Interview with Dr. Betty Jane Kissler

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Begin Tape 1, Side 2

Opening announcement recapping the previous interview

Betty Jane Kissler: I had actually, of course, started working here before that degree was conferred, and I had become involved in the activities of the department and university before the degree, but it was part of the overall picture, I guess, of my career. At any rate, when I first came to Southwest Texas, I was asked to start the, develop the program for teacher education. That was kind of an exciting thing to do because there’d only been one person who’d been here one year before me. So, there was nothing really planned, and it was my responsibility to do that. The program started growing, not because of anything I had to do, just simply history majors, universities grew; there were more students to the point where we had over a hundred student teachers in one year—not all in one semester, but in the course of a year; but one semester we had about seventy-five, which was probably about as many, seventy-five or eighty, as we’ve ever had. And we had five people working with student teaching. At any rate, it was kind of exciting to start with only a very small program and see it grow and see other people being brought into it.

But that led to an interest in education, the training of teachers, the teaching of history, how it was taught in the public schools and the connection between the universities. I’ve tried for a number of years to get universities, the University of Texas particularly, where I knew there had been others who had been concerned about the teaching of history in public schools—and there had been some attempt on the part of the University of Texas to take some action to try to get university professors involved so that there would be good teaching in public schools, so that there would be better students coming into our universities, and as a result perhaps training better history teachers. But it was impossible to get anyone, or very few people, in the universities involved. And, at the time, I can understand it because everything was growing very rapidly. History research, historical research was ever so much more important than the creating of a teacher, especially a public school teacher. They really were relegated to the lesser positions in order—in the university priorities.

Probably Southwest Texas was one of the last to move in that direction because we train so many teachers and we had been a teacher-training institution. But the University of Texas, once Dr.
Webb had died, Jim Pierson left there to go to North Texas—well, he went elsewhere, but he had been working with teacher training through the history department—they just simply were not interested. They did not seem to care about the public schools. That was true to some degree here. It took a long time to work through, within my own department, to get them to realize that what they were teaching, the people they were teaching, were teachers, prospective teachers. I think, it took a while, but after a while they began to realize what we were doing, in working with the public schools. And I think this department became much more sympathetic to teacher training and concerns in the public schools.

Well, that went on for almost twenty years without very little attention paid by the universities; but it’s been very rewarding in the last, oh I suppose, seven or eight years, to all of a sudden find the universities wanting to know why their students are so bad and what the problem is. We’ve seen reform movement in public schools. I have been asked to speak with chairmen around the depart—around the state, with the chair association that started that led to the Texas advancement for history, the association for the advancement of history. But I became involved in it only because I was one of the few people that was involved with history that had some understanding of what was going on in the public schools. They were really very few of us in the state. And it—finally they were ready to listen to us. Glen Lyndon was another person, at SMU, who has been involved in sort of the same way I am. And it really has been rewarding just from the standpoint to be able to participate in what seems to be a reawakening of this and faculty beginning to be more interested in the public schools and what is being taught out there. Now it’s being forced on them by the new standards that the state legislature established.

**Kathy Lea Stinton:** In part, what you do with the student teachers—is it more than merely a concern of the information that they have? Is it teaching them how to teach, not just to impart to knowledge but actually how to reach students, how to teach, how to be basically more effective, not necessarily just more knowledge?

**Kissler:** Yes. We are concerned about both. We want them to be sure they know their history and not teach wrong information. And [we] try to help them, if they don’t have it—where they can get it, try to provide the resource where they—the bibliographies as to where they can get information if they don’t have it. But then when they get out into the classroom, of course we’re checking them on their accuracy and what they’re teaching, but we’re also concerned that they don’t stand up there and just lecture like their college professors do. That can be effective to a certain degree in a high school class, but not for very long.

You need to—you have a number of students—even in a high school class you have a select group. The bottom students are out. They don’t meet the requirements to even get into college. So you [college professors] don’t have that group that doesn’t, that barely makes it through high school, may not even make it through high school. In public schools you don’t have that luxury. You have students sitting in your class that have an IQ of 70. You have to try to reach that child and yet you may have one in there with an IQ of 170. And you really have a range of abilities,
sometimes, in a classroom. So, it becomes very important that you recognize that. You don’t do that immediately. And students—it will take them probably two or three years before they begin to observe in their classes students that they know they’re going to have—that are slow. And you begin to spot those, those characteristics of a slow student, the bright ones, the trouble—the students that are troubled. And you begin to see that. But the interesting thing about that is that we could help students to recognize those students in their classes and work with them.

