

J u d y D y k e

OK, this is the interview of Judy Dyke, who is the Associate Director of Admissions and a counselor in the Admissions Office at Columbia College and it is March thirteenth, 1998.

And I'd like to start off with asking you, when did you come to Columbia and what were the circumstances, conditions, or the individuals that brought you here?

I started at Columbia in the summer of 1976. I was a year older than my daughter Karen is now. And I actually got the job through an ad I saw in the Sunday Tribune. And I had been substitute teaching for ten years; being divorced, I realized I didn't want to go into teaching, through the kind of horrible circumstances you get through being a substitute, and I thought, "Oh, this sounds glamorous, this sounds fun."

What was the ad for?

It was for a secretary in the Film Department and I thought, that's where the glamour came in, I thought, "That sounds cute." And so I answered the ad and Tony Loeb was the chairman of the Film Department at that time. And that's when we were in the old building as us old-timers, we old-timers recall. Anybody that remembers the old building really has been here a long time. And it was only part of one building, as I recall, on Lake Shore Drive. So I went up to the second floor and interviewed with Tony Loeb and he was a filmmaker from Hollywood, and had all that kind of pizzazz and aura that an artsy person would have and, of course, I was immediately taken in. I had to keep calling

him back because he never returned my phone calls. And finally he said, "OK, Madame Dyke, you have the job." And I guess it was August of '76. And I was a pure secretary like the old days: carbon paper, typing, one ringy-dingy. And one of my first tests was when Tony said to me, "Judy, get Frank Capra on the phone!" I knew this was gonna be a lot more fun than substitute teaching in the city. So I really was, evolved into the mother of the Film Department. Some of my best friends are still faculty, or in the case of Michael Rabiger, acting chairman of the Film Department. And I'm just rambling on here, I don't know if that's how you want me to do.

Yeah.

There are very few people that still work here who were from the old building. And at that time, now that our student population is over eighty-five hundred I think, we had somewhere over two thousand students at that. But what I remember most about it, and probably will for the rest of my life—it was the most fun I've ever had in my life. It was small, it was family, it would be nothing for me to plop down in Mike Alexandroff, the President's office, just to chat, or with Bert Gall, or go to lunch or run with my friends from the Film Department on weekends. It was kind of a post-hippie place. I think I was also attracted to Columbia because of its liberal outlook and I love education, I love school, I love college. But it wasn't traditional and I don't think of myself as traditional so I fit in quickly, at least in my image of myself. And that, the film part, there were so many opportunities that were a blast that

I never would've had any other place, such as: having lunch, picking Michael Capianis—the director of *Iphigenia* and *Zorba the Greek*—up from the airport and stopping for a bite to eat while the limousine waited outside; escorting William Friedkin—the director of *The Exorcist* and *The French Connection*—to some fancy PR thing with his white silk scarf wrapped around his throat, and having lunch with Buck Henry, who wrote the screenplay; meeting these amazing movie people that were so fascinating and so interesting. I was scared to death but I wasn't gonna say no to any of these tasks.

Then there was certainly, beyond all that, though I think what kept me here for so long—at that point I was in the Film Department for six years—was my, again, my love of education. The kind of conversations that you have in an education setting that you don't have in the corporate world or in other places, the inclusiveness of the school, the



allowance for difference, all of that stuff mattered. A bit of a rebel that I am, I would have had a harder time fitting in a more traditional setting. And then I decided to leave. I started out, by the way, probably earning around nine thousand dollars a year. A divorced mother of two small children, very broke, maybe probably a little unconfident, too, but I would be doing it. Even though it wasn't a whole lot of money, it wasn't much at all, it was enough to keep me going and I just fell in love with the place. But, it came to the point where I knew I couldn't progress much further than what I was doing and the salary I was making. I got some little raises but I couldn't, in my thirties, look for it to become something more substantial and I think I knew that I had other talents that I could use. So I left, I quit. Oh, that was painful. All the Film students and teachers had this huge party, I think I still have pictures from that. It was very, very difficult to leave. And I went to a corporate type of setting at USA Cable Network advertising sales office in Chicago—I shouldn't start that—an advertising sales office in the city as Office Manager; more money, but there, I felt dead in my soul. There was something missing. The conversations I was having, the tests I was doing, the effort of money-making as an end in itself didn't interest me and I'm sure it affected my feelings about work, I lost my enthusiasm just to get up in the morning. So then you're back to the drawing boards: Do you want to go back to teaching, what are you gonna do? At which point, I called Bert Gall and I said, "Bert? I want to come home." I didn't say it that way but I said, "If there's something that comes up at the school that seems more interesting, where I could make more strides as a career that would suit me....,"

