

PRESERVING MEMORY: NEWARK AND RUTGERS  
IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

An Interview with

ANNE CODDINGTON

Conducted by

Gilbert Cohen

SEPTEMBER 24, 1991

INTERVIEW: Anne Coddington

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GILBERT COHEN: This is Tuesday, September 24, 1991. This is Gil Cohen. I'm meeting with Dr. Anne Coddington in the Dana Library...Dr. Coddington who's on the faculty of the English Department here in Newark—Rutgers in Newark. And I was asking about your academic career and your career in general, which is quite interesting to say the least. And if you could go back to the beginning, I guess.

ANNE CODDINGTON: Well, I was born in Newfoundland, which was Britain's oldest colony in 1918. I attended school at the age of seven, having been taught to read by my father before I entered school. I skipped grade five and grade eight, and left school at the age of 13 when I was just beginning grade ten. When I was 17, I returned to school and took a business course at Little Dale College in St. John's. My next classes began in 1967 at Jersey Prep School here in Newark, where I decided to finish my high school education and get a GED diploma, with a view toward attending college. At that time I wasn't quite sure where I would go to college. But one evening, having been shopping at Hahne's Department Store, my husband picked me up, and we drove by the beautiful buildings lit up which were Conklin and Boyden Halls. I said immediately, "I'm going to be a student at Rutgers."

I completed the requirements for a college entrance at Jersey Prep, having been accepted at Rutgers with a math and language deficiency. In 1968, in September, I was accepted as a matriculated student. I entered the University College for the first year, and being told by Cassie Miller that I could not register for courses unless I took a math course. I absolutely refused and called in NCAS to see if I could transfer the following semester and was told I could transfer the next day, which I did. And I've been at Rutgers-Newark ever since.

COHEN: What year was that again that you actually entered NCAS?

CODDINGTON: I entered NCAS in the fall of '69.

COHEN: Fall of '69.

CODDINGTON: I completed the degree in three more years. I finished in June '72. I graduated with honors, college honors and Phi Beta Kappa key. I wondered what I should do with my degree. And I was walking across campus and decided that I would walk over to 601 Broad Street and see if they needed a teacher for the evening and was told that I should apply to New Brunswick. I did that immediately and was accepted and began teaching September 1972 in the EOF program, which was quite an experience in itself.

COHEN: Could you go into that? We were talking before about your experiences teaching in the EOF program. On the Newark campus, is that right?

CODDINGTON: On the Newark campus.

COHEN: You were telling me, and if you could go into that just to see what happened.

CODDINGTON: Yes, that was—

COHEN: The first course.

CODDINGTON: That was quite an experience. I had two classes. And in one of them I had a very bright student who was really curious about the structure of the language. And she had written some poetry, but she did not know—didn't have confidence enough to write essays. She went on to I believe complete her master's degree here in Newark. Two other students in the class were troublesome. They christened me the hardest teacher in the EOF program. They on one occasion, when we were going to the library, I was taking the class to the library, these two girls "marched" to 601 Broad Street and told Cassie Miller that they were demanding that I be removed from the class. I was told by another student that they had been worked up in the class before mine, and they wanted a black teacher. I was called from New Brunswick and told that I should not come to class at night. The dean—I believe his name was Caldwell—wanted to come in and talk to the class. During the day the students called, kept calling, one of whom said, "I'm ashamed of you, Mrs. Coddington, that you would quit the class just because of those two girls." I said, "I did not quit the class." Then I was told that the dean had come in and told them that I would not teach them, and that I had quit the class.

Dr. Rawling from New Brunswick found out about the problem, and he called me and told me to return to class and to report to him if there were any more problems. I then returned to class. And I also went to see Cassie Miller; and he told me that he had been the one to call New Brunswick. The students had told him that they were representing the class. Of course they were not. I was in the library with my class that evening. I returned to class, and the students who had tried to make trouble were not given permission to transfer from my class. So we continued the semester in peace.

I've been teaching at Rutgers ever since. Sometimes as a teaching assistant, as I was working on my master's degree. And again in the eighties when I worked on my Ph.D. I continued taking courses after I received a master's degree, with the hope that there would be a doctoral program in English at Newark. I had been turned down by New Brunswick—I'm not sure why since I had a good record in graduate school. All my grades were A—or 1 at that time except one course. I was not accepted there, so I decided to work toward the degree, even though no degree was likely to be granted, in Newark.

I was out for one year in 1979 having suffered a heart attack. When I returned, Dr. Howard Gruber encouraged me, after some consultation with him on the subject, to work toward a doctorate in psychology. I was told that I would have to complete six courses in graduate psychology, write four comprehensive exams, and write a dissertation. In consultation with Dr. Primer of the English Department, we decided that I would do an interdisciplinary study and write a dissertation on Erasmus Darwin, which I did, and was awarded the Ph.D. degree in

philosophy in 1987. I have had one other year off for heart surgery in 1980—1989. Other than that I have been at Rutgers as a teacher since 1972. I'm presently teaching one course in English composition at NCAS or is it FASN?

COHEN: NCAS is the college, University College is the college, FASN in the faculty which serves those colleges. [Laughter]

CODDINGTON: Hard to keep up with the changing....

COHEN: With the acronyms, too. I wanted to ask, as the quintessential nontraditional student, how did this affect your status as an "older" person in this environment, ...the whole thing, affect your relations with—as an undergraduate—oh, with your fellow students?

CODDINGTON: Well, in the evening of course we had adult students and did have, at that time, in 1968. When I transferred to NCAS, that was another story. There were no older people on campus. I was considered the grandmother, and of course in any case as a mother because many of the younger students came to my house and studied with me, and we spent hours and hours on the telephone discussing biology and other courses. I think I was able to be helpful in some instances. And the students certainly made me feel rather special to the point that when I graduated, one of the students did a write-up on my accomplishments and advertised that I was going to be teaching at University College with a bachelor of arts degree. I'm not sure that anyone got to teach at University College or NCAS with a bachelor's degree after that. I think it caused a bit of problem.

COHEN: How did the students approach you for help when you were a student? How did this come about?

CODDINGTON: Well, mostly because of contributions in class, I think. I was probably more eager to speak up, ask questions, than the younger students. And I needed answers. And I remember on one occasion telling the teacher that I was paying tuition and taxes. And if he did not intend to teach, I was leaving. [Laughter] We became good friends afterwards.

COHEN: You made yourself perfectly clear, huh?

CODDINGTON: I was a determined student.

COHEN: Otherwise how did this affect—influence—your relationship with faculty, people who taught you and perhaps everything?

CODDINGTON: Well, I had as many friends among the faculty as I had in the classroom. Dr. Varnum was my advisor, and I took, I believe, 15 credits ...with her, and we became fast friends. And are still friends. We meet for lunch at least once a semester at her house or mine and with other members of the faculty at that time. We went to her office or some other teacher's office for tea or coffee and cheese and crackers during the breaks. There was always somewhere to go for conversation or help, whatever we needed. Just fellowship mostly. I was very active in the

church, and when I came to Rutgers, I remember making the comment that the fellowship at Rutgers was comparable to the fellowship that we shared in the church, even more so.

