

INTERVIEWEE: KAREN MANSFIELD  
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DATE: August 28, 1990

SM: This is an interview with Karen Mansfield, Benefits Counselor, Personnel Office, on Tuesday, August 28, 1990, in HOB-360.

I always ask this same question, Karen: What positions did you hold before you came to UCI? Did you come in 1974?

KM: I did. I came in 1974, and I was young at that time and actually had very little work experience before I came here. When I read that question, I thought, "What would I put there?" because it's not going to sound like very much was happening before I came. You know, it really feels to me like there was a lot going on. I was an army officer's wife, as one position, I was a mother as a second position, and then my job had been as a dental orthodontic technician before I came to the university, so I made a complete switch.

SM: You mean you made X-rays and things like that?

KM: No, I didn't do X-rays. I was an assistant to an orthodontist, and so we did banding of kids' teeth in his office. We lived in Laguna Beach and had a great time doing that. It was a play job, actually, for me.

SM: Really?

KM: Yes, I loved it. I loved every minute of it because the kids were there all the time and it was a very relaxed atmosphere and it was quite fun.

SM: Is it true, Karen, that they put a television up above the child's head when they are being worked on so that they can enjoy Mickey Mouse or something like that?

KM: Not while I was there. I think they do that now. Not when I was there. But we were dealing mostly with kids who were in high school who were getting braces on their teeth. They'd come in, sometimes they'd come straight from the beach, because the office was two blocks from the beach down in Laguna, and they'd come in sometimes with their surfboards, leave them out in the lobby, or they'd have a skateboard, they'd have sand on their feet, and they were adorable and I enjoyed them and I enjoyed working with them a lot.

SM: That's very nice.

KM: It was fun.

SM: Then you came to us at UCI.

KM: I did.

SM: And did you work for Bobbie Brown?

KM: Actually, no. When I first came to UCI, I took a job in Telecommunications. A friend of mine in Laguna had a friend working here at UCI and she needed a position filled as a campus telephone operator. And I was thinking about making a change from my job in Laguna because, while it was fun, it

really wasn't going anywhere. We'd close the office down at the drop of a hat so that the dentist could go skiing and we were closed on Fridays. It was a play job but it wasn't something that I could continue to stay at.

SM: I imagine the parents didn't think it was play. They were probably paying plenty.

KM: Yes, they were paying, they were paying a lot. So I came to UCI and interviewed for this job over in Telecommunications, and was hired right away and started just immediately.

SM: Was that in telephone work?

KM: Yes.

SM: Was that Betty Noller?

KM: No, in fact it was Carol Ellis, and she's still here now. I think Carol Ellis came to the campus when the campus started.

SM: Yes, I must go and see her. But Betty Noller I dearly loved. She got this terrible arthritis and she finally was very crippled.

KM: Yes.

SM: But I ran into her, well, I guess it was six or seven years ago before I went to Australia, and she seemed the same, you know. She was a wonderful person.

KM: Yes.

SM: So then you worked here opposite Crawford Hall?

KM: Yes, indeed. Yes, I was in that building.

SM: And then from there you went to Bobbie?

KM: Yes. Well, actually, I was there for about a year and a half, and a position in Personnel came up for a receptionist. And with my background already working with the campus telephones, I had a pretty good knowledge of what was going on around the campus with that kind of thing.

SM: Yes.

KM: So I applied for the job in Personnel and took it. But, again, it was still not yet working for Bobbie. It was about a year in reception at Personnel before Bobbie's position in her area opened up and I applied for it and received that job.

SM: I want to find out about your job. I'd like to say to you that the faculty and the academic administration, certainly, because I know about them, are very appreciative of your work and Bobbie Brown, the whole operation. And I had very tough battles with the Personnel Office and had a very unhappy opinion of them, because I was trying to get reclassifications and I felt they were . . . both when I was Dean and then even when I was Acting Chairman of the History Department, I had to do something, and it hadn't changed a bit.

Then I became Coordinator of Education Abroad in 1975, and I was trying to get . . . Three times I tried to get reclassifications. The first time was no problem, but the second and third were just battles right to the end. When I was Dean, I even appealed when I was so sure I was right. And it came up to . . . You appeal to the Chancellor, but he gave

it over to a three-member committee, which was the Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs--that was L. E. Cox--and somebody else, two other people who were pretty high up. I think that came out as a draw. But I was so mad, I had to appeal it. So I think you should know what the faculty and the administration think of Bobbie Brown and you.

KM: Thank you, Sam.

SM: Now, let's think. Who else in your office besides Anne Payden and . . .

KM: Carla Fox.

SM: Carla.

KM: And Dee Cathey.

SM: I don't know her.

KM: Dee is the newest member of our staff.

SM: What does she do?

KM: Well, she's really rapidly advancing from what she started doing, and that is that she was hired as our receptionist for the Benefits Unit. But given all the programs that we have to deal with and the demands on our office from staff in things that they need to know and help that they need with their benefit programs, you really evolve immediately from a receptionist mode to doing a variety of things. And that's exactly what she's done, she's growing with the programs.