because he knew me quite well, "...let me know." Well, it wasn't very long that he called back and asked me to go to lunch and described two or three different jobs that were up. One of them had to do with alumni, I don't think it was Director of Alumni but it was in that field. At that time, this would have been in 1984, the winter of 1984, because I was only gone for a year and a half. And he said, "What I think you'd be really good at is admissions. You're the type of personality, you know the school. I think it wouldn't be very difficult for you to fit into that kind of effort." And so I quit my job and came back on the invitation of—oh, and Bert said, "You always have a family here," and that's the kind of thing that would seduce you back, you know.

Before you...

When I had the lunch with him, that, "You always have a family here," in other words, you're always welcome. "If there's something that we think you can do here that you want to do, this is home." So I said, "OK." So, in 1984 I was thirty-nine and then came back, a year and a half interrupt, and came back in Admissions and now I've been in Admissions for fifteen years. I'm a lifer, I'm fifty-four now.

So you're gonna retire...

I probably will. I want the luncheon at the Hilton, no, dinner, thank you. And it's just made so much sense to me. I think I make a good Admissions person because—oh, by the way, in 1984 my daughter was graduating from high school and, of course, I recruited her here. She's a photographer. And then my son came along, he's a musician graduate. So both my kids went to school here as well. So, in many ways, it's

really being part of the Columbia family.

How would you describe, and maybe if you feel there's an evolution you could talk about it, you know, when you first came here and maybe what it is today; or if it hasn't changed, that's fine. But, the mission of Columbia—in your own words—and based on your experience here, your tenure here. And then if you could comment maybe on the mission of the school and how it relates to the larger society, whether it be the impacts Columbia has had or, you know, in arts, the media. If you could...

Yeah, well, the mission to make available a quality arts and communications, public arts, education available to all students is another reason I love being here. I feel that that has, of course, enabled so many students—who didn't have a voice or the scores or the resources or the background or the sophistication—to enter that kind of opportunity, a chance to do that. I saw it as being a primary person in the Film Department, talking to prospective students there, seeing their accomplishments, all of them, was fascinating. And in the creative process, or the creative experience, when you're behind a camera or an easel, scores, privilege, all that sort of stuff, sort of, fades off and you're on an equal ground as it should be. Sometimes the stars or the really great students weren't necessarily the best of their high school but they found a niche where they could express themselves. Even with my own kids, they were rather uninterested in the academics when they were in high school, but because they found a major and a school where they could develop artistically, they just happened—fortunately—to be in the arts. They

blossomed as students. Karen became a student here. She wouldn't have gotten into, maybe, a Brown or a select, highly selective university. Here she could do that, she could get the education. I'm just using that as an example because the mission includes so many people. Some of the things that both my kids have said that the most valuable thing—outside of, you know, certainly the equipment and the teachers and all that—was having classes with students from all ethnic backgrounds, minority groups—a grandmother majoring in Dance, which Karen had in one of her classes; the chance to study with all types of people, a kind of situation I didn't have when I was going to school. And I think that is part of the journey of the Columbia student and, back to becoming an academic student, somebody really interested in learning, Karen and Jonathan—both now—are highly literate: what they read, who they talk with, what they, the conversations they're about are directly related, I think, to their academics here. Karen's favorite class was a class called Missing Pages in History and that opened her eyes up to all the events that she never even heard about before that were kind of, either the dark part of America or the things that we hide as a culture. And she did her little presentation on the Haymarket Riots and actually was able to get from a man called Ed Sadlowski—who is one of the big shots of the United Steel Workers of America—real film footage of that riot and showed that to the students. And then, you know, through her presentation, they all clapped and gave her a standing ovation; it was wonderful. That's when she became alive academically.

So it sounds like you're saying the arts maybe hooked your children, then opened them up to this broader education...

Yes, absolutely.

Not the reverse, but it's another way of the educational process working, and that was encouraged here.

