

SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE

and

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

University Archives CSUF Presidents Project

JEWEL PLUMMER COBB

Research Scientist, Professor, College Administrator

OH 2067

Interviews Conducted on

March 27, 1990  
April 6, 17, 1990  
May 8, 23, 1990  
June 9, 1990  
July 2, 1990

by

Lawrence B. de Graaf

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None

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## INTRODUCTION

When Jewel Plummer Cobb assumed the presidency of California State University, Fullerton [CSUF] in 1981, most observers were initially impressed with the novelty of the event. She was the first African-American woman to assume the presidency of a major public institution of higher education west of the Mississippi River. It soon became apparent, however, that this position was but the culmination of a remarkable set of accomplishments as a research scientist, university professor, college administrator, and actively involved citizen. Receiving her Ph.D. degree in 1950, she successively assumed positions as a cell research biologist, as a professor at a major midwestern university, a large eastern university, and later a prestigious women's college. By 1969 she was appointed dean of another women's college in the northeast. She remained there until 1976, when she assumed a similar position at a larger women's college, from which she moved to CSUF.

In all of these professional callings she served with distinction. She was among the foremost biologists in probing melanoma cells as an avenue to finding a cure for cancer, and she shared her findings with both national and international audiences. Her teaching included several innovative programs aimed at advancing the teaching of science at pre-college levels. As she moved into administrative ranks, she gained increasing recognition, receiving some thirty awards as of 1989, along with eighteen honorary doctorates. She has served on the National Science Foundation, been elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, and held positions on over twenty other educational boards, commissions, and committees, as well as assuming a large number of civic responsibilities.

Most of these accomplishments have been documented. Her findings in cell physiology have been recorded in thirty-seven scholarly publications; some of her thoughts on blacks, women, and higher education are in nine other pieces. The university archives of the institutions at which she served have records of her administrative work and special programs. But many other aspects of the life of Jewel Plummer Cobb are not easily traced by printed sources. How were her later attitudes affected by her growing up on the edge of the Chicago ghetto and receiving her undergraduate education largely in the South of the Jim Crow Era? In what ways did race and gender continue to invite discriminatory treatment or create unique opportunities through her career? How much of a role did they play in her consciousness and life decisions? Her administrative career occurred in a period of widespread change in higher education. What were her thoughts on these changes, her

reactions to them, and how did they affect her administration? Higher education administration invariably raises issues of governance and relations with students and the surrounding community. What have been her thoughts and positions on these matters?

Since such questions are rarely directly answered in publicly available documents, oral recollections have become increasingly recognized as an essential supplement to papers in archival collections. When Dr. Cobb decided to donate her papers to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, that institution recognized the need for an oral history. "Researchers, in order to document a life, must have an understanding of motivation in order to gain insight into how a person thinks and why they acted as they did." While acknowledging that personal and professional correspondence and writings could supply some of this, it suggested to Dr. Cobb that "An oral history interview, skillfully executed, would add immeasurably to the documentation available in your papers."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Cobb subsequently contacted me, as a faculty member who had long been connected with the CSUF Oral history Program, and this project was launched.

The timing was fortuitous. I had just completed a multi-year, 33-interview oral history project with founding administrators, faculty, and trustees of the California State University system as well as research on the history of Cal State Fullerton. Thus I was familiar with developments in higher education in general during much of Dr. Cobb's career as well as with her current campus and system. While the CSUF Oral History Program had concentrated on community projects in which the interviewees had not necessarily been influential, it had expanded into sessions with persons in positions of leadership, focusing as much on institutional and policy history as on the lives of the interviewees. I had been associated with two of these, The California Government Oral History Program of the State Archives and interviews with the two previous presidents of CSUF for its University Archives. The latter project was the precedent for this one, which was finalized as both a supplement to the Cobb papers at the Schomburg Center and a complement to the campus archives. The President's Associates, a campus support group which had underwritten interviews with prior presidents, agreed to support the Cobb project.

An archival interview which would also be an autobiography is characterized both by what it ideally should contain and some things it often cannot. As an autobiography, it should be a total life history, offering an idea of the conditions and experiences which shaped a person as well as one's life accomplishments. This comprehensiveness is doubly important when the interview is being conducted for future users rather than as part of the interviewer's own research. It is impossible to predict what aspects of a life

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<sup>1</sup> Diana Lachatanere, Schomburg Center, to Jewel Plummer Cobb, March 14, 1988.



future scholars might find of interest, so the soundest procedure is to try to cover all appropriate topics. This approach, in the case of Jewel Plummer Cobb, seemed to rule out an interview design in which her experiences as a black person and a women were the sole or even necessarily the dominant consideration. The result is an interview which should be of as much interest to future students of cell physiology or higher education administration as of African American history or women's studies.

Even the most carefully designed oral interviews fall under suspicion of the fallability of human memory compromising the validity of the information and impressions they communicate. Users of this interview should keep several considerations in mind on this issue. Oral recollections often will be selective and self-serving, but so are many printed sources of information, especially those of an autobiographical nature. Telephones and electronic record-keeping have made paper documents an even less certain source of information, particularly on questions of motive and attitude. Thirdly, an oral interview "like any other source must be correlated with more conventional documentation."<sup>1</sup> Finally, in determining the usefulness of an interview one must be aware of the conditions under which the information was recorded. For this a brief interview history is needed.

The project initially planned four separate interviews; it ended up with seven sessions, running from March 27 to July 2, 1990. All of these were held at the official CSUF president's home in Fullerton. None were longer than two hours, and at no time did either the interviewee or interviewer seem tired or unable to concentrate on the topics. In all sessions both parties were at ease, but some questions elicited strong responses. This was particularly true of those dealing with academic governance. I am a member of the history department, and so were several faculty who were often critical of President Cobb. Two specific issues that led to somewhat argumentative extrapolations were athletics at CSUF and Dr. Cobb's view that the CSUF faculty's role in governance extended to "micromanagement." The discussion of these and many other issues of higher education was carried out with the awareness that Dr. Cobb's race and sex might have been important factors in shaping her experiences and attitudes. When I felt this might be the case, I raised these considerations; at other times she initiated them. Finally, while I came to each session with a detailed outline of topics I hoped to cover, she was free to raise others, and did, so both parties have shared in the structure of these interviews.

For an oral history to be a useful addition to an archive, both the interviewer and interviewee should be well prepared. As noted above, I was already quite familiar with developments in

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Hand, "Some Words on Oral Histories," in David E. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum, eds., Oral History (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), 55.

higher education, especially in California. I am also a scholar of modern African-American history. I supplemented this background with limited research into the unfamiliar area of cell physiology and further review of developments at CSUF during Cobb's tenure. More extensive research was precluded by a full academic load plus outside professional and scholarly commitments and by the tight time schedule. Dr. Cobb greatly facilitated my preparation by providing an extensive vita, written observations on her early life, and several articles.

However, some might wonder how well prepared a white male could be to record the life of an African-American female. Many feminist historians have contended that women's lives are and were quite different from men's, suggesting that they are governed by "a special rhythm." Black scholars have similarly noted an increasing "consciousness" of the distinctiveness of their history.<sup>1</sup> Does it follow that only a woman could inquire about such "rhythms" and only a black could sense such "consciousness"? Not necessarily, particularly when the white male is well versed in the black experience and has done research into women's history. Nor does it follow that all women or blacks think of themselves primarily in those terms. Finally, an interviewer who assumed that race or gender was the central experience of the interviewee's life might well have missed many of Dr. Cobb's scientific and educational experiences and produced an oral history which did not have the comprehensive scope expected of an archival interview.

And it is her professional experiences and accomplishments that are the most prominent theme of this oral history. At each major step in her career, she recounts particular details of the discipline or institution she was involved with. Readers will find in her accounts useful insights on cancer cell research, on the history of three women's colleges--Sarah Lawrence, Connecticut College, and Douglass College--as well as of Cal State Fullerton, and on the life of a scientist and educational administrator in general. In most of these offices, Jewel Plummer Cobb was a pioneer. Sometimes she was the first black, other times the first woman, often the first black woman to hold such positions. She could also not help but reflect upon her times. She grew up in a period in which discrimination and racist attitudes were an omnipresent reality for blacks. She assumed her positions of educational leadership during the Civil Rights, Black Power and feminist movements. Both these pioneer roles and those times repeatedly called for comment on her experiences and thoughts as a black person and as a woman, and those reflections are a second major theme of this interview. Finally, readers will find a message of success within the system that is at odds with some of the current interpretations of the history of black Americans.

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<sup>1</sup> Sherna Gluck, "What's So Special About Women? Women's Oral History," in Dunaway & Baum, eds., Oral History, 222; Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Coming of Age: The Transformation of Afro-American Historiography," Journal of Negro History 62 (Summer 1982):109.

Though she will recount occasional injustices, primarily Jewel Plummer Cobb's story is one of a black woman steadily rising by virtue of her own efforts to positions that few of her race and gender had held. This message is not overtly delivered, but one cannot help but sense it in this chronicle.

Archival oral histories often have another distinguishing feature from many interviews done for individual research: the extent to which they are transcribed and processed for the convenience of future users. This oral history has run the gamut of recommended steps. It was transcribed, and then the transcript was audit-edited, i.e., read by the interviewer simultaneously with listening to the original tape. This step corrected mechanical errors, false information, and awkward wording and called attention to passages in which thoughts were unfinished or unclear. A corrected copy was sent to the narrator for her review, which included the opportunity to add and delete from the transcript. Such changes have not been distinguished from the original text, but these were done with restraint, so the final version is similar to the original transcript. The narrator's changes were encoded, and the final version was subject to two proof-readings. Finally, this introduction and both a discursive table of contents and an index were added to facilitate readers. The original tape, transcript, and edited changes have been deposited in the Oral History Program archive at California State University, Fullerton. Bound copies of the final draft are on deposit at that location, in the CSUF University Archives, and at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

While legally an oral history is the product of just two individuals, the interviewer and the interviewee, in practice it represents the work of several others as well. Gaye Kouyoumjian was responsible for all transcribing, encoding of changes, printing of the final draft, and making the index. During all of these processes she also performed invaluable editing. The CSUF Public Affairs Office as well as Dr. Cobb furnished the photographs. The President's Associates at CSUF provided the funding, and Norma Morris, executive assistant to the president, handled arrangements. At several moments of crisis, Kathy Frazee of the Oral History Program was a welcome source of assistance. The cover embossing and binding were done by Professor Gary Shumway. To all of these must go credit for transforming a series of oral recollections into this final publication.

Lawrence B. de Graaf

May 1991



## BIOGRAPHY

Born to Carriebel and Frank Plummer	1924
Graduated from Englewood High School, Chicago	1941
B.A., Biology, Talladega College, Alabama	1944
M.S., Cell Physiology, New York University	1947
Ph.D., Cell Physiology, New York University	1950
Post-doctorate Fellow, National Cancer Institute, Harlem Hospital and Columbia University	1950-1952
Instructor, Anatomy Department, University of Illinois College of Medicine	1952-1954
Married Roy R. Cobb	1954
Son, Roy Jonathan Cobb, born	1955
Instructor/Assistant Professor, Research Surgery, New York University	1955-1960
Professor of Biology, Sarah Lawrence College	1960-1969
Dean of Connecticut College	1969-1976
Charter Member, Committee for Minority Involvement in Higher Education	1971-1976
Board of Directors, American Council on Education	1973-1976
Member, National Science Board	1974-1980
Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences	1974-
Dean of Douglass College, Rutgers University	1976-1981
Advisory Board, <u>Signs</u> , Journal of Women in Culture and Society	1978-1986
President of California State University, Fullerton	1981-1990





CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: JEWEL PLUMMER COBB

INTERVIEWER: Lawrence B. de Graaf

DATE: March 27, 1990

(Tape 1, Side A)

de GRAAF: This is an interview with Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb, President of California State University, Fullerton. It is taking place in Dr. Cobb's home at El Dorado Estate in Fullerton on March 27, 1990. The interviewer is Dr. Lawrence de Graaf of Cal State Fullerton.

Jewel, a good place to begin any interview is with your family background. Now I understand, as was very typical of Afro-Americans, that your parents go back to slavery.

COBB: Right, that's correct.

de GRAAF: Which family? On both sides?

COBB: Well, I don't know too much about my mother's side of the family because she was raised in New York City. While her mother was living, her father died, I guess a few years after they came to New York. I have a picture of them upstairs, a family picture with the four children--five children. My mother was the youngest of three daughters, and the eldest was a son who was a very famous composer.

de GRAAF: Oh?

COBB: Yes. He was a composer by the name of Bob Cole who, really, together with his partner, Billy Johnson, and then James Roseman and James Weldon Johnson, produced the first black musicals, which traveled in the United States as well as in Germany and England around the turn of the century. I have extensive information about him and I have a number of his manuscripts, some of which are at the Schomburg Collection in New York City.



de GRAAF: Was he alive when you were . . .

COBB: No, he died in 1911.

de GRAAF: Okay.

COBB: But, anyway, he was my mother's brother. My mother came from Athens, Georgia, and that was a very active and a very interesting town during those days. There were something like thirteen churches in Athens, and they thrived. It was a large black community in Athens, and there was a college there. This was in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s.

On my father's side, I have extensive documentation to the eighteenth century from a diary that my great-grandfather kept. And my grand-aunt, because my grandfather was a twin, wrote a book in 1927 called The Triumph of the Cross or The Sin of Slavery, in which she documents a number of things that happened on the plantation just outside of Washington, D.C.

de GRAAF: What was her name?

COBB: Her name was Nellie Arnold Plummer.

de GRAAF: Nellie Arnold Plummer, yes.

COBB: She was a spinster schoolteacher and took her savings in the 1920s to write and publish this book, which is in the Library of Congress. I have a copy, one of the two or three known copies that exist, and my goal when I retire is to write that book up in another kind of way with some chapter beginnings, as the grand-niece of a slave.

de GRAAF: Interesting, yes.

COBB: That's the plan I have, one of my projects.

de GRAAF: I understand you had a grandfather who was born a slave but managed to get through a doctorate program in pharmacy, I believe. Was it at Howard University?

COBB: Well, yes. My grand-aunt Nellie, who wrote the book, and my grandfather were born in 1860 in Bladensburg, Maryland, which was just outside of Washington, D.C., and that was the plantation owned

by the Plummer family. Their names, of course, were given to them.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: He went to pharmacy school at Howard University, and he graduated in 1898. I'm not sure that at that particular time it was equivalent to what we call our doctorates now, you know. Physicians were not, also.

de GRAAF: Right.

COBB: Doctors were prepared, I guess, out of high school to be doctors with four years.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: At any rate, he was a pharmacist, practiced pharmacy. He had a drugstore--interestingly enough, one in Mississippi. My father tells this story as to why he would not come to my graduation, which was in Alabama. And he wouldn't come to the graduation because he said he was never coming south. "And why?" I asked. The reason was that his mother and father, the father who had the pharmacy, had a little drugstore in Mississippi. And one day, apparently, a little white boy came in to buy a cigarette. In those days, you bought cigarettes one at a time.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: My grandfather said he would not sell him a cigarette, he was too young to have a cigarette. And, apparently, the little boy went home and told his parents that this man had treated him badly or something, and so at night they set the place on fire. They were living in the back of the store and they really escaped with nothing but their buggy and had to move. This was about 1900 or something. They moved to Ithaca, New York, although he had been living in Washington, D.C. And my father went to Cornell University, graduated from Cornell in 1908.

de GRAAF: Yes. He went into medicine also?

COBB: My father went to medical school, yes. He began in Washington at Howard University. And then, after

his second year--I think it was his second year--he transferred to Dr. Benjamin Rush Medical School in Chicago. But between those times, he also went to the army, World War One, and he served as a medic in the army. I have his little brass microscope. It's a field microscope. It folds up in a little piece like this. I gave it to my son when he was in grade school to look at things and play with, which may be why he's been interested in biology (chuckles) and ended up being a doctor also. At any rate, my father transferred from Howard to Rush Medical School and graduated from there in 1923. I have his little graduation program. There were twenty-three of them in the class.

de GRAAF: Oh, my, yes.

COBB: Then he had a post-doctorate fellowship in dermatology at the University of Chicago and then stayed in Chicago to practice medicine. I was born in 1924. My mother had been a schoolteacher in Washington when she met my father, who was in medical school. She had been to Sargeant's, which is a physical education school at that time associated with Harvard. She had been there for, I guess, a year, maybe two. She never graduated from there, although she did get her bachelor's degree the same year I did, when she was fifty, in Chicago, from Roosevelt College.

de GRAAF: Interesting. Besides your grandfather, followed by your father, were any other of your family involved in science or medicine that you know of?

COBB: No. My father had two sisters, Aunt Bea and Aunt Lucille. They never received the same kind of education that my father did. In my mother's family, her sister Dora Norman was a schoolteacher in Staten Island. And the other two sisters, I gather, died because I never heard much about them. And, of course, the brother was a composer. He died in 1911.

de GRAAF: Okay, one other question before we get out of your background. As was quite common of Afro-Americans of long lineage in the United States, there was at some point in time intermarriage with non-Afro-Americans. As far as you know, was this ever the case with your family?

COBB: Well, my Aunt Nellie, in this documentation of her family tree back to the 1700s . . . Well, Cupid Plummer fought in the Revolutionary War for his master. You know that was done.

de GRAAF: Yes, right.

COBB: He apparently married an indentured servant from Ireland. There is another marriage like that in the family, but directly that was true for my . . . that must be my great-great-grandmother, I suppose. My Aunt Nellie had gray eyes and was relatively fair in complexion, as was my grandfather. On my mother's side, my mother's father was part Seminole Indian, because they were from Georgia. In Georgia the Seminole Indians and the slaves were good friends during the early years, and there was a lot of intermarriage, apparently. My grandmother on my mother's side, I think, you'd say she was a mulatto. In fact, I'm sure you would. She had blond hair, which she sat on--it was that long. And there's a picture of her upstairs, as well. So that is part of that marriage of my great-grandmother.

de GRAAF: Now, you were born in 1924. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

COBB: No, I only had me. My mother had a slight complication after I was born. She had phlebitis, which is blockage of the lymph nodes, I guess. So she says the doctor suggested she not have any more children.

de GRAAF: Okay. Now, where in Chicago did you live as a child?

COBB: Well, we lived in an apartment. I remember that we moved a lot. Father did not believe in buying a house because, he said, the neighborhoods change too much. In Chicago, when the black folks moved into a neighborhood, it was only after the white folks had moved out. It was, therefore, a changing neighborhood, which meant that it was going down in real estate value. Otherwise, they would never have let blacks live there.

So the first house I remember we lived in was on Loomis Boulevard. I must have been very small. Then I remember we moved to another place on Prairie. I know we were living on Prairie, it

seems to me, when Prohibition ended, because I remember the horns blowing and celebrations in 1933. Then I remember we moved from there to 5940 South Parkway, and we lived there during the Depression. The years of the Depression were when?

de GRAAF: Well, roughly from 1930 until about 1940.

COBB: Because I remember my mother was teaching school and was paid with certificates.

de GRAAF: That was very common.

COBB: And I also remember that we had a baby grand piano in the thirties, and they came and took it away because we couldn't keep the payments up. My father was dependent upon the money paid to him by his patients. They hadn't paid, couldn't pay, after a certain period. So we moved from an apartment, I remember, a two-bedroom apartment, to a small one and one-half room kind of kitchenette that was a friend's--it was in the back part of a big apartment that friends of ours owned--to condense ourselves. I don't remember how long we lived there, not too long, maybe a couple of years. I just have vague recollections of that.

Then we moved to 6816 Champlain into an apartment that was sort of out of but still in the city, in Woodlawn. I remember that apartment because it was left very dirty, and I remember that my mother and I had to clean it up, get rid of the cockroaches, bed bugs, and a whole lot of stuff. Anyway, we got that apartment together and we lived there for quite awhile.

We moved from there to 6029 Eberhart Avenue, where we lived about fourteen years. All through high school, we lived there; we lived there until my father died. That apartment was not too far from the University of Chicago, about six or seven blocks. I could have walked to school. But I was not going to go to the University of Chicago, because I was not going to walk to college. It was very important for me to go away to school.

Every summer from the time I was fifteen until college, we went to a summer resort, Idylwild, in northern Michigan, in the northern woods, on a beautiful lake that was a summer resort for black families, and many people owned their homes around the lake. Families with their youngsters came from Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Detroit, lots of

people from Michigan--Lansing, Flint--and this was really a black middle class resort. They enjoyed that particular area because it was up where they could buy houses, summer houses.

de GRAAF: Did your parents ever buy a summer house there?

COBB: No, we never bought a summer house. My father never was really interested in buying anything permanent. He used to say that he would like to have a summer place, he'd like to build a log cabin. He thought that was a neat idea for a summer vacation house, a log cabin, but he never did.

And because I had so many friends who were in Michigan and from Detroit, I decided I wanted to go to the University of Michigan. It was one of the Big Ten schools, and we used to listen to football games on weekends at home, and my father would always talk about Michigan. Illinois never appealed to me as much because I knew so many people from Michigan. I just really wanted to go to Michigan. I also had a crush on a boy who was from Detroit. It was a one-sided crush; I mean, it was not reciprocated, but that was very important. Plus, as I said, I had a lot of good friends. So anyway, I went to Michigan from February 1941 to June 1942.

de GRAAF: We'll get to your college education in a while. I want to dwell on your earlier times. But that's interesting. I wondered how you got the Michigan connection. Now, one final thing about your various locations in Chicago, did these tend to be sort of on the fringe of the black area or did you live at times right in the heart of what came to be known as the Black Belt or black section of Chicago?

COBB: Well, we always lived in what was called a changing neighborhood--that is, a neighborhood that had been recently vacated by white folks. And we knew also that following our leaving, it would be occupied by Mexicans.

de GRAAF: Oh?

COBB: Because there was a large black population, called Negro then, migrating up the Mississippi River Valley to Chicago. You see, the stockyards

determined the pattern of jobs during the First World War. The unskilled labor pool from Europe dried up in wartime because they could not come across the ocean in boats and so forth. So the word got around that they needed workers in the stockyards in Chicago. Hence, a large migration up from the Mississippi Delta region to Chicago to work in the stockyards. That was a tremendous growth. Thousands and thousands of black folks came north to Chicago specifically for that reason. There's a book about this called Chicago, written by a sociologist who describes all this. But anyway, with this movement or migration northward also came the black professionals to service them, the doctors and the lawyers and the ministers. And so my father was, of course, one of the doctors that served this newly migrated labor pool coming to work in the stockyards.

de GRAAF: Was his clientele exclusively black then?

COBB: Yes, no whites at all. He was a very close personal and social friend of the druggist who had the drugstore just under his office. And when he first started practicing he shared an office with a dentist, a Dr. Charles Machen, and their office was at the streetcar transfer spot going to the stockyards. It was at Fifty-ninth and State Street. People coming on streetcars and whatnot had to transfer there to get to the streetcar going west to the stockyards. So you could get off the streetcar and go to the doctor's office and see the doctor without paying an extra fare. In those days, hardly anybody had a car. My father had a little car, of course, but in general, people didn't have cars. So it was always a good transfer spot. This Dr. Greenberg was the pharmacist who owned the drugstore under his office, and he remained close with him for years. In fact, I talked to his son a year or two ago. He is a biochemist working in Chicago.

de GRAAF: Okay now, you went to school in Chicago to one or several elementary schools.

COBB: Right. That was coinciding with the fact that we moved several times. In terms of apartments, the apartments and schools were associated with a given school district.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: And that brings me to a very important point. There is a book called Up From Equality or Down From Equality. I have it upstairs. It's a book written by a professor at Eastern State Michigan who tracked the school district history in the Chicago public schools from 1922 to 1941.

de GRAAF: Really?

COBB: And the essence of it is the following: When I first lived at 5940 South Parkway, I went to Sexton Grammar School. I'm not sure exactly, I must have been eight or nine years old because I'd been to kindergarten at Carter Grammar School when we lived on Prairie Avenue, and then transferred to Sexton. And then I was transferred out of Sexton. Well, the reason I was transferred was that the board of education changed the school district, and I had to go to Betsy Ross Grammar School, which was overcrowded. I remember that my class was held in a portable building with a pot-bellied stove.

Well, not until I read this book did I understand why. The Sexton School was in a changing neighborhood, just on the edge of where we were living, but the parents of the area around there were white, and they objected to having black children in the classroom with their children. So they prevailed upon the board of education to rezone, a move that, in fact, left Sexton School half empty. And then they arranged with the local community college to have the community college come in and use the classrooms of Sexton, rather than having black kids there. So this was a gerrymandering arrangement. I was then shunted over to Betsy Ross, as I mentioned, in an overcrowded situation, and I went to school there for maybe second, third through fifth or sixth grade. I remember skipping 5A or 5B, I can't remember which. One of those grades I skipped. And I stayed in Betsy Ross until we moved to Woodlawn for the seventh grade, then I transferred to McCosh Grammar School. Because I had skipped a semester back in grammar school, I graduated in February rather than in June, six months early, and went from that. We had eighth grade.

de GRAAF: Then high school, yes.



- COBB: Then I went to a high school that was also overcrowded, and that was Englewood High School, and we had double shifts. I began at a quarter of twelve in the morning and ended at five-thirty or something.
- de GRAAF: Were these schools that you went into after you were transferred out of Sexton predominantly black schools, all of them?
- COBB: Yes, essentially, almost all black, as I remember.
- de GRAAF: And how about the teachers? Were they also predominantly black?
- COBB: All white.
- de GRAAF: All white?
- COBB: All white. Very few black teachers I've ever had in school, very rarely, all because there was another problem in Chicago. In order to teach, you had to go to Chicago Teachers College. And in order to get into Chicago Teachers College, you had to pass an entrance admissions test. I remember talking about that extensively when I was in high school, because several of my classmates wanted to go there. I never wanted to go there, because I never wanted particularly to be a teacher or to stay home. But only one or two people that I knew--friends of mine that were black--ever got to go to CTC, as we called it, which was Chicago Teachers College. An entrance exam was required.
- de GRAAF: One couldn't have a degree from some other place and get a teaching job?
- COBB: No, no, this was high school. In order to teach high school in Chicago, you had to have your certificate. And as far as I understand--I don't know what it is like now--but then you had to be a product of the Chicago Teachers College or the two or three other teachers' colleges. But I don't know. I never heard of anybody--and that's not to say it didn't happen--graduating from some other college and coming in and getting certified or anything. I never even heard of that. I'm sure it must have happened, certainly, in these days. So as I said, I never had a black teacher during all my years in grammar school or in high school. I

must say though, in correcting that, I remember having an art teacher as a substitute at McCosh in Chicago, a Mrs. Margaret Burroughs. She came to teach art, and I remember her very well because it was a unique arrangement. She had us sketch somebody sitting in a chair. Our class had never had anything like that. I thought it was very exciting. I actually persuaded my parents to let me go to the Art Institute in Chicago to Saturday morning children's classes. I did that for a couple of years, and then she decided to stop. Either we didn't have enough money or I wasn't talented enough or I didn't insist or whatever.

But I do know that some of my girlfriends' parents taught grade school in Chicago during the time I was in school, but I didn't have them myself. There was a black high school, Wendell Phillips, that had a black principal. She was, in fact, the only black principal in Chicago. Maudell Bousfield, her name was, and she was principal of Wendell Phillips High School, which was in a black district in another part of town, which was not where we were living. It was a poorer section of town. Our high school was 60 percent white and about 40 percent black in the forties.

de GRAAF: What, if any, impact do you recall from having all these entirely white teachers? For one thing, did they treat you well, or did you feel at times they were demeaning toward you?

COBB: No. I had good experiences with the teachers. I was associate editor of the yearbook, I was very active. I ran for a student office, but I never won. I was in the honor society, and so were a couple of my best friends. There was one black girl on the school newspaper. We all said that Miss Zander never had any black kids on the school newspaper staff, whether it was true or not. On the yearbook, there were several of us black students who were in the top of the class. I was in an advanced class in several different subjects in high school. We didn't have advanced placement. We didn't have SATs [Scholastic Aptitude Tests] in those days.

de GRAAF: Right.

COBB: I did have one very awful teacher, but I can't say it had anything to do with whether I was black or not.

de GRAAF: Just bad teaching, yes.

COBB: She was awful. I made the mistake, though, of asking her the first day of class what did I have to do to get an E, which is equivalent to an A.

de GRAAF: Oh!

COBB: And that really turned her off.

de GRAAF: (Chuckles) Really turned her off, yes.

(Tape 1, Side B)

de GRAAF: What were relations between black and white students in high school?

COBB: Blacks and whites stayed apart outside of high school. But we were good friends in school. You never went to visit any other friends who were white.

de GRAAF: Was that just a general understanding?

COBB: I guess. We never talked about it. But I had one friend who lived a block away from school, Carol Nelson, and we were really good friends.

de GRAAF: She was a white friend?

COBB: Yes, a white friend. It never occurred to me to have her come to my house, and she never invited me to her house.

I belonged to the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], and there was a club, the Girl Reserves Club, that was very active and it was at the black YWCA. You see, the YWCAs were segregated.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: I learned how to swim at the black YMCA which had a pool. It was quite a distance from our house, but our parents used to car pool and take us to the Y so we could learn how to swim. So I did learn to swim, had to pass the Swimmer's test, after the

Beginners, of the Red Cross. It was in this segregated YWCA pool. When we graduated from high school, we had two separate high school proms because black students were not allowed to go to the hotels in Chicago, and thus to a prom anywhere. Even if we wanted to, we wouldn't have been admitted or served. So we had senior graduation proms merging all the black students from high schools. Well, there were two high schools that were essentially black. My high school, as I said, was mixed.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: There were two other high schools where there was a scattering of black kids, some of whom used false addresses to go to them because they were thought to be better than Englewood was. I was in Englewood, and it was fine. And, you know, I went to the University of Michigan and had no problems getting admitted and any of that. But we had a strictly separate social life. When I went to the YWCA on Friday afternoons--about seven or eight of us--we'd walk about twenty, twenty-five blocks to the Y, to our gadabout Girl Reserves meeting. We had a great time. Then we'd walk home twenty more blocks, and thought nothing of it in those days.

de GRAAF: In the winter as well as in the summer?

COBB: Oh, yes, all the time. It was just sort of what you did with your friends. And we'd get a hot dog along the way or an ice cream along the way. By the time we'd get home, it would be dark. But it was a nice experience; I remember very fondly that experience.

de GRAAF: What was the essence of this Girl Reserves? Was it a character building organization?

COBB: Yes. Girl Reserves is the high school teenage clubs for the YWCAs. They still exist.

de GRAAF: Oh, I see.

COBB: I'm still active in the YWCA because of those nice experiences. My cousin was a resident manager of a YWCA in Chicago at one time, and was transferred from the one in New York City. So I've had YWCA in my life almost all my life. The Girl Reserves was

a kind of a teenage fun club. And I remember--what was it--"Gracious in manners, Impartial in judgment, Reverent to God, Loyal to friends, et cetera." It was character building. It also taught you how to work with other girls in clubs and to manage, how to keep secretarial notes and how to plan parties. We had a party maybe twice a year a year. Mrs. Alpha White was the advisor.

de GRAAF: Did black children from all walks of life get into this? Or was it predominantly a middle class black experience?

COBB: I would say it was predominantly middle class, girls with parents like mine. A lot of parents in those days worked in the post office, and some were teachers, some were doctors, some were lawyers, some were in businesses of various sorts.

de GRAAF: Now you've commented on some of the social restrictions that you had to put up with in Chicago.

COBB: You couldn't go downtown to eat in a restaurant.

de GRAAF: Oh, I was going to ask you that. Was this an ordinance or was this just a general understanding?

COBB: No, it was law.

de GRAAF: A law?

COBB: Well, you know, not until the United States Supreme Court decision having to do with desegregation of everything [Brown v. Board of Education, 1954]--not schools, but way before that, there was another law before that about eating in restaurants, riding on buses and that sort of thing in the United States. And in Chicago there were restaurants that were very reluctant to change. But I remember my girlfriend's father was a lawyer and another friend who was an activist. This was Carl Hansberry, Sr. You may have heard of Lorraine Hansberry. She wrote A Raisin in the Sun.

de GRAAF: Oh, yes, A Raisin in the Sun.

COBB: That's a true story. That's about moving into a white neighborhood, which they did regularly.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: Anyway, they used to go to restaurants in Chicago and they would be told to sit in the back, and then they would sue. Others were told they didn't have any more room, and you could see they had room. And they would sue and win the cases regularly, and give the money to the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People].

de GRAAF: But it took a while for this to trickle down to the black population in general.

COBB: Oh, yes, yes. We just never went . . . Toward the end, you know, we used to go to the store or something. Well, in my neighborhood by my high school, we ate in a local drugstore because it was the neighborhood drugstore; everybody ate there. But downtown in the shopping center and the big restaurants, we never went to any of those.

de GRAAF: How adequate was the black community, as far as retail stores, restaurants, and so forth?

COBB: There was one retail store, I remember, and there were a couple of dress shops, but we never shopped in them particularly. There were several good restaurants, but in those days I didn't go to restaurants. I was in high school, and we didn't have any money.

de GRAAF: Did you ever feel or ever hear the word used, that blacks were living in a ghetto?

COBB: Oh, yes. We knew that very well. My mother had an extensive library about Negroes, as they were called, very extensive, well documented. We subscribed to all of the local newspapers and magazines, such as The Crisis. And, in fact, they were active in all kinds of black organizations that were on the cutting edge of these changes.

de GRAAF: Did they belong to the NAACP?

COBB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, and the Urban League. Those people were social good friends of ours, indeed.

de GRAAF: So you were exposed to that sort of . . .

COBB: Oh, we had an extensive library of black literature. Many times I wrote stories, essays and detailed information in high school on black poets and black writers. I was well versed in all the black cultural aspects. And, of course, art--very important--and I remember many times going to see Paul Robeson sing. He had lived down the street from my mother as a child in Harlem, and she knew the Robeson family in Chicago, so they were good friends. I remember Paul Robeson was so tall. He remarked to me one day when I saw him at the concert. He said, "You know, your aunt was very important and instrumental in helping me get on the stage." I remember him saying that to me. I was quite young, a teenager at the time. We went to concerts all the time. There was a very active black cultural life in Chicago because it was a big enough city to support a large group of black professionals who were involved in the arts.

de GRAAF: What would you say was the impact of all of this, when you were growing up, on your aspirations and objectives?

COBB: Well, I knew that I had a very rich culture and a very rich background. And I knew, of course, about my uncle being a composer who, with his two colleagues, composed over 160 songs. We got royalties regularly from the publishers of these, and I knew that they existed. I also knew about my father having graduated from Cornell and gone on to medical school and the very active civic life my mother was involved in. She was on the citizens' committee that used to evaluate films, whether they were called P, PG or R. That was something they did in Chicago. She'd been involved in that and a number of other things. So I was always much aware of what was going on culturally. And scientifically, it was because of my father, who was a physician. He was on the staff of the local hospital, and we used to talk about science over the dinner table in the evening. He would come home around five o'clock or so to dinner, and then he would go back to the office in the evening, because that's when his patients got out of work.

de GRAAF: I see.

COBB: Nowadays you can't get a doctor or do anything after five o'clock, can you? Nor can you ever get

them to make a house call. In those days, he had a little black bag, and he used to make house calls. And one of the reasons he never encouraged me to go to medical school, he said, is because it's a hard life, climbing up some of those tenement stairs, trying to take care of patients in the middle of the night. That was the image he had and that was the way it was in those days.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: We never had this kind of gentleman's medicine that we have nowadays, nor did women ever work in clinics or other kinds of hospital set-ups where they might have been in danger.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: So perhaps in later years I might have been a doctor, although I don't regret going into biology and doing theoretical work.

de GRAAF: So your father did not particularly encourage you to go into medicine?

COBB: Correct. He did not encourage me to go into medicine as a doctor, because of the hardships associated with it as a life-style.

(tape is turned off)

de GRAAF: Okay, back to our look at your life. One thing I'd be curious of, you've mentioned some of the difficulties your father particularly had during the Great Depression because of limited income. Were either of your parents ever on relief?

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: I know that was common with some physicians in the Los Angeles area during the Depression.

COBB: Did they have relief?

de GRAAF: Oh, yes, the Works Progress Administration in L.A. For instance, a section within the black community was headed by Dr. John Somerville, a prominent dentist in L.A.

COBB: Oh.



- de GRAAF: Anyway, as you made these trips to the Y and so forth, did you observe how the Depression was having serious effects on the black neighborhoods you went through?
- COBB: No, I can't say that I noticed any difference.
- de GRAAF: How about in school? Was there much talk about unemployment relief or other hardships?
- COBB: In the thirties and forties?
- de GRAAF: Yes.
- COBB: No, not that I recall. Not that I recall. I'm just trying to think. In 1940 I would be in high school. No, I don't remember any specific conversations.
- de GRAAF: Now, you family had rich civic associations. How about church? Was that a significant part of your life?
- COBB: No. My father refused to go to church. He'd been to church twice on Sundays his whole life growing up, because of the strong church affiliation in Maryland where he grew up on his father's farm, which was given to them when slavery ended, by the way. They gave my grandfather twenty-five acres at the end of slavery, and that's where he grew up. And the Bladensburg Baptist Church--the Hyattsville Baptist Church--was the church. And it's written up extensively in this book called Triumph of the Cross that my Aunt Nellie wrote. It is heavily laced with what the Sunday school people said or what the hymns were and all that kind of thing. But we did not attend. My father came to the church when he was giving me away at my wedding. My mother went fairly regularly to the Episcopal church, and I was confirmed an Episcopalian when I was eleven. And I sang in the choir all through high school. It was a very big social life, too. The acolytes were always very handsome, and we all had crushes on them. They had parties at the church, and we were involved. It was my center of social life.
- de GRAAF: I see, okay. Now the Episcopal church was a church essentially for middle class blacks, wasn't it?

COBB: Yes. The minister was black. The whole church was black. The whole congregation was black.

de GRAAF: The whole church was, yes. Finally, were either of your parents or you ever involved outside of the college campus in lodges or sororal organizations in the community? I know sometimes they are big things with black families.

COBB: Well, my father was a member of a fraternity, which has branches nationally, Alpha Phi Alpha. We don't have an Alpha chapter at Cal State Fullerton. We have two other black fraternities, but not that one. He was very active in the Alphas. He was in the first group of initiates back in 1907 and remained active with them literally every week. Every Wednesday evening he would go to the Alpha house for meetings, and they played billiards; he would stay there overnight, actually. That was something that I found very interesting. It was understood; on Wednesday nights, that's where he was. And I assume that's where he was. Who knows? (chuckling) Mother seemed content with whatever it was. And when he died, the fraternity, the young college men of the undergraduate chapter, gave the eulogy at the funeral, and the hearse passed by the fraternity house, made a special route to pass by the fraternity house on the way to the cemetery. The tombstone was given by the fraternity: "An Alpha Phi Alpha Brother, Frank Victor Plummer."

de GRAAF: I see.

COBB: So he was very active. My mother also joined a sorority and went to those meetings quite a bit. And I joined a sorority in college, although I was never active after that.

de GRAAF: Okay now, let's get to your scientific interests. We've already discussed your family background in this area. Were there any schooling experiences in elementary or high school that particularly reinforced your interest in science?

COBB: Yes. My second year in high school was when I decided that I loved biology because I had a teacher--Miss Hyman was her name--and the things we did in the class were very exciting using the microscope. It was the first time I ever used a microscope, and I found that wonderful to be able

to see things through it that I could not see ordinarily. That was fascinating. And I took five years of science in high school: that is, two years of biology, advanced and general biology for a year, then I took a semester of botany and a semester of zoology, and then, of course, a year of physics and a year of chemistry.

de GRAAF: Did you have any particular career in mind when you were taking these courses?

COBB: No. I thought I would be a physical education teacher because my mother and my aunt had been physical education teachers. I thought that that's what I was going to do.

de GRAAF: Did you enjoy athletics?

COBB: I enjoyed it, but I was never very good at it. I mean, I was never, you know, an athlete, an athletic star, although I did get my top honors, a sapphire pin, when I graduated as a senior because I worked at it very hard, even though I didn't excel. You had to have so many points each semester to get your rungs on the ladder, and you had to have a long chain of things: basketball, I guess, exercise, posture, health, who knows, all those things. But anyway, whatever they were, I did them because I was very determined. Well, I got my athletic letter in high school. I was never really good at it.

The biology evolved slowly as a change in my interests, and I was going to be a high school biology teacher. But because I liked science, I just took the science. I mean, it was just something I liked very much. I wasn't conscious of it in any particular way, except, of course, I knew my father was in science. I used to go to the Field Museum all the time. When I was young, my father took me to the Field Museum Saturday films for children. When I was getting ready to go to college, I had definitely decided I would like biology as a major. That was already determined by that time, so I started taking biology right away.

de GRAAF: Two side notes: First of all, was it somewhat unusual or fairly common for girls of either race to chose biology or science as a major at those times?

COBB: I don't remember being particularly aware of whether there were girls in my high school class in the physics classes or in biology. I just don't remember. I know when I got to college, when I was at Michigan, a girl that I admired very much was in medical school. And she was beautiful. There were two gorgeous girls that I admired, but Maggie Laura Walker was a medical student. She was a senior at Michigan Medical School when I was a freshman. We all lived in the same house, because it was a segregated house. We couldn't live in the dormitories at Michigan; they didn't allow black students. And I remember her because she was outstanding. Her mother had been the first black woman banker in the United States, Maggie Laura Walker, a very famous woman who had a bank in Virginia.

de GRAAF: Now, one other thing that sometimes hangs people up in science these days, and that is the heavy mathematics component. Was that true when you were going through?

COBB: Well, you know, there wasn't much math. I did okay in algebra and geometry in high school. I had one year, but I never took calculus. When I got to college at Talladega, I had to do analytical geometry, and I did. I never took calculus, however, because in those days it wasn't required for science majors. I often think if I had taken calculus early on, I probably would have been okay in it. But I tried to take calculus when I got my doctorate. I enrolled in a calculus course at City College in New York City in the summer. It was a total disaster. I just did not get the hang of it. And I have since then bought a self-paced book, and one of those that I'll maybe do when I retire is to teach myself calculus. I had some problems with algebra conceptually, but earned a good grade. Something wasn't going right. I'm not particularly gifted in math. I can do it when I have to, but it's not one of my favorite subjects.

de GRAAF: Likewise. (laughter) All right, so you go to college and, as you said earlier, because of some of your summer friends, you chose the University of Michigan. Let me ask again an overall question. How common in those days--this would have been the early 1940s--was it for girls to go on to college?

COBB: I guess everybody I knew, girls and boys, was going on to college. There were some girls' clubs--I was in one of them--and they were all going to college. They were mostly going to be teachers, however. That's why they were going to college. My best friend, Mary Ruth Ridley, was accepted at Chicago Normal Teachers College, CTC.

de GRAAF: Oh, yes.

COBB: She went on to become a teacher, and others went down to the University of Illinois in Champaign, and they lived in all-black sorority houses down there. In Ann Arbor at the University of Michigan, there were eighteen or more girls with me in the Smith League House. So it didn't seem to be that unusual, I guess, when I look back at it, for girls to be in college. At Michigan, when I was there in 1941-1942, there were something like 200 black students, a big population. Seventy-five percent of them were from the South, and they were in medical school or law school or theology school or college. Particularly those from the South were there because their states would not allow them to go to their own medical schools or law schools. So they got free tuition to come to Michigan, which was much better than going to the University of Alabama or Mississippi or Virginia, Georgia, or Texas, for example. They had a better deal. There were two I remember well: Maggie Laura Walker, a medical student, and Muriel Logan, a graduate student in music. There were several from Washington, D.C. who were there. Joe Louis's sister, Penny Barrow, was there getting her master's degree. Several undergrad and graduate students from Detroit were there.

de GRAAF: So what you're saying is a large majority of the black students and the University of Michigan were males?

COBB: Yes. Well, yes, among the black students there were eight men to every woman.

de GRAAF: Oh!

COBB: It was the greatest!

de GRAAF: Yes, I can see that.

- COBB: At that time, at the University of Michigan before Pearl Harbor, there were more black men, although among the black community in general there are more women who are college graduates than men nationally.
- de GRAAF: I was going to say I've seen different things on this. I've even seen some literature to the effect that some black families tended to encourage girls to go on to higher education more than they did males.
- COBB: Yes. Do you know why?
- de GRAAF: No.
- COBB: Because they wanted their girls to be kept out of the kitchens so as to avoid being exploited by the white men in the households where they worked. Because rape was something they all had read about during slavery, and the stories lived on.
- de GRAAF: I see.
- COBB: On the other hand, there were other problems that black men had being exposed in the vicinity of white women. Hence, the workplace created problems.
- de GRAAF: Yes.
- COBB: So it was a very complicated situation in thirties and forties. Men, mainly college graduates, became Pullman porters and worked in the post office.
- de GRAAF: Yes.
- COBB: But women were kept out of the kitchen, and that was the idea. And also during the time of post-slavery, teaching was a desirable job. The nation had primarily segregated schools, and they had to have black teachers for them in the South. So that was always a career that they could have, teaching. And women taught. Men rarely were teachers.
- de GRAAF: Yes.
- COBB: Men became principals, or ministers and then became principals, but they rarely were teachers.

- de GRAAF: Was this sex role aspect ever brought up to you, as far as science careers, that science careers in general were for males?
- COBB: No, but I was discouraged about medical schools. I think my father was one of the culprits, in the sense that he didn't think I should be doing that horrid stuff, running up and down the tenement stairs. In those days, doctors made house calls. He always encouraged me in science and fostered whenever possible my plans for it. In the summer of 1948, I went to Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. I was a graduate student, but my parents had to pay my lab fees to keep me there. And they did that willingly. There was never any discussion about my not going on to college and subsequently doing whatever I wanted to do as a career. That may have been because I was an only child, I'm not sure.
- de GRAAF: That could have been. Now, you lasted at the University of Michigan only three semesters. What difficulty did you find there?
- COBB: Social difficulties. I didn't have any problem with schooling there. My first semester, which was the spring of 1941, I took biology, English literature, French, and geography. I didn't particularly do well in French, earning a C or a D. I did really well in my other subjects. And then the second semester, fall 1941, I took genetics, which I liked very much. I took entomology at Michigan, which I really liked, collecting beautiful insects. In December of 1941 there was Pearl Harbor, but my studies continued. I was taking some physical education. I was involved in some things related because I was still considering physical education, and so not quite sure about my choice of career. All those courses were very interesting, and I did fine.
- But I got into trouble with my housemother, because we were caught staying out beyond our appointed hours for curfew. And really, I attribute that directly to the poor social structure for blacks at Michigan. When I went to Michigan, the dean of women wrote a letter to my parents saying, "We are sure that your daughter would love to live at Smith League House." That was a university sanctioned house, a big house with about thirty girls in it. Over half of them were

graduate students, and it was all black, of course. I soon discovered when I got to the campus what the dean's letter meant. They wouldn't let us black women live in the regular dorms. So in that house there were mostly graduate students. We as undergrads would go to parties and have to be home at eleven-thirty or midnight, but the graduate students could stay out. And they would take our boyfriends. So we undergrads were very angry about that, and we used to sneak back out to the parties. Our housemother was in a far wing. Four of us lived on the top floor, sophomores I guess we were then, and one night we all sneaked out. The housemother became suspicious and came upstairs and found that we were not there. So she said, "You'll have to move." Of course, everybody knew that she was half-crazy, but that's another story. So we had to move out of the house.

de GRAAF: Was she a black woman?

COBB: Oh, yes. Everybody in our house was black. So we had to move out of the house to a nonsanctioned rooming house, which was very unsatisfactory. Also, black students could not go to the local beer tavern, Pretzel Bell, where everyone went after football games, because they wouldn't serve blacks. Also, we couldn't go downtown to any of the restaurants or to get a haircut or a beauty parlor or whatever, for the same reason: the shops wouldn't serve us. And the Men's Union Building was off limits to women. Girls could not go in there except on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday nights, if accompanied by a male. That was allowed, but only by the side door.

de GRAAF: Oh, my!

COBB: I am not kidding you. Michigan was sexist and racist.

(Tape 2, Side A)

de Graaf: You were commenting on the discriminations; these were against all girls, regardless of color?

COBB: Oh, yes. I was experiencing double problems: sexism and racism. So I said, "Oh, to heck with this. This is just ridiculous."



de GRAAF: Now, how did you happen to choose Talladega College?

