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Interviewee: Bill Mitchell
Interviewer: Melissa Ziobro
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Melissa Ziobro: This is Melissa Ziobro, Specialist Professor of Public History at Monmouth University, interviewing Dr. Bill Mitchell for the Monmouth Memories Oral History Program. Today is July 26th, 2016 and we are on our campus in West Long Branch, New Jersey. Sir, take it away.

Bill Mitchell: This is Bill Mitchell. I came to Monmouth in 1968 and it was a pretty crummy place. [laughs] It was pretty awful.

Ziobro: Elaborate! [laughter]

Mitchell: We were poorly paid. I actually had to teach the regular course levels, four courses. In order to get by, I taught an overload. I taught five courses a semester, and then I taught two courses in the summer.

At the same time, I nonetheless was able to do research and publish. That was hard. It was a real, hard struggle. That was part of it. The other part was my colleagues. I was really embarrassed by most of my colleagues.

The person who had taught anthropology was a retired minister…had no real knowledge of anthropology except superficial. Maybe he read through Benedict and Margaret Mead, but had no real understanding of the discipline.

Classes were large. The average class size was 45. I can't remember. I've been trying to remember the name of the president at that time. I can't remember his name.

Ziobro: Van Note...

[crosstalk]

Mitchell: Van Note, right, President Van Note. I hardly knew him. I lived in New York City, and I commuted to Monmouth by public transportation car, the [inaudible 2:30] colleagues who lived in New York at the time. At the time, there were no requirements really for hiring, no process for hiring, no process for tenure.

It was probably in 1970, sitting in a faculty meeting, and all of a sudden they announce who's received tenure, and the chairman of my department, at the time we were all called chairmen, Al Freedman, all of a sudden gets the announcement that he received the tenure.

It was no process, he had no idea, and he said "I got tenure," and he turned to me and said "they are going to regret that." but, they actually did. Indeed we did.

I was in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the time. Again, it was chaotic. Al, who was chairman, would refuse, and there was no process about hiring and firing. He never wanted any competitor, so he would hire a sociologist and then afterwards, he would fire them. Just fire them.

I knew, at the time, that in order for me to get tenure, I would have to establish relationships outside of the Department, which I did. I proceeded to do so. It was also - at 1968, was the time of Vietnam War protests. I participated in some of the protests here at Monmouth.

There were times when helicopters were coming over the campus. I was there during the Maxwell Taylor incident, and what I still remember from that period was the brave General Maxwell Taylor hiding behind the curtain as all of the fracas breaks out.

Ziobro: This is something that Brian Greenberg discussed a bit in his interview. Could you elaborate on that for us? Your...

Mitchell: Yeah, his brother was there – Mike [Greenberg], right, and he was in History -- at that time it was History and Political Science. The event was one where the rules were set out -- this is at the event itself -- that he would only answer questions submitted to him in writing, which of course belays the whole notion of academic freedom. He would be the one selecting the questions he's going to answer.

Mike got up on a point of order. I don't remember exactly the words he used. Mike could be explosive, but the point of order was he wanted to have questions from the floor. He rushed up to the stage. It was in Wilson Auditorium.

Rushed it up to the stage and, I think it was the head of student government, slugged him, which created the fracas. His point was he wanted to change the rules of the procedure. This was at a time of very heightened concern about the US bombing in Southeast Asia.

Maxwell Taylor was one of the creators of that system. During the fracas, Maxwell Taylor rushes off stage and he's looking out from the curtain. I just said, "Oh, you bloody brave General hiding behind the curtain."

Before the event, Mike was not there. I was with the students who were organizing protests about the war. They were thinking of disrupting the event, and I argued against that. I said, "You know, there are ways to do this without disruption. Let us all put on black armbands."

That's what we did. We all put on black armbands as a symbolic form of protest. I really did not believe in disrupting conversations. There was a meeting with Van Note There were many students advocating that we cancel classes, and so on. The faculty voted against it.

There was a meeting with Van Note to discuss these events with the students, and it was terrible. I felt so bad for the guy. I really felt bad. He couldn't handle it. It was beyond him. I really felt sorry for him. Not for his position, but for him. He just couldn't handle it.

At that time, it really was a pretty crummy place. It really was pretty crummy. We all thought that the only entrance criteria was a check. If you had the check, you could come in. At a certain point we had rolling admissions. You could enroll at any point.

In sociology and anthropology, I was extremely careful to establish relationships outside the department in order to prevent being fired by...this was also the time when FAMCO was organizing. I was not part of the organizing of FAMCO, but my wife was. My wife, Barbara Jaye, J-A-Y-E. Barbara came two years prior to my arrival at Monmouth. She was very active in the organizing of the union.

One of the things, that fact that I commuted, prevented some of the relationships from developing. At any rate, the next president was Stonesifer, who was truly dreadful.

