Cindy Emmans interview

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KB: Morning, June 16, 2006, and I’m Karen Blair. I’m about to interview Cindy Emmans, Dr. Cindy Emmans, formerly a professor in the Department of Education at Central Washington University.

Would you tell us a little bit about your background before you came to Central?

CE: I got my doctorate in 1991 from Boston University, but I had been living overseas in Europe, mostly in Germany, for several years, and for the three years from my doctorate ’til I arrived at Central in ’94 I had been working with professional development programs and Master’s degree programs – also working with students in a doctoral program – but I hadn’t had a typical campus experience, and I really wanted that. My husband warned me that the politics would eat me alive, but I didn’t believe him because I knew I would love the campus situation, and I did, at first. So I arrived in ’94, hit the ground running. I embraced my teaching. My assignment was to teach an Educational Technology course, which was a course in how to use computers – in the Ed Department, so it’s a course for pre-service teachers. It was the only course they had in technology, and at that time most of us didn’t have email, the World Wide Web was unknown – although within a year or two we started using the Internet in our classes, and that mushroomed, of course, but at first it was a pretty basic course, and some students had never used a computer, or they’d only use it for very specific purposes. And I inherited the book, and most of the curriculum was just fine. It was a good course, at the time. The course changed radically in the seven years I was there, because technology changed, and I was also pretty aggressive, or assertive, in making changes and trying to make the course relevant. I didn’t want this – I wanted my course to be one that they would look back and say, “Oh my goodness, I used what I learned in that course,” and I think that was pretty much true, because I tried to keep it open, and taking from all kinds of technology, and not just using whatever we happened to have in the room at the time as far as technology, because who knew what they were going to encounter when they were finally teaching. So I was always pleased with the teaching end of it. I had – certainly had academic freedom to develop my own course and teach it as I wanted.

KB: Was this a required course for students?

CE: It was a required course. All Ed majors had to take this course. It was one of their – I don’t know if they would call it “core courses,” but there was a Methods course, there was a Technology course – they had, of course, their subject area Methods courses, whether they were History majors, or Math majors, or whatever, and then Student Teaching and that sort of thing.

One effort that didn’t go as well as it might, as I – toward the end, especially – my ultimate goal, and my evolving goal, was to align the curriculum so that the students would have Technology in their other courses. And some of that happened, but it wasn’t a very coordinated effort. But I did work with some of the other professors. The other “problem” was – one of the assignments in my course was that they should create a lesson plan using technology. That made a lot of sense, but discovered early-on that at least half of them hadn’t had the course in how to do a lesson plan, so that I’m going in sort of – and that changed – well it did come into effect where they ultimately were required to take the course with the lesson planning, as well as some other basic courses, before they took the Technology course. That was kind of a fight, and not everyone agreed with that, but that worked, and that was very helpful. It was certainly better for the students, so that part was very good.

The politics did enter the scene. First a little background on the building. I’ve heard Black Hall referred to – Old Black Hall referred to as a rabbit warren, and it did have little, tiny offices for all of us, but in retrospect the social interaction that that rabbit warren effected or caused was good, because we had to socialize – or not necessarily socialize – we had to interact with each other. We saw each other every
single day. We had to walk past the secretaries to get to our office, and walk past the Chair’s office, and we had to see each other. And yes, they were small offices and the people who had the inner ones with no windows – you know, those were not good offices, but again, as far as the interaction, it was very good. Well we then built the new Black Hall, or rebuilt the existing and added the new part, and you know, it’s a very wonderful building, but it is not – in my opinion not well planned for the purposes. For instance, on the ground floor is a very large – like a library – like an educational library which has limited hours and isn’t always open – as it should be. I mean, they’ve got to keep it secure. But it’s taking a whole lot of space on the ground floor. It should be on the second floor, because it doesn’t need 24-hour access. It also, by its location, blocks how you get from the first floor to the second floor. You can’t always go the most direct route. Not a big deal, but somebody didn’t think that through – like an architect.

And then the big problem is the offices are in the north – I don’t know – one end of the building, and the – the office for the professors, all on the second floor, and the offices for the Chair and the secretaries are on the first floor in one corner, and my office was almost the opposite corner, and the interaction was totally lost. There was a copy machine up near our offices, and we’d see each other once in a while there – and also copy machines down where the secretaries were. But you get your mail, you’d be the only person in the mail room, and then you’d go to you office – no one had to interact. It was astounding to me, what that office did to the social interaction and professional interaction of the professors. We were not thrown together any more, which – thrown together sounds negative, but I mean it in a positive sense. Just astounding to me, and I think it did a lot of damage. I have no idea what the situation is like now, but I have a feeling people are still going to their rabbit Warren. They have big, beautiful offices and no one would call it that, but they’re going off into their little cubicles – their big cubicles.

