

TEMPE HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #: OH-278  
NARRATOR: Christine Kajikawa Wilkinson  
INTERVIEWER: Aaron Monson  
DATE: July 18, 2008

CW = Christine Wilkinson  
INT = Interviewer  
\_\_\_\_\_ = Unintelligible  
*(Italics)* = Transcriber's notes

Side A

INT: Today is July 18, 2008, and this is the Tempe Historical Museum's renovation interview with Dr. Christine Wilkinson. We're at the Fulton Center on the ASU campus, and let's begin.

Let's start by talking a little bit about your family life. A simple question to start off: Can you tell me when and where you born?

CW: I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on December 31, 1944.

INT: And who was the first member of your family to settle in Tempe, or if not in Tempe, in the Valley, and why did they come here?

CW: I believe it was my father's parents, and they either worked on or managed a farm in Glendale. I was very little, so I remember going there, and I remember them having strawberries, they would pick strawberries, and I think probably melons, that sort of thing.

INT: And when was it that they first settled here?

CW: Well, my father grew up in California, and yet he went to high school at Phoenix Union High School, so somewhere in that time frame, they had to have moved, and I would have to check, but it just doesn't seem to be that long. We might have lived here maybe a half a dozen years, I think, and then they moved back to California. So then Dad, he finished high school and then was fortunate enough to get a scholarship, so he remained here. But the rest of his family, the majority of his family, were in California.

INT: When you were younger, how did your family spend time together?

CW: My father was a professor and coach at ASU, probably when I was in middle school. And my mother went back to work, and she worked for what was then First National Bank—which then became First Interstate, and now is Wells Fargo, but the whole time, I knew it as First National Bank.

Education was always important, and our family spent a good amount of time, not only in a university town, but being a part of a university. And, of course, it was much smaller, so almost everything we did revolved around things associated with the university.

And my parents, and I think my mother in particular, was an extremely extroverted, social person. She was very, very dedicated to the community in which she lived, and also her heritage, which is Japanese American. So she always, always had people over at the house. She was always entertaining somebody.

And when she began working for the bank, her branch was in Tempe, and then they actually moved to where the Fulton building is now. It was a little branch bank, and she became the assistant vice president. As a result then, she opened student accounts, worked with faculty and staff in their accounts, so really it was an extension of the university. Well, when she'd meet new students who didn't have a place to live or who got homesick, then all of a sudden, they were at our house.

Dad had dozens and dozens of players, coaches, former coaches, former players, always at the house. I don't ever remember a Thanksgiving, Christmas, or major holiday that we didn't have ten, twenty people for dinner or all day or all weekend, and that was just part of life. And we attended all of his games. If we went on vacation, we would probably stop by at a recruit's house. So that was part of it.

Then, as we grew up, I would say, they always believed our education was most important. I have one sister, who is two years younger, and we both went to Tempe High School, which was the only high school at the time. And we both were very involved in the school throughout our four years, and that was encouraged by our parents.

I don't know, whatever else.

INT: Do you remember any interesting or funny stories that your family told you when you were younger, about other family members or . . . ?

CW: I don't know. I think one of the things that is more of a cultural, no, I guess more reflective of the times . . . . When we were smaller and these towns that are all connected now actually had space between them, my mom and dad would drive us to Mesa on a weekend, and the stores would be closed, so the term was "window shop" in the store windows. That was actually like a big pastime, you could go and you could window shop. I don't know if anybody else did that, but that was probably a nice way to get us out, and it wasn't very costly. (laughter)

I don't know about stories. I can think of lots of little things, but I don't know.

INT: That's fine. If you can't think of anything now and if something happens to come up over the course of the rest of our time here, just shout it out.

CW: Well, one of the funny ones, 'cause people identify us with coaching, is that we always had—I shouldn't say always, but very often—had a number of coaches at the house, and many of them had nicknames, but they were all “coache.” And just by the inflection of the voice, you knew who they were referring to, even if we kept saying “coach,” and I could do that, too. It was just an amazing sort of thing. And that also was a common occurrence.

I think another thing which would be, probably not a story, but interesting, was my mother's parents lived in Utah and would come down, as I reflect on it now, probably because the weather was hard on them. But when I was younger, they would come down and live with us for probably four months out of the year, and that was kind of just a natural sort of thing. And when they came down to live with us, Mom and Dad always gave up their room, and they slept in the den or something like that. And now that I think about it, it was like four months at a time.