It was, and Jonathan had a class, possibly with Zafra Lerman or somebody else from Science. Being a music composer, he composed the birth of a star as a presentation as part of a written piece that he did on that. You know, the science students are encouraged to use their major and their talents to supplement their papers. And so, I just thought it was such a creative approach to teaching, the classes that they took here. I used to ride the bus, the El, with Zafra and she'd go to Evanston and I'd get off at Rogers Park—and Lou Silverstein too, you know. I don't think she was here when I started. The only ones that I can remember, that were for sure here that are still here, are Bert Gall, Ann Kennedy...

What position is she?

Ann is the Controller. And she was, when she started at Columbia, I think, nineteen or twenty and she was at the switchboard...Lya Rosenblum, Horace Jimerson. Horace is in the, he's responsible for all the equipment and the ordering this and the media stuff. He sat next to me in the Film Department in the old building behind the partition. Back to the old building, there was one creaky elevator with some kind of hippie guy that was smoking on the thing and you'd have to ring a bell to get the elevator to come up and down and that was how we got around

the one building. And who else was still here? Mulvany wasn't here, there was another chairman in both Photo and Art. Huh... that couldn't be it. I don't know because a lot of people had retired and gone on to other things.

If they come back and you have other anecdotes we can put that in.

Oh sure. I just think Columbia has made a major impact on the Chicago area and students being able to study the arts and communications. And certainly, with the success of the students that are coming out of here, we see how that's impacted

You said that it was a good fit when you came to Columbia and you listed a lot of reasons why. And, obviously, you were encouraging your [children] to come here so you embraced..
Tuition had part of it *(laughs)*.

OK, but had you, how has Columbia, again, over the time that you were here or maybe what you brought to it, has your philosophy or ideas about education changed because of Columbia's influence, or has it changed because of your experience here?

I think it's deepened my belief in the mission of making college available to as many people as possible. I see a lot of snobbery out there, a lot of, kind of, you know, exclusivity. When a school, a college or university, continues to get more and more selective, that's such a, you know, competitive thing with the reps that I talk to in my job. And I think that, I believe in, I believe, when I go out there to talk to students in my job they know I believe it; that this is a good thing. And there's sometimes some suspicion on prospective

students' part, "Well, you take anybody?" And of course I have to go through my experience here and why it had worked, through my eyes, and some of the students I have known that have come out of here graduating with honors who were maybe a little bit of a rascal in high school and how it can change them, how it can broaden them. And, I guess it's just deep in my belief in the mission of open admissions and making this available.

How, or has the student body—it's obviously grown and maybe you can address what that means to the school—but has the student population—in addition to the size and the impact—has the student population changed since you came to Columbia and in what way?

I think there were, when I was working in the Film Department in the '70s, more older students who were returning to school or finishing their education; sort of like a turn-around at some point in their lives. I don't mean a lot older but maybe more students who already had a Bachelor's degree who were coming back to do something different. Now, there are more traditional students coming right out of high school and starting at Columbia.

And does that shift—and again, we can talk about size, just the growth—but has that shift from maybe the more mature and, perhaps, directed or exploring... What challenges does that present for Columbia, getting the students right out of high school?

Yeah. I think that back then they kind of knew they were in for a different sort of experience and

that's why they chose Columbia; for their own rebelliousness or their own need to express themselves in an environment that was supportive to who they were, whereas now I think a lot of the kids are coming straight from high school to the College. They know what our majors are, they know why they're coming here, but it's not with the same kind of edge. It seems more traditional in some ways. Maybe that's inevitable. When you get, when the student body's gotten so large and there's certain things you have to do to keep up, to keep the school in the mainstream, that has its own value. I think having become more mainstream has attracted a lot more students from communities that would never had picked Columbia, or families. When I started in Admissions, one of my tasks that was the hardest was trying to convince counselors and parents that this was a regular place. I would always get the question, "Are you accredited?" Yes, but I could tell just by the body language of the parents—not the kids, the kids all seemed to know that they wanted maybe to come here—but the high school counselors, who are responsible for helping the students come pick colleges, and the parents were a little bit more resistant. Now I'll go into the school and they're tripping over each other trying to get over to welcome me and I don't get the same kind of suspicious looks any more or, "Are you a regular college?" They know that. I think it's more much more high profile, it's included in the traditional academic community now where it wasn't twenty years ago or fifteen years ago.

And that...

It's a good thing and it's, it changes the texture of the school.

Yeah, maybe elaborate on that, you know, how it's changed the texture.

Just by its growth it has, you know? I see it as a more traditional place and it has to be. I mean, you can't have something as unique as what it was in the '60s and '70s grow to over a thousand students and be that funky, odd, little school, but...