COBB: Well, my best girlfriend was there, and the dean of women at Talladega, Dr. Hilda Davis, had been at the University of Chicago every summer. A number of the faculty at Talladega in Alabama were, in the summer, at the University of Chicago enrolled in courses in various disciplines.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: And so Dean Davis would come over to recruit me and talk with me and my parents and explain that Talladega was on the University of Chicago plan, which meant you took survey courses your first year in humanities, social sciences and the sciences. In the first and second year, you could move as fast or as slow as you wanted in a course. If you were ready to take the exam one week after the course began, you could make an appointment with your faculty and take it. So you could move along as fast or as slow as you wanted to. And that appealed to me because I was anxious to get out. I mean, I was in a hurry--who knows for what, but I was. So I decided I would transfer to Talladega. I had never been south, and so I transferred to Alabama. And everyone says, "You transferred from Michigan?" Usually it's the other way around. You go to an undergraduate school and then you transfer to Michigan.

de GRAAF: Oh, yes.

COBB: Anyway, I did that and I went as a freshman because Talladega accepts no transfer credits. And Buell Gallagher was the president. Do you know who Buell Gallagher was?'

de GRAAF: Oh, yes. That's right, he was president then, wasn't he?

COBB: I remember the day he began. We all met him in the freshman class. He said, "Talladega has been waiting dum, dum, dum years for your arrival," and that was impressive. He was a marvelous speaker and a very special person. So anyway, I began getting

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' Buell Gallagher subsequently became the first chancellor of the California State College system.

the books, notes, and data and syllabi for the first year survey courses in freshman social sciences and humanities, and I studied and read them. And after about twelve week, I asked to take the exams, and so I got that under my belt. And so I finished the first year in a semester or a semester and a half; that is equivalent to the time at Michigan. And I brought myself up to date in what would be my third year, junior year, by the summer of 1943. But I also took an inorganic chemistry course at Central YMCA College (now Roosevelt College) in Chicago. So between taking a couple of summer courses plus accelerating studying and taking the exams, I brought myself up to date, so that by the fall of 1943, it was my senior year. I graduated in three and one-half years from college because of this accelerated plan at Talladega, plus my summer school. So I graduated in 1944 from college. I was twenty at the time.

de GRAAF: Do you feel you got a good basic undergraduate education at Talladega?

COBB: Yes, a very good foundation in psychology, a good biology. I took my biology courses there, and they were very interesting: in bacteriology, comparative anatomy. I got better organic chemistry there than I had inorganic at Central Y College. Actually, Talladega has the highest percentage of graduate students going on for Ph.D.'s of any private black college. It's a very interesting small school. I'm now on the search committee for the new president. But anyway, it was a good school. I was sorry that I transferred, however, when I look back at it. I should never have done so. My father didn't want me to transfer, but my mother and I prevailed. And I could have done without that experience in the South. It was a very bad one.

de GRAAF: Well, that's what I wanted to ask you about.

COBB: Very bad.

de GRAAF: In what respects, Jewel?

COBB: Well, we had known before we got there that the Ku Klux Klan had burned a cross on the campus the year before. I was also involved with a young sociologist, a white family, Professor Peter Rasmussen and his wife. We all drove into

Birmingham, Alabama one day together and meanwhile, we shopped. They had dinner at a segregated restaurant, a black restaurant called Nancy's. And we left the Rasmussens there with a man from Atlanta who was very active in a Southern conference. I'm not sure what its exact title was called then. And when we came back to pick up the professor and his wife, they were gone. They had been arrested and taken to jail for eating in a black restaurant, a violation of the city sanitary code, because the sanitary code stated that blacks and whites, when eating in a public restaurant, must be divided from one another by a six-foot curtain or wall, for sanitation purposes. So they went to jail and we spent two or three hours trying to arrange the bail for them and set up the court hearings. Mrs. Rasmussen had a little baby at home. She had not given the formula to the baby-sitter. We finally got them out of jail on bail, and they had to appear in court the next week. President Buell Gallagher went to court to testify, on their behalf, of course. That was my first real brush with the uncivil aspects of segregation. At a different time, we stayed in a hotel overnight to make a train connection in Birmingham on the way back home to the north after school ended, and we had to stay in a terrible, flea-bitten old hotel, because that's all we as blacks had access to.

Another time, I and a classmate were going in to shop in Birmingham on the bus. The war was going on then, and so we got permission, my girlfriend and I, to go to Birmingham to shop one Saturday. We had to get permission from home to leave the campus because the Southern black colleges were very protective. They're not doing it because they were prudes; it's because they were protective against the social climate, at least in those days. On the way, the bus had a wreck and everybody was banged up, but not too much. I had a bruised knee. Naturally, we were in the back of the bus because that's where we, as blacks, had to sit, which of course galled me because I had been living in Chicago, at least where I didn't have to sit in the back of the bus. I had other things that happened to us in Chicago, like segregated neighborhoods, but I never had overt things happen. So we all got out of the crippled bus on the side of the road and we waited. All the white folks got picked up by passing cars. It was early in the morning, and we were picked up finally by a group of laborers going to work, I think, in

the steel mills. So they picked us up and took us into Birmingham. I walked around with that bad knee all day, and we came back on another bus that night.

And then another time, I was in the drugstore downtown in the little town of Talladega and sat down on the stool at the soda fountain and ordered a chocolate soda. The little waitress said to me, "We don't serve niggers here." That was the first time anybody had ever said that to me in my face, so I was very upset. At another level, the dean told us we couldn't go walking off campus in the woods with our boyfriends or classmates or stroll in the park nearby. By "off," I mean out into the woods. When I think about it afterwards, the rule was established because somebody could take a shot at us. If a farmer didn't like two black folks walking on his property, you know, he could just shoot us. After all, we were trespassing, right?

de GRAAF: Sure, yes.

COBB: So it was intimidating in Alabama in that sense. Socially, it wasn't as good as it should have been in a coed school, either, because the government started drafting students. And so we had fewer men by the time I graduated--it was a small school, only 300 students.

de GRAAF: Oh, only 300 students.

COBB: There were thirty-two of us in the graduating class and only eight men out of the thirty-two, so it was a pretty bare situation.

de GRAAF: Exactly the opposite of what you had had at Michigan.

COBB: At Michigan, yes. So I was really sorry. In hindsight, it was not a good idea. On the other hand, Michigan had its problems. Since I'd been banned from the League House, it wouldn't have been as nice socially.

de GRAAF: Those are very interesting experiences. Were you left with a feeling from Talladega that you would rather not make the South your area of living?

COBB: Oh, yes, I definitely decided that. I was offered a job teaching at Pine Bluff College in Arkansas, at graduation, and I said, "No, I'm going to New York

to go to graduate school." And also, I had never really lived in the South. It was not part of my culture. And to live in the South requires a special mind set. There's a book by Nat Hentoff which states that Southern blacks and Southern whites share much more in common, the way they look at the world, than Southern whites and Northern whites or Southern blacks and Northern blacks. That's essentially it. And I guess that would be true in some ways. There is a culture. It's a different culture, different manners, different ways of looking at it.

de GRAAF: Yes. At least, I think, fifty years ago it was probably quite true.

COBB: Yes, this was written that long ago.

de GRAAF: Now, while you were at Talladega, were you a full-time student or did you have part-time work?

COBB: Few ever worked at Talladega College that I knew of. At Michigan, a few had part-time jobs. There was no place to work in Talladega. It was a little Southern town. When I was at Michigan, my roommate did work for a little while for an elderly lady. She'd go over there and prepare her luncheon and clean up a little bit around the house. But normally it wasn't part of the culture of college kids in those days the way it is now. Nor did they go away to Europe or travel abroad.

de GRAAF: Or have BMWs or Porsches.

COBB: No. No, nobody I knew went away to a foreign country in in the summer to travel. One friend I know did that, but at twenty-four, after college. He went to thirteen countries by himself after he finished at the University of Illinois.

de GRAAF: At Talladega did you recall any, what we might say, legacies of the Booker T. Washington approach to education, that it should be character building and so forth, as well as teaching new disciplines?

COBB: No, Booker T. was interested in trades, vocational trades, as a part of your experience. You should learn a trade while you went to school.

(interruption)

de GRAAF: But you didn't find this vocational [emphasis], or what Washington calls in his autobiography "the gospel of the toothbrush," was true at Talladega?

COBB: No. Talladega, in fact, identified with [W. E. B.] Du Bois. In fact, Du Bois was our graduation speaker.

de GRAAF: Oh, very interesting.

COBB: No, it was very much an elitist, bachelor of arts, liberal arts college, in the New England style of the liberal arts. It had no vocational courses whatsoever. About ten years ago, someone wanted to introduce some business courses as undergraduate courses at Talladega and the alumni rose up in arms. "No, no, no, no!" Well, you know the traditional Ivy League colleges have no business courses, no professional courses at all.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: For example, it's like Pomona and the Scripps Colleges. That's the same curriculum.

de GRAAF: Yes. What about student, for lack of a better word, student rights and status vis-à-vis faculty? Was it, by modern standards, rather autocratic?

COBB: Autocratic, definitely autocratic and paternalistic.

de GRAAF: And now, how about women students particularly? Was there a unique dress code or were they strict there?

COBB: Yes, there was a very strict dress code. We had to wear stockings and regular dress shoes to dinner. You could wear your saddles and your socks to lunch, but you must have dressed a certain way. Appropriate dress was very important.

de GRAAF: Did you perceive that women had more restrictions, as far as hours and so forth, than male students did?

COBB: Yes. Oh, yes, definitely, definitely, very definitely. And we had strong "parental" rules. You had to write away if you wanted to go to Tuskegee Institute, two hours away. The black cadets were there. During the war, you had to get special permission to go to Tuskegee. The dean of

women had to know who you were going to stay with when you were there, things of that sort.

de GRAAF: Oh, yes. Finally, this may have been unlikely, but did you happen to observe the faculty role, as far as university governance and so forth was concerned at Talladega? I say this because, just from reading and personal observation, black colleges do not seem to have been as advanced, if you want to use that word, as white colleges in granting faculty a role in governance.

COBB: That's true. The president was quite autocratic, and faculty were passive.

de GRAAF: Okay. So you majored in biology at Talladega?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Were you still, while you were there, somewhat ambivalent between a possible teaching career and going on to be a research scientist?

COBB: Oh, I was going to be a teacher, a biology teacher. All the way through, even to go to graduate school. I was going to graduate school so I could teach high school biology.

de GRAAF: So did you take a mix of education and biology courses?

COBB: Yes, I had thirty hours of undergraduate education courses before I graduated from college. It was my minor, if you will. And I did some practice teaching down there. Then I went to NYU [New York University] Graduate School of Arts and Sciences with the idea of getting my high school teaching certification.

de GRAAF: And that was in the fall of 1944, right?

COBB: Yes, right.

de GRAAF: How did you happen to choose NYU?

COBB: My biology professor at Talladega persuaded me that that was the best place to go. I wanted to go to New York. That was a primary requirement.

de GRAAF: Had you ever been there?

- COBB: Oh, yes, my aunt lived in Staten Island, and I went to New York as a teenager to see my cousins. Plus, my mother had lived in New York all of her life before she married, and the family would often listen to the radio on Sunday nights. A theme song was "Give My Regards to Broadway, Hello to Herald Square." And I had a vision of New York as, you know, a place where all ended and was to be. I was headed to New York, and the discussion as a college student had to do with Columbia University or NYU. My professor felt that Columbia was not as receptive to blacks as NYU, and so he suggested I apply to NYU, which I did, and I did have a very positive experience. I'm glad I attended that school.
- de GRAAF: Did you find New York in general different from Chicago?
- COBB: Yes. It was bigger, but also prejudiced against blacks. Well, one thing was understood, that blacks could not get apartments in Greenwich Village, so I lived uptown, in Harlem.
- de GRAAF: NYU is toward the lower end of Manhattan?
- COBB: Yes. It's on the edge of Greenwich Village, near Fourth Street. Harlem begins uptown, at 125 Street.
- de GRAAF: Otherwise, did you find you were more welcome in restaurants and so forth?
- COBB: I would say yes, except there were some things that were still being worked through. I was attracted to the community church, the Unitarian Church in New York City. Well, they had an active antisegregation program. Rev. Donald Harrington was there. He was a very famous minister. And his younger cohort was a black man by the name of Rev. Maurice Dawkins.
- de GRAAF: Oh, Dawkins, yes.
- COBB: And they were there as ministers. I went to that church because they had an organization called the Committee Against Discrimination in East Manhattan. They were conducting a research study to look at the East side restaurants, working with white couples and black couples. They documented scores of cases where the white couple was received graciously in a restaurant. The black couple coming right along behind them was told there was either no room or



they gave them a seat by the kitchen. So they documented this time and time again, and they took the data to the city of New York and got the whole thing cleared up. The owners of those restaurants had to cease and desist instantly. And it was a social activism coming out of the church, and I liked that. And in fact, when I went home--I was in New York for awhile and then went back to Chicago to live for two years, to teach at Illinois Medical School--my local minister, my mother's minister at the Episcopal church, came to visit me one day. He said, "I understand that you are going to a Unitarian church and not to the Episcopal church." And I said, "Yes, Father Martin," and I told him why, and he couldn't say a word. He didn't say a word because I told him I felt very strongly that religion is tied to something that you care about in real life, in the real world, and that discrimination was something I felt very strongly about. My mother didn't appreciate that, but that's the way I thought then.

de GRAAF: Okay, you say even when you began NYU you still had as your primary objective becoming a high school teacher. Was your curricular aim simply a credential, or did you also initially plan to get a master's degree?

COBB: I planned to get a master's degree and get a license. I don't know what credentials are, except you had to have X number of credits in student teaching. You had to have a master's degree to teach in high schools in New York. At least that was always what I was told, as a black person. And as I said before, you always had to be over-prepared. In Chicago, you had to go to CTC, teachers' college; you couldn't just come into the system. We were given rules that were the utmost rules and the most rigorous rules to follow, as blacks.

de GRAAF: Which I imagine discouraged a great many from wanting to teach.

COBB: Well, of course. Anyway, I knew that I had to get a master's to teach in high school. I also knew I had to pass an oral exam for a substitute teacher's licence. I remember I went down to take the exam before a speech person who tested me. And she said, "Well, you don't pronounce your T's very well." And

I said, "Oh, that's probably true." And ever since then, I have made it a point to pronounce my T's.

COBB: And I know I'm very good at diction. When I read graduation names out loud--I used to do that at Connecticut College--everyone said, "My goodness, you pronounce them so well." I said, "Well, it's because I had three years of high school Latin." And in Latin, you pronounce every syllable. And it become much easier when you've had Latin, right?

de GRAAF: I had the same experience, yes.

COBB: Yes. Words just seem to fit well, where all the vowels and the consonants come out, because you're used to looking at them that way. Anyway, I did get my substitute teacher's license.

de GRAAF: Now, was it at NYU that you decided to choose cell physiology as your emphasis?

COBB: Yes, it was. It evolved, actually, because when I began graduate school I had no idea about the sub-specialties within biology. I took one undergrad course, histology, for one semester, and three graduate courses: one course, Selected Topics in Cell Physiology, on Saturday mornings; a course in endocrinology on Friday afternoons, and a course in biochemistry on Monday evenings. My teacher in biochemistry was the teacher that I liked most. And I will say that I chose my subject area, biochemistry, because I liked my teacher. I had "good vibes" from him, as the slang goes.

de GRAAF: What was that person's name?

COBB: It was cell physiology I liked, and that was the same thing as cell biology. His name was Kopac, from Nebraska, Milton J. Kopac. Now, I took biochemistry and he made it very exciting. He was a very, very good teacher and had a pleasant, upbeat way of saying things that I liked very much. I didn't get good vibes from the Friday afternoon teacher. Isn't that funny?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: Endocrinology, I liked the subject, but he had this southern Texas drawl, and that turned me off. It was a good course, an excellent course. He left the

academic profession and went to head up the endocrinology section of CJBA, I believe. It was a pharmaceutical company. And then the Saturday morning course was taught by a man who was charming, an older man in whose house eventually I went to stay in the summer of 1948 at Woods Hole.<sup>2</sup> He was one of the founders of the National Science Foundation. He was helping to lobby for it in Washington, D.C.

de GRAAF: Oh, who was that?

COBB: Robert Chambers. There's a Robert Chambers, Sr., and a Robert Chambers, Jr., both biologists. And he was rather old, it seemed, at the time he was teaching. I was just twenty. But anyway, I decided biochemistry was my interest, and I wanted to work with Kopac, a colleague of Chambers, so I did.

(Tape 2, Side B)

de GRAAF: Let's go through your NYU career and some of the early classes that you took. One other question on your field of cell physiology or biochemistry. Was that a field that was particularly in vogue in the early to mid-forties?

COBB: Yes and no. It's the same field that we now call molecular or cell biology. In fact, it was cell biology. Cancer cell work comes out of that, although that's not the only part of it.

de GRAAF: So your work was almost entirely in cell physiology?

COBB: Right. Well, I had other courses I had to take.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: Genetics and endocrinology and embryology, for example. I don't know, I took a lot of different courses. I had to take thirty units of courses for my master's and then another thirty for my doctorate.

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<sup>2</sup> When I went to Woods Hole to do independent research at the Marine Biological Laboratory, Dr. Kopac arranged for me to rent a room at Dr. Chambers's home because they believed no rooming house nearby would take a black person.

de GRAAF: Now, most of the time you were at NYU, you were also a teaching fellow?

COBB: Yes. While teaching, I took embryology, Tissue Culture Methods, endocrinology, genetics, and a couple of marine biology courses up at the museum. I took a course in protozoology up at the University Heights NYU campus. I was advised not to take parasitology from Dr. Horace Stunkard because he was a racist.

de GRAAF: Now, what was your work as a teaching fellow?

COBB: Well, the teaching fellowship was interesting. I applied for a teaching fellowship, as my friend Captain Jack from Talladega suggested--he was my professor. I applied for a teaching fellowship, equivalent to a graduate teaching assistantship. I did not receive it when I applied to NYU from Talladega. So I came anyway to graduate school and started working in the law library twenty hours a week. It was too much, and I caught the flu. I talked to the chief of the department, Harry Charipper, and I said, "I really can't continue to do this." So he said, "Well, why don't you apply for a teaching fellowship?" I never told him that I had done that the year before from Talladega, and been turned down. But now they knew me, you see, because they had seen that I could do the work and all that stuff, and I was not an unknown. I came from a place they never heard of--Talladega--plus, of course, we had H (honors), S (satisfactory), and U (unsatisfactory) as grades. We didn't have any other letter grades at Talladega. H, S and U, that's all we had. We students going on to graduate school used to complain about that. We felt we were not in competition with other applicants that way.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: But anyway, I started doing the teaching fellowship. I had a desk of my own, a lab area of my own. I shared the big lab with its three desks with two other students who became very good friends of mine--very close, in fact. And we worked together for five or six years.

de GRAAF: You were basically a lab assistant in a series of undergraduate courses.

COBB: Well, the teaching fellowship involved the following things: You had a lab of sixty people. A teaching fellow was assigned to twenty of those students in a lab for teaching, and there was a major professor giving the introductory notes and so forth. Then there was a quiz section of thirty students for one hour on a different day in which you, as the teacher, went over the lecture and lab related material. Then there were the big lectures. So there were three contact modes for a freshman biology course, let's say. The professor gave the lectures; the graduate assistants worked as graduate assistants in the labs and headed a quiz section. So the first year, you got to be a lab assistant in course X, Y or Z, and had a quiz section maybe. In the second year or third year, you got to head up the lab, introduce the subject matter, as well as being an assistant for twenty of the students, because there were three of them in the lab for sixty. And then you still headed up the quiz section. Then, if by the fourth year or fifth year it was your field of concentration, you could give a lecture or two. So that's the way it went. And so I was the lab assistant and graduate assistant in physiology and comparative anatomy and in Biology 1 and Biology 2. I headed up the sections in biology very often, and occasionally gave a lecture in biology. And then I was a grad assistant in endocrinology, in comparative anatomy and general physiology. This was over the years, so I had five years as a TA by the time I graduated, plus a master's, plus a Ph.D., okay? Yet, nobody in my department gave me any encouragement or advice to apply for a job in a school in New York City, a college in New York City--nobody, including my advisor.

de GRAAF: Well, we'll get to that in a minute.

COBB: So at that point, I would say that is the strongest indication of the racist problem that the society at large had, because they never even suggested to me I try. Now, NYU did not hire its own, with which I agree. That's just not healthy. But there was Hunter College, City College of New York, Queens College, plus a plethora of other colleges right around the greater New York area. Now I could have, I know, applied to a black college and gone there to teach. I'm sure I could have, but I didn't want to leave New York. I was interested in staying in New

York, and they all knew that. A woman who was a friend of mine who was a scientist, a white woman, Anne French, who has since died, lived in Greenwich Village. She said, "I have a good friend, Dr. Montague Cobb, who is head of the anatomy department at Howard University, and I'm going to call him and ask him if he knows of any situation in New York because you want to stay here." So she called Montague and he said, "Well, my good friend Dr. Louis T. Wright is head of the Cancer Research Foundation at Harlem Hospital, and I think you should go and talk with him because I think he would like to have you join their research team." So I did and he said, "Yes, we'd like to have you." I told him my field was tissue culture and cell physiology. "I'd like to have you grow human cells, do some tissue culture work within in our research group." And so I applied. Then Montague and Anne French told me about the National Cancer Institute's Post-doctorate Fellowships. I didn't know anything about anything. So I applied to the National Cancer Institute of NIH [National Institutes of Health] and was awarded a post-doctorate fellowship, which I was to use at Harlem Hospital and at Columbia University, spending two days of each week in the Tissue Culture Laboratory with Dr. Margaret Murray at Columbia College of P and S [Physicians and Surgeons]. So that's what I did. So I learned more of the nuances of tissue culture, plus I carried that expertise into the research I was doing at Harlem Hospital and began working there and doing a lot of exciting research.

de GRAAF: Okay. Now I'd like to get back to your NYU career and a few more things. That's very interesting, though, your experiences. In 1947, you got your master's degree with a ponderous thesis on the "Effect of Several Aromatic Amidines on the Respiration and Aerobic Metabolism of Yeast Cells."

COBB: Right.

de GRAAF: Was that sort of a way of nailing down your command of basic cell research?

COBB: Yes, and it was using the apparatus called the Warburg Apparatus, which is a respirometer. It measures the amount of oxygen taken in and the

amount of CO<sub>2</sub> given off by cells in special little sealed chambers.

de GRAAF: I see. This was all done in vitro?

COBB: All of it was done in vitro, right, under the directorship of Dr. Kopac, my advisor.

de GRAAF: Now, by this time, had you pretty much decided not to simply be a high school teacher but to go on to get your Ph.D.?

COBB: Yes. It was evolving slowly, because everybody was there and doing certain things that were a natural flow, shall we say. To break it and stop and go to work after a master's was not the normal flow for our group of colleagues, because everybody was in the graduate program to go all the way through. I did, however, have a bad experience when testing the plan to teach in high school. I didn't like the substitute teaching I was doing my second year in graduate school. It was just terrible, because of the discipline problems. We had to tell the students to be quiet in high school.

de GRAAF: Was that in New York City public schools?

COBB: Right. It seemed incredible that you had to discipline the class rather than teach. I was at Julia Richmond High School for a week, and after that I said, "I will never do that. That just doesn't make sense." What I didn't know then, as I know now, is when a substitute comes in, kids always advantage of a substitute. I didn't, of course, think of it that way. But I just didn't like it. I preferred teaching at the college level.

de GRAAF: What was the attitude of your faculty? I imagine the faculty at NYU was overwhelmingly white.

COBB: It was all white.

de GRAAF: All white. What was their attitude toward your going on for a Ph.D?

COBB: Oh, everybody expected that I would, and there were no overt actions to the contrary.

- de GRAAF: In spite of your subsequent experience, they had no place to place you once you got your degree?
- COBB: Well, I just think they weren't into advising in those days. I just don't think that it did occur to anyone, or maybe Dr. Kopac knew only about research labs and did not have any real facility for helping me to find a teaching job. I was, in one way, on my own. I didn't have enough creativity or imagination, perhaps, to apply to different schools with my excellent credentials. I mean, it just never occurred to me to be able to do that. I liked research very much and wanted to get a post-doc.
- de GRAAF: Well, that was going to be another question of mine. As you were working through NYU, did you ever face a divide that I understand some scientists face of whether you wanted to go into pure or applied science?
- COBB: Yes. I decided early on that I did not want to go to work in a pharmaceutical house and do their directed research, to go to a place where I might not have been able to do my own research and my name wouldn't have been on my papers.
- de GRAAF: So some sort of academic research was your orientation?
- COBB: Yes. I never thought of anything else.
- de GRAAF: Okay. Now, when you go on to your Ph.D. you have a little bit of a different orientation to your dissertation. Now it's on "Mechanisms of Pigment Granules Formation."
- COBB: Right.
- de GRAAF: And if I understand your field, which I really don't, it seems to be that pigmentation becomes a major thrust of your research.
- COBB: Yes. And that was a topic suggested to me, by the way, by Dr. Kopac. He suggested that subject. And it was a good one, obviously, because I'm a person with increased melanin cells, as a black person.
- de GRAAF: Yes.



- COBB: And the pigmentation, of course, varies among groups, races, and so it was a natural subject area that I found most interesting. So that's why he thought it would be good for me to pursue it.
- de GRAAF: Out of curiosity, did you ever find that you were the first black student that Kopac had had?
- COBB: No, but I know I was. There was one other black person in the department when I started, a man who had been teaching at Brooklyn College for a long time and came back to get his doctorate, Mark Parks. And then there were two other black students that were taking courses in graduate school but not doing research in areas with Kopac. One of them was marking time before he got admitted to medical school, Sam Brisbane, and the other one was after me and went into neurophysiology, Alfonso Orr.
- de GRAAF: So it's possible Kopac picked out this topic because you were something of a "novelty" as a black Ph.D. student.
- COBB: Probably because of my pigmentation. And it was a very good subject. One of his colleagues and a faculty member, Myron Gordon, was working on melanoma in fish up at the Museum of Natural History in New York, so my work fit in nicely. Pigment cells that become cancer cells are called melanomas.
- de GRAAF: Now, for the nonscientist who may read or listen to this interview, would you briefly explain melanoma?
- COBB: Melanoma is characterized by a cell that produces a unique pigment granule called melanin, which makes the cell interior black. Melanin is the pigment that's found throughout the animal and the plant kingdom. It's what makes mushrooms turn black when exposed to the air or potatoes turn dark brown when they are exposed and have been cut and injured. Melanin cells provide protective coloring for animals. It is what makes bears black and fish spotted with black, because of which, when they move around on a certain kind of background, they can become sort of invisible, protective coloring. It's the same pigment cell that makes the coats of dogs and cats and mice black. There are also a group of pale melanins that are brownish red rather than black; it is what makes the hair shaft black and the eyes black. Melanin cells are derived from the

neuroectoderm, or neural crest, the same embryonic origin of brain cells. And in the lower vertebrates such as fish, there are special pigmented cells all along the adrenal glands in the body. These cells are ubiquitous. There is an International Pigment Cell Research Group. We have a journal that's called Pigment Cell Research, and our conference is held every two years and is worldwide. In the past, I have given papers at these conferences. I'm not involved now in the field, although I'm interested in it still. Melanoma, by the way, is a very, very malignant form of cancer. Such patients have a poor prognosis.

de GRAAF: That's what I wanted to get into.

COBB: And it was on the radio last night, indicating that there are seven danger signs for certain kinds of people, and the incidence of melanoma in California is about 2 percent higher than the average. In Phoenix, Arizona, it's 4 or 5 percent higher than the average because of the exposure to ultraviolet light. There are two kinds of skin cancer, but melanoma is the worst, and you can often die of it. It spreads throughout the body very quickly.

de GRAAF: So when you went into this area of pigment formation, you were looking both at something that is interesting for its effects on coloration in all forms of life, but also something that had direct medical applications.

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: And you were aware of both of those?

COBB: Yes. As a biology major in college, I knew much about pigment cells. And I was particularly interested in it from the cancer research perspective.

de GRAAF: That was another question. You perceived very early in your doctoral work the link between your pure research and its applications in the medical world, cancer and so forth?

COBB: Yes. I received my post-doctorate fellowship in cell physiology from the National Cancer Institute.

de GRAAF: Yes, that's right.

- COBB: And of course, the Public Health Service, the National Institutes of Health, and taxpayers' money does support research that will lead to some positive societal good. That's the way it's always perceived.
- de GRAAF: Okay, which leads probably to my culminating question on your NYU years and experience. As you went through New York University, did you formulate some of your missions for life? For instance, were you already thinking that cancer research, some link between what you did and fighting cancer, would be one of your missions?
- COBB: Yes, definitely, definitely.
- de GRAAF: Did this stem from problems in any members of your family with cancer?
- COBB: No.
- de GRAAF: Was cancer research widely perceived at that time as a societal need?
- COBB: Oh, yes. It was a very serious disease. You see, as a cell biologist it was a natural flow for me. Had I been a botanist, I would probably not have been interested in cancer research.
- de GRAAF: Now, were you also at the same time, in spite of your discouraging high school teaching experience, interested in science education?
- COBB: Oh, I had a very good high school science experience.
- de GRAAF: No, I mean when you taught high school as a substitute?
- COBB: Oh, you mean that part.
- de GRAAF: Yes, that part.
- COBB: Oh, was I interested in science education? No, that came about later.
- de GRAAF: That came about later. How about the idea that you would play a role in advancing women and minorities in science? Had that entered your mind at NYU?

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: That came later also.

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: And finally, although it seems a little bit farfetched, did you give any thought that you might someday be an educational administrator?

COBB: No, never. Not at all.

de GRAAF: So you left NYU pretty much determined to be a scientific researcher with cancer as a focus.

COBB: And some teaching, because I had been teaching in graduate school for five years.

de GRAAF: Okay. Well, that pretty much finishes my questions on NYU.

(Tape 3, Side A)

de GRAAF: This is the second interview of Jewel Plummer Cobb conducted by Lawrence de Graaf. It's taking place Friday, April 6, 1990, in Dr. Cobb's home in Fullerton.

Jewel, last time we had gotten up through your Ph.D. to your early career. I'd like to summarize that and ask you a few questions about it. You were first a postdoctoral fellow from 1950 to 1952, was that?

COBB: Right. It was a fellowship awarded from the National Cancer Institute, which is a part of the National Institutes of Health.

de GRAAF: Then, in 1952, you became an instructor at the University of Illinois College of Medicine.

COBB: Right, in Chicago.

de GRAAF: In 1955, you're back in New York as an instructor and then an assistant professor in research surgery at NYU Medical Center.

COBB: Now, in 1954, I returned to New York City because I married Roy R. Cobb. I returned to Harlem Hospital Cancer Research Foundation, now headed by Jane C. Wright, for one year. Then, our unit was invited to join Fourth Division Surgery at New York University Medical School, which was a part of the Bellevue Hospital Medical Center. Bellevue Hospital was staffed by doctors from NYU Medical School, Columbia University Medical School, and New York University Postgraduate Medical School, and, I believe, one more medical school. I'm not sure now which one that was. But there were three divisions of the operation doing the medical support system, plus the fourth division, which was NYU Postgraduate Medical School. There were three medical schools plus one postgraduate medical school. At that time, when I went there to be a part of our cancer research unit that was established, I also received an appointment as an instructor in Fourth Division Surgery.

de GRAAF: What I was first wanting to reflect on is that this seems like a rather interesting, perhaps dramatic, career rise. Was it common for blacks or women to go from postdoctoral fellowship to one university



position to another university position in five years in the fifties?

COBB: I don't think it was very common. No, I don't think it was, certainly not in the North in a place like New York City.

de GRAAF: Without being immodest, what do you attribute your success to?

COBB: I think our cancer research unit had been a very successful one. It had done a lot of good, leading edge research. The research had been published in the leading cancer journals with peer reviews, and the unit had established a strong reputation in the field of clinical cancer chemotherapy.

de GRAAF: This was the research unit at Harlem Hospital.

COBB: Yes, at Harlem Hospital. Therefore, it was attractive to New York University Medical School. We were doing some cutting edge research.

de GRAAF: In your original postdoctoral fellowship from 1950 to 1952 at Harlem Hospital, what was the main thrust of your research?

COBB: I was doing two things. I was growing human tumors obtained from the patients who were at the hospital with cancer. They were in the chemotherapy unit of the hospital and therefore were being treated through our clinic, which was a separate foundation and part of NYU Postgraduate School housed within Harlem Hospital and, ultimately, Bellevue Hospital. We were not city employees. Bellevue Hospital is a large municipal hospital, and our foundation had a penthouse suite of laboratories and offices. The doctors who were working in the foundation were employees of Bellevue as residents or visiting physicians. The head of the Harlem Hospital Foundation at the time when I joined it was the hospital's Director of Surgery, Louis T. Wright. He died, and was succeeded by his daughter. Likewise, when we moved to New York University, the head of Fourth Division Surgery was Dr. William Hinton. The director of our New York University Cancer Research Unit and foundation within Bellevue Hospital was Jane C. Wright.

de GRAAF: Again I come across, perhaps, as a person rather ignorant of science, but how exactly does one grow human tumors?

COBB: You obtain the living tissue from surgery, either by biopsy or removal in the operating room as a full process. You obtain the tissue or cells under sterile conditions, with the appropriate solutions or media to keep it alive in test tubes--in vitro, as we call it--and then you place it in special flasks with their proper nutrients and place the flask in the incubator at body temperature, thirty-seven degrees centigrade. We used different temperatures, but essentially grew cells at thirty-seven degrees. They grew, and then you looked at them through the glass under sterile conditions under the microscope. Then, eventually, you preserved and stained them for permanent preparations. Often I did time-lapse microcinematography of living cells.

de GRAAF: What was the whole purpose of this?

COBB: In that part of my research, I was looking at the effects of certain newly synthesized, promising cancer chemotherapeutic agents, and particularly two classes of these. One was the antimetabolites, which were antifolic acid derivatives. Folic acid is part of the B complex that we recognize. An "anti" would be a poison to that particular molecule. The other group was radiomimetic agents, which were derivatives of mustard gas which had been used years ago in World War I. Established from that poisonous gas were a whole series of chemical derivatives that were known to be promising as radiation-like substances. They produce essentially the same kind of damage to cells in division as did radiation. It was like a chemical radiation. So those are the two groups of substances. We were working closely with Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company and also with Burroughs-Wellcome. Before any kind of a chemical could be used in a human being, there had to be an evaluation done in terms of what it would really do chemically in humans. So the clinical group of our unit was doing testing with those human patients beyond surgical or radiation cure.

I was not concerned with the clinical phase. My work was in cell biology. I was interested in the basic cytological changes that occurred in the



presence of these drugs in vitro, the idea being that if one could look at drug changes at the cellular level at certain concentrations below the toxic dose for a human, it would then be a drug that had a differential toxicity to the cancer cells, yet wouldn't damage the normal body cells. It's a little like the work that had been going on for years in bacteriology. You can take an antibiotic by mouth and it will kill the bacteria in your body, but it won't hurt you otherwise. The same principle exists at a theoretical level for cancer drugs. That is, you could take these drugs that would differentially kill the cancer cells but not the normal cells. We really don't have, at this point, a thoroughly successful cancer chemotherapeutic drug. All of them have some toxic side effect for humans. They don't, of course, kill the patients, but they can make them very sick. It's a matter of trying to find a drug that is the least toxic that will do the job. That is why I was involved in those studies.

The other part of my research was growing human melanomas. I had been interested in them because of my own doctorate work. I did a number of studies with colonies of mice carrying the melanomas, and did some special research with them. I had a research grant for this work. I also did some work with one of the antibiotics, Aureomycin, and noted its effect on the growth of human fibroblasts in vitro. I wanted to see whether the Aureomycin would be effective in the overgrowth of fibroblast from keloids. Keloids are big scars that sometimes exist in patients when a cut heals. It's particularly characteristic of African-Americans. Sometimes patients would come into the unit that had very large marble-like growths on the ear lobe because they'd had their ears pierced, and instead of growing just the little hole there, they would get a keloid formation. So it would have been useful had one been able to use, let's say, Aureomycin, one of these antimitotic drugs, because they stop the cell division. That's what made them cancer chemotherapy drugs. Had they stopped the growth of fibroblast in vitro, Aureomycin might have been used to prevent keloid formation. So that's another part of the project that I was doing. At any rate, it was very interesting. We did some time lapse work of many cancer cell types. You've seen pictures of flowers opening; that's done by time lapse. You can't see the flower opening.

de GRAAF: In the two years that you had this postdoctorate fellowship, did you come to any significant conclusions or make any breakthroughs, particularly?

COBB: I made some very interesting and important cytological conclusions about direct cellular changes in the presence of the radiomimetic drugs, particularly, and also in the presence of two antifolic drugs, amethopterin and aminopterin. I published that material. This research was among the earliest studies in the cancer research literature that described direct cytological effects by drugs that would be eventually used in patients.

de GRAAF: Did this work contribute to your getting a key pin award as the outstanding woman alumna of NYU around 1954?

COBB: I'd forgotten about that. Perhaps so. Perhaps my advisor had recommended my name and had submitted my research papers. I had forgotten that, yes.

de GRAAF: In 1952, you go on to the University of Illinois Medical School in Chicago. What was your area of teaching there?

COBB: I was a member of the faculty in the anatomy department. I taught histology and a course in cell physiology, specifically tissue culture. I designed their first tissue culture laboratory in the department and began using those techniques.

de GRAAF: The department hadn't had a tissue culture lab before you came?

COBB: That's right. I established it in the department and began doing research there. I did work with my own research interest, melanoma cells, that I mentioned and also did some growth of human tumors of other kinds. I grew and described a craniopharyngioma. It is a very unusual kind of brain tumor. I described it in vitro and its possible cytological changes following exposure in vitro to a spectrum of drugs that were antimetabolic agents. Then I also grew in vitro and described several human bladder cancers in cooperation with a Dr. J. H. Keefer from the Department of Urology, and did some time lapse studies with those. I also attempted to start growing some mammalian leukemia cells. We worked with those for quite a while. We

were not successful in getting those cells to propagate through a series of generations. We did grow them under short-term cultures and we did some good time lapse cinematography during that time period. But we were not able to have sustained growth, that is, continuous cell line cultures of those cells.

de GRAAF: I noticed that some of your early publications, either during the time you had done your postdoctoral or at the University of Illinois, were with Dr. Louis T. Wright of the Harlem Hospital Cancer Research Foundation. First of all, was he a black or white physician?

COBB: He was black. Harlem Hospital was essentially a black hospital, servicing the patients in Harlem. He was one of the first physicians to use the antifolic acid derivatives to treat cancer patients.

de GRAAF: Was there any other reason for your collaboration in that? Was cell physiology also his area of specialty?

COBB: No. He was head of the Department of Surgery. He, as head of the Department of Surgery, put his name on the papers, as was the custom and still is the custom in medical research.

de GRAAF: Is that the reason you often find medical papers with multiple authors?

COBB: That's right. Not all those people actually did the work. But the main philosophy of the cancer research foundation was to try to explore the cellular changes that could be helpful in the clinical treatment of cancer, and that was his main thrust and his main idea for which the big grants came. So this was part of that theme. Not the melanoma work that I was doing; that was a separate subset and my own research. But the major philosophy had been established through Dr. Wright, because he was really one of the very first persons--he and Dr. Sidney Farber of the Binney Foundation at Harvard--who were able to successfully cause remission of leukemia in children with anticancer drugs.

de GRAAF: You go back to Chicago in 1952. You had been away for what, eight years?

- COBB: I graduated from college in 1944, but I had not really been back to live since I graduated from high school in 1941.
- de GRAAF: That leads to my question, then. How much or little had Chicago changed, especially in conditions of blacks?
- COBB: It was the same.
- de GRAAF: It was the same.
- COBB: Exactly. There were still exclusively black communities, very little change.
- de GRAAF: Did you find you had to live in the black community then?
- COBB: Oh, yes, definitely. There were neighborhoods that were changing, black real estate was encroaching on former white areas. But that was white flight from the city.
- de GRAAF: The public facility situation had changed somewhat, hadn't it?
- COBB: It had. That's true. The public facility situation in the fifties had changed completely, so that one could go wherever one wanted to, in hotels and the like.
- de GRAAF: Was your being hired at the University of Illinois Medical School any sort of a breakthrough for blacks or for black women?
- COBB: No, I don't think so. As far as blacks are concerned, there was a black professor of pharmacology who was there already, and there was another professor in another field. There was one young black man who was a graduate student in my anatomy department who since has died who was there. There were a few black students in the medical school and in the dental school getting their professional degrees. Out of maybe 200 or 300 faculty, probably you could count 4 or 5 blacks. The students were supported through the Rosenwald Fellowship Program.
- de GRAAF: And all males?

- COBB: All males, yes.
- de GRAAF: As far as you know, you may have been the first black woman faculty at the school?
- COBB: Perhaps. I would think I might have been, yes.
- de GRAAF: In 1954, you met your husband. Was this in Chicago?
- COBB: Yes. He was a friend of a friend.
- de GRAAF: This was early in 1954?
- COBB: It was in the wintertime, probably February.
- de GRAAF: You were married very quickly, in July.
- COBB: Yes, in July. One of those whirlwind things.
- de GRAAF: I don't want to get too personal, but out of curiosity, had you had any serious romances prior to that?
- COBB: Yes. I had had a long-time serious romance when I was in graduate school with someone who had been in NYU Medical School. He finished medical school, went into an internship, and then into psychiatry in Philadelphia. When I was, I guess, one year or two years from my Ph.D.--I must have been about twenty-four; he was maybe twenty-five or twenty-six--I broke off the unofficial engagement for, I guess, rather immature reasons on my part, as I look back from the view of experience.
- de GRAAF: Out of curiosity, your husband's name?
- COBB: Roy R. Cobb.
- de GRAAF: What was his occupation?
- COBB: He was an insurance salesman.
- de GRAAF: This obviously raised the still rather tricky question of marriage and a career. What were the views that you recall in the fifties on that, a married woman still pursuing a career?
- COBB: All black women worked. It wasn't unusual. Everybody that I knew that was a black woman worked because there was not enough money for a single

income household. It was relatively rare to have a woman stay at home and not work. It had to do with economics. However, women that worked, most of them, were schoolteachers, so they had their summers free when their children were home. That was the most common kind of job that many of my friends had.

de GRAAF: Very shortly after this marriage, you returned to New York. What prompted that?

COBB: My husband was from New York. I had met him when he came to Chicago to visit his friend who was in the navy at Great Lakes. His friend was a psychiatrist in the navy, and he'd come for a long weekend, I guess. That's how I happened to meet him, because he was a good friend of the friend of my apartment mate.

de GRAAF: Where in New York did you live when you moved back there?

COBB: We first lived for two months, I guess, in our friend's apartment--because he was still in the navy--in New York on Fifth Avenue at 101 Street in a very elegant building. I have to laugh about that, because it was an elegant building with a doorman and all kinds of things. In order to take your clothes to the laundromat, you had to go someplace because they didn't have laundromats in the building, probably maids and things took care of that. I remember we used to leave our apartment with our clothes in a suitcase to go to the laundromat because you didn't dare do this any other way. We did succeed soon in getting an apartment in the Metropolitan Life Insurance middle-income housing development, called Metropolitan Life. They had built a very large complex, about four square blocks, in two places, uptown in Harlem and down in Bedford-Stuyvesant area, around Twenty-third Street in New York on the East Side.

de GRAAF: Was that already a predominantly black area?

COBB: Harlem was. Bed-Stuyvesant was all white then, and you never even thought of applying down to Bed-Stuyvesant to live, which was close to Bellevue Hospital, by the way. Black folks never, ever got into Bedford-Stuyvesant. It was called Peter Cooper Housing Development, but run by Metropolitan Life. Both of them were run by Metropolitan Life. The one

uptown in Harlem was occupied by blacks. I was across the street from Harlem Hospital, where I worked, so it was a convenient place. We lived there, because I was at Harlem Hospital for one year after I married, before I moved to NYU. Then, shortly after I moved to NYU, I became pregnant, so we moved to the suburbs.

de GRAAF: Which suburb?

COBB: Mount Vernon, New York. That was interesting because it was a changing neighborhood that we moved to. Since that time, that whole area has become totally black, and most of the south side of Mount Vernon is black. Everywhere we went over the years, it was a changing neighborhood. The whole story of movement of blacks in urban areas in America has been that way.

de GRAAF: How long did your marriage last?

COBB: Until 1966, I guess, about twelve years, 1954 to 1966.

de GRAAF: You had just the one son?

COBB: Right.

de GRAAF: So in 1955 you go back to NYU, as you say, because, basically, NYU absorbed the hospital unit in Harlem that you were working in?

COBB: They invited Dr. Jane C. Wright to join Fourth Division Surgery at NYU. She had succeeded her father. She became the head of the cancer research unit, called the Cancer Research Foundation.

de GRAAF: Jane Cook Wright?

COBB: Yes. Her father was Louis T. Wright. Her sister was also a physician, but she was not involved in cancer research. Dr. William Hinton invited the whole unit to join New York University Postgraduate School, to move to Fourth Division Surgery. They had not had any clinical cancer research unit or associated basic cell research at NYU Fourth Division prior to that. They set up a very nice large suite of labs and rooms for us and built a tissue culture laboratory for me.

de GRAAF: Your position there was in Research Surgery.

COBB: That's right, professor of Research Surgery.

de GRAAF: What exactly did that involve?

COBB: I was doing cell biology research, cancer cell research, and I was also doing some teaching in the Postgraduate Program in Cell Biology. So I had this academic appointment. However, we were on soft money. That is, we brought big research grants with us. It would be something like a center, or a foundation like at Cal State Fullerton, except that it was very, very well heeled. It was a feather in the cap of Dr. Hinton to have us there, because we were a very active group. And the surgeons who were at Bellevue in the Department of Surgery were involved with us in clinical research. We did a lot of good things. I got a lot of research done there. I also had my own grants from the National Cancer Institute for my melanoma research, and also I had grants for quite a few years from the Damon Runyan Cancer Fund and also from the American Cancer Society. So it was a financially successful operation at Bellevue. However, it meant that every year, you had to write your grants, and we had no real fringe benefits in those days. I guess my husband must have had Blue Cross or something, because he was working in insurance, but we didn't have TIAA-CREF [Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association-College Retirement Equities Fund] or any of that. So not until 1960, when I went to Sarah Lawrence, did I have TIAA-CREF.

de GRAAF: You put out about thirteen of your thirty-six scientific articles in the five years you were at NYU. I notice again, as is quite typical, that these were often coauthored, and Jane Cook Wright was one of the most common of these coauthors.

COBB: Yes. She was head of the lab and followed her father's model. A lot of those papers had two phases to them. They described the clinical work with a spectrum of drugs on ex-patients and also the in vitro effects of the same drugs on tissues removed and grown from these patients.



(Tape 3, Side B)

COBB: Many of the papers, however, were joint papers describing clinical research with a certain group of patients, and also describing the cellular changes in the same patients' tumors grown in vitro by me. What we tried to do was to evaluate these agents at the cellular level, using the model of bacterial sensitivity, in which you plated out some bacteria, then you tried them with a series of antibiotics at very low doses, and you'd find out which antibiotic killed the bacteria, and that's the one you would use in the patient, in vivo. The same theory was in operation with the cancer chemotherapy drugs, except it was an experiment to see if, in fact, there was any correlation between in vitro results compared to using the same drug on the same patient's tissue in vivo. Remember that when patients are candidates for cancer chemotherapy, they are beyond surgical or radiation cure; they are advanced patients with their disease. Or they are patients who cannot be cured by surgery, like leukemia, where the whole body is involved. So we attempted to look at what that correlation was. And at the end of five years, I wrote a definitive paper summary of that data from forty plus cases and found very little correlation, except in a few specific instances. But that was important to establish as such.

At the time I wrote that summary of my work 1960, I was ending my time at NYU Medical School to become a full-time teacher, moving to Sarah Lawrence College. I left the unit, but my research assistant stayed on for a couple of years. They were sad to have me leave, but I felt that the combination of the amount of time involved getting to NYU in New York City and the fact that research is very demanding, and I was married and had a child was just too much. I thought I wanted to teach again, with research as a secondary aspect of my work rather than research as my primary work. Also, I wanted to be financially on permanent money rather than on research grants--soft money.

de GRAAF: So your whole time at NYU, you were on soft money.