So that – as it was – a big – there were many changes in administration when I was there. When I arrived, Linda Murphy was the Dean. I think she was there for about two years while I was there, and she was the one that started the planning for the new Black Hall, and she was the one that decided we should all move out a full year before we really had to move out. The building just sat there not being used – no construction, the plans were still going, and we had all moved out. And we were disgruntled. And we all had – we moved – most of us moved to Michaelson Hall, and we had perfectly nice offices there, but most of us taught elsewhere. And for me it wasn’t that big a deal, but I did have to go over to the library to teach, and you know, that adds ten minutes to each side of your class schedule to bring your materials. As I said, it wasn’t as bad for me. I didn’t have that many materials. But for instance, the teachers who taught – professors who taught Children’s Literature – I mean, they had their grocery carts full of books and all the materials. Some of the Methods teachers had to carry all these materials everywhere they went. Our Library Resource Center was in between Michaelson Hall and the Library, so that was another stop, and – the logistics were really quite difficult, and they didn’t have to be. It could have been a very limited time that we were displaced, and instead it was a couple of years.

When we finally – they moved into Black Hall, then everybody was sort of happy for a while, but as I said, the interaction changed even more. We got apart from each other. Back when Linda Murphy was there, she also started the wheels moving for dividing the department, and she did it rather underhandedly, and also, in the end, it was divided into two departments, and it was divided by numbers. So they decided that they’d take first the Special Ed and Children’s Literature, and this that and the other thing – I don’t remember exactly how it was divided – and put those twenty people – twenty slots, twenty instructors – on one side. They would call that the Department of Teacher Education, okay, and then the other section or department was called Curriculum and Supervision, and that was the Student Teaching supervisors – that made sense – and it was people like me who taught the Technology course and also the Methods courses, and that sort of thing. And out of this – I said that was the Department of Curriculum and Supervision, but the other one called Department of Teacher Education – we were also Teacher Education, and especially the Student Teaching supervisors – caused a lot of confusion. The students never knew who was who, and what was what, and they were always going to the wrong person and the wrong secretary, and as I said, it was a false division in the first place. It didn’t make academic sense. And maybe it made political sense, but I’m not sure why, or how. But it was done, and you had to live with it.

KB: Who were the chairs of the – who was Chair of the whole thing?
CE: We didn’t - that was the other thing, then, we had two chairs. And initially Fred Able was to be the Chair of Curriculum and Supervision, but he was voted out, and I don’t remember the timing of that, exactly. And then Jimmy Applegate was the interim Chair. So actually Jimmy Applegate was probably the first Chair when we split – he was Chair of Curriculum and Supervision, and Greg Wang [Gregory Chan] – Greg Wang? – was Chair of the so-called Department of Teacher Education. And he ended up, I think, on the Seattle side writing programs over there, but he was Chair for a while. [Tape is turned off.]

Somewhere along the line here, Linda Murphy left, and as I said, we were left with these two departments, and we weren’t – no one was quite sure why we had two departments instead of one big one, and we were left with this mess as far as where we lived – where our offices were. And Lynne Douglas was then appointed as the Dean, and she wasn’t interim Dean. She was actually elected, or hired as the Dean. And so she was left with overseeing a lot of changes, and that sort of thing.

At the beginning, you know, everything seemed okay, but then Jimmy Applegate, I believe, was retiring, and – or phased retirement, and needed to leave, for whatever reasons – financial reasons, whatever. It wasn’t that he was ousted, or anything like that. Oh, I need to back up. Fred Able ended up being voted out, and there were several issues involved with that, and he showed a lack of leadership, and so Linda Murphy decided that the whole department – and at that point it was both departments – all 40-some – should vote, which we did, and he was voted out. And it wasn’t terribly close – I mean, he was obviously out. But Linda Murphy told Fred the exact vote count. So say it was 18 to 12, or whatever it was. Well Fred knew who his 12 supporters were, therefore he knew who his 18 detractors were, and my goodness there – I felt the repercussions from that, because I couldn’t, in good conscience, vote for him. In retrospect, I probably should have voted for him just for political reasons. In good conscience I couldn’t vote for him. He had just caused too many problems. But he knew I had voted against him, and that followed me – that vote followed me the rest of my time at Central. And why Linda Murphy thought it appropriate for him to know – “Oh, 18 were for you and 11 were against you,” or whatever – I’ve never quite understood that, or forgiven her for that. That’s just silly. But she left, so she didn’t have to deal with picking up those pieces, either.