Sometimes their teachers did too. And get them to provide programs—what could you do with a student—what can we do with this student, he can’t read the book. How can we get the information to him? How can we work on that? And we have had, and I still—I haven’t been as involved in it in the last five years since I’ve been in this office, but I know there’s still materials that we have in our curriculum library that Mr. Clayton, Mrs. Fitzpatrick, both use to still provide that kind of information for our students. They have to write lesson plans. We look for variety of approaches. We don’t want them to just give questions and have students answer, but they should have a variety of different things that they do in a day in classroom. And, of course, that varies if you’re working with seventh grade students or senior students. You do different things with those students. So, you work with the student teacher to recognize the differences between a seventh grader and a senior in high school and the approach to learning, how students learn. And that’s something that’s very difficult to explain. Now, there are lots of theories on why people learn, but it’s still something I’m groping with. I can read theories. But I—and sometimes they work, but then there’s that child sitting out there that I’m still not reaching, and even in our college class you have those that you don’t always reach.

That’s been one good thing that’s been fun about it, but it’s also been a frustration, because that’s the area I should have written in and my department would not have recognized it, for promotion, for tenure. Fortunately, that wasn’t how I was being evaluated at the time, but today, if I were starting my career, coming in under the same principle but with the new standards that we have, I would have to write, but I would have to write history. Well, then I don’t want to supervise student teachers. Because I don’t have time to do that and do the type of research that would be required, historical research—but if I could write on teacher education then I would have time to do that. I could even do some interests pro—studies, probably, with student teachers and write about it. I don’t like that kind of writing, though. I much prefer doing history writing, and so I didn’t pursue that, but I didn’t have to. But, even if I did it today, I would have to be in a different department because my department—I don’t think the history department would accept that as history, history research. But that’s where we are, and that’s—you’re a—you’re neither fish nor fowl, in a sense. You don’t belong in either department, almost. Educationists don’t want you either because you don’t like some of the things they do, like their language. So you don’t fit there. But, then the history department doesn’t like you either, particularly (laughs), because you’re not doing history.

**Stinton:** E.H. Carr had a number of definitions for history, so perhaps you’ll just have to give them a new one (laughs) and validify it.
**Kissler:** Well, and it—and that may change, too, as we get, as the reforms—with the new reforms that have come into the public schools, with the requirements for what is taught out there. And now the professors are—I really think that the exams are going to be—that the students are going to be taking, and they are going to be tested on information we’ve taught them. And I think if it shows up that our students aren’t doing well in Chinese history, well, we know that. They’re not going to do well in oriental history. We don’t teach it. So we expect them to not do well. But if they’re not doing well in colonial America, or British history, or some of the areas where we do have some courses—if they’re not doing it, then we need to look at what our courses have in them. What are we doing—yet these students are taking these courses, yet they’re not getting it. Is it our fault? Or is it their fault? We need to really look at that—how we are teaching—to see why they’re not doing well. Now, if most of them do well and we only have one or two that don’t, then that’s a different matter. But if we have a lot of them that fail and don’t do well on these exams, then I think we’ll have to look at our own teaching. So, there would be some fallout on what’s happening out there with the public schools that could really have an impact on higher education. I don’t know, may not. But it’s been kind of interesting.

That’s been a side of my career—I didn’t intend to go that way at all. And it was only because I had to work at UT to supervise student teachers that I fell into this job, and I stayed. I liked it. I like the flexibility of my schedule. I didn’t have four classes. I could have one or two. I taught in the ev—at night frequently. And I had my days free. Free, I say. That’s not quite right. But I drove from Austin to Gonzales, sometimes Victoria, to San Antonio. So I frequently drove five and six hundred miles a week. Sometimes even more than that, just in supervising student teachers, to get to the schools and see the students. And [I] would make four trips—yeah, four days a week, come in on the fifth day, usually Fridays and try to—or on Mondays, one way or the other, to take care of work in the—in my classroom or in my office, what needed to be taken care of. Otherwise I just stopped in, checked the mail to see if there’s anything important come by, and then I’d be on my way again. Which was kind of, a different kind of—assignment—than the regular teaching. So, when you—when I moved into here [chair of the department], so—the thought of going back to fulltime teaching (laughs)—frightens me. Four classes and being here five days a week, and because I’ve done that. (Laughs)

**Stinton:** We won’t let your colleagues hear that.

**Kissler:** —hear that part of it. Well, there isn’t enough of a career left to make a whole lot of difference anymore. The (clears throat and reassumes a serious tone)—besides getting involved in teacher education, and of course—I didn’t take the time to do the historical research—I say take the time, I would like to say I didn’t have time. Probably I did have time. I just didn’t have the priority set to—to do the historic—to continue the historical research. I loved it. I enjoyed what I was doing on my dissertation, and I really would have like to have gone on. But the time factor just became something I—I couldn’t change—where my—the way my priorities were set at that moment.
Stinton: What was the subject of your dissertation?