And do you see that growth as part of its mission to, you know...

No, well, I would like to see it eventually have to limit its growth because something's gonna be lost, it's just a personal, I see something kind of lost already in... Not so much the, you know, the students still have small classes and all that but it just seems much more bureaucratic. I don't feel as close to the janitors and the administration, you know, there's not that kind of feeling—just personally, selfishly speaking. But at what point do you say, "Enough, this is big enough." I think about that: Do they want to get to ten thousand, twelve thousand? How is it going to further change the student population and the quality education of the school?

It's interesting, you're, I mean, many people talk about this issue of size and that it's been problematic. You know, it seems that no one knows where it should have stopped- if it should have stopped, but you know, that's—where it should have to keep that old thing. Many, you know, you're not the only one to say that it's lost some of that old character, but no one knows the point where it should have stopped to keep that old character. And no one's really suggested turning back the

clock, but the other thing is no one knows where the size is going. And I find that pretty, not that surprising but it feels surprising that no one sees—you know, whether it be administration...

There's no foresight into where is it, what do they want? As an admissions team we go out there with responsibilities to—well, we don't really recruit, but it's more to spread the news of some of this information about our school, and it continues to grow every semester. At worst, I think in the fourteen years I've been doing admissions it's been flat once or twice but it's never gone down. It just keeps growing. And it's sort of alarming and I don't know how, if, and why they should do that.

Is there any word from wherever—sideways, on high—about, "This is how many students we can accept this semester?"
No.

So it's how many...

Yes. Whoever shows up and can get into classes at registration is allowed in. You know, you know, we have open admissions. We don't necessarily anymore mean it's guaranteed; there's gonna be some modifications on that. But, basically, if the student applies and gets the transcripts in and wants to register for classes, they can do that. There is no deadline for an application. So if the growth was ten percent, as best they could, they would try to put them in some place. And I see it just jumping away every—especially every Fall—three percent, five percent, six percent growth. And I can't even explain why I somehow feel that at some point there should be a limit on it or, "What is it going to be?" It will be like trying to row

the Queen Elizabeth, you know. It gets huge, and especially with a school like Columbia where so much is dependent on equipment and facilities and access to all this stuff. That's what you tell the kids when you go out there, and it's gonna be harder and harder to supply that kind of experience for these students as it gets bigger.

Someone made the comment that if Columbia retained all the students it accepted it would grind to a halt because there wouldn't be—you talked about equipment, you know, that if these people, if there wasn't a very significant attrition, and this was a certain department that was saying his department at least—it couldn't maintain. Right.

Is that what Admissions has...

See, that's what's been happening. We've always known they were gonna, through attrition, lose this many students per year and then Admissions would replace those students with new freshmen and transfer students and still have school growth. But as the efforts for, you know, assessment and retention take hold and there's more attention given to continuing students to keep them here, and if we keep the admissions growth rate up, figure it out, the math. That would be a great thing if we could retain more students, but what do we do then, maybe put an admissions deadline on the application? We don't, this is all unknown.

No, and I think, but this is interesting because, you know, I wanted to talk about—and we're maybe a little bit out of order—but the challenges that Columbia, you know, in your eyes is going to have to face and this is obviously one of them, that maybe

admissions is the first place where...

Yeah, to keep up with open admissions you have to go along with that. You can't start introducing maybe, "What percentage of your class are you in or what's your GPA percentage?" I don't know.

And is part of the mission or that open admissions, so that you don't breeze that, has that changed over the years? Not necessarily your commitment to it, but what open admissions means? Did it mean something different in the '80s than it does in the '90s, where you're saying that more and more students are coming right out of high school? Are other challenges raised by that or is it simply, again, those numbers that keep growing, that that's the challenge of open admissions?

Yeah, and interestingly, we attract very bright students. It's not only that, "Well, I can at least get into Columbia." You know, that that's the kind of student that will end up coming here. I talked to a young man today from a very selective Catholic boys high school, Catholic high school, was brilliant, you know, probably a Merit Scholarship winner, whatever, and he's probably gonna be coming here to study film. So it's kind of always been that way: a real mixture of students' abilities from high school. I don't think very many of the kids that I've talked to over the years have come here just because they could get in here.

And couldn't go elsewhere.

And couldn't go elsewhere, which was one of the things that, initially, high school counselors thought was happening. But we also host every year a high school open house.