COBB: Yes, with research grants all the way through. I have had research grants continuously for twenty-five plus years, until I stopped research in 1976. I was really quite fortunate. I had good research and was rewarded with grants all the way through.

Even when I was at Sarah Lawrence, when I was teaching, mainly, I had excellent external research support.

de GRAAF: I notice briefly two other people who collaborated with you on several articles. One was a Frederick Golomb.

COBB: Yes, and Stephen S. Gumport. Both of them were senior surgeons at New York University in Fourth Division Surgery, and they were on the faculty teaching surgery and, of course, had their patients. They were involved in the clinical cancer research program.

de GRAAF: So would this be the same sort of set-up, they did the in vivo and you did the in vitro?

COBB: That's right. We often had good ideas that worked together with in vivo and in vitro. Dr. Gumport was an expert world authority on clinical surgery of melanomas, and I, of course, was interested in and did a lot of special tissue culture work in melanomas because of my own graduate work.

de GRAAF: Now, much of your work or, at least, your writings at this time, seems to be on neoplastic cells.

COBB: Those are cancer cells. "Neoplastic" is another name for cancer.

de GRAAF: One final person that I notice you seemed to write in conjunction with for a few years after leaving NYU was a D. G. Walker.

COBB: Right. Dr. Dorothy G. Walker and I wrote several papers. She was my research assistant. The papers came out in subsequent years, but that was all done at NYU.

de GRAAF: One other break while you were at NYU. It comes in 1956 to 1957, when you were a visiting lecturer at Hunter College.

COBB: Yes, Hunter College, which is part of the city university system. I taught a course in tissue culture there.

de GRAAF: This was a part-time job?

- COBB: Yes. It was two evenings a week. I did that in addition to my full-time job.
- de GRAAF: In all this work, did you find you were beginning to form a network with black scientists elsewhere, or was there no such network yet existent?
- COBB: There was a network, a very loose network. I can't say that I particularly had a network. I guess I knew about a few people, but not too many people that I knew were in my particular field, cell biology. My black network was mainly social, not necessarily through science. I knew a lot of black doctors who were at Harlem Hospital, but they were more social connections than professional.
- de GRAAF: Was there any organization--I pull out of thin air the National Medical Association, as an example--which was trying to encourage some sort of a network among black scientists?
- COBB: No. The National Medical Association encouraged and, in fact, did have a good network among black physicians, but I was in basic research and I knew relatively few, very rare numbers, of black scientists who were in basic biology research. There were some, maybe fifty, around the country, and I would see one or two of them at the national cell biology meetings. But we were never connected in an official organization.
- de GRAAF: How about woman scientists? Was there any organization or network of those?
- COBB: Yes. In New York City, we had an organization called AWIS [American Women in Science], a chapter of which I established here at California State University, Fullerton. They were women who were not only in biology, but they might have been in chemistry or physics or what have you. We used to meet regularly. That was a very nice group. I don't remember if it was when I left New York, but one of those times, they honored me at a reception as a woman scientist. I went to meetings when I was at Douglass College--AWIS was established in 1977. I used to travel from Douglass College in New Brunswick, New Jersey, to New York City, which was a thirty-five mile distance, from 1977 until I left in 1981. There was not, shall I say, an

organization of women scientists that I can remember prior to that 1977 date.

de GRAAF: Nationwide, you mean.

COBB: In the sixties, we were all members of the Association for Cancer Research, AACR, as cancer research scientists, or we were members of the Society for Cell Biology or something of that sort, and there were women in that group. Eventually, in the seventies, women scientists in those organizations started to form women's caucuses. I think the national feminist movement inspired us all. I remember speaking before the women's caucus of the American Physical Society in the seventies.

de GRAAF: Did this ultimate organization in the seventies spring out of any feeling that women were not being equally treated in the scientific world?

COBB: Oh, yes, very definitely. We always talked about it, constantly talked about the fact that the staffs in basic research were all male and that, very often, the women were just postdocs, not permanent. I don't know if you've seen the article I just wrote in the Douglass College alumnae magazine on women in the sciences.

de GRAAF: No, I haven't seen it yet.

COBB: I'll show it to you. We were always aware that women rarely had good positions, that is, as heads of laboratories, nor were they on the cutting edge of some of the big, fabulous research laboratories. If they were there, they were there sometimes as postdocs, and they stayed postdocs for a long time. There were a few women, rare women, here and there, but they were so rare you just sort of knew about them. Jane Wright herself, who was a well-known clinical cancer chemotherapist, published an awful lot, and she finally got a little more recognition. She left NYU, eventually, I think, when Hinton died and went up to another hospital at Mount Sinai and headed up their cancer research clinical work for a long time, and was very successful in her field as a physician. But they were few and far between.

de GRAAF: Your years at NYU were also the years of the beginnings of the civil rights movement. Did that affect you in any way? The Brown case, perhaps not,

but was there much interest in the movement that you can recall on the part of yourself or any other person you knew?

COBB: In 1963, there was the March on Washington. That was a very significant time; we were all talking about it. It was very important to us. My husband travelled to Washington, D.C. to march in it.

de GRAAF: Earlier than that. In the fifties when, for example, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. was year after year trying to get Congress to enforce the Brown decision. He was from your area.

COBB: That's right, in New York, yes, and we were all very proud of him and we knew what he was doing, and I, of course, had met him. Many people I knew were members of his church [Abyssinian Baptist]. So we were very much aware. We were always aware of everything that was going on at the political level in terms of blacks trying to do things to make changes: the Urban League, the NAACP, A. Philip Randolph and his work with the sleeping car porters, and the like.

de GRAAF: You say "we." Who are you referring to?

COBB: All my friends.

de GRAAF: By the end of the fifties, Malcolm X is beginning to make an impression in the Harlem area again. Do you recall him at all?

COBB: Really?

de GRAAF: Let's see. Malcolm gets out of prison around 1953, I think, converts to Islam in prison, and by 1957, 1958, he is one of the leading speakers at Muslim places.

COBB: I don't remember him from that time period, though I read his book, but many years later.

de GRAAF: That in itself may be significant as to just how much or little visibility he had.

COBB: I don't think he had much visibility then.

de GRAAF: You say you left NYU in large part because you felt you wanted to teach full-time as well as get a

little bit more balanced life and a stable financial position.

COBB: I had a more balanced life, career.

de GRAAF: You found that research really chewed up a lot of your time?

COBB: Oh, yes, a lot of time, and I wanted to be more stable in terms of my financial arrangements. I got tired of writing grants and waiting for publication, and I was also ready to just teach again. I liked teaching, and I mean teaching regular undergraduate courses, because I had done that, you see, for five years as a graduate student.

de GRAAF: What sort of a college was Sarah Lawrence?

COBB: It was a women's college.

de GRAAF: Private?

COBB: Private, very high tuition, room and board. It's now around \$20,000. It was academically well-known. The college is noted for its rather unusual structure. There were no titles to the faculty. They were not full, associate, assistant professors; they were faculty. Each student took only three courses per semester, and they were in-depth. They had intense one-on-one relationships with the faculty to do special projects and work. Harold Taylor, whom you may have heard about, who was a very well-known educator at that time, was the president for a long time. When I arrived there in 1960, Esther Rauschenbusch was president, and she began the first return-to-college program for women ever in the United States and was a pioneer in that work. Sarah Lawrence was located in Bronxville, New York. It had a strong liberal arts philosophy. You didn't major in a discipline; you had an emphasis. The most famous professor probably of Sarah Lawrence that you've ever heard of is Joseph Campbell, who has, of course, done the PBS series on mythology. A number of well-known, very famous professors were there. It was a relatively small campus, with an outstanding faculty. Students, the girls were often very wealthy and very bright, because it could afford to be quite selective. One of the Watson daughters was there--Watson from IBM--and Linda Morgan. Her father had been the famous commentator.

The mother and father were killed in the wreck of the Andrea Doria off of Nantucket. She was maybe ten, twelve years old at the time. She was saved. The children were very bright. And Max Lerner's daughter was there, and just a whole slew of daughters of very famous people.

But it was a very exciting place. It's the most exciting college I've ever taught in. We had small classes, fifteen or sixteen students. We had what we called a don-donee relationship, and every student had a don. You had twelve to fifteen donees with whom you interacted at least five or six hours a week, including classes and conferences. It had a four-year traditional liberal arts curriculum. There were no vocational courses whatsoever, and it was a very exciting place. I was there for nine years (1960-1969). Marjorie Wagner was then the dean. She married John Wagner.<sup>3</sup> Marjorie was the dean of faculty when I was there, and Ward was the president. After Paul left, Esther Rauschenbusch became president and Jackie Mattfeld became the dean of faculty. Esther died; Jackie moved on; Marjorie divorced. She and her little children drove across country. She took the job at the Claremont Colleges. I don't remember which she was in, McKenna or Scripps. But anyway, Marjorie had been the dean there. As for me, Sarah Lawrence was a good situation, and I stayed there until 1969. I'll tell you who else was there: Anita Silvers. She was on the CSU Academic Senate from San Francisco State.

de GRAAF: I've seen the name.

COBB: She is severely arthritic and has a motorized wheelchair. Bessie Schoenberg, who's a famous modern dancer, was there. Oh, there were any number of just outstanding faculty. Anyway, that's where I was for nine years. There was one black faculty, Adolph Jones, who came there after I was there.

de GRAAF: Had there been any before you, as far as you know?

COBB: No, not to my knowledge. There may have been one; it doesn't register that there was.

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<sup>3</sup> John Wagner was a professor of English at CSUF.

de GRAAF: How did you happen to learn about this position or choose Sarah Lawrence to go to?

COBB: I just decided to apply there. I had registered my son there before he was born to go to their nursery school, because it was very famous. The woman in charge of it, Evelyn Beyer, had been a student of Frances Ilg at the Yale Child Study Center. So I registered my son there, and he had gone to their nursery school for quite awhile. I knew about Sarah Lawrence. I lived about ten minutes away from it. I had made inquiries during my last year of graduate school (1949), but nothing came of it. I decided I would apply again. I'd had five years of teaching experience (1945-1950), I had published extensively, and I just decided in 1959-1960 that I would try to find a college in the general area. I guess I started looking around 1959. So I interviewed to become a professor of biology. It so happened by sheer luck--a lot of things that happen to you are luck, no matter how you want to put it--that Elizabeth Beeman, who'd been a regular faculty there in biology, was leaving. There were only three faculty then in the biology department, I might add. Sarah Lawrence is a very small school: two faculty in the chemistry department, two in physics, one or two in math.

de GRAAF: It must have meant that you taught a rather diverse array of classes.

COBB: It was great, yes. I was hired because Elizabeth Beeman had just decided to go Vassar to teach, so she was leaving. So I got the job--just pure, pure coincidence. I taught general biology, exploratory (or freshman) biology. I taught a wonderful course in morphology and evolution, actually. Another course was embryology, comparative anatomy, and histology. Another course was endocrinology, and another, genetics. I also taught in the National Science Foundation's program for science teachers. They were high school teachers who came back to refresh themselves in the field. That was a very important part of NSF's program at that time. So I taught that course sometimes in the evening, and I enjoyed it very much. It is the same type of program now taught by Professor Pagni and others at CSUF.



- de GRAAF: Did you have any particular mission or goals, either when you first went there or as you served your tenure there?
- COBB: I had my research as my secondary mission to teaching which I was doing and very much occupied with. I had a nice lab they built for me. I was lucky. I had labs built for me everywhere I went all along the way, because I was in a new field, a cutting edge field. I had nice group of students--seniors--and some research assistants there at Sarah Lawrence. I couldn't do as much research because, of course, I was teaching.
- de GRAAF: What was the load there, by the way?
- COBB: I taught two courses and had two or three senior lab projects. But I also had this don-donee relationship, a part of the college plan, so that each student had a minicourse with me because they were doing this intensive activity of fifteen units, roughly, of school time, professor contact time. But the donning wasn't always in a regular course. And, of course, in biology, you taught twice as much time for half as much student credit, in chemistry and biology and physics. So I had a full schedule, with no lab assistants. I remember it being a very full schedule. I had one sabbatical in 1967 for a semester, the last sabbatical I ever had.
- de GRAAF: I notice that some of your publications at this time focus on the growth and melanization of the Cloudman S-91 mouse melanoma.
- COBB: That's a strain of a mouse melanoma tumor, using mammalian cells as a model of a mammalian pigment cell. Since I no longer had access to human tumors, because I was not in a hospital clinical set-up anymore, I worked with mouse cell models.
- de GRAAF: Briefly, again, betraying my ignorance, what is it about the physiology of mice and rats that make them so desirable to replicate human biology?
- COBB: First of all, they're small and manageable. One can achieve population sizes that give you statistically valid results, which is very important. They are mammals, like humans, and have the same physiological systems that humans have. They are closely allied, physiologically, to humans.

de GRAAF: Because I notice a lot of your later research is with mice.

COBB: All the latest. After 1960, it was all with mice; that was my research cell type, sometimes with mice or sometimes with strains of cells in vitro derived originally from the mouse.

de GRAAF: Did you feel you made any significant findings or developments while you were at Sarah Lawrence?

COBB: Yes. I did a lot of organ cultures. Actually, one of the most significant findings I made was just before I left NYU, in 1957. Walker and I published a paper on the effects of Actinomycin-D on human cancer cells, and that was the first time there had ever been described in vitro the direct cellular effects of Actinomycin-D, which has been since established to interfere with RNA metabolism. It was a very significant finding regardless of whether there were cancer cells or not. We, of course, did work with cancer cells as a part of our own clinical pairing model. But I published a great deal on the effects of Actinomycin-D on noncancer cells as well and did some very basic work in that area. That was some of the work I described when I went to Moscow in 1962.

de GRAAF: I was going to ask you about that. You had, as a matter of fact, two trips to international cancer congresses.

COBB: Yes. In 1958, I gave a research paper in London. It was very exciting work. I was able to get grants from the National Research Council and from the National Science Foundation to go on to these meetings.

de GRAAF: Were these congresses essentially conferences or something more than that?

COBB: They were conferences, yes, but they were international conferences. Something like forty or fifty countries were represented. There were cancer research scientists from all over the world.

de GRAAF: In 1962, Moscow would seem a rather strange site for a conference. What were your experiences there?



COBB: No, it was a very well run conference, and they had enormous hotels. We were at a hotel called the Ukraina that I revisited when I went returned to Moscow this past July (1989). It's an enormous, thirty-six-story hotel. Intourist placed the research scientists in various hotels by language. People from Australia, New Zealand, England, and the U.S. all stayed in one hotel because they all spoke English. People from French-speaking countries were placed in another hotel. Intourist was much more visible then than in 1989. The food was far better in 1962 than it was this past July was in Russia. For one thing, we had fresh oranges from Soviet Georgia in July, and this time, we saw no fresh fruit in July. The amount and variety of food was much less.

de GRAAF: In 1967, you got a National Science Foundation grant to the Laboratorio Internazionale di Genetica e Biofisica [LIGB] in Naples, Italy.

COBB: Right. That was my first and only sabbatical.

de GRAAF: What did you do there?

COBB: I learned how to work with cancer viruses. Some of the very important first work that was done on the mechanisms of transfer of cancer viruses was done by the head of that laboratory, Gianpero DeMayorca. It was recommended that I go to that lab by a colleague at Einstein Medical School, because I was going on a sabbatical and I wanted to see what I could do in terms of working and learning new research ideas, which is what I think a sabbatical is for. It is not to lie on the beach; it's to do research and advance your knowledge, scholarlywise. So I applied to the LIGB, as we call it for short, to ask whether I might go there to work in this laboratory. I worked with a man who had done some very important work in the lab, Guglielmo Marin, and I learned about the polyoma virus and how to work with it. Some of the early molecular biology work done was being done in that laboratory. I learned how to use the new techniques and how to think in the language of tumor viruses. It was a very productive period for me.

de GRAAF: First of all, was it very common for American scientists to go there?

COBB: Yes, because the LIGB lab had a close affiliation with Cal Tech and also with U.C. Berkeley, and with Wayne State University and with Albert Einstein Medical School. There were scientists, such as Gunther Stent and several other science faculty who had done some of the original work on DNA-RNA activity.

(Tape 4, Side A)

I was in that laboratory six months and learned quite a bit.

de GRAAF: Have you ever been back, out of curiosity?

COBB: I've only been back once to Naples, but not LIGB, and only for a few hours. The laboratory has changed because, after all, that was twenty-two years earlier.

de GRAAF: At this time, you also get into several undergraduate and high school teacher science education programs: the National Science Foundation Institute for High School Teachers and the NSF Undergraduate Research Participants Program.

COBB: That's right. The one of NSF for high school teachers is the one I taught at Sarah Lawrence in the evening for upgrading and updating the biological information for high school teachers. That was a very good program the NSF had at that time, and we ran it at Sarah Lawrence for several years. I taught the biology part of it, and someone else taught the math part. Occasionally they had a semester of chemistry.

de GRAAF: Did you help to secure that grant for Sarah Lawrence?

COBB: Yes. We wrote it jointly from our science department, which consisted of all the sciences.

de GRAAF: Did this reflect the beginning of a greater interest on your part in science education?

COBB: Yes. I've always been interested in science education. I had also designed a program called Partners in Education, which you may have read about on my vita. It was an idea to have college students go into junior high schools and act as modified

teacher's aides, as a volunteer process, and to then help the students in any way that the teacher thought was useful. It was never carried out as a project, but I worked with the idea, I guess, maybe in 1966 or 1967, and I would, had I stayed at Sarah Lawrence for a longer period, probably have pushed it and worked it through to have it done with the local junior high schools. But it was called Partners in Education. I've often thought about that project; it would have been a good one. But the Undergraduate Research Participation (URP) of NSF, called the URP Program, was wonderful. When I became a member of the National Science Board, I urged them to reinstitute it because it was excellent.

de GRAAF: When had it phased out?

COBB: They're popular programs, and then they got phased out in the seventies, for one reason or another. Sometimes it's funding in Washington; sometimes it's because the National Science Foundation had competitive interests that differ--a whole number of reasons. But they never continued that Undergraduate Research Participation Program for many years. For a while there, in 1978, they just cut out funding education programs at NSF. They were switching it over to the new Department of Education. Remember HEW became HHS, Health and Human Services, and the Health, Education, and Welfare title was dropped. Education was changed from HEW to a whole Department of Education. Then, in 1981, Reagan became president. There was a big debate about eliminating the Department of Education, if you remember, and Terrel Bell was the director. He then instituted a blue ribbon committee to look at the state of education in K through 12 in America. David Gardner, now president of the University of California, was chair of that committee, and they decided to look at only K through 12, not college. They came out with a report called Nation at Risk. They [the Reagan administration] didn't succeed in getting rid of the Department of Education because of that report of the blue ribbon committee. There was no way they could get rid of the Department of Education. So the Department of Education took over a lot of the science education work in the early eighties, and only gradually did it come back over into the National Science Foundation's budget. There's

always been a tug, kind of a creative tension between those people in the National Science Foundation--the board--who want to fund science education versus those who favor funding basic science by individual scientists, as well as big science. Big science is superconductors, the big government laboratories, and the like. Science education has always been a little stepchild because it's been in competition with basic research for funds. But because of the state of affairs, everybody's finally waking up. America goes in cycles. In 1958 was the Russian Sputnik. We then had this surge of interest in science education. AIBS [American Institute of Biological Science] came along with three basic textbooks in cellular biology, organismic, and then ecology. So there was an emphasis on science teaching way back in the early sixties. Then it phased down. Now, we're up in the high period again. Of course, we at Cal State Fullerton profit from that because we are set up primarily to be able to handle the teaching of science, and we are awarded grants. We probably have well over \$1 million on grants in teaching. We have the David Pagni program. We have the Harris Schulz one, and the R. Nanes program. We are not set up to do a lot of the big laboratory basic research like the University of California system. So we're getting a lot of those science education grants. My point is that URP was an excellent opportunity for undergraduates to learn about research. Two of my students who were my undergraduate research participants went on to get their Ph.D.'s with great success, I was happy to say, and that makes me very proud.

de GRAAF: Were any of these NSF or Partners in Education projects you were associated with primarily oriented toward inner city teaching?

COBB: No, they were not.

de GRAAF: Sarah Lawrence was actually located predominantly in either a black or Puerto Rican area, wasn't it?

COBB: No, it was not. It was in Bronxville, New York, which was so white that they had no houses owned by blacks in Bronxville. It was a known special, private enclave, exclusively white. Just to the south of Bronxville was Mount Vernon, the southern end of which was black. But the northern end, where

we moved in '64, was entirely white. In fact, at my son's school, they bussed black kids into it to mix the school classes. Yonkers, on the western edge of Sarah Lawrence, was also absolutely white.

de GRAAF: At that time?

COBB: Yonkers, of course, has had this big racial battle in the late eighties. No, it was an enclave totally white. Sarah Lawrence, of course, had all these very rich young ladies, and a special, whole nest of intellectual excitement going on.

de GRAAF: So Sarah Lawrence itself didn't feel any commitment, necessarily, to go into inner city projects.

COBB: Not per se, no. There had been a big brouhaha with a sociology professor in '68 who had been studying a black neighborhood in Mount Vernon. In fact, the black students at Sarah Lawrence boycotted his whole project because they said, "We don't want to be studied anymore. We want somebody to do something for us, not study us."

de GRAAF: I guess the only other thing I might note is that your years at Sarah Lawrence corresponded with the height of the civil rights movement and the rise of black power. Here I'd like your reactions to some of the events there. First of all, Martin Luther King, Jr. What were your personal or collegial reactions to him?

COBB: I thought he was a very special person, and I followed him very carefully in terms of his speeches and whatnot. As I mentioned, in 1963, there was the March on Washington. I did not go to that march, but my husband went.

de GRAAF: Was he particularly active in . . .

COBB: Not active, just interested.

de GRAAF: Other events that came up--the freedom rides, the Mississippi summer, the Selma march--do you recall those, or did they particularly . . .

COBB: I knew about them. I wasn't myself actively involved in them.



- de GRAAF: Do you recall much about the growth of black nationalism, particularly perhaps, after the assassination of Malcolm X in 1965?
- COBB: Yes, I do remember that, and I had a very good friend who was one of the theorists who worked very closely with that field. I knew a lot of the people who were intellectually involved with that area. It was a very important time. I felt very strongly about it, because I felt much more aware myself as a black person in 1968 and 1969 than I had previously.
- de GRAAF: I was wondering.
- COBB: I might mention that the black students on campus brought it sharply to my attention at Sarah Lawrence.
- de GRAAF: Were there many black students at Sarah Lawrence?
- COBB: There were about thirty-five or forty, but it was a small school. In fact, Sarah Lawrence's black students set the message, the goal, for Sarah Lawrence activists that had not been clear before. The white students were often affiliated with SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]. You remember SDS?
- de GRAAF: Oh, yes.
- COBB: They were, in turn, linked with their boyfriends at Columbia University, and one of those young ladies was Cindy Firestone of Firestone Tire and Rubber. She was very active, and a whole coterie of very well-to-do white girls--because this was a women's college--were involved at Columbia, and also with some of the folks at Yale. The SDS started the whole sit-in at Sarah Lawrence, but they didn't have a strong platform, except in the large, generic sense of helping the world and so forth. But it was not focused. The black students helped SDS to focus on some specific goals for Sarah Lawrence.
- de GRAAF: Did this sit-in come in '68, in the wake of the Columbia protest?
- COBB: Yes, it was all tied together, because the students were good buddies.

de GRAAF: What were some of the changes that they sought at Sarah Lawrence?

COBB: More black students, black faculty, black studies. I've forgotten all the details of that platform, but it was a very good one--active in the community and all that.

de GRAAF: Were any of these changes implemented as of the time you left?

COBB: Yes. They added some black faculty; they added more black students. Alice Walker was there in 1966 or 1967, I believe, as an exchange student from Spelman. She had come up at the suggestion of one of our English faculty, who was a writer and a poet who'd met Alice at Spelman. We had this loose affiliation with Spelman as another woman's college. I recall that she took a biology course with me.

de GRAAF: The sixties also bring on the women's liberation movement. Did you have any role in any of their activities?

COBB: No, we really were not involved in '68 with the women's liberation movement. That really became much more visible to all of us, I would say, in the early seventies, with The Feminine Mystique.

de GRAAF: After the passage of Title IX?

COBB: No, with the book.

de GRAAF: Of course, that had been out since '63. I don't know how long it took to circulate.

COBB: Yes, but it became very popular. You see, we were a woman's college, so we had a lot of things already going on that were feminist. I would say we had a strong presence of women's awareness, definitely, from the very beginning. Our big discussions used to be about whether women learned differently from men. Esther Rauschenbusch believed they did, that there were certain kinds of things that women did differently from men. I never believed that. I believe that the learning process is the same. I never believed there was some particular mystique about how women learn. That was a thread that ran through a number of things at Sarah Lawrence. We were always terribly feminist-oriented because of

the kind of women who were there, a strong presence. And there were good, strong women faculty there. Our two physics professors were women, for example, and in our biology department, the three of us were all women. Our president, Esther Rauschenbusch, was a woman and the dean was a woman and on and on and on. As far as faculty, a psychology professor whom I knew, Gertrude Baltimore, was obviously a woman. Her son, a Nobel prize winner, is now the new president of Rockefeller University. So we had a strong feeling about women. As I said, Esther Rauschenbusch began this new course for return-to-college women. It was expensive--\$4,000 a year--but those women were from Westchester and could well afford it. Very strong feminism ran through the campus. I don't really remember much about whether Betty Friedan's book was part of what was being taught at Sarah Lawrence. I'm sure it was. But in the science and biology curriculum, that was not something I covered. I was much more aware of the societal racial activity. That was where my allegiance and my interest had been at that period of time, much more than about women. As far as the women's movement goes, I was living a feminist life by example. I was never politically active in the women's movement as such, particularly because the feminist movement--we often talked about it, as black women--was really an upper middle-class white woman's movement.

de GRAAF: I was going to ask, did you find some contradictions between the goals of women's liberation and most black groups?

COBB: Yes, because they had talked about the women's right to work. Well, we black women been working. We'd been living a feminist life all of our lives. We'd been, as I said, forced to work. Everybody I knew worked. It was just part of the life, because you had to make ends meet.

de GRAAF: In 1969, you leave Sarah Lawrence for Connecticut College to become dean. Had you had any prior administrative experience?

COBB: Heading up my science group as chair on campus. See, we rotated the chairs. It was a very small group of eight people.

de GRAAF: The whole science faculty was one department, basically?

COBB: Yes, one science group. And I had been involved on the general committee, which would be like our executive committee of the Academic Senate. I was on that for quite a few years, because I was a senior, tenured member of the faculty. I'd been tenured by that time five years. I was tenured at the end of my fourth year, early tenure, and so I had served on all these committees through the years. By '69, I was a senior member, and I saw many things about the college that should be changed. However, I did not actually have any dean's experience.

de GRAAF: Did Connecticut College approach you or did you respond to an announcement for the position?

COBB: No. What happened, and I've often said this when I talk to women's groups, a friend of mine who was head of the National Scholarship for Negro Students [NSFNS], who had formerly been with the National Merit Board, called me up. Hugh Lane called me one afternoon in the spring of 1969 and said, "Jewel, how would you like to be a dean?" That's exactly the way he said it. I said, "What do you mean, would I like to be a dean? What are you talking about?" He said, "If you care about some of the things you're complaining about that don't happen in colleges, then you might be able to be in a position to make some changes were you a dean." I said, "Well, yes, that's an interesting thought. What do you have in mind?" He said, "There's an opening for a dean of the college at Connecticut College." I said, "Connecticut College? Where is that?" He said, "It's in New London, Connecticut." I said, "New London, Connecticut?" To me, that was like the end of the world. Whoever would go to New London? I knew New Haven and Yale, but New London, Connecticut? Anyway, I said, "Okay." I had divorced two years before and come back from my sabbatical in Italy, so I said, "Yes, let's look into it." He said, "I'll give your name to the search committee." So he did. They called me up, sent a car for me, and I went up to the campus. I was interviewed, and I was offered the job.

de GRAAF: You said a moment ago that one of the inviting aspects of your taking this job was a chance to do

something about some things that had bothered you about colleges. What were some of these things?

COBB: I was very concerned about the absence of a strong black student presence and black faculty presence. I was also concerned about some of the curriculum and some intracollege matters that seemed to me to be very important.

de GRAAF: What curricular aspects bothered you?

COBB: I felt there should be a stronger science presence, and we were debating things like whether students should take large courses in addition to small courses. I don't remember all the other details, but they did have a lot to do with the presence of black students and the black presence in the curriculum. I felt there ought to be more in terms of black content material than there was.

de GRAAF: These were views that you formulated and espoused at Sarah Lawrence?

COBB: Right, over a time period. But I wasn't shouting them at the top of my lungs, because I'm not that kind of person. I was more involved with my teaching and research than I was in being political. I've never really been very politically active as a faculty member. Were I, say, at Cal State Fullerton, I would never have been on the Academic Senate, because I'd have been in my lab doing my research and teaching. Those were my primary interests.

de GRAAF: So you never went in the late sixties to any of these black power conferences or black studies conferences?

COBB: No, because I was a biologist. I wasn't in literature or history or sociology where those were the normal subjects of black studies.

de GRAAF: What was Connecticut College? Was it a public institution?

COBB: It is a private liberal arts undergraduate institution with a high tuition, like Sarah Lawrence, but much more traditional in structure. All white, essentially, in an all white town, except

for a small black neighborhood. It was mainly a white enclave. It is a very fine, conservative New England school, but a good school, with an excellent reputation.

de GRAAF: Was it coeducational?

COBB: Interestingly, in my last two years at Sarah Lawrence, we started the experiment of coeducation because Yale became coed, and they immediately accepted some of our best women students. They transferred; Yale didn't take them. The students themselves were attracted to Yale. That was about an hour and ten minutes from us. So Sarah Lawrence then announced that it would become coed. It was a period there when all the women's colleges were going coed, and Connecticut College had, the year before I got there, changed its charter from Connecticut College for Women to Connecticut College. There were 8 men living on campus for a year before I came. The women's colleges did it that way. They got a couple of men from another college on loan, so to speak, to see how it was going to work. Then they started adding them in incremental units, and that's what happened at Connecticut. So when I got there, there were 28 men on a campus with a student population of about 1,600. Every time I moved, I moved to a bigger institution. Sarah Lawrence had about 900-1,000 students. Connecticut had 1,600. Douglass College had 3,600. And, of course, here there are 25,000.

de GRAAF: Quite a leap, yes.

COBB: But the first two campuses were private colleges, very high academic standards, top 5 to 10 percent of the student senior class bodies were admitted. There were about 50 black students at Connecticut College out of 1,600. They had a sit-in and a protest, and they got about 70, because the movement was still going on in 1969.

de GRAAF: Oh, sure, very much so.

COBB: Cambodia came along, and Richard M. Nixon. We had a big sit-in and a big to-do about that, and again, Yale was involved, as a nearby, predominantly white male campus. This was the time of the Black Panthers and that real hot period of activism. We

had lots of student meetings and all-day sessions on issues associated with racism.

de GRAAF: During the Cambodian crisis, was Connecticut College ever shut down, as we [CSUF] were?

COBB: Yes, but not as rigorous a problem as you had. We had things we closed off, and the black students locked the administration building and sat in. I was always happy about that, because what they wanted I couldn't have gotten as an administrator: that is, more black students. So as a result, we got a black member on the staff of the admissions office--there'd never been a black staff member--in the Outreach Program. That would never have happened otherwise. Then we started really working hard toward getting more black faculty, and we succeeded in getting a few more. One of them is now dean of the college, and another one from Yale is still there and tenured. He got an M.F.A. from Yale, an outstanding artist. And a few others came along, but relatively few. None in science.

de GRAAF: None at all in science.

COBB: I taught in the zoology department, and I was the only one.

de GRAAF: I was going to get to that. A couple of other things on Connecticut College. Was it strictly a four-year liberal arts college?

COBB: Yes, an undergraduate liberal arts college, offering the B.A. degree only, and no vocational courses whatsoever. It's like Vassar, Smith, Mount Holyoke, that kind of place. We had a consortium with the New England schools.

de GRAAF: What exactly were your duties as dean? You were dean of the whole college?

COBB: I was dean of the whole college. I was academic dean. In the undergraduate liberal arts colleges they had three deans: dean of faculty, which I was not; dean of the college, which was the dean of all academic affairs associated with the students; and a dean of students, who had to do with student life. Wesleyan was set up that way, Trinity was set up that way, Williams, and all the Ivy League schools had that design.

de GRAAF: What proportion of your time was taken up with being a dean of the college?

COBB: About 80 percent, 90 percent. I went to my lab every morning from eight to ten, and then I left to go over to the dean's office.

de GRAAF: Did you teach any classes there?

COBB: Yes. I was a member of the group of faculty teaching the first year biology course and gave a certain series of the lectures and ran a lab. Then, I taught a junior level course for biology majors, and then I taught a senior seminar, all over different years. I only taught one course at a time. I could never have done more, because here I was teaching, doing research, and doing the administration associated with being a dean. At that time, I wasn't married anymore; I was divorced, so I had more time, especially the last three years. I was there seven years. My son had gone off to prep school and to college, so he was a freshman in college when I left in 1976. He was a freshman at Wesleyan when I left to go to Douglass College in New Jersey.

de GRAAF: Did you live in New London?

COBB: Yes, right across the street from the campus in a college-owned house.

de GRAAF: I also notice you were director of the cell biology lab again. Is this one case where you set up the laboratory?

COBB: Right. They converted a big classroom into a lab, which I designed. Those were the good old days.

de GRAAF: What were the general conditions at Connecticut College? You've mentioned the black students protesting and getting an increase in the number of students. Did you have any problems there? Or were you one of the few black faculty members there?

COBB: I was a full professor, yes. I never received tenure because I never asked for it. I was so naive when I left Sarah Lawrence. I gave up tenure, and it didn't even occur to me, it didn't even matter, literally. Of course, had I been smart like some faculty members who become administrators, they ask



about retreat rights before they accept the job. I didn't even know what that meant; I really didn't. Of course, Charles Shain, the president, came personally down to my house to visit me before I was hired. I find it very interesting, as I look at it, that he came to my home to visit me. He never went to the campus to visit me, although I'm sure they made inquiries the way they usually do. But I think he really wanted to see what my lifestyle was. I think about it and I feel like saying terrible things, but I do believe that that was a racist attitude. I would not be surprised, although he was very charming to me and we had a very good relationship, I think he had to be sure, and he came to my home. Very interesting.

(Tape 4, Side B)

de GRAAF: This is the third interview with Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb, occurring on the seventeenth of April, 1990, at Dr. Cobb's home in Fullerton.

Jewel, last time, we left at midstream your experiences at Connecticut College between 1969 and 1976. One striking thing about those years is that you were appointed to at least sixteen boards of directors, commissions, committees, and so forth, far more than at any previous time in your career. I want to get to that overall, but first let's look at some highlights. You were made a member of the Corporation of the Marine Biology Laboratory [MBL] at Woods Hole, Massachusetts in 1972. What does it mean to be a member of a corporation?

COBB: Actually, a member of a corporation means that one is elected by the incorporators, and this is a large group of individuals, over 700. To be eligible to be elected, one must be an active scientist. That is, people who are community folk who like the MBL or other walks of life, though they may be interested in MBL, are not eligible to be members of the corporation. It is a large group. About 700 individuals are members of the corporation, and they are eligible to vote for the officers and the various committees. They are eligible to be nominated for membership on various committees. It would be similar to, let's say, the faculty of a university. The community support groups or the staff would not be eligible to vote on faculty matters. This would be equivalent to "that kind of affiliation." They are selected after their vitae are submitted and examined, and they must be recommended by an existing member of the corporation.

de GRAAF: Do these people come from all walks of science? Because you instinctively look at the name and you think . . .

COBB: No, only the biological sciences, biologically related sciences.

de GRAAF: But it does not have to be necessarily related to marine biology?

COBB: No, because the Marine Biological Laboratory has many people who are not basic marine biologists, but

they are biologists. For example, people who are in developmental biology or embryology might be working on a fundamental marine egg system. A neurobiologist studies nerve transmission. They would be using subjects that come from the nearby waters when they're at the laboratory, because that's where the living specimens are. But back at their home campuses, they might be from Indiana University, for example, where they have been working on neural transmission using nonmarine organisms perhaps, amphibia or birds or mammals, for that matter.

de GRAAF: Is one of the rationales for being on this that you get occasionally to actually go to the laboratory and use its facilities?

COBB: One can use the laboratory if one pays a laboratory rental fee. The MBL is a hotel, if you will, whereby scientists with obviously suitable projects would submit their application for a rental of space and use of equipment during the summer, primarily; about 80 percent of the work that goes on in MBL is done in the summertime. That means one has the privilege of using the library and all of the facilities of the labs: the sea tanks are running, various other equipment, large, expensive pieces that are in the laboratory. But it's a rental arrangement, and often a department at university X may come with 3 or 4 graduate students, and they would occupy a laboratory. Down the hall, they may use some of the big pieces of equipment, such as the electron microscope or the scanning microscope, which are available to the entire group of scientists. I guess about 400 or 500 scientists are there in the summer. They also have courses for advanced work that are taught. The faculty of those courses are faculty only for each specific course. One year, the head of that course was from Scripps in La Jolla. They usually teach the course with a team of scientists, three or four, for two or three years. And then another year, a person may come from the University of Rochester, for example. It depends on the topic and the research emphasis and the syllabus for that given course during the summer.

de GRAAF: Did you ever either teach or make use of the facilities there?

COBB: Yes, I made use of the facilities for quite a few years. I first was there as a graduate student doing what we call independent research and attending the lectures associated with the lab. The lectures are offered by Nobel Prize winners and the like. Subsequent to that, I did not work in the laboratories or rent space in the laboratories or work with anyone, because my field was tissue culture, specifically mammalian cancer cells, so my work was as a library Reader. That is, I, again, rented a desk in the stacks which I used to do my reference reading and paper background material for writing my papers. Then, in more recent years, I have always been a Reader in the library, which is, again, with a capital R, whereby you give money to use the library privileges. That means you have access to all of the journals and computer data and can subsequently get articles xeroxed or information from the library staff, et cetera. A Reader may contract with MBL for a month or for two months' period of time.

de GRAAF: Are you still a member of the laboratory?

COBB: Yes, still a member of the corporation, and I make it a point to attend the business meeting every year, at which time the elections occur for committees and for trustees.

de GRAAF: I suppose we ought to follow up with the inevitable question, had there been any or many blacks or women in this laboratory prior to you?

COBB: Yes, indeed, though not many. Probably the most famous black biologist was there during the thirties and forties from the University of Chicago and, later, Howard University, in Washington, D.C. He was Ernest E. Just. E. E. Just was probably the most famous black biologist there. His picture now hangs in the general reading room of the MBL Library. A few years ago, there was an E. E. Just memorial lecture that took place. There have been several black scientists--biologists, biochemists, et cetera--who have been to the MBL, either taking courses or doing research over the years. In fact, there is a special program for minority college students that has been funded through the Rockefeller Foundation for a few years and, more recently, another program through the National Institute for Mental Health [NIMH] for minority

Ph.D.'s in psychology. They spend several weeks at MBL taking courses and doing research. There has also been the independent scientist coming from various medical graduate schools, such as Harvard, Pittsburgh, Howard University, Syracuse, the University of North Carolina--anywhere around the United States--to do research or take courses. But there are very few.

de GRAAF: In 1974, you are named a member of the National Science Board. This is the policy making body for the National Science Foundation?

COBB: Yes, that's correct, and that's a very prestigious and important board, and I found that experience extremely enriching in every way.

de GRAAF: You were on it for six years.

COBB: Yes. It's a six-year term because it transcends politics. It is not a political appointment. In fact, I was nominated in 1974 by Nixon and confirmed under [President Gerald R.] Ford. During that six-year period, I chaired a task force committee of the National Science Foundation on minorities and women which then became a permanent committee, I'm happy to say.

de GRAAF: With the idea of increasing the numbers of both in science?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Besides that, what functions did you have on the National Science Board? How often did you go there, once or twice a year?

COBB: No, we met every month. It was quite a time-consuming operation. I was on several committees--budget, special projects, et cetera--that had to do with the business of the board over those six years.

de GRAAF: Were they particularly in any way related to biology or cell biology, or did you have to tackle any aspect of science that arose?

COBB: There were larger issues on the committee. A lot of them had to do with major funding of big science, what we call big science, discussions related to the government-sponsored laboratories; the graduate

fellowship programs; evaluation, after some site visits, for certain university grants; evaluation of the Antarctic program, for example, and the future of science education.

de GRAAF: I noticed you've been quite interested in the Antarctic, haven't you?

COBB: Yes, I have. I've been very interested, and I have kept up relatively well with what goes on in Antarctica.

de GRAAF: How many people at any one time are on the board?

COBB: It is a twenty-four member board, and there are six people selected each year, rotating off, and new ones every two years; six people are on. Then, those six nominees go on to the president for approval, and he nominates. Then the president, if he approves, presents them to the appropriate congressional committee on NSF appointees, and there is a congressional hearing. Because I was residing in Connecticut, Senator Lowell Weicker presented and spoke in my behalf. Once approved, the president then announces his appointments. I was at Connecticut College at that time. Don Shields from Cal State Fullerton [president 1971-1980] was in my 1974 class as well.

de GRAAF: I noticed that, yes.

COBB: He was one of the six people appointed.

de GRAAF: Did you get to know him fairly well?

COBB: Yes, we talked a lot about what he was doing out here, but never, never did I realize I would be here in Fullerton at Cal State.

de GRAAF: Even as late as 1980 you had no inkling that he, for instance, was thinking of leaving?

COBB: Absolutely none. Jim Zumberg was also on that committee with us. Of course, I do remember when Jim left SMU [Southern Methodist University] to go to USC. Jim, by the way, is a geologist and was very involved in establishing some of the first research programs in Antarctica, because a lot of what happens in Antarctica is of extreme interest to geologists.

de GRAAF: One other aspect of this. Was it very common for scientists to be chosen from comparatively small colleges like Connecticut College to be on the National Science Board?

COBB: Not so common, but they always had a few representatives from small colleges. They tried hard to mix things up. For example, there was a woman professor, Anna Harris, from Mount Holyoke who was also on the board with me. From time to time, other campuses were represented that were not the top fifty-two universities of America. Those fifty-two are the big research universities. Clearly, of course, for example, Don Shields, who came from a big university but not a big research university, was on the board. There was one other woman who became a member of the board, Marian Koshland from the University of California, Berkeley. Her husband, Daniel Koshland, is now the editor of Science. Of course, he wasn't then. So there were three women on the board at that time. There are usually only three. By the time I left, there were two black members of the board. Walter Massey came on my last two years. The chairman of the National Science Board for my last two years was black: John Slaughter, who is now president of Occidental College. He followed George Pimentel, who is a professor from UC Berkeley. But George stepped down because he had a lot of work to do. Prior to George Pimentel, it was Richard C. Atkinson, who is president of UC San Diego. So they were all there during the time I was there. There's the chairman of the board, and then there is the head of the whole National Science Foundation, Guyford Stever. They are two separate but very important top positions.

de GRAAF: Besides you and Shields, have any Cal State University faculty ever served on the board?

COBB: No. I don't think so, in the past. Now there are two presidents serving. Warren Baker, president of San Luis Obispo, and Tom Day, president of San Diego State, are both members of the National Science Board.

de GRAAF: Then you also, during your time at Connecticut, were on the board of directors and also on the Commission on Academic Affairs of the American Council on

Education (ACE)? Were these elected or appointed positions?

COBB: They were appointed positions. I was on the board of directors for two years of ACE. That was a very exciting and a very important experience. We met regularly, I guess five or six times a year, and we were at that time in the throes of a number of issues associated with minorities and faculty in colleges. The nation itself was very much aware of the results of the civil rights activities during the sixties, so that was one aspect of our American Council on Education work. That was only one small part of it. The large issues associated with colleges and universities across the United States were discussed, and also how the ACE headquarters activities would be structured to respond to the needs of the colleges and the universities. That was our charge, so to speak. It was a most interesting time.

de GRAAF: I'll bet. ACE covers the entire gamut of education, does it not?

COBB: Yes, it does.

de GRAAF: Were you there, though, primarily for higher education affairs?

COBB: No, I'm sorry. ACE only covers higher education, but it covers the gamut of aspects of higher education. There are a number of national higher education organizations, like AASCU, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, on whose board I sat more recently, since I've been in California. Then, there is the American Association of Colleges and Higher Education, AACHE. Then there is also NASULGC, which is the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, and that is another group for which Cal State Fullerton is not eligible. We are members of AASCU and ACE if we wish to be. ACE includes many colleges and many universities and has more of broadbased constituency with eligibility being that you are a four-year college or university. But the dues are very expensive and our budget is tight, so we do not belong to everything that we're eligible to belong to. But I was involved with ACE for quite a while, and it was a very enlightening and important experience. I think I contributed some facets to



that committee. Sister Ida Gannon was the chair of the executive committee when I was there. She was president of Mundelein College in Chicago at that time for seventeen years. She has since, of course, stepped down from that position.

de GRAAF: You were also on several minority-oriented organizations. One that particularly caught my eye was the Committee for Minority Involvement in Higher Education in Connecticut.

COBB: MIHE, we called ourselves, a very interesting and worthwhile committee. It was made up of interested faculty and administrators, I guess twenty or twenty-five people, who wanted to examine the presence of minorities at various colleges and universities in Connecticut. It also included the Commissioner of Higher Education for the state of Connecticut and several white faculty and administrators. Our modus operandi was to invite a given board of trustees from, let's say, the state of Connecticut Vocational Colleges system, the tech colleges, to a meeting of MIHE, and we would discuss with them, ask them questions about, how they perceived their plans for incorporating more minorities in their faculty, their student body and administration. We hoped they had plans that would increase the presence of blacks. While it was focused mainly on the black population, it was not exclusively black. The focus was on black because of the high underrepresentation. We used the same procedures for the University of Connecticut system. We called in the trustees. That was our process. We had only the power of suggestion and awareness, and to bring to the level of consciousness the fact that this group (MIHE) was looking at them and wanted them to make some changes. So it was a very useful process.

de GRAAF: What were some of the changes that you were seeking? Or, to put it another way, what did you see as the main impediments to a larger black presence in higher education in Connecticut?

COBB: I would probably say the national, generalized impediments. For one thing, the numbers of blacks in Connecticut were probably very low; in fact, I'm sure very low in New England. And also the pervasive, generalized racism that exists, not only in New England but all over the United States, for

that matter: the idea at some subtle level that there weren't any blacks around who were eligible, that were good enough. "We can't find them," or, "Well, you know, that's complicated." "This would be someone who might not fit in." The whole gamut of reasons: those were impediments, both perceived and real.

de GRAAF: Were you trying, among other things, to get Connecticut colleges and universities to recruit outside of the state?

COBB: Oh, sure. We did not discuss with them where they were to recruit or any of those kinds of details. That was their task. Our task was to make them aware that we thought that their operation was inadequate, given the fact that there were very few minorities involved in their particular institutions.

de GRAAF: Were you at this time operating under the aegis of any national or state Affirmative Action programs?

COBB: No. It was nonstate affiliated, noninstitutional affiliated. It was simply a group of interested citizens, all of whom were part of higher education.

de GRAAF: By the time you left Connecticut College, did you see significant results from this work?

COBB: That's very difficult to say, but I would say yes, in the long run, although I have not really followed it closely. I do know that in Connecticut, at least certainly by 1985 or 1986, which would be ten or eleven years later, they did have a Commission on Minorities in Higher Education, like an advisory council which published a report with some goals which were very good. The report was clear and unambiguous. It said, "By year, let's say, 1990, there should be a certain percentage increase in the number of financial aid recipients who are from minority groups" or whatever. That kind of report that would change the statistics relating to the numbers of students in different types of universities, as well as faculty, as well as their presence in administration. I think that was part of an evolution that occurred. The Commissioner on Higher Education of the state of Connecticut at that time was proactive and very positive, but he had no

power at the campus level. It was simply an advisory group, so to speak.

de GRAAF: During your years at Connecticut, you're also on a Committee on Opportunities for Women and Minorities in Science.