Kissler: I did a restudy, so to speak, of the boundary dispute in Venezuela and British Guiana. I reinvestigated it. Primarily because at the time, this was in the mid-sixties, Venezuela was asking for a reevaluation of that and deman—and asking for some territory back because they felt they had been—cheated—maybe a too strong a word, but they didn’t get a fair shake in 1898 when that decision was made. And to some degree they had a basis for their argument. It was an interesting study to go back and look at, look at the maps, look at—and to see what was used by the commission when they made their decision. It was really—

Stinton: It really does sound fascinating.

Kissler: I really did enjoy it. It was something I could do without traveling because I couldn’t afford to go off somewhere. And I had to work. And I could get the information through microfilm. It came in on interlibrary loan so I could get the stuff that way. And I didn’t have to go off and do the research. So that was one of the reasons—

When I first came to Southwest Texas, to change the subject, I had been told earlier by professors that I should join not only the historical associations but I should certainly get involved in the teacher organizations, or professorial organizations, that would help, had helped the profession, like the American Association of University Professors, AAUP. I joined AAUP. There was a chapter—well, I’m not sure if there was really a chapter here, but it was one of the things that were encouraged—we’d get membership applications from the national office. And I joined. And I think there was a chapter here when I first joined. And then the TACT organization was on campus. That’s the Texas Association of College Teachers, which is a state organization.

There were members of the history department; there were members of both of these groups. And periodically they had meetings; there were things that would come up on the university campus that they talked about. There were state meetings. They always sent a delegate to the meetings. Usually the meetings were in Austin, so it wasn’t far to go. It was easy to get there. And Dr. Craddock was quite active in the organization; Everette Swinney had been, to some degree; Dr. Taylor had been. In fact, he was one of the founders, I believe, of [the] Texas Association of College Teachers, or certainly had been in on the ground floor of that. And there were other colleagues I can remember. One of the chemistry professors had, he was president under the local chapter, and at one point he said, he said, “It’s time—you really need to get in—be a delegate.” And that’s when I became a delegate, went to the state meeting, which I found to be interesting. Well, Emmie Craddock was involved, and so it was kind of a—it was something to get involved in because these were good friends, but you also could learn about what was going around the state in other universities and what were the concerns of the professoriate around the state. Well, I participated in [a] few of those early meetings and went to a couple of state conferences. And then I—I think that was maybe the time when I really started working on my dissertation and I didn’t—wasn’t active, too active in it, because I had too many other things
to do. And then after I finished my dissertation, well, then I came back to—I started getting more involved in activities on the campus and became involved again with the AAUP and the TACT organization.

I really don’t know—I’m really kind of puzzled why I moved up the line in those organizations, into the executive boards, executive staff, because I really didn’t know people that well. I didn’t think I knew people that well, although I had been to the meetings. I had been going as a delegate, but I’m not one of these people that stands up and says very much. And only if—or rarely do I—I’m not the person that stands up and says much. Yet in talking, I guess it was talking to people, when you’re talking about things on a one-to-one basis, I must have impressed some people, or maybe it was because I simply was willing to work. It may have been the reason. Or willing to serve, I’m not sure what it was. But I was asked to serve on the executive board of TACT and was elected. It was an elected position. And I was a state president. And I’m again the regional pres—vice president. I mean the regional vice president. My job was membership, or primarily membership. And I had a telephone in my office that was on my own bill, line. And so I called some of the local chapter presidents, and we worked and tried to increase the membership. So, I became acquainted with some of the people in my region by doing that, at least on the telephone. And the next thing I knew, I was nominated to be one of the candidates for president—of TACT. And I was elected. And I still am kind of in shock by that, that I was—that that happened to me. Well, it was kind of a fun year to be president of that organization. And by that time, AAUP had organized into a state conference and had a state organization. And I was active in that.

Well, it was at that time that—being active in both organizations and knowing the—I had served on the executive board of AAUP as well—we decided we would enter into an arrangement whereby the two organizations would work together because we had very much the same kinds of concerns. There was just different membership in the organizations. The TACT organization is basically state schools of four year or above, graduate schools. AAUP has all of them, the private schools, the four years schools, the graduate schools, the—it has anyone who is in the professoriate can be a member of AAUP, could be junior colleges. But we all had very much the same concerns. We attempted—and we did work together with—trying to—and we have our joint meetings, and that’s continued. We had a meeting just a couple of weeks ago, it was a joint meeting. Now, that may come to an end because of some of the things that happened at the national level with AAUP.