COHEN: On the Rutgers-Newark campus. I wanted to say, how did you feel in the big city environment on this concrete campus? How did that affect your perception of collegiality—even a better term you just used, fellowship?

CODDINGTON: Well, I heard many comments about the concrete campus, and I loved every block. The opportunity was there that I had been denied as a young person. And just to be able to come to class and have teachers and make up for the things that I had missed earlier in my life meant a great deal to me. I was glad to see that it was visible. I had known Rutgers existed somewhere in Newark. But I just couldn't place my hand on it. I couldn't visualize it. And I knew students from the church who were students here. And I just didn't know where Rutgers was actually until I saw those two buildings. And suddenly my mind was made up. I was going to become a student at Rutgers.

COHEN: Now which church was that again?

CODDINGTON: My husband was the pastor of the Clinton Avenue Presbyterian Church in Newark for 25 years.

COHEN: Well, at the time you came to the campus, this was after major trouble in the city in July 1967, the Newark riots. And you came in 1968. And I was wondering how this event and the discussion in the press and so on affected your perception of the potential for fellowship on the campus and how it affected you generally?

CODDINGTON: Well, it didn't affect me greatly. I knew that there were problems. As a matter of fact, my husband had gotten a call one afternoon to come down and see what was going on at Rutgers, that students were breaking down the doors. And by the time I came down for the evening class, there was nothing to be observed.

COHEN: Students were breaking down the doors? When was this?

CODDINGTON: Some of the buildings. Conklin was taken over at the same time.

COHEN: Well, that wasn't.... I'm sorry. What I'm talking about is the—Conklin was taken over in February '69. I'm talking about the Newark riots in July of '67. You came to the college the year after those riots in '67.

CODDINGTON: Right. Yes.

COHEN: At that time there was no assault on the—no attempt to take over buildings during the riots. I was wondering how you perceived the city and potential on the campus when you came on the campus a year after these major events in the city.

CODDINGTON: I didn't—it didn't worry me. I didn't give it any thought at all. I was just so bent on going to college that there was.... I knew there was a threat naturally in Newark. We were robbed about nine times, and the house was set fire to on the very day that I had seen Rutgers for the first time.

COHEN: When did that occur, during the riots?

CODDINGTON: This was after the riots.

COHEN: After the riots.

CODDINGTON: We were out of the country during the riots.

COHEN: Oh.

CODDINGTON: But after the riots. But there were many fires set in Newark. Even at that time, there were fires down in Newark at the very time that I was thinking about going to Rutgers, and I had seen the buildings. Actually it was the very day that there was that huge fire on Avon Avenue where 35 homes were burned.

COHEN: That was the day you saw the—

CODDINGTON: That was the day.

COHEN: The day you saw the campus.

CODDINGTON: That was the day I saw the campus, and that was the night our house was set fire to also.

COHEN: Seeing the campus—just seeing the buildings. If those buildings hadn't been there as you saw them at that time, what do you think would have been your career, your academic career?

CODDINGTON: Oh, I think I would have found a college somewhere. I was determined probably since I was 17 that someday I was going to go back to school. I wasn't sure that I was going to go to college at first. But then my daughter told me, you know, Rutgers has open admissions. You don't have to wait until you finish your high school education to apply. And I didn't wait. I did apply and was accepted.

COHEN: You were told that in 1968?

CODDINGTON: No, in '67 I was told that.

COHEN: 'Sixty-seven you were told that.

CODDINGTON: My daughter's a teacher. She told me, "You can apply to Rutgers right now." And I did apply and was accepted. But I was already in the prep school, so I completed all the requirements before I attended in the fall.

COHEN: What was your perception of Rutgers in Newark before you enrolled?

CODDINGTON: Only that it was here and there and down.... As I say, I didn't know where I would go if I wanted to go to college. And regret now that I didn't pursue it. But I didn't know where the college was. And as I say, I knew young people from the church who went to Rutgers in Newark. But I didn't know where the buildings—I didn't know where the buildings were; I wouldn't have known where to go, and I could have looked it up. I just didn't think of the possibility at that time.

COHEN: And when you first came on this campus, first time, if you can recollect—

CODDINGTON: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: —what were your impressions?

CODDINGTON: I was excited. I attended Dr. Osborne's course in Western Civilization. And it was a large class. But it was exciting for me. And I took Spanish. And I worked on the translations for the class. Xeroxed them at home in the church office and brought them to class. You know it was really a great time.

COHEN: You mentioned before the students in Conklin Hall in February 1969, for a few days it was taken over—or liberated as the students, some of the students.

CODDINGTON: Yes, I remember that.

COHEN: What memories do you have of that action while you were here? Events surrounding?

CODDINGTON: My impression was that it had been blown out of proportion. As I say, we were called at home. My husband was called to come down and see what was happening. And by the time we came down, nothing was happening. But it seemed to be blown up much more than necessary. I'm not sure. I believe the building—I believe we met in some other building for classes.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. What then was your perception of the grievance, the students' grievance that they were occupying the building?

CODDINGTON: I thought they were promoting open admissions for one thing. I don't know. I never did get into any other grievances they had. But I know that we did go into open admissions, and that many of the students didn't come to class. That the campus center was filled with students during the day who never came to class. And one of my teachers had a special assignment to deal with the remedial problems. Our complaint was that the students never came for help. That, I remember that.

COHEN: What do you recall of the reaction of your fellow students to the occupation, takeover or liberation of Conklin Hall?

CODDINGTON: I don't remember discussing it.

COHEN: What were your impressions of faculty attitudes toward the takeover of Conklin Hall?

CODDINGTON: No, I don't remember it being discussed. Of course as an evening student, I came at class time and left immediately afterwards. I didn't have as much to do with the other students as I did when I came in the daytime, you know. We met in the campus center, and we met outside, and we'd study. But I don't remember there being very much talk about dissatisfaction until let me see. Dr. Lerman from the Animal Behavior Institute called a group of us together at one point to discuss some of the problems. There were problems at that time: attacks, robberies, not sure about rape. But I do remember there was a great concern. And faculty and students met with Dr. Lerman on several occasions to discuss the fear. One of the things that was discussed was the fear: Why should we fear? And I remember speaking up and his coming over and looking at my name and my place of residence which had changed from Newark to Glen Ridge, and this question...I'm not sure whether he verbalized it or not. But the question was what did I know about fear and the problems of the city? Of course as I mentioned, we had been robbed four times, at the house four times, the church ten times. And the house had been set fire to once. And I had been bringing people in off the street who had been robbed and beaten to the point where when I called the police, they would say: Not again! We lived through some desperate times in that Clinton Hill section at that time.

COHEN: This meeting with Dr. Lerman, this was after the occupation of Conklin Hall?

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes, yes. That occurred when I was attending University College. The meeting with Dr. Lerman—there were several meetings.

COHEN: Well, you were a student from '68 through '69.

CODDINGTON: Just the one year,

COHEN: Just the one year, '68-69. So the transition was in '69. I see, yes.

CODDINGTON: I did point out that the fear was real because some of the girls were talking about fear. And he seemed to think that—Dr. Lerman seemed to think that there was no reason for fear. And I said, "The fear is real when you live in a place where the minister's wife down on the corner had been held at gunpoint and raped." There was reason for fear because I had seen so much of it. Yet I was not afraid to come on campus. And there were people who asked me if I were not afraid to come. And of course I was not afraid. I was too excited about the opportunity of going to college to be afraid.