SM: Well, maybe I'll get to see her when I go over next.

KM: Yes.

SM: But, you know, what the faculty really appreciate, those who were knowledgeable and really knew what was going on, was the respect for Bobbie and her office when the Medical School came on board. You came in 1974, but the Medical School really had been . . . Poor Bobbie had been working with them, starting around 1969, and they kept coming down from Los Angeles or wherever they were.

KM: Yes, right.

SM: And the whole business changed, I suppose, because she had all these people over at UCIMC, the Medical Center.

KM: Right.

SM: She had to put them on to all the benefits and the whole shooting match.

KM: Yes. That process was really drawn out over a long period of time, like you say.

SM: Yes.

KM: And then the acquisition of the Medical Center. And then, about that same time, we were [converting] from the old retirement system that was not coordinated with Social Security to the system that is coordinated with Social Security, very big changes, very big changes in the benefit programs at that time.

SM: Yes.

KM: There was a lot to deal with.

SM: Now, you've really answered questions one, two and three. Now, how are promotions arranged in your office? I mean, you must have received advancement.

KM: I have received advancement. And I've been very fortunate. You know, you've heard the term "being in the right place at the right time"?

SM: Yes, I have, indeed.

KM: There is something to that, obviously. I think that you have to prepare yourself for those opportunities. I've been lucky, in that I came to the campus and to the Benefits Office when it was very young, in terms of comparisons as to what we have now and what we had then. So it was easy to grasp the things that were going on at that time. They've grown tremendously since then, and since I've been able to keep up with the growth--the growth of the campus as well as the growth of the programs--the opportunities for promotion just fit right in. And I was reclassified several times, although possibly not as often or when I thought it should happen. It was one of those things where it's a struggle sometimes to promote yourself, and that occurred a few times. But in retrospect, I can see that when you go into an office as a senior clerk, for instance, and you're looking now and you're an analyst, you know that you got from point A to point B with several things in between, and that's what happened to me.

SM: Well, good.

KM: So it was good.

SM: I'm very happy for you. You might spell the name of the fourth person, because the typist will . . .

KM: Well, actually, it's the fifth person. There was Carla Fox and then Dee Cathey, C-A-T-H-E-Y, is her last name.

SM: Cathey, right, that's good. There's Bobbie, you, Carla, Anne. That's right, five. The fifth is Dee.

KM: Yes.

SM: Okay. Now, question five I've already touched upon and would like to reinforce the respect and affection the campus has for Bobbie. I'm speaking of faculty, and we're pretty . . . I have to say that the faculty are somewhat un-businesslike, some of them. I mean, some of them are awfully sharp, but a lot of them just . . . You know, they're great scholars and they're terrific lecturers.

KM: That's what makes you so dear.

SM: But they don't know a damn thing . . . What?

KM: That's what makes you so dear, you know? It does.

SM: Well, some of them are pretty helpless.

KM: It adds a variety. (chuckling)

SM: The details of things, you know. Bobbie is great, and I have her remind me now. Am I covered for this? Am I covered for that? And so on.

KM: Yes.



SM: Now, I'd like you, please, question six, could you please tell me what are your responsibilities, precisely? Now I know you as . . . coming to you a number of times, oh, in the eighties particularly, on what my benefits were. Then when I came to retire, Bobbie went and got the . . . You know, all of a sudden, on her screen appeared my case, my resume and so on.

KM: Yes.

SM: And then we talked about it and I know I went and then talked with you about certain aspects of it. Now you're benefits and you're insurance?

KM: Well, let me tell you.

SM: Yes, I'm listening.

KM: I looked at that question and I thought, "How can you be succinct and specific about what you do when it feels like you do just about everything."

SM: Give me your job description. (laughter)

KM: Give you my job description. That would be pretty boring to read, so I didn't want you to see it. So I wrote a few notes down.

SM: Good.

KM: I'll probably be glancing at those while I'm answering your question.

SM: That's good. Oh, glance at it, really.

KM: I will, I will. These are the things that I wrote down. In my particular job, I design or work with campus departments

and schools for training programs. For instance, we'll go into the department, and if they have an interest and a group from that school or that department wants to hear about a particular type of benefit or the whole package, we'll accommodate them and come to, say, for instance, their monthly meeting and address that group and be there to make a presentation and/or to answer questions. And I get involved in doing things like that.

Another thing is, obviously, as you know, we do individual benefits counseling for anyone who needs it or wants it, and we encourage that to employees. When we talk to them on the telephone or when new employees are hired, we let them know that even though our time is somewhat limited . . . There are five of us in our office, compared to, you know, the size of this campus with an excess of 7,000 employees, I believe we're looking at. So, obviously . . .

SM: In excess of 7,000?

KM: Well, when you count the Medical Center, yes.

SM: Yes, that's right. As you said, when they took over the hospital everybody had to be on our rolls.