Well Jimmy Applegate was chair, and again, by now, the department was divided. I thought it was wonderful. I thought he was a good leader. He was honest, he was straightforward, was able to make decisions if there were problems. He would make decisions, but he was a good listener. He was certainly not arbitrary when he made decisions. I guess I personally liked him, so that always makes a difference – respected him. I also learned a lot from him. He kind of took me under his wing, actually, when I first started and he was also a professor, and if I ever needed anything, you know, please come to him, and [inaudible] shared his syllabus with me, and I still remember reading – he had a list on his syllabus that said, “I will not wear a hat. Neither should you. I will address you by your name. You need to address me by my name.” He wanted to be called Dr. Applegate, not Jimmy. “I will do this, or I won’t do this, neither should –” and it was just a wonderful list, basically about civility, but he had rules that most of the professors didn’t, you know. I will not chew gum, neither should you. And to me, these are just common sense rules, but I always kind of felt like I was a big meanie, because – oh, the complaints I got because I wouldn’t let them wear baseball caps in class. Well, it was class, it wasn’t the baseball field! I did stick to that all through my seven years there, but not everyone did, and the gum chewing, and that sort of thing. I was a real stickler for that sort of thing, and people like Jimmy Applegate – and I suppose he’s old school, and so am I – it was good to work with him, because I knew he felt the same way I did. [Tape is turned off.]

I’d like to note, or thank a man named Glen – a professor. His last name escapes me at the moment, but Glen was also very helpful, and sort of took me under his wing, too. Especially that first year when I hadn’t been in a typical college situation. So he was great.

After the – Fred Able lost the vote of confidence, Jimmy Applegate came in temporarily. I think it was a little more than a year, but maybe not even, and then we were faced with a decision to have a Chair. At first they were going to run a search, and I think they were even going to advertise in the Chronicle, and so a committee was formed. I wasn’t on it. And people applied, apparently, and I applied. And I was told
that I was not qualified, which – maybe they didn’t like me, but I was qualified. I was more than qualified. With their list of qualifications and what they needed, I exceeded all of the qualifications, but the committee said I was not qualified and therefore I was not in the job pool.

Well I’m not sure what happened next. I don’t know how many applied, but what happened is that we then had a vote as to who should be our Chair. Lynne Douglas engineered this, and Lynne created a ballot. She came to our meeting to have us vote, and all that, handed out the ballots, and there was one name on the ballot. So quite a vote, and the one name was Osman Alawiye, and he had been a professor in the department for quite some time, and we knew him, and he was certainly affable and a nice guy. Alawiye is A-l-a-w-I-y-e, Osman, O-s-m-a-n. But he was not the kind of person I thought would be a good leader, and in the end I have to say he wasn’t a particularly good leader, but again, he was an affable sort and people seemed to like him, and I think Lynne Douglas decided she could work with him.

The fact that we were voting and there was one name on the ballot made me feel like I was in Communist Russia. I did not vote. I wrote on the ballot “Abstain,” because – and I think I was probably the only one that did that. I think everybody just checked the little box. Nobody wanted to make waves, I still get angry remembering that whole scene – how that was handled. And I guess this is an example where – you know – Lynne Douglas didn’t know what to do with us, didn’t know what to do with this department, so she found a person she thought she could work with, and put him in charge. And that’s probably not all bad, but when you’re working with 20-some professionals it doesn’t seem to me like the best way to handle something. [Tape is turned off.]

After that, while we were still in Michaelson when we voted for Osman, and then we eventually got to Black Hall, and as I said, it’s a wonderful building, we had wonderful technology – many good things about that building. The lab I had to work in was on the second floor. It did have windows, but I didn’t need windows – but I finally had computers that worked. For the most part I had enough computers, although there’s – I did have a couple of sections where kids had to double up, which really shouldn’t have happened, and I’m not sure why, but that eventually evened out and I think there were 24 computers, and I typically had 22 or 23 students. So that was good, because I don’t think it’s fair to the students to double up unless everybody is doubled up, and that’s the way you’ve designed the course. But the course had been designed for them to have their own, and that went well.

So Lynne remained the Dean for quite a while. During this time we had an NCATE review, and I was pretty involved in that, as far as helping with getting the materials lined up and all that sort of thing. In the – and before we had even heard for sure what the results of NCATE were, Lynne then announced that she had gotten a job in Olympia, and there was a lot of rumor and innuendo as to why she was going then, and where she was going, and why she was moving, and that sort of thing, and I think the real rumor, or the thought, was that because the NCATE hadn’t gone as well as it might – I mean, we didn’t exactly – we didn’t lose accreditation, but still, the review didn’t come out as positively as it might, and I think she saw it coming, and she got out.

KB: This was ’99? Something like that?

CE: Yeah, something like ’99. And then Jack McKay was appointed interim Dean. He had been the Associate Dean, and he was the logical person while they found another Dean. And they did eventually do a good search, and they hired – I was on that search committee, and they hired Rebecca Bowers, and everyone was very happy, and I did leave that next year, but I know that I could have worked very well with her, and that would have gone fine. But it was too late. [Tape is turned off.]

[Taping resumes mid-sentence] whole time, of course, I’m working toward promotion and tenure, and I had come in as an associate because of my background before that. I had more than the three years that I mentioned since my doctorate. I had a lot of teaching when I still had my Master’s degree, working in Master’s degree programs, and –
KB: Where were those?