COHEN: To what extent was this motivation shared by your fellow students?



CODDINGTON: Oh, at the time I think, for the most part, not for many of the people who had come through open admissions...sat out in the campus center. But later the students who came in the EOF program were students who had to work all day and still come to college at night. Taking 12 credits, which was almost built-in defeat. But many of them survived and went on, continued their education.

COHEN: What can you say, since you've had experience in University College, the students, and then you taught at University College?

CODDINGTON: Yes, several years. Sometimes I taught both evening and daytime.

COHEN: Arts and Sciences in the daytime. Taught as a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences during the daytime. How would you compare the students both at University College to the students of Arts and Sciences through the early seventies, through the seventies, let's say, during that period; it's a crucial decade.

CODDINGTON: Well, for the most part, students at University College are upward bound. They're employed. Eager learners. Great to teach. And reliable in attendance and in doing work. The EOF program now is in the evening also, at least when I taught in the evening. These too were eager learners for the most part. But they were influenced by some radical teachers, as I was told by the students themselves. As a matter of fact, one student wrote me a note and told me not to worry, that it wasn't my teaching; it was the fact that students were being told to demand black teachers.

COHEN: This is one connection with that first EOF class that you had difficulty with...

CODDINGTON: Yes.

COHEN: So let's take the two groups. The students not in the EOF program in University College—we'll start with that—what was the background, ethnic, racial background of this population?

CODDINGTON: Oh, they were very mixed. They were black and different nationalities.

COHEN: And the EOF students?

CODDINGTON: Mostly black I think. My recollection is they were mostly black. Some, of course, hadn't finished high school. I guess some of them were working. But they were full of questions, you know. They were eager. I was going to say surprised by joy. But they did. And when you have students for a full year, you can see the difference in how secure they become as they learn. And I was very excited with them by the end of the year. You need a year with students.

COHEN: Could you describe some of that excitement because you went into it in some detail about this rather unhappy experience. Now you're intimating that there was more than just....

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes, yes. That was only in the beginning. It goes back to a good relationship. I always try, right at the beginning of the semester, to establish a relationship with each student and meet each student in my office as quickly as possible. So that I know them and they know me. And they know that I'm concerned about them. So you have that kind of relationship; and in the learning relationship that lasts a year, you are friends for life.

COHEN: Now these are English composition courses other than the EOF? In the EOF and other courses, or how did that work?

CODDINGTON: Yes. In all the courses I've taught. I've only had the opportunity to teach Literary Masterpieces on two occasions in all that time. But I find that with all my students that it's a joyous experience.

COHEN: What happens? If you could describe that joyous experience. [Break in recording] Describing a joyous experience then in the question. Okay.

CODDINGTON: Alright. I begin my classes by letting them know, let new students know, that I care about them. There are certain rules that they have to follow. And certain rules about the material that they have to follow. And they should master them before we get into the dialog, the conversation. My title is lecturer, but I would not call myself a lecturer. Deal with ideas, I sometimes choose books that are more difficult than the average teacher chooses, such as *World of Ideas*. This semester I'm using—we'll be using next week—*Reading, Writing, and the Humanities*. I consider my course as a good foundation for the whole academic experience. So we deal with words first, sentences, paragraphs, essays. And then we get into the heavy stuff of discussion of ideas. Once students are free to exchange ideas in the kind of relationship we have, they have no problem writing.

COHEN: What kind of relationship is that?

CODDINGTON: A relationship of mutual respect and esteem. That is what I try to establish right at the beginning of each semester with each class.

COHEN: Do you have any recollections of your outstanding students?

CODDINGTON: Well, many of my students have been editors or contributors to the *Observer*. I can nearly always find names of my students on the *Observer* editorial staff. And that pleases me. And many students come to me for recommendations for graduate school. And I tell them I'm a part-time teacher, no one knows me. Why don't you get a recommendation from some of the senior faculty? But I have been told many times that they prefer a recommendation from me. Sandra West is the person I mentioned before. She was Sandra Whittier when she was a freshman in 1972. And I remember telling Dr. Ramsey one time that Sandra was justification for the EOF program. She had blossomed so. And of course there are many others whose names I mentioned—probably couldn't. I met her at a party in the Psychology Department where she was the secretary a couple of years ago. And she told me she was working on a master's degree. We haven't seen each other over the years. But we definitely remember the experience of the classroom in 1972. That kind of thing.

COHEN: Where do you stand on the discussion about many people's perception of the perceived conflict between teaching and research demands on faculty?

CODDINGTON: Good question. Research is very absorbing, time-consuming. I just take the experience of working on my doctorate. Had I not done the course so often that I could do it with my eyes closed, it would have created a great deal of pressure because my focus had to be my research. I think there are teachers, and there are scholars. And teachers are not always scholars, and scholars are not always teachers. But research is necessary if one is going to survive. In this community one has to be a scholar, a recognized scholar. But I fear that the teaching suffers. Some of the highest-paid faculty are involved in doing research, have a great deal of time off. Whether they should have the position to the teacher as a whole, you know. I don't think—probably I shouldn't say what I was going to.

COHEN: Well, whatever you can say.

CODDINGTON: Okay. What I was going to say. I'm not sure that the best teachers are doing enough teaching is what I'm trying to say.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CODDINGTON: The best teachers, those who have the most to offer in the way of knowledge, aren't doing the most teaching. That's been a worry of mine for a long time. I don't think students—and I have said this before, and I've just seen it in print—these students aren't the priority. I don't know about other campuses. I don't think the needs of students are the first thought or the first concern.

COHEN: Yes.

CODDINGTON: In hiring or in other areas.

COHEN: Talking about hiring faculty, the next step would be promotion. In your perception, how fair, for want of a better term, do you think is the promotion process on campus?

CODDINGTON: Well, as one who has not been involved in any way in either looking for or receiving promotion, I'm probably not the person to talk about things like that. [Laughs]

COHEN: Okay. I want to go back to the question of courses, first from the point of view of the student. I'll just speak in terms of dividing this up into—how did you see the curriculum, the coursework, from the point of view of the student? How interesting was it? How relevant was it? When you were a student. What can you say about the curriculum that you were exposed to?

CODDINGTON: I thought it was great. And I still think that students ought to be required to take courses in Literary Masterpieces, in Western civilization. I guess you would call me a traditional. I think a foreign language should be required. And my views may not be very

popular, but I do think that it is very important for students to not be permitted to graduate without a good number of courses in literature and history.

COHEN: As a faculty member, how do you, what you were expected to teach in the courses that you were teaching, how would you evaluate the content of those courses?

CODDINGTON: Well, no one has ever told me in 19 years what I should teach, how I should teach. So we've been given lists of books to choose from. This year we tried to use—we're trying to use—the *Bedford Handbook*, which is helpful because it covers almost every problem the student might have. And I call it their bible where they turn for guidance when they have problems. I don't know whether anyone else is using *Reading, Writing, and the Humanities*, which is the book I chose; the essays are pretty heavy but interesting. The essays are taken from literature, from philosophy, from science, kind of across the curriculum.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CODDINGTON: And I valued that freedom. There have been no limitations. In the past we have been evaluated. I was evaluated twice: right after Hefferman and right after Christian. Now I understand everyone has to be evaluated again. And I don't particularly like that, but I think for younger teachers and T.A.'s that it's probably a good idea.