There's only one word to describe Stonesifer. Dreadful. He was unable to make a decision. I'd meet with him. By the way, he liked me. I say he was dreadful, at the same time, they were very supportive of me. He was one of the persons that I used, obtained support.

Why was he dreadful? Because he couldn't make a decision. He couldn't do anything and even to the very end, he would say things like, "The way you people do things here at Monmouth." "You've been president for five years, what do you mean, 'You people'? You're president of a..."

At that time, the administration was much smaller than it is today. Ken Streidig [?] was in charge of the summer school. I can't remember his name. We didn't overlap much. He was the dean of the faculty or the graduate school. I'm not sure. His assistant -- as I've gotten older, my grasp of names... -- he later became dean of faculty. It'll come back to me.

Ziobro: And researchers using the interviews can always go back and visit the archival records as well.

Mitchell: He became dean of faculty. There was the strike. That was in the Stonesifer period.

Ziobro: Phil Donahue talked about that at length. Did you participate in the strike?

Mitchell: I was chair of the department. I was chair of sociology and anthropology. At that time, it became sociology, anthropology and social work. Ultimately it became anthropology, social work and criminal justice.

I was chair of the department and consequently part of the administration. At the time, there was the undergraduate studies committee, which consisted really of department chairs and the dean of faculty. I can see him. He was one of my supporters also. His name will come to me. We had a meeting.

They wanted to bring in scabs to cover the classes but it was the chair of biology -- again, I can't remember the name -- at the time who was fabulous at that meeting. He absolutely opposed it. We all agreed with him. We all agreed with him. He was a real ameliorating influence on the administration but at the time of the strike, I was extremely concerned about Stonesifer.

He wrote an op-ed in the *Asbury Park Press* condemning the faculty. Why throw kerosene on a fire? That's what he was doing. Condemning the faculty and so on -- which is so typical of him. Pete Everetts and I -- Pete was chair of English at the time -- we were chatting about it and we decided to go see members of the board that we knew.

He went to see Jules Plangere and I went to see Bill Waters. I called up Bill. I can't speak for what Pete did. I called up Bill Waters and asked if I could have an appointment with him. He was chairman of the board of trustees and of course, Jules was a very important member of the board of trustees.

Bill said to me, "I can't talk to you about the strike." I said, "This is not about the strike. I'm not going to discuss the strike at all." So he asked me what it was about and I said, "It's about the president. I want to discuss with you my concerns about the president."

I was scared. I was really frightened. He said, "OK." It was actually after commencement, sometime after commencement, I went to his home in Bamm Hollow. He had a home right by the golf course. I foolishly...

He said we'd sit outside and it was outside. I said, "Oh OK, fine." But it was cold. I was chilly. I was freezing and I was already kind of shaky. Shaking, I laid out my concerns about Stonesifer and indicated that this is not personal animosity. That he had always supported me.

I laid out particulars about trying to move something forward and he wouldn't do it. At the end of that conversation, Bill said to me, he said, "Thank you so much. We already know it. We already know it." That was that.

Shortly thereafter, Bill Waters came in as chief negotiator and he negotiated an end to the strike, and then shortly after that, Stonesifer stepped down for reasons of family, whatever the euphemism that was used, and went into the English department where he had tenure in the English department and stayed around in the English department, and still to the very end spoke about, "How you people did things at Monmouth."

With the end of the Stonesifer period...there was a friend, Bob Reus. He was the one person during this Stonesifer period that could get something done. If you wanted to get something done you had to go to Bob Reus [?]. He did it, but he was an exceedingly abrasive personality. Very abrasive. Never to me but to others.

There was one time he had this big thing with Marilyn Parker, who was the chair of the chemistry. She's someone that you should interview. She's around, Marilyn. I can give you her telephone number. She was chair of chemistry and he...and Marilyn was always so much a stickler for procedure. A stickler for doing things the right way. She'd be the person that stand up in the meeting, we haven't followed procedure and so on and Bob would just blow up at these meetings of the undergraduate studies committee.

Stonesifer left and they brought Sam Magill and he was brought in as a temporary president. He was brought in under the proviso that he could not be the regular president. I forget, his initial period was one-year or two-year. Anyway, Sam was someone who really worked very hard to ease tensions among the faculty. He was also a womanizer. He was a womanizer, but he worked really hard to ease the animosity.

It was in Sam's period and through working with FAMCO that we finally began to get decent procedures about promotion, tenure. All of these committees were established right then and the procedures at that time. By the way, talking about Al Freidman that's why I...Al is dead so it's not going to matter. Stonesifer is dead and Bob Reus is dead. I actually like Bob Reus but he was abrasive. I liked him because I could get things done with him. I also saw his limitations.