COBB: That was a committee of the AAAS [American Association for the Advancement of Science]. The AAAS established around that time an office for increasing the number of women and minorities in science. That has evolved and developed into a very strong office which still exists. Dr. Shirley Malcolm was the head of that office, and, since then, she has in the last year just been promoted to the head of all education--having nothing to do with minorities or women--programs for AAAS. But at that time, it was specifically to, again, look at ways that we might increase the amount of science awareness of high school and junior high school girls in general, and minorities, also. That was our charge and our charter. We worked on that.

de GRAAF: Were you aiming primarily at affecting the consciousness of female and minority students or changing the attitudes of those that might recruit or decide on their role?

COBB: Mainly the students. One of the things that had happened during the time I was chairing the task force at the National Science Foundation relating to women and minorities--they added handicapped to our subset; we did have \$5 million for that total program. That's not much money for a national program, but this statewide operation that I just mentioned was really sort of a spinoff from that. We, the National Science Foundation, did set in place some good national programs. In fact, our National Science Foundation sent out RFPs for people who'd be interested in setting up programs for women, programs for minorities, and we set up several of those. They're still in existence, now independently funded, I'm happy to say.

de GRAAF: Was one of your goals in some of these programs to open up positions in science-related industries for women or minorities?

COBB: We didn't talk about industry, but it was inferred. Mainly, we did not talk about what they would do

after they got their degrees, in terms of jobs. We were interested in getting them through to the terminal degree, to the point where they were eligible for jobs.

de GRAAF: Another thing you took on: you were on the board of directors of the American Conference of Academic Deans for, I guess, one academic year, 1972-1973. Is that something of an honor to be selected to that only three years into a deanship?

COBB: Yes, I guess it was, in a way. I was, at that point, dean of Connecticut College, which was, again, a rarity for New England and nationally, so that is why I was involved in that particular group.

(Tape 5, Side A)

The issue of women administrators in higher ed had just begun to change because of the very strong women's movement in the late sixties and changes that occurred, for example, very near us, in Brown University, where Pembroke College became a part of Brown University. As a result, the Faculty Club at Brown University, which never admitted women to eat or do anything else there, now did so. So there were a lot of changes going on in the early seventies with reference to women in administrative positions, particularly those in coed institutions.

de GRAAF: So part of your reason for serving on that board was to try to advance the cause of women?

COBB: Right, to try to address the issues and to strengthen the number of women who might be moving into administration.

de GRAAF: Finally, in 1974, you became a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences. Was this also something of an honor?

COBB: Very much so, and I still consider that quite an honor. That's an elected position. The Institute of Medicine is one of three organizations that are part of the National Academy of Sciences, and eligibility and election mean that those folks who are members of the institute deemed your credentials and what you were doing of sufficient importance and stature that you were eligible and could become a member of the institute. That's the way that works.

de GRAAF: Is membership predominantly an honor, or are there some functions that are associated with it?

COBB: No, it's an honor, although if you are geographically anywhere near Washington, D.C., where the national headquarters are, they expect you to participate. Now, we have an arrangement whereby there is a regional meeting of IOM, and it occurred two months ago at the new Beckman Center at University of California, Irvine; that was for the western region of the institute. I went to the meeting, but we had no particular assignment, so to speak. You are to vote once a year on the new members who come in, and there is a national meeting every year in Washington in November. But unfortunately, my calendar has not allowed me to attend, although the issues are very important.

de GRAAF: Does this try to set national policy?

COBB: Oh, yes, national ideas, national studies. It looks at large issues like AIDS, and it looks at how medicine is delivered to rural communities, issues associated with impact of certain environmental substances. It does studies. It's not a lobbying organization. It is a study organization designed to enhance the aspects of medicine as delivered to the public. It includes, by the way, some members who are not scientists; public figures associated with science may be members of the institute.

de GRAAF: Is this a lifetime membership?

COBB: Yes, except I think they just passed a charter revision, an amendment that says after the first year after one reaches the age of sixty-six, one becomes a senior institute member, which is, of course, something that I will become.

de GRAAF: Has the Institute of Medicine done much before or since you've become a member about minority or women's roles in medicine?

COBB: Not particularly. That's not one of their major focuses. However, there are a number of women and minorities--certainly a number of people I know--who are members of the group and on the executive committee, too, for example. The president of the Institute of Medicine is now Samuel Thier, and prior

to that had been Dr. David Hamburg, who is now head of the Carnegie Corporation.

de GRAAF: These are a lot of things to combine with being a dean of a college, and yet I notice you still had some time for research, because you seemed to be producing a few more papers, mostly on melanogenesis and the growth of pigment cells.

COBB: Right.

de GRAAF: Was this basically a continuation of your earlier work?

COBB: Yes, and my grants. I transferred my research grants and equipment, and they designed a new laboratory at Connecticut for me. Those were the good old days when there was money around. They actually took a classroom and designed it under specifications that had been suggested.

de GRAAF: Because your National Cancer Institute grants required that you have such and such laboratory space?

COBB: I couldn't have functioned without the laboratories. They were well equipped laboratories. I had two research assistants and a laboratory diener [helper], plus some senior students who were biology majors.

de GRAAF: What ideas did you get out of this mixed experience you had in Connecticut, being publicly involved, being a dean, but still being an active researcher, about the balance that ought to exist among faculty between research, teaching, and outside activities?

COBB: My ideas, of course, would be my own personal ones, and I'm not saying that they are the right ones. I don't think the word "right" is the right word. But as far as teaching is concerned, if you're in a university--that is, if you're in a normal faculty position, if you have the word "professor" in front of your name, rather than "lecturer." I say that because there are some appointments in universities whereby people are called research investigators. But if you are a "faculty member," it is expected that you will be teaching students, and the number of students you teach or the amount of teaching that you do depends upon the character of the

institution. If you're going to be a good teacher in science--in fact, in any field--you have to transmit to the students some excitement about your discipline. The scholarly activities that you engage in are transferred by your enthusiasm through your teaching and, in turn, make you really a good teacher. If you have not done your research, you come in and you simply reiterate what X people have said over the years, you get to be stale as an instructor and you also become stale yourself, which is worse. Then you kind of lose interest in what you're doing and your own ego gets deflated. So that's the point about research and teaching. I think they mutually reinforce one another. The kind of research and the kind of teaching varies by institution and by discipline.

As far as public service is concerned, I believe that that is extremely important, but public service varies. People are doing public service by virtue of their churches. I happen to have been interested in what was going on nationally in higher education, and I guess that's why I've evolved toward being a president. But other people would feel simply that they want to participate in some other kind of outside work. I think it's very important that a scholar contribute to society, because they have so much talent, I think, to offer in committees and to help guide citizens. Perhaps it's a committee to change the structure of a city council or to determine pathways for organization of a beach association. But the logical thinking that scholars theoretically do really helps to shed light on what the committee members or lay persons are thinking. Because sometimes they're terribly emotionally caught up in a little thing over on the right and they have to be brought back into focus. I think as many bright people as possible ought to be serving on various committees outside, off the campuses. I think that's been a big help to making some community-based decisions. It may not have to do with education at all. Again, that's somebody's privilege. I know that our late Dean James Diefenderfer was a very active member of his church, and that was a very important role that he played. That was his very strong perspective. I know other members who have been members of their city councils, and others who are very good amateur writers or artists. They vary. But at any rate, I do think they all go together.

Now, from my own perspective, I probably did more outside activities than I would normally have done had I been married still, but I was not at the time. By the time I got to Connecticut College, I was divorced. I had gotten divorced before I went to Connecticut College. During the time when I was there, I had become interested in national education organizations. Really, it was my first external activity when I got to Connecticut College. At Sarah Lawrence, I was not involved too much in them. When I became a dean, then I became involved, and that's the way that goes. But it varies, depending on the person. I think it all worked out very well, as far as my son is concerned, because those groups I mentioned did not take me away very often. Also, when he was fifteen, he went away to school, which he wanted to do; I wasn't as keen about it.

de GRAAF: Where did he go?

COBB: To Phillips Exeter. He spent his last three years of high school there.

de GRAAF: One final thing before we leave your Connecticut College experience. You obviously were beginning to come out very much on behalf of women and minorities in science. Did you see a particular need for this, besides expanding job and education opportunities? That is, did you feel that getting minorities or women into science would somehow change their image in the general populace?

COBB: Change the image of women in the general populace?

de GRAAF: Or minorities?

COBB: I wasn't really thinking about what the general populace would think. I was more interested in developing the human potential that exists for individuals who had been socialized to believe that they couldn't do something. That is by far the most important thing, to change the attitude of the young women or minorities, period, to overcome the socialization factors that existed, the negative societal factors. And also, in so doing, you contribute to the positive contributions they make as human beings.

de GRAAF: This negative self-image has been extensively documented in the case of blacks. Did you find that



it was comparable with women in science? Did many young women have a feeling that science was a masculine area or that they could not establish careers in science?

COBB: Oh, definitely. I just talked yesterday, in fact, with someone who said that they had a young daughter who lived in another town. They were divorced, so the mother and the daughter were living in another town, and this daughter had a lot of bright young friends, thirteen-year-old girls, who would be at the house all the time. And they kept talking about, "Oh, I'm no good in science. I don't want to do any science. I don't want to do any math." These are bright, middle-class, privileged youngsters. That is, they came from families where parents were college educated. And their attitude was, "I just can't do science." It is still a serious problem of an image of science as being something that boys do. If you think you are good in math or in geology or physics, heaven forbid, or chemistry, you are aware quickly that you're unusual. Now, biology is considered less masculine and, in fact, the statistics show us that, proportionately, there are many more women Ph.D.'s in biology and health-related areas than there are in physics, chemistry, or math all combined because of the image of biology. It's part of your body, it's health, it's nurturing, it's all those other things. Of course, there are very few women in astronomy and engineering.

de GRAAF: In 1974, you had a Ford Foundation grant to work on the experiences of campuses that had a significant increase in their black students. Did this come out of a 1973 conference on that topic?

COBB: Yes. It was a conference that was held at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Carolyn McDew and I edited the conference material. She was at the University of Connecticut and I was at Connecticut College. I suggested the title "The Morning After," because what it really had to do with was the experiences in these predominantly white campuses in New England five years after Martin Luther King had been assassinated. The tragedy was followed by a strong jump in black enrollment. We wanted to find out what was actually going on in 1973. That's essentially what this conference aimed to do. I asked for a small grant

from the Ford Foundation. It took, I think it was, \$4,000 to publish it. So it has been published. It is a monograph and has an ERIC number, and it was very interesting. About twenty campuses were surveyed.

de GRAAF: What were some of the findings?

COBB: The financial aid packages were given mainly in private schools. The University of Massachusetts also had aid plans. The financial aid packages at all the schools seemed to be adequate. There was a hesitancy on the part of these black students to take a freshman curriculum that was perceived as less difficult. That is, there was a great deal of sensitivity and ambivalence about advising black students to go slow on taking, let's say, chemistry and biology the same year, and math the freshman year. There was this complicated feeling about advising that on one hand says, "Don't take two hard subjects your first year. Slow down," versus the student response, "What do you mean? Do you think I'm dumb?" and ambivalence about doing that. They reported on students' participation in intracampus organizations and groups, as well as their academic performance. They did pretty well in academic performances. And, of course, we looked at the dropout rates. We looked at some of the graduation rates. In general, the campuses that had these enrollment figures responded to that increased enrollment by trying very hard to keep the support system going, but much of it was still in the process of not succeeding for complicated reasons, and so they tended to vary in success. There was also discussion on the part of the administrators who were present in terms of the attitude of the institution toward bringing in black studies and other support systems, and the issues, you know, of adjustment to college. They're the same issues we now still deal with.

de GRAAF: Was the general consensus of this conference and these proceedings that a special administrative structure was needed for, at least, a large number of black or other minority students?

COBB: Yes. There was an awareness that there would have to be concentrated efforts to help those students in an essentially alien environment. The private colleges were working on this very much.

- de GRAAF: Did you find much evidence of racial problems on the campuses?
- COBB: No, that didn't come into discussion, particularly, except the analysis that when black students didn't seek the help that was available to them, the recalcitrance was based on a projected fear on the part of those students that they didn't want the teachers to know that they didn't know. In other words, they didn't want Whitey to know they didn't know, because they perceived that Whitey already thought they were dumb and they shouldn't be there.
- de GRAAF: Was there a lot of feeling that many of these black students had not received a good preparation for college from their precollege schools?
- COBB: That was not necessarily discussed. The students that were accepted in the private schools were all top students. You take Wellesley, Vassar, Harvard, Smith, Bowdoin, Williams, Trinity, Yale, and Wesleyan, you're talking about a certain kind of student.
- de GRAAF: This may or not be the best time to go more broadly into some of these topics--you decide--but it seems to be established that by the time you're finishing up your service at Connecticut, you are indeed rather deeply into minority and women students' issues.
- COBB: Yes, in a way, but not really, because that's not my mainstream. My mainstream work had nothing to do with that. My mainstream work was not involved in those categories.
- de GRAAF: True.
- COBB: Let's talk about the large issues of administrative activities, because that's what I was, Dean of the College at Connecticut College. One of the aspects that I was particularly charged with was trying to look at how these students who were seniors handled themselves with respect to graduation and post-college lives. A very high percentage at Connecticut College would be, and had been historically, going on to some kind of postgraduate education, and that followed in several categories: those who were going to a professional school, such as law school or medical school and those who were

going on for masters and Ph.D.'s. So one of the major activities that I spent time on, literally, over many, many weeks, was to have what we'd call fireside or after dinner dessert and coffee meetings with students in the living rooms of the dormitories. We had ten, twelve, fourteen dormitories; I'd say ninety-five percent of the students lived in dorms. I spent time talking with them about programs available; aspects or nuances of going on to graduate school; what the GRE [Graduate Record Examination] meant and, of course, distributing that to them--the dates for all the exams--telling them that the bookstore had special books on GRE areas; explaining to them the graduate fellowships and scholarships were that were available; nuances about different kinds of graduate schools, different kinds of medical schools and law schools. We always had an up-to-date record of LSAT [Law School Admission Test] scores and of what those inferences were.

I also spent a great deal of time--for the juniors--talking about international experiences, international education through IIE [Institute of International Education]. In my office, we kept an extensive documented file of programs for students to spend either the junior year or post-senior year abroad, and what they were about. Through my office, we also administered the Watson Fellowships. We did the interviews for the Watson Fellowships, which way back then were a marvelous--\$8,000 a year, no questions asked, no report required--way for students to spend the post-senior year abroad working on a special study area of concern to them. We interviewed those students, and they had marvelous projects. We were one of thirty-two colleges that were given the Watson money; it's IBM money. That aspect of things worked very well.

I was also very involved in coordinating and chairing the committee on financial aid scholarship monies, mainly, as well as other kinds of financial aid. We had some interesting rulings in a private college that would be different than those here. For example, we had the requirement that they could not work but so much during the academic year. They could not have cars, because a car would cost about \$1,000 or \$1,200 a year to keep, and they were living on campus. If they could keep a car, then they didn't need \$1,200 from the college. We also had to evaluate the kinds of work study opportunities that were available for them; how much

of the package would be work study versus grants; and, in general, make sure that the students had a fair evaluation of their financial needs.

We also were very involved during those days with the transition from a single-sex college to a coed college, and that was a fascinating period. When I went there in 1969, there were only twenty-eight men. Of course, by the time I left seven years later, there were approximately 60 percent women, 40 percent men. With those changeovers, there were a number of things that happened on the campus, one of which was that in 1972, Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972 was passed by Congress. So we then had to look carefully all over again at our sports programs, at our athletic facilities, whether, in fact, we were distributing those monies we had appropriately for women's and men's sports. We had some big adjustments that we had to do. We also changed and had a new athletic director. In that process, we had to make sure that that athletic director--it happened to be a man--understood what we have as Title IX, different kinds of equipment and a whole upgrading arrangement.

de GRAAF: Prior to Title IX, had Connecticut College placed much emphasis on athletics?

COBB: Not too much. It had focused on dance. It was very strong in dance, and it had a good, strong women's gymnastics program, and we had a women's basketball team. But when the men came, we had to then start men's basketball, soccer, lacrosse. During that time, we had a very big debate about whether we would have an ice hockey rink. There was a place off campus near the campus--the land belonged to us--that we would be able to build this rink on, and there was a long and big discussion, somewhat like the kind of discussion we have these days about our athletic stadium: whether or not this was a viable idea for a campus to have. But the main reason we got into the ice hockey, which is very popular in New England, is because of the men. They were practicing at a commercial ice hockey rink, with all the difficulties. So that transition was fascinating.

We also had big transitional problems about the dormitories. We had to remove a lot of the beds and get new beds that were longer because, on the average, teen-age boys tend to be taller. That meant a certain kind of change in the budget. We

also found another aspect, which was that boy students are harder on furniture than girls, so we had a higher breakage problem, another budget difficulty. We also had a problem in those days, particularly, with drinking. You were able to drink alcohol in Connecticut at the age of eighteen, and the popular thing to do was, when the kids had social parties, to have beer parties. Of course, we had a little beer pub. So we found that when the boys were present--I should say this is a campus relatively isolated, about an hour from New Haven, an hour from Hartford, an hour from Providence--they had parties and they came from other schools on campus, and boys were in the dorms and whatnot. We tended to have things like telephone booths thrown out of the windows or beds thrown out of the windows or other things, causing big damages. Physical damages in the bathrooms occurred and things took place that would not have occurred had we been an all-women's college. And we had a tragedy. We had one tragedy with a young man during spring break. You could stay on the campus, but the dorms were, essentially, empty. This kid died. Apparently he had, we think, a combination, maybe, of a drug and alcohol. We don't know. He had had too much to drink and gone to his room by himself. Probably, what we think is he vomited, but he was so drugged out of it he choked on his own vomitus. They found him three days later. It was awful sad.

(Tape 5, Side B)

We were talking about the changing of students from all-girl to coed and what some of the consequences were. As far as the curriculum was concerned, there was an increase in the number of students interested in the sciences. That was a happy thought. We needed more scientists. This remained a liberal arts undergraduate campus with the B.A. degree offered, but with increased numbers of students enrolled in the sciences after we admitted boys.

de GRAAF: I see, that's interesting. I gather your job there as dean was somewhat analogous to being a dean of students?

COBB: Not exactly, because we had a dean of students. In the liberal arts, Ivy League type colleges, one has an academic dean of students who deals only with

the academic affairs of students--not the social life, not the dormitories. Financial aid and the academic adjustment of students, that's the milieu. And, of course, s/he is intimately involved in the curriculum discussions with faculty matters.

de GRAAF: You were in that situation?

COBB: Yes, but I was not dean of students. Dean of students was held by somebody else.

de GRAAF: But you still felt that regular dialog with students was important.

COBB: There were three of us as the top three administrators at the college: the president, the dean of faculty, and dean of the college. Next down were the deans of the classes. There was a freshman dean, a sophomore dean, a junior dean, and the dean of the college, who worked with seniors.

de GRAAF: Anything else you'd like to say about your role at Connecticut?

COBB: Yes. It was a very exciting period because it was a transitional time in higher education, namely, for us in terms of changing from a women's college to a coeducational college and all the aspects of that. There was also the change in our relation to societal developments that impinged upon the campus. For example, I came there in 1969, and we closed the campus for the Cambodian incident in 1970 and 1971. With that, some changes in student representation on committees occurred. We began to have students on committees. We began to have a more involved student organization awareness of what went on in the curriculum and more of a role to play in the matters of the campus than had been possible before. The presence of men on the campus created a change in the political interest of the students. That is, the male students tended to be more interested in college governance than the female students had previously. I saw that subtle change. Now, it was also tied in with the activism of students because of Cambodia, so I'm not quite sure how much of it was due to the gender change versus the political action awareness period of students in those early seventies. I was there during that very critical period from 1969 to 1976, and I could see these changes. One thing that was very clear at

Connecticut that I think is a model that we have not really done much with certainly on our university campus is that every candidate who was to be interviewed as a new faculty member had to be interviewed by the department's student committee. If a new biology faculty was to be selected, they were interviewed by the student club--it wasn't a trivial club; it was a serious club--for that department as a part of the input into the evaluation of whether that faculty member was going to be hired.

de GRAAF: Was the student input ever a crucial determinant?

COBB: Yes, in some instances. But in general, consensus was reached between the students and the faculty. Also, every year, the student group had an opportunity to evaluate the courses taught for that year: whether they were clear or not clear; also to suggest courses for the department. Whether the department actually taught them or not was, of course, up to the faculty, but they would say, "We think we need a course in . . ." or "It's not enough that we're learning about X, Y, or Z." It was a very important, serious role of what they call the Student Executive Committee Group for each department, and I liked that because it was not a popularity contest; that's quite different. It had to do with their serious thinking about the curriculum.

de GRAAF: Did the faculty accept all of this greater student input to other faculty hiring and to course content?

COBB: Yes. It had to be passed by everybody. By the way, on the faculty of Connecticut College and at Douglass College, the president chairs the faculty meeting. That's the way it's done everywhere. It's very unusual here, very atypical [at CSUF, which elects a faculty member to chair the Academic Senate]. You've never been on any other campus, so you may not be aware of that.

de GRAAF: I've been at Howard once, but that I found quite autocratic.

COBB: That's not a good example. But at all the Ivy League schools and all the other places, such as Douglass College, the faculty meetings are chaired by the president. That's quite normal, really, but



not in CSU, apparently. Things got off to a wrong start in 1959, in my view. (laughter)

de GRAAF: That's an interesting observation. In 1976, you move on to Douglass College at Rutgers. Rutgers, I understand, was the state university of New Jersey?

COBB: Is, yes.

de GRAAF: As the dean of the college.

COBB: No. I was dean of Connecticut College, which was quite a different kind of role than dean of Douglass College.

de GRAAF: I wanted you to tell how it's different.

COBB: I was the chief academic officer at the college. The Douglass College phenomenon is that it is, historically, the women's division of Rutgers University. Rutgers University in New Brunswick had, I guess, probably five undergraduate colleges, and each college had its own campus, its own faculty, its own dormitories, and its own student body.' In the years up to 1961 or 1962, I guess it was, the state monies were given directly from the legislature to the college for Douglass College, which was called NJC, New Jersey College for Women, directly from the legislature to the college. It did not pass through the president of the university. And each college of the university got its own money. Around 1963 or 1964--I'm not sure when, way before I got there--the money was then rearranged so there was a lump sum given to the president of the university and then distributed to each college. So that, of course, was a very big difference, because then there was the chance for politicking and manipulation from above, taking monies out and not giving, for example, and there was much less campus control. We used to have to defend our budget every year, like a department does. Now, Douglass College was founded in 1919, after two consequential situations: namely, money came from Congress that was available through the Land Grant Acts to have home economics taught at

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' In addition to this complex at New Brunswick, the State University of New Jersey had campuses at Camden and Newark, each with several schools.

land grant colleges for the benefit of society and agriculture. So the trustees at Rutgers College, which it was then--it used to be called Queen's College, and it was founded in the Colonial Period. The trustees said, "Well, gee, we can't do home economics. We're a men's college." Meanwhile, Mabel Smith Douglass was campaigning through the New Jersey Federated Women's Clubs for a women's college equal to the men's college, because women were taxpayers also, and New Jersey had a free, taxpayer-supported men's college only? So between that and the fact that there was money available for home economics, plus a gift of a big piece of land, Douglass College was founded and called New Jersey College for Women. It was first run by three or four trustees from Rutgers College, and then it evolved through the years to become the autonomous New Jersey College for Women.

So coming up to 1976, when I got there, Douglass College historically had its own campus, its own dormitories, about 3,500 students, and its own faculty and its own curriculum. But it was part of the Rutgers University system and was beholden to the larger decisions by the president and by the provost, who was over the colleges and all the segments: Eagleton Institute for Policy Studies, as well as the graduate school of pharmacy, for example. By a long, complicated story, the medical school had been split off from Rutgers. It was then its own autonomous medical school by the time the seventies came along. The dean of Douglass College was, in fact, the president of the college, because the faculty was our faculty, the students were our students, and the campus--the grounds and all of that--all the scholarships, all the monies, endowments, and whatnot all were ours. There's a big, nice endowment for Douglass College.

de GRAAF: Did you seek this position?

COBB: No, I didn't.

de GRAAF: Were you invited to apply?

COBB: I was invited to apply. I never sought any of those positions. I was invited to be dean or whatever I was doing, as far as my administrative jobs were concerned, at all three of them: to go to Connecticut, to go to Douglass, to come to Cal State Fullerton.

- de GRAAF: What was it about Douglass that intrigued you and made you willing to leave Connecticut?
- COBB: It was a bigger job with more responsibility. It was, like I said, being president of a campus. I knew the campus because I had visited with the then-dean of Douglass, Marjorie Foster. When I'd been down to Princeton to a conference, she invited a few of us up to her house afterwards. Marjorie had retired, and that's why the job became available.
- de GRAAF: Were you the first black administrator at Douglass College?
- COBB: To my knowledge. Certainly the first black dean.
- de GRAAF: Had its dean always been a woman?
- COBB: Yes, all the way through. I was the sixth dean. Two of the other deans, interestingly enough, went on to become college presidents, one to Wellesley and one to Radcliffe.
- de GRAAF: Was the faculty predominantly female?
- COBB: White male.
- de GRAAF: White male?
- COBB: Yes. What else is new? However, I must say that we had quite a few women, interestingly enough, in math and in chemistry, higher than the national average. But the faculty was predominantly male. In the languages, we had, perhaps, more females than would normally be at a nonwoman's college. But the chair of biology, the chair of chemistry, the chair of history, of economics, American Studies, political science were male. The English department had a woman chair. We had a good, strong women's studies department, very good academically, highly ranked. It was probably the second strongest in the nation. The first and oldest women's studies department was at San Diego State. You may know that. Marilyn Boxer headed that program. She's now vice president for academic affairs at San Francisco State. She was dean of arts and sciences at San Diego State.
- de GRAAF: Was there any ethnic or Black Studies program at Douglass when you were there?

- COBB: Yes, there was an Afro-ethnic Studies program. It was called Africana Studies at Douglass when I got there.
- de GRAAF: So your role as dean was sort of analogous to being a president of that particular college?
- COBB: At that campus, yes. But it's much more complicated than that, because we had these layers above, yes.
- de GRAAF: Insofar as there was academic governance, was it strictly at Douglass or was there also a universitywide academic senate?
- COBB: There was a universitywide senate. There was what we would call a New Brunswick campuswide academic senate and there was a systemwide academic senate, which meant the Newark campus and the Camden campus. There were also disciplinewide groups, regardless of whether they were in New Brunswick or Camden or Newark. So there were layers.
- de GRAAF: In that respect, Cal State Fullerton must have been a little bit simpler.
- COBB: In that way, yes. That's true.
- de GRAAF: You were also professor of biology there. Was that basically a retreat right or did you continue to teach?
- COBB: I taught, I guess, probably four or five years. I taught one course, a junior level course, there. I might add that I received tenure. In fact, I would not have taken the job without it. I did not have tenure at Connecticut College because, as I said to you, I didn't even know to ask for that. That was okay. Anyway, I had tenure. But not only did I have tenure, I had a professor II rank. There are two ranks of professors at Rutgers, professor I and professor II. Professor II is the top rank of the two professors, and that only occurs if one has an especially prestigious academic record. I think out of our 200 to 300 faculty, there were 9 or 10 of us at Douglass who were professor IIs. It's quite rarely given. And the salary was higher. Anyway, I came in as a professor II and could have stayed there, as you say, with retreat rights had I decided not to keep being dean.

- de GRAAF: Some of your roles and experiences at Douglass--did you work directly with department chairs and faculty?
- COBB: Yes. We had our faculty. . . . I guess it would be equivalent to the academic senate executive committee. I worked with them. We met regularly, and I chaired that.
- de GRAAF: Was Douglass predominantly an undergraduate liberal arts college?
- COBB: Essentially, yes, because we had a separate graduate school, but many of our undergraduate faculty, of course, were graduate faculty as well; but they taught graduate courses.
- de GRAAF: But at Douglass you wouldn't have been personally responsible for dealing with several different schools the way you are at Fullerton?
- COBB: Oh, no. That's right; it was a smaller job. It was, in fact, the college campus, and our college campus was smaller than HSS [School of Humanities and Social Sciences at CSUF], because the total campus was 3,500 students. Under me were all the various deans. We had a dean of students and all the residential programs and the registrar and the director of financial aid and things of that sort.
- de GRAAF: Did you have to do a lot of fund raising or community relations?
- COBB: I didn't have to do any of it, but I did it because that's what I think a leader is. You have to be a visionary and not just a manager. I was able to start a very good program which has now been the basis of the stronger, bigger operation that's going on, and that is to establish a special program for science management for women, which was funded first through a foundation and has since become institutionalized. I also got funds from the National Science Foundation--I, of course, was on the board at that time--for special women in science projects that we had. But I did not have to go forward into the community as such. I might also say that any time I raised money, I had to get it cleared first through the Rutgers Foundation so that we wouldn't both be going to the same place. But I considered fund raising as part of what I was

supposed to do, because I was trying to push Douglass all the time. I had got a lot of good money that way.

de GRAAF: As far as your relations with the faculty and university governance were concerned, how frequently did the academic senate of the college meet?

COBB: Of our college?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: Once a month. It wasn't a senate. It was all of the faculty. We didn't have a senate. We had an executive committee of the faculty, and we met, probably, every other week, depending on what the issues were, because we had to do several things. Once, we had to hammer out our general education plan or core curriculum, as we called it. That took about two years, and I was heading up that whole thing. It worked out pretty well, and we got that passed through the faculty. Then we had big debates about how much foreign language we should have on the entrance exams--the same things we're talking about now. Should we have an entrance exam and could they be exempted from the first year of a language if they scored at a certain level? What score should we accept for advance placement? We changed the physical education requirements; we lowered them during the time I was there. Everybody used to have to take, I think, two semesters of physical education, and then we dropped it down to one semester. Those were some of the big debates we had.

de GRAAF: Did Douglass remain a women's college all the time you were there or did it convert?

COBB: It's still the women's division, but it has a different structure altogether. There are no more faculty that belong exclusively to any one college; they now belong to the university. But we had what we called at Douglass "Douglass Fellows," the Douglass Fellows Program, which is a voluntary group of faculty who choose to affiliate themselves with Douglass and work through and get special programs done, and that's been a very good program. What was the other question?

- de GRAAF: Had the student body changed at all? Did it change while you were there?
- COBB: Yes. Now, when I was there, even, if a student from another campus wanted to take a course at Douglass in economics, they took a course in economics. I taught male students in my biology courses even then. Similarly, if our students wanted to take a course that was offered at Cook College or Livingston or Rutgers, they just applied. They had to get on the bus that went around all the campuses if you had to go across town to take them. You could always take courses elsewhere. One of the big things that we fought--and so far it has been kept that way--was one thing that I was going to go down to the mat on, and that was that our dormitories not be coed. Because then you lose all semblance of the collegiality of a woman's college, which was our particular mark and our characteristic stamp that held us together. It is what has complicated and, in fact, practically destroyed Radcliffe from Harvard, because Radcliffe changed to allow men to live in Radcliffe's dorms and Radcliffe students to live in Harvard's dorms. I talked to an old friend of mine only last week who graduated from Radcliffe, and she said nobody really remembers anything. "They don't talk about, 'I go to Radcliffe. I go to Harvard,'" as students. So we were interested in keeping our integrity. We had unique houses at Douglass. We did when I was there and still have them, language houses. There was an Italian House, a French House, a Russian House, and those were not to be coed, because they were run through our Residence Education Program.
- de GRAAF: Were all those houses just given those names or did they signify a strong international component?
- COBB: They had to be majors in Italian or Spanish or whatever language. You couldn't live in there otherwise. You spoke the language at lunch or breakfast. They had to go to a big dining room for meals, but they'd have a Russian table or a Spanish table. That's done in most of the Ivy League undergraduate campuses.
- de GRAAF: Were you able to have any of the personal relationships with students, meetings with them, that you had had at Connecticut College?

- COBB: Yes. They used to come to my house. I lived in the dean's house, somewhat like this, a very large dean's house right on the campus, actually. We had a lot of meetings.
- de GRAAF: The dean's house was provided to you as part of your job?
- COBB: Part of my job description.
- de GRAAF: It must have been a little bit of a comedown to come out here and find that there was no such thing.
- COBB: Indeed. It wasn't a comedown, because this job was exciting and had so much more to it than my previous job.
- de GRAAF: Did Douglass have a very large minority student population when you went there?
- COBB: No, quite small.
- de GRAAF: Which is a little unusual for New Jersey, isn't it? Because New Brunswick isn't far from Newark.
- COBB: It's a University of California model equivalent versus the state colleges, like CSU. So there was a competitive selection process; it was not a rolling admission. They waited until they got all the applications, and they took the best students. They did have a certain small percentage which were admitted under special admits, as we called them, financial aid special admits. But they were like the top 10, 12 percent of the graduating classes, the way the UC system is. We had state colleges as well. We were always working toward getting more black students, however, as well as Hispanic, mainly from Puerto Rico, in that side of the country.
- de GRAAF: Did you notice any significant change in minority enrollment by the time you left Douglass?
- COBB: I think we were climbing a little, but it's a hard job. I might make another point. When I first went to Douglass College, it was the women's division of Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Rutgers College was the men's college. It then decided, two years after I got there, that it would become coed. So we had a change and a drop, of course, in the sense that we did not become coed, they became coed.



So they got some of our women applicants that would normally have come to us, because they couldn't have gone to Rutgers College. It's confusing to the outside high school student, because the words "Rutgers College" mean Rutgers University. Douglass doesn't have any normal way of connecting unless you know. So we had to step up our recruitment efforts. They then had a universitywide admissions office, a whole new operation. We had some say-so in terms of students coming to us, in terms of qualifications. We could take whatever or not take people that we didn't want. But when they went to recruit, let's say, to high schools in Trenton, New Jersey, they went as the university, and each of the schools in New Brunswick and Newark and Camden had a representative there that could distribute their literature. So we didn't have the singular exposure and visibility that we had had in the past, where we went out with our own admissions office, our own recruiting team. So we had to do it in different ways, and it was very difficult. There were many obstacles placed in the way of remaining a woman's college, remaining a strong Douglass College that we knew. By the time I got ready to leave, I was very disgusted with the way they were trying to decimate what had been a very strong and fine women's academic entity.

de GRAAF: Were there some in the overall university administration or its board of trustees that simply wanted to get rid of the idea of a separate women's college?

COBB: Yes, including the president of the university. He claimed lip service that he didn't. But he was saying that in one breath and doing things policywise that would negate them.

de GRAAF: Who was that at that time?

COBB: Ed Bloustein, who just died. They're now looking for a new president of Rutgers. I got a letter yesterday. I guess they wanted me to think about it, submit some names.

de GRAAF: I don't know what it was like in New Jersey, but the years you were at Rutgers roughly coincide out here with a leveling off of student enrollments, and also, I might add, of budgets. But that was,

perhaps, the idiosyncrasy of our governor then. Did you have any such problems?

COBB: Indeed we did, the same problems, big problems. How much of ours was exacerbated by the decisions from above us on the campus, I don't know, but I lost seven faculty during the time I was there. That was all very painful, and, of course, they were all very angry about it.

de GRAAF: They had to be laid off?

COBB: Not laid off, just new positions weren't to be filled. No, we did not lay off anybody.

(Tape 6, Side A)

de GRAAF: So you had a plateauing effect in enrollment, and funding, too?

COBB: No, not so much enrollment. We had to cap our enrollment at a certain level; we were not allowed to increase it, and that was on purpose.

de GRAAF: On purpose because of funding conditions?

COBB: Yes. We were a little dismayed. We weren't sure whether some of the capping was to keep us under control and to take those lines away from us, or for other reasons. But we could have had more students, had they accepted more. There applications were there but, you see, it's not a rolling admission, so it's not the same kind of thing. It depends on how far down in the pool you've got that you accept. Of course, the percentage of acceptances in a public women's college like Douglass was much lower than it would be here. Our percentage of acceptances at CSUF was around 80 percent, but ours at Douglass was much lower, 34 percent. Tuition here at CSUF is nothing compared to what it was at Douglass College. Even now, tuition there is about two and a half times what it is here.

de GRAAF: In spite of the fact that it was a state supported institution?

COBB: No question. You didn't know that our students' fees are second from the lowest in America in what they have to pay? That's what absolutely amazes me when they protest a ten-dollar increase.

- de GRAAF: I knew they were low. I didn't know they were second lowest in the country.
- COBB: The lowest is the University of the District of Columbia, at least last year.
- de GRAAF: Going to your personal accomplishments at Douglass, the thing that seems to stand out here is that you attain several awards. One of the more interesting ones was a Phelps Stokes [Distinguished American Visitors Program] travel award to Africa.
- COBB: Yes. That was a very, very interesting trip. The late Phelps Stokes, philanthropist, was dedicated to increasing the spread of information about America to Africans and to enhance the knowledge base. So they had a special program for distinguished Americans to go to Africa for short trips, headed by the president of Phelps Stokes, who was a former ambassador to Ghana. I went to Africa with four other distinguished people. Ed White was head of the New York Opera Company. The other one--I can't remember his name now--is the man who does the music on Saturdays at the Metropolitan Opera. The two of them were involved in music, the City Center operation. Also along was Mr. Gino Rodriguez, who was in international art. He had a gallery and had done a number of things internationally. Then, Ambassador Franklin Williams led our group. It was a fantastic experience, although I became ill in Liberia and spent a week in the Kennedy Hospital in Monrovia. I received excellent care.
- de GRAAF: How long?
- COBB: Three weeks.
- de GRAAF: Then you were also voted, in 1978-1979, the outstanding alumna by the United Negro College Fund.
- COBB: Yes. That, I think, was mainly because of my position.
- de GRAAF: At Douglass?
- COBB: Right.
- de GRAAF: And then Outstanding Educator of the Year by the [United Negro College Fund].

- COBB: I think that United Negro College Fund award was when I was at Douglass College. What year was that?
- de GRAAF: Academic year 1978-1979. Finally, the Woman of Achievement Award from NYU. That's as an NYU alumna?
- COBB: Right.
- de GRAAF: Any comments or thoughts on those awards?
- COBB: No, except I was very proud to get them, and it's always a nice feeling to get those kinds of accolades.
- de GRAAF: Do you feel they were predominantly for your science, for your educational administration, or for a mix of those two?
- COBB: At NYU, it was a combined reason, science first. Probably my administrative positions and career posture, I would say. They weren't science awards for research activities. They were more because of the total picture of my being a woman scientist and an administrator.
- de GRAAF: About this time, you also begin to be granted several honorary doctorates by various colleges. Were these, again, not only for your science, for your administration, or, do you feel, for a combination?
- COBB: For a combination and my collective career. That brings me to a point we have not discussed, and that is a special program that I began, got the idea and initial money for, for a postbaccalaureate premedical and predental program for minority students when at Connecticut College, beginning in 1974. That program facilitated the entry into medical school or dental school every year of six to eight postbaccalaureate minority students. Some were Hispanic, some were Asian, one American Indian, and several blacks, who had graduated from college with demonstrated learning ability and skills. They had not majored as premeds, but they wanted to go to medical school or dental school post-graduation. So they had successfully to do a lab science before applying, and then they applied by a competitive process whereby faculty from several medical schools joined me to assess their applications. They were

funded through private money at Connecticut College and they all went to medical school or dental school. I'm very proud of that program. That's my favorite program.

de GRAAF: And you set that up?

COBB: I set it up and I got the funding for it. When I say "I got the funding for it," I went with the Development Office to several foundations--the Macy Foundation, the Van Ameringen Foundation, and one other--and then, ultimately, a part of the Public Health Service. The last year, we got government money. Before that, it was private money. So a number of those honorary degrees cited that in their presentations at the commencement exercises. The first honorary degree I received was from Wheaton College, which is a women's college in Norton, Massachusetts. That was because I was a woman dean, and they were few and far between. That was before that postbac program was established. Other honorary degrees have to do with contributions as a woman educator and leader, some of which, around 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, were all associated with that postbac program and lots of other things.

de GRAAF: With all of your administrative jobs, did you still have any time for research? Did you have a cell lab at Douglass?

COBB: No, I could not do research at Douglass. That job was too encompassing. I'm going to receive another honorary degree June 16 from Northeastern University in Boston.

de GRAAF: Very good. One thing that I wanted to get into briefly. At Connecticut, we talked somewhat about athletics and Title IX. Let's carry that over to Douglass. Did Douglass College have an athletics program?

COBB: It had a very good, very strong athletics program. Even though we had voted to reduce the number of courses required for graduation as an academic program, we still had a very good athletic program. Most of the women on Rutgers University women's basketball team were from Douglass College, and we were very good. I remember having a big argument with the athletic department of the intercollegiate program, particularly at Rutgers, because the little

band that played never performed when our women's basketball team was playing. It was an all-university team, but the point was that they didn't think women's sports were important enough to have the varsity band play. It's the same thing we go through all the time. But we did have a strong presence in athletics at Douglass College. I'm very pleased about that.

de GRAAF: Let me follow that up. You say you're pleased about that. What is your personal philosophy about the role and importance or unimportance of athletics in higher education?

COBB: I think it's extremely important and an integral part of an undergraduate educational experience, primarily if one can participate as an active member of a team, whatever it is, or in an individual sport. I think individual sports in many ways have their virtues. My preference is tennis, which is an individual sport; but it may be a team sport, or swimming or whatever, that enables you to develop special skills, as in archery, for example. That's important for your own health, physical health as well as mental health, to be able to exercise and to enjoy that kind of opportunity.

de GRAAF: In either Connecticut College or Douglass, did you run into any problems, financial or otherwise, with the athletic program?

COBB: No, we did not. We did not have a big time athletic program of the kind we have here with our university.

de GRAAF: Let's go on to your termination at Douglass. You've mentioned that you and the university president didn't exactly see eye-to-eye. Were there any other problems you were encountering by 1981 at Douglass?

COBB: No. It was mainly the reorganization of Douglass College, the downgrading of its autonomy, that I felt was wrong.

de GRAAF: Before the Cal State Fullerton job came along, had you had any thoughts of going elsewhere?

COBB: Oh, yes, definitely. I was offered a couple of things. I had a very big problem situation in that I was a finalist--it's a very interesting case, and

when I retire, I'm probably going to write about it--for the presidency of Hunter College. The then-chancellor of the system, City University of New York, Kibbee, had indicated his preference that I be the president of Hunter, but I ran into a number of things which were mainly political and also racist. The search committee was headed by a man who had some directions from city hall, an interesting man who was a former rabbi. Mayor Edward I. Koch had given him some instructions. It had a big political implication because city college [CCNY] was also looking for a president, and the city of New York was in a very difficult, awkward position of having City University also looking for a president. That person had to be black. There was just no other political answer to that question. They had had a very big problem. It either had to be a black or a Hispanic. It could not have been a Caucasian. Politically, the campus sits right in the middle of Harlem, and they'd been through all the brouhaha at Columbia about six or eight years before with the Center for Urban Education, and it just absolutely could never have happened to have a nonminority president of City University.

So here I am, being nominated after a member of the search committee came to me and asked me whether I would apply for the Hunter position, so I said, "Okay." So I sent in my vita, innocently. Then began the witch hunt, as I became the finalist. The New York Times began writing articles. They came to the campus and they asked I don't know how many faculty what I was like as a dean. Of course, among those there were departments who had lost a position based on those seven lines I mentioned, and they, of course, had nothing but negatives to say about me because, in conference with the faculty executive committee, I had to decide with their consent which positions we weren't going to fund. That was a combination of FTEs plus the strength of the department. So what happened was, Steven Weiss at The New York Times would write an article every other day about what was wrong with me: I wasn't popular, faculty say. . . . He chose what he wanted to choose to put into the paper. Meanwhile, it turns out that a Jewish member, Gold, her name was, said she was sure that a black woman could not raise money for Hunter College. I know that she said that, because I had an acquaintance who was on the search committee, a black man who was there and heard her say that. Meanwhile, of course, at

Douglass College, I had been involved with the whole operation of fund raising, and every year, we went up \$50,000. The last year I was there, we raised \$350,000 from Douglass College alumnae, with me as head of the college. So that was not true, they knew that, and I told them that. But the point was they could not have a black president at Hunter and a black president at City University. You understand.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: So what they had was long petitions submitted to the board from white women scientists and faculty from all over the city of New York and the boroughs in favor of me being president of Hunter. It was to the point where the chancellor was calling me on the phone in summer of 1976 to ask me when I could start, when I was able to tell my faculty that I would be leaving. You know, all those little terminal discussions that you have when you're about to select somebody. But it did no good because the chair and Gold and one other person opposed me in a final meeting. So they came to the board in the September meeting and they couldn't reach an agreement, so they closed it and decided to reopen the search.

de GRAAF: This was September of 1980?

COBB: No, it was earlier.

de GRAAF: So shortly after you'd gone to Douglass.

COBB: I guess it must have been 1978, two or three years before I came here. Anyway, they then decided to reopen the search. I'm told that they worked hard at trying to find some more candidates with my credentials, because there were very few people [with my qualifications]. They wanted a woman, so they looked some more. The rabbi got this one vita from Donna Shalala, who was younger than me and had less experience and no administrative experience in higher education. They selected her. She's a good person. I like her very much. But anyway, my point is, I have experienced racism in higher education in relation to searches. The other one was at the University of Michigan. So I feel sometimes very bitter and sometimes not, depends on how you look at things. You can't do much about that. But they



ended up having a black president of City University.

de GRAAF: These allegations about faculty discontent at Douglass, had there been any celebrated incidents while you were there, differences between you and the faculty or the faculty senate?

COBB: No. I always had a consensual process; I believed in that. We worked very well together, really very, very well. We never had grievances; I don't remember any grievances. There were differences between me and any given faculty member who might be for the reorganization of Douglass College while I was not. There were definitely differences on the autonomy of Douglass. But I definitely did not agree with them on academic campus matters.

de GRAAF: In other words, they sided with the university president.

COBB: Yes, for reorganizing and downgrading our independence in order to merge as one big university.

de GRAAF: That does raise an interesting question: the future, in your estimation, of women's colleges. Some would say very bluntly they are archaic, a thing of the past. Do you share that view or do you think women's college still have a role to play?

COBB: I think they have a very definite role to play, and a very positive role. But what I did want to bring out, which was a very important point, I think, and is a useful analogy anywhere, is that these faculty at Douglass--and I think of two women faculty, particularly--saw their own interests improved in the "reorganization." They saw it as strength for their discipline and their scholarly activity rather than their allegiance to the college as a women's entity. That is, they did not see that a woman's college was as important as their own discipline. They saw their own strength in furthering, let's say, economics as a university discipline where they, as an economist, saw that they would get more positions, that they would get more prestigious faculty given to them. More attractive faculty would come if they were a bigger department, because maybe the economics department at, let's say, Douglass was not as strong as the economics

department at Livingston. So if they could join together, they would be stronger and therefore they'd attract more people into economics and they themselves would have a larger scholarly club. See what I mean? I didn't see this identified with me--of course, being a human being--at a personal level. I thought, for example, one particular woman, I said, "Don't you understand how strong and important it is for women to be in mathematics, and you are our role model for women in mathematics, and you want to dissociate yourself from a strong women's college?" But she saw it as a mathematician, if you know what I mean. So we had differences of opinion. But that's not the same as a grievance because somebody is not promoted. I must say there were a lot of people who were not promoted, because I always feel strongly about standards of academic performance. Regardless of what the discipline is, you've got to be good, no matter what your gender, your nationality, your culture. You have to be a good mathematician and teach properly at college and do research at Douglass College--Rutgers--because we were a Ph.D. granting institution. Teaching was most important, but the priority for research was much stronger at a university system like Rutgers.

de GRAAF: Did you raise the standards for promotion while you were there, or seek to raise them?

COBB: I wouldn't say "raise." They were already pretty strong. I might also say, let's say a history department at Douglass would evaluate a person. I would evaluate a person. Then, the systemwide department would evaluate a person. So there were three levels.

de GRAAF: Was it very common that the last systemwide committee would turn down somebody that had the school's and your approval?

COBB: Not common, but it did happen quite often. It happened less often, because I was very rigorous. On the other hand, it always is true that the department's going to be easier on a faculty member, because they're among them and they like them and they know them better. It's a natural, human experience. We had some horror stories like that occasionally, but not often.

de GRAAF: Anything else you'd like to say or recall about your experiences at Douglass?