COHEN: You mentioned before a student who—your words were— student who wrote poetry but didn't have confidence in writing essays.

CODDINGTON: Sandra.

COHEN: Yes. Okay. Why would that situation exist in a particular student?

CODDINGTON: Well, one doesn't have to be.... As a matter of fact, I read just within the past couple of days about "when one begins to reason, one loses the inspiration for poetry." Of course that's an ancient essay. But—

COHEN: Ancient essay?

CODDINGTON: An ancient—came from an ancient essay. Poetry, I'm sure Sandra's poetry, is mostly written from emotion. And while she had many mixed metaphors, still, you know, I think she has published quite a bit. I haven't read anything that she's written recently. But she seemed to be fascinated by the structure of the language which she had never had, and she didn't know a direct object from a.... You know, had never heard of a direct object or anything. And I try to get my students to love the language, know the way it works, and for her it worked. You know she really, really loved it. By the end of the semester when we were doing much longer essays, Plato's *Apology* at the end of one semester, they were really into ideas by the end of the year.

COHEN: Why is prose intimidating?

CODDINGTON: I think it all has to do with learning the basics and being sure you know how to use the language correctly. When you don't know, it's not knowing that you know how to write an effective sentence. Knowing that you know when to change—to choose—which construction you're going to use, which works better in this instance. And that gives confidence. And students are not being taught this in high school. If they are taught in high school, they forget. They have to be...you have to review it when they come to college, bring it to mind. They haven't learned it as options, that they have options, that they have choices—that they have choices. And that to write a beautifully-constructed sentence can bring one a certain kind of joy, if you will. And I know there are teachers who think they ought to begin to write right off the top of their heads and not think about what they write. I don't teach that way. I teach my students to think about what they write and analyze what they write.

COHEN: When the students read poetry, how do you approach the study of poetry compared to how you approach the study of prose? Doesn't it require the same discipline?

CODDINGTON: Well, to teach poetry, I begin again with the words, begin with the basics, the meter, the imagery, and the rhythm, what is required. And then the meaning. What does it mean? I remember giving you a poem to look up—and it was probably back in 1972 or '73—a poem by Milton. And you said to me, "I'm so glad when teachers give me things like this to look up."

COHEN: Oh, yes!

CODDINGTON: Because it's a learning experience for me, you know.

COHEN: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, yes.

CODDINGTON: Yes. I had many illusions in reference ...[in audible]...

COHEN: I remember that.

CODDINGTON: I have students who get very excited about poetry. A while ago I was getting off the elevator and met a former student, and I don't remember his name. And he said, "Mrs. Coddington! I have read that poem to a hundred people." And it was Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress*. And, you know, we had a lot of fun doing it in class. And I have had mature men meet me on campus and almost hug me for introducing them to poetry. That's the joys you get out of teaching.

COHEN: Right. In the same vein, again teaching composition, what relationship do you see, from your experience, between teaching classic works, the canon, if you will, on the one hand, and English composition on the other? Would you have had the same result with this thing as far as the outcome of being able to compose a decent composition by having them read the *New York Times*, let's say.

CODDINGTON: Well, I use the *New York Times* at least once a semester. I take an essay from the *New York Times* and have them respond to it. That's my argument essay, using the technique

of argument. I enjoy whatever I'm doing. And I try to make it enjoyable for the student, whether it's English composition or the *Iliad* or the Bible or a poem by Milton or Marvell or Shakespeare.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. Let's do the teaching ...How would you describe the level of preparation of students you've been teaching through the seventies, in the early years you were going through. Level of preparation of these students that you've been getting in your classes.

CODDINGTON: Well, it's very difficult to get students to prepare.

COHEN: I mean how well prepared they had been—I'm sorry—for college work?

CODDINGTON: Only for college work?

COHEN: Yes. Right. I'm sorry.

CODDINGTON: Yes. Right. I see a difference in my class this semester for instance. There aren't—almost no spelling errors. A very few of the common errors of subject, verb, agreement. Mostly the kind of problem they have is wordiness, you know, not being concise. Almost writing off the top of their heads without—I thought we had a couple of papers. I don't have as many non-native speakers this...non-native students this semester. I have one, who has a serious problem with tense. But we're working on that. You know I have time. I've only one class. So I have time to spend with them. I know there are tutoring classes available, but I prefer to tutor my own students if I can, and I try to do them.

COHEN: If you could make a comparison between students, let's say, at the beginning of the seventies and at the end of the seventies into the early eighties. Do you have any sense of change during that period?

CODDINGTON: Well, I think that the emphasis on basic writing. There was probably, as I just pointed out, emphasis on certain basics that one can see. But usually when you emphasize one particular aspect, you have to lose out somewhere else. And I think that in some way might be in... The students are given a test, a placement test, I guess, to get into college. So I always take the position if you couldn't write, you wouldn't be here. You know something about writing. What we have to do now is polish, you know. We have to work on what you know and improve what you know, add to what you know about writing. There have been times when it's been very difficult to make progress. It's hard work.

COHEN: Oh, I can imagine.

CODDINGTON: It's hard work. You have to take the students individually for the most part and work with them that way. But they do learn.

COHEN: Talking about the then levels of preparation, what perception do you have of the effectiveness of the Academic Foundations Department in bringing students along, preparing them for the general curriculum.

CODDINGTON: I assume that many of them wouldn't be in the one-on-one classes had they not been in Academic Foundations, particularly the non-native student. I don't think they have opened admissions anymore did we?

COHEN: Open in the sense that anyone was admitted.

CODDINGTON: No.

COHEN: In my opinion I don't think it ever was going to that.

CODDINGTON: Well, some of them, you know, need all the help they can get. A year in Academic Foundations... I think any teacher who has a student for a year ought to be able to teach that student to write without having to go and take another course in just about the same thing.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. How much, to what degree is the liaison between the faculty teaching the English composition courses and faculty teaching comparable courses in Academic Foundations? Is there any kind of link, let's say?

CODDINGTON: I don't know. The only thing I get are forms to fill out if the student needs help in this course particular area. I have one student, a Chinese student, who has a—she has a serious problem with tense. And, you know, I cannot start teaching tense to a class of 25 students. Most of them would be bored. So I deal with her in my office. But I've also recommended her to a tutor, tutoring program, and I'm not sure whether this is Academic Foundations or not. But I filled out the form for her, and she came to me today. I spent about half an hour with her today. She said, "Have you heard any more about my tutor?" And I have had many, many students who have signed up for tutoring—and either they have not been able to get together because of the scheduling—going through the semester without their tutor. And of course the student is responsible for getting there. I don't know about the tutoring program. I know that there are tutoring programs going on even between semesters.

COHEN: During this period, in the seventies I mean, earlier you'd mentioned the problem that you'd had in this EOF composition course, and the students had certain objections. Was there anything comparable to that that was occurring either in your classes or that you were aware of in other classes through the seventies, let's say, and into the early eighties? Or was this an atypical situation, do you think?