When I came up for tenure with Al Freidman he said, "I'll recommend you for tenure but only if you give me a letter of resignation." There were no committees. "What?" "That's what I'll do, I'll recommend you for tenure but only if you give me an undated letter of resignation." I thought about it and I said to myself he'd never be able to use it. I needed his recommendation, but there's no way I was going to get tenure without the recommendation of the department chair.

I said, "OK." I wrote him an undated letter of resignation and I knew that he'd never be able to use it because all he would have to do is put on a date and hand it over and I would indicate the

circumstances under which I was forced to write it and nobody would pay any attention to it. That's how uncertain he was as a person.

Ziobro: How did you come to replace him as chair?

Mitchell: Probably I'd have to look at my CV. At that time, when I first came, chairs were appointed. Faculty had no say. They were all top-down. He was appointed. Had a PhD from the University of Michigan but never published anything, never did any scholarship. He was very smart.

At some point in the, was it 1972, after I got tenure, and that was at the time when some of these procedures were taking place, the department faculty were to make...vote and make a recommendation on who would be chairman. It was still chairman. The faculty voted me as chair.

Ziobro: You have a few times now emphasized “chairman.” How common were female faculty members and how were they perceived by their male counterparts?

Mitchell: There were far fewer women. Barbara was the only...I think that she had one other colleague in English who was a woman. Very few female faculty on campus in 1968 into the 1970s. It's thanks to the early pioneers like Barbara.

She got her PhD at Rutgers. When she got her PhD she applied for a job at Princeton, and it's a shame she didn't save the note that she got back, they sent her a note saying, "We're sorry but we are monastic except on weekends. No women need apply." We're monastic except on weekends. That's how things were in the academy at that time. Very few women. It was unusual that Marilyn was chair of chemistry. She was the only woman in power at that time.

Magill had begun to reach out and to sooth the savage breast, so to speak, but also working with FAMCO, creating a procedure for faculty. It also was a time, in the 1970s, when enrollments declined around the country and there was a great number of unemployed PhDs out there so it was also a time when one could increase the standards.

It was then that faculty began to improve. Truly improve. I'm proud of my colleagues but when I came I was not. By the way, there was an attempt to decertify the union led by someone in psychology, I forget his name, who was an alcoholic. His breath always reeked of alcohol. It failed.

Fortunately our union was formed before the … decision which ruled that faculty are part of administration and consequently don't have a right to form unions, which has inhibited the formation of unions at many other private institutions. We were among the first private institutions with a union and one of the few that have a faculty union.

Also, the board of trustees were better. We had a better board of trustees, better faculty, better administration. One of the things that Magill did was he fired Bob Reus. He fired the head of the student services, Mary Anne Nagy's position of vice president for services, and his underling. I spoke to Sam. I was very upset. I said, "You have every right to remove Bob but you have no right to associate his name with those other two."

Sam did not like that, but its true. He had every right to have the provost and the dean of faculty that he wanted, that he felt more comfortable with. He brought in Eugene Rossi to replace Bob Reus.

There was a move established and one of the persons, it was Janet Warnock, who was another early woman here and important woman on campus. I don't know if she was chair then but at some point she was chair of political science. Janet and some others created a petition to the board of trustees to allow Sam to be in the running for the permanent slot of president.

Ziobro: Do you know why he was initially disbarred from that position?

Mitchell: I have no idea. It was simply, "Hey, you're in here to help establish some kind of stability." What the reasoning of the board was, I have no information about that. That was part of his initial contract and with that petition from the faculty that was changed so he could be one of the finalists for the presidency. The institution was transformed at that point.

There was a period of time, and I don't remember the dates, even as enrollment was falling around the country, we were the institution that was teaching the Brookdale students. Before Brookdale was built, it was instituted as an institution, but there wasn't a place for them so they were being taught here at Monmouth. That was for a couple of years that we were teaching.

Ziobro: They were being taught here, but receiving a Brookdale degree?

Mitchell: Yeah, at Brookdale. I don't know how it worked, but they were being taught here. It helped some enrollment, but then enrollment began to decline here. It was a scary period. The faculty were improving, but our student enrollment was declining. There was a period of time when I thought, "Are we going to last as an institution?"

Unfortunately, again it indicates the Stonesifer period. They should have been planning for this. They should have been looking at...one of the jobs of enrollment people is to look into the future, to see what trends... If all of sudden you have a decline of 50 percent in high school graduates, it's going to affect the institution. Whatever the decline, they hadn't done that.

There was the significant decline in students. I remember there being a meeting with Jane Rossi and Magill -- I was chair of sociology, anthropology, social work and criminal justice at that point -- about how we are going to deal, we are going to cut faculty and so on. One of the things that Magill and Jane did was they tried not to eliminate, fire faculty, but rather not rehire…

Also, I know, they moved faculty positions into the administrative positions that they needed right at the time. I don't think any faculty were actually fired. They also instituted the bio, the institution of bio, at some point I don't know exactly. As you get old, time gets crushed, melted into a blob.