COBB: Yes, my relationship with the New Jersey Federated Women's Clubs. They still are the fairy godmothers of Douglass College. They were responsible in large part way back in 1917, 1918, and 1919 for the college to have ever been founded, and they have always adopted the college as their special protege. Their statewide headquarters is on Douglass's campus. They have a Douglass Day for prospective students every spring that they finance. They have special scholarships that they give to our students. The dean of the college is always invited to their annual meeting, which is somewhere in the state, in which the ladies are always introduced as "Mrs. John Brown" and "Mrs. David Smith." They don't use their own first names. It used to be that they wore white gloves. These are ladies of the old school, if you know what I mean, and they could fit very well into the most conservative community you'd ever want to know about. But I thought they were very much in our corner at Douglass College all the time, and I had a very positive and strong relationship with them, personally, as dean of the college. I spoke often at various New Jersey Federated Women's Clubs, and they may have had one or two brown or black faces among their hundreds and hundreds of ladies--very few. But I remember very well, when I heard this job was open at Douglass, I had asked some friends for New Jersey who happened to be up for Thanksgiving and I was asking this friend, "You know, Marjorie Foster's getting ready to retire from Douglass College." That's all I said, because no one had called me about the job. I wasn't really ever going to apply there, I really wasn't, because I had just finished with the Michigan experience and I was not going to go through another one of those. He said, "Jewel, forget it, because the New Jersey Federated Women's Clubs. . . . In New Jersey, of all places? You think you're going to get to go there as a black dean?" It's very interesting.

I say all this to say that the perceptions that I and other black friends have had of places have been negated once I had gone there. I had the same kind of statement made to me when I came here to CSUF from people in Los Angeles. How was I ever going to survive, they said, in Orange County, communitywise, because Orange County was conservative? So I had some good experiences with

the Federated Womens Clubs, and I think they are a perfect example of the strength of women's clubs and organizations when they have adopted a good cause, I really do.

de GRAAF: I imagine one of the things you wished for out here was a comparable organization?

COBB: We have a good women's organization, but not the same. They're not as organized in Orange County as they were in New Jersey. For one thing, they in New Jersey started almost 100 years ago, when the lack of feminism and women's rights were not so easy to be angry about. It was a different kind of thing. The culture in New Jersey is different. The women there have lived in the state for three, four, five generations; it's an older culture. Orange County is a relatively new culture. Three generations ago, there were only a few farms around, so it's a different kind of culture. It's a younger group with shorter histories here.

But anyway, the other thing about Douglass College, when I left. . . . I have very nice memories about Douglass because the faculty had this big going away party and, to my suprise, Bob Kelsey, who was our business manager but an artist, presented me with this painting. That was given to me at this party. It was a fun party. They had a song they had done, and they had costumes. I mean, it was really a super event, and it was a nice gesture--very relaxed, very funlike. Also, interestingly, every dean of the Douglass campus has to sit for a full-size oil portrait which hangs in the entrance of the administration building, complete with robes and all, so I had that. It's very nicely done, a beautiful oil painting done, incidentally, by a black artist who won the bid. Lastly, of course, the math and science residence hall has been named after me and Polly Bunting. We were scientists and former deans. It's called the Bunting-Cobb Hall of Math and Science, and it was dedicated last October.

de GRAAF: That's a separate building?

COBB: Yes. I'll show you a picture of it. At least, I'll show you the wing of it.

de GRAAF: That is something to be proud of.

COBB: It makes me very happy.

de GRAAF: This is probably a good place to end, then. We can begin our fourth interview with your coming to Cal State Fullerton.

(Tape 6, Side B)

de GRAAF: This is interview number four with Jewel Plummer Cobb. It is being conducted on May 8, 1990, at her residence in Fullerton. The interviewer is Lawrence de Graaf.

Jewel, the first thing I'd like to review from our past is a little bit more on that National Science Foundation program for teachers of science that you were in charge of, I believe, at Sarah Lawrence.

COBB: Yes, that was the National Science Foundation program to enrich and bring up to date the science knowledge of teachers in high school. It's not unlike a program that we have now in the School of Mathematics and Natural Science. We have an enrichment, or refresher, program in geological science, in physics, and another one in mathematics.

de GRAAF: This is aimed at persons already teaching in the field?

COBB: Yes, they're veteran teachers. But the idea was to bring them au courant with the latest in biological research information. The lectures occurred in the evening once a week, from, say, seven to ten. There was a midterm exam and a final and also a final paper.

de GRAAF: Coming as it did in the 1960s, when there was a great emphasis on reaching out to minorities, was there any special orientation in this program?

COBB: No, there was not. This was science only.

de GRAAF: How long did you remain with this program?

COBB: I guess we had it as a grant to Sarah Lawrence College for the sciences. We must have had that for three years.

de GRAAF: You did not take it with you to Connecticut?

COBB: No. It was a grant to the institution, for the sciences. The grant I took to Connecticut was my own individual research grant.

de GRAAF: This was a National Cancer Institute grant?

COBB: That's right, yes.

de GRAAF: Going on to the seventies, one thing we haven't completely explored is the impact that some of the changing social norms of the seventies might have had on higher education. One, of course, is greater trends toward sexual equality. You mentioned something last time on the impact of Title IX. First of all, let me clear up one thing. Many people look at Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972 and immediately think "athletics." But actually, Title IX had ramifications far beyond athletic programs, didn't it?

COBB: Yes, but that was not a problem for us in 1972, because we had been a women's college before, and we were hiring women faculty and administrators. The greater impact there was that we were now taking men, and we had to adjust the furniture in the dorms, as I mentioned. And some of the behavior of the male students was rather rambunctious, in terms of destroying furniture in the dorms. But the social changes had to do with what we call the opening of the dormitories to visitors at all times. This means doing away with the philosophy of in loco parentis. That is, there could be male visitors in the dormitories for overnight, and that was quite new. Parents were just beginning to accept the fact that there were no special hours and the young ladies could receive guests who stayed overnight. Some of our problems were when a young man would stay there a week or two or three, and then the students in the corridor would complain that this person was there that shouldn't have been there that long.

de GRAAF: A young man who was not a student?

COBB: A campus visitor, a boyfriend of one of the students. That was a problem in those days. Of course, now it's accepted without a blink of the eye.

de GRAAF: Did Title IX in any way discourage unisexual colleges? It didn't forbid any women's or men's colleges?

COBB: It had an impact indeed. I don't know much about the other group of male colleges that changed to female, except that we were directly impacted when

nearby Trinity, Wesleyan, and Yale became coed. By the time I was at Connecticut College in 1969, Trinity and Wesleyan were coed. That meant that a number of the girls that would normally be coming to Connecticut College would now go to Trinity or Wesleyan. So it was a matter of financial exigency, really, to increase the number of men coming to a women's college. That's the same thing that's going on right now with Mills College. You know the students are out on strike and they're protesting the college going coed. They claim they will stay out until after exams are over. The same reasons are behind this issue. I admire the women students at Mills for their spirit. Mills College was having difficulty getting strong female applicants, and the trustees decided that they would have to change because, let's face it, education requires money and it is a business. It's the business of educating, so finances play a very important role. It was definitely the reason why Connecticut College went coed. But it went coed before Title IX.

de GRAAF: Which raises an interesting question: what do you feel instigated the change of a place like Yale, which historically, for many decades, was a one-sex college, into a coeducational one?

COBB: Finances, pure and simple. In all of those cases, it was finances. Because Yale became coed in '67 or '68, way before Title IX. What they did at first was to take transfers. When they did that, they gave the girls coming in preferential spaces in the dorms, and the men students really were furious. They resented it tremendously. But they still had Morey's, the famous tavern, which was only for men, and that attitude still prevailed over things at Yale left from the all-male years. In fact, what they did at Yale was to increase the number of students rather than cut down on the number of men, because "Old Eli's Leaders of the World" were not to be tampered with. Old Eli's "Special men from Yale would always be"--that was sacred, so that's how they did it. I was at Sarah Lawrence when this first happened, and they really took the best of our women students, because they were attracted to the idea and they could be accepted. They only took the very best, best women as transfers, because they wanted the experiment to succeed. Likewise, when we were at Connecticut College, we only took the best men transfer or freshman students.



- de GRAAF: May I ask as an interesting sidelight, approximately what is the sex ratio at Connecticut College?
- COBB: Now, I guess it's about 40-60. It was never 50-50; it was never meant to be 50-50. I don't know what it is at Vassar, for example. They, of course, did the same thing.
- de GRAAF: All through the 1970s, the Equal Rights Amendment is first making its way through Congress and then through the states. Did you find that that was a movement that in any way spilled over into higher education?
- COBB: Well, 1964 was the special equal rights component. You're not talking about 1954?
- de GRAAF: No, I'm not talking about civil rights. I'm talking about the Equal Rights Amendment. The ERA, the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution.
- COBB: That was much later, and our Connecticut MIHE activities responded to that new law.
- de GRAAF: That was in the seventies. It passed Congress in '71.
- COBB: It did not particularly have any obvious impact at Connecticut College. I remember Caroline Bird wrote a book about all of this during that period, and I did a number of lectures related to hiring and empowering women. I was very much involved with women in higher education and used to lecture in that genre. There were five pioneer women in higher education that met in Sturbridge, Massachusetts in the early seventies, including Sheila Tobias and Adele Simmons, among others whose names escape me. That group had its first meeting at Sturbridge. Then it met at Brown University to form a new organization called HERS, or Higher Education Referral Service. Its purpose was to facilitate the movement of women faculty into college administration in response to the ERA. Pembroke, the women's college of Brown, dissolved itself, and Brown University became coed at the undergraduate level. We, the HERS group, used to have meetings there, and I was involved in those early meetings. Then, I was one of the founders of another group for minority women modeled after the same concept, which was called NEMWA, or New England Minority Women

Administrators. It was composed of minorities--Asian, black, Hispanic, Indian, if there were any, women--who met regularly, had conferences once a year, or maybe met more often to talk about some of the things that we could do in terms of helping minority women in higher education. So both of those groups were flourishing in the seventies. The larger group, that nonminority women's organization, established a special summer institute in Philadelphia, at Bryn Mawr, which is still going, and another branch of it in Denver, which has to do with summer enrichment for aspiring women administrators. It offers an intensive period of three to four weeks of training and information about how to be an administrator, things related not just to motivation but to concepts in budgeting, organizational development in administration, what are some of the procedures that work and don't--that kind of thing, enlightenment programs, and so forth.

de GRAAF: Do you recall that in any of these organizations the idea was very often floated that you would be better off in your goals if the Equal Rights Amendment were ratified? Or did that not seem to be of major concern?

COBB: No, that was not particularly directly related to women's jobs in higher education. It [jobs] was related to the 1967 EEO, Equal Educational Opportunity Act, which said that all jobs should be equal. That had a very important impact. The ERA was considered more social than related directly to a job. There were a few suits going around in the seventies relating to women who didn't get tenure. They were more aware of their rights as women professors than they had been before. I recall a couple of classical cases of friends that I knew at a nearby college, the University of Connecticut, where the professor, in one case, sued. It was inspired, I'm sure, by this rising indignation of women professors about how they were treated, essentially.

de GRAAF: You must mean the EEOC, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which was Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It specified that equal opportunity for acquiring and advancing in jobs could not be denied on account of race, creed, or sex. This was also a period in which you get some changed ideas on student rights and student independence. One

example would be, of course, that the time-honored concept of in loco parentis, in place of parents, really seemed to be dying out.

COBB: That's correct. And that's when we did away with parietals; that was the era. It began, really, in the late sixties. We had a meeting when I was at Sarah Lawrence with a group of colleges. Sarah Blanding, who was then president of Vassar, came out very strongly in support of having men visiting girls in the dormitories overnight. She used to say, "I'd rather have my girls as women students in the dormitory visiting rather than in the sleazy motel down the road." That's a very good point. It was considered rather radical at the time. Everyone was amazed because, at that time, Sarah Blanding was quite old.

de GRAAF: As a dean at Connecticut, did you sometimes feel between a rock and a hard place as far as parents' reactions to some of these things was concerned?

COBB: Yes. When I used to go to speak to the alumnae groups--sometimes we did those combined with recruiting--some of the alums or the parent of a prospective student in the audience might very well rise and make a protest comment about how horrible it was that Connecticut College was now letting men stay overnight in the dormitories. There was a period of great concern. In fact, at Connecticut, we arranged so that students could vote as to what dormitory they wanted to live in. Some dormitories had no visitors after 10:30. Other dormitories were open twenty-four hours every day, seven days a week. Other dorms had overnight visitors only on weekends. So you could select the kind of dormitory that you wanted to live in when you came in as a freshman, to some degree,, and that helped a lot. The rooms were 80 percent single rooms, so it made it better, too.

de GRAAF: Quite a contrast to here, where in our first dormitory experiment we had four to a room.

COBB: Where was that?

de GRAAF: That was at Othrys Hall, out next to PCC [Pacific Christian College].

COBB: That was an uncivilized way to handle anything. It's not as bad, though, as it is in China, where

there are eight students in one room, or six, depending on the size of the room, with double bunk beds and open windows and mosquito netting, because there's no such thing as air conditioning. I remember in Northeastern University in Xian, it was hot, ninety-seven, ninety-eight degrees. It's inland. It's like the Middle West would be. There were no desks, of course, in the room, because there was no room for a desk. It was, still is, a pretty bad living environment for the students in China.

de GRAAF: Was there a greater amount of off-campus work in part as an avenue to independence that you noticed during your years at Connecticut or Douglass?

COBB: No, not at all. Especially at Connecticut, because it was in the small town of New London. Everyone lived in the dormitories. They had no cars. In fact, if you were on scholarship, you could not have a car, because they figured if you could spend about \$1,000, \$1,500 a year to have a car, you didn't need scholarship money. Besides that, there were few jobs around in that kind of environment. At Douglass College, likewise, cars were not allowed to be registered with freshmen. They could not have cars on campus because, again, they had a residential dorm. We did not have thousands of acres of parking lot. It was a residential college. And that's true with all the colleges that are residential in the East: cars are not expected to be there, and if they are, they are few and they have to find a place to park--and that is not on the campus. So it becomes a hazard rather than a help. Even in New Haven, there are buses that go around the campus between the different sites so that you can hop on a free bus to take you to another building or a class. If you need to go to the medical center and you have a class in the science building, you've got to go across town. It's not the same as in California, where you've got a residential campus with big parking lots. Cars assume a minor role in those kinds of colleges in the East. That's not to say they don't have cars. But the parking's limited, and they are discouraged.

de GRAAF: So much for cars, but at Douglass, did you notice a greater number of students seeking outside work, for whatever reason, between 1976 and 1981?

- COBB: No. Students eligible for financial aid were given their choice of work study jobs. They had to take the job as part of their package. More than 80 percent of our students were full-time, leaving little time for work. We also had many endowed scholarships. Students might have worked on weekends.
- de GRAAF: Finally, the 1970s are the decade sometimes referred to as the "Me Generation." As one who experienced various social movements and the need for them, did you find in the seventies that students had less of an interest in public activism or social causes?
- COBB: I never really did a study to determine that for the campus of Connecticut College, but I know they had a low voter turnout. There was activity in the town by students who were working as volunteers in social service type activities, but relatively little because, again, there was a transportation problem. How would they get there? What were the possibilities of work in that category? However, they did have a very active PIRG [Public Interest Research Group]. You know, the public information student organization that works as a consumer advocate group? They had a very active chapter, and there was some debate as to whether or not they should have the dues for PIRG taken out of the student's check when they registered versus letting them pay voluntarily. But that's always been a system that's been debated on campuses. PIRG at Rutgers was considered a part of the student fee. You prepaid, in other words. If you didn't like it, you could get your money back. Well, you know how that works. There was a modest degree of involvement. There were students who did internships unpaid but for credit, particularly if they were in the government department. Then those students who were interested in government at Connecticut College had to make arrangements to go either to city hall in our little town of New London or to Hartford, where they worked in the governor's office. But they were a small group. You really had to work at it, because to get there meant you had to have a car, you had to have enough money to have a car, and it was a project.
- de GRAAF: One other characteristic that I'd like to know if you had a lot of experience with was some of the changing curricular patterns and pressures. Going

back to the late sixties, we get a tremendous emphasis on innovation and so-called relevance in higher education. I'd like to know to what extent you encountered these in either Sarah Lawrence or Connecticut. Let's begin with innovation, the idea, first of all, that some of the modes of learning ought to change, discussion or direct experience ought to take the place of lectures.

COBB: Right. First of all, the total learning environment at Sarah Lawrence was innovative; the whole place was innovative, as I might have mentioned. There were not titles to the professors. They were not associate, assistant, or whatever, whether tenured or nontenured. Every student had a donee, and the classes were between ten or fifteen in number. You had no major. You just had a focus of interest and concentration. So already you had innovation.

de GRAAF: All this had preceded the 1960s?

COBB: This was in the sixties and before.

de GRAAF: Had this been just set up in the sixties?

COBB: Oh, no. It was started that way. From the beginning, it was always an experimental college way even before Harold Taylor, who wrote the first book on such colleges--you may have heard of it--called Colleges Without Walls. It was a brilliant idea that spoke to community, town-gown involvement.

de GRAAF: Yes, I've heard of it.

COBB: He was a very famous educator. At any rate, the students often had special designed projects, because they only took three courses, and that other fourth was to be an innovative relationship with some special, individual project with the professor. For example, if you were a history student and taking History 101, you might find your interest in one small aspect of 101, so you took the regular course, the class of fifteen, but then you had a special project that was decided upon by you and the professor. The same thing happened in biology. We had lab experiments and special things, only one-on-one. So you ended up, really, teaching three courses plus fifteen individual courses, because they were individual projects. And they were all semester-long projects; they weren't just a short

paper you did. You did this as part of your parallel work. So that was innovation that was natural and part of the culture at Sarah Lawrence. They had a big debate and finally decided that every student should have at least two large lecture courses in four years, so they arranged that. Then, with those two large lecture courses, they had small discussion groups, so there was a large lecture and then one other meeting with a small discussion class in groups of fifteen.

But when you got to Connecticut College, it was much more of the traditional college, with titles like associate, assistant, and full professor. About my second year, 1971, they did away with the senior comprehensive examination. When that happened, the carillon bells in the chapel rang, the students were dancing in the streets, and there was a very big to-do about the absence of senior comps. Also, something very interesting occurred at Connecticut about 1973, and that was that all exams were on the honor system. When you picked up your exam at the registrar's office, you took it to one of three classroom examination rooms. You carried your blue book and your exam to that room. There were periods of time: eight to ten, ten to twelve, one to three, three to five. You could pick up your book at the beginning of, say, any of these periods for the two-hour period, go take it to a classroom, sit, do your blue book, and bring it back. You had to sign an honor code that "I have neither looked at notes nor shared information with my neighbor." That system was in effect for many years, probably still is. We found that one of the problems was there was an increased incidence of attempted cheating that had a direct relationship to the increased number of men enrolled. So the honor system was an innovation. It would only work in a small college with a strong culture of honesty as an ideal. There was an introduction of Black Studies. There were debates on that. I believed that Black Studies was best taught by a black professor, if available, and I made a permanent enemy of a white woman who was teaching the course and felt she knew everything about it. So we never really agreed on anything. But that difference was much more complicated than that. She had hoped to have my job and it wasn't given to her, so she never recovered from that. So we did have a Black Studies course. We never had any Asian Studies. Of course, there were very few Hispanics. I don't remember

having students that I advised or counseled who were from Puerto Rico. There were very few from Cuba or other places. So our innovation was in the manner of taking exams and the idea of introducing ethnic studies, at least Black Studies, for the first time.

de GRAAF: It may sound a bit odd for what was still a predominantly women's college, but did Connecticut have any emphasis on women's studies while you were there?

COBB: No. It was very interesting. I organized some special conferences on women in this and women in that which were supported fairly well. We had a few courses, but there was not a significant presence of women's studies in the curriculum block. This was probably due to a lack of faculty interest. Also, the president was very anxious to make the college's image change to that of a true coed campus. That was very predominant at Douglass College. In fact, some of the top intellectuals in women's studies were at Douglass College. I mean top, top, nationally well-known in history and in literature. Elaine Showalter was one such person, who's now teaching at Princeton. Another was Mary Hartman, who was a social historian who wrote Victorian Murderesses. I don't know if you ever heard of it or not.

de GRAAF: No, I haven't.

COBB: It's a fairly well-known book. You've heard of the Berkshire Conference?

de GRAAF: Oh, yes.

COBB: Mary Hartman or Elaine Showalter was often the chair of the Berkshire Conference. The other names escape me right now. Mary Hartman was my successor as dean at Douglass. We had Catherine Stimson, who helped cofound Signs. You know the journal Signs? Also Joan Burstyn was our faculty, and she cofounded it with Catherine.

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: It was actually established with Joan Burstyn, who was at Douglass College. Catherine Stimson was at Barnard at the time, and they coordinated with a small group to establish Signs, and a significant



number of women intellectuals were present. It was, therefore, a very strong and important period for women's studies at Douglass. So when I came to Cal State Fullerton, I asked about the library holdings for women's studies. It was practically nonexistent. There was nothing here, hardly, in women's history. Then, when I looked at the history department per se, it had zero or maybe one female. It was a shock to me to imagine that that existed.

de GRAAF: We had two at the time, but that was all, two out of almost thirty history faculty.

(Tape 7, Side A)

One changing pattern that at least we observed out here and I'd like to know if you observed it back there was by the time you get to the late seventies, there's a bit of a reaction against some of these innovations and so-called relevant courses, more of an emphasis on "back to basics." Did you notice that at all at Douglass?

COBB: We did notice it by establishing a new core curriculum. I don't know what one means by "back to basics."

de GRAAF: It's a good question. At Cal State Fullerton, one conspicuous example might be that Western Civilization in one semester got down to only thirty-nine students enrolled in it. Then, shortly before you came, the history department managed to secure the present rule that everybody had to take Western Civ.

COBB: That was a political coup that would never have existed in any college I've ever heard about, except Columbia University. Columbia University throughout the sixties never did away with its required Western Civilization course. But at Douglass College, we debated the core curriculum, which, I think is probably what you're speaking about when you talk about "back to basics." In fact, I've written a short article on that for a conference that took place at Harvard. We had a very fruitful two years' discussion with the equivalent of, I guess, a faculty curriculum committee, and ended up with a basic group of courses that were expected to be taken by students in terms of areas. They were small numbers, unlike here, where there are over

1,000 choices. But we put in that category of historical enrichment, Asian Studies, and I cannot imagine that a university like ours, at this point, does not have a requirement of a component of civilization that is not Western. I think it's very shortsighted in these times to have students come up with the idea that the only data that counts in this world is Western Civilization. It really ought to be World Civilization, with one semester or half a semester of Western and an equivalent amount for Eastern Civilization and other areas--Asian, African, et cetera. I think we do our students a big disservice. Of course, politics plays its role, and I find that anti-intellectual. I feel very strongly about that, and I hope that at some point, when people who care have enough time--because a lot of people don't have time to be bothered with this political stuff in the academic senate on curriculum--this course will be changed. I think it's a distressing scene at this campus. If you look at catalogs--and I've studied this matter over the last ten years--there is no myopic view of only one type of history that exists anymore. I'm not talking about the Great Books and all that stuff. I'm just talking about straight history, period.

de GRAAF: The history department is currently considering a modification of that course to the West and the World. It still would have a Western orientation.

COBB: It will be ten years before it gets anywhere.

de GRAAF: Why do you say that?

COBB: Because I understand that campus politics. It's called faculty jobs and FTEs, and it has nothing to do with caring about the students' breadth for the world of tomorrow. It has to do with "What's going to happen to my course if I don't have enrollment?" To the degree that that happens, I think we are doing a disservice to our students.

de GRAAF: One other thing that sometimes is lumped in with not exactly a backlash but simply a curricular change of that period--I certainly noticed it in the seventies at Cal State--is a greater emphasis on the part of students themselves on career-oriented courses and a corresponding decline of liberal arts. Now, at places like Connecticut and Douglass, was that at all in evidence?

COBB: No. I think at Douglass College, there was beginning to be a strong feeling about careers, yes, and there was this issue of the liberal arts. But you see, we had no applied preprofessional fields. We were a traditional baccalaureate degree-granting institution, as were Connecticut College and Sarah Lawrence. We offered no undergraduate business major, no undergraduate human services, none of those areas. We only had liberal arts courses, and they were all for B.A.'s. So you didn't have that career trend. We did have undergraduate education courses, but we had no major in education, of course. So the liberal arts was part of what we did. The liberal arts included economics. I found here that economics was over in the business school, to my surprise. We had no such thing as criminal justice. We did not have a physical education major. So all of that careerism, professionalism which comes with a state college system was not present. So I can't quite compare.

I would think, were I to go back to Douglass, the students would be just as motivated toward careers as they are here, except they had to do it in different ways. In fact, I had one of the assistant deans write a booklet for freshman on careers for an English major, careers for a sociology major, et cetera. We were aware that parents were coming in asking--this was a women's college--"What kind of job can my daughter get?" So the parents imposed a lot of that pressure. Part of that function is money, inflation. Everything costs more. I think, as you and I would agree, a campus is but a reflection of society, and we just do what the society imposes upon us in every way.

de GRAAF: It's a hard idea for some faculty to swallow, but I think you're probably right.

COBB: Another point is that a young student, girl or boy, getting a liberal arts education at Radcliffe or Harvard in English, Asian Studies, you name it, has, by definition of being there and graduating, a direct line to a good job. That is not the same as a graduate at Cal State Fullerton. It's a snobbism; it's elitism. You can have a young man majoring in English in Harvard, Yale, or Princeton and getting a job at a bank when he graduates. You don't have to have a major in finance to get a job in a bank if you go to a prestigious Ivy League school. You see what I'm saying?

- de GRAAF: Yes. In fact, what you're saying is what some have argued, and that is that perhaps a liberal arts or a humanities major is, essentially, an elite type of education that not everybody can afford.
- COBB: I wouldn't argue that way. I would argue that the recruiters are narrow, and they are missing the advantages of a broad-based, liberally educated individual. I've written a lot on that and given a lot of speeches on it. In fact, I'm going to give a graduation speech on the twentieth of May, and I'm going to speak to that. I'm going to my alma mater, which does not have undergraduate business courses or accounting or finance or any of that. It is a straight liberal arts campus. In fact, students who can write well and think well and analyze and pull things together and see the whole, they're far better employees. If the recruiters would not be told from the job market around here that they've got to have somebody who knows computers. . . . Secretaries should know computers, not college graduates. I used to say to my students at Connecticut College--because I advised the seniors in terms of their post-college plans--"Do not learn how to type. Whatever you do, don't learn how to type, because you do not want to go out and have your first job as a secretary. You are a college graduate, and that's quite different. So don't be hoodwinked into 'Can you type?' which is what often happens." You see a young lady coming through the door. "Oh, can you type?" I say, "Don't learn how to type." Did you ever ask a young man to learn how to type?
- de GRAAF: That's true, yes.
- COBB: You see, that's the head turning around we still have to do.
- de GRAAF: I don't imagine that at Sarah Lawrence or Connecticut or Douglass you saw a great change in the composition of the students, or did you? A lot of ethnic minorities or greater class stratification?
- COBB: No. Connecticut College had a tuition that was pretty high. In order to get diversity, though, we had to offer more scholarships. The diversity was primarily black students, and they tended to be those students who needed scholarships because the

tuition was very high. We had a few international students who were well enough off to come to America to go to college, but the diversity that you would find in California did not exist in New England at that time. Now, I understand, there are large numbers of Portuguese families in New Haven, and also people from other Caribbean areas who speak Spanish, and West Indian students. Of course, West Indian students speak English, obviously; they're from the British settled islands. We had numbers of those students. But these black students often had to have scholarships.

de GRAAF: This was a notable trend of the late sixties and seventies?

COBB: Not particularly. It wasn't evident in the way it is in this part of the country. There is such a difference. Even now, when I go East to campuses, you don't see too many Asian students, ones from the Pacific Rim countries. There are a few; they're not absent, but not to the degree that we see here.

de GRAAF: Using Cal State Fullerton as an example, through the later seventies, especially, it made considerable outreach efforts to actually recruit minorities and bring them in. I don't know to what extent we're legally bound, but we have sort of affirmative action type goals that we were trying to reach. Did you notice anything like that at Douglass, being part of a state university?

COBB: Yes. There was a whole program similar to our EOP-- it was called EOF--which was state funded.

de GRAAF: Did this bring a particularly significant change in the student body?

COBB: Yes, it definitely increased the numbers of black students and Hispanic students because, by that time, in northern New Jersey, there was large emigration from the Caribbean area, the Spanish-speaking islands.

de GRAAF: Did this bring you into contact with what were sometimes corollary problems, such as students whose cultural background is not as preparatory for higher education, or students admitted under special admission?

- COBB: Not particularly, not at Douglass or Connecticut. Certainly not at Connecticut. Not at Douglass, either, because those students went to the state colleges, not to the university. Rutgers College and Douglass College would be equivalent in California to the UC system. There were students that needed special tutoring and assistance, and we had some sections of what we called no college credit courses, yes. The policy had been to take quite a few of these students, and the state colleges used to be very angry at us for doing that, in the same way that it happens here.
- de GRAAF: So you did have some experience with what we would call remediation?
- COBB: Yes, we had a course or two.
- de GRAAF: Did you feel that was an appropriate thing for a university to do?
- COBB: Yes, I do, because life is such that some students have not had the opportunities in high school. We have to get very clear about equity versus excellence, and we have to get very clear in our own minds without our bias of the difference between not having had something and having had it and failed. Those are two different things.
- de GRAAF: There was quite a bit of talk in the sixties and through the seventies of faculty collective bargaining. Of course, in 1978, the California legislature passed the Higher Education Employee Relations Act, which eventually, when you became president, led to collective bargaining on this campus. But prior to that, I'm interested in whether you had run into collective bargaining at Connecticut or Douglass.
- COBB: At Connecticut, we had no unions. At Rutgers University, we did have a union. It was the AAUP [American Association of University Professors]. I remember the year before I became dean of Douglass, the faculty had struck and said that they would not give grades to the students. That, of course, was finally changed, and they did, but that was their method of striking. But it was not as complicated as it seems to be here. AAUP in general has been seen as a more rational and benign group. I don't know whether that's true or not. I think all of

that is a manifestation of the campus leadership. Certain campus leaders and unions are different by personality than others. Some will work and keep things agitated more than others.

de GRAAF: Did the arrangements that had been worked out before you came to Douglass require that you, as the dean of the college, sit down with AAUP representatives?

COBB: At Douglass?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: Oh, no, nothing like that. They were already established. I had a couple of good friends who were members of AAUP, and one of them finally became the New Brunswick president, the head of AAUP. He's a chemistry professor. But no. They were, essentially, invisible. They were working at the president's office level, which was over at Rutgers University, for the whole system--between Camden, Newark, and New Brunswick. They worked to establish conditions of work, period, and that had to do with salary steps and health benefits and things of that sort.

de GRAAF: Out of curiosity, were you a member of AAUP?

COBB: Yes, to the degree that I could be. Let me think, now. It seems to me that somewhere, a long time ago, I was a member of AAUP. It must have been back at Sarah Lawrence. But this just meant you were part of the national group and you got the newspaper. It had nothing to do with contract negotiations on the campus. I remember I had to give up my membership when I became an administrator, which was at Connecticut College. I think their newspaper's quite good.

de GRAAF: I do, too.

COBB: AAUP's newspaper is excellent. We used that and referred to it in the seventies on the students' rights bill. Remember that? AAUP developed a very good document on students' rights in the seventies, and it was extremely helpful to me as dean of Connecticut College. I began looking at some of the student activities, because there was a lot of agitation. Remember the Vietnam War was part of that, and we had quite a bit of action then.

de GRAAF: So you found that students' rights was an issue that you confronted during the seventies.

COBB: Oh, sure, because we were debating, if you remember, in the early seventies whether students would sit on committees or not. We also debated whether or not students should have a major. There was a big debate on students deciding their own curriculum. You don't remember that?

de GRAAF: Yes, we had some of that, but it never got as far as whether they should have majors, as I recall.

COBB: Oh, yes--or required subjects. Well, I guess maybe it focused more on required subjects.

de GRAAF: That was a big debate out here, yes.

COBB: My son went to Wesleyan University, where he had no required subjects at all. He did have a major; he was a biology major. But he had nothing he had to take in four years. He only took what he wanted to. Now, of course, it was dictated by premed. He knew he had to take certain courses to be eligible to go to med school, but not as far as the humanities were concerned. But he did not have to take economics or religious studies or philosophy; he took what he wanted. I know he missed much.

de GRAAF: We went through that. In the late sixties and very early seventies, we had a G.E. [general education] plan which was totally optional. You had to take general education, but you could pick virtually anything to take.

COBB: You didn't even have to take it at Wesleyan. At Connecticut, we had a core curriculum. We had requirements at Connecticut we never did away with. But we never had a required course, like Western Civ, nor did they have it at Wesleyan or at Sarah Lawrence.

de GRAAF: One final thing before we leave collective bargaining: sometimes it represents one or more of several changes as far as faculty-administrative relations, and I'd like to know if this occurred at all at Douglass, particularly. One would be an increase in the role of the faculty in institutional governance. Did that occur while you were at Douglass?



COBB: No. The role of the faculty was always there, in committees. But it was not involved with micromanagement, as is true in the CSU system. Several of my colleagues as presidents who have come into the CSU from other states have commented that they have been surprised by the degree of micromanagement in which the faculty are involved.

de GRAAF: Give a few examples of such micromanagement.

COBB: We have the faculty discussing football, for example--that would never have come up in faculty meetings whatsoever--nor the management of what component of the budget was to go into an athletic program. It would have involved the athletic council, but not the whole academic senate debating a matter of this sort. When you look at the book of regulations for the university, there is discussion in there about the academic senate deciding on a committee on where to put trash cans around on the campus. That's what I'm talking about as micromanagement. And things having to do with the physical plant--a committee might be involved, you know, but not where you've got a whole academic senate involved in deciding. That's the micromanagement. Micromanagement of the curriculum, yes. Requirements for graduation, language requirements, tests for freshmen--all that, yes, all the academics in detail. But not physical plant; not other big budgetary issues, the way one does here. That's the micromanagement.

de GRAAF: In your experience with eastern colleges, the issue did not arise that the proportion of the budget given to athletics or the configuration of the physical campus could be determining factors of curriculum and academic excellence?

COBB: Everything has to do with academic curriculum, but the idea was that the faculty were guarding their budget at eastern colleges. Components never really had to be discussed. It was always there. Here, there's a certain kind of inference that the administration cannot follow through on that basic premise. There's a basic distrust that you did not find among the faculty where I was in the past. Now, that's not to say there weren't some big issues. There were a lot of big issues, one of which had to do with reorganization of the whole university system, at Douglass, whether there would

be five schools or three schools. That's a big project, and that was, of course, the province of the Academic Senate. But you didn't have this basic distrust that is exhibited here. Even in a time of positive relationships with presidents, I could see where there was some basic hostility that had happened historically. But this particular campus, of all campuses, has had a nonadversarial presidential leadership, yet the paranoia is incredible. I think it's based on personalities of a few faculty, frankly, mainly in the history department. I'm very serious about that. I think there is a negative leadership component that seems to come out at certain times of crisis. The same thing could be happening in group dynamics among students, I might add. It's not peculiar to this campus. I'm talking now about group dynamics. If you have that basic concept, it creates the phenomenon. It's not at a personal level.

de GRAAF: One other aspect of collective bargaining certainly very evident here is that the faculty become very active in trying to improve remuneration and benefits through collective bargaining.

COBB: Work conditions and unions are always part of what goes on, and should be.

de GRAAF: This happened with the AAUP at Rutgers?

COBB: Oh, yes, definitely. That was why they had the strike; they were getting raises for the faculty.

de GRAAF: Would you say that faculty pay was a big issue while you were at Rutgers?

COBB: Always, yes, and on every other campus I've ever been on. Except that at a private college, people were paid based on merit, and there were not public salaries.

de GRAAF: I wanted to raise that issue.

COBB: There were not public salaries, and there was not an automatic raise. It was based on whether you deserved a raise or not. In fact, the deans I've been interviewing for these jobs we have at CSUF, many of them have come from big universities that did not have that kind of "you get a raise anyway"

system. That way, you got productivity from tenured faculty.

de GRAAF: So you tend to prefer a merit type of salary to a structured one?

COBB: Yes. Because, in my view, I like the idea of the union for nonexploitation of labor. I'm basically a liberal; I am not a Republican. I believe in unions. Ironically, the most conservative people around here believe in unions. Isn't that funny, how bedfellows get together? But I believe in merit, earning pay for what you do.

de GRAAF: Let me pursue this first of all in your historic experience. Connecticut College, you must be referring to, had the merit system. What about Douglass, which was part of the state university?

COBB: Douglass had automatic steps.

de GRAAF: Was there anything like our present Meritorious Performance and Professional Promise<sup>5</sup>

COBB: No, but we did have a professor II group, a very small, special group of super, super professors who did get higher salaries, and I was one of them. I came there as a professor II. But they were just a small, tiny element, about one half of 1 percent of the total professoriate.

de GRAAF: Looking at our MP<sup>3</sup>, as we sometimes call it, experience, and, more broadly, at personnel, beyond the general principle of rewarding merit comes the sticky question of defining it. In your experience, for instance at Connecticut, did merit tend to be defined by such tangible fruits as publication?

COBB: Not as much, but some. Service and relationships with students were very important.

de GRAAF: How did you evaluate relationships with students?

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<sup>5</sup> Meritorious Performance and Professional Promise, or MP<sup>3</sup>, was a system of bonus awards to faculty whom peers felt were exceptional in teaching, research, and/or service. It was instigated in the mid-1980s.

COBB: Student questionnaires on how teachers taught, the way we do. Every campus I've been on has had a student evaluation form.

de GRAAF: And you feel it's an effective device for evaluating faculty?

COBB: That was not all. They had visitation by peers in the department to their classes, and looked at the syllabi--the same general plans one has here.

de GRAAF: Class visitation is not very common here, is it?

COBB: No, it isn't, but it should be. The visitation was preannounced, but it was considered part of the evaluation.

de GRAAF: At both Connecticut and Douglass?

COBB: I don't remember whether it was done at Connecticut, but it was done at Douglass. Not every time, but occasionally.

de GRAAF: One other thing: what did you do at those schools with respect to post-tenure review?

COBB: None. There was some of that going on at Rutgers University, but it was vigorously objected to, and I don't think it ever got off the ground.

de GRAAF: Do you have strong feelings one way or the other on post-tenure review?

COBB: I don't particularly have a feeling one way or another. I think the worst cases rise to the top. I don't have a problem with it, because I, as president, had to be evaluated here. I've never had to be evaluated in any institution like I have here. I think it has its anxiety level, but it also has its constructive uses. On hindsight, I think it ought to be done for every faculty member. Why not? Any other job in society is evaluated constantly.

de GRAAF: I tend to agree with you on that, which doesn't make me too popular with some of my colleagues.

COBB: I'm sure.

de GRAAF: Let's get to a few more specific experiences and then get you into Cal State. You had mentioned

being rejected for some positions in the 1970s, you felt due to race. One we didn't get around to was the University of Michigan. When did this occur? What was the position?

COBB: I think 1974. It was the dean of arts and sciences, third-ranking job at the university.

de GRAAF: What were the circumstances of the decision?

COBB: First of all, I went for an interview after a call from a faculty member at the University of Michigan, and I was selected as one of the final three candidates. Then, that selection of those three went to the Board of Regents, who are the trustees. They interviewed the three of us and selected me as their final candidate by a unanimous decision. Then came the sabotage by the president, Robin Fleming, and his vice president, Franklin H. T. Rhodes, who is now the president of Cornell. They sabotaged it. They began working at not letting me get the position. First, they said they would not offer me tenure, and I said I would not come without tenure. Then, they said, "Well, you can have the job for two years." Robin Fleming was the president. I said, "That's not acceptable." "Your department won't give you tenure." Mind you, I had been tenured at Sarah Lawrence for seven years, I guess, at least. I got early tenure, as a matter of fact, published over twenty-five, thirty articles in well-respected, peer reviewed journals, the whole works. "We can't give you tenure," he said. I said, "The medical school can give me tenure." Because there was a letter which I had a copy of that the medical school said that they would give me tenure. "It's not acceptable." It wasn't acceptable because they had their own candidate, a Southern white man who was in the zoology department by the name of Billy [Eugene] Fry. He was their candidate. But the regents did not select him; they selected me. So as I said, they attempted to sabotage this. The vice president went up to Lansing, where the regents were meeting, and tried to campaign them individually. I know all this because I had a contact on the board of trustees who told me all of this. It's not my imagination. Meanwhile on campus, there was a big protest, a march around the administration building by women professors and students, all protesting, and it was a big headline then in the Michigan Daily. I have the paper in my files.

de GRAAF:     Protesting for you?

COBB:           Yes, wanting me. It was a big issue--article in the Michigan student newspaper. I have all of it. I have a whole sheaf of this material. So then the upshot was that the regents would appoint a universitywide investigative committee. It was headed by Wilbur Cohen, who had been the former head of HEW. He was in the graduate school of education, hired by Fleming. So they headed up a committee and they came east and they met to ask me questions. The inference was, from Fleming, that I was in a small college and I didn't have enough experience to be heading up the deanship, and therefore, I shouldn't have it, essentially. So they came to interview me and many other people on the East Coast. Meanwhile, Robin Fleming said he would resign if I were chosen; he threatened to resign. They went back to the regents and they had, apparently, an eight-hour meeting, after which they came out with a resolution. They said, "Either you select Cobb or we'll go back to the drawing board and open the search." The trustees finally decided that they would go back to the drawing board and reopen the search.

          Meanwhile, Fleming had told everybody he was going to head up the University of California system and he was going to go back West. His family was there and he was going to tell everybody goodbye. This was going on while all this brouhaha was going on, because he was anticipating this new job. So he got to California as a finalist and had the interviews with his wife present, and again I had a colleague who was with me on the National Science Board who was a regent, and he told me the story. That is, when he got into the final interview with the Board of Regents, [Edmund G.] Jerry Brown [Jr.] was president. My colleague, who is my good friend, was head of the Hoover Institution, and another couple or two or three people were there; I don't know who they were. My colleague asked Dr. Robin Fleming, "What about the Cobb case?" He said if he could have been shot dead with daggers, he would have been dead by the look that Mrs. Fleming gave him when he asked the question. Fleming started to explain, and the more he explained, the worse it got. First he started calling me "Mrs. Cobb," and my friend said, "She is Dr. Cobb." He went on to talk about this, and it became very clear to the regents that he was going against the vote of his

regents. That principle was absolutely no-no. So the second finalist, along with Fleming, was David Saxon, and he got the job. I have a lovely feeling of sweet revenge, because he did that to me. One of these days, I'll write about it.

de GRAAF: Had you had any prior contact with him? Do you feel he had any personal reasons to do this?

COBB: No. He wanted Fry and he didn't trust a woman and he didn't trust a black woman, frankly. He had one black male further down in the middle administrative ranks and nothing else. And I would have been the highest ranking black in a university in the nation, at that point. Maybe not, because maybe Clif[ton Reginald] Wharton [Jr.] was president of Michigan State. But I was a woman; that was enough right there. Then also, a black woman. Goodness. So that was that story.

de GRAAF: You talked about your rejection at Hunter College, and you attributed that to the feeling that New York City could not have had a black president at both CCNY and Hunter. Therefore, they turned you down.

COBB: That's correct.

de GRAAF: But why do you feel that a black at CCNY was, as you put it, "a must"?

COBB: Because it was in Harlem, right smack in the middle of Harlem, in the community of Harlem, surrounded on all four sides. And it was a city college, and there had been a lot of racial activity, you may remember, in the early seventies, at City College, very strong. Columbia had gone through a big brouhaha relating to its urban center, which was also in Harlem. So the city fathers realized, and the politicians in the city realized and told everybody, "This place is going to have a black president." So they did. And then here I am, who happens to be a black woman, down at Hunter. Donna Shalala, who got the job, went on to Wisconsin ten years later. Now, they have a male president, I believe, at Hunter. I don't keep up with those things. Bernard Harlston, who's a black male from Tufts, is the president of CCNY, and has been for several years.

de GRAAF: Overall, how widely do you feel you were either accepted or even preferred, as opposed to rejected or given less opportunity, due to being black or to being female, by the time you applied for the job here?

COBB: Those are the only two cases in which I feel that there was a definite antiblack, antifemale bias, and I'll never know which was stronger. I believe very clearly it had to do with both at Michigan, and I think it had to do with me being black at Hunter, not being a woman. I interviewed for a number of jobs as president or vice president for academic affairs because of my vita. I was always a finalist. But I don't really think that race or gender had anything particularly to do with my not getting other positions I applied for. I don't know, because like a lot of other things, you don't know what the quiet discussion is. But in those two particular cases, it was very obvious. Other than that, I just apply like anybody applies, and I tell young people who talk to me--sort of proteges, women and black--"If you want to be a top executive in education, you should probably get turned down about seven, eight, or nine or ten times, because that's the way it is. So don't take it personally." You take it personally, but yet, you have to expect that that might be true. It's to a lesser degree, I guess, for professorships. I've never applied for any of the positions that I have received; I've always been called. I don't mean tricky stuff like calling a friend and saying, "Hey, nominate me." I don't mean that; I have never done that. For professorships, I've never had that problem of being one of a pool and then being turned down. I never really had those many jobs. I've stayed seven to ten years in every place, practically.

de GRAAF: From all of your administrative experiences at Connecticut, Douglass, and in various organizations, what were the main conclusions or lessons that you drew about the art, if it is such, of campus administration on the eve of your coming here?

COBB: Oh, goodness, so many. It's a good question, and I'm going to try, one of these days, if I can ever get myself together here, to write about this. I am a people watcher and I am a president watcher, or a top leader watcher. Not so much consciously, like "I'm going to watch to see," but you do it as a part



of it. I've learned from different leaders in higher education sometimes what to do and sometimes what not to do. I know the person that I admire most was Esther Rauschenbusch, who first was dean of Sarah Lawrence and then ultimately became the president. Esther had a personal way about her in conducting meetings and in interacting with people that was extremely gracious but yet not full of fluff. She was very businesslike in her meetings. She did not digress into little vignettes about something that happened to her or didn't happen to her, because the chair of a meeting has a captive audience, and they can do that, and no one around the table dares say anything. You can get bored as heck and say, "I wish they'd shut up and get on with the agenda." She was directed and focused, but the method by which she conducted the business was extremely gracious. She was knowledgeable because she'd been at Sarah Lawrence forever, as a faculty member, then as dean, and then as president. So she had all of that going for her.

I also observed some good things about one dean we had, Jackie Mattfeld, in two different categories. One thing not to do: she used to talk about "my faculty" and "my this" and "my that," and that used to irritate the hell out of me. She doesn't own anybody. Those aren't her children, and she's not the parent. But she did spend endless hours talking, and Sarah Lawrence is a small school; maybe it had 800 students. We used to talk a lot in meetings and sit around her house and talk on things about--always--education, how to plan. Because Sarah Lawrence, as I said, was always experimenting. I liked that. I also have observed different components of issues. Also, I observed the president of Connecticut College, who had a certain kind of charm but was a lousy manager. I did learn some things from that experience. Of course, I had lots to learn. I was never president anyplace else, so it was always a unique experience just being president. But one thing I did learn from that particular president was that I should never undermine the authority of a second-or third-layer administrator. That is, if you've given an administrator a certain task to do, protocol suggests that they should do it and you should not go around them and have that particular act sabotaged, which is what happened to me one particular time, I remember, at Connecticut. That was very poor management on the part of the

president. So you learn different things from different people.

I learned from a woman whom I respected, Sister Ida Gannon, who was president of Mundelein College--she was a nun--for seventeen, eighteen years. I learned some things from her that were very important, particularly in one-on-one meetings where there was a difference being expressed by a faculty member. Always, where there's real controversy--maybe it's complaining about another faculty member or whatever it is--always, at the end of the meeting, write down exactly what was said, in the minutes of the meeting, then send a copy in writing to that faculty member, or it could be an administrator, for that matter. Have them sign off on what took place.

(Tape 7, Side B)

In other cases where it's a very sticky wicket situation where there might be legal matters involved, one is always wise to have a secretary there taking notes. Different things of that sort. Over time, I have observed one thing, and that is that faculty, or administrators, for that matter, tend to be far more litigious than they ever were if they are done what they feel is a disservice. They will sue or get a lawyer in a minute. I've seen it here, you know, as well. So that changed atmosphere occurred. There are different kinds of things that you observe: how much to see the students, how much you can get to see the students.

de GRAAF: Being in a role below president at both Connecticut and Douglass, how much were you involved in fund raising?