But my activity with AAUP led to my being nominated for the national convention, the national council of AAUP. And again I was elected. And I still am—I still don’t understand why that happened—exactly. But that was a fun three years because I served—I flew to Washington twice a year to attend those meetings. One was strictly the national council meeting, and there were about thirty of us on the council from all over the United States. And we made policy decisions for the organization. Then the second meeting was the national conference when the—where delegates from all over the United States came. But you also have the national council meeting
also. Those three years were fun years, in the sense I met some very interesting people from all over the United States, various universities. [I] met people in collective bargaining units, and those that were not. I learned a good bit about how collective bargaining operates within the professoriate at various universities, if they had the AAUP as the bargaining unit or AFT or the NEA or various other state organizations that they can put together. But at any rate, that proved to be quite a fun three years. And also very rewarding in the sense of what I learned and the people that I met.

**Stinton:** Before you go on—you’ve mentioned a couple of times that both of these organi—organizations, excuse me, have similar goals—

**Kissler:** Mm-hm.

**Stinton:** —and concerns, and if you could give me an idea of some of the specific—

**Kissler:** Oh, the AAUP has a red book that lists the policy statements that they’ve developed through the years. One of the first ones they did was in 1940. And it has to do with academic freedom. And it’s a statement of free—of academic freedom and responsibility. A professor has academic freedom, but he also has responsibility with that freedom. And it’s a very good statement—of what all of that means.

Then there is, along with this, with the academic freedom, and there’s a statement on promotion and tenure. Why tenure is so important for an individual who has—why you need tenure to have academic freedom. Why the two go together. Tenure is not job security in the sense that we think—as we now think about it, it’s become much more job security. But when I first joined AAUP, tenure was important, although I didn’t have to be—I mean tenure wasn’t something that we even thought about very much. It came in the sixties. Well, I’d already been here several years. All of a sudden I knew I had tenure, and I never could quite figure out why it was granted. I didn’t do anything anymore than just do my job.

But at that time, tenure was considered very important if you were going to do the research, have the academic freedom you—that you needed to be a professor and do the research that you needed to do. If you’re working on a project and you start asking questions, your research should take you wherever you need to go. Sometimes politically you can’t do it because some group stops and says you can’t so that. It could be, if it’s not political, there may be other things that stop you from doing it. You should not be stopped—maybe. I don’t know. As a good example of that issue, should DNA be stopped, the research on DNA? It’s very controversial. It is—the scientists themselves have done some stopping of that because the—what happens when you start messing around with the genes, what you produce could be a monster perhaps, or whatever. I don’t know enough about that. I shouldn’t maybe use that as an example, but it takes us out of the politics to some degree.

**Stinton:** A moralistic issue—
**Kissler:** Right.

**Stinton:** —or at least a (unintelligible).

**Kissler:** And also a, and a scientific one too. Because is that what your, the purpose of your—should you do that, to create something that’s, that you can’t control, perhaps? Or should you turn something loose that—might not be good for the world or good for society. It does become moral, becomes scientific (unintelligible).

But in history, to get it back to use, there are several issues. You could be taking a position, as you study history, you could be—get into documents that you need to look at and you find some things that weren’t known before. You want to publish them and because it may reflect on some historical character badly, or it might give an interpretation that someone, whoever publishes it or whoever doesn’t want it to be out, you could be curtailed. Your activities could be curtailed, and they shouldn’t be. You should have the right to take your research and ask the questions where you—where you and your students should go. You have the right to ask those questions. You should be free to do that.

Now, not to destroy, I mean there has to be responsibility with this. Not to set up a different kind of government, not to—I don’t mean it to be (unintelligible)—I’m not saying this very well—in a destructive sense, that you should be free to do this. I really believe this. If I start something, I want to study it until I have an answer or as good of an answer as I can find. I don’t want a religious group, political group, moral group, I don’t care what it is, to come in and say, You can’t go any farther than that. I don’t think they have the right to do that. Now, they may have the right not to publish what I’ve found, or not, I mean there may be a time when that becomes necessary. I think we have the right to ask those questions, ask our students those questions. I think their minds should, it’s more—I’m more concerned with the rights of students and working with students to let them sell all sides of an issue.

And that’s another part of this. It’s not only to study what you want to, but it’s the right to present it. Present it in such a fashion that you’re not indoctrinating them but that you’re opening the minds of these students. And I really believe you should have the right to do that.