Gene became provost and vice-president, and there was the second dean of faculty which was Gloria Nemerowicz [sp.] who came as a sociologist out of the department that I have led.

One of the things that Miguel did was to improve...I don't think it was called institutional advancement at that time, but institutional advancement...prior to that the Stonesifer period -- this is the gossip, is it true I don't know -- but institutional advancement did not bring in enough money to pay its own salaries. Pretty bad.

The other gossip, I have no first-hand experience, but fairly wide spread gossip about Stonesifer, tied to it, at lunchtime he would go to the Deal Country Club, where he had a credit card and sat by himself drinking martinis. Like many rumors, I have no idea if it's true, but do you know something, Melissa? It could well be true.

Do you follow? Which is why rumors, they are, they could be true. I have no idea. I never saw him myself. I never hang out at the Deal Country Club.

It was at that time that the endowed chairs, the professorships were established. The professorship that I held, the Freed Foundation, the professor in social sciences, was established, and in a way I was used as a bait, because Jane Freed was my former student, and the Freed Foundation was headed by her ex-husband, and Jane and I were close even after she graduated, she was socially close, of course not a romantic relationship.

The other professorship were established at the [inaudible 36:15] reached out. This is part of reaching out to the faculty. It was a part of a way of reaching to the faculty. Here we're getting some things. Somewhere around that time, the class sizes diminished from 45 to 35 as the maximum cap. When you're teaching nearly 200 students a semester, there is no way you can have a personal relationship.

It's really hard to have a personal relationship with students. With the reduced sized of the classes and the reduced number of courses that the faculty were teaching -- I know you're in a different position, and you know some of the difficulties when you are teaching four courses.

Ziobro: I have actually a reduction, but I showed...

[crosstalk]

Mitchell: When teaching, it's quite really hard. Three classes -- much more able to have a personal relationship with students. That's what our reputation began of the individual attention to students. It began to feed out in lots of other ways around the campus with fees and so on.

In that period I began an Honors program...I don't remember the exact data. I have to look in my CV. I can send a copy of my CV.

Ziobro: I wanted to ask…

Mitchell: I will send you a copy of my CV. It was also at that time that... At the beginning there were only a few of us who were interested in scholarship, very few. It was me, Ken Stunkel, Barbara, Jane -- my wife. Barbara, by the way, was the one who got us the sabbatical program. She was the force behind that. The reason was selfish, she wanted the sabbatical. She wanted the research.

It was at a Stonesifer period, and, boy, it was hard to get through the Stonesifer, oh God. [pauses]

Magill, Rossi, Provost Gloria Nemerowicz, dean of faculty. Gloria was in many way truly wonderful, but also not terribly great interpersonally, unfortunately…

Melissa, it sound like bragging, but it isn't. You can ask most people how...I was, as a dean, you'll find, most people really favorable. I was a terrific chair. I really believed in democratic governance. I believed that my job was to help people to be there, and help organize things, and make sure things get done. It was true as chair.

I stepped down, and John Pull took over, and the department just deteriorated, it really did. I went on sabbatical. I was on sabbatical in Peru for a year doing research. When I came back, people spoke to me, they were really upset.

There was no longer a democratic decision making, and John was exceedingly erratic, exceedingly bizarre. I fought for his tenure. It is one of the few regrets I had, that I fought for his tenure.

Gloria and I came to profound disagreement. I never regretted having fought for her tenure, advocating, but never regretting that. Even though we had profound disagreement, that was never about interpersonal level.

Animosity in the department was such is that next time round I was elected chair again over John. Then I received Freed professorship, and I stepped down as chair. John became chair again.

It was shortly after that, and it was advocated by Glenn King, we have to get out of this department, we just can't stay here. It was Glenn who -- I was kind of reluctant -- advocated the move to history.

It was a brilliant idea, because historians and anthropologists have a lot of similarities as long as they are not diplomatic historians, they are social historians. We love context, we love data descriptive material.

In some ways historians are the anthropologists of the past interrogating information. It was a great union. We left the department, but Gloria... Unfortunately, Gene Rossi asked me to establish the semester abroad program.

I worked for a year doing so at his request. It wasn't my idea. In the end as I did established the whole set of courses. This would have been in the late 70s. Unfortunately, Shining Path, Guerrilla Movement, broke out in Peru... have a great place for students today. I said, "Let's move to Ecuador."

I went and I met with people in Ecuador. I established relationships with the Universidad of San Francisco in Quito, which is probably the most beautiful cities that we were out, Quito in the highlands of Ecuador. I established the relationships, and then Gloria announces to me, "We don't have the money to proceed." This is after a year. I could have published the book.

After a year of extensive work with the faculty, committee just said to me, "We don't have the money to proceed with the semester program, so tell the faculty committee we're not going to move ahead." I said to her, "Gloria, I will not say that to the faculty committee. You and Gene Rossi have come to the meeting to tell the fact that, I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to do it. You'll have to do it."