COBB: I took it upon myself as a very important part of my job at Douglass College. In fact, I raised quite a bit of money and got several grants for the college. In fact, we had a particularly strong alumnae association, very strong, the best woman head of the alumnae I've ever seen anywhere. I tried to bring that model here; it just didn't work the same. For one thing, I didn't have that person here, and there's no substitute for that person. Also, we had some things going against us here that weren't present at Douglass. We are a commuter campus, and you don't have as strong a tie to the campus as you would on a residential campus. The majority of our

students transfer in from a community college; they are only here two years. You can't have the same loyalty. But the main point was size and commuter. I did raise funds for Douglass College and, in fact, spoke often in categories with relation to women. I encouraged women to develop their full potential and tied it to the past and related it. I ran into a woman fairly recently who was part of the Pace Setters group. Those are the members of the class of fifty years ago. She was present then. They had the fifty-year alums, the forty-years, the thirty-years, the ten, every decade. Every year, that group had a reunion on the campus, and I have many lovely pictures of those ladies. They were wonderful ladies. But that was a different time, and those women were middle-class, obviously college-educated women, way back in the thirties or twenties, so they, by definition, came from a middle-class background.

On fund raising, I have been surprised here that the mentality is not the same on the part of the deans. Some of them are more, shall I say, aware of it, I think, than others. But in the state system, I think the job description has never had a strong focus on fund raising. We had barriers at Rutgers. I could not go to a foundation and ask for money without clearance first from the university foundation, because they didn't want us bumping into each other. The university might have asked for \$100,000, and I would want \$25,000 for a project only for the college. So the foundation, according to their feeling, would therefore say, "We've given \$25,000 to Rutgers University, Douglass College. We don't need to give \$100,000." You know what I mean. We have not--and I purposely have not--imposed that restriction here, because first of all, our fund raising is such a small amount and we're not at that level of sophistication. But yes, fund raising was what I did, and I enjoyed it. I think that's part of my attractiveness to this institution or any other place.

de GRAAF: Had you had experience with the bureaucracy of several layers that you have run into here, both below you, and then a board of trustees, a chancellor's office, and, beyond that, a legislature?

COBB: I never had to deal with the legislatures as a dean; that was not my job. Certainly, the bureaucracy,

yes--lots of it, indeed--campus bureaucracy, provosts and president.

de GRAAF: Do you have any words of wisdom on how that's done most efficiently?

COBB: I never did it efficiently. I always argued with the provost on these matters. I have difficulty with adhering to people up above me. I always think I know as much as they do. I've always felt that way, that I should be there and will be there, with effort. That's part of my inner self. That's why, I guess, I'm president of a campus, because I felt that. I was never really satisfied being a second or third shelf. It just didn't sit well. I think maybe it might have been because I'm an only child, I'm not sure. But I always felt that I could do whatever I wanted to do, in terms of working hard, and it would be attained, if you know what I mean. Obviously, that's rather naive. But the drive to do that and to keep trying to be there is, I think, the point that made my being successful. Some people have felt that they need to change jobs every five or six years. Several people I know have become presidents of not one but two places. Take [L.] Don[ald] Shields. Jim Zumberg has been president of three places. He's at USC now. Before that, he was at SMU. Before that, he was in some other small college, moving every six or seven years. I used to get job offers all the time. I never applied or never even thought of moving from CSUF. I wasn't interested in moving just to move, but being in a position where I felt that there were things I could do that would be effectively carried out for progress. The most delightful, exciting thing is to put forth an innovative idea and have someone pick it up and do it and then you incorporate it or own the feeling that they did it. I don't have to get credit for it, that's okay, because I know inside that I was the inspiration for it, and that's what's great.

(Tape 8, Side A)

de GRAAF: This is another in a series of interviews with Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb. This one is taking place on May 23, 1990, again at Dr. Cobb's home, the El Dorado Ranch in Fullerton. The interviewer is Lawrence de Graaf.

Jewel, we now have you at the brink of being selected to be president of Cal State Fullerton. I'm curious as to how and when you learned of the opening at CSUF.

COBB: I was called by a member of the search committee of the board of trustees, whoever else is on the search committee, asking whether or not I would be interested in submitting my vita for consideration for the presidency of Cal State Fullerton. I did not know it was available, nor would I have particularly applied, because I had by that time become very cynical about applying for positions. I did not want to continue to be an affirmative action statistic because of my experiences at Hunter and at Michigan. Since I had tenure at Rutgers University and was dean there and there was no foreseeable change, I really didn't have to move anywhere. I was, as I mentioned, disenchanted with the reorganization of Douglass College--my campus--but I was not frantically looking for something, nor did I start reading the Chronicle of Higher Education every week to see what was available. So that's how that happened.

Then, I discovered that James Rosser was president of Cal State L.A. I knew him in New Jersey because he'd been one of the vice chancellors for the State of New Jersey Commission on Higher Education. He knew me, and he was the one who had suggested my name. The month before, I had been called in for an interview in New York City to a hotel by Dr. Glenn Dumke on general principles, because chancellors of the CSU have a regular cluster of people that they interview over the years and develop what we call a stable of potential candidates.

de GRAAF: That's exactly the word that Mansell Keene [former Assistant Chancellor for Faculty and Staff Affairs] used in an interview with me.

- COBB: So as a result of that, he had interviewed me in May. I guess it was on general principles, without any campus in mind. That's how that happened.
- de GRAAF: When you were first approached for the job and thought of responding to this invitation, what did you know or think about the California State University system? For example, did you have a good idea of the size of the campuses and the fact that they were coeducational?
- COBB: Yes. I knew about the Cal State University system, because anybody involved in higher education knows about the Cal State system. Both the UC and the Cal State University systems are model systems for the rest of the United States for public higher education. There's no doubt but that it has a special and an honored rank in America with reference to what can be done with a state system. Secondly, about seven years before that, in the spring of 1974, I had been called for an interview for the presidency of Cal State Dominguez Hills. I came out for that, and then I went over to see Dominguez Hills. On the way out, I changed planes in Pittsburg, and the landing gear wouldn't go up as we were up in the air. They kept saying, "We have to try to get the landing gear up." They kept flying and they got the landing gear up. By the time we got to California, I was a nervous wreck, because I figured, well, if they can't get it up, maybe they can't get it down. So I got off the plane and I had my interview. I remember it was raining. The office was still on Wilshire Boulevard, and I had an interview and so forth. I flew back to New London. I called and said I was withdrawing my name. It turns out I wasn't really ready to move psychologically. My son was in college; he hadn't finished yet. I was not ready to move, geographically, literally, far away to the West Coast. Of course, my traumatic event on the plane only added anxiety and concern to my visit, so I withdrew from that. That was just an interview, mind you. I didn't know whether, of course, that visit would have gone further or what.
- But I specifically knew about Cal State Fullerton, because I sat side by side very often at the NSF board with Don Shields, who was president here. He used to talk about his children and about horseback riding, what his children were doing, and

about the campus in general--nothing specific. But I did know about it for a long time, because of Don.

de GRAAF: So you were quite familiar with the educational mission and the limitation on graduate degrees we could give?

COBB: Yes. The Cal State system offered master's and bachelor's degrees, I knew that. It was like the system in New Jersey. The university--Rutgers, where I was--offered the Ph.D.; the state colleges did not. So that model is true for many states.

de GRAAF: I imagine, through Don Shields, you had a fairly good idea of what the Fullerton campus in particular was like.

COBB: No, except it was a good one and he liked it here. But no details. We never talked about it in that kind of detail, except it was a good campus and he liked it.

de GRAAF: You mentioned that you had prior acquaintance with Rosser of L.A. State. There had been one other black president, James Bond at Sacramento State. Did you know or have any communication with him?

COBB: I had occasion to meet him at various annual meetings of the American Council on Education [ACE], because he was attending those sometimes, and I had met him then. But I didn't really know him.

de GRAAF: Did you get any particular impressions of the system before you were considered for the job from either of these people?

COBB: No. I never talked to Jim Rosser about what it's like. That may sound peculiar, but I can tell you why. I remember asking somebody about the position at New Jersey, at Douglass, and someone telling me, "Oh, forget it, Jewel. You'll never get it because the New Jersey Federated Women's Clubs would never have a black dean." Secondly, I asked somebody else about the presidency at Hunter, and they said, "Forget it. The provost is in line for that job, and he's first in line. You just can forget that." I have learned that rumor and gossip about something that's going to happen or not going to happen is a waste of good time, and I have never gossiped or

never stood in the hallway to calculate or figure out what's going on, including this campus.

de GRAAF: There were two women presidents before you, Marjorie Downing Wagner at Sonoma and Gail Fullerton, who, I believe was, at the time you were selected, the president of San Jose.

COBB: Yes. Very interesting that you mention Marjorie. I knew Marjorie, because she had been dean of Sarah Lawrence when I was there, way back in the sixties. So I knew her. In fact, Marjorie had called me at one point to ask me--when I was at Connecticut--if I'd consider coming out to Scripps College. Not that I was in the running for anything, but she knew about me. But I never, of course, responded.

de GRAAF: How about Gail Fullerton?

COBB: I've never talked to her. I didn't know her.

de GRAAF: The actual selection process: the presidential selection team was, I believe, composed of eight persons. I'm not, sure, however, what the distribution was between trustees, faculty, and there was one student, wasn't there, Janice Bailey?

COBB: Yes, the president of student government. I remember her because she was a black woman. But I'll tell you the truth. I did not know who the faculty were who were on the search committee at Fullerton. That may sound very strange.

de GRAAF: It does.

COBB: Because they didn't select me; the trustees selected me. I just really didn't know. I still don't know the names of the two other people who were finalists, except one was a white male and the other one was a woman. But that's all I know. I never really knew who the members of the search committee were on the campus.

de GRAAF: So you did not at any time meet, then, personally, with the whole search committee.

COBB: I met on this campus for twelve hours. You know the process.

de GRAAF: I don't, exactly.



- COBB: It was a very long day, and different groups came into the conference room upstairs on the ninth floor: student groups, community groups, faculty groups, administrators--just a whole group of people all day long.
- de GRAAF: This was, of course, when you and the other two finalists were being interviewed.
- COBB: Yes.
- de GRAAF: But prior to that, in the spring. . . . Because this was in July 1981, wasn't it?
- COBB: I was not contacted until June. As I understand it, the trustees told the search committee to go back to the drawing board, because they had all white males.
- de GRAAF: I had not heard that.
- COBB: Obviously, that was not a very good idea. There must be other people in the world--women, minorities. That's why I was called late in May. So I came out for an interview in June. It was a very quick turnaround--about six weeks altogether--from the time I was interviewed until I was selected.
- de GRAAF: That is rather quick.
- COBB: This time [the 1990 selection process for the new president of CSUF] was only four weeks' turnaround. So it's not unusual, I guess.
- de GRAAF: Did anybody from the search committee come to Douglass to visit?
- COBB: Yes, indeed so. Bill Leahy came from the chancellor's office, as that is the trustees' rules and regulations. And, apparently, he spent three days on the campus, unbeknownst to me. That's why I couldn't figure out why our faculty was so upset about not being able to do background checks, because when I say he was thorough--he talked to



faculty, to administrators, to students--everybody in the world--for three days on my campus.<sup>6</sup>

de GRAAF: But never came to talk to you?

COBB: Oh, no. That was not his job. The search committee's job was to speak to and interview me. His was background.

de GRAAF: Were you ever aware that there were 140 applicants for this job at one time?

COBB: I've read it in the newspaper. That's a common applicant pool for presidents.

de GRAAF: It is?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Granted, there was this rather short period of time between your being informed of the possibility of the job and your being selected, were there any interim periods in which you were informed that the competition was shrinking?

COBB: No, there was no communication. That would have been a breach of confidence by the search committee.

de GRAAF: So they, in effect, leave you in the dark until they tell you whether you're in or out?

COBB: Absolutely. They called and asked me if I would come out for an interview. I can't remember . . . There was something about coming out for an interview on X and then staying over three or four days until Y. I said I couldn't stay over; I had to go right back. So I did. Then, I came back out on the thirteenth of July, that July board meeting, and I waited in the hotel across the river there for them to let me know who was selected. I guess the three finalists were being debated by the board.

de GRAAF: So you did come out in June and you actually visited this campus, right?

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<sup>6</sup> The CSUF Academic Senate in spring 1990 insisted that a faculty member accompany the representatives from the chancellor's office visiting the campuses of presidential finalists.

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: I'd be interested in your recollections of that visit.

COBB: That it was a beautiful, gorgeous place.

de GRAAF: You really felt that way?

COBB: Compared to any campus that I can think of on the East Coast, this is a gorgeous campus. It's been laid out all at once. It's been organized and planned. And it's a beautiful campus, it really is. It's unusually fortunate to be. . . . I said, "Gee, this is fantastic."

de GRAAF: I gather it was not a too oppressively smoggy day?

COBB: I didn't notice any smog. Look, in New Jersey, we have comparable dirt and trash. It's a beautiful area. Californians don't understand how beautiful it is and how lucky you are. I'm serious. Just try living in another city in the East: Philadelphia, New York, whatnot, even Washington, where it's humid as well as hot. At least, it's dry and hot here.

de GRAAF: Did you also get a chance to look at the community and housing and so forth in your June visit?

COBB: I would not have been so presumptuous as to have looked at housing, not knowing whether I was to be selected. It would have been a waste of my time. A lot of people do that; faculty do that, and, I think, "What gall!"

de GRAAF: This was the time, during June, that you had the twelve-hour meeting with various people?

COBB: Yes, the end of June.

de GRAAF: Does any particular either line of inquiry or group that you met stick out in your mind?

COBB: No, except that it was a very long day, many, many questions. But I had been twelve years in administration prior to coming here, so I was used to the questions. I mean, they were things I knew about. I had been seven years as dean of Connecticut College and five years as dean of

Douglass College, when I interviewed for the position.

de GRAAF: When you came out on July 13 for the final selection. . . . Incidentally, the two other finalists were Judith Ann Sturnick, who was a vice president of academic affairs at Southwest State in Minnesota.

COBB: I know Judith well. Now, I know her. She's president of a small campus in Maine. We were together in Rome last June.

de GRAAF: And Leo Goodman-Malamuth, who, at that time, was president of Governor's State U. in Illinois, but had been some sort of an administrator at CSU Long Beach. I don't know if he's still around or what he's doing now, do you?

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: You've mentioned earlier that you were invited to apply because the initial pool was entirely of white males.

COBB: I didn't know that until years later. They would never have said that to me on the phone.

de GRAAF: Did you get any other sense that affirmative action considerations were a factor in your selection?

COBB: No. If they had been, they would, I guess, have had two choices, me or Judith.

de GRAAF: I know that one trustee made the comment to the press that your selection gave Cal State Fullerton "a unique opportunity to really show the world what it means to step into the 1980s." I'm not sure what she was referring to there.

COBB: We hope it was because of my academic reputation and administrative history, twelve years of being a dean at two different places.

de GRAAF: Were there any other things that you learned then or since that may be clues to why you were the person chosen?

COBB: Clues?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: No. I think, as I heard from one of my colleagues, they looked at my resume and they said, "My gosh, she's fantastic." It was because of all the research I had done, basic research in peer reviewed journals, some thirty-plus articles, and my academic administrative experience, plus teaching. So that's all I've ever heard.

de GRAAF: I'd like to ask you a few questions on your recollections about the reactions to your selection. I do this because I think anybody reading this interview in years to come should be aware that you were the first black president at CSUF, you were the first woman president at CSUF, and, perhaps most interesting, you were the first president--obviously, since the original one--not to have been previously associated with the campus, either in faculty or administration. [William B.] Langsdorf was appointed even before the campus was set up; Shields had been a professor of chemistry; and [Miles D.] McCarthy, the interim president, had been the vice president for academic affairs and all sorts of things. Did you expect that any of the faculty or administrators would take this uniqueness on your part into account in their reactions to your being selected?

COBB: Yes. I realized--at least, I felt I realized--that I was a stranger in their midst, so to speak, both administration and faculty, because I was a woman, I was black, and I was from the East. The combination of all those things I was aware of. I probably reacted overly strongly to that, too, because I was very intent on showing everybody that I knew everything about how to run a university. That created for me a certain kind of sternness, because I recognized that Don Shields had been a macho type male. I knew him, as I say, for six years, and I wanted to be sure that everybody understood that I had the everything-under-control syndrome, you know what I mean? With time, I relaxed on that model. But I was very acutely aware of the person I was following more than anything else, and I felt I had to prove myself and not be timid and shy--that kind of thing.

- de GRAAF: You've already mentioned that a few faculty complained that they were inadequately represented in the selection process.
- COBB: Way back?
- de GRAAF: Yes.
- COBB: I hadn't heard that before.
- de GRAAF: That was a complaint in your selection, as well as the current one--for a few. I don't know how widespread it was.
- COBB: I never heard that before. You're telling me something I never knew.
- de GRAAF: You already mentioned one other thing that I picked up from some quoted comments at the time, too, and that is that you felt to some extent that you were being put into the same mold as Don Shields, or would be compared with him.
- COBB: Oh, yes, sure. That's a natural expectation, really. As I said, that's part of what my hangup was at the very beginning, having to realize I was following a very macho man.
- de GRAAF: Did you ever get the feeling from any of the trustees or staff at the chancellor's office that you were the outsider, or, as you put it, the stranger?
- COBB: Never. I didn't have that kind of interaction with them. It's a normal process most of the time [that] when presidents are selected, they are not selected from the campus, if you notice the dynamics of higher education. Fullerton was quite unique by having had one person who was. But at Douglass College, where I'd been, that was not true. At Connecticut College, it was not true. At Sarah Lawrence College, it was not true. In fact, rarely is a president chosen from the internal cadre.
- de GRAAF: I'm particularly interested in your feelings about the response you got from the surrounding community. Shortly after news of your selection broke, a person who'd been a long-time outside supporter of the campus--since deceased--took me aside at a meeting and expressed the apprehension that he didn't think

Orange County was ready for a black president of an institution of higher education. Did you get this reaction from any or many people in the community?

COBB: No. As a matter of fact, for the next six months upon my arrival, there was a celebration and a welcoming event every weekend, sometimes two days, Saturday and Sunday. I was just amazed and overwhelmed by the welcoming that I received, and I never received anything that was indicative to me of hostility or anger about anything. Obviously, people, I'm sure, felt something behind the scenes, but I never was aware of it.

de GRAAF: Another thing I'm curious about: before you came out, did you have any impressions of Orange County from general news?

COBB: Yes, I did.

de GRAAF: What were they?

COBB: It was John Birch Society territory. The John Birch Society had just finished doing something down in the south part of the county. I knew that Richard M. Nixon had been around here, and [Ronald W.] Reagan. I knew that it was a very conservative county. People hastened to tell me that.

de GRAAF: How did your subsequent experiences match up with your earlier impressions?

COBB: As I said before, I was just surprised how delightful everything was and how welcoming everybody was. My housing worked out very well.

de GRAAF: I want to get to that in a minute, because I'm aware in some respects it was different from what you had been accustomed to. We might as well go into that. You came out July 13. Was that the day the selection was made?

COBB: It was the day I was told, yes. The selection was that morning, maybe.

de GRAAF: Did you then immediately look into housing?

COBB: I came back, it seems to me. Or maybe I stayed one extra day. But I came out here from Long Beach to look. I think I went home. I'm sure I did. I went



home and I got a telephone call from two different real estate people. One of them, a man, took me around in the morning. He just took me around to different areas, and he said, "Do you think you like this area or that area?" and I didn't know one area from another. Then he said to me something about "Gee whiz, how did you get to be president? How does it feel to be president?" So he was clearly amazed, and that turned me off. I said, "He's not going to be my real estate agent." Then, I had an appointment with another agent who was a woman that had written me. She was very positive and very warm, so she took me around, showed me actual houses. We had appointments and went in. She'd laid it all out. The first place I looked at was the one that I bought, but I didn't buy it right then. I looked at that one. Then, I went to another couple of places, and I didn't really like them. I had a vision of a house with a swimming pool and so forth. I had visions of myself sitting around a swimming pool (laughter) just like Californians do, right? But then I started thinking about it a little bit more, all in that same day. How much does it cost to keep this pool up? The grass? How much is a gardener? I'd been through this once already in my own private life years ago. So I went back. I loved that little house that I bought. I said, "I really want this house." It was more expensive than it should have been, so we tried to negotiate a little bit, and they said no, they wouldn't come down. So I signed a letter of intent, a little contract of intent with them. I was at the airport with this woman's car while the policeman is telling us to "Move on, move on, no parking here." And here I am, signing away on this big amount of money for this mortgage.

de GRAAF: When did you learn in the whole application process that Fullerton did not have a provided house like Douglass College had?

COBB: I guess I learned that somewhere early on.

de GRAAF: That didn't particularly turn you off from wanting to come here?

COBB: I don't think that's a reason to decide not to accept a position as the president there.

de GRAAF: What about the cost of housing out here?

COBB: That did take me for a loop. I was stunned. I asked Chancellor Glenn Dumke if the CSU Foundation could give me a low interest loan, but they said they had no money to give. I then used part of a pension sum I had. I and all presidents received a small sum of \$4,000 for the wear and tear on my private house. This only happened after four years, when the chancellor's office realized our dilemma, because only five presidents had campus houses. The rest of us were living in our private houses. So in trying to make the package more attractive . . . And I must say, for some of the pros relating to then Chancellor Ann Reynolds, she did work hard to upgrade the perks and other issues of helping presidents. She did that.

de GRAAF: Did the system come up with moving expenses for you?

COBB: Yes, that's expected, as we did in New York to Connecticut, et cetera.

de GRAAF: What were your initial reactions to your selection, first of all, with respect to your career and career objectives? Had the presidency of a large public university been a goal of yours?

COBB: Not per se, but I had decided to cast my lot with public education. I was called. I did not seek this job. My plans were to stay in New Jersey, at Rutgers. In fact, in 1981, I bought a condominium apartment in Passaic for the future.

de GRAAF: What was the reaction at Douglass College to your taking the position?

COBB: They were happy for me.

(Tape 8, Side B)

They had songs, and the faculty had dressed up in costume. It was a big party. It was a fun party.

de GRAAF: It sounds like it. Your feelings on leaving Douglass? Did you feel there were certain things you had hoped to do that were still unfinished?

COBB: I was very happy to leave Douglass--not because of the people; I loved them--but because of the reorganization they were doing to downgrade our

college as an entity unto itself. So I felt that they were decimating the campus and were trying to do away with us as a women's college. But fortunately, Mary Hart has been able to hang on to a lot.

de GRAAF: Did you have feelings on leaving the East Coast for the West Coast?

COBB: Yes, I did. I was going so far away. But I'd been psychologically prepared by then. My son had finished medical school and was in his residency; he was well along.

de GRAAF: Going into your transition into Cal State Fullerton. First of all, apparently, you still had much left to do at Douglass, and that kept you there through the summer of 1981.

COBB: Yes. I felt I could not leave the campus in a whirl.

de GRAAF: Was there an interim dean?

COBB: There was an acting dean who was appointed from the faculty, and she later became the permanent dean.

de GRAAF: I imagine to a certain extent you had to juggle two jobs through the summer, didn't you?

COBB: Not too much. I just did a lot of background reading, but I was not called upon; it's never done, really. You can't ask an incoming president to start working when they're not on the payroll. Plus, they have to finish up where they are.

de GRAAF: So McCarthy continued in all capacities through the summer?

COBB: Yes, that's right. He did. I came back once, I guess, maybe in August, and stayed with Martha [McCarthy] and Miles, and that was when I was working with the real estate person. Then, I came back once after that with my dog and put him in a kennel, and I stayed with them. They were very gracious. Then, for two weeks I was the house guest of the woman that I bought my house through, while my furniture was coming. All very positive, upbeat folks.

- de GRAAF: Any other comments on the role of McCarthy during this transition period? Did he particularly have sessions with you to try to . . .
- COBB: He was very helpful.
- de GRAAF: You formally succeeded to the presidency when, in early October 1981?
- COBB: The first of October.
- de GRAAF: Were there any others at Cal State Fullerton that spent a considerable amount of time [with you] or you think were crucial during this transition period of the summer?
- COBB: No. Everybody was just very nice and very supportive.
- de GRAAF: Let's, then, go to what you encountered on the campus itself. First, I'm curious, how did your office in Langsdorf Hall compare with others that you had had in the past?
- COBB: It had its own private bathroom.
- de GRAAF: That was unique? You'd never had that before?
- COBB: No. The building which was the administration building at Douglass, Fanning Hall, was an old Victorian house, and the layout was such that there was one bathroom for, I guess, three or four offices. Whereas at this campus, they specifically designed this president's office with a private bathroom and shower. So it was a new building, although I think the design is very poor, because all the vice presidents should be together, and that was not possible.
- de GRAAF: That's true, the awkward separation of the office of the vice president for academic affairs from here.
- COBB: Yes, it's not good. I would have never have had the president's office so far up above the campus, on the ninth floor. I would have had it on the ground floor, with a suite on the ground floor where people could walk in and out very easily. There's something psychologically wrong and aloof about having that penthouse office. I don't like it; I've never liked it.

de GRAAF: You had Mary Koehler as your administrative assistant when you first came?

COBB: Yes, right.

de GRAAF: Had you had a comparable person in your earlier jobs at Douglass and Connecticut?

COBB: Yes, I did.

de GRAAF: How about the rest of the immediate staff assigned to you? How did that compare with what you had?

COBB: I had two secretaries prior, and an executive assistant with her secretary, plus another woman who ran the outreach activities of Douglass College. I established one off-campus center for women in the community. In one way, we were more richly staffed, just a different group of people. But I never had a secretary as good as Norma Morris, never. She's not a secretary, she's a staff assistant, but she functions at all those levels, and I've never had anybody as good as Norma, ever, in my whole life, in all the various. . . . I had a secretary as I was dean of Connecticut College, two people--never as good.

de GRAAF: Obviously, Cal State Fullerton was a larger administrative entity than you'd had before, but you said that Douglass was quite comparable in its organization?

COBB: We had a dean of students, and we had what was called an associate dean for faculty, which would be equivalent to Vice President for Academic Affairs Jack Coleman's position. Then, we had a student affairs dean, who was equivalent to [Charles] Chuck Buck, and two associate deans within Student Affairs.

de GRAAF: Did you have anything equivalent to the office of the vice president for administrative affairs at Douglass?

COBB: Yes, we had a budget officer. But, you see, it was structured differently in another complicated way, because Douglass was one of the colleges of the university, and there were layers of budget bureaucracy that came straight from the president's office.

- de GRAAF: When you came in 1981, I believe there were two vice presidents, right, of administration and academic affairs?
- COBB: No, student services.
- de GRAAF: Was it vice president then?
- COBB: No. Just the title changed, from dean to vice president.
- de GRAAF: Those two vice presidents were Ivan Richardson in administration, and Frank Marini, I believe, was provost?
- COBB: Right.
- de GRAAF: By that time, we'd used the word "provost," hadn't we?
- COBB: Yes. I had inherited the concept from Don Shields's days, but then I did away with it when I had received the resignation of Frank Marini in 1984 and I accepted it. Then, we went back to the more traditional process.
- de GRAAF: I gather that you did not entirely like the title of provost?
- COBB: I didn't mind the title of provost. I just didn't like some of the assumptions that the provost made as to what that meant.
- de GRAAF: What were those assumptions?
- COBB: I mean that I should not have access to the faculty directly, but to pass through the provost's office.
- de GRAAF: He, in effect, told you this when you arrived?
- COBB: No, no. That was evolving. He would never have told me that when I arrived; I would never have accepted. But operationally, that began to happen. That's when I decided that that was not what I wanted.
- de GRAAF: Did either of these people, or their respective offices, handle matters that you had usually done in your capacity as dean at other campuses?

- COBB: Not particularly. I signed off and made final decisions on faculty promotions and tenure and whatnot where I'd been before, and the same thing happened there. No, I would say it's about the same.
- de GRAAF: Was the division of most campus functions into these administrative and academic affairs one that you were comfortable with?
- COBB: Yes. In fact, it works very nicely, very well. Somebody takes care of the elevators and the gardening and the plumbing.
- de GRAAF: Also reporting directly to administrative affairs are such things as the business office.
- COBB: That's because it's a bigger place, but the budget office at Douglass reported two places: to the president's budget office on campus, as well as to me. So they're not exactly comparable, in that sense. But all the various things that people did were the same.
- de GRAAF: Two broad areas of campus activities that under your presidency would eventually become vice president status were extended education and student affairs. I'm particularly curious about the first. Had any of your prior campuses had such a large extended education and summer school operation?
- COBB: Yes, but it wasn't specifically under Douglass College. It was for the whole university.
- de GRAAF: But it did involve some of the students and faculty at Douglass?
- COBB: Yes, if they wanted to. We also had a separate school for evening school, separate altogether. Cooperative education was in another school. We did not accept cooperative education at Douglass College. We did not believe in having academic credit and being paid at the same time, or work of the cooperative education type. So we never did, as well as many liberal arts colleges in New England, where I had been. It was an anathema to me to be both paid and get academic credit. I still don't think it's right. I've debated that with the Committee on Extended Education, but they argued with me that they wouldn't get any students

otherwise, because the students were economically in need, and they wouldn't have just gone off to do fieldwork without getting paid. Within that context, I understand the difference.

de GRAAF: Were you a little bit surprised at our large office of cooperative and internship programs?

COBB: Not particularly surprised, no. I understood it in the context of this kind of a university. See, we also offer here B.S. degrees. We did not offer any B.S. degrees at Douglass. We offered no pre-professional courses. We were exactly like UCI. We had no undergraduate business school, no undergraduate social work, no engineering department. We were like Pomona and Claremont McKenna undergraduate colleges, and Occidental.

de GRAAF: You said you'd had a dean of students at Douglass. Were there any ways in which the large student affairs that we had here was significantly different or raised different issues from what you'd had before?

COBB: Yes, because we had residence halls and 2,000, 3,000 resident students, and we had a very elaborate residential education program [at Douglass]. So we had an associate dean and an assistant dean of students; we had a career placement office, like we have here; and a lot of psychological counseling. And of course, we had financial aid. Financial aid, by the way, did report to the budget office; it didn't report to the student services, which varies on our CSU system, too.

de GRAAF: Did you have as much of a financial aid structure back at Douglass?

COBB: Oh, yes, very much so.

de GRAAF: So you were familiar with that. Did the complete lack of campus residences present to you problems as far as how you would relate to the students or how they would relate to the campus?

COBB: Yes. I have always felt that our student affairs office here--especially the vice president or the dean--needed to have more direct interaction with the students through structured arrangements, such as group meetings with them. The presence of an



Associated Students Incorporated group with an entity of its own and a student center of its own was really a surprise to me, and I don't think it could have happened in any other state except California. The university center at Douglass College was under the dean of student affairs. Everything that went on in that center was decided by a policy group, including students, and that was the way it was run. We had a few of what I call slot machines, those things you put your money in and push and you shoot the little man? Those were all under Douglass College's budget. We, in fact, were able to hire a new assistant dean of student services because of the revenue from those machines. Here, all that revenue--and there are many more machines, downstairs in the student center--goes into the University Center budget, and that helps them run a very highly structured program. It is separate completely from the president's office, and I have no say-so whatsoever in that. That was established, apparently, by a very smart lawyer years ago, for the whole CSSA [California State Student Association] system. You may remember there'd been a brouhaha up at Chico recently with reference to the president and what they should get at the college--Chico--versus what the student association should get. It is a very different operation.

de GRAAF: Yes. I notice that when you first came in, you advertised that you would have at least one, perhaps several hours a week when your office would be open for students. Were you able to maintain this?

COBB: Yes, I kept it for a long time. Anytime a student wants to see me now, or a faculty member, they are put on the schedule. But I used to have open hours, at least two hours every semester, once in the fall and once in spring, and then I also started having staff hours and faculty hours. I don't know whether you knew that. It was advertised, but getting messages around this campus has been constantly a problem. The communication system's difficult. Everybody's flying off in space; nobody's staying here. It's not in a nice, little, woodsy community somewhere.

de GRAAF: Most of the campus activities, as I understand our administrative structure, report initially to a vice president, associate vice president, and so forth.

Did you find that this diluted authority that you had had in earlier positions?

COBB: No, this helps. As president, I had a different job than I had at Douglass, you see. It's a different job, because I was president. As such, I had here much more external work to do than I ever had at Douglass. I never had to do all those things at Douglass, and the president here has to do them.

de GRAAF: You mean, along lines of community relations?

COBB: Yes, the external community, and members of this and members of that, and going to dinners, and being a spokesperson.

de GRAAF: You did, however, mention that in time, Provost Marini, as you put it, had some implications to his office that you did not agree with, particularly the idea that he should be the dean of faculty, so to speak.

COBB: That's fine. He should have been the dean of faculty. But to say to a faculty member that they cannot see me, they must go through him, was the straw that broke the camel's back.

de GRAAF: Was there any particular incident that brought this up?

COBB: No. Just a cumulative awareness on my part.

de GRAAF: Were there any other top administrators whose ideas of running their offices came to be at odds with yours?

COBB: No. Richardson, much to my surprise, decided to step down.

de GRAAF: I knew he did, early in your administration. I wasn't sure what the circumstances were there. Finally, a few more things before we plunge into the policies and so forth. Beyond the receptions and convocations that you mentioned in your first weeks, and, I gather now, months after arriving how did you seek to become better acquainted with the administration, staff, the faculty, and the students during your first years?

- COBB: Visits to various departments and having open hours and visiting with the students in various kinds of meetings--the AS [Associated Students] board and the like. The president of student government and I used to meet every other week. In fact, the president that first year and I are still very good friends.
- de GRAAF: There was, I believe, a regularly meeting council of deans?
- COBB: Yes.
- de GRAAF: Did you meet with that?
- COBB: Not really the first year, because that's one of the things that I eventually became aware of, that the time I had in deans' meetings was not as frequent as I had wanted it to be, and I did not attempt to change that. I had so much to learn. I did have a lot to learn, being at a new campus, my first presidency, and I wasn't aware of all those little end plays going on, lots of little tricks of the trade that one learns by experience.
- de GRAAF: Yes. There was, I imagine, some entity of top administrators that met regularly? What do we call it?
- COBB: You mean at the chancellor's office?
- de GRAAF: No, within this campus.
- COBB: PAB, President's Advisory Board. We met regularly.
- de GRAAF: Who, exactly, is on that?
- COBB: Only the vice presidents.
- de GRAAF: Was that more or less one of the major decision-making groups?
- COBB: Yes, and still is. It's where I seek advice. I make the decision, but I seek their advice. In fact, any vice president can put something on the agenda, because it's something we have to decide collectively.

de GRAAF: Was it strictly the vice presidents, or did it also include what in your beginning were associate vice presidents or deans, like student affairs?

COBB: No. We have two groups on campus. We have the President's Advisory Board, which is a small group of the four vice presidents, plus my executive secretary, who sits there but doesn't have a vote or anything. Then, there is the President's Advisory Council [PAC], which is the large group of about thirty people, which includes all the directors, all the deans, and all the associate vice presidents.

de GRAAF: How often did that group meet?

COBB: Once a month or once every six weeks.

de GRAAF: Was that also decision-making, or more to keep you informed?

COBB: More to keep everybody informed.

de GRAAF: This was a system already in place when you came?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: And you did not particularly try to change it?

COBB: No, because PAC was a very important group for communication. The associate vice president for extended education is on it. The person in charge of cooperative education is on it--third-level management people.

de GRAAF: Was the Faculty Council [after 1986, the Academic Senate] your main vehicle for meeting faculty?

COBB: Yes, the main formal vehicle.

de GRAAF: You have regularly attended their meetings?

COBB: Yes, as many as I can.

de GRAAF: You mentioned that your earlier experience had been that the president or dean of the campus was also the president of the faculty council.

COBB: Yes, at Douglass College.

- de GRAAF: Were you rather surprised that at CSUF, the president of the university is not the president of the faculty council?
- COBB: Yes, I was. At Connecticut College, the president ran the faculty meetings.
- de GRAAF: Did you ever inquire as to whether Cal State Fullerton might adopt those other customs?
- COBB: No. I accepted whatever structure they had. Obviously, it was something that had been started way before I got here, and you can't change a campus culture.
- de GRAAF: As a matter of fact, it goes all the way back to the beginning. Langsdorf invited the faculty to organize their first year and elect one of their own as chair.
- COBB: Yes, that's part of the campus culture. That normally is a very unusual method. In fact, Langsdorf set the tone, so to speak, for that years ago.
- de GRAAF: On your wider role with the community: when you came here, there were several campus-community groups, and I'd be interested in your reflections on how they fit into your getting better acquainted with the campus.
- COBB: They invited me to things right off the bat, and I was pleased about that. In fact, I had the Coordinating Council of Community Groups over here right before last. The well-developed community support structure here was a delight and a surprise, because we had never had anything like that at Douglass. First of all, our community was not just the immediate community; the whole state was our community. Students, of course, came from all over the state, but they lived in residence. So it was a different operation. But it was delightful to have those groups already formed on this campus. I did form new ones, however. I formed the Parents Association; it was a new group. We also formed the Coordinating Council.
- de GRAAF: I was going to say I hadn't heard of the Coordinating Council.

COBB: That was developed in 1984.

de GRAAF: What you had when you came on board was, obviously, the Friends of Cal State Fullerton.

COBB: Right. That was one group. And Music Associates and the Art Alliance. What else? The Titan Athletic Foundation.

de GRAAF: Wasn't there a President's Associates group?

COBB: There is a University Advisory Board, which still exists. The President's Associates is a group of people who contribute big money to the campus, but that's not a support group because they don't have an organization.

de GRAAF: Were there any people you can think of in the earliest years that were particularly crucial to helping you get to know the community?

COBB: One very important person who was crucial was [William] Bill Bridgford, CEO of Bridgford Foods, who arranged to open his home to have a reception for me, and that was quite a wonderful gesture on his part.

de GRAAF: You had an associate vice president of community affairs. I believe it was Duane Day?

COBB: That's right. He had been charged with forming these community support groups in the seventies with Don Shields.

de GRAAF: What was the state of alumni affairs when you came?

COBB: They had a small cadre of people that met and made all kinds of decisions and were paying dues. All the alumni had to pay dues to be members. It was a small operation and not very effective. So that was one the two things I saw immediately that I felt needed to be changed, one of which was to enhance and upgrade and reorganize the alumni into a viable organization that didn't pay dues. And secondly, to look at the possibility of building a dormitory.

de GRAAF: How did you go about changing the alumni?

COBB: I had a consultant come in to look at it and give a report, and I talked with Duane Day about how to

restructure things, and we set about to do that. It took about a year and a half to stop dues and reorganize. Then I took a person out of Student Affairs, I guess it was, and made that person director of alumni. Sue Sheppard Lasswell.

de GRAAF: That position continues to the present day, right?

COBB: Yes, with Sue Lasswell.

(Tape 9, Side A)

de GRAAF: On dormitories: did anybody clue you in to the sad history of our first dormitory?

COBB: Yes. I heard it 100,000 times.

de GRAAF: Was the intent, perhaps, to warn you?

COBB: No. I think the nature of scholars is to tell the history of the past (laughter). I heard that story completely. I heard about the International University problem<sup>7</sup>, extended ed, and I heard about the earlier attempt to have a satellite campus down in Mission Viejo. I heard all the news.

de GRAAF: One of the big problems, obviously, with dormitories was funding, because the state simply would not put money into it.

COBB: Right. I set about to work on that.

de GRAAF: What was your strategy?

COBB: To follow procedure because we'd had dormitory revenue funds, and I got the cooperation of Assemblywoman Teresa Hughes to tap into the dormitory funds and also to work with the chancellor's office in putting through a line item in the budget to hold down the cost of the interest of the developers on a bond issue for the building so that the students in the housing could actually afford to live in the house at rates that would be attractive. They tend to be higher than they are on some campuses that were built decades ago, but they still are within a reasonable cost compared to

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<sup>7</sup> Refers to an abortive effort to set up a joint doctorate with United States International University in the 1970s.

housing outside of the campus. But that was through some cooperation by Assemblywoman Teresa Hughes, also by the legislature and the chancellor's office, to bring about a financial package that would work.

de GRAAF: And all of this finally came together when?

COBB: Oh, gosh, four years ago. We've only had those dorms two and a half years.

de GRAAF: Did you model this package particularly after anything at other campuses?

COBB: No. Our dorms were already built by this time.

de GRAAF: Not another state university.

COBB: No, not at all. It was my own idea, plus, the chancellor's office arranged with the state . . . See, dormitories are built with a certain kind of funding, revenues from off shore oil drilling. We tried to get money from the federal government through the HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] plan of low interest rates, 3 or 4 percent, but the hooker there was that you got points. Ten would be a perfect score. You got five or seven or eight points for having pre-existing dormitories that you had proved that you ran well. We were out of the running because we had no dorms to prove, so we never got those initial point advantages for the HUD low interest money. So that's why we had to pursue other means.

de GRAAF: Did these other means include floating a special bond issue for our dorms?

COBB: Not a special bond issue, but dormitory revenue monies, plus a bond associated with dorms, plus this \$350,000 line item in the budget every year until it gets paid off. That's what Teresa Hughes was very instrumental in finally working out.

de GRAAF: Interesting, being an assemblywoman from Los Angeles. You didn't get the same cooperation from any local legislators?

COBB: She happened to be chairwoman of the Education Subcommittee. It was she who knew what was going on. However, I have always had incredible support from my representatives from Orange County, again,



part of the proof that Orange County is not a hostile place; it's a good place. Even people whom I may not agree with in their political philosophy worked for the good of the university, and whatever my policies were--or theirs--we did not discuss. We only talked about common goals. That's as it should be; [it's the] professional way to do things.

de GRAAF: Did it ever arise that at least two of the local legislators now and for the last several years are alumni of Cal State Fullerton? [Assemblyman Ross Johnson and Senator Ed Royce]

COBB: Yes. We always made a high visibility of that fact as we bragged about our campus. We were always, first of all, very proud of the fact that they were alums. Secondly, they had a special feeling about us, as well as State Senators John Seymour and Marian Bergeson, who were not alums. They were also very supportive.

de GRAAF: Back to some of the other situations that come in. Let me just go through what I perceive to be some of the particular problems that you faced shortly after arriving. One of the earliest seems to be in the area of athletics. The athletic director, Mike Mulcahy, had just resigned prior to your coming, I believe in May?

COBB: I never heard of him.

de GRAAF: I get the impression when you arrived here, we had no regular athletic director.

COBB: I guess so, yes. Then, we had Lynn Eilefsen. I don't remember when Lynn was hired. It must have been in 1982.

de GRAAF: In addition to that, the athletic department had been over \$200,000 in debt.

COBB: Right. I do remember that, because that was my charge from the trustees, to be sure that didn't happen again. That was their expectation.

de GRAAF: Was this a big issue with you the first year, do you recall?

- COBB: Always, athletics has always been a big issue. It is one of those nonprofit centers. It's profitable, in other words, but not in dollars and cents.
- de GRAAF: An even bigger financial problem, perhaps, was the CSUF Foundation. It supposedly owed the federal government about \$800,000.
- COBB: That was true. That was all worked through the diligent, day and night help of Ric Richardson. He did so much. He just deserves a special kind of honor, and I've said so publicly and in writing. To have worked with that material, all the documentation, all the receipts, all the bills for a long time was of incalculable value.
- de GRAAF: What was the essence of the problem?
- COBB: Undocumented bills that had no receipts or data to back them up. It was just the bookkeeping.
- de GRAAF: So the federal government felt we owed that money back to them?
- COBB: Yes, because there was just no evidence, proof of spending, and whether it was supposed to be spent. I don't think the person who did it did anything dishonest; they weren't absconding with money or stealing, but they were sloppy.
- de GRAAF: Was it from one particular grant?
- COBB: I don't really know.
- de GRAAF: Another economic problem was statewide, and that is that then Governor Jerry Brown declared two different spending freezes in the first six months you were here.
- COBB: That's right. Two weeks after I arrived in mid-October. But I was used to freezes.
- de GRAAF: Oh, you had been through that at Douglass or Connecticut?
- COBB: Everybody had; we had big problems. As I mentioned, at Rutgers there was this whole business of faculty striking because they weren't given raises and wanted to withhold grades in 1976, so I was used to freezes.

de GRAAF: Were there any particular programs endangered? As I recall, this was a time when the Faculty Council was concerned about layoffs.

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: Let's go on, then, to faculty relations. You have said you met regularly with the faculty council. What about the committee structure, particularly what at that time was called the Fiscal Affairs and Long-range Planning Committee. Today it's called the Priorities Committee. What sort of relations did you have with this committee? What specific issues rose between the two of you, or what major issues of campus finance did you both address?

COBB: They were discussed primarily with the vice president for academic affairs, and suggestions were given to me for the decision.

de GRAAF: Did you feel you and the faculty at times had different ideas of the role of the committee?

COBB: Yes, but I think we now have an excellent organizational structure with faculty input always.

de GRAAF: There was also the feeling that faculty had virtually no input in the fiscal affairs of the university. This concern first became strong during a period of slow growth and budget crisis during the 1970s, and it continued through much of your presidency. How did you deal with this faculty concern?

COBB: By working with the Priorities Committee as described a moment ago.

de GRAAF: Around 1985-1986, you created a President's Task Force on Missions and Goals of the University. What was the main purpose of this body?

COBB: To chart our philosophical future.

de GRAAF: Was it created in response to a systemwide movement or some specific problem?

COBB: No, absolutely not. Every institution must chart its own course.

- de GRAAF: Did either this task force or its published reports influence the direction of the university?
- COBB: Yes, in positive ways, by all on- or off-campus and new faculty know our plans.
- de GRAAF: About a year after you came here, collective bargaining elections were held at CSUF and statewide, and the CFA [California Faculty Association] narrowly won out. I'd like your recollections on how this institutionalization of a union role affected you as president, or the campus.
- COBB: It was a union, and they helped faculty in addressing grievances. It did not change my office, but I welcome unions. They help the employees feel more comfortable.
- de GRAAF: Did you attempt to modify or influence the personnel process?
- COBB: No. Why would a union presence call for that?
- de GRAAF: I was aware that shortly after you came, the personnel requirements, especially for advancement to full professor, seemed to be tightened.
- COBB: They were, but it began with the Don Shields letter earlier. Full professor is an honor, and with it comes a certain dignity and expectation from colleagues. But you see, the whole national education scene changed as well. Whatever occurred for promotion and tenure, let's say, in 1971--nationally, it's not just this campus--had a different perspective of expectations that gradually increased as the years went by, so that one truly expected faculty to do research to be a full professor. At least scholarly work, and that may be different for different disciplines. You wouldn't expect a professor of social sciences like history to have as many publications as someone in the sciences, because the publication style and system is entirely different.
- de GRAAF: I don't, but I think some faculty who get on committees--this was my observation--on Professional Leaves Committees--sometimes make that mistake of "an article is an article is an article." But that's another story. Let me carry this on a bit. It was in the early eighties that these personnel

rules were actually instituted. Shortly thereafter, about 1984, we got a series of national reports coming out--Lynn Cheyney's [50 Hours] is only the last of this series--that all seemed to focus on the concern that perhaps research, and particularly highly specialized research, is being overemphasized, and that teaching, particularly a broad, general education, is being neglected as a result. Did you ever feel that the emphasis that had been placed on scholarly publication was at odds with teaching?

COBB: No. Believe me--I'm looking at promotion standards--we have never overemphasized research on this campus, and because a national article comes out, you grab at that as if this is a trend that is appropriate to us. I don't know if you've ever sat on an FPT [Faculty Personnel and Tenure] Committee.

de GRAAF: That I have not. I've been on division, department, but never the schoolwide committee.

COBB: A couple of times I had to argue with the FPT committee to give somebody a promotion.

de GRAAF: So you do not feel that we fit into that mold of overemphasis [on research].

COBB: No. But we are a different university than we were in 1971. I have never given anybody tenure who was not a scholar and a teacher. I don't know how many times I have to say this, and I've been here nine years, although some faculty would like to believe I've done otherwise, especially some old-timers who believe this new rigor thing is wrong, because they're judging themselves from the criteria that were used when they were promoted.

de GRAAF: So you were very involved in the personnel process. Were there any other of the standing faculty committees that you particularly had dealings with? You touched on priorities and personnel. Somebody quoted you when you had been here about a year and were asked what your impressions of the campus were, and you were quoted as responding, "I have likened it" [your first year as president] "to walking through a forest where there are lovely trees, nice flowers . . ."