CODDINGTON: I think that at that time there was a great deal of unrest. And that might have been typical of the time. I don't know that it happened to any other teacher. But certainly what happened to me, if one were going to be discouraged easily from teaching, that would have ended it. That would have ended it for me. But I was too elated to be doing it. And I felt very secure even though... I knew that I was being undermined, you know, what I was trying to do. But there were successes. There were students who stayed on and stayed on. Some couldn't possibly stay on. Some of them were mothers who had children and worked full time. And I had a class that began at nine-thirty at night at that time.

COHEN: Oh, boy!

CODDINGTON: And I remember bringing in coffee to keep them awake to do their exams. [Laughs] Could you....?!

COHEN: Are there other examples of that sort of experience dealing with people who were really having a hard time balancing their family life—private lives—with school? Any others that you can think of, that you can recount?

CODDINGTON: Well, I think that year, you know, it was so—

COHEN: ‘Sixty-eight?

CODDINGTON: That was ’72.

COHEN: That was ’72, I’m sorry.

CODDINGTON: That was ’72 to ’73, when they were really promoting. And there was some fighting against it, too, the idea that students should have to work full time to qualify for the tuition, for 12 credits, which is a full load.

COHEN: That was a requirement of the EOF then?

CODDINGTON: Yes, that was a requirement then, and they were fighting against it. I don’t know what happened. I don’t know if it’s required. A student that’s working full time, two courses would be plenty. Two courses would be plenty.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. And the requirement then was full time plus?

CODDINGTON: The requirement was full time plus 12 credits in order to qualify for the free tuition and whatever other benefits they got.

COHEN: In the day school?

CODDINGTON: That was at night.

COHEN: At night?! Twelve credits at night.

CODDINGTON: Right. That’s what they were requiring.

COHEN: So what was this doing to people that you can recollect concretely?

CODDINGTON: Well, as I said, it was built-in failure. Only the fittest survived. [Laughs] I’ve had students on welfare, you know, didn’t work. Or collected welfare and, you know, Aid to Dependent Children and that kind of support, and went to college and did well in it. Yes.



COHEN: This is when you were teaching in University College?

CODDINGTON: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: Now you've been teaching in University College and in the College of Arts and Sciences.

CODDINGTON: Right.

COHEN: So there's been a....

CODDINGTON: Well, as a T.A. I worked in CAS. So I worked at University College the first year. Then the second year I got a T.A. that let me finish the master's degree, which was in '74. Then in the fall of '74 I started teaching at University College again. And I continued that on until 1978 I taught during the day and during the evening.

COHEN: No.

CODDINGTON: And then I had a heart attack. When I came back, I entered a doctoral program and was given a T.A. again. So of course that destroys any kind of seniority. Of course you don't have any seniority anyway.

COHEN: That was a T.A. in the day school? Yes. Mm-hmm. Yes.

CODDINGTON: I've not taught at University College since 1978.

COHEN: Oh.

CODDINGTON: 'Seventy-eight – '79. The spring of '79 was the last time I think I taught in University College.

COHEN: You mentioned before the motivation and so on of the students in University College. But we didn't get into.... And I wanted—the question is, how would you compare, if you can, the University College students as a student body, again, to the day-school students. How did the day-school students compare to them?

CODDINGTON: Well, you must remember that I've only had freshmen for the most part. The times that I taught Literary Masterpieces, I considered the students very bright. Very eager learners. And at night they were all eager learners. I taught sophomore English at night several times. Yes. Delightful students, you know. It's a joy to teach people who are eager to learn.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CODDINGTON: And a very.... [End of Tape #1] ...that one gets a chance to spout off.  
[Laughs]

COHEN: Okay. We're back Dr. Coddington. How would you compare the level of, shall we say, motivation of day-school students to evening-school students? Any generalizations you could make there?

CODDINGTON: Well, I think that someone who returns to college or has a chance to go to college later in life has a much more serious attitude toward learning than the student coming out of high school. And that's what you have in the evening. Mostly people who did not have an opportunity to go to college right out of high school and have now discovered that their company will pay their tuition if they go to school at night, you know. So they don't have that burden. And as I say, a promotion might be coming out of it. But the other thing is that they seem to enjoy learning more, I think. That would be my judgment.

COHEN: Yes. How does life experience figure into, in your judgment, to academic success? Again, thinking of the two groups.

CODDINGTON: Oh, well, I'm sure that the life experience has a greater effect on the mature student. The mature student has probably read a great deal, you know. In all the years I was not going to school, I was reading. I was reading all the time. When I started writing essays and getting A+'s on almost everything, I didn't know why. I hadn't studied the structure of the language. I didn't know why I wrote well.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CODDINGTON: But now I realize I wrote well because I read a great deal.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes.

CODDINGTON: And the writing came naturally to me. And I think that happens...it's the same thing that happens with the evening students, who have probably read a great deal more than the student who comes from high school, having read only that which was assigned and barely that. And they skim, you know. They don't really read. They don't read with understanding mostly—for the most part, the students, the younger students.

COHEN: What changes, you know, have you seen, I guess day and night, in students and faculty in student life on the campus? Social relations.

CODDINGTON: Well, let me see. In the seventies, for instance, at NCAS, there were more opportunities to get together, more things going on, particularly for graduate students and for undergraduate students. There were sometimes panels of faculty, sometimes a lecture, sometimes dinner and a lecture. A great deal of that went on under the direction of Dr. Watts for graduate students, as well as for undergraduates, and particularly English majors in our case.

COHEN: So during the seventies compared to—

CODDINGTON: Compared to the late eighties. I don't know what time she gave up the directorship. But there was definitely a great deal...she kept a great deal going on. She kept the

graduate program kind of moving. As I say, when I was a student, now, there were professors who invited students to come to their offices and have coffee or just to chat during the free periods. They made themselves available just for fellowship, socializing. I don't know if any of that goes on. And the faculty naturally are not the same as when I was a student. There were a few people there. Dr. Primer is still there and Dr. Christian. I don't think there is anyone there with whom I took a course as a student—as an undergraduate. In graduate school I took courses with Dr. San [sp], Dr. Christian. But Dr. Primer was my advisor on my dissertation. But, you know, it's completely changed, completely changed. There was a big change in the seventies when about ten English teachers were wiped out at the same time, you know.

COHEN: What happened to them? They all did not get tenure or lines were dropped?

CODDINGTON: No, not only did not get tenure. They were in many cases just fired for whatever reason, I don't know. Dr. Varnum went; she was my advisor at the time. And Dr. Rooney went. Well, I could name a number of people. About ten at the same time, you know. That was a big cut in one department.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CODDINGTON: And then the Classics Department was reduced, terribly reduced, at the same time. But at that time we had a different view of what this campus was all about. And I remember a faculty meeting in which a new dean didn't seem to see any good reason for so many literature courses, for instance. And the move seemed to be toward, I suppose, a campus devoted to business. And I think that's probably what we are now, is it not?

COHEN: Well, the business component is probably—certainly—you know major compared to what it used to be let's say ten years ago.

CODDINGTON: But then when you get graduates, and I've experienced this, coming from Prudential side. An associate manager coming for help in writing memos.

COHEN: In what course?