She didn't, no need to be here. There was no way I'm going to be her messenger. What it was? That was the time when they got the Challenge grant idea. They got several million dollars from, so...their whole focus changed, and what I was requested to do was... It caused me such anger. Melissa, I was furious with the administration, I was so angry with the administration when Tom Pearson asked me to become interim dean of Humanities and Social Sciences.

I said, "Tom, I am still angry with the administration," because of what happened, but I did become interim dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, and I didn't regret it.

They established the Challenge grant, and it was -- I forget on what it was -- on social policy? I don't know. We received a lot of money, there were a lot of workshops, some of the workshops valuable, some of the workshops not valuable.

I attended one workshop where...it was also a period of multiculturalism, and anthropologists never really took to multiculturalism, because it was, as we say, an essentializing of culture, and we don't essentialize culture. [laughs]

There was one meeting where a guy came in and spoke about African Americans and showed this video in which there was this talk about sun people from Africa and ice people from Europe, and how they differ. At the end of it -- this is part of this -- I handed it, I stopped, I raised my hand. There was an insult someone from the outside, but I said, "I feel like a physicist just having listened to an astrologer," and pointed out how outrageous this was. That was pretty awful, pretty terrible, but there were some good workshops as well.

Because of the money and...they were isolated, Gene Rossi and Gloria Nemerowicz. For example, they would come to the faculty meetings and they would sit by themselves alone. Many years ago, Pamela Rossi, his wife -- Gene is now dead -- asked me if they were sleeping together.

She is an anthropologist. I said, "Pamela, I have no idea whether they are or not." Exclusive to relationships with everyone else -- that's how they were.

They didn't have much in a way beside of themselves. They didn't have significant...they thought they could unsit Magill. They had support on the Board of Trustees. So foolish for them to think that anybody in the Board of Trustees would allow a [inaudible] provost to unsit the president.

At most, there would be a period of time where the president would be allowed to resign for family reasons, whatever the excuse. Politically naive they would be. It was public. It was very public, exceedingly public.

Magill in that process, Magill fired Gene Rossi. I forget if Gloria was fired at that time as dean of faculty. I'm not sure what happened. Ken Stunkel was very much involved in that, who was very much opposed to the multicultural focus of the Challenge grant and very public about it. I was not.

It was really sad towards the end. Gene Rossi called me to his office and asked for my support, and there was no way I was going to support him. I was furious about having asked to do a spending...it was actually more than a semester, a year. I am creating a program and having the program, not because of its quality, not because they were interested in something else. Is no way.

At the end of the thing I was really sad. I simply said, "Well, Gene, good luck to you." Shortly after that he was asked to leave his office, the cops came in, removed -- they wanted to be sure -- the files, whatever happens to this big...

He was out, and Ken Stunkel became Dean. Maybe, he had been Dean, and then Gloria became Dean, and then he became Dean again. I'm not sure, but Ken would. Have you interviewed Ken?

Ziobro: Not yet.

Mitchell: Interview Ken and Magill, of course. This public dispute, as one would imagine, unless he were a disaster, which he wasn't. He wasn't. Certainly, there were faculty who supported Gene Rossi and Gloria Nemerowicz. There's no question about it, but still, no board of trustees is going to, like with Stonesifer, it was after a period of time that he resigned. Do you follow me?

Ziobro: Mm-hmm.

Mitchell: He stepped down, but it wasn't right after the...There is no way they are going to do it after the strike. They just looked to...

Ziobro: What were some of the particular grievances with Magill?

Mitchell: Sam, unfortunately, had two big failings. One is he would grab a group of faculty, ask them for their...gossip with them, invite them to his house and so on, chat with them. Then without informing them that he was using them as a platform in which to make a decision...that's how he got a group of us together.

I was there, asking about Bob Reus and talking [inaudible 53:24] and so on, but there was no idea, and it felt manipulative. He would reach out to faculty and to...I decided with Sam, hey, I'm going always be careful about him, about what I say because it could be used in a particular way. The other thing was that part of it...he was a terrible womanizer, just a terrible womanizer.

He's had lots of different marriages. What was her name? The "Ice Queen," what he called her, his wife. Young, gorgeous woman, but she was like the "Ice Queen," became his wife -- much younger than Sam. We all thought that he did that in order to become president, that he needed a wife.

The dispute, really, was not between Sam and the faculty, but rather between Sam and Gene Rossi. Sam protested that Gene and Gloria were excluding him from decisions that he should be involved in. He was right. He should be involved in major decisions about the academic direction of the University.

That's what his dispute was, and that's when he acted to remove Gene. Then the faculty became involved, whether they supported Gene or Sam. It wasn't a faculty-movement against Sam, but rather over that issue.

Following Sam, was...