When these people get on our campus and see all the things that we have, which are so different from other colleges and universities, they fall in love with it.

Has changed the, I mean has more and more counselors come, maybe talk to that a little bit.

Oh, they all want to come. In fact, the one we're having this year on May eighth, every school I go to the whole staff wants to go. Many of them come every year. They really love the experience of coming down here, exploring the facilities. They know they're not gonna see a football field and a fraternity house and some of them are not sure what they're going to see but when they do they understand it, they start recommending it, it's really important for us to get them to...

The image of Columbia—through the eyes of high school counselors—and how that's changed Right. I think we were, back then, seen as more of a trade school and not a real college. Even though we got our accreditation at some point, it was just before I came to Columbia in '74, it took a while for that to click in. Funny thing is now, I go to the New Triers and the Lake Forests and Hinsdale Centrals and their perception of Columbia is not only positive, "Oh, that is such a good school. We've heard so many things about Columbia College," also, "We've had students that have come back to tell us how much they love it." And they read about it a lot in the papers too. I mean, PR does a good job of making sure that any accomplishments that our students do are in the newspapers. So finally it's just become a cool place and included in where they would recommend their students to go. "Oh, well film: NYU, USC, Columbia..." in

the same breath without pausing, it's not "Well, there's always Columbia." You don't hear that anymore, not at all. It's been amazing. And parents too, "Oh, I've heard that's such a good school." It's sort of a sexy kind of thing, they really think it's terrific.

And do you see that, what do I want to ask, that could that become even more of a burden, its acceptance? Does it mean that it's an alternative that people are finally discovering or does it mean it's becoming mainstream and could that be more problematic? Do you understand? It'll never be mainstream.

Why not?

Probably, because of the majors that it offers, the kind of students that it attracts who are interested in the creative process. There's something that you can't even explain. It's just in the, institutions carry personalities just like people do and this place is, I think, never going to be, you know, about straight white-bread traditional stuff. Traditional it can be, there's nothing wrong with that, you know, in helping certain things go along more easily, there's nothing wrong with that. But I think it will always be a little ultra, a little different, because of what the majors are and its inclusiveness. I never have seen that disappear. In fact, I've seen it just—I'm so proud of that, you know, that students I know whatever school I'm going to, the inner city and Lake Forest, they'll feel welcome here. It's going to be maybe different for some of these students, but I just think that that's one of the strengths, the biggest strength of the school. It's funny, I don't often talk about that when I'm out talking to groups of students but I guess I really believe that.

Just, and then we'll move on to another topic, that you said, when you were talking about when you were first here and working in the Film Department and you were saying it was so much fun. And it sounds like some of that had to do with your situation, you know, as a single parent and finding this job, this place that you fit. Did it stop being fun, and if it stopped being fun was that because of the size or what, could you address that or expand on that?

It was something I better not...

We won't go there. So we were talking about some of the things that changed at Columbia...

It got more bureaucratic, I noticed, when I came back in Admissions by that time. It just seemed that it was not as much of a—it seemed like we could do so many things by hand, by personal involvement, by alternate ways that weren't so cold when it was less large, almost pre-computer. And we did it, you know. And certainly as it grew so large you couldn't keep that up, there was no way. But, yeah, the bureaucracy, the politics, all of that has grown and made things more complicated all the way around. I worry about that sometimes.

You mean for its future?

Yeah.

That you see those things continuing to grow...

Yeah. I think all institutions struggle with bureaucracy in the workplace and as for growth, how do you adapt and keep a humane operation going? That's what I yearn for, is that humanness for the students and for the people who work here. And when you have an increased bureaucracy, as the

complexity grows, it just gets all tangled up and people, I think, feel lost, sort of invisible.

That's interesting, you talk about, you know, the nature of institutions. That the early days of Columbia, without people even saying it, it does not sound like it was an institution.

I don't know what it was, I've never seen anything like it. It wasn't, certainly, like any college I had ever seen. It was, I suppose it even took me a while to accept it as a college, this place. I mean, you take this rickety elevator up and... I don't know.

You mentioned it wouldn't be unusual to drop into the President's office and have a chat with him. Tell me a little bit about your impressions of Mike Alexandroff, what you feel, you know, he did for Columbia...