CE: Also in Europe. They were external programs that Boston University had, and then later the University of Maryland had, and they—basically they brought the programs to the students. This was prior to distance education as we know it, but you still had people—a lot of Americans based overseas, especially in the Cold War days—a lot of professionals who needed a Master’s degree but they were stuck in Europe, and the teachers—some of them could go home for the summer, wherever home was, and take summer school and that sort of thing, but that took forever and didn’t always work well, so Boston University wisely—and there were some other Universities who did the same sort of thing—would have programs on weekends, or whatever, so that especially teachers, but also other professionals could earn degrees even though they didn’t live in a typical college town, and they couldn’t go up the street to take classes. So we would bring the classes to the bases.

So anyway, I had a lot of experience. I did come in as an associate, which made sense, and then, of course, wanted to be promoted to a full professor. So I worked hard to try to juggle everything. I know we all had—sort of had the beast because teaching was supposed to be first, and it was first, and as I said, I loved the teaching part and the—thought that I was very dedicated to it, but that doesn’t always leave a lot of time for trying to write grants, or trying to publish, and also the service. I was also very involved in service. I was always on committees, not just in the department, but for the college—the whole University. I was on the Faculty Senate for three or four years, and one of those years on Faculty Executive Council, and I thought that I always did as much or more as anyone else as far as pulling my weight on the political end of things. And no complaints, except that takes time, and publishing—I think my publishing was more than adequate. It was certainly more than most of my colleagues were doing, but I didn’t have a book or anything like—I almost had a book, but the publisher retired, there were changes in personnel, and it didn’t work out.

But anyway, I did go for promotion and tenure earlier than I might have—I think I had been there three, or maybe four years—and promotion was denied, but I was granted tenure, which was nice. So then the next year I went out to be promoted, and that year Fred Able, the former Chair, and his good buddy Bill was on the committee, and one other man, and Osman Alawiye, and these men didn’t like me, and mostly because I had voted against Fred. And they wouldn’t even review my materials. They just said, “Well you’re not ready for promotion.” And I said, “Well I have in writing a year ago, when I got tenure, that I would be considered as long as I kept doing what I had been doing, and it’s in black and white.” And I said, “This conversation is over,” and basically walked out of the room. They kept trying to argue, and talk, and explain, and I said, “Nothing to say to you.”

So that—I did not let that lie, and I ended—I wrote a letter, I think, to Provost Dauwalder. I know I wrote a letter to Lynne Douglas, and—I know I followed procedures. I don’t remember the order of what. And again, letter back from Lynne Douglas that she’d reviewed my materials, and I was not ready for promotion. And I happen to be privy to other people’s promotion and tenure packages, partly because they’d asked me to look at them. Some of them I’d written letters of support, and I’d been on various committees—I mean, I wasn’t working in the blind here, and I was fully aware of who was going on for full professor, and what these people had done, and nothing wrong with what they had done, but I had done more—as much or more, in all three areas. And so that was my argument—if you’re going to promote those three or four or six people, then you have to promote me along with them. This isn’t—you can’t apply different rules to different people.

And I ended up going to a lawyer and discussing this, and the first lawyer said “No, there’s nothing you can do, not everyone can be promoted,” and I had to explain the academic situation where it wasn’t one job, one promotion—like in a corporation—but, you know, anyone who earns it is supposed to be promoted. So then he wrote a letter on my behalf, I believe, that just basically said if the others are promoted, then I need to be promoted along with them. And in the end—I never—I didn’t hear anything formal, I heard it accidentally, through the grapevine, that I was on the list to be promoted. It was never in the paper, like they usually would publish it in the Daily Record. That year there was nothing in the paper, but I did eventually get the official letter, and I was promoted, and I was very happy.
And of course at Central salaries were still lagging way behind what they should have been. They were getting a little bit better, but that was why I wanted the promotion – to get at least a little bump in salary to be on a par where I should be. I always felt bad for people who had been there ten years or twenty years ahead of me, and by now I had at least reached their level of salary, which is way under what it should have been. But we were all fighting, and I think fighting together, and of course it was the women who were always the losers back then. Still – well maybe – I think they’ve fixed a lot of that, but that was the problem. [Tape is turned off.]

KB: [Tape resumes in mid-sentence] responsibilities that you had while you were at Central.