Ziobro: Stafford.

Mitchell: Yeah, Becky Stafford. Sam, as I look back, was the president who established an improved faculty-administration relationships, and established norms and procedures. Not that he did it, it was during his period, that that was worked out. I see Sam as the president that began, "Hey, I'm proud of most of my colleagues," when research became more of a focus, they're more doing scholarship and so on.

Becky transformed admissions. She brought in the admissions person, you'll see, whoever her admissions person, she brought her in, and they transformed Admissions. They really did. That's

when the student body was stabilized at Monmouth during Becky's period, because the student body was stabilized, our finances were stabilized.

She pretty much stayed out of faculty matters. Tom, of course, was the provost. Tom was always someone who never balked the administration. He is not a big balker of the administration. I say that...I have a great deal of affection for Tom. Becky was a great provost, but he's not someone who was going to balk the administration.

She pretty much stayed out of the faculty matters, but stabilized our enrollment. It's when Monmouth began our climb up in the ratings, the quality of the students improved. Of course, Becky was followed by...What's his name?

Ziobro: Gaffney.

Mitchell: Paul Gaffney. What would Gaffney's contribution be? Fundraising… the building. A lot of the building boom is a result of Gaffney's...unfortunately, from my perspective, a lot of the fundraising has...I wish they would do more in terms of endowed chairs, professorships, which makes a huge difference in what faculty can do, and so on.

Gaffney also established the honors program as a school, The Honors School. Through The Honors School and the enrollment of high GPA and SAT scorers, that's also part of the increase in the profile and why Monmouth has climbed in those ratings, the "US and World News Report," and the other ratings.

Ziobro: We've briefly mentioned the honors program twice now. Can we just do a quick comprehensive overview of the honors program? You were one of the founders, so that's incredibly important. From the inception as honors program...

Mitchell: It was actually me. For the idea that...I had two very good students. They were anthropology majors, and they left Monmouth. I asked them why, and they said they had no one to talk to. I said to myself, "We have to do something about creating a program that would get students of that quality talking to one another."

I was Chair of Sociology at the time and I raised that issue at the Undergraduate Studies Committee meeting. We created a committee of which I was chair, by that time we were called chairs. Tom Pearson was on it...What was his name? In math, was on it and one other person. We met creating a program that we thought would be appropriate for honors students and creating criteria for entrance to the honors program.

Then it was instituted and I was chair or head of the Honors Program for a year. Then I went into the field, so is the problem with anthropologists going off into the field. I don't remember whether it was the sabbatical one year I had a Fulbright to teach in Peru, but I went into the field.

Tom Pearson was head of it. [inaudible 60:00] was head of it and then Brian Garvey. Brian was in many ways a great head but unfortunately a very insecure guy. By the way, I love Brian, but he's so insecure and unfortunately, I guess maybe there should be a period in which [redacted].

When I was dean of Humanities and Social Sciences I got information from the English Department he wasn't showing up for his classes. I got him to come in and I got him to agree to [redacted]. He had to come in and meet with me once a week, or once every period of time, to let me know. [redacted/inaudible 63:50].

Of course the angel of the Honors Program was Jane Freed. At the end of the year, you never asked her for money. At the end of the year she'd come in and just hand us a check. The last check I remember her handing us was for $35,000. That was one of the major supporters and supports of the Honors School.

Unfortunately, with the current administration, Paul does not like Honors. When I met with him with Kevin Dooley and Renee -- he met with everybody at the beginning -- it was quite clear, "Why should we be giving all of these special things to a certain class of students?" I said, "Hey, it would be great if we gave it to all the students, but we don't."

After the meeting I sent a memorandum contesting his opinion. He sent me an email back, "Thank you for your memo." So, I do not see it.

Ziobro: Have there been any cuts or deprivations to the program since he took over in 2013?

Mitchell: Don't know. I've been interim dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, I've been chair of Sociology and Anthropology, I've been interim dean of Honors. I've always felt myself part of the faculty. I always believed people who followed me in leadership positions have their own style. They're not going to be Bill Mitchell. They're not going to do the things that I do, but I see the Honors Program at this point, so there should be some...

Ziobro: We'll definitely talk about that, yes.

Mitchell: I see the Honors School in trouble. It's weak. It's been left in a weakened position. It was a mistake to move it out of Beechwood Hall. I loved being around the students. I loved being in a place where the students would drop in, open door, and being over in the library, they're removed from the students. There's not even a student lounge over there.

It's been left in a weakened position, which makes me very unhappy, tied into with, I think...Paul Brown is not terribly interested. I have no idea about the provost. I've never met her. Paul Brown is not at all interested in pushing Honors the way Gaffney and certainly Tom Pearson were.

Ziobro: Before we get to far away from it chronologically, can we talk about when the college became a university in 1995? Were you involved in that procedure at all?