CODDINGTON: Had gotten a promotion, and all of a sudden horrified at the thought of having to write memos for the vice president. Needing help in English. That kind of request makes one wonder whether the student had enough English, you know.

COHEN: Coming for help in what course?

CODDINGTON: Help with writing. Not going to school. Coming to the house.

COHEN: Coming to the house! Oh, could you tell us a little bit about that one?

CODDINGTON: I have gotten up six o'clock in the morning on many occasions to tutor associate manager of Prudential in English.

COHEN: Who was one of your students?

CODDINGTON: No, no. Not one of my students. No, no. My students wouldn't have needed that. [Laughter]

COHEN: Pardon me! [Laughs] So why did this person who did not have you as a professor in a course call you?

CODDINGTON: The student had graduated before—probably before I did. And people that I know, who know I am an English teacher, have come for help.

COHEN: Fellow students.

CODDINGTON: Not my fellow students. No. Rutgers students—Rutgers graduates looking for help in English, having reached the associate management status at Prudential, not knowing how to write.

COHEN: Is this a typical experience for an English faculty who teaches English composition?

CODDINGTON: I don't know.

COHEN: That they call up at six o'clock in the morning?

CODDINGTON: No, no. I say I've gotten up at six o'clock in the morning.

COHEN: You've gotten up then.

CODDINGTON: That's the time I had to spare before I went to work. But I've had other people come to me for tutoring who are advanced in business, looking for tutoring. So that makes me wonder whether they're getting enough English in their undergraduate years.

COHEN: What kind of referral system do they use to Dr. Coddington?

CODDINGTON: [Laughter] You find in life that you meet many people in many walks of life. And when one is an English teacher, one is expected to know how to help other people with English.

COHEN: Okay.

CODDINGTON: You haven't said anything about the library.

COHEN: Oh, we're getting to that. We're getting to that. I wanted to get back a little bit to some of the background events that we've touched before, on, you know, events in the city and crisis events in '67 and '69. Also during the late sixties and into the seventies, of course, there was the anti-Vietnam War movement on campus. I was wondering how that, well, how that affected your teaching, let's say. Let's start with that.

CODDINGTON: First of all, I'm thinking about my student years, in which there were so many bomb scares that we were always going to some other building to hold classes. And going outdoors and holding classes. I had forgotten that. But there was quite a bit of disruption on campus in those years, too.

COHEN: What effect did it have upon you as a student, first?

CODDINGTON: I'll tell you. And I can remember well. I was taking a course in Literary Masterpieces. That must have been '70—yes, about 1970. And we missed the last part of English 216. We never did finish the course. And I've always missed that. Although I still keep in touch with the teacher.

COHEN: Was that in the spring of '70 when the moratorium was called?

CODDINGTON: That was the spring of nineteen...

COHEN: After the Cambodian killings, or rather the Cambodian

CODDINGTON: Nineteen seventy. I've forgotten the reason. But I certainly remember that we missed the last classes of the semester. And I was very disturbed about it. And I still think of it as something I missed that I should have had. I ended up feeling cheated.

COHEN: What did you feel at that time of the appropriateness of that action?

CODDINGTON: Oh, I don't remember that at that time I had any feeling about it. You have to remember that I was a full-time housewife with an ailing husband and church responsibilities. And, you know, I was very active in the church with youth groups, and I was church school superintendent with 200 pupils and 20 teachers to train. I have gone through my life sometimes with whole eras passing me by because I've been so involved in what I was doing. And at that time, I remember the goings-on, but not specifically.

COHEN: How did the community work, the community ties, inform your teaching?

CODDINGTON: What community ties?

COHEN: Well, active in the church, you just mentioned.

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes. Yes. Right.

COHEN: You were living until what year again in Newark?

CODDINGTON: 'Nineteen seventy-one.

COHEN: 'Nineteen seventy-one?

CODDINGTON: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: At that time you were a student and then moved to Glen Ridge.

CODDINGTON: Mm-hmm.

COHEN: Still.... I mean there was of course a family life. But then beyond that other.

CODDINGTON: I remained active in the church.

COHEN: Active in the church.

CODDINGTON: Until '74.

COHEN: 'Seventy-four.

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes, right. As a youth coordinator. And for three years before that I had been, as I say, the church school superintendent with 200 pupils coming from the neighborhood and 20 teachers to train, go out on retreats. So, you know, there was just a great deal...and women's work, too. I conducted Bible Study groups.

COHEN: Would that in any way inform your community work, your teaching, your approach to the mission of the university?

CODDINGTON: Oh, oh. Oh, very much a part of it. It was teaching Bible Classes around my dining-room table for years before I came to Newark to teach. And I enjoyed doing that. I enjoyed doing that. And teaching in the church school as well.

COHEN: I wanted to talk about administrations that you worked under—impressions that you've had and whatever impressions you may have had, what you can say about, let's say, oh, when you came here in '68, well, at that time, Mason Gross was president of the university. Do you have any perception of him as the president?

CODDINGTON: No. He was about to retire, I think. Or was he ill?

COHEN: He was ill.

CODDINGTON: Right, right. I remember Dean Blumenthal. I remember being on the Honors Council with the provost, Norman Samuels; he was teaching at the time. I think he had been away and come back. He was teaching political science. And Dr. Youngerman [sp] and some of the students. So I've considered Norman Samuels a friend ever since then. I saw him a couple of nights ago at a party honoring Michael Jaye.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CODDINGTON: Dean Hosford. I sat in on his class in British history. Of course Dean Tiger was the chairman of the department. Pat Gartenborough's [sp] been a very close friend since 1971. And she is a person that I should have mentioned when I said don't ask me about this you know, promotions. I went through Pat's suffering with her during the time that she did not receive her tenure and then entered a grievance procedure and won. I have seen a great deal of suffering in that area, a great deal of suffering. The present acting chairman of the English Department had some very bad experiences also in that area, Dr. Miller, Professor Miller. He's been vindicated, I guess you would call it; I'm not sure if that's the correct term or not. But in any event, he fought his battle and won.

COHEN: Talking about that, do you have any perception of the effectiveness of the AAUP in these matters?

CODDINGTON: I'm not sure whether the AAUP won his battle. I don't think the AAUP won his battle for him. I think he had to go to court. There's been some progress in the area of part-time lecturers, you know. We have I think now a contract and got a raise of \$150.

COHEN: Oh, yes. That's right. Now what do you think about that? That's post-seventies but recently....

CODDINGTON: Every \$150 counts.

COHEN: Yes. Sure.

CODDINGTON: But I admire the work of the people who have gone to bat for the part-time lecturers, you know. We've worked all these years. It seems now, looking back, to 1972 when I received \$600 per semester. And was paid twice a semester. Money didn't even enter into my teaching at that time, you know. I had a husband who was employed. But I just enjoyed teaching so much that I would've taught, I think, whether they paid me or not. [Laughter] That's not so today.

COHEN: That's not so today. [laughter]

CODDINGTON: No. I feel very disappointed that I'm not teaching two courses instead of one this semester. They say there's not money available. But I'm not sure that that's the reason.

COHEN: Going back to the administrations. Your impressions of the Bloustein administration, for 18 years, I guess. 'Seventy-two to....