He was the heart and soul of this place, a great, compassionate believer in the rights of people. He was so proud of this place. He worked so hard. And I do think it was his efforts, it is, I mean, it has become—Columbia is a way distance from what he first envisioned what it could be, maybe different than what he wished it could be. But somebody who, I don't know, so deeply cared about the mission of the school and the people who worked here and students who went here.

Occasionally now, I run into parents of students that I'm talking to at college nights, at programs, that come up and say, "I went to Columbia College. Is Mike still there?" I say, "No, Bert is." "Oh, OK." Everybody knew him. And...

Do you remember when you first met or any early conversations or meetings?

I think there were so few people

here I met everybody rather quickly. But it's so funny, I never was intimidated, maybe when I first met him, he was the College President. His door was open. You could go and plop on a chair, "So Mike, what's happening?" And then you could have a conversation. And he was so welcoming to that. And so you never felt like it was as hierarchical as maybe I feel like the place is now. It was so, it was more of an equality.

I think it's important, you know, to have some comparison, but descriptions of atmosphere, environment then and now...

We always used to go to opening day at both Cubs' park and Sox park: Paul Johnson, Mike, Bert, a couple of secretaries; there might be a gang of twelve or fifteen of us that would pile into cabs and go, in forty-five degree weather, to the opening day of, you know, Wrigley Field and Comiskey Park. See what I mean? Have a beer, eat dogs, all lined up freezing, and that was a ritual.

That's a great story. Any other anecdotes like that? I have not heard that yet.

Every graduation there would be about ten, twelve, twenty of us, whatever, that would pile in the limousines. And we'd just be crazy, we'd stay all night and end up some place for breakfast, I'd come home at dawn. If it was dark out the night wasn't over yet, you know. We would just go out.

So that, it sounds like every graduation was a cause for celebration not only amongst the students that were graduating but...

We celebrated the completion of another... exactly. And there was

that warmth and fun and shared experience that we laughed about, and Mike would wax nostalgic about the old days when he would pass out the paychecks by hand and worry that there was enough money. So he would hold court and we'd listen to him. And we'd have limousines and it was just a blast.

I think that's a very illuminating picture that I would think is probably rare at institutions of higher education where the faculty, administration, staff really felt a part of this graduating class.

That seems, I don't know.

Right, and these parents I was telling you about who I see now, the mothers and fathers of the kids I'm recruiting, loved it. You know, memories of the darkrooms and the film cage and the—and many of them are working in the industry. Some of them went on to do different things but more and more frequently I'm finding parents of kids I'm recruiting. And that makes sense, I mean, this school's gotten big and enough time has passed

A challenge that other departments have talked about that I wonder if you could address working in Admissions, that size, they haven't always gotten increased, you know, increased numbers they've gotten, but not always extra teachers. Has the Admissions Office had to grow along with the students or, you now, does that work load, the burden...

Let me tell you a story. Before I started admissions there was a woman named Margaret Lyman who was still working at Columbia in 1984, and she's still a good friend of mine. In fact, I talked to her yesterday on the phone; she's now eighty-one. She, when, this is

a good story, Margaret's husband Thaine Lyman was the chairman of Broadcasting at Columbia in the old days, which turned into the Television Department. He also worked at WGN but he was an—she is somebody you should talk to, she lives in Wilmette; I could give you the information about her and she's a wonderful storyteller: Margaret Lyman. Do you want her phone number? (*Laughs*) We had some sort of in-house admissions operation. People dropped in, they could pick things up but never had Columbia, had Columbia gone out to recruit like there schools: visiting the high schools, the day visits, attending college fairs at nights. So she was the first one to do it, she did it all by herself. There are over three hundred high schools in the Chicago area alone. And in about five years, from the time she started until she had been here five years, I think the growth of the school's—you could check this, but about seventy percent. She had come, she was married to Thaine—the chairman of the TV Department—had been a rep, she used to run her own market research business, had been a rep for the College of St. Teresa in Minnesota. And many of the local counselors knew her coming from this traditional Catholic school in Minnesota, "You're reping who? Columbia?" That was major, for her to, because they had her ear, she had their ear, they knew her and they weren't going to be disrespectful to her. Whereas they might have just rolled their eyes and, "OK, OK, give me what you have." They would sit and listen to her because, just who she was. There was an enormous growth in those years when she started. She started the first counselor open houses. We all then—I was at Film then, because I was the secretary then. She'd treat everybody to prime rib dinner at the Cart restaurant, which

is where that Chinese restaurant is. There used to be a restaurant there with, you know, eighty year old waiters. It was like old timey Chicago where they had prime rib, the chef carved off and it was, you know, martinis and rib meat and cigarettes. And the counselors were herded in there for a wonderful luncheon after they had seen the different things at the school. It just exploded after that and she worked until she was almost eighty years old. I think she might have been, she retired at, possibly, seventy-seven. Her last job was to recruit out of state. She would do the St. Louis area...