KM: Yes. When we talk to people for the individual counseling, sometimes it's hard for them to focus in on what their needs are or they're not really sure how to apply our benefit plans to what their needs are, their personal family needs. So we open that door up to them and just say: Here are some things

that are available. What do you need to cover? What kinds of things do you have to worry about? Do you have young children or are your children through school?"

SM: Very good.

KM: What kind of life insurance do you need? Or do you need to be spending money on life insurance premiums or possibly tax-deferred annuities. So it's sort of tailoring the benefit programs to meet their individual needs. And then, as those needs shift, Sam, for people who are employed here for a long time, like myself, for instance, when I started here my daughter was five. She's now twenty-two. She's a senior at Cal Poly.

SM: Good. Cal Poly Pomona or San Luis Obispo?

KM: Pomona. When I was first hired, I needed the maximum life insurance coverage because she was my little dependant. Well, now that she's pretty much getting to the point where she's going to be on her own very soon, we reduced that kind of coverage and do more focusing on my own retirement plan, so I can shift where I'm spending money on one thing and put it into another. And it just makes sense to do that. So that's the kind of thing that we try to turn on the lights for employees and say, "This is how you should be facing your benefits." And what might be right for you now might not be exactly right for you in five years. And I think that that

helps them to get a little idea of how to approach their benefit plans.

SM: Oh, yes.

KM: So that's the kind of thing. And I love to do that. I really like to do that.

SM: Now, would you come to the History Department, for example?

KM: Yes.

SM: Would you talk to the three or four secretaries and tell them about the benefits? And you would expect them to refer and ask, say, me or somebody to talk to you?

KM: Let me tell you how . . . You're saying something that's somewhat right, but then there is actually another way that that works. Around the campus, we have about 100 representatives in the schools and departments for benefit programs. And our office in Human Resource Personnel . . .

SM: Oh, you mean, a secretary will also act as a . . .

KM: As a benefits rep.

SM: A benefits rep.

KM: Yes.

SM: Who's the benefits person for History? Do you happen to know?

KM: Well, it's actually for the School of Humanities, and that would be Tammy Tsujioka.

SM: Yes.

KM: That's pretty good that I remembered that, out of 100 people. (chuckling) I don't know them all.

SM: Yes. How do you spell it?

KM: She worked in our office, so I can actually do that, T-S-U-J-O-I-K-A. I'd have to write it down to see it. I'll write it down. In fact, if you give me a pencil, I'll do it right now.

SM: Yes, there's a pencil.

KM: T-S-U-J-I-O-K-A. Tsujioka, Tammy Tsujioka.

SM: They would have got it on the tape.

KM: Yes, good. Well, that's one respect of keeping the departments . . . not so much trained. The benefit reps that we train for the departments are there to have enrollment forms, brochures and do some very basic benefits counseling to new employees, faculty and staff and so forth. Because, frankly, we just don't have enough staff in our office to handle the entire campus, so that's why we have this corps of people representing some benefit programs. These people in the departments and schools also have other jobs to do. Benefits is but a part of what they do; and depending on the size of the school, maybe a larger percentage of their time is spent on benefits. And if it's a smaller school or a smaller department, a smaller portion of their time is spent on benefits.

SM: I'll tell you, Karen, why that's very important. When I first started, we started out and I was Dean of Humanities, and we made appointments before we opened. One appointment was made in a department--I won't say which--of a full professor. And

I discussed with the chairman that they should see to it that their new incoming faculty were aware of insurance policies and so forth. And this particular chairman either had forgotten, or if he hadn't forgotten the professor had, the full professor he came in as. And he went up into high altitude here, about 11,000 feet at Mt. Baldy, and he had a heart attack and died. Maybe he'd had some heart attack before, I don't know, but he did, and we were horrified. He'd not taken out any kind of insurance. The life insurance is fundamental. Then you could take accidental death and dismemberment.

KM: Right.

SM: So that was really a blow. His wife was absolutely left with nothing.

KM: But he had medical benefits, health insurance and so forth? Did he die?

SM: He died. He had only been hired for about two months and he hadn't come onto this campus. He was employed as of July first, but he wasn't here. He was up and . . . I don't know what he was doing. But, anyhow, I can see the . . . From that point on, I was really alerted to the importance. But you're doing it a different way. I used to send them over to your office.

KM: There are times when people do just simply come to our office, because maybe the person in the department who is supposed to

be doing benefits is on vacation. Maybe there's been some turnover in that job and there's a new person who doesn't know how to do it yet or is not comfortable with it. Or they just simply don't know what this person really wants. And so the person just says, "I really have to go directly to the source. So I'm going to walk over to Personnel and I'm going to ask to speak to somebody in Benefits." We are people-oriented people in our Benefits Unit. We really like . . .

SM: You certainly are.

KM: We are, and I think that that's a really important part of doing the job.

SM: That's why I was shocked at your tape that came out last week.

KM: What tape?

SM: The tape you had answering the telephone.

KM: Oh, wasn't that awful! That was a malfunction in the system. It was awful.