**Stinton:** (unintelligible)—your definition of, or the earlier definition of tenure, was more of a—

**Kissler:** —a job security so that you could do that.

**Stinton:** —a protection—in a sense.

**Kissler:** Yeah.

**Stinton:** —so that your job would not be threatened by—

**Kissler:** —by that.
Stinton: —by your research, regardless of which way—

Kissler: —it went. That’s right. So that you wouldn’t be forced to not look at something, or go in a direction that—

Stinton: It wasn’t a seniority issue as much as—

Kissler: That’s right. It was a— I think that’s the, at least as I understood it, that’s what it initially began to be. Then, of course, as the job market became tighter, then it became much more of a job security kind of thing. Once you had tenure—you still are supposed to be basically free, and we generally are free to go on and do our research. Most of us don’t get involved in those kinds of things. But let me give you an example.

When I first started teaching and first started teaching here, I had to sign a loyalty oath.

Stinton: That was an outgrowth of McCarthyism?

Kissler: I didn’t find it—oh, I thought it was kind of funny, that I would sign a loyalty—because anyone would sign a loyalty oath. I mean I—that didn’t show that I was any more loyal than, you know, the communist living down the street. Of course, I think a communist can be loyal to the United States. His political bent just happens to be—it doesn’t mean he’s for Russia, necessarily. But, you know, a lot of people wouldn’t believe that. That’s all right. But nevertheless, if you didn’t sign it, you wouldn’t have a job. So—it—that was an infringement on my right, all of ours. Certainly we should have had the right to—we shouldn’t have to profess our loyalty by signing an oath.

Stinton: Did the AAUP or TACT, either one or both, deal with the issue of the oaths?

Kissler: They opposed it. AAUP did. I’m not sure what TACT did. I’m sure they did too. I’m sure they did. But you know, you were—we had no option. It was a state law. If you were going to teach in a state university, you signed it. And that—just like you take American history, you don’t have the option. Now, it was eventually eliminated and forgotten. The—I’m trying to think if there were some other—there’s a group right now that’s known as—something in academe.

Stinton: Accuracy in—

Kissler: Accuracy in Academe. That’s it. It’s a right-wing group. They’re coming into the classrooms. I think they’re students, I think, that are sitting in and taking notes or taping or whatever. If they’re finding someone analyzes the—finds that you’re taking a position that whatever this group thinks is wrong, or whatever—I assume you’re called on the carpet. I don’t know. I don’t know how they’re going to operate. I think that could be very interesting, if they come into a classroom and start—and professors are called on the carpet because they voiced a particular comment. It seems to me they should have the right to give the various interpretations, whether they be Marxist, whether they be right-wing, socialist. You know, I don’t—I think all of
those we should talk about. Students don’t make good decisions if they don’t have all the
information. People don’t make good decisions if they don’t have all of the information, or as
much as they can get. And when you give them only one part of it, then you are restricting their
thinking, their actions or acting in proper ways. And I really object to that.

Well, the AAUP was trying to protect the professor with these standards. Then they came up
with not only tenure standards, promotion, how that should be done, they came up with
grievance procedures and all of those things had been written. Then they moved on into what
should be—with collective bargaining. Having come in, they’ve come in with all kinds of things
in collective bargaining—how that should be done, the procedures, again, for that. There are lots
of things that have been written about collective bargaining. There are statements on the part-
time faculty. The AAUP has studied that and made some conditions. They have statements on
libraries, what should be adequate, what should be done (coughs) in a—what should be in a
library, how librarians should be treated, their rights as members of the faculty. They think they
should be treated as faculty not as workers, have the same rights. At any rate, they have taken
on—there are just lots of things that they’ve made statements about.

The interesting thing about it is that most of the other organizations have adopted the policies of
the red book. NEA has. AFT has. TACT did. It’s just one of the things the new organization, the
American—or the Texas Faculty Association that Ken [Margerison] is president of has adopted
it. So the red book is something the AAUP wrote and put together through the years, is
something that sets standards for all of higher education. And has been basically adopted it. Lots
of organizations, not only—well, associations that aren’t faculty-oriented but are higher
education-oriented have adopted the policies and support them. And the American Historical has
adopted its, so it—the standards, the—it really has become a, it is a—set the basic standards for
actions on the part of professors in higher education.