CODDINGTON: I don't have any bad impressions of the Bloustein years. I know that he came to Newark. He was available for people to ask questions. And I know that when I applied to New Brunswick in 1974, I considered that I got a run-around down there. And I was told on the phone that they knew why I was not accepted, and I never found out.

COHEN: With the doctoral program?

CODDINGTON: Yes. Right, right.

COHEN: That we were talking about before.

CODDINGTON: Yes. There seemed to be something not right going on down there. [Laughs] But I don't know what it was. I didn't look into it. I should have. I tried to avoid stress, and I've paid the price for trying to avoid stress. Administrators? Just let me think.

COHEN: Well, Henry Blumenthal was dean from '69 to '71, I guess.

CODDINGTON: Another provost I wrote a letter to about the treatment we were getting about the registration down there at 53 Washington Street. Horrible times. [Laughs] I tell you the horrible times I went through as a student. First you would have to walk to 53 Washington Street to get a card signed. And then you had to walk back again to get your professor to sign it. And then walk it right back and deliver it. I lost my patience once there.

COHEN: What happened then?

CODDINGTON: I wrote the provost a letter. And the provost sent the registrar the letter. And I went down one day and walked in without waiting for anyone. Went right into his office. And handed him my registration personally. And a dean and several other people came rushing after me. I think they thought I was going to kill him. [Laughter]

COHEN: What year was that again?

CODDINGTON: That must have been around '74.

COHEN: So the provost was then James Young.

CODDINGTON: I didn't know—I guess I didn't get to know him. I met a few nights ago. I've forgotten. He wasn't provost very long, was he?

COHEN: Actually from 1973, I guess, when he first came on board, 'til 1982. Yes.

CODDINGTON: Really?

COHEN: Yes. Norman Samuels replaced him as provost. I want to go back before his tenure as provost; the comparable position on this campus was the vice president for the Newark campus, which was occupied by Malcolm Talbott, in 1965 to, I guess 1972, right about... Do you have any recollections of his administration?

CODDINGTON: No. I knew him through my husband. But I don't recall anything particular about him.

COHEN: No recollections of his involvement in negotiations around the takeover of Conklin Hall?



CODDINGTON: No, no. I remember seeing him at faculty meetings and like that. We were invited to faculty meetings in those days. No. My eyes and mind were on the books.

COHEN: On the books. [Laughter] Henry Blumenthal was after— Malcolm Talbott also served as acting dean until Henry Blumenthal took over in 1969 for a couple of years. Any perceptions and recollections of his deanship and otherwise?

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes. I know him. And I went to see him one time, and he seemed very concerned that I should not work too hard. [Laughs] He was concerned about my age, I think.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. Anything else?

CODDINGTON: Not try to take on too much. Well, I met him socially much later.

COHEN: For a year his successor as acting dean was Gilbert Panson, chemistry. Panson subsequently became first dean of the graduate school. Any recollections of him?

CODDINGTON: Yes. He's the one who told me to go down to New Brunswick and walk in and demand to know why I was not accepted.

COHEN: Yes. That's interesting.

CODDINGTON: Yes.

COHEN: Do you have any other recollections of him?

CODDINGTON: I didn't follow it up.

COHEN: You didn't? Oh.

CODDINGTON: He's the one who handed me my diploma, I remember.

COHEN: Oh, yes. Yes. And then his successor was Richard Robie.

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes.

COHEN: Any recollections—

CODDINGTON: I knew Dr. Robie.

COHEN: —about his tenure as dean?

CODDINGTON: Yes. Yes. It was under Dean Robie that the wipeout of the English Department. And he was very, very kind to me. He offered me his place at the president's party after graduation on one occasion. And another occasion he encouraged me to stay with taking the

graduate courses with the hope that there would be a doctoral program in English on the Newark campus. I don't know what would have happened had he lived. But he certainly had that in mind as a possibility.

COHEN: Did you have any perception of why he left the deanship?

CODDINGTON: Why he left?

COHEN: Yes.

CODDINGTON: I thought he had died.

COHEN: Oh, he died after he left the deanship.

CODDINGTON: Oh, did he? I didn't realize.

COHEN: Do you have any recollections of that period which was a troubled period? I don't know if that rings any bells.

CODDINGTON: What year? That was probably—might have been the year that I was off.

COHEN: Mm-hmm. Yes. Let's see. He was dean for four years, '72-'76, if I'm not mistaken. But there was apparently, there was a kind of unhappiness.

CODDINGTON: I knew there was a great deal of unhappiness. Oh, yes. As I say, I was present at a meeting when he.... Well, actually he was begging for help. I remember he was begging people to give—this is the English Department now—give him some reasons why there should be a stronger English Department or a Classics Department. But he didn't get any answers. But he did answer a question from a professor, in which he indicated that we were moving more toward a business-oriented campus than a graduate school, for instance. Certainly the graduate school was going to....

COHEN: And then of course his successor was Norman Samuels who's our present provost.

CODDINGTON: Right. Mm-hmm.

COHEN: Have you informed impressions about him as dean?

CODDINGTON: Well, I'd say Norman to me has always been there since I've been a student somewhere, you know, as a friend. And I have a great deal of admiration for him.

COHEN: I want to discuss your experiences with the Dana Library from....

CODDINGTON: Oh, yes.

COHEN: Well, let's start first in your dual capacity as a student.

CODDINGTON: First as a student.

COHEN: Yes.

CODDINGTON: Well, I didn't know very much about libraries. So when I first started, I was a freshman at University College, I know we were taken on a tour of the library. When I went to do my research paper, my husband came down with me and helped me find all the things I needed. And as a graduate student, I received a great deal of help from Mr. Merritt, from Mr. Dole. Mr. Dole has gone as far as to bring things from New Brunswick when he was taking courses at New Brunswick at night. And we would meet somewhere where he got off the parkway, and he would bring me books, and I would go over and pick them up. He's been very, very helpful through the years. And, as I say, Mr. Merritt and Mr. Cohen and I've forgotten the girl's name, and I meant to.... The blond girl who did all the work for me on my doctorate, who helped me so much. Of course Natalie's been very helpful, too. But the girl I'm thinking of....

COHEN: Seventies, early eighties, in 1970's and the eighties.

CODDINGTON: No, she's still here.

COHEN: Still here.

CODDINGTON: Is it a Polish name?

COHEN: You mean you're talking about perhaps our interlibrary loan librarian...

CODDINGTON: Right, right.

COHEN: I guess Wanda's position. I think she's an associate or I forget

CODDINGTON: Wanda. That's right.

COHEN: ... Well, yes.

CODDINGTON: I couldn't pronounce her name. But I did mention her in the credits—  
[Laughter] of my dissertation.

COHEN: Yeah Wanda is a...

CODDINGTON: She was just absolutely wonderful.

COHEN: Oh, yes. She's real jewel.

CODDINGTON: I couldn't have gotten along without her. And I really appreciated it. And as I said, I mentioned her name and yours. the acknowledgements in my dissertation.

COHEN: Just how important was the interlibrary loan for your—

CODDINGTON: Oh, oh—

COHEN: —doctoral work?