SM: Yes, you said that and I couldn't believe it.

KM: I was shocked. I was embarrassed because several people heard that.

SM: Did they? Well, I was one.

KM: I think it was there for a couple of hours, and it's something we don't like to happen. It's a very bad thing.

SM: Well, don't worry. You've got a [fine] reputation. We know that's a mistake of some kind.

KM: So you cut us a little bit of slack there, huh, Sam?  
(chuckling) That was really nice of you. But I have to say that when people walk over to our office, the one dilemma that we're faced with sometimes is that I could be meeting with another person at that time. And the person walking into our office who has maybe come over from Humanities or Engineering, on the other side of the campus, has made the effort to get there and talk to someone and, unfortunately--not often--there may not be someone available to speak to them. And that's frustrating for the person who has taken the time to come over.

SM: Oh, yes.

KM: So what we really like to do is have that person give us a call. And usually, within a day's time, we'll be able to set up an hour's meeting with them. We try to do that to accommodate them.

SM: Well, you know, they're fairly used to making appointments.

KM: Yes.

SM: They know what that's all about and they know that . . .  
Sometimes if a student is there for office hours and they call up and don't come over, thinking a faculty member is there.  
Well, what else now are your responsibilities?

KM: Well, we talked about other things. Well, in addition to the things that we said about individual counseling and doing training and so forth, we have special programs that come up



on the campus where we have to set up an ad hoc training program, where we get to our benefit reps, pull them together and say, "Here's what's coming down the pike with benefits. We've got to prepare for this. We have to get the campus ready. We need to get some memos prepared and we want to get our ducks lined up before this really hits the campus, before it comes into effect."

SM: Well, one of those things that I sometimes run into when I am coming over from the University Club building, and you and Anne and Bobbie are coming out of a meeting.

KM: Yes?

SM: Now is that a staff meeting or is it a meeting with some of your people around campus, preparing them?

KM: Yes. In fact, Sam, when we're meeting at the University Club, it's usually a meeting of all of the southern campuses, San Diego, Riverside, UCLA.

SM: Oh, is that right?

KM: And what happens is that when the Office of the President wants to do some special training on a program or something that's coming up, because of the location of Irvine, they naturally draw all of the campus' benefits reps to the Irvine campus because we're right here by the airport and driving distance is just a little over an hour for some people. So we have those meetings here and they're conducted by the Office of the President staff, Benefit staff, and we meet at

the U Club and spend an entire day there going over what they want us to know about. We get a chance to talk back and forth, ask question, figure out what they want us to do and troubleshoot a little bit.

SM: That's good.

KM: So it's good. We have those kind of meetings pretty regularly.

SM: What else are your responsibilities?

KM: What else do I do? I get to take a look at how things are working in our department. There are times when a process that's in place that used to work simply is just not working anymore.

SM: You mean you're a troubleshooter.

KM: I'm a troubleshooter, in a lot of respects. I picked up some supervision responsibilities in the last year, and I have not done that in the past; but I've done a lot of training of our own staff, for instance, Carla and Dee. So I have a little bit of experience in that area and I'm getting more.

But just when it comes to our own unit's procedures and how we handle the influx of new benefits, the forms just keep expanding and growing, the numbers of forms, the numbers of employees. The things that we used to do with those no longer work because the numbers are getting too big to handle, so what we end up doing is figuring out a new way to manage the volume, a new way to address new programs, and also give

ourselves a shot of adrenalin every once in awhile to remind ourselves why we're there.

SM: Also, that's a very intelligent way to do things, because you're on your own, because you're preparing yourself for a higher position as a supervisor.

KM: It's good experience. I have to say that it really is.

SM: Oh, yes. You've got good experience and you do well at it. You're the one they'll think about when they're going to look for . . .

KM: And, you know, and I'm a person who just simply likes change. I do, I like to find new ways to do business.

SM: You should be an historian because that's what we study, change.

KM: Really? Really? It's fascinating, really.

SM: Because everything is changing.

KM: I think it's good. I think it's rejuvenating.

SM: I mean, there's just no way in the world you can ever go back to the way it was.

KM: No. I agree.

SM: Now do you consider your own benefits sufficient? I asked this question of the other two staff people I have talked to. Now, wait a minute, question seven. Do you have any difficulties in your job? I mean, besides straightening out some wafty professors. You know what wafty means, do you?

KM: Well, I have a feeling I know what it means. I think I put my own definition to it. They're up there somewhere.

SM: Yes, they're really up there.

KM: And in the clouds.

SM: They're great on their lectures and their research and something like that, but they're not practical and they let their wives do all the . . . make certain important financial decisions.

KM: Yes.

SM: And they say, "Well, I don't want to do this." And you've got to try to explain to them. How do you do that?

KM: Well, let me tell you. I want to read . . . Because I got a kick out of this question, I want you to know that. I read it and I said . . . The part that said, besides straightening out some wafty professors, and here's my response: "No, that's the only problem we have." (laughter)

SM: (laughter) Oh, that's lovely! That's terrific!