To go on, there, one other thing that came out of this in my activities was the national AAUP
working with the state AAUP and with state TACT. I was president of TACT, the state president
of TACT, and then about a year after that I became the president of the state conference of
AAUP. So I served three years because that was two years and TACT was a one year. I served
three years as state presidents of these two different organizations. And that was an interesting
experience because I became acquainted with officials at the state level, political officials, and
had to do some testifying before committees. The first time it scared me to death, second time—I
still don’t do it, you know, very easily. But, it has led—just being involved with having that title
of that position opened some doors. It really is kind of interesting. You walk into the
coordinating board office, and you say you’re president of such an organization, they recognize
that, the organization. They may not recognize you, but it does open the door for you to come in
and (unintelligible) some things.
Stinton: Well, did your involvement in these groups as well as, perhaps, relationships, friendships, with such people as Emmie Craddock, Dr. Craddock, the mayor—I guess she’s been the mayor for a number of years.

Kissler: Yes. About five or six, I guess, off-and-on at different times. (Coughs)

Stinton: Did that directly lead into your involvement in local politics? Or was there, were there other motivations, other incentives—

Kissler: I imagine, at the local level, getting involved in local affairs—I was appointed to some of the commissions—to some of the committees, or commissions, that the local government was here. And I really don’t know again quite how I got known around the community, but I did.

One of the committees I’ve sat on for, or the boards I’ve sat on for years, appointed by the city way back in the sixties, is the Community Action Agency. And it started out as a very small kind of group that got money from the federal government and started family planning, doing—the. Oh, they had the Headstart programs. That was where, the first thing they really did was Headstart. Then they moved into family planning and health programs for mothers and children, for people that really couldn’t afford it. And there are lots of programs that the federal government paid for in the sixties and in the seventies. And there’s lots of money that finally came down. That started out as an organization of about $20,000–30,000 and now is well over a million dollars, the budget of Community Action. That brought in people from the Mexican-American and the black community that I became acquainted, in working on the board, served on the board, and I became acquainted with some of those people. And that may be partly why I got—was as well-known around parts of the community.

Stinton: Did you start out in that initial involvement, as a representative of the college?

Kissler: No, of the city.

Stinton: It was of the city—

Kissler: The city, I was appointed by the city council.

Stinton: —oh, okay. (Unintelligible)

Kissler: The city council. That was strictly living in the community. And I was appointed. And that’s because Emmie was on the council, I’m sure. Well, Bill Poole was on the council at one point. And I’m not sure—and there were other college people that were on the council. But I think I was appointed because Emmie—she’s at least the one who approached me, and I assume—asked if I would. And I’m still on it. I’ve just never gotten off of it. It’s one of those boards that if you’re, if you’re appointed by a city or county, you’re there forever unless you step down or someone—they want to appoint someone else. If you’re appointed by one of the other groups then you only have a two-year or three-year term; you can’t stay on. So, everyone rotated
off except me. (laughs) Well, some of the commissioners, county commissioners stayed on for a long time, but, but anyway, it—

**Stinton:** Well, that gives some continuity—

**Kissler:** Yes. It does.

**Stinton:** —to this committee.

**Kissler:** Well, the—and that probably is not good, to some degree, because it becomes very much—I become very protective of the group. You know, others come in and start questioning, [she is speaking humorously] then I’m kind of—and that isn’t necessarily good because it needs to be questioned sometimes.

I don’t know exactly how I got involved in running for the city. I had been asked several times if I wouldn’t run by neighborhood groups. I was; I would go to the neighborhood groups myself because I was interested in the master plan that was being developed by the city. I was interested in what was going to happen in my neighborhood. But I just was interested and participated in those. And I had been asked, and I said no. I just simply didn’t have time. And I didn’t when I was president of the state organizations. Involved in that activity, I just felt I couldn’t do it. And then finally I wasn’t as busy or wasn’t as involved at the state level. And finally I just decided—there was a one-year term. One of the council members had moved out of town and resigned, and there was a one-year term. And that’s a way to find out, if I’m elected, I can find out it’s something I want to do. And I won’t be out anything. One year isn’t going to be that much. And so, I ran for the one year with the support of this neighborhood group, and I was elected. And I don’t think I did all that much that first year. It was learning as much as anything. But then two years ago, when that term—when I had to run again, I ran again, and I didn’t have any opposition. I did the first time, but I didn’t that time. And so that was—I was elected. I don’t and—I still am enjoying it. I’m finding it—

There are some very interesting problems in the city, very different than the university: the growth of the city, the planning for growth. How do you allow growth and yet not growth to the point where you, you destroy the city environment, pollute the river. You have to be careful of all of those things and not destroy the living standards of people who are here. That’s not always easy to do. We sometimes think developers are strictly here to rape the city, get their money, and leave. Some are, I suppose. But there are others that really do care about the city and want it to grow and develop in a reasonable way— [Trails off]

I think we have a council right now that works together very well. And from all I can tell, from listening to other—from observing other cities and reading about other cities and even attending some of the Texas Municipal League meetings, San Marcos is doing fine in the sense of what’s happening in other communities. With they’re having growth, they’re having the same kinds of problems, but we’re ahead of the game in our planning and in what we’re doing. So, I think that
speaks very well for the council—I don’t have any aspirations to go any farther than where I am in politics.