CE: Okay, as I said, my first course was called Educational Technology, and that was my main course, and some quarters that’s all I taught – four sections of that. Some quarters I did three sections of that course, and then I had release – assign time to something else. In fact, my first year my assign time was to work with the other faculty members to help them with technology. And that went pretty well. They were eager to have help, and again, when we were at Black Hall back in our little rabbit warrens, they were right there, and I still remember hearing people – “Ciiiiinndddyyyy” – calling down the hall because they’d lost their data or whatever, and I would literally jump out of my chair and run down to that office. That didn’t happen in the new Black Hall, but actually, by that time people were a little better with technology. But still, when people would have problems you always – especially with computers, you want immediate assistance. You don’t have time to wait around and figure out what you did wrong, or how to get your data back. So that was a nice part of my assignment. I enjoyed it, it worked well, but the second year, no. It didn’t even last a year. The third quarter I was there, I remember Fred Abel calling me in and saying, “We’ve got a little problem here covering a course. It’s a – it’s still the same course. It meets in the evenings, I guess at five o’clock. Can you do it?” And I said – I said I would. I mean, I didn’t feel I had a choice, but it wasn’t at all negative. I said “I’ll do what I need to do for this department.” As I think I mentioned, those first couple years, everything was wonderful, and I have very good feelings. In the fall, then, I got reassigned again. I had some time to work with faculty, and back to my other course. Then aft – at some point in that cycle I got approval to teach graduate courses, and then, typically, one of my courses would be to graduate level. A similar course, but at the graduate level. Most of the students were already teachers, and so I put the course up a level because they were already in a classroom, and again, my emphasis was to teach – to make the course valid, and help them use technology in their classrooms. Of course in that case there was no guessing about what technology they might have available – hardware and software – as they were already in the school. They knew what they had, or what they could get – get their hands on. So that was good, and as I said, most – many quarters I taught one section at the graduate level, and then three sections of the undergraduate level.

KB: Were the public schools in advance of Central, or did they have low-level technology?

CE: The public schools were all over the place. I think most of them were probably on a par with Central. Some schools right in Ellensburg were ahead. Chuck Wahle was a teacher – probably still is – in Ellensburg Public Schools, and he did wonderful things with the kids – mostly at the middle school, also at the high school – and was getting his hands – getting grants and stuff, and getting his hands on more advanced software, and I worked with him some, and he was kind of an inspiration for me to make sure that my students would be prepared even if we couldn’t use the fancy software that Chuck Wahle was using [spells Wahle’s name] – that he was using with his students, we still, I think as I mentioned before, that they were ready to use whatever life presented them. Some schools, especially the rural schools, had lower levels – had probably old computers, maybe one in the back of the room, whatever. Other schools in the Seattle area, I think were probably ahead of Central. But I think Central, especially after we got into Black Hall – I think we were well suited – probably a little ahead of the average – certainly way ahead of the average, but well positioned to prepare the Central students for what they would encounter. So that part was good.

KB: Supervision of students?
CE: Oh, and then also my last two years, year and a half, part of my assignment was to supervise student teachers. And I think I kind of fell into that because my original background is music, and the Music Ed students who were out there in the field in their classrooms didn’t have a Music Ed person from Curriculum and Supervision observing them. So the people from Curriculum and Supervision would do their darndest, but if you don’t know anything about music it’s a little hard to help a student teacher. There was a person from the Music Department also assigned, but her role – it was always a her – was a little different than the role of – that was more casual, voluntary sort of thing. The Music people, of course, wanted to keep an eye on their Music Ed students who were out in the field, but no one was assigned to actually supervise those students. So there were, I think, probably a couple of Music students, and there I was, and I said, “I’d love to try that!” I told Osman, and Osman was only too happy to reassign me. And most quarters there weren’t enough Music student teachers for a full load for me, and I don’t remember what a full load was – how many you supervise. I think four. We were expected to visit them quite regularly, and work with them, and then there was a seminar once a week for all of the student teachers. So typically I’d have two or three Music students, and then I might supervise a first grade teacher or a classroom teacher – that sort of thing.

KB: How far did you have to go? Travel all over the State?

CE: No, I was able to stay in this area. I did go to Thorp quite often, because the Music students would tend to be assigned to Thorp, one of them, and then I’d go to elementary schools right here in town. Went to the high school, and also Morgan Middle School. So that was nice. I really enjoyed the freedom. I did like getting out, even though I didn’t have to drive very far. It was nice to get in new settings, and get out in the community a little bit. I had worked with the school district somewhat. The school district had a strategic plan for technology about in the middle of my seven years that I lived here, and I was on that committee, and met with them quite a bit just to help them think ahead, and make decisions about what made sense for high school students, and of course those same high school students feed into the colleges. Also, though, what made sense for their teachers, and backing out of that, some teachers from Central – teachers to be – would end up being teachers in Ellensburg or in a similar school district, so there’s a nice fit there, and I think they helped – they appreciated my opinions, being a college professor, as, you know [inaudible] the opinions and the feelings of the classroom teachers in the K-12 schools, and the administrators, and that sort of thing.

KB: Weren’t you involved with the musical life at Central?