KM: And I went in to Bobbie this morning and I said, "Bobbie, I've got to tell you what I'm going to say to Sam this morning." And she laughed and she said, "Well, we must have some other problems, too." And I said, "Yes, I'm sure we do." And, you know, they're problems that come and go. And again, it's just thinking back on the variety of problems that we face. It's all part of just working, it's all part of being part of a

complex organization and dealing with complex issues and figuring things out.

SM: I agree, yes. The faculty, I've found in my own work as an administrator, tend to be pretty impractical about things. They'll do wonderfully on their lecturing and their writing, but, oh, God.

KM: Some of the faculty that I've spoken to, very prestigious faculty, such as yourself, have been so dear to us and so complimentary of the things that we do. They seem to have a tremendous appreciation for what we do.

SM: Oh, yes, we do. And I think that is one reason. Of course, the rest of the office, as I've said, has been difficult and its record is bad. And with the exception of Jim Pacino, who I really liked very much and I always argued with him. Well, let's put it this way. I think I won more than he did in our wanting to . . . adjudicating, say, a merit increase or a reclassification. Oh, boy. Now, I'd like to know about yourself. You came out from working in a dentist's office.

KM: Yes.

SM: And what was your next step?

KM: The next step was coming to the university, really, in the Telecommunications Office as a receptionist for the campus.

SM: That's right, Telecommunications Office.

KM: Yes, yes.

SM: And you were there and then you went to Personnel.

KM: Yes, I did.

SM: Do they normally require a college degree for people to do these things?

KM: No, Sam, they don't. The requirements for the position that I'm holding right now, I would say for a person entering at this level, that a college degree could be helpful but experience and an equivalent of experience in education is the requirement. There is no degree requirement. In fact, that is such the case for almost all staff positions.

SM: You mean, you're overqualified if you have a college degree, university degree?

KM: I'm working with . . . You could be, but that's not to say that you are. I believe that the degree, as it is . . . For instance, my daughter is close to getting her Bachelor's Degree.

SM: In what?

KM: Oh, she's going to be . . . I want to say environmental design. She's going to be a landscape architect.

SM: Very good.

KM: And she loves that field. It's wonderful for her and it's been very interesting for her, because she's simply not someone who wants to work in an office. She knew that she wanted to either pursue her dance career or do something altogether different that was unusual. And she decided that she would probably be able to do more working in the

environmental design field. So, at the time that she made that decision, she was dating a young man who was going to be an architect and he was going to Cal Poly. So she started in at Cal Poly, not really sure which direction she was going to go, and ended up getting into the environmental design.

She talks to me a lot about the things that they do and how it's much more than figuring out what flowers go where and what should we put here and there. A lot of it has to do with planning a community. They worked here on the Irvine campus doing what they call hardscape for the dorms. Where do we need to put wheelchair access? Where do we need to do a variety of things? How is what is there now working out and how can we improve on it? And also, they look at what's happening in all the Southern and Western states with our irrigation problems.

SM: Very good, very good.

KM: So they look at all that. So it's really much more expanded than you would think. And given that kind of degree, obviously, she's not prepared for a job in personnel.

SM: Right.

KM: Given an M.B.A. or a business degree, then, someone coming in might have some insights as to how to approach certain problems, but the experience of working with the programs, I think, gives you a tremendous advantage. And that came to me over a long period of time, which I think puts me in a good

category for being able to handle these benefits. I feel good about that.

SM: Very interesting. Well, now, tell me about your own benefits or the benefits that our staff at UCI and the UC system have. I mean, do you consider your benefits sufficient? Health insurance, dental insurance, retirement, annuity and so on?

KM: I continue to be impressed by the level of benefits that the university offers. Because when you consider that, in general, they are equal to about 35 percent of salary for any employee, whether it's faculty or staff. When they're setting up a budget for a position, when they decide what this position is going to be and how much the person is going to be paid to do this particular job, over and above what they're going to be paid, then this department has to look at the benefits that are available and what that's going to cost. And, in general, it's equal to about 35 percent over and above the salary.

SM: Now, therefore, your benefits are equal to 35 percent of your gross salary?

KM: Yes, right. And that's what people have to think about as well when they're leaving the university. If they're going to be self-employed or going to another employer, they think, "I can leave and make X number of dollars more a month or a year doing roughly the same thing that I'm doing now." And we'll stop them for a moment and say, "Wonderful. Do you know



what your benefit plans are going to be where you're going? Or, if you're going to employ yourself, what it's going to cost you to have health insurance, to set up a Keough for retirement or have dental insurance, or do you need dental insurance?" A variety of things. And when they start thinking about that, I'm not saying that they change their minds and stay. But they leave with a lot more information than they might have considered.

SM: Yes, some do stay.

KM: Yes.

SM: I know that I was saying to Bobbie just last week when Sally and I went to see her, at the end of our conversation I said, "You know that the university is very generous to us."

KM: Very much so, yes.