**Stinton**: But, then you didn’t have any aspirations to get involved to begin with—

**Kissler**: (Laughs) That’s right.

**Stinton**: —so you never know.

**Kissler**: (laughs) As I say, it’s been kind of interesting how—

**Stinton**: (laughs, unintelligible) —happens along.

**Kissler**: I look back on—why did I get involved in—I really do—wonder how I got involved in the national organization and then the state, because I really wasn’t that out-front. But whatever it was, and I’m really am not sure what it is—I think maybe it partly was because I was at the meeting and they needed somebody. (Chuckles)

**Stinton**: Well, regardless of the reason—in term of—from the point on, 1985 on—I mean you’re involved in the city, you’re still active in the AAUP and TACT and, and still are very involved, I’m assuming at least from an interest point of view, in student teacher—

**Kissler**: Oh, yes.

**Stinton**: —supervision. You work with Ms. FitzPatrick and Mr. Clayton.

**Kissler**: Yes. As a matter of fact, we’re leaving tomorrow, no Thursday, to go out to a meeting where we, which we’ve attended for years, which deals—which has public school, primarily public school teachers. And we’ve been going to that for a long time just because we like to keep up with what goes on with public school teachers. I’m interested in talking to some of the teachers as to the type of programs they would like to have from the colleges now that they have career ladder and graduate courses. And we offer—(coughs) so that we could maybe plan for some summer programs. Even—even though these will be people from all over the state, there’s no reason why I couldn’t, they can’t come here in the summer time if we offer good programs. But more than that, if we find out what those teachers want, we can find that we know that that’s going to be what the teachers around here want. And so we could offer classes on Saturday or weekends, I mean, or at night. Even going to their campuses if you could get enough teachers to teach a graduate course, or workshop, whatever arrangement we can make to try to—

**Stinton**: (Unintelligible) A graduate course.

**Kissler**: Yeah, I think it could be.

**Stinton**: Do you, not knowing how chairmanships work, those sorts of things—you’ve been an acting dean—
Kissler: Uh-huh.

Stinton: —for the School of Liberal Arts. For one year?

Kissler: One year.

Stinton: Was that eighty—

Kissler: It was three years ago. It was—

Stinton: '81 or '82?

Kissler: Something like that.

Stinton: And then you’ve been chairman for three or four years now?

Kissler: I was chairman before I went over to acting dean. I just stayed out of it for one year. But I was chairman before and came back as chairman. (Coughs)

Stinton: So, do you—do you feel that you’re going to continue?

Kissler: No. As a matter of fact, I imagine, I haven’t announced this because I’m not sure how it’s going to work exactly, but, I really am thinking—(coughs) I’m looking for the time to step down from the chairmanship a year after we move into this building, after it’s been renovated. [The Taylor-Murphy History Building is slated for renovation next year] Because I’ve thought about it, to do it before, because I’m really kind of ready to get out of it. But I don’t think it’s fair to—when you’re off—when you’re away from your home base to turn it over to someone new. And especially if it were someone that had been brought in from the outside—or even someone who hasn’t done it here. It still—there are lots of things that—and I haven’t brought anyone into the office to even do much. Dr. Wilson’s the only one who did it. And I’m not sure he would have done it if I hadn’t been over in the dean’s office. Even that—he still ran into problems. But I thought that if I could move this year—if we move out, which we’re supposed to at the end of this year—stay with the group for that year, we’re supposed to be out about a year, then move back in. And then that year we would maybe start making arrangements to get someone in this position. And I would step down.

Stinton: Well, you’re leaving it open-ended in terms of the renovation of the building. The way construction goes (laughs) you might—(laughs)

Kissler: Well, I just—it just seems to me—

Stinton: —be here for a while.

Kissler: that you’re not—there are—even with the first year you move back into a building, there are always problems, with that first year. And it just seemed to me that would be a good time to either—if we have to have a national search, we could go out and do it and bring
someone in; we’d be settled in the building and hope [to] have the dedication over again, the new rededication or whatever it will be called, and—at any rate, that’s what I’m thinking about.

**Stinton:** Are you thinking in terms of moving in a specific direction? Yourself? In terms of your career at that point?