CE: Oh yes. I loved the musical life at Central. I – as I said, I’m a music major, and I play violin and viola, and not to - I think I’d only been at Central a month or so, and ran into Peggy Gries, who said I should check into the orchestra. So I called Dan Baldwin, who was the conductor at the time, and they were having a concert coming up very soon – I had kind of been dragging my heels on this – and he said, “Well why don’t you wait ‘til the next concert.” And then he said, “Wait a minute. Have you played a lot?” And I said, “Oh yes, I’ve played a lot.” “Oh, why don’t you just come and see how it goes?” So I dropped in and there were two or three rehearsals left, and played that first fall concert and absolutely loved it, and I’m pretty sure I was in every concert from then on, from the fall of ’94 until the end of 2000, because in the fall of 2000 I had a sabbatical, so I wasn’t in the group. And maybe I played again my very last quarter [which] was the winter of 2001.

KB: Was Dan Baldwin the conductor the whole time?

CE: No. About halfway through Dan left and they hired Paul Elliott Cobbs, and both were just wonderful conductors. Very different men, very different styles, you know, with the orchestra, but both excellent musicians, and I learned a lot. I mostly played violin. I did play in the viola section for a concert or two when they needed violas, but for the most part I played violin, and I saw that orchestra grow from one of those first concerts – not the first one, but one that first year – we had four first violins when we should have eight or twelve, and we were playing hard things like Tchaikovsky – no, that was the second year. That was fall of ’95. And then things started growing, and the word got out, and more students were
recruited, and I think by the time I left there were probably a dozen first violins, which, as I said, is as it should be. So it was fun to see the growth, and it was very fun to play in the group.

KB: Were you the only non-student in the orchestra?

CE: Not quite. Laura Applegate – Appleby?

KB: Ton.

CE: Laura Appleton, Sociology professor, played – not the whole time I was there, but for some of those years, and when I first joined, Donna Nelson played, and so the three of us – and Peggy Gries would play sometimes, and of course she was involved as a professor, but it wasn’t as though she was assigned to the orchestra – but she would play when she had time. But I think that was pretty much it. It was an orchestra meant for the students. It wasn’t designed as a community orchestra – by the time I got there. I think possibly in past years they had a lot more community involvement. And I’ve been in other college orchestras where they depended on community involvement, like more than half the people were from the community, and right now I’m in a university orchestra where I’m the only community member, and it’s meant for the students. And they’re only too happy to have me, but they don’t design it around community members.

KB: Did you attend musical events or other cultural events on the campus?

CE: My first concert at Central was a trio of John Pickett, and Carry Rehkopf, and John Michelle, and I can remember it was just jaw-dropping. I was so impressed, and I was so thrilled. And if fact, that is probably prior to me joining the orchestra, because I went and I heard that concert, and I was just bowled over at the quality we had on this campus, and then thought, “Hmm. I should check into the orchestra. Obviously there’s more to this than just three people.” So I did, and then I tried to go to all of their concerts, and I went to several other events, too – mostly instrumental things. Of course I was in the orchestra events, but I certainly went to most of the chamber music concerts, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

KB: And how long did you take lessons with Carrie Rehkopf?

CE: Oh, that’s a good question. I think – I didn’t start lessons until I’d probably been here a year, and then I took them on and off for five or six years – took lessons with Carry. She’s a wonderful teacher. I enjoyed it.

KB: What about the town/gown relationship? What do you perceive as the tensions and connections between Central and Ellensburg?

CE: When we arrived in Ellensburg, my husband and I, we were bound and determined to join this community in every way you want to spell that, and we put feelers out, and we – one of our first contacts was Brad Fitterer of Fitterer furniture, and of course, that family goes back – way back, and a little aside, as the house we bought is still called the Fitterer house because that’s where Brad and his four or five siblings grew up, and they’d lived in that house from I believe 1940 to about 1970-something, but that’s a long time, and that’s the Fitterer house. And then the Shaws – we bought it from the Shaws, and I think they were there seven or eight years.

KB: Those are a furniture store, too.

CE: That’s exactly right. I always thought that was such a funny coincidence. Never really met the Shaws, although that’s who we got the house from, and then we lived there for seven years and owned it a few years beyond that. But anyway, we moved into town, and we knew it was a big rodeo town – we knew that was important – and of course, Brad Fitterer is really involved with the Gold Buckle Club, and the
rodeo, and all that, as I say, so we actually joined the Gold Buckle Club. It was very expensive to join, for our interest, and of course we didn’t have horses, or a ranch, or anything, but it seemed like really nice people, and it seemed to us a good way to ingratiate ourselves – that’s not really the right word, but – to get to know people other than University people, because obviously I had the connection at the University and we had friends there, and this would get us involved in the community.

Well an entire year went by, and we did not get invited to one single event – one single anything that the Gold Buckle Club did. There was absolutely no social interactions. No one made any effort to get to know us or include us. It was very odd. And then I think the next we heard from them was the next fall, rodeo time, and they’re having a fund raiser, and did we want to come and give them money again? We took our gold buckles and ran, and – you know, we didn’t stay involved. It didn’t make any sense to be involved.