SM: And this generosity is not true if you work for the government.

KM: And in that light, I'd also like to say that you have a good perspective. You see things . . . the glass is half full, as opposed to, you know, half empty. And a lot of employees call us and they become disenchanted or a little upset when we have to tighten up on benefit programs a little bit. The premium for Prudential Insurance is going up, it's going up again next year.

SM: Yes, I know.

KM: But when you look at the outside world and see what's going on, in comparison, it's still very favorable here at the university.

SM: Well, I'm very interested in that answer. Now, question nine, could you tell me how Bobbie Brown has organized her office? Now, I know it somewhat, but you could . . . Could you tell me very briefly, but she's done it pretty well and brings on a person like Anne Payden, say, who just does nothing but annuities, does she?

KM: Right. She focuses on annuities. And the way that our office has been organized by Bobbie has really been a process of evolving from Bobbie doing it by herself.

SM: That's right.

KM: By herself, which is hard to imagine, to taking me on as an assistant to get those forms out and through and on to Payroll. And with that growth and all the growth that we referred to earlier in this interview, the need [arose] for increased staff just to handle the workload. Then you step back and look at, gee, we're handling the workload, but are we really doing anything significant? Are we being smart about how we're doing it? So when we meet, I think one of the things that Bobbie likes to do is get together with our unit and meet on a regular basis, say, every other week we get together.

SM: That qualifies itself as a staff meeting.

KM: Yes, it does.

SM: You say you're having staff meetings every second week.

KM: Yes. And we fill each other in on what's happening. If one person is having a particular struggle with a situation, we'll offer them some feedback or some input on how to work it out, maybe take it over for them if they're just sick of it, you know, they just can't deal with it anymore for awhile. So there's a lot of exchange of ideas, a lot of very open communication, and Bobbie really supports that. She wants to hear what our opinion is on certain things.

When she gets a memo from the Office of the President and they're asking for input on a brochure that they're going to design or write, she memos that to all of us and says, "Look, we've got until the twenty-fifth of this month to get back to these people and say what we think about what they're going to do," and she wants the input from everybody. I think that gives everybody a sense of purpose in what we're doing in our office, and that, I think, is to her credit. I really do.

SM: Very good, very good. Well, staff meetings, I found, were important. I had, for instance, a meeting with the chairmen--I called them my cabinet--and we met once a week.

KM: Yes.

SM: In a crisis, we'd meet more often. And then with the secretaries, I'd always meet with the secretaries.

KM: People need to be able to speak to you.

SM: Some of them won't speak. It's very hard to make some people speak up.

KM: Yes.

SM: They are reticent, they are cautious, they are not wishing to place themselves in, shall we say, a position that they might be challenged.

KM: Yes. One of the things about working for Bobbie is that I think there has been a tremendous amount of growth in her own persona, so to speak. I will say this with a certain amount of candor here, and that is, initially, in working with Bobbie it was very difficult for her to give up certain responsibilities because she was so protective of how they were going to be handled, and if it was going to work for me to take over something that she'd been doing.

It was very difficult for her to release and delegate, initially, and that was a struggle that we went through for a period of time that lasted . . . It worked out and it's really quite lovely now, but that was a struggling period for both of us, because I wanted more, I was ready. I said, "Come on, come on, come on. Give it to me." And she was saying, "Oh, I don't know, I don't know." And I learned a lot from that, as did she, and I think it has been a rewarding thing for us.

SM: Well, you've given a very interesting analysis of the administration of your office and how it works and your

frequent staff meetings and your shifting around assignments. If some people get really weighed down, burdened with them, you shifted for awhile.

KM: Yes.

SM: This is all very, very wise. Now, question ten, what is the general opinion of the staff organization? And I suppose I really mean in Personnel. Although, I suppose I'll ask in the question, that this secretary--and she was a fantastic secretary--she was an Administrative Assistant, actually, asked the question of me in this talk I gave on writing the history of UCI and the interviewing. And as I said, her question was, "Why don't you interview some staff who are below positions like Director of . . . and so on?" So I'm asking you the question of your opinion of the staff organization in UCI and how, starting with Ralph Laue and his replacement following his retirement. L-A-U-E, Ralph Laue.

KM: Ralph Laue.

SM: What is your opinion of that?

KM: I want to clarify that question a little bit further before I answer that, Sam.

SM: Yes, please do.

KM: When you say the staff organization, are you talking about limiting my answer to Human Resources, which used to be called Personnel, by the way. We've had a recent name change from Personnel to Human Resources.

SM: I know you have.

KM: And that's across the board. That's happening in the world right now, so this change (inaudible).

SM: Yes, I know that. They've answered the telephone and I didn't think I had the right office.

KM: And, in fact, people are walking up to the door and seeing the words Human Resources and looking at me in the hallway saying, "Could you please tell me where Personnel is?" You know, so that's what's happening, and it's just a change that we'll all get used to.

SM: Well, I'm asking the question, as I've tried to say, of the whole staff organization of UCI.