That's at the age of seventy-seven?

Uh-huh. She finished before she turned eighty but she might have, she was in her late seventies when she retired and she was great. She could relate to the kids, she could relate to the counselors. So now we have a staff of twelve counselors. Some of them in-house; some of them out-house like me, where I strictly go on the road and go to the high schools. But it's, the staff has gotten real big, we just hired two new counselors.

Now are those full-time positions?

Uh-huh.

Oh wow, twelve full-time...

Well, let's see... about five people on the road.

How has that changed from the mid-'80s when you first started?
There were three of us...

Three, OK.

...plus a couple of people on campus. Bonny Lenin, who still works here, she's been at Columbia a long time. And there were maybe two or three people on campus,

Bonny's been here almost twenty years. And then Margaret on the road and then Howard Hildebrandt who started fourteen years ago, the same time I did, in Admissions. That made us three on the road and now there's probably five of us on the road, six.

What—if you were king—what things, look into Columbia's future, you know, kind of, what do you see on the horizon and what areas do you think need to be strengthened here and what areas... and, you know, and again, I know you've touched on some issues already but what solutions might you, what things would you change or address if you had the power, you know, tomorrow?

I would hope that this becomes—this would be a place where people feel honored working at, that there's respect given to faculty, staff. That it's a, that there's more of a mutual respect school-wide. I would like to see, this is hard, more [forms], more attention to performances and through, not only, you know, we have our student body doing some things but make it a creative center, you know, how the School of the Art Institute has the Film Center and there's a lot of invited panelists and filmmakers. Interesting, when I worked for Tony in the Film Department, at that time, once a year he would bring in a Frank Capra, a King Vidor, a Buck Henry. Roger Ebert was teaching, Joe Mantegna was teaching Acting for Films. Roger Ebert, on the same Friday afternoon, was teaching Film Criticism. But to make that, "Wow, you know, that's a neat place not only to study but a center for this kind of thing." I suppose that's hard to develop, the college community. I remember how excited the kids would be when we'd get these

visiting filmmakers come in and talk to them for two or three hours. They do get some of that here but even a bigger center for that kind of thing. Get the big poets in and the big authors in. There's something so exciting about that even if those people aren't teaching here, their presence. Photo does some of that, they have a great photo lecture series. And other departments do it sporadically but there could be so much more done, where the kids feel that they're in the presence of exciting stuff going on.

I was gonna ask, that's a feeling that you'd like to reiterate... It happened more in the old days: Duane Michaels, the photographer, these people were visitors to the school. I'm sorry, I interrupted you.

No, no, expand on that. Who were some of the other people that came that made this more of a creative center at that time? And did they address the students, would these be guest lectures? Yes, well, the Photo Department still does that, I believe, on a regular basis. But they would do workshops with the students or they would, like they had a seminar on the weekends, they invited guests and residents for the weekend. For a while, in the Film Department, a man named Eddie Adler—who was a screenwriter, former President of the Screenwriters' Guild—was a guest speaker in residence for a semester. He flew in from New York... maybe once a week to teach a couple classes. And it was just, there was more involvement of accomplished stars or people outside of Chicago being invited to participate either as teachers or lecturers. Unless I'm being nostalgic and it's not changed

But I like that idea of a creative center and that isn't something that has to be diminished by size. It could be...

No, that should, in fact, be more of a mandate that we get that. And there should be the resources for that. I wish we had—in my perfect school we'd have a beautiful auditorium where we could have some of these kind of events. We do real well with what we have but it would be really nice to have some sort of a, you know, a center for invited people to lecture and to perform, show their work. Something rather than just, "Photo does this and Film does that and Fiction does that." Some kind of cooperative thing within the school.

I get the impression that sometimes Columbia doesn't make use of maybe some of its own great resources and people that are really nationally, internationally known. Could you maybe speak to that or do you brag a little about that?