As far as general town and gown, I always thought – noticed that there seemed to be a problem. I was always struck by the fact that the people I knew who were not involved at the University didn’t know anybody I knew at the University. So I’d say, “Oh, do you know so and so?” assuming there’d be a connection – maybe at Church, or through the school, or through their kids, or through – no. And then I’d talk to people that I knew in town – neighbors, or whatever, “Do you know so and so?” “No.” Nobody seemed to know anybody. It seemed like there was this pie that was divided up, and you’ve got one section is University only, and one section is maybe the professional community or something, and then you’ve got your section of the ranchers, and the rich wheat farmers, and that sort of thing, and other sections – whatever. It didn’t seem – there didn’t seem to be a lot of overlap. And the whole time I was there, I noticed that – that there wasn’t intermingling, to the degree that I really expected.

And we did continue, my husband and I, to make efforts to get to know people, and my husband never worked in Ellensburg because Central could have hired him, but somehow he scared them. He went in and talked about new programs that they could make money, and branch out a little bit, and that sort of thing, and – yeah, he could see the fear in their eyes, at – I think he said the word “entrepreneur,” and they didn’t like that word. They were a State institution and they were going to keep doing it the way they had been doing it, thank you very much.

Now I think – my impression is that Central has gotten a little more entrepreneurial since I left. They certainly have more programs that are off campus, and they’ve – you know – there’s some outreach, and there’s Distance Ed, and – you know, thinking out of the box. I hate that phrase, but they were able to break down some of those barriers, but at the time they weren’t interested in someone who is now a Dean, and could have / should have been a Dean here on campus. And he applied for a Dean of Continuing Ed – didn’t get an interview. Applied for some other positions as well, so – the whole point of that is that my husband didn’t work in Ellensburg, so he didn’t really have the connection to the town, although he got his private pilot’s license while he was here, and made some friends – pilot friends, and people who worked out there, and had a great time with that. He loved the people he met out there. He loved the flying situation, because here in Ellensburg it’s what they call Class G airspace, which means there’s no traffic and you don’t have to be in contact with the radio. The skies are empty. There are no military planes up there, no commercial planes, except perhaps way, way up high. So that was a wonderful aspect of living here.

KB: Did you have anything to do with the Centers while you were at Central?

CE: I did not. There were times when it was a possibility that I probably could have taught in one of them, but it didn’t work out for the schedule, or whatever reasons.

KB: I’d like to return to the question of NCATE, if you have any further observations about that review. I think it was ‘99 when we were not entirely pleasing to the accreditation board. Do you have any further details about that that could explain what the problems were? Were you party to that information?
CE: Not really. I think a lot of the problem was a lack of consistency. I mean, as I said, my personal problem was that there was different standards applied – certainly within our department – I mean, from person to person, and I think different standards across the college, and I don’t know if NCATE looked at any department other than ours, but there was certainly, like I say, a lack of consistency, a lack of leadership going up the line, nobody knew – the right hand didn’t know what the left hand was doing. There wasn’t coordination of efforts.

One effort I was involved in that I kind of alluded to earlier was aligning the courses so that they made sense and would work together. I was on a committee that Jack McKay appointed when he was still Associate Dean and Lynne Douglas was the Dean, and it was professors from both departments – so-called Teacher Ed and Curriculum and Supervision – and we were going to block our courses so that students would take – for instance if it was going to be the lesson planning course, the technology course, and one other course the same quarter, and the professors teaching those three courses would work together. There would be some overlap. The lesson plan, then, could be involved with the technology, and it was great. The first thing I said at the very first meeting to Jack McKay where I raised my hand, and I said, “Can you promise us that the results of this committee – our findings – will be implemented – will be taken seriously?” “Oh, of course! Oh, my goodness, yes! Whatever you say, that’s what we’re going to do. That’s why you’re here.” And it was a fairly large committee – it wasn’t just three people deciding how to run things. And so, like I said, big committee, we had a lot of meetings, we worked very hard, we came up with what I thought was a wonderful plan to link these courses. The students would be encouraged to sign up for this because it would make their scheduling easier and they wouldn’t have to worry about getting into sections. That was always a problem when they got to upper-level classes. And it would kind of run itself. We weren’t expecting everybody to do that, because you’ve always got people that are transferring in, and that sort of thing, but – it never went anywhere. It never got off the table. And obviously, this is a personal example, because I was on that committee, but I think that was endemic in that whole – all – probably all College of Education, but at least those departments. People would have good ideas, or there would be initiatives, or even job searches – anything – there was no consistency. Everybody was kind of off with his or her own agenda, and you know, that does not a good department make. You’ve got to be – you don’t have to all think alike, but you do have to have some commonality as far as goals, and improving things. And so I think that was part of the problem.