KM: Okay.

SM: In other words, all of those who . . . And I'm speaking now, really, of those who are really up to, oh, like a person like . . .

KM: The Vice Chancellor?

SM: Yes, or Director of Admission or Director of Finance and any of those things.

KM: Well, I'll tell you, the staff organization at UCI, which is in areas that involve academics, students affairs and business administrative services, those are . . .

SM: Yes. Administration of all those things. A person comes in, say, at the very bottom, Clerk Typist, Step I.

KM: Right.

SM: And you move on up through Secretary, then to Administrative Assistant and on after that. That's what I'm talking about.

KM: Yes, and how that works?

SM: Do you think it works well?

KM: It has worked extremely well for me. I have seen that because of the way the staff is organized and because of the opportunities that present themselves, whether it's through just a natural turnover process or an opening up of new opportunities and new positions, that people who are already here get the opportunity to advance. And I think that there is a concept that's a basic management concept that you should promote from within whenever possible.

SM: I like that. I like that.

KM: It is very important. It's also important to bring new people into the university. You know, not everybody is going to want to come in at the Senior Clerk level, so you have to kind of balance those two things out, and I've seen that happen. For instance, when Anne Payden, who is our financial consultant in Benefits, took this job, it was a job that given slight turns in the way it was described or the job description was prepared, it was a position that I could have gone into but I didn't have a financial background. I had a very extensive benefits background, benefits and retirement, a generalist, and Anne is a financial generalist. So that position was on a fence and could have gone either way, depending on who took

it. And it's good that she came in and took that job because she added a dimension to the programs that was not there before.

SM: She's a dear. I like her. I think a lot of her.

KM: Yes, she is. So the staff organization as it is, I think, promotes its own employees and also opens up opportunities to new people coming into the university, and I think it works well. I know it's frustrating for some people.

SM: Okay. Well, as I said, what I ran into was the problem of reclassification, the problem of advancement.

KM: Yes.

SM: And they would battle me to the death.

KM: I'd like to say one more thing then, based on your comment right there, and that is that with our new Personnel Manager, I should say Director of Human Resources, Lon Orey, that's O-R-E-Y, we are meeting regularly with him.

SM: Lon?

KM: Lon, L-O-N, is his first name.

SM: And he's your Ralph Laue?

KM: He's our Ralph Laue. His primary goal is service to the campus. And one of the things that comes out in our meetings with him is: Find ways to say yes. Which is nice because, really, if you can look at a situation and initially it looks like, gee, I know they want this reclassification to go



through, but it's not quite there, how can we help them get it where it needs to be to let this go through?

SM: Very good, very good.

KM: And I think that that's the mind set that he wants to promote. And it's a mind set that we've had in Benefits, I think, for quite a long time, and I believe that's one of the reasons that we get good grades on the campus, when they do interviews around the campus.

SM: Very good.

KM: We try to find ways to say yes to people, so that they leave us feeling okay about whatever happened. And when we can't--and there are times, unfortunately, when we can't say yes--at least there's an understanding about how this came about and how to prevent it in the future.

SM: Very good, very good. Do you have any suggestions for me as the UCI Historian?

KM: I think you just need to keep being who you are. You know, I'll tell you, Sam, you're a brilliant man and I know that, and you're preceded by your own reputation. And I looked at that question and I said, "I could not improve on what this man does."

SM: Well, you're very sweet, but I have a lot of defects, I can assure you. (laughter) It's going to be awfully tough writing this history.

KM: I know it is.

SM: But I do think, though, I've made a contribution. I mean, if I should die in a couple of months, that collection of 100 interviews, you know, are there. They belong to this university, and have lots of insights into all manner of work, into research, into teaching, and now I've got your opinions and I've got Wanda Cullers and I have others. And I've got Mrs. Peltason and I have Mrs. Aldrich to give their views.

KM: Well, it's obvious to me that you are so sincerely interested in what you're doing.

SM: Oh, yes.

KM: That it's not just a task for you. This is something that you're deeply involved in.

SM: Oh, yes.

KM: It's wonderful.

SM: I'm not getting paid for this, you know. It's a labor of love. I was paid and I'll have to say Dr. Peltason did give me a very modest stipend, (very modest) for two years, to make these sixty-five [interviews]. And I asked him for eighty-five. And the money for eighty-five, he felt, was too much when we got the budget. So I cut it to sixty-five. And then I've done it the other way. Now I've got them, I say, "Can I have five more?"

KM: Yes, that's the way to approach that.

SM: I think I've got three more. Carl Hartman, I don't know whether you know Carl Hartman. He was the Associate Vice Chancellor.

KM: Yes, I remember. I've seen him.

SM: He had a stroke and it's very, very sad, but he knows more about this institution.

KM: We talk to him.

SM: And so I put him on a . . . Pardon?

KM: We talk to him in our office quite a lot. Bobbie has really, really stayed very close with him and his benefits.

SM: Yes, well, he works his computer and he talks on the computer.

KM: Yes, he's marvelous.