**Kissler:** I would like to have a semester off, which I probably will get because normally they give chairmen a semester off to kind of get themselves back into—and at that point, I would like to—do what I was trained to do, do historical research. And spend the remainder of my career really working as a historian and not in all these other things.

**Stinton:** Well, I have been wondering as you’ve been speaking today—remember at our last meeting, when you were discussing the early discontent and in high school, jobs, which, as you said, were really very good jobs—and you explained why you felt you were discontent and so on. But as you—as you’ve gone along, it’s occurred to me, maybe this being a wrong assessment, but that you seem to be not only at the right place at the right time, but you seem to be very interested in a lot, a lot of different things—and unafraid to make change, which is, perhaps, kind of an important lesson or an important examples for, for people in general, not just people anticipating an academic career. But to see someone who has allowed themselves to grow not necessarily in a real planned manner, but to be sort of taken by the flow, not without control, but—

**Kissler:** Well, I think—yeah, I think that’s kind of interesting. I hadn’t thought about it in quite that—those terms, but I think that’s probably a good assessment. I think I have—I’ve been in the right place. I think there’s no question.

**Stinton:** Well, (chuckles) that helps.

**Kissler:** I think I’ve been very fortunate in being in the right place at the right time, for opportunities to come along. I also think, though, that I have taken some opportunities. One of the things that led me into local, into the political arena here at the university—when affirmative action came into being. And we had, the university had to show that we were meeting the standards. There were guidelines that were prepared by the federal government, the EOC I think is what it was called. Oh, whatever it was. Anyway, those guidelines came and we set up a—there was a committee set up on affirmative action. And I was asked if I would chair it. That was the first major university-wide committee that I had chaired. I had done some other things, but it was the first one that really required—I had done a survey for the [faculty] senate. I had been appointed by the senate to do a survey of faculty salaries. And that had been kind of an interesting project. But this was—working with the administration on that led to this. That took us two years to get into, to get the report finalized, get it in. And when it was finally through, it was about, oh, I suppose a twenty-page report. Having gone through every one of the guidelines, analyzing our departments and our university to see where we were deficient and where we met—where we were in keeping with the standards—
That, once that was over I was, somewhere in that timeframe, I was elected to the senate. And I guess it was my last year, I was chair of the senate. That was an interesting year because that opened the door to activities at the level of the [J.C.] Kellam Building [administration building], where I sat in on some meetings. I was invited to some things just because I was chairman of the senate that I wouldn’t normally have gotten into. One of the perks of that is to be involved with the Alumni Association. You sit on their board—as a kind of an ex-officio member. And that was fun. I enjoyed getting acquainted with some of the people in the Alumni Association. And that has kept on to a certain degree, not as much as it was, but I really did enjoy that. Meeting some of the board members, [I] had an opportunity to meet some of the regents. There were just a number of things. Then I think the thing that really was a thrill, but it scared me to death, I was asked to give the commencement address. And gave it at Evans Field with about seven thousand people sitting there and the sun shining in my face. (Laughs) And, in May, gave that commencement address. So, those were all kinds of honors that, again, just happened because I was chair of the senate. Then I didn’t choose—I didn’t run again. I've forgotten, I was involved in something else and decided I couldn’t do the senate again. (Laughs)

**Stinton:** (Laughs) That’s another—

**Kissler:** Oh, I think maybe I became chairman. I think maybe that’s about the time that that occurred, or something. I mean I was getting involved with the—and you couldn’t be on the senate if you were chairman. (Laughs)

**Stinton:** I think we’re running out of tape. And I kind of hate to have to cut it short, at this point, but not only do I appreciate, not only for myself but for Dr. Brown, you allowing me to—

**Kissler:** Oh.

**Stinton:** —listen and, and to learn about all that you’ve done. But—

**Kissler:** This one isn’t, I don’t think, quite as organized. And quite as—

**Stinton:** But that’s, that’s fine. As we’ve said, there are different approaches of teaching history (laughs) so why not different approaches to, to sharing about oneself. But I think, unless I’ve missed my mark, that you’ve more than adequately provided enough information and insight to achieve what we discussed on the first meeting, which was to allow others to see how you have arrived at where you have arrived and where you hope to go, which is interesting that it ties back into some of those early beginnings and those early interests.

**Kissler:** Mm-hm.

**Stinton:** And—so, I hope that when this has gone to the archives, if anyone, particularly if any young women get to read the transcript, to listen to the tape, I think they will benefit.

**Kissler:** Well, thank you.
Stinton: Well, unless there’s some final grand statement (laughs), I think we can probably—

Kissler: —call it to an end.

Stinton: Okay. Well, once again, thanks.

Kissler: Well, thank you.

End of interview