I’m not – I wasn’t privy to any of the really specific stuff. I did spend some time talking to the NCATE people. They had an open forum where people could come in and talk, and very few people showed up, and so I basically had a private conference, and tried to allude to some of the leadership problems. And they acted like they didn’t want to hear it, or they acted – I mean, it’s almost like they were looking around the room, like they didn’t – they acted like they weren’t paying attention, but maybe they did hear some of it. And I certainly wasn’t there to tear down the department. What I wanted to happen – and I know I told them that – what I wanted to happen is them to make a few recommendations – okay, you have a strong department. This would really make it stronger. And again, be consistent, have some guidelines, you know, be fair – that kind of thing. So, you know, maybe I did more harm than good. Again, my purpose was to make it stronger, and that’s what I told them. We’ve got a lot of good things here that could be better, and I’d love to hear an outside – and they needed an outsider to say, you know, this is what has to happen. But maybe that’s not the way NCATE works. I’m not the most politically savvy person in the world.

KB: I’d like to hear about the upper administration. President Ivory Nelson – was he President when you came here? Would you talk about good and bad administrative decisions of his, and others? Who did you admire among the leadership? What good decisions were made? What unfortunate decisions were made?

CE: Okay. Yes, Ivory Nelson was the President.

(Transcription of Tape 1, Side 2)
CE: Ivory Nelson was the President for most of my tenure here. When I arrived in ’94 he had already been here a couple of years. I certainly met him at one of the first new faculty meetings, or whatever. I never really had anything to do with him, although when I was on Faculty Senate he was, of course, at the meetings, and I know he knew my face even if he didn’t know my name, and didn’t know me. But I had a few – sort of conversations, or comments across the table from him, so I knew him a little bit. I always felt that he was not really – the town and gown problem, I think, was exacerbated by Ivory Nelson because he never got involved in the town. Now there were probably a lot of reasons for that. I still remember when Jerilyn McIntyre came, she hadn’t been in town more than a month, and there she was at the Jazz Festival with her husband, and I remember [being] taken aback – “Oh my goodness, the President of the University is here at a community event. That’s just wonderful.”

Another thing – I happen to know that Ivory Nelson, in his entire time at Central, and I don’t know how many years it was – ten or twelve – attended one musical concert, and that happened to be the jazz group playing in Colorado at some other function. It wasn’t even on campus. And I’m sorry, we have a wonderful Music Department, and of course I’m biased, being in the orchestra – having been in the orchestra – but wonderful jazz band, marching band, choirs, small ensembles, large ensembles, and it would seem to me a President would make a point of even going once a quarter – once a year! I mean, just show up, and show your support. And so that was a bone of contention. Again, I kind of take it personally because I was involved, but I think that’s an example of Ivory Nelson – you know, they say he was in his tower and wanted to stay there, and – and I certainly thought the same. I know – as I say, I think he probably knew my face, but wouldn’t know my name. I talked to other faculty members who would say, “I walk by his house every day, and he doesn’t – you know – wouldn’t know me if I tripped over him.” And he certainly met me, he knows I’m a professor, but no interaction. No desire for interaction. And of course, some people are bad with names and faces, and that kind of thing, but that doesn’t mean you don’t make the effort and at least act like you want to be involved.

Politically, certainly there were problems again at Faculty Senate. I can remember voting, and voting, and messing around and whatever with the Music building funding, and I can remember Ivory Nelson doing some kind of end-run where he basically took it out of the budget and tried not to tell anybody, or reduced the budget, and the Music people desperately needed a new building, and he was against that, and I don’t know why. I think he thought the funds could be better spent elsewhere. Again, if Faculty Senate there were certainly some meetings that were – not rancorous, but certainly not completely positive, where – you know, people just didn’t agree with what he had to say, and I think he would not always know all the details, or all the background. He had decided something, or thought something should be some way, and then would get arguments, and didn’t want to discuss it. Didn’t want to hear the other side of it. But as far as the Board, and that kind of administrative policy, I really didn’t have that much to do with it. I’d read it in the paper like everybody else.

KB: Are there any last people or issues that we didn’t get to talk about that you’d like to commend or critique before we close?

CE: I don’t think so. As I said, I think the administration is very good now. I think my timing here couldn’t have been worse. During my time I had four Chairs in my department, and four Deans – three Chairs and four Deans – which is not good in any situation. Even if all of them had been wonderful, it’s not a good situation with all that turmoil, and in most cases they weren’t great leaders, so that makes it even worse, and so it was a very tough time. And also, as I mentioned, the salaries weren’t good, which always makes morale poor, and you know, a lot of issues going on. I think if I had arrived the year – the year before I left, I would have had an entirely different attitude, situation, experience, you know, than I did during that time. Although overall there were many good things, as I said. I loved the teaching. I think the students, for the most part, were dedicated and hardworking, and I – certainly there were no discipline problems – no deviant behavior or anything like that. So that was a positive situation in that regard.

KB: Any last thoughts before we close?
CE: I don’t think so. That’s it.

KB: We’ve covered all you meant to say.

CE: I think so.

KB: Well thank you. I learned a lot.