SM: Well, he's doing an [interview]. I laid about twenty questions and he's been working on that for a couple of months. He can only use one hand.

KM: Yes.

SM: But I asked him and he said it's coming along.

KM: He's remarkable.

SM: He told an interesting thing when I asked him, which was about seven, eight, ten months ago. He said, "Sam, I wouldn't have wanted to do it then," meaning earlier, "but now that you've asked me now," which is like twelve months after I wanted to ask him, he said, "I'd like to do it." So he's bashing away on his computer the answers to that.

KM: Wonderful.

SM: Now, to be clear, Dr. Peltason did give me a modest stipend, which has expired as of . . . Oh, my word.

KM: June thirtieth?

SM: As of February. So this is a labor of love. Have we left anything out?

KM: I'm thinking. I looked at the question even before you read it, so I was thinking even before you asked me. And I really believe that the things that we've talked about have covered most of what's been on my mind. Because I've interjected some things in the midst of your questions that I might have put in here. I would say, at this moment, I don't think of anything that we've left out. There's obviously a tremendous amount of material. There's a lot more that I could say, but I think it would be re-emphasizing things that have already been said.

SM: Yes. Well, I'll tell you how we handle this, Karen. When I send you your typescript, it will be the final copy. If there's anything left out, I just ask people to write down any additions or anything like that, and that's just attached to the interview.

KM: That's a good idea.

SM: So it works pretty well. Now, thirteen, what changes would you like to see made? You've really covered that.

KM: Yes. I hope that the person that has to listen to this tape and make something of it can . . . I apologize for the quality of my voice, because I know that it's . . .

SM: Don't worry. She's an absolute sweetheart. (Thank you, so are you, Sam!) Gary Long is her name and she . . . Well, I'm afraid this machine is bad, so she's going to battle two things, your voice and . . . Let's see how it sounds, though.

KM: All right.

SM: And also, this machine . . . Well, I have to change it. The Uher was hopeless. About interview number twenty-six or seven, I switched to this monstrosity of a thing. But it's a Wollensak and it's pretty good. What I would like to ask you, Karen, you said you do singing. Are you in a chorale group?

KM: Yes. The most wonderful thing happened this year, and that is that I was reacquainted with a friend of mine that goes clear back to high school days. He happens to be a man who is brilliant in the musical world, in vocal music and so forth, and he moved to California about three years ago, unbeknownst to me. But I knew of his whereabouts because he's very well-known in the world of vocal music. My sister happened to be reading in the L. A. Times about this man and she recognized his name because we were very good friends in school and my sister and I are close and she knew him as well. And she called me on the telephone and she said, "Karen, Greg

Lyne is living in California. Did you know that?" And I said I didn't have a clue.

SM: How do you spell that name?

KM: L-Y-N-E. He's teaching at Long Beach State. He's the Director of Vocal Music there, and he's also director of a men's barbershop chorus. And the profile that was done on his chorus in the L. A. Times is the thing that caught her eye. And the [article] went on to talk about what this chorus does and how popular they are and how he's the director and so forth, and they have open rehearsals. So I decided I'm going to look this guy up; I called him, went to meet him, listened to his rehearsal with chorus. There are 120 men in this chorus. They're marvelous. They just went to international competition in San Francisco and took first place. He's a genius. He's a brilliant man.

SM: One hundred and twenty women, too, then?

KM: In my chorus, there are 100 women. And when I talked to Greg, when I met with him and we had our little reunion together .

. . .

SM: Oh, you're just a women's chorus?

KM: I'm in a women's chorus. This is a men's [chorus]. It's called Barbershoppers, those are the men. The women are called Sweet Adelines. They're changing their name to Harmony International, so that's happening right now. But when I spoke to Greg, he said, "Karen, where are you singing?"

Because he remembers me as someone who used to sing a lot and I have not been singing for a long time. So I told him that I haven't been singing at all and he put me in touch with the Mission Viejo . . .

SM: A coach.

KM: Yes. He said, "You really must go down there, try out, get in the chorus." They're going to international competition in October, so we're headed for Salt Lake City to compete with the . . .

SM: But you sing in a women's chorus.

KM: I sing in a women's barbershop chorus.

SM: Wonderful.

KM: It's wonderful. It's been fun for me. We had a wonderful retreat here at UCI here this weekend.

SM: Do you see that up there?

KM: Yes, what is it?

SM: I'm a Mozart fan.

KM: Oh. (chuckling)

(End of Side 1)

SM: Well, I turn it over to go on, you know. Dr. Aldrich had two sides. I was just saying that there are only three interviews which I would consider to be downbeat, and the people were disappointed and the program wasn't going well. As against the rest of them, which say things are really going forward. Irvine is really on the march. We've got all these buildings

being built and these faculty are coming and new administration. We've got a new this and that. It has really been a very exciting experience, and this all generates from the questions, you see, asked.

KM: Yes.

SM: So I would say that UCI is in pretty good shape.

END OF INTERVIEW