And then there was another long period of time where . . . . My mother came from a family of eight, and her youngest brother was, as many of her brothers were, in World War II. And he came back, then he came to college on the G.I. Bill, and because he was still single, he lived with us. So he lived with us for several years, I think I remember even through part of my high school, as he was finishing up and he got his Masters at ASU. So he is like a . . . . He's definitely always been my uncle, but almost like a much older brother, who took care of us, too.

And so that always adds to the mix of a family, 'cause there was always some type of extended family. We always played board games, card games, jigsaw puzzles, crossword puzzles, a lot of those kinds of things, and it was always fun.

INT: Let's switch gears just a little bit. I'd like to talk about your life in Tempe now specifically, or in the Valley if you don't happen to live in Tempe.

CW: I live in Tempe.

INT: Okay, good. Can you tell me what the name of the neighborhood is that you live in?

CW: I don't think it has a name.

INT: No? Okay; a lot of neighborhoods in this city do. What is it about your neighborhood that you feel is unique or special, if anything?

CW: I think I've always been pleased and proud to live in Tempe itself. I think it's retained its identity as a college town and as a positive environment. It's done a good job of trying to

retain its history while growing to meet contemporary needs, and that's good. And much—as this project is—much of the work I have seen in the more historical sense and retention of records and remembering special events has been bubbled up. Most of it has come from the citizens and the people who've lived here, rather than from top down. And that is wonderful, because I think you get a much broader view, and you get many walks of life and many perspectives. So the project that you're working on now, I think, is a very good one.

As far as our own neighborhood, I wanted to remain in Tempe, wanted to be part of the school district that was part of Tempe, and I think that was the main thing. I don't know that where we live is as significant, the neighborhood, is as significant.

INT: Let's go back to your education. From doing a little bit of research, I'm familiar with the schools that you went to to earn your degrees. But can you tell me where you completed primary and secondary schools, and in which years?

CW: I can try. Part of it I think will show the rapid growth, when people didn't think it was.

I grew up in the same house from first grade all the way through college, and yet I started at . . . Kindergarten, I was at the Payne Training Lab School, which was a lab school operated by ASU at the time. Then I moved to the public schools, and there was a school that was a multi-story school on the corner of Eighth Street and University, probably where Chili's is now. I was there for either half or a full year, then they opened up Broadmor, so then I went to Broadmor from second to sixth grade, I believe. No, I'm sorry—I went from Eighth Street to Ritter, which was a brand-new school. And Ritter is on the other part of the Tempe campus, off of University and Rural, which is where part of the Biodesign area is, but it's kind of over in that direction. Then they opened Broadmor, which would be south on Rural, and I was moved there for sixth grade. Then, I guess because of the growth, there was a former high school on the ASU campus, which is probably where the Fine Arts area is now, so I spent seventh grade there. Then they opened up McKemy, and I spent eighth grade there. And then I went to Tempe High School.

So I can hardly remember all the years, but I think it's indicative of the growth, because for a long time, I think people didn't move; they only went to one school. And for some reason, my class must have been a big class, or several right before me, as well as the general growth of the town. So how many was that? Like six or seven schools.

INT: Almost every year.

CW: Yeah, almost every year. The good thing is, separate from most people who moved that many times, you have new friends. And while I had new friends each time, there also was a group that kind of followed me, but there was a lot of new, every single time.

INT: And for the record, can you also tell me where you completed your degrees, higher education?

CW: I completed my baccalaureate degree in Secondary Education, major in English, minor in History, from Arizona State.

I did spend a year overseas with the University of Loyola of Chicago, junior year, 1964-65. That was a very, very historic year to be with a university like that, because the University of Loyola is run by the Jesuits, and that happened to be a time when the Catholic Church had the Second Ecumenical Council, which was a worldwide summit of all the Catholic leadership from around the world. So all of the bishops, all the cardinals, all came into Rome for this Council, and because we were part of this Catholic university at the time and because of our particular leader/Father, he was able to arrange for us to go to the opening concelebration mass of the Council, and we stood probably twenty-five yards away from the huge, huge celebration, and we got to see all of the pomp and circumstance. I'll never, ever forget it; it was amazing. Plus, they changed many of the rules and policies that are still in existence today, so it was a very impactful part of my education.

So then I came back, I graduated, then I went to the University of California at Berkeley and got my Masters in their College of Education in Counseling Psychology. Then I got married, and then I decided to work on a Ph.D., after a great deal of encouragement by a faculty member, who I'm very proud to say became my major advisor. Then I got my Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration. And I've taken some other things since then. That would be my education.