Oh, all the time. I say, "My daughter Karen the photography student, do you know who her teacher was? John White. You might want to know, well, who is John White? Well, he won a Pulitzer Prize and he's the head photojournalist for the Chicago Sun-Times." So I draw in names of people who they might not know by name but let them understand that they're gonna be studying with people who are important in their fields. So I try to learn as much about the names of the people from the different departments and use them when it's appropriate to get them excited

Sure, I think that would be...

Jonathan studied with Bill Russo. Jonathan's a composer but to have Bill Russo as a teacher is an important thing. And so, Gwendolyn

Brooks used to teach here, not when I was here, I think that was before I got here.

And you mentioned Ebert.

He used to teach here on Friday afternoons along with Joe Mantegna. When Joe was at—oh, I had such a crush on him—he was at the Organic Theater as part of their ensemble and then went on to do quite a few films in Hollywood; one of the nicest people I ever met. And he and Roger taught on Friday afternoons.

Any students that are particularly, besides your own two children, that stick out in your memory or may have come back to teach?

Just one student. An alumni event that they have every June, and Charles Robert Carter was invited as the Alumni of the Year and presented with something and gave a little talk. And he was a film student, he had come right from high school when I was working in the Film Department, finished in four years, traditional. And he's been a screenwriter and director out in Hollywood all these years. And so he, that was very important for me to remember him and to see him again. Jeff Jur, this quiet little guy who was so gifted in film and very sweet, very non-aggressive, went on to do cinematography for *Dirty Dancing*. And Declan Quinn—who I used to take the El home with to Rogers Park—his brother, the rascal Aidan Quinn, went on to become quite famous as an actor. He was never meant for film school, but Declan went on to finish and did the cinematography for *Leaving Las Vegas*, among other films. All these kids I remember, you know, just know people in class and who had gone on to do really great things.

Very interesting. Finally, you know, we're getting toward the end of the tape. But maybe if you could just finish up talking personally how Columbia's influenced you. And again, maybe you could even speak to, or return to talking about when you first came here as a very young person. You had two kids, you were divorced, I'm not saying that, but was this your first full-time job or...

Yeah, because I had been substitute teaching just as a way to earn some extra money. And so this was sort of going to be a little entry into the full-time world that didn't seem too overwhelming, and little did I know I would be here twenty-one years later at the same place. I think I've influenced Columbia and certainly Columbia's influenced me.

Maybe give some examples of both of those.

Well, I've influenced Columbia, I think, through my efforts in admission and recruitment and having been a little bit older than some of the other young recruiters out there. Having had two kids graduate from here, I think, gave me credibility in the eyes of counselors and parents. And one of the things I'm most proud of, again, maybe this reflects back on the open admissions, when we were in an open house for students one year, and this is one thing I'm very proud of: There was a panel of students that were going to talk to the audience in the Getz, not the Getz, in the Hokin Theater about what it's like to be a student at Columbia. On the panel was my daughter Karen—who was a senior—next to her was Mary Mitchell of the Chicago Sun-Times now—but her name wasn't Mitchell then, that's her new,

married name—but she's a columnist in the Chicago Sun-Times, and then there was this young man named Rafael Arzuada. I'll never forget his name and I knew who he was because I recruited him from the city school... high school. And he said, "I never thought I could go to college. I was a gangbanger, I was doing drugs..." he didn't make it sound quite that evil, I mean, people weren't fleeing out the back doors, "and there was this woman that came to my school and..." To make it short, that he started to see that there were possibilities for him in college. He came to Columbia, suit and tie. He was, I think, working on campus in Mark Kelley's office or the Academic Advising Office. Public relations major, graduated, so, you know, for me...

And you were the one that had visited him, recruited?

Yeah, so I'm more proud of Rafael than a lot of else I've done. And I know that I probably, just through my sheer caring about this place, that comes through. People say, "You're so enthusiastic, you must love it there." That's how I think I've made an influence.

And where would he have gone...
I don't know.

No, that's pretty profound.

It is. And it wasn't, you know, I probably didn't speak to him that long at the school but, "There's a place I can go?" He was so ready to assume that, his self-esteem was probably pretty down and he was envisioning the kind of dead-end life that a lot of his friends had gotten involved with and something magical that clicked. He had enough confidence to apply and to stay here and to get what he needed. So, if you reach some of those people, that's swell, that's

really great. For the ones that, you know, don't make it or they shouldn't have come here or flunk out or whatever, there's the ones that do make it and this school gave them that chance.

I think it's a good time to end up this.