Mitchell: No, that was Becky. Becky, I don't know. She applied to the state...it was the time actually when lots of colleges were applying for universities, so we're not alone. Isn't it "Georgian Court University" now? It's no longer "College." It was a part of trying to improve prestige. Was there any real change? Of course not. Just a change in name, but making prospective students and outsiders think it's more highly rated.

It was also a period in which the graduate programs began to take off, with the graduate school. That's when the graduate school was developed at that time, and it was done, I think, as part of the process of becoming a university. It was also the time, because of the graduate school, that our course load was reduced from four to three right at that time, but I wasn't involved in it at all.

Ziobro: We've talked a lot about administration. I would love to hear what some of your favorite courses to teach have been over the years.

Mitchell: I've always loved teaching Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. Absolutely, and the reason for that is it was a place where I would open up students to a new way of thinking. There's

nothing more lovely than to have students think of the world in a new way. That certainly has always been one of my favorite courses.

Then, as I've gotten older, I began to prefer teaching, aside from Intro to Cultural Anthropology, teaching graduate courses for the same reason. In the graduate class, you're not filling in information. You're guiding. Now that I've retired, I don't regret giving up teaching, but I regret not being in a position of mentoring, of reading student papers, directing research, that kind of mentoring which I've always loved.

Ziobro: You mentioned your retirement. You retired in the spring of 2014?

Mitchell: No, at the end of the spring.

Ziobro: At the end of the semester?

Mitchell: A year ago, I retired.

Ziobro: Was it a hard decision for you?

Mitchell: Well, I had thought of retiring 10 years before. My wife, Barbara, had a stroke. She retired after the stroke. She's older than I am. I thought, "Well, I really should retire now that she's retired," and so on, then I found myself depressed.

Went to a shrink and talked about how I was feeling depressed. He asked me what I was retiring to, and I couldn't think of what I was retiring to. He said, "Bill, you need to think of what you're retiring to, not what you're retiring from." Gracefully, I decided not to retire. What was your question?

Ziobro: If you, 10 years ago were not ready to retire, in 2014, what are you retiring to now?

Mitchell: I'm going to be 79 this year. I need more time to take care of my body. Frankly, I go to the gym. I've always swum. I've always tried to take care of my body, biked, and so on, but I just need more time to do that. I'm doing that, but I still remain active in the anthropological community.

I'm still on the advisory committee of the anthropology section of the New York Academy of Sciences. I'm president-elect of the Association of Senior Anthropologists of the AAA, so I still maintain all of these ties. I still feel that I'm engaged professionally.

Ziobro: What are some of the things you remember most about your time at Monmouth?

Mitchell: Being asked to write a letter of resignation beforehand.

[laughter]

Ziobro: That's definitely a unique story. I have not heard that from anyone else, and I don't know that I will.

Mitchell: Do you think that Al Freedman was so hard? One of my great memories was being part of the process of building a great institution. I feel that I was a significant part of that process. Focus on research, scholarship, attention to students, I was not the one who caused it, but I was part of that process.

Ziobro: If you were talking to junior faculty, what would your advice be about balancing service, teaching, and scholarship?

Mitchell: That's an impossible question to answer. You can always bounce from one to the other as I've done. There was a period of time when my wife was at law school. It was a testing of a divorce when she was at Yale.

I became prime parent of teenage children. Even though I had an au pair at home, I was still the prime parent. That was part of a time in my life when I was more involved with administration than scholarship. As I look at my CV, that's when, right?

One has to do what one loves. I keep saying there are different ways to work in the vineyards of the Lord. I say that as an atheist, but there's different ways of doing it. You don't have to do it all and everybody doesn't have to do it the same way.

For me, the key is being committed. I've been committed to either improving the institution through scholarship, through service, through teaching...The worst thing is to hate what you're doing, so I moved from one to the other.

I was an administrator. I focused on teaching, focused on scholarship, sometimes more in one way than the other. It's hard to recommend to someone else, and of course it depends on the situation where you're in. If like you, you're on a four-year contract. How is it working now, Melissa?

Ziobro: That's what I have. There are a variety of different situations, whether you're an adjunct or a full-time, non-tenure track, [laughs].

Mitchell: Four years from now, you're going to have to come up again, which creates a different set of pressures.

Ziobro: What are your thoughts on it? There's a lot of talk about adjunctification of college faculties and this trend toward fewer and fewer tenure track positions...

Mitchell: It's horrible. It's horrible.

Ziobro: Do you think it's a problem here at Monmouth?

Mitchell: Of course it is. Absolutely. Absolutely. It's one of the things that I would raise as dean. The board of trustees would meet and I would try to raise the issue. The more adjuncts you have...you're not only creating the situation of impermanence of the faculty, you're also increasing the work for the full-time faculty.