- COBB: ". . . and, all of a sudden, you step on a land mine." It's exactly true. I think it would be true for any president on any campus, because, you know, things are going very well, and, all of a sudden, some faculty member gets killed. Or, all of a sudden, there's a student sit-in somewhere you didn't know about. That's what I mean.
- de GRAAF: Was there any particular incident you had in mind when you made that comment?
- COBB: No. We hadn't had student sit-ins. There are various things. It's just part of a living, breathing body of 2,000 staff and faculty and 25,000 students. You just never know from day to day, and that's a fact. That's what makes it exciting. On the other hand, you just can't sit back and relax and think everything's hunky-dory.
- de GRAAF: With respect to your job, roughly what percent of your time was involved in campus affairs as opposed to extracampus--community relations, fund raising, and so forth?
- COBB: I'd say about 20 percent of my time was devoted to external affairs.

(Tape 10, Side A)

de GRAAF: This is another in a series of interviews with Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb. It is occurring on June 9, 1990 at her home in El Dorado Ranch in Fullerton. The interviewer is Lawrence de Graaf.

Jewel, one thing that we didn't get on the tape last time is to review briefly the organization of the whole CSU system as you encountered it and some of the comments you might have on it. First, the other presidents. How often did they come together?

COBB: We came to meetings once a month at what is called the Executive Council, and that was a meeting at which the chancellor and the vice chancellors were present. We had an agenda that was sent to us ahead of time. It consisted mainly of items that the chancellor's office had placed on it. However, other presidents who had systemwide issues of any sort that they wanted to discuss could also put items on the agenda. The purpose of that meeting was twofold: one, to give us information--verbally--that was extremely important that might end up in the ensuing weeks in a typed directive or typed public information, but sometimes was information mainly for the presidents' ears only. The chancellor often described her conversations or meetings in Sacramento concerning various items on the CSU table, whatever they might be, and various comments of that sort, or plans that were underway. The other part of the objective was to hear from the presidents their comments and advice and thoughts that might be useful to the agenda topic.

de GRAAF: Was this group purely information sharing and advisory, or did it sometimes make policy?

COBB: It helped to shape policy, because there might be a policy item coming up having to do, for example, with the suggestion of student fee increases. Various presidents would speak to that; or having to do with fraternities and how they were handled on various campuses; or malpractice insurance for the doctors in the various health centers; or enrollment planning. Those are the kinds of items. So they helped to shape policy.

de GRAAF: You worked with two chancellors, briefly with Glenn Dumke, most of your career with Ann Reynolds. How

were each of these about taking ideas from presidents and accepting your advice?

COBB: I would say they were about equal. The advice they asked for from us, unless there was a unanimous feeling about it, was, really to shade the size of issues--not so much big policy matters, "Should we do this?" The question never came up, for example, "Should we increase enrollment?" That was a question that was determined at the chancellor's office level and with some awareness and sensitivity to what the legislature expected of the CSU. Dumke was a little less patient with the presidents in the discussion period. He often terminated it faster than Reynolds and sometimes became a little irritated when they didn't shape up the way he thought in conversation. You remember, when I got to Fullerton in 1981, he had already been there for years and years, and was about ready to step aside. So I think his patience quota had changed. He was getting a little more impatient with whatever was going on versus someone who comes in new.

de GRAAF: In both of these cases, did the chancellor almost always preside over these meetings? Or were there times when one of the vice chancellors presided?

COBB: No, the chancellor always presided.

de GRAAF: Did this Executive Council also have committees?

COBB: Yes, there were four or five. But they were statewide. We were never allowed to meet among ourselves; that was tabu. Advisory subcommittees and all of that were never allowed. If we had an agenda topic that we wanted to gather five of us together for, we would have to do that clandestinely. But we never did. We used to convene on the telephone about items, but we never had conference calls, because that was not allowed. It was called "sunshine law," but it was also a Dumke practice. We were always told that we were not to gather independently.

de GRAAF: Did these even go so far as to preclude socializing among several presidents?

COBB: Oh, no, only business. How could they tell us what to do in our private lives?





de GRAAF: I was wondering that myself.

COBB: No, indeed not. We did have committees. The Admissions Committee had two or three presidents on it; it was a statewide committee. There was a management advisory group, called MAG, which sat with the chancellor on matters sometimes before and after a board meeting or sometimes in between. I was never on MAG and did not want to be on MAG and was glad that I was not asked to be on MAG.

de GRAAF: What committees were you on?

COBB: The Admissions Advisory Council. I've been on that for almost all the time. I headed up a statewide committee on science resources and teacher education in science. I also was on, and am still on--but we are not meeting this summer--the Education Equity Committee, which is a statewide group.

de GRAAF: Can you think of any outstanding issues that came up at any of these meetings of the Executive Council?

COBB: Hundreds of them. Every month, there were critical issues that came up. I'm serious.

de GRAAF: Were there every any times you can recall when most or all of the presidents were at odds with the chancellor's office?

COBB: Often. You take nineteen vibrant leaders vibrating in the same room together (laughter) with the chancellor and vice chancellors, all of whom are very strong personalities, and you're not going to get unanimous opinion. Well, I'm just teasing, in a way. After vigorous conversation and discussion, we came to grips. Sometimes presidents didn't agree with something, sometimes there were critical things on which the chancellor really wanted a consensus, or at least the majority of the presidents to be behind, and then she would ask for those people who were behind. But there was no counting or tallying or any of that kind of thing.

de GRAAF: No formal votes.

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: The chancellor's office and the Board of Trustees set the broad policies for the system. I have heard

from previous presidents that sometimes these policies were not ones they completely agreed with, and I'd like your comment. One of these was the share of the whole system's budget that went to Fullerton compared with the full-time equivalent students that Fullerton was carrying. Did you ever feel that you were getting an inequitable ratio?

COBB: No, it was a strict formula, and that's the way we got it. If the formula is inequitable, it's inequitable for every campus.

de GRAAF: But there were different student-faculty ratios among the campuses, weren't there?

COBB: Yes, but that has to do with the mix of curriculum, and we set about to change and improve our student-faculty ratio by changing the mode and level of some of our courses. That's how the differences occur. It wasn't something that was "unfair." We, however, collectively, as presidents, always felt that there were more staff folks down at the chancellor's office than there needed to be, and they ought to give us more of those positions, feed them out to the campuses.

de GRAAF: Did you ever get any place on that protest?

COBB: Whatever they did, they had to do it. They used to always say, "If we do it for one campus, we have to do it for all. We can't do that for one; we have to do it for all." That was always the answer you got.

de GRAAF: During the seventies, particularly when there were several Reagan appointees on the Board of Trustees, the trustees came up from time to time with policy suggestions, at least, that stirred great concern among faculty and, I think, all the way up to the presidents. One example was a 1976 suggestion that would have significantly modified tenure. Do you recall during the eighties that trustees ever came up with such controversial ideas as that which the presidents collectively took issue with?

COBB: No. There was no discussion of changes in tenure, for example. There was a policy that Chancellor Reynolds did put forth to the trustees that was never discussed at the presidents' level; it was just handed to us by fiat. That was a policy that she introduced on retirement of presidents and what

they should or should not receive as a result of that. But that was never discussed by the presidents, which I found very interesting, because it should have been. Most other things were discussed by the presidents, but this she chose not to. I was also on an ad hoc committee, by the way, to formulate policy on presidential review. We wrote a policy having to do with how many times presidents should be reviewed when they were first hired and then after X number of years, and what kinds of individuals should be on that review committee. We did formulate that as a subcommittee and gave that to the chancellor.

de GRAAF: Has it been adopted?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Probably the most controversial thing that Reynolds did was the one which apparently caused her downfall, and that was this salary hike for herself, vice chancellor's positions, and presidents. Had that been openly reviewed with the presidents?

COBB: No. That was another one that had not been discussed whatsoever with the presidents. I received a letter in the mail indicating what my salary would be, and it was the first time I knew about it. It was not discussed.

de GRAAF: When it came through, did you have any misgivings about the secrecy with which this was being done?

COBB: I, frankly, didn't even know it had been a secret, secret in the sense that. . . . I guess what they were saying was that there was supposed to have been a sunshine law applied so the press would get it, I guess, but none of us thought about it as a "secret." I do remember that the first time--during my time--discussion of salaries came up, it was at a Board of Trustees' public meeting discussion in Fresno. At that meeting, it was very messy. In fact, I think one of the trustees objected to the raises that were recommended then, and there was a great discussion. But the majority of the Board of Trustees agreed, and they voted in a public session. I think the memory of that very unpleasant public session must have been what was around for this past discussion, because I don't even know what month the salary raise was decided. According to the

newspapers, they said this "nonpublic meeting" took place among the board either in November or December.

de GRAAF: It was several months ago, I know.

COBB: It must have been November, because I don't think the board met in December. But I didn't know anything about it, personally. My style is not to gossip. That is, I'm not going to call up one of my colleagues and say, "Did you hear what happened at the trustees' meeting?" Or call the trustees, for that matter, although I have a couple of good friends who are trustees. My work and time on the campus are so busy, I don't feel like wasting good time calling up to gossip and rumor monger. I never have, whether it's on this campus or any other campus. Half the time, I don't even know what's going on, except those things that are officially going on. Of course, I know those and know them well.

de GRAAF: One final thing on this whole abortive pay raise: had there been for some time before that went through a widespread feeling among presidents that the salaries you were currently getting were not competitive with those of compatriots in many other states?

COBB: I never talked with the presidents about salary.

de GRAAF: But I should think if this feeling had been around, it must have bubbled up occasionally at meetings of the Executive Council.

COBB: I know we were very concerned that faculty salaries were lower than they should be, because we had felt they would not give us the best faculty we wanted. We knew about the debates with the union [California Faculty Association] about salary increases, and there was a big debate last year by CFA that the faculty be given more money that was available at Golden Shore [location of the CSU chancellor's office]. The CFA always had a very antagonistic, adversarial position with reference to administrators as a principle, as we were told. We knew about that tension all the time; that had been constant from the very beginning. I would suspect that there was a little bit of that complaining going on at the Sacramento level, because the union

had the ear of many of the legislators. They contributed to their campaigns, called lobbying. I, personally, find the whole political machination thing nauseating, because I think that education should be apolitical. To the degree that politics enters into it, I think we cheapen it, and I feel very strongly about that. I always have. But public universities have this problem, since it is taxpayers' money. My background has been in private colleges. On the other hand, I was not a president in New Jersey, so I'm not sure whether I can compare the union and legislative activity there with California's. But I do find it really quite upsetting the politics of things--and I don't mean politics whether they're Democrats or Republicans. I mean the other kind of politics--personal persuasion, different groups getting the ear because they give money. I think that's abhorrent, frankly, I really do.

de GRAAF: Between you and me, I think the only good we're ever going to get out of that quagmire will be public funding of elections.

COBB: It won't ever stop, because that doesn't stop an aide from receiving input from someone who is interested, from a union. The minute we had unions, we began another kind of introduction of problems into the educational arena. I understand the importance of unions, because they do help in so many ways besides salary setting and the conditions of work. They do make everybody toe the line in deadlines and things. We had them at Rutgers, and I saw an improvement in efficiency. However, when it comes to the way things are used as blackmail--"We won't sign this unless you do X"--that I find just deplorable, I really do, and I'm very sad about it.

de GRAAF: I think others are, too, but some would say that's perhaps just the realities of power. I don't know. I have mixed feelings on this myself. Two other outside entities that I think from time to time you dealt with: one was the North Orange County Community College District. I'm not sure what the timing was, but when you came, was Dr. Leadie Clark the chancellor?

COBB: She was the chancellor [of NOCCCD], yes.

- de GRAAF: So you had the fascinating phenomenon of two black women presiding over different entities of higher education in Orange County.
- COBB: And a third black woman president of Saddleback Community College.
- de GRAAF: I didn't realize that. Who was that?
- COBB: Constance Carroll. She still is.
- de GRAAF: How much contact did you have with Dr. Clark?
- COBB: She and I were good friends, and still are, although I don't see her as much. She's now working in Los Angeles with a project in the YWCA.
- de GRAAF: Aside from personal things, did you find that your institutions had much reason to get together?
- COBB: We do lots of things with the community colleges, particularly in the north area of Orange County. We have big transfer centers. We have articulation committees.
- de GRAAF: Transfer centers. How do those work?
- COBB: We have special money from the chancellor's office to supplement the vocational guidance of the community college students to tell them about how they can transfer to a senior college; what it means; what the curriculum is; how you go about it. That's what a transfer center is. It's meant to enhance the transferability of students, particularly minorities, because the highest percentage of minorities go to community colleges, yet they are the lowest percentage of transfers.
- de GRAAF: Did you have these transfer centers only at the North Orange County campuses, or did you have them in other systems?
- COBB: Every campus of the CSU has a transfer center; it's a systemwide project. I'm not sure where all of our transfer centers are, but there are quite a few. We have one at Rancho Santiago [a community college in Santa Ana].

- de GRAAF: These centers, then, would not be so much to orient students to go to Cal State Fullerton as to tell them about the whole Cal State system.
- COBB: By definition, they get certain generalized admission information. But if they're going to a community college near where they live, which most of them are, naturally, we expect and encourage them to come to us, because it's the most convenient. This is not a sleepaway campus. It's a commuter campus, which is quite different from residential set-ups elsewhere. Our biggest class always at the university is the junior class.
- de GRAAF: I know that community colleges transfers are a very important part of our enrollment. I wasn't aware they had gone so far. How far back do these centers date, do you know?
- COBB: About five years.
- de GRAAF: I notice there is also some evidence that you and Dr. Clark, or Cal State Fullerton and the North Orange County Community College District tried to articulate some sort of a common policy on remedial education, the gist of which, I guess, is that the community colleges would take a greater share of the responsibility?
- COBB: I don't remember any policy or arrangement.
- de GRAAF: I don't know if it was ever worked out, but the possibility was discussed in 1983 that Fullerton and Cypress [community colleges] might become centers of remedial education.
- COBB: I wasn't aware of that. We do have remedial education as what they do at community colleges now, but there was no discussion that I'm aware of with Leadie Clark, particularly. Where did you get that information?
- de GRAAF: Out of the notes on the university center retreat in 1983, that this was under discussion.
- COBB: It never really materialized. What happened is that we ended up having Fullerton Community College faculty teaching a math course on our campus, and the community college gets the credit for it. We do



have remedial math and English courses here, but they're paid for by the chancellor's office.

I believe that remediation is part of what a public university has to do, and we need to have special funds in order to do it. That's the end of that conversation. Members of your history department feel very strongly about it and worked on making it a big agitation, but let me say this. We have to be very careful about blaming the victim. We must be very careful about blaming the victim--students--because what we talk about in terms of remedial education has a stigma attached, as if they are dumb, as if they don't belong here, as if we are elitist and not a public institution. Those are three attitudes that I find most objectionable. First of all, we don't talk about faculty teaching first year French, do we? That's a remedial, if we want to talk about that. We're talking about remedial as if a student had the subject once and failed it, and then had to be taught again. That is not true. They are in the dilemma because they have never been taught in the first place. That's the problem. So what we have inherited as a problem from high school is, of course, something that we can always blame the high school for. Fine, so now what do you do? Do you penalize the student for poor pedagogy? I maintain it's easy to teach a bright student. All you have to do is give them the assignment and they'll do it, because they're bright and they're ready and motivated. The student that has to plod along or who is not motivated has to have more attention, more challenge, as a pedagogical technique. That's where the challenge is. But instead, some people--not me--turn around and say, "Well, those students are dumb. They don't belong here. We are a university." We are a public university and we are our brother's keepers, and I said that in the notes of the faculty Academic Senate in 1982 or 1983, just that.

Now, how do we deal with it? The chancellor's office did come around with money, finally, when they realized it was a statewide, universal problem. We have money from the chancellor's office, thousands of dollars, just earmarked for "remedial," or what I call "additive," education.

de GRAAF: When did the chancellor's finally come through with this?

- COBB: Five or six years ago. It's been in quite awhile. We have the Intensive Learning Experience. We have the specialized money for the English department, and we have special money in math. So there must be something going on universally that's at issue here.
- de GRAAF: There are some other aspects I would like to explore. One that I gather from some of the documents I've looked at was that in the early eighties, there were some sorts of changes in the entry level requirements that made the expectations that colleges had of what they were getting from high schools versus what students were actually getting in there more at odds. The one that seems to have brought this to focus was the ELM, Entry Level Math. Was that a new requirement we imposed about 1983?
- COBB: No. That was in place when I got here in 1981.
- de GRAAF: According to the documents in your papers in the University Archives, this became a really big issue in 1983.
- COBB: Everywhere?
- de GRAAF: It was discussed here, particularly, at Cal State Fullerton.
- COBB: Because Gerald Marley [CSUF professor of mathematics] was obsessed with it. He was on the statewide committee to form the ELM test.
- de GRAAF: Was the ELM test a significantly more demanding one than had existed for entry level math testing before?
- COBB: I have no idea. I don't think so. It's probably the same test. But what did happen at the statewide level is that there was the institution of some statewide regulations on what courses all high school students should take.
- de GRAAF: That's what I'm thinking of, yes.
- COBB: That was a statewide decision, of what they should have in high school.
- de GRAAF: More years of English, more years of math.

COBB: Yes. But then, we even added to that. I was on the statewide admissions advisory council, as I said, and in that one, we added another year of math--three years of high school math and four years of English. There were fifteen units that had to be completed prior to beginning college. If they came in with one or two deficiencies, they were called "conditionals." Then we set a ruling that each year there were fewer and fewer "conditionals" allowed until 1991, when all of the units expected had to be finished from high school in order to be admitted to a CSU campus. That included a year of art, which was not ever there before, and the UC system did not have art. Ours included so much science, so much math, so much English, and history, and government. So by 1991, all of those conditionals will no longer be acceptable; they would have to go to a community college and take up to fifty-six units there, and then transfer.

de GRAAF: In 1983 at the university retreat I've mentioned, you've described the crisis apparently revolving around this entry level math test as putting students in "a terrible dilemma." Do you want to explain what you meant by that? You were looking, basically, at these relatively new requirements on one hand versus what most high schools were requiring on the other hand. It seems to me it was in that context.

COBB: At that particular point, students were in a dilemma because they did not have the same kinds of guidance at home to have put them into the right courses so they could move along well. Again, it was a variation of my comment on blaming the victim, and what we had to do is to try to make sure wherever possible that students were aware of CSU admission requirements.

(Tape 10, Side B)

High school districts were not equal in terms of the depth to which the counselors penetrate the high school community. For example, there are many students that never even heard of admissions tests. I know, because I went to Buena Park High School. I asked in a class of black students that had gathered just to chat with me because I had been asked to be the assembly speaker in a classroom. I said, "How many of you have heard of the SATs?" The

response was nothing. Two or three in the room had ever heard of SATs. At this school, there were forty-seven languages. These happened to be a group of black kids, but the same thing would be true were they coming as new, first-generation, educated high school kids. They would not know. So the counseling and the advising has to be intense, because the parents at home are not going to say to them in the morning or at night, "Did you get information about when the SATs are coming along?" An educated parent or family will know to ask that. So what I'm saying is, when they say in high school that college requirements require this number of years of the right kind of math, the right kind of subject matter in science, they don't know. They come from a cultural background that doesn't know, and that's why I said these kids are in a dilemma.

de GRAAF: It seems to me that you and many others are also in something of a dilemma, because, obviously, in being on this systemwide committee that increased the expectation of high school, what you and your colleagues must have been looking for was a better prepared student vis-a-vis the requirements of college, and yet, here we have. . . .

COBB: No. That was in 1983 that I said that. We began a systemized change. The state put in the ruling first, in 1983. We did not begin our advisory changeover until about 1985 or 1986. By that time, the first state requirement had penetrated through all the superintendents, through all of the school districts, and what have you. Then, when we put in the requirements for the CSU in 1986, we staggered the expectations over four years, so that that will end in 1991.

de GRAAF: One obvious solution to the dilemma that we've discussed would be remedial courses, and that's the heart of the debate. One thing that occurred to me as I looked over things was that in 1983, the California Post-secondary Education Commission [CPEC] put down an order that seemed to suggest a reduction of remedial courses at both CSU and UC.

COBB: It said, optimistically, we hope that by the year 1995 or 2000, there would be no need for remedial courses.

de GRAAF: Quite optimistic, indeed.

- COBB: In fact, the presidents and the chancellor all discussed that, the CPEC Report, at one of our Executive Council meetings.
- de GRAAF: Obviously, you didn't entirely agree with it.
- COBB: No. The statement is a fine statement, but let's just carry that through for a moment. They didn't say it quite like that, by the way. It was a statement of optimism. It was quickly translated into the idea that CPEC was recommending that we be a police state, and no, you can't get in here unless you have all those courses well understood and you're academically ready. Let's just explore that for a moment. We are saying in America that we have a land of opportunity, and opportunity for the CSU has always been access. Now, if you have some access and some warning ahead of time and you start working on getting the courses and you stagger it over four years, then you will be ready to handle college material. The other component of that, which is my theory--and I testified before the state legislators on it--is that if you know what your prerequisites are, then you will take them, because they're public information and you don't have to rely on Aunt Susie or Uncle Joe over the dinner table to tell you. It will be publicly known that you are to take those courses, obviating the differential vocational counselors who like to counsel certain kinds of children, and the others, they don't bother with. Because, in order to fight the world's fight, to be prepared to handle college, you have to have the courses to get into college. But you've got to have the information to know that you'd better take those courses. So my argument before the legislature was counter to MALDEF's [Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund] argument. MALDEF argued that it was unfair to put that up as an added hurdle, and I maintain if you want to enter the mainstream, you have to be prepared to enter the mainstream. But that's quite different than saying, "No, you're not prepared. You can't come here." If you make available and indicate up front what is expected publicly, not relying on a counselor to tell you, then your parents will know that "This kid's got to go in this class." The children will know themselves. High school fifteen-year-olds are adults; biologically, they're adults.

- de GRAAF: You said that the state did make separate funding available for remedial classes about five or so years ago.
- COBB: It's not called "remedial classes." They are academic support systems.
- de GRAAF: Because I certainly get the impression following the Faculty Council/Academic Senate debates that a major issue was the concern that these academic support systems courses would drain from the funding for the regular courses.
- COBB: Yes, I know, and I've just told you that there's been supplementary money that pays for those, so they do not drain from the general fund. That's what I just said.
- de GRAAF: I know. I was just wondering how far back that went, whether there was a time when there was a legitimacy [to their concern].
- COBB: Five years, I guess. I'm not sure of the dates. But they have put in now thousands of dollars since '85, '86.
- de GRAAF: Yes, but in '83, when this debate was very hot, it might have been a legitimate concern.
- COBB: That's right. It was a legitimate concern. But I also have another problem with that "legitimate concern"; it reflects a certain selfishness. That's what I don't like: lack of social consciousness.
- de GRAAF: In your estimation, has the issue which is called remediation, whether we like the term or not, been largely settled now? Do you feel there is an adequate support system offered?
- COBB: I haven't done any studies to see whether there has been or not. I don't know. I really can't answer that. I hope so. I hope, certainly, [it's] addressing a lot of the problems. Just like federal monies for Head Start. They only handle about 25 or 30 percent of the youngsters needing Head Start.
- de GRAAF: One other thing I was going to go into on external things--then we'll get back to the campus--how much contact did you have with people at UC Irvine: its

chancellors, Dan Aldrich and Jack Peltason, or any others?

COBB: Dan Aldrich and Jean Aldrich are very special people, and I knew them. We chatted with one another. I've never been to their home for dinner nor they to mine, but we had a very good professional relationship. Jean and I were on a hospital board together, CHOC, Children's Hospital of Orange County. In fact, she came to my retirement dinner, she and her daughter, last Sunday.

de GRAAF: UCI certainly has been the more talked about campus in the press most of the time. Did you at any time feel that UC Irvine commanded an image or resources that went beyond its differences from Cal State Fullerton?

COBB: No, I wouldn't say "beyond its differences." I do think that the press did have a favoritism to UCI. I think it's gotten much better in the last year or two years.

de GRAAF: I've noticed that, too.

COBB: It really has improved.

de GRAAF: Yes. One thing I know that was quite a stunner to some of us who knew the background here was a few years ago when Arnold Beckman gave that large grant to UCI to build a science center. Did you at all try to redirect some of his gifts?

COBB: We worked very hard for years to get the ear of Arnold Beckman, with no success, despite the fact that, as I understand it, he served on our advisory board in the seventies.

de GRAAF: All the way back almost to the origins of the campus. He was one of the first people Langsdorf sought out.

COBB: I just find it very peculiar, as a matter of fact. Of course, as you know, I presented his name to the board [of trustees] for an honorary degree, which was granted, and nothing else has happened. I understand now he's poised on top of millions of dollars he's considering what he's going to do with. His affiliation has been clearly with Cal Tech and

the University of Illinois, but UCI, also because of its medical and laser and medicine, does grab a significant position with the donors because of its importance with human beings. It's not quite the same. But I am puzzled why he has not given us something. By the way, everybody in the world has tried to work to get next to Arnold. I've even discussed it with Don Shields since he's back in this neck of the woods when Jim Diefenderfer and Don and I were trying to get some things done. Nobody can get close to him. The chancellor called for a luncheon appointment with him when she and I were planning and plotting together. She never got a call back. I'd hate to talk about it as an elitist position, but I do think he thinks of it as an elitist position. Yet, why was he on our board for twelve years plus? I don't understand it. I really don't.

de GRAAF: Let's turn to something that was a recent issue, as the Senate Forum put it, and was perhaps one of your prize accomplishments: the expansion of the physical plant. When you came here, I don't think there were any buildings under construction. Were there even any which had serious plans or working drawings?

COBB: No. Seventy-seven, I think, was the last one, wasn't it?

de GRAAF: I think it was, yes. [Actually, it was 1979 when the Art Annex was completed.] There was quite a period of time when there was no construction. Was this largely due to budget crises? Or was there feeling on any people's parts that, aside from dormitories, Fullerton didn't need any more buildings?

COBB: Aside from dormitories? Nobody thought dormitories were needed, either, when I came here. I'm the one that began that whole process.

de GRAAF: There was no other grass roots interest in dormitories?

COBB: No, nothing that was brought to my attention. You know we had those dorms across the street and they failed, and I think everybody felt their fingers were burned.



- de GRAAF: Did you very quickly place a significant priority on new buildings?
- COBB: My first priority was dormitories, because I knew how valuable they are to undergraduate education. Then, we began our whole process of obvious things that we needed.
- de GRAAF: The first document I've seen in chronological order on that was in a 1983 five-year capital outlay projection. First, a little aside. Are these done only every five years?
- COBB: No, every year they're updated. Each year we do a five-year projection, but it's one year further on the five years.
- de GRAAF: Because I notice some very interesting things that did not seem to materialize. The first priority was expansion of the library.
- COBB: I beg to differ with you. I went to the legislature and got extensive internal remodeling. You remember we got the third and fourth and fifth floor done.
- de GRAAF: True, remodelling.
- COBB: That was an expansion and a remodeling.
- de GRAAF: That was over \$1 million.
- COBB: I fought for that, because what they wanted to do was to delay it a year until they had the library study done and CPEC could look at it. I, together with Senators Seymour, [Ed] Royce, and [Assemblyman] Ross Johnson, got that request through our legislative committee in Sacramento to do what we wanted to do, because we had the lowest assignable square footage<sup>3</sup> of any library in the nineteen [CSU] campuses. On that basis, the committee said, "Well, okay." Reluctantly, they said okay. That was what I did.
- de GRAAF: Two other things that I wasn't particularly aware of being done: one was a cogeneration plant.
- COBB: That's utilization of steam to make coolant.

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<sup>3</sup> The ratio of library size to enrollment.

de GRAAF: Was that actually completed?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Then there was a waste facility, also?

COBB: Yes. Those things aren't very glamorous, and they don't come to the attention of the faculty.

de GRAAF: The cogeneration plant was over \$6 million, as I recall. Then something that is a dream that goes way back, but I wonder if it's going to be anything more than a dream: you requested funds to plan an auditorium.

COBB: That's right. Our auditorium's on the budget planning cycle for next year. We will get approval, I'm quite sure. But you see, we were going to look at the auditorium in terms of a fund raising operation. Auditoriums are not high on the priority listing in capital outlay, because they're not classrooms, nor safety. Safety is first. There's a whole list of priorities in terms of what gets attention first. We did a feasibility study of whether there were enough people around in the donor population to raise money for an auditorium, and the feasibility study said no. So then, about two years ago, fortunately, the chancellor's office revised the process of capital outlay formulation so that auditoria up to a 1,200 people capacity could be requested and built with public funds. See, we were wanting a 2,500-seat auditorium, and we had to scale it down to the 1,200 because we didn't have a donor population to give to it. So we are going to be in line for the first phase, but we've got so many things on the drawing board now. We've got five things, as you know, right now: we've got the McCarthy Hall annex building going up; we've got the Education Classroom Building, between Langsdorf and HSS that's been approved and working out nicely; we've got the planning for the library addition, which will be almost double the size of the library. We've got planning monies available--when I say "available," they have been approved by committees, they're in conference this month--for working the approval for the physical education building. So we've got all those.

de GRAAF: An addition or a replacement of the physical education building?

COBB: No, remodeling and enlargement.

de GRAAF: In this initial document, I saw nothing about the addition to the engineering building, which, of course, is the one state-funded. . . .

COBB: We have that.

de GRAAF: When did that become proposed?

COBB: The next year [1984], when we got a big boost from the [State Senator Nicholas C.] Petris bill. That was special money set aside for science and technology for the state. We were in the middle of a big aerospace community, and we put in our request and we got it. And, I might say, by having that engineering and computer science wing, we have created more space elsewhere.

de GRAAF: Some of the most ambitious building plans were funded with private or nonstate money.

COBB: Just, really, one.

de GRAAF: The Ruby Gerontology Center. I'm also thinking of the hotel, of course.

COBB: It's on our campus, but it's not the same. It isn't run by us.

de GRAAF: I'm curious, though, as to whether in your previous experience at Douglass, Connecticut, and so forth, you found any parallels. Of course, Connecticut was a private school. Let's look at Douglass. Had New Jersey been forced to rely on private funding to build what might have been traditionally state-funded classrooms?

COBB: I don't know of anything that was built by private funds, certainly not at Douglass College. Several things were given to Douglass College way back. Several big buildings and one gym were given as a gift way back, but nothing during the time I was there.

de GRAAF: From your conversation with other CSU presidents, did they also have to rely to some extent on benefactors like the Rubys for certain buildings?

- COBB: When you say "have to rely," yes, because if you wanted to move things along, you certainly had to go to private sources for the money to supplement your state money, definitely.
- de GRAAF: In what state was the Ruby Gerontology Center when you came on board? Was it very far along in fund raising?
- COBB: No, it was just starting, the very nucleus, at that point, just starting as an idea and approval. Actually, it wasn't even in that stage. The CLE [Continued Learning Experience] organization had been founded and was moving along nicely. They were still meeting over in the Mahr House, and they ran out of space. Then, they started talking about "we need a place to meet." At that point, I pulled together a committee, Leo Shapiro, Ken Doane, Lucien Minor--a whole group of very fine individuals were the nucleus of the CLE operation. But they needed more classroom space, and they started talking about a building. I pulled them together and said, "Look, we're not going to have a building for a few classes and a senior citizens' social center on this campus. This is an academic campus, and we will have to pull it all together as an academic experience," and that's what we did.
- de GRAAF: Did Professor Rosalie Gilford play a significant role here in the idea of Cal State Fullerton's emphasizing gerontology?
- COBB: Yes, she did play a significant role, because that was her field. She was teaching courses in that field and she is the one who tied together the credential program in gerontology, as well as developing what we do have as an undergraduate gerontology minor. She's responsible for all of the academic thrust and the direction of the academic programs, and helping us to formulate the advisory committee. But she's not involved with the management of it nor the fund raising, per se. But she provided a very essential, very important part of it.
- de GRAAF: I know the Ruby family gave an important percent.
- COBB: \$100,000 at the very beginning, and then more at the end.

- de GRAAF: Was it difficult to get the balance? Was this a multiyear fund raising effort?
- COBB: To get the balance of what?
- de GRAAF: Of what the whole building cost.
- COBB: Yes, five years' worth of effort, with a big launch from the CLE group. But the person to whom all the credit should go, really, for a continually high effort level, is Leo Shapiro.
- de GRAAF: Now, the final outside funded thing, the hotel. Had this basic idea of a hotel-sports complex built around redevelopment funds been already laid down before you came?
- COBB: Yes. Don Hopping from the optometry school [Southern California School of Optometry] had talked with Don Shields about the idea of a hotel concept that would help pay for a sports complex. That was on the back burner lying dormant when I got here in '81. Then we began talking about it some more. They'd already, in fact, laid out a theoretical sports complex on paper but hadn't been able to move it along.
- de GRAAF: Had the city of Fullerton and Hilton agreed to this by the time you came?
- COBB: No, we worked together to get that done, and then we got sabotaged by the environmental impact statement objection group. A master's student and a citizen in the neighborhood sued in court. They lost the case after two or three years, and Hilton pulled out, too, at the same time. Then things were in a hiatus for two years.
- de GRAAF: In other words, you didn't immediately get Marriott to move in and take the place of Hilton.
- COBB: No. It took reopening the whole bid concept later. But the city was very excited about it from the very beginning, and wanted it to happen.
- de GRAAF: What were they most excited about, the hotel or the sports complex?
- COBB: The revenue, and business for the city from the hotel.

- de GRAAF: Had Hilton originally come in in anticipation that this whole hotel might have been done by the time of the [1984] Olympics [in Los Angeles, with a few events at nor near CSUF]?
- COBB: I don't know. I expect so.
- de GRAAF: Someplace I read that they were rather perturbed when that didn't materialize.
- COBB: I would think so. It makes business sense.
- de GRAAF: The hotel has been completed now for about a year, but the sports complex hasn't been started. Why is that?
- COBB: The hotel complex just opened in November, and this is June. The bids [for the sports complex] will be open June 21, and, hopefully, the ground-breaking will be in the summer.
- de GRAAF: I know Cal State Fullerton is quite unique in having a hotel on it. How unique is Fullerton in not having a football stadium, compared to other CSU campuses?
- COBB: Let's see. Long Beach plays in a Long Beach City Stadium which is pretty good, and they're remodeling it. Then they have the Civic Center, with the big basketball arena. San Diego has a big domed facility nearby in the city of San Diego, so they use that. Bakersfield is building something with some private money, as I recall. San Jose has a great stadium, and they're enlarging it to 30,000. Fresno has a fantastic stadium.
- de GRAAF: Is it still state policy that state money cannot be used for a sports stadium?
- COBB: Yes. The small campuses--Chico, Stanislaus, Sonoma--don't have stadiums. I know San Francisco State doesn't, nor Sacramento. Sacramento uses the city facilities.
- de GRAAF: So this will be one of the few CSU campuses with its own sports complex.
- COBB: Right. On the other hand, there are only a few schools in our system that are Division IA. I don't

know what Northridge is doing about that. Northridge is Division II.

de GRAAF: Probably your biggest physical expansion, with the possible exception of the dorms, has been the satellite campus. Had this been contemplated before you came?

COBB: No. I remember they had something down in Mission Viejo, a trailer or something years ago, and it failed.

de GRAAF: The only satellite I recall in the early years, the poli[tical] sci[ence] department ran a rather vigorous public administration program in Santa Ana through the late sixties and early seventies. But eventually, for some reason, that fizzled out, too. Yes, through the late sixties and early seventies.

COBB: I first started thinking about a southern Orange County facility the day I was appointed, because the vice chancellor for academic affairs at CSUF said, "You're not very visible in south Orange County." So I arranged for a study of academic needs to be done there. Dave Walkington, then Director of Extended Education, did the survey and found out there was interest. Then the survey was put on the back burner because Frank Marini, who was provost then, had bounced it off some faculty, and the faculty weren't interested because they thought it would drain the general fund and take money away from them--the same concept. I understand all that. We also decided, when I started really developing and pushing it, that we would not proceed unless we had specially earmarked funds from the chancellor's office, and that's what we've done. We've said, "No money, no go." But we did work for two years to find the right site. We went everywhere. We went to the Irvine Valley campus and to the Ziggurat [Chet Holifield] Building in south Orange County. We went to see Spectrum 30 land, and they said they'd build something for us. Then, by sheer, wonderful fortune, Saddleback [Community College] had land, buildings, and parking. When Dick Sneed became chancellor, he said, "Look. We've got all these empty classrooms here and a big, empty parking lot, because we've moved our campus to the top of the hill with new buildings, and we're not using this area. So why don't you use it?"

de GRAAF: About when did that come along?

COBB: Three years, four years now.

de GRAAF: I gather one long delay was the failure to get separate money in the state budget for this campus.

COBB: Yes, two years we were delayed.

de GRAAF: Who was the resistance? The Department of Finance, the legislature, the legislative analyst, or the governor?

COBB: The governor didn't have any money. Everybody thought it was a great idea, but the governor, George Deukmejian, didn't have any money.

de GRAAF: Didn't it get in the budget once, and he vetoed it?

(Tape 11, Side A)

We are one of the few campuses in the CSU system with such a satellite, aren't we?

COBB: No, there are two or three in the north.

de GRAAF: There's one in Contra Costa County, a satellite of what, Hayward?

COBB: Ventura County, they're trying to develop one; that's from Northridge. And San Jose. Monies for San Jose's satellite were approved the same time ours was.

de GRAAF: When you contemplated this whole thing, did you see Mission Viejo as a perpetual satellite or, eventually, a separate campus?

COBB: I saw it as a perpetual satellite.

de GRAAF: So far, does it seem to be working out that way?

COBB: It's only a year and a half old. I can't tell. And the powers that be, associated with the political power, will ultimately decide that. I think there really will have to be, somewhere in south Orange County, a four-year campus. There's just no question, because all you have to do is drive down that way--Laguna Niguel and across--and you see



those hundreds and hundreds of houses going up. I hope they have people to go in them. Really, it's breathtaking.

de GRAAF: I know. When you planned this satellite, did you foresee that it would have any particular focus to its curricular offering?

COBB: Oh, yes. We had great debates and resistance on the part of the community colleges, including Fullerton as well as Saddleback, because they were worried that we would take courses away from them. But we made it very clear that we were only going to be a junior- and senior-level and graduate school, with courses in that area and that area only.

de GRAAF: Within that level, is it contemplated that it would focus, say, on science or on liberal arts?

COBB: No. The general, all-purpose curriculum, excluding science labs.

de GRAAF: No science labs?

COBB: No science labs and no engineering and no studio art, per se, just business courses and the liberal arts courses that are taught by lecture form. We have nursing down there, but it's lecture stuff.

de GRAAF: A few faculty have complained that this satellite favored affluent areas over working class areas in Riverside and Los Angeles.

COBB: That's true, because the south part of Orange County, demographically, does not have any poverty pockets, which, I think, is unfortunate for access of poor students. On the other hand, Santa Ana students come here, and that's where the poverty group is. We tried very hard to figure out how we would be able to put pockets of poor neighborhoods into that Saddleback region, but there's no way; it's too far down.

de GRAAF: Was there ever any thought given to a location that was not in south Orange County?

COBB: Yes. We looked around everywhere. We tried to find an abandoned school building, but we couldn't put it up as far north as Santa Ana, because the whole idea was to be down there, because they couldn't commute.

de GRAAF: But you never thought, for instance, of Downey or someplace like that?

COBB: That's close to Long Beach. Think about that a moment. We did all that thinking. I did all that thinking. There are no pockets of poor communities that are not served by Long Beach on the west side. On the south side, there's nothing. On the east side is Riverside County, and that's not our territory. There's nobody out there.

de GRAAF: There are a lot of people out there now. It's a rapidly growing area. There's just not a state university there.

COBB: But for the amount of money invested, it's not a densely growing area. Oceanside, those little towns along the ocean there? They are in our district; maybe not as far as Oceanside.

de GRAAF: Probably not with the new San Marcos campus in north San Diego County.

COBB: San Clemente, I think, is in our district.

de GRAAF: Oceanside, I imagine, would go in with San Marcos.

COBB: . . . would be in San Diego and San Marcos, yes.

de GRAAF: Any other comments you want to make on physical plants?

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: Let's go on, then, to some academic and faculty developments.

COBB: You're gearing all this toward faculty. What about all the other parts of the university, the community, student services?

de GRAAF: We could get to it right now, if you like. What would you like to say about student services?

COBB: You ask the questions.

de GRAAF: Let's start off with one thing that's been in the news: fraternities and sororities and the Greek problem that you have.

COBB: One of my favorite subjects. (laughter)

de GRAAF: Obviously, this had been festering for quite some time.

COBB: From the day I got here.

de GRAAF: First of all, as you began to look at it, how legitimate did you feel the neighbor complaints were versus how much did you feel they were simply trying to get rid of the fraternities?

COBB: I think both. They were legitimate and they were trying to get rid of the fraternities. If I owned a piece of property in the neighborhood where the frats were, I would have felt that I wanted the frats to get out, because they are nuisance neighbors. They are young kids, and they party a lot, and they have a lot of friends who party a lot. That disturbs the residential areas who like quiet. But the real crime has been done by the city fathers who allowed the density of development of buildings in the first place in that area. That was the crime, called greed.

de GRAAF: In several cases, I know the frat houses were in there first, and then there was more development.

COBB: Really?

de GRAAF: Yes. Some of those frat houses go back quite a ways.

COBB: Interesting, interesting. I never knew that.

de GRAAF: Did you ever try--though this may seem like a wild idea--to find a campus location where some sort of frat row might have been set up?

COBB: No. I was not in favor of having fraternities on the campus. With this minimal amount of land that we have, with the arboretum taking up almost 10 percent of our land, there's hardly enough for even recreation, and with 8,000 plus cars parked on asphalt, we don't need fraternity houses added to that. In fact, that was a principle that was reiterated at the chancellor's office for all our campuses. Perhaps I talked to maybe two presidents who agreed that frats on campuses are unnecessary. The big campuses in someplace, I remember the

University of Louisiana, they have a beautiful, big fraternity row, and the houses go around in arched circles, one more beautiful than the next, on campus property. But they have land galore.

de GRAAF: You're right. We do not have a lot of land.

COBB: That would not be a priority. But I want to say I am a Greek myself, and so were my parents, and I have great loyalty. I believe in the Greek organizations as a social support system for undergraduate students.

de GRAAF: All of this has come to a head in recent years with the city of Fullerton, basically, threatening to change the zoning?

COBB: They have. They put in what they call "conditional use permits," and that means that all buildings have to comply in terms of physical structure and behavior. If they don't, they will no longer have a conditional use permit. We've ended up with two fraternities that have had to tear down their signs and eliminate their fraternities from the houses. Several of those houses are owned by faculty, I might add.

de GRAAF: Do you feel that now the problem is settled?

COBB: No. I don't think it will ever be, because just as we get organized with the undergraduates who are behaving in a responsible way, we get a new wave of freshman or a new wave of transfers. However, I do want to say this: there is a Greek Alumni Council, and they are excellent. Those are, by definition, graduates of Cal State Fullerton who were Greeks here as undergraduates. They monitor very, very closely what goes on with the fraternities and help us in areas of discipline.

de GRAAF: Another focus of your student concern has been California's increasingly diverse population and concern that Cal State Fullerton's policies mirror that. One aspect of this, obviously, is outreach and student affirmative action recruitment. Did you significantly change our policies in trying to attract more minorities to this campus?

COBB: I think I made loud and clear statements in my public speeches at various times, at the beginning

and the end of the year and whatnot, that I felt it was important for us to recruit from the community that we live in. In our case, it was Hispanic, mainly, and Vietnamese. Of course, Asian students have been attracted here because over 100,000 Vietnamese live in Buena Park; that's our service area. There's a huge Hispanic population in Santa Ana. The high school graduation rate for Hispanic students is about 11 percent, and our proportion of Hispanic students who go on to college and are on the campus is around 10 percent.

de GRAAF: I was going to say that beyond attracting more, a big problem seems to have loomed in recent years of getting those who do come here to get through. Why do you feel blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans have all had lower rates of completion or staying in college?

COBB: I don't know. I think part of it is cultural in the sense that, in general--certainly, with Hispanic students--they come from an economic base where college is not in their history. They are often needed at home, and they have problems associated with being in college, even: pulls and tugs on baby-sitting obligations, taking care of their little brothers and sisters at home, where to study at home, et cetera. A number of our black students come from poor communities--poor families, too, although the number of black students here is very low. But still, they're few and far between, and there are insurmountable economic barriers and cultural barriers that exist, psychological barriers that don't exist at college. What happens to create anxiety begins in high school or before. Of course, this is a dilemma that I'm very interested in. Racism plays a strong part. It's a subtle racism whereby black students feel that they are inferior. They feel that the whole structure of the world is white, and they are just in it as nonentities. To the degree that that gets internalized, being simply "in it" and not counting means they are less important. To me, it just means we're in this competitive world and, gosh darn it, you'd better work yourself hard to keep the enemy from catching up with you. It turns into either motivation or inhibition. It depends on the way young people or older people think of themselves.

de GRAAF: There have been various programs set up to try to overcome some of these either cultural inadequacies or feelings.

COBB: It's called EOP and SAA [Student Affirmative Action].

de GRAAF: How has EOP fared budgetwise during the eighties?

COBB: Very well. It's a line item protected in the legislature. It can't be cut. Even now, it cannot be cut. We also have another line item in the budget that can't be cut, and that's a \$350,000 subsidy for the dormitories.

de GRAAF: That cannot be cut?

COBB: That's right, because it is used to buy down the interest rate on the loan that allowed us to build the building.

de GRAAF: Other things were tried. One, I believe, was set up under you, and that was the Student Mentor Program?

COBB: Right, the one that Thom Coley runs.

de GRAAF: How has that worked, in your estimation?

COBB: Beautifully. It's only two years old. Friday night, they had their dinner, and almost 100 people attended. There were lots of high school counselors present. We've worked with four service high schools: Buena Park, Valencia, Fullerton, and Santa Ana. It's worked very well. Eight or nine of the students read their essays Friday night stating what the program has meant to them and what suggestions they had for the program. Almost every one of them said, "it has meant a lot to me because it has taught me something about my own culture." See, black culture, African-American history, is not taught in the schools in Orange County anywhere, and where are they going to get it? Sure, they have all heard of Martin Luther King. That's one day, a few minutes, period. Unless you come from a home situation where that's part of your upbringing and your cultural roots are discussed around the table, and you identify with those famous black folks who've been inventors or scientists or whatever, you don't get it. Of course, everybody knows that a strong sense of your own history helps you in your

own identity. So they spoke about that the other night. I thought that was interesting. But what is also very interesting, with money from Southern California Edison, one of the young ladies from Buena Park High School is graduating with a 3.8 average, and she's coming to Cal State Fullerton. In her essay, she said she had been reading all the material about college and trying to decide what she was going to major in. She's interested in Spanish, maybe she said history, Spanish and history. I'm not sure what the other subject was. But it was a liberal arts subject; it wasn't science. She'd studied the catalog and read it, and now she has decided that she is an undeclared. (laughter) That was cute. I'm looking forward to her coming. That's really great.

de GRAAF: It sounds like it. There's also a school-based, I guess, mentor program that deals with students already here.

COBB: Faculty mentors.

de GRAAF: Yes. Has this, in your estimation, been particularly effective in helping to keep minority students at CSUF?

COBB: It's been pretty good. There's no assessment that anybody's done that I can point to. It's really complicated, because there's an unevenness to its utilization on the part of students.

de GRAAF: I've been in it.

COBB: I, too. Have you got mentees?

de GRAAF: I've had them, and I've tried to get them to come to my office. There's a strange reluctance on their part.

COBB: Same thing; join the group. They're very busy, and they often don't see themselves as needing anything.

de GRAAF: Sometimes. Or sometimes they just seem to have some sort of a block about coming to a faculty person's office. Any other programs you'd like to talk about that you helped to start specifically to help deal with this question of improving the retention of minority students?

COBB: No. I think the EOP and SAA, which were not started by me, are doing quite well.

de GRAAF: Have you felt at any time that all of these programs combined simply weren't doing the job, that somehow we had to find a totally new direction to deal with this retention problem? Or do you feel this perhaps is the best we can do?