CODDINGTON: Very, very important because with my heart condition I couldn't travel around to libraries, you know. So I had to have everything practically brought to me. And you've done me many a favor. I called you on the phone when I needed something. Oh, yes. I couldn't have gotten along without the help of the library and librarians.

COHEN: What other experiences did you have with service in the library, circulation, the periodical room...?

CODDINGTON: Every semester I bring my students, and I give them usually a topic, something I'm working on, and either you or some of the others...Natalie has done an almost—almost everybody has done—and of course Richard when he was here. [Break in recording]

COHEN: We're back with Dr. Coddington, and we were talking about library services.

CODDINGTON: Library. And the students receive— I think the instruction has been enhanced over the years, you know. Now you work with them. They get a real course in how to use the library to do a research paper. And it helps me, it helps them, and I'm sure it helps you to know what we're going to be working on, so that you can have the material all ready by the time you get there, and spend the time very effectively. I consider that a very important part of my course.

COHEN: What can you say about collections, especially growth of collections during the seventies and into the early eighties? If you have any recollections of...

CODDINGTON: Well, the library has expanded so much, not only in what's inside, but the structure itself has grown so much since I was a student that it's almost unbelievable. I don't remember ever needing anything that I could not get here or through the interlibrary loan. So I think it's a good library.

COHEN: Couple of wind-up question: Is there anything which, you know, we talked about before that you'd like to get back to, expand upon?

CODDINGTON: Not that I can think of. Do you have any more questions?

COHEN: Not for the moment. But the other question is, is there anything that we haven't talked about that we should have talked about?

CODDINGTON: I don't know except that I would like to see a doctoral program in English in this area instead of students have to go elsewhere. That's been one of the things that I've been concerned about. Because you can get a doctorate in physics, I think, and in psychology. But I don't know whether there are any other doctoral programs. We have a good graduate program from all I hear from students who come here from New Brunswick and other places, that we

have a better graduate school than most, particularly better than the one in New Brunswick. So I don't see why we should not have a doctoral program on this campus.

COHEN: Do you think there would be enough demand for a doctoral program in English on this campus?

CODDINGTON: Well, I haven't looked at the enrollment. But my impression is that it's way up.

COHEN: You mean the master's program in English is—

CODDINGTON: Yes, the master's program.

COHEN: The master's program in English. Well, since we're on the subject of the graduate program... what effect do you think the establishment of the graduate school in the seventies had on the graduate course offerings on this campus? Before the establishment of the graduate school, there weren't graduate courses given. But do you have any perception of what the effect of the actual status from the graduate school itself?

CODDINGTON: Well, like the campus, the visible campus, made a great difference to me, you know. The knowledge that we have a graduate school gets out to the teachers—teachers mostly, I think—who want to continue their education. And I think we have a great many more graduate students because there is a graduate school of Newark than we would have otherwise. I was one of the first graduates of that graduate program; it was established in '75.

COHEN: Yes, yes.

CODDINGTON: Because, you know, I was an October graduate so that I graduate in '75. Actually got my diploma here in 1975, although I'd already gotten it having represented the campus in New Brunswick.

COHEN: And I guess to follow up to that, what effect do you think the establishment of a graduate school had on undergraduate teaching?

CODDINGTON: Well, that's also a good question because you have a lot of teaching assistants in the undergraduate school now which we didn't have earlier. We had a few, but not as many as we have now. That provides an opportunity for the teaching assistants, too, because it provides tuition for them for one thing. More students can attend. I would like to see more training for teaching assistants. That may be going on now. I think there is some attempt at that. I would like to see training by the senior faculty. When I started out as a teaching assistant, I had been teaching for one year. But no one ever taught me how to teach. [Laughter] No one ever really instructed me. And I'm not sure...I think I did very well without it. But, you know, I was more mature and had teaching experience in the church. And I would like to be sure that the graduate students who have the responsibility of teaching our undergraduates know what they're doing. And not only know what they're doing, but know the best way to do it, you know. I think the

experienced faculty have a much better idea of how to do that than even, well even a writing director.

COHEN: True.

CODDINGTON: Unless it's an experienced writing director, you know. However as we mentioned before, you know, the final exam is a common final given to all students at the same time.

COHEN: Freshman composition?

CODDINGTON: Right.

COHEN: Mm-hmm.

CODDINGTON: I think also they should be graded by the senior faculty rather than the teaching assistants.

COHEN: Oh, is that how it's done. Oh.

CODDINGTON: The teaching assistants and the coadjutants grade, just one or two, one or two.

COHEN: On balance, how would you assess the benefits to undergraduates of the graduate program, graduate school?

CODDINGTON: Would you repeat that?

COHEN: How would you assess the benefits or lack of benefits to undergraduate students of the establishment of the graduate school, with the whole problem with T.A.'s and so on. Have undergraduates benefited more from the graduate program? Or is there a greater distance between undergraduates and experienced faculty? Or is the input or employment of T.A.'s and people with heavy research background, publications, bring more of a positive influence on undergraduate teaching on campus?

CODDINGTON: I really don't know. I think there's...I suppose since the teachers are also students—this is the teaching assistants—are also students, it may be difficult for the senior faculty to look at the teaching assistants as colleagues, you know. I sense that. I always sensed that. But as for the undergraduates.... I have an example: My grandson—one of my grandsons—is a student here. But another of my grandsons is a student at another college. And I asked him how he was doing in English. And he said, “Well, I'm not doing very much. We only had the coadjutant. [Laughter]

COHEN: Okay.

CODDINGTON: It's almost like saying, well, we had a substitute today, we didn't do anything. [Laughter] And I said, “Did you know that your grandmother is a coadjutant?” And he said no.

But, you know, that is the attitude that some of the students have toward T.A.'s and P.T.L.'s. I thought that was absolutely great. But my other grandson, who is attending Rutgers, was delighted that the section of English composition that he was supposed to take was closed. So he didn't have to take English composition this semester.

COHEN: Anything else?

CODDINGTON: My son graduated from—

COHEN: Did he!

CODDINGTON: —University College with high honors. A history major, won the Byrnes Award.

COHEN: Oh.

CODDINGTON: So now we have a third generation.

COHEN: Third generation here.

CODDINGTON: Different name. My daughter's son is a student here now.

COHEN: Uh-huh. That's quite interesting. Any further summary, reflections on your career at Rutgers in Newark?

CODDINGTON: I would like to have the experience...I would like for the teaching assistants and the coadjutants to have the experience that I had when I first became a teacher. I'm not sure whether they're having it or not. Maybe they are. I can't tell. I don't sense maybe the mutual respect and esteem that I like to share with my students, between the senior faculty and the teaching assistants and P.T.L.'s. I don't really think that they're experiencing what I experienced. I think that mine was a better experience.

COHEN: In what respect?

CODDINGTON: I don't quite know how to put it. It's just that there was more a sense of fellowship, more of a sense of mutual respect and esteem. Now the others may be experiencing it. I don't feel that that's there as it was.

COHEN: Anything else?

CODDINGTON: Maybe between the writing program and maybe in the journalism program and maybe here. But not as a whole. That's what I sense. It may be just me.

COHEN: Well, thank you very much.

CODDINGTON: You're welcome. It was my pleasure. [End of Tape #2]

[End of Interview]

Edited by Gideon Thompson