The full-time faculty have to oversee the adjuncts. "Are they teaching? Are they teaching well? Are they showing up for their classes?" And so on, which doesn't mean there aren't fabulous adjuncts out there. There certainly are. It's really become a class of migrant laborers. They're migrant laborers, the adjunct faculty, and discriminatory. It's not something that I approve of at all. It's terrible.

Ziobro: We haven't talked much about you as a scholar, and you're obviously a hugely-respected scholar. How did you settle on South America as your area of expertise?

Mitchell: I was in graduate school, the University of Pittsburgh. I did not have an area of interest at the time. I was always interested in issues of power and, "My God, I need to go to the field. Where am I going to go to the field?" This kid from Brooklyn says, "I don't do jungles."

[laughter]

Mitchell: "Mountains. I want to do Mountains." It just so happened that John Gillen was in the department. He had worked in Peru, so...I also decided Africa is out. In terms of funding, it's the Alliance for Progress. I'm interested in Latin America.

I went to John and I said, "You know, I'm maybe thinking of doing some work in the Andes," and "Do you have some things I could read?" He recommended some books for me to read. I wrote a proposal and, lo and behold, it was funded.

[laughter]

Mitchell: I didn't know Spanish. Part of the funding was...I had a year at Cornell to study Quechua, which was the language of the people that I was working with, plus Spanish and Latin American Studies at Cornell for a year before I went into the fields, so it was accidental.

Ziobro: I was going to ask you how you wound up in Monmouth...was it primarily because Barbara was here?

Mitchell: No, we met here.

Ziobro: Oh you met here? Then tell me, how did you wind up in Monmouth?

Mitchell: My first year of graduate school, my brother who I was very close to, became ill with a kidney disease. That was 1961, before dialysis was known or anything. I became really worried about him. Second year of graduate school, my father died suddenly. Third year of graduate school, my mother died.

I thought, I was in my mid-20s, "I'm taking it. I'm dealing with it." Then I go off into the field. I look back and I see it was the bottom of my life. It was just the bottom of my life. They worried about my brother. We finally got him on dialysis. We didn't know about dialysis at the time.

I came back from the field. Field work is very hard. It is not easy. You're isolated. You're in a community where things are very different, the expectations are different and a lot of uncertainty. That tied in with all of the uncertainty in my life. I came back and looked down...back at my life and it was the bottom of my life. I didn't even know if I wanted to continue being an anthropologist.

I was miserable, I was unhappy, I was unhappy with my fieldwork. I didn't do as well as I thought I should have done. I actually had money to write up my thesis, with the grant, but I couldn't do it. I was just not psychologically prepared to do it. I had broken up a long-term relationship and I went into therapy.

I got a job teaching at Brooklyn College where I had my undergraduate work. I was teaching as an adjunct at Brooklyn. Al Friedman had been teaching as an adjunct at Brooklyn, I didn't know whether it's sociology. Someone said to me, "There's a job opening at Monmouth, why don't you apply to it?" I don't know. I was really miserable. I did and I got the job.

I take up the job at Monmouth and...I took it. I established a relationship with my future wife. I was in therapy and, little by little...actually, Monmouth is very important to me. It was the place where I was able to grow up and regain my self-confidence.

Thank God for my therapist. By the way, I quote him in several ways in my work. I used it with my son who is an anthropologist and others. They're struggling with their theses. "It's only a thesis, that's all. What's the big deal? That's all it is, it's just a thesis. Prove that you can do the work. That's it, no big deal. Don't make it..." That's how he got me through my thesis.

I wrote my thesis and through that process regained my...it was accidental. My initial thing was, "OK. I'll see, I'll see what...it can happen." I began to grow here. Then, when I got my thesis finished, "I'm going to move on."

Ziobro: I was going to ask, have you ever considered leaving?

Mitchell: I'm going to move on and I put out feelers. That was 1972 and there wasn't a single job opening anywhere. I was zilch. It was the worst time to apply for a job. I decided, I really made a conscious decision, "OK, I'm here at Monmouth. I can do two things. I can sit here and rot like I see some of my colleagues doing or I can make it a better place and do what I want to do." I decided the latter.

That was actually a conscious decision. I can sit here and...OK, I had my thesis, I had my job, go just run in and teach, go home and...but that just [laughs] wouldn't be satisfactory for me. I would have missed out if I had followed that first path. I would have missed out of a satisfying, an absolutely satisfying career.

In fact, I think I'm one of the luckiest persons in the world, Melissa. I find I've had an extremely satisfying life, career...don't regret it one bit, don't regret staying at Monmouth. Was a period of time, little Monmouth...OK, didn't stop me. I got National Science Foundation grants, Fulbright grants, been active in my profession. I'm now doing a 10-year review at the University of Florida. Never stopped me.

Ziobro: I have gone through all my questions and I think that's a beautiful place to end, unless there is any thing you'd like to add that we haven't covered.

Mitchell: No, I'll send you my CV. I can give you...