COBB: I don't think it's the best we can do. I also think that it has to be linked with high school. I think that's where a lot more has to be done, in high school. I'm also interested in Saturday schools in science in junior high school and seventh grade for minority students--black students, particularly--so they get some understanding and enrichment in science. That's math and physics and the world of science in general, including in that reading and writing. General awareness.

de GRAAF: It would be interesting if there would be a turnout for that sort of thing.

COBB: There are several models. There's one in Cerritos going right now, linked to the ABC Unified School District. There is a good one that's been functioning in Atlanta for a number of years, and I went down to see it. It was funded by the National Science Foundation years ago. It's always hooked with a university, and the city of Atlanta gives free classroom space on Saturday mornings. I think it's a good idea, and maybe I'll work on that some when I retire.

de GRAAF: Moving from student affirmative action to general affirmative action, I know you've been very interested in increasing the number of women and minorities on the campus. When you first came, the Affirmative Action director was Everett Winters. He stayed less than a year, I think, and then went to SMU.

COBB: Yes. Don Shields lured him down there. He was here for a good year.

de GRAAF: How did you find our Affirmative Action Program when you came?

COBB: It was all right, moving along. It was not as good as I thought it should be. There was nothing going



on in terms of faculty recruitment that I could see. The only requirement was a final report as to the number of Affirmative Action candidates included in the search.

de GRAAF: Have you made any significant changes in Affirmative Action?

COBB: I've hammered at poor Jack Coleman, and he has set aside money as incentives to help in the final stages. Once somebody is thought to be a good candidate by a search committee, he will give extra money to help the department to get that person to come--an incentive program.

de GRAAF: Do you have any comment on the statistics? I don't happen to have them with me. Do you feel we have appreciably improved?

COBB: No. Jack does, but I don't. I think we're moving very slowly. We've improved the number of women here somewhat. Affirmative Action is both women and minorities. I don't think we've done as much as we should.

de GRAAF: Do you feel that the pool of qualified people is out there waiting to be tapped?

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Among even blacks and Hispanics?

COBB: Yes. Some of them may be lured from someplace else, but I don't care about that. I think we do have a number, yes, no question. California itself doesn't have too many, but the South and East do. I think Cal State L.A. actually goes there, visits those places. San Bernardino is doing very well, because the Dean of Arts and Sciences is from Hunter College, New York City, and knows, personally, a lot of black faculty. He's a younger person than I am, and he's more apt to be in the classroom with them and to get to know them at meetings, whereas I don't. Because a lot of it's personal contact--most of it, in fact.

de GRAAF: Has Rosamaria Gomez-Amaro [current Affirmative Action director at CSUF] . . .

COBB: It's not her job. She could do that, but she doesn't have any time to do that.

de GRAAF: We also had a staff Affirmative Action program, didn't we?

COBB: Yes. It's still working.

de GRAAF: How successful has that been, in your estimation?

COBB: I'd give it a B. On faculty affirmative action, I'd give a B, B-. Both of them, I'd give about a B-.

de GRAAF: I noticed in 1983 some sort of a management development program seemed to be undertaken. It looked as though it had as its orientation administrators and staff, with the idea of particularly increasing the chances that they could eventually move to higher types of jobs. Was that done, in part, with Affirmative Action in mind?

COBB: Yes, that's been moderately successful. I must ask Rosamaria to give me a summary of those results over the years. It's been pretty good; it's been helpful.

de GRAAF: So now a person could come in, for instance, as a custodian with some thought. . . .

COBB: He could move higher up or laterally. Also, it goes into a new way of thinking.

de GRAAF: That they're not locked into a job?

COBB: Yes, right. It gets them out of the morass, so to speak.

de GRAAF: Going to issues of race per se, there have been a few interesting incidents on this campus. One of the first you confronted was a protest over the serving, and even, I guess, some special events associated, with Coors beer on this campus. Can you give us a brief summary of that incident?

COBB: You remember the president, Mr. Coors of Coors Beer made a very negative and derogatory public statement about blacks?

de GRAAF: That's true, in the early eighties.

COBB: The issue derived from that. Now, they've just done so many things in subsequent years to counteract that unfortunate statement.

de GRAAF: When this whole issue broke, there was some reference in some of the published material that Coors put on some sort of a party, that there's some sort of Coors event at the Pub at the time that broke.

COBB: Yes, I vaguely recall that.

de GRAAF: I know your response to this whole incident was to suggest that that event, at least, be terminated.

COBB: Yes.

de GRAAF: Do you feel that your pressure had anything to do with Coors changing its tune, so to speak? Did you have any personal contact with them?

COBB: No personal contact. I think it had some impact. You know, the word gets around. But all over the country people were protesting that situation. I mean, real strong everywhere--north, south, east, and west--and in the black press in general.

de GRAAF: You say in recent years Coors has made a lot of amends?

COBB: Oh, yes. Now, the company does many public relations things for Hispanics and blacks: scholarships, special programs, underwriting events, et cetera.

de GRAAF: Another issue that broke a couple of years after that was that a well-known racist figure from northern San Diego County, Tom Metzger, was found to be producing tape recorded programs through our communications department.

COBB: Video programs.

de GRAAF: What brought this to your attention?

COBB: Students apparently refused to work for him after awhile, and it was picked up by the Daily Titan. Then, it came to my attention.

de GRAAF: Obviously, this confronted you with a dilemma between civil rights and civil liberties.

COBB: And the First Amendment. I talked about it with Communications Professor Edgar Trotter, who's, obviously, in journalism education. I reached the conclusion--justifiably so--that the First Amendment was more important than anything we have and that it was Metzger's right to speak on TV, painful though it was. However, there was great agitation and great concern conveyed by the governor that any public state university should have harbored anybody of that dimension on the campus. He was very adamant. The chancellor's office, of course, let us know, too. But we were adamant here. I was adamant. I thought it was horrible, needless to say. But when the students came up to see me, angry and full of disgust--black and white students--I maintained that they wanted to remember the First Amendment was important in America, and that's why Martin Luther King could have the March on Washington. Had it not been for the First Amendment, that couldn't have happened. But we were going to look into the matter and take steps to make some changes, which is what we did. It was at great cost, however. We had to pay \$250,000 to the cable company to replace the equipment they had loaned us as part of the contract for a studio on our campus in 1978 or 1979. We kicked out the whole cable company. They were within their rights under federal rules. The FCC [Federal Communications Commission] says any time a cable company has broadcast to the public, it must give a certain amount of free TV time to anyone. You could get on the microphone and talk about whatever you wanted to. Anybody could. They have to do so many hours per month, and that regulation was what Metzger was exploiting, free of charge. Who wouldn't? He apparently did the same thing at Texas, and they took him off the air. So he went to another state and did the same thing after he left us. But when we asked the cable company to leave, we had to get replacement for the television equipment that the students were using in the classes, because that had been given to us. All this, by the way, was signed way before I got here--the cable company and those inferences about free time. So we had to get rid of it.

de GRAAF: The cable company was brought on originally so our TV track communications majors could have some actual experience in broadcasting.

COBB: It wasn't quite like that. The cable [company] asked for a space, and we said, "Sure." We needed them and they needed us. It was a mutual arrangement.

(Tape 11, Side B)

de GRAAF: There are a few things on curriculum I'd like to be sure we get in. For one thing, two new programs came up early in your presidency that aroused some debate: military science and ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Program]. What was your view on those?

COBB: I think they're fine, handled within limits.

de GRAAF: Were there many other CSU campuses that had an ROTC program?

COBB: Several of them. I don't know which ones. I think San Diego, Northridge--several of them do.

de GRAAF: Another one that came on board that I know was much closer to your heart was women's studies, formed as a minor. Did you have any role in that?

COBB: Yes, I did. It was sitting in the Curriculum Committee, dead, just there, when I came to the campus. I realized that we didn't have a women's studies program, and that seemed peculiar for a campus as large as ours. Upon inquiry, I found out that it was on ice in the Curriculum Committee. Not that they did not want it, but they never got around to it. So I asked Professor Dave Fromson, who was chair of the committee, what was going on. I felt at least it ought to be brought to some fruition by bringing it to the Academic Senate to be passed. In the Academic Senate, they debated it, as all faculty do, and some characters couldn't see why we needed one. But we got it passed, anyway, and that started it.

de GRAAF: Another thing which was well established but has had its enrollment difficulties during your presidency have been the two ethnic studies programs.

- COBB: They now have good, strong enrollment, because they were brought in under the allowed requirements for credit under general education. But when I came, apparently, they were not, which I found ridiculous. In fact, our general education package was sent back from the chancellor's office because it did not have adequate attention to ethnic studies.
- de GRAAF: I know we've had some ups and downs on general education during your presidency. That was one of the issues?
- COBB: Yes, it was.
- de GRAAF: But I think there were other problems, also. The enrollment in the Afro-Ethnic Studies, I believe, at one time was such they had only a single digit number of majors.
- COBB: They still don't have but one major, as does linguistics.
- de GRAAF: Were you under any pressure at any time to terminate those as programs?
- COBB: No, nobody's mentioned this to me. Actually, they're used very effectively. Sometimes, people have double majors.
- de GRAAF: Sometimes, yes.
- COBB: But they're used very effectively for enrichment and enlightenment of students, black and white.
- de GRAAF: Do you feel that both women's studies and ethnic studies have a permanent place in higher education?
- COBB: Yes, I do. It's ironic that we don't have more students in women's studies, since we're 55 percent women on this campus. But the enrollment in the program increased last year.
- de GRAAF: But you don't feel that the answer lies more in integrating them into established disciplines.
- COBB: I think both should happen. It's a debate academia has had in history and economics over the years, and American studies over the years.

de GRAAF: One school presented some unique problems, and that was the School of Business Administration and Economics. In 1983, its reaccreditation was put--to use the technical term--on deferred status.

COBB: Delayed one year.

de GRAAF: Why was that?

COBB: Not enough research by the faculty.

de GRAAF: How was that rectified?

COBB: By the dean getting busy with the faculty to do research and setting up a nine-unit teaching load so they'd have more time for research and making the classes larger in place of it. History is the only department on this campus that has a required course for everyone, which I think is wrong, frankly. I think it should not be that way, but that's a political act. Talk about politics.

de GRAAF: It's hard to get away from it sometimes. Subsequent to the reaccreditation problem, we had a long issue of the accounting department. Was that also a problem of lack of research?

COBB: Yes, but also complicated by personalities who refused to do research.

de GRAAF: On what grounds?

COBB: Just because of certain entrenched tenured faculty. The accounting department was made a program because of that and because of the personalities of the department, but I think eventually, in another few years, it will probably go back to being a department.

de GRAAF: In any of these cases in the School of Business, do you feel that the problems were in any way due to the noncompetitive nature of higher education salaries for this type of person?

COBB: It's the discipline of business, which is an applied field and for which there can be a lot of money made outside of the teaching arena. So faculty given X number of hours in a day choose to use their expertise and make money versus going the "humble, poor scholar" route.

de GRAAF: The final issue that I think we have to raise is athletics, because it became a big issue toward the end of your term. But I think it's one that pervades a lot of higher education. Let me see if we can summarize the main components. First, we have Division IA status?

COBB: Yes. There's Division I and Division II, Division IA, IIA, IIIA at different amounts of sports. Division II really is another whole category. I might say that intercollegiate athletics has been a hassle all during the whole time I've been here and will be for every future president.

de GRAAF: We had already established this Division IA status before you came, right?

COBB: Yes. Don Shields did that in the seventies.

de GRAAF: Did you have any thoughts that we should not have been in this when you came on the scene?

COBB: Yes and no. No, because I know if we're going to be in intercollegiate athletics, we might as well try for the top, so I agreed. Yes in the sense that we were having so many problems with finance.

de GRAAF: What are the advantages of our being in Division I as opposed to Division II? Because I know a lot of other CSU campuses--San Francisco, Los Angeles, Northridge, to name three that are about our size or bigger--are not in Division I.

COBB: Northridge is trying to get into Division I, into our Big West Conference. Anyway, the differences have to do with the competitive teams you can or cannot play. With the competitive teams that you play in Division I, you have more of a chance for making gate receipts and television contracts, possibly. In response to a request from the Academic Senate, I answered sixteen questions on that matter just two weeks ago.

de GRAAF: So you're quite familiar with it.

COBB: Yes, because certain faculty members on the Executive Committee did not want us to keep football. That was the strategy behind the questions. But the Academic Senate voted to keep football.



- de GRAAF: Can a Division I school drop football?
- COBB: Yes, they can drop football, but there is the strong risk that we may also not get good competitors for basketball and for other sports. There's much more to be risked than to be gained.
- de GRAAF: One thing that I think is puzzling some people in this whole scene is that Cal State Fullerton has made quite a name for itself in some other--sometimes called, perhaps unfairly--lesser sports. We have had championships, or been contenders for championships, in men's baseball and women's softball and men's gymnastics, and perhaps you can name some others.
- COBB: Indeed we have, and baseball and basketball are not small sports; they are our big sports, our special sports, men's as well as women's. But our football games are also televised nationally and so help our visibility, useful for recruitment of new faculty and administrators.
- de GRAAF: On the other hand, in football, except for the year that Damon Allen was our quarterback, we have never won even our league. In the few games we've played with really major schools--I can recall LSU [Louisiana State University] and West Virginia University games--we were clobbered, to put it mildly.
- COBB: It sounds like you've been listening to people from the history department. We went to the California Bowl twice.
- de GRAAF: I keep up with this to a broad extent, beyond the history department. "Why, then," some people are going to ask, "has Dick Wolfe"--our head of gymnastics--"recently been put on half-time while we continue football?"
- COBB: Because men's gymnastics is not in the same league in terms of bringing revenue in that support other sports in this school. Football actually does help all of the sports, because it brings our name into the public view on ESPN [Entertainment and Sports Programming Network] and on other national television channels, which has never happened for men's gymnastics. Men's gymnastics, or women's--but more men's--doesn't bring in any revenue whatsoever.

In fact, men's gymnastics has been in the hole \$20,000 or \$30,000 because the coach failed to raise the money that he was supposed to, versus the women's gymnastics coach, who raised \$30,000 or \$40,000. I worked hard to get that men's gymnastics program back in. The Athletic Council recommended that we cut out gymnastics and fencing, but I decided to keep them.

de GRAAF: That's been another problem, the idea that to balance our athletic budget, some of the smaller sports ought to go. So far, have we had to cut anything out?

COBB: Four years ago, we cut tennis and water polo.

de GRAAF: Has this whole idea that football draws crowds and therefore draws money beyond what it cost. . . .

COBB: That's a scientific study.

de GRAAF: It has been carefully studied?

COBB: I answered that in my sixteen answers two weeks ago. Please read the minutes of the Academic Senate meeting on that subject. [This meeting was held May 24, 1990.]

de GRAAF: One other concern about the whole athletics question has been the impact on students. Recent studies at our campus seem to suggest that students who go into athletics do not have even as high a retention or graduation rate as . . . .

COBB: That's not true. All the women's basketball team was on the Dean's List. We have, also, a chance for 400 athletes to have an opportunity for a close collegiate team undergraduate experience on a commuter campus. If we talk about the scores of football players, yes. But we can't generalize for 400 athletes. There are 90 players in football, and there are 310 others.

de GRAAF: But I think football has been the main focus of the debate.

COBB: Yes, but that's true nationally. We're not any different from any others. That's the only thing that counts. Let me tell you. An ex-football player, Dillon, is going up this fall to be a Jesse

Unruh Fellow in Sacramento with the legislature after graduation. Football players are not all special, that's true, just like all violinists are not special. But they also often come from a poor economic background. But, all told, they have an opportunity to be exposed to a college experience that changes many of their lives.

de GRAAF: That's true. That's, I think, where the real trade off comes. Some have said that athletics, especially at Division I schools, takes up so much of a student's time that it really eats away at their ability to gain a college level education.

COBB: They graduate at the same rate as nonathletes, after six years. That study's been done by Dolores Vura, director of our Office of Analytic Studies. Incidentally, nobody graduates around here in four years, and a significant number, not in five.

(Tape 12, Side A)

de GRAAF: This is the last in a series of interviews with Dr. Jewel Plummer Cobb, president of California State University, Fullerton, by Lawrence de Graaf. It is occurring on the second of July 1990 at Dr. Cobb's El Dorado Ranch home.

Jewel, this interview is being done, at least partially, for the university archives at Cal State Fullerton, so I'd like to begin by summarizing some of your reflections on colleges and universities. First, you've been partly at private and partly at public universities. What do you see as the distinct mission and contribution of each of those sectors?

COBB: First, whether public or private, their mission is identical in the sense that they are seeking to share knowledge and to empower all students, so that when they graduate--they earn the degree from that institution--they will be adaptable and they'll have mastered critical thinking skills and content, in terms of a special discipline as their major. That is true for all educational institutions. The purpose of both also is to prepare students for life, both in terms of a career as well the enriched kind of life that one can have in one's leisure time: how to read a poem; how to enjoy a piece of art; how to recognize good literature when one reads it; some sense of the history of not only America, but of the world; and some sense of the humanistic experiences that have been transferred from their professor, their textbooks and the like, to them for future use. So they are the same.

The difference between private and public institutions is not so much in the mission but in the management process. In terms of management, they are quite different. For example, the management of a private institution has far less bureaucracy, far less signing off by a number of external components of a given campus, than does a public institution. The public institution is, in fact, far more dependent on a state budget than is a private institution. Both institutions, however, are dependent upon federal monies, particularly scholarship aid. But in a private institution, the decision making process is shortened, less cumbersome, and involves a different set of players. Very often the trustees who are selected for that particular campus and no other campus and the

president and the other administrators make decisions without the layering of having to do it this way or that way. There's not as much structure. For example, the president of a private institution would have a search committee with certain procedures from history laid out. But the decision would then be made by the president without the sense of having to report to the public in the same way that one has to report to the public in a public institution.

One difference which I found very important is that, as the years go along, a private institution has much more difficulty raising money. Eighty-plus percent of the money they need must come from student tuition. Another component, of course, is the private foundation and donor support. Some comes from the government, depending on the type of institution. Therefore, the president of a private institution has to spend far more time in critical fund raising that would not be required in a public institution. The president of a public institution has to raise money for what we call the icing on the cake, so to speak, but the fundamentals are guaranteed by tax monies. Of course, there are problems with that, as we know. All things considered, the president of a private institution has less time for shaping visions and new concepts than does the president of a public university because they are spending so much time in fund raising. It is also true that the complications of having to adjust to the pool of students one accepts is directly related to the number of students that one can admit who are paying students. One hopes ideally that the number of paying students in a private institution--especially the ones that I was in, Sarah Lawrence and Connecticut College--are at the top of the academic scale from high school. When you have a drop in enrollment of the better students, you have to go to your wait list--as you may have read in this morning's paper that private colleges are having to do just that--then you begin to take students who are not predicted to be as good academically. Then, parents of the top prospective students for the next year or the year after, say, "Well, they took so and so in your class, and she was just a B- student, say, at College X or Y. Therefore, that's not really the place I want you to go, because you're an A student."

Both types of schools have a social commitment to Affirmative Action, but Affirmative Action only

involves a very small percentage of any admitting pool. You would think, from the way people comment about it, that it's like 50 percent of the campus. But even in our public institutions like the CSU system, one can only take what we call special admits up to 4 percent. At Cal State Fullerton, we have never really gone up to 4 percent. You didn't know that, did you? Now you know it. Please transfer it to the critics of special admits. I don't know what it is this year, but it's not 4 percent; it's never been 4 percent.

So the point is that a private institution has a different management style. It's much more relaxed. It's much less bureaucratic, and many of the decisions can be made more thoughtfully, without all of the layers of heavy input by the faculty. The faculty input is considerably less. In a private institution, the faculty stay within the true definition of what faculty do, and that's planning curriculum and deciding upon the academic progress in the classroom and associated with it. Except by voluntary request of the administration, they are not involved in whether there's a new building to be put up or whether there's a process in place to monitor the status of a custodial service--all of the micromanagement that occurs in this institution and in this CSU system. We're not unique, by the way. All the twenty campuses of the CSU have the same history of faculty governance.

de GRAAF: That's a very interesting comparison. Do you feel a lot of the layering of bureaucracy, particularly the larger administrative staff of public institutions is necessary? Or is this something that has built up without reflection?

COBB: In higher academia, the formulas are the same, whether public or private. They are not different. I'm talking about the ratio of administrators to faculty, the ratio of clerical staff to students. Those formulae are the same across all systems. I would say, if anything, though, the private school, if it's wealthy enough, has an enriched administrative faculty. The ultimate ideal of administrative development and staff development is Harvard or Stanford. I mean, it's incredible, because they've got the money. Sometimes in private schools, the private schools in the New England area which I know, have a freshman class dean, they have a sophomore class dean--for academics only--a junior

class dean, and a senior class dean. We don't have anything like that in our system. We don't have the money for that kind of caring administrative management system for each class. We are really thin, especially Cal State Fullerton is very thin in terms of staff.

de GRAAF: So when you say that in private colleges you don't get the layers of bureaucracy, that doesn't necessarily translate to a smaller administrative or bureaucratic staff.

COBB: No. It just has to do with external management controls at a system and at a state level, and how many sign-offs, and how many things are laid down on paper that you must do. For example, constructing a new building takes three to five years in our system.

de GRAAF: One thing that's happened in recent years that's getting increasing publicity is the rising cost of higher education. Costs have apparently been going up somewhat more than the cost of living itself. How would you account for this?

COBB: Across the nation, you mean?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: It's not true here at Cal State Fullerton, however.

de GRAAF: It's not?

COBB: We have the second lowest fees. It's not called tuition, but it's the same thing. I think that's peculiar, that problem in the state. We have the second lowest fees for students in the United States. It's from data noted in the Chronicle of Higher Education. You had about \$5,700 subsidization per student in the state system in California in 1989-1990. The subsidy of students at other state universities across the country is less, so the true tuition is more. For example, at Rutgers University, tuition is around \$1,600.

de GRAAF: But why do feel higher education costs across the nation have been growing as much as they have in recent years?





COBB: For the same reason everything else has been growing: inflation. Goods cost more. Transportation costs more. Insurance, personal and public--especially insurance for institutions--have gone up tremendously. Liability, accident insurance--everything associated with the university has gone up. The cost of building a building has gone up. Inflation costs about 4 or 5 percent a year, so you add that up, and it gets to be tremendous. Postage has gone up; it's doubled. Telephones, utilities and utility bills are in the thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars. Plus automobiles, plus buying automobiles that may belong to the institution, or buses--they go up. And, of course, the cost of food, and now, the layering of computers instead of typewriters; they go up. The cost of paper and paper goods has increased because of the wood situation. Everything has gone up. And, I might say, 84 percent of the budget of a public institution like ours is personnel, and all those people expect raises every year, as they should, because their costs have gone up when they go to the grocery store.

de GRAAF: One place this is reflected is considerable increases in tuition of private institutions. Do you feel this is going to make their enrollment increasingly elite or limit their role in the future?

COBB: Their role? You mean in terms of education?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: I think it will have some effect. But parents' salaries are going up as well. The scholarship monies that the president and all the boards of trustees and alums must raise increases, too, so one must answer that with reference to a more rigorous development fund-raising effort to match those problems. To the degree that they cannot match those expenses, then they will have to take fewer and fewer scholarship students. As you know, also, we are in constant dips and peaks in terms of enrollment and enrollees. I think we will have, whether public and private, no problem with reference to enrollments after 1995, because all of those parents who were baby boomers are college educated. There was a surge of post-World War II entrance into college, and all those veterans of

World War II who then came back, went to school themselves through the GI Bill, married, they are now college-educated parents. And every college-educated parent that I know of urges their son or daughter to go to college because they went to college. Whereas during the earlier years, in the forties, you had many parents who were first-generation citizens--I mean among those who'd been living in America for forty or fifty years--so college wasn't something that was necessarily pushed for various and sundry reasons. Perhaps they did not appreciate it. But now, with all the increase in college graduates we've had for the last fifteen or twenty years, they're going to tell their children to go to college. So we've got that big population coming in in 1995. So I think all colleges and institutions will, in fact, have to grow, in terms of either number or size.

de GRAAF: You anticipated very well my next line of questioning, because your career does parallel an amazing growth in higher education, some would say a democratization of higher education. Pursuant to what you've just said, it would be interesting if you could go back to the early forties, when you entered college. Roughly, do you recall how many of your high school classmates went on to college?

COBB: I can't remember that. I really don't know, because we had 275 graduates in my high school graduating class. I was in the honors group, and I really only knew mainly those people who were in the honors group. We never had advanced placement courses back in the forties. The students that I knew, my friends, all went to college. But that's not a good sampling. I'd say that would be around forty, fifty, sixty students that I knew. Some of them went to the University of Illinois; some of them went to junior colleges in Chicago; some went to teachers' college; and some went out of state.

de GRAAF: From your reflections on what teachers or counselors may have said during high school in the forties, how much did you get the message that going on to college was an expected part of life or essential to success?

COBB: It was expected in our group of students, in our advanced group. We used to have graduate students come to talk to us about different subjects--not so

much about going to college, but about subjects that normally would have been college subjects.

de GRAAF: And these were often black graduate students?

COBB: No, they weren't black. They were from the University of Chicago.

de GRAAF: I think you would agree, for the broad student population--perhaps not the one you were in--it was much less common to think of going to college?

COBB: I can't answer that. I really can't. I would only be giving you my projection, and it's not accurate. As a scientist, I don't like to be inaccurate.

de GRAAF: As you've said, with the GI Bill and so forth, there's been a tremendous increase in the . . .

COBB: That was a revolution in America. The GI Bill was an incredible revolution and in fact did create the "democratization" of higher education, and in high school, too. I mean, kids from Ozark, Arkansas, or Podunk, Iowa, who went into the army or the navy or the air corps, suddenly had this opportunity when they came home. I mean across the county. The proportion, of course, of blacks in America was only about 12 percent. The great mass of encouragement via the GI Bill came to about 88 percent of the soldiers who were Caucasian. So what we have here is an increase in GI Bill opportunities to go on to college for all veterans.

de GRAAF: Do you feel that this growth has in the past, or will in the future, necessitate any changes in the missions and goals of higher education? For instance, has it, or does it, forecast some modification of a liberal arts emphasis?

COBB: I think we will never have a modification of liberal arts, because, if we think about it, what is the real reason for going to college? It's an individual enrichment, as I mentioned before. Although I do find that among the majority of students now, and certainly at Cal State Fullerton--it's the only place I know--there's this emphasis on careers. This is especially true at a state university. The applied discipline areas are not offered at a Connecticut College or at a Sarah Lawrence. In fact, even at Douglass College we

never had an undergraduate business major, and still there is no such undergraduate major at Rutgers University. It's like the UC system.

de GRAAF: Someone made the general observation that, prior to World War II, college was, by and large, an elite expectation only.

COBB: That was from the students' perspective, but the curriculum was structured as it is now. I do not think the curriculum should be vocational, but should be a liberal arts curriculum as much as possible.

de GRAAF: The argument would sometimes go that who but an elite would either have the time or the money to follow that. But as you broaden the clientele, you get people who either do not have the economic base that they could "afford to spend four years educating themselves without any immediate payoff in mind." Or people come from the mindset that's more impatient for an immediate return.

COBB: Which is what we have at Cal State Fullerton. I have students whose parents say, "What are you going to do about getting a job when you graduate?" I deplore that. Part of that is a class problem. It's also part of our materialistic culture that we have too much of now. The Russian students that were here--four of them, for the year--they loved a lot about America, but one of the things they were shocked at was the materialism of the students. They have to have a stereo; they've got to have a car; they have to be able to go to certain restaurants to eat; and they have to dress certain ways. Now, that problem is nonelite. That is not an elite way to look at things. The word "elite" has always been identified with the leisure class. I would maintain that it's not necessarily true. The leisure class doesn't exist in America anymore. There's data that indicates that "people who are rich" are working very, very hard, and they don't have the post-Renaissance life-style that we like to cling to from Europe. We don't have it anymore.

Meanwhile, however, my argument is that it is important to keep the curriculum structured as we do in general education. The problem I have with general education courses is that we are very narrow in terms of history, and I've said that to you several times. I believe very deeply in changing

the limitation to Western Civilization that we are offering. Our students graduating now are going to be world citizens. The leisure elite and nonelite will be world citizens. If they don't understand seriously, in depth, Asian history--the Japanese, the Chinese--and the Eastern European histories, if they also don't understand Africa as a component, they are not going to be able to have a strong intellectual foundation for the jobs we have for them to do. So that's why I feel so strongly. The absence of Eastern studies or ethnic studies or women's studies is not unique to our campus. It's quite true across many campuses. It's part of the debate that has been going on, the one Secretary of Education William Bennett went into when he said you should read certain great books, and all those other books about women or minorities are trivial. There's a debate on that, and I don't want to get into that.

de GRAAF: One final question on higher education before we go on. You mentioned that we are, demographically, in something of a plateau right now, with the anticipation that, in a few years, the baby boomers will increase the population of our institutions. Cal State Fullerton, during your tenure as president, has also been on somewhat of a plateau. I noted that the first fall you were here, we had an enrollment of about 23,250, and the projection for this coming fall is 24,750. That's nothing like the growth that occurred in years prior to your coming. What has been the cause of this relatively sluggish growth?

COBB: That is not sluggish; that has been carefully planned by me. That's precisely not sluggish. The whole point is, the faculty have been protesting violently about the high student-faculty ratio, so we set about enrollment planning. It's been in the newspaper every year how we purposely set out with our statistical analyses and our Office of Analytical Studies to predict how we might change the mode and level and the number of students coming in every year so that we could gain more faculty per student and have the student level move up very slowly. We have done that on purpose. It's not sluggish; it's planned. I'm very surprised that you say that, because I thought the whole campus knew. Certainly, your colleagues in the history department have been the loudest alarmists in screaming about

how high our student-faculty ratio is and "we have too many students and we can't teach them right and the quality of the academic experience is deteriorating. . . ." I've heard that for three or four years. We set, then, in place a planning model, which has been working right to our prediction. Now we have said that on this campus we will not enlarge any more until we have our new classroom building, which is not scheduled to be built for two more years, maybe three. So any growth that we have is at the Mission Viejo campus, on purpose. In fact, what we have to do is to close the window of application acceptance earlier and earlier in the winter before.

de GRAAF: I was only using the word "sluggish" in historical comparison. The campus grew almost 14,000 in the sixties and another 7,000 during the seventies, so by that comparison, current enrollment growth rates seem sluggish. Leading up to a broader question, when this new enrollment rush comes in the late nineties, do you see it as further enlarging existing campuses or do you feel there is a limit beyond which the campus becomes difficult to administer?

COBB: We have, again, a plan for this campus for the year 2002, and that's been published in the student newspaper and it's part of the Academic Senate. We did all this together, with the Long-Range Planning and Priorities Committee. Student enrollment is planned to reach 20,000 by the year 2000.

de GRAAF: A 20,00 full-time equivalent?

COBB: FTE, yes.

de GRAAF: And you feel a campus of this size can accommodate 20,000 FTE?

COBB: Yes, with our building master plan that has been approved. That goal was set many years ago, and we agree with it.

de GRAAF: So that if there is a large expansion, we will have to have new campuses.

COBB: Right. There are, however, some campuses that are still underutilized. We're not one of them, though. There is a debate about what will happen in south

Orange County with the tremendous growth going on there, whether the Mission Viejo campus will stay there and continue as a two-year or whether they'll build a new four-year campus. I predict in about three years, the CSU will decide whether they'll build a new four-year campus. If you've been down in that area, you can just see house after house after house and still open land to be built. I think it's too bad, too dense, but then that's not something you and I have any control over.

de GRAAF: Is Mission Viejo right now one of the five new projected sites in the CSU system?

COBB: No. There's no discussion of a specific projected site beyond us. Mission Viejo is not one of those five. Actually, those five sites stated in the press may never come to pass, because there's a big debate going on over that. But that will work itself through. I think another campus would be built east of San Marcos, toward Hemet and what have you--a CSU campus, perhaps. As you know, the UC is also planning other campus, so who knows where they'll be?

de GRAAF: Anything else you'd like to say about your career in, or reflections on, higher education before we leave that for other subjects?

COBB: No.

de GRAAF: The next thing I'd like to go into, or review something we haven't gotten around to, is some of your awards and personal accomplishments while you were president of Cal State Fullerton. Two were definitely along the line of women's work. One intrigued me very much, because I'm familiar with the magazine, and that is, for several years you were on the advisory board of Signs [Journal of Women in Culture and Society]. What was your function on that advisory board?

COBB: To read articles submitted from time to time and to provide general guidelines.

(Tape 12, Side B)

Both cofounders of Signs were at Rutgers University. Catherine Stimson was one of them. The other cofounder's name was Joan Burstyn, head of our

education department at Douglass. So with that, I've been involved with Signs. But then, when I came out to California, I really didn't have much time to do this, although I admire the magazine. I read it frequently and will probably publish some things in it when I get some time to write them up.

de GRAAF: You were also involved with a planning group to assess the presence of women in science, Initiatives for Improving the Representation of Females in Science and Engineering Courses.

COBB: For the National Academy of Sciences, yes. That group was an ad hoc task force group, and it had to do with the fact, I think, that I had been on the National Science Board and had been involved with women in science. We met, really, about three or four times, long and good meetings, productive meetings to provide a document to the National Academy of Sciences. I think the academy's working on aspects of it, but it takes time for them.

de GRAAF: Then you were, in 1982 and 1983, on a Council on Technology Education.

COBB: Yes. When?

de GRAAF: Eighty-two and eighty-three, I have from your vita.

COBB: Of the academy?

de GRAAF: Yes.

COBB: The same kind of work, trying again to look at what we can do to increase the number of minorities and women in science and technology. It recycles every six to ten years. That problem, by the way, has been with us since 1974, when I was on the National Science Board. We have not made as much progress as we had hoped, with reference to young people going on to college in science and technology, and it's getting worse rather than better. The data indicate that high school students are not taking as much science. Of course, our math scores are not as good as they should be in junior high and high school.

de GRAAF: You were on several groups of an organization I'm not familiar with, AASCU.



- COBB: That's the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. That's the national umbrella group for hundreds of state colleges and universities. It is headed by Allan W. Ostar. I was on the board of directors for several years. Most of the CSU campuses belong to it. There are some very good national programs. One year I headed up a committee on graduate studies, and after that worked with the committees on athletics and on technology.
- de GRAAF: Is it common that CSU presidents are on committees, or are you rather exceptional?
- COBB: No. Only presidents can be members of AASCU and, hence, on committees. We always have four or five. One year, about five years ago, Stephen Horne, former president of CSU Long Beach, was the president of AASCU.
- de GRAAF: Then, finally, you have also been on the Western College Association Accreditation Commission. You are not unique in this. Both of your predecessors, I think, were also on accreditation boards.
- COBB: The commission, yes, right. I served for a short time on the board.
- de GRAAF: Do university presidents commonly get called upon to be on accreditation commissions?
- COBB: Yes, that's part of our obligation as volunteers. I chaired the five-year accreditation visit to UC Santa Barbara, and, as a member of the team, I've been on the visit to the University of San Diego and, most recently, to UCLA. I will chair one next April, an accreditation visit to Bowie State, Maryland.
- de GRAAF: Did you have any comparable accreditation obligations when you were at Douglass or Connecticut or Sarah Lawrence?
- COBB: Yes. When I was at Connecticut, I was on the MASC [Middle State Association of Schools and Colleges] team to evaluate the University of Massachusetts.
- de GRAAF: So this is just an accepted part of being head of a college?

- COBB: Yes, as an administrator. They select deans and faculty members and presidents for programs like that.
- de GRAAF: Then you had quite a few public services.
- COBB: MASC would be a public service.
- de GRAAF: I'm thinking in a more local sense, since coming here. As soon as you landed here, various Orange County groups decided that you ought to serve with them, or you made that decision yourself. I'll just tick them off and ask you to comment in general. You were on the board of governors of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Orange County chapter; the board of directors of the Orange County Philharmonic Society; the board of directors of Pacific Symphony Orchestra; a member of the board of directors of Californians Preventing Violence. That's an interesting one. What sort of group is that?
- COBB: That has not been functioning particularly recently. In fact, not at all.
- de GRAAF: You were the chair of the Education Division of the Orange County United Way campaign in 1983; a member of the committee of the Orange County branch of the American Cancer Society, which, I suppose, is quite appropriate; a member of the advisory committee of the Coro Foundation. Do you want to describe that?
- COBB: The Coro Foundation is an interesting group. It's a national foundation. We had some very active participation when I was at Connecticut College. What it does is to identify young leaders who are graduating from college, such as undergraduate leaders like the senior class president. They arrange for them to work in a city setting associated with some project around the mayor's office, or in state or local government. It prepares them through an internship for the next phase of their civic lives. These are often political science majors who then go on to work in the public sector, often politically. It's a marvelous group. The Los Angeles group is oldest, but they established a Coro group in Orange County as well, and that's how I got involved.

de GRAAF: Had you ever been involved with Coro before you came here?

COBB: Only to help select the candidates in the seventies at Connecticut College.

de GRAAF: And then you've been on the board of directors of the Newport Harbor Art Museum.

COBB: I still am. It's a very interesting group. Tom Nielsen of the Irvine Company and a friend, is president of the board.

de GRAAF: Again, are these just anticipated parts of being a campus president?

COBB: Yes, I think so. I think it's important for presidents to serve on those community boards. They get a sense of the bigger community outside.

de GRAAF: Finally, your series of awards accelerates somewhat when you come to Cal State. Let me just mention a few and ask you to comment on them. The first year you were here, you were the recipient of two rather interesting ones. One was the Woman of the Year of the Bethune Tubman Truth Award. I gather that's a black women's award?

COBB: Yes, a black civic organization in Los Angeles, and they chose to honor me, for which I was very pleased.

de GRAAF: Another was the Candace Award for achievements in education. Now, what was that?

COBB: The Candace--pronounced Can-da-say--award is given by another national civic organization called the Coalition of 100 Black Women. It is an award given nationally to about seven women every year. Its awards ceremonies are held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in the Temple of Dendur Room. The award is a very handsome crystal piece for outstanding women nationally, and I was pleased to be one of them. What year was that, by the way?

de GRAAF: That was 1983.

COBB: Boy, time flies.

de GRAAF: Then one that has almost an ominous ring. That same year, you received the Woman Warrior Award from the Asian/Pacific Women's Network.

COBB: Isn't that interesting that Asian women would have named the organization that? Again, I received a crystal piece with a picture of a woman in Japanese attire and hairdo, holding a samurai sword. I don't know the history of how that name came about, but, again, it's for outstanding women in the community in L.A. The interesting thing about that award is, they give it not only to Asian women, but sometimes to non-Asian women. Obviously, they gave one to me. I believe they gave one to Rose Bird, formerly of the California Supreme Court.

de GRAAF: There are many others I could tick off, but I'll just mention two others that seem to be particularly interesting. You had a Hall of Fame Award for Black Educators in 1984.

COBB: Yes. They have a group of national higher education administrators and faculty, an organization. Every year, they select a certain number--maybe about two or three, nationally--and I was selected to be one of those recipients.

de GRAAF: Then, in 1983, you received the National Coalition of 100 Black Women first annual recognition award. Were you one of those who inaugurated this whole award?

COBB: No, I wasn't. I was in California, and they formed a chapter in Los Angeles, and the award was in that group.

de GRAAF: One pattern that seems to stand out: quite a few of your awards are for distinction as a woman. Do you feel this has been your great contribution, of showing what women can do, of breaking new ground for women?

COBB: I don't know. I think perhaps my visibility and my thinking and writing have been associated a lot with women, mainly because of Connecticut College's influence as a changing women's college to coed, and certainly at Douglass, under that same category. I have not taught ever at a black college, so I've not been involved in the black college system as such, although I graduated from one. So I think the

women's issue has been very much a part of it. And also, science has been a strong part of it. In any of those cases, I still feel strongly that the major need and the major problem these days has to do with blacks in higher education at all levels--much more serious. I think the progress has been far better for women than it has been for blacks.

de GRAAF: That's where I'd like to finish up our little summary: some of your reflections on both blacks and women. To begin with, obviously, your career shows that a black and a woman might be expected to do a great many things, and yet, how many other blacks do you feel expect that they could perform in ways that you have? How many blacks going to college today expect that they could become successful scientists and so forth?

COBB: I think the fact that they have got to college and are in college automatically gives them a level of expectation that is quite strong. I get a lot of calls from black women who are interested in career changes or want to talk with me about going to graduate school. I think that's very strong. Men, on the other hand, would be talking mainly to men rather than to me. That's kind of natural, because they see the role model image, which is what it's about. That's my own personal contact. If you ever read Ebony magazine, which is a good magazine to look at from a historical perspective, you see that the jobs and the opportunities are so varied, from the public utility companies to theater and foreign service. No longer are you an oddball when you're in these particular fields. Certainly, in the world of business--marketing and management, accounting, anything you want to name now--it's certainly different, in terms of opportunities.

de GRAAF: I think you're quite right, and yet, there's been some literature in recent years to the effect that when you get to the mass of the black population, there is still a great feeling among blacks that they cannot or will not be able to attain those position.

COBB: That's called cynicism and depression related to the history of what happened to their parents and what is happening to a lot of other blacks who cannot get out of the ghetto, who still experience prejudice when they wish to buy a home in a certain area, who

even have taunts and things said to them, calling them, in certain communities, "niggers." You look on television and you see some of the things that still happen, in terms of racial incidents. Even though they are few and far between, the impression is deep and unforgettable, because they recognize that no matter how much a black person achieves, they cannot change the color of their skin. It's irreversible and permanent, and they recognize this, and it's a fact. People will look at me--or anybody else--first and say, "Ah, that's a black woman." Then, they will say whatever else you happen to be. That particular problem is very clear in America, and that is what makes them feel depressed or cynical. The bias and the prejudice that exists--and it's happened to me and does now exist--energizes me rather than immobilizes me. To the degree that young or old or whatever people can use that as a stimulus rather than as a barrier, the better off they are. You have people who feel very strongly that things are very bad, but I think a lot of it has to do with personality. I do think so.

I think one of the things that was so important about the Nelson Mandela visit [to Los Angeles on June 29, 1990], certainly from the point of view of what I saw in Los Angeles Friday evening, was a stadium packed with 70,000 to 75,000 people, black and white, all nationalities. I saw people of every persuasion there. But everyone there was heartened by that experience, having a man who spoke so clearly with notes, with no glasses, I might add. I was impressed with that. I think that gave a lot of encouragement. We black folks have a tendency to talk about, as the spiritual says, "I've been 'buked"--that means "rebuked"--"and I've been scorned." That's a spiritual, and a number of the spirituals that came from slavery are still sung in churches. And the memory of that scorn and that rebuked attitude persists every day in every way. To the degree one can get out of that and think, "Okay, let's get out of that; let's get into the positive phase," the better. But that kind of tragic background is very clear and still evident, because we have too many remnants of post-slavery oppression. After the Reconstruction Period ended, things went downhill very fast, and that's not too long ago. I can definitely remember many things that impacted on me as a child, and certainly on my parents, that would never have happened had we not been black. So that's part of the story. I think

it's important for white folks to stop blaming the victims and understand the problems that do exist. And we're not through with it, because for a black student to come to Cal State Fullerton is like going to a foreign country, an alien foreign country.

de GRAAF: In spite of the various programs and so forth we have set up?

COBB: What's a program got to do with it? It's the way the professor looks at you in the classroom. It's the absence of courses that really speak--as a main part of any course--about black contributions in that field, especially in the social sciences or in psychology, where the black person is invisible. I don't mean the course should be set up with black achievements being floated through it all the time. It's the same thing women complain of, the same idea. This is not a white male world, but history and the scholarly people who wrote it were mostly male. Because for many years all around the world, women had a certain role and men had another role. Men's role was leisure class; they did the thinking and writing. The women were making babies and cooking or looking pretty for their masters. Just think about that for awhile. So you have all the histories written, in the Renaissance Period, and post, and pre, by men, because that was their job to be leisurely, and to be warriors. But between those two things, they were, in fact, the dominant force in deciding what was going to be laid down in history. That's part of what Signs tells you, if you read Signs. I must commend you, Larry, that you know Signs. There are professors on campus who never heard of it.

de GRAAF: I think we can wind this up, because you very systematically answered a series of questions I had on minorities. So let's go on to women. Here, I think, the outstanding change that you see in your lifetime has been the much greater involvement of women in the work force. In 1950, only 27 percent of the labor force was composed of women. By the late 1980s, it was well over 40 percent.

COBB: More than that, even.

de GRAAF: I should say well over 50 percent of all women of employment age--sixteen years or older--were in the labor force. Now, with this very substantial change

has come the problem perhaps best summarized by the term "superwoman." Can a woman keep up her traditional responsibilities and become the equal of males in the labor force as well, or does something have to give?

COBB: Something should give, because why should a woman be working eighty hours a week? When you think about it, ordinary common sense says, why should a woman be working eighty hours a week? The husband should help more, if she has talent to work, or is otherwise needed. I might add, all those people buying those new, bright houses down in south Orange County with loans and mortgages are two-income families. So if that person's going to be down there doing all of that, they're counting on the wife's salary as well as the husband's salary as part of that package, my son included; he and his wife bought a new house last week. So therefore, the problem is, why should they? And they shouldn't. The services should be then shared in the home to the point that it is physically possible. Obviously, the husbands can't have babies, but they certainly can have paternity leaves as they've had in the Scandinavian countries for years. Scandinavian society includes a paternity leave, recognizing that the man's role is very important in a household. So you have that particular model. And you have the fact that every woman will have thirty-five years of nonmothering time in her lifetime. So it's important to look at that time period as something that's terribly important for the possibility of full human development. I think the first thing we have to do is to continue to try to change the idea that when a woman's working, she should also share with her husband certain activities. She ought to share in certain activities at home, but not 100 percent of them. The problem is that we have in our own minds, as women, this real difficult role of still sorting out that which we have been socialized to believe is our job and our job only. That's the most difficult task of all.

de GRAAF: One last question would be, do you feel that some of this gain that women have made in employment has been directly contributory to problems of greater divorce and poorer child rearing? Some conservatives have raised the point that the



deviation from traditional roles has left a void, either in mothering or some other essential roles.

COBB: Why do we blame the mother all the time for those problems? There is a father, also, an important figure. I leave the question like that on purpose. It is a sexist question. Think about it.

de GRAAF: It may get back to the anticipation, though, that perhaps women are uniquely biologically set up to, obviously, bear children, but other to do things as well.

COBB: That may very well be, like black folks can dance. I mean it; I'm very serious about that. I have some of the nicest, most marvelous scenes of men taking their little babies to the grocery store and loving them and changing their diapers and feeding and caring for them. I have seen that in very beautiful ways. I also know some women who are bored silly taking care of their little babies and being at home. So we have to watch being grouped in stereotypes about what women are best at or not good at. Obviously, women are biologically set up to have the babies, but it does not mean that they exclusively have a better way to raise them than men. And we always blame the women for everything. We blame the women when they can't work. For years, we didn't even have a maternity leave. You had to stop working. That was a punishment because you had that baby. There are a whole series of very important socialization things that we assign to women because they're women. I think what we have to do is to look at those again more carefully. We're finding now there are a lot of interesting marriages where there are househusbands. If they're househusbands, we say, "Why aren't they out there working and letting their wives stay at home?" I know one case that went on here at the campus for a long time. It was a wonderful opportunity for that husband to take care of the children--the two of them--while the wife was working. Now, they're grown up to a point where they're both in grade school, and now he has a job which he likes very much--I might add, working with children--and everything is fine. So I think that's a problem that we have to examine, in terms of the way we look at the question. Also, the question is always asked, what about women being in higher education administration? I still look around the room and I

see more men everywhere as presidents or as deans or as vice presidents. We just got our first woman dean in Dr. Mary Tetrault. I was, however, pleased to find out that in the seventies, we had a woman vice president for academic affairs, Mary Mark Zeyen. But that is all done at a price.

de GRAAF: We had some other women deans in the past. Hazel Jones . . .

COBB: That's right, I understand. But it's always been done at a personal cost, and I hope one day it can happen without that personal cost. But that has to do with the woman marrying the right man, and the man marrying the right woman because of his liberal or conservativene attitude about matters of that sort.

de GRAAF: That's a very good point, I think, on which to end this interview, Jewel. Thank you very much.

COBB: Thank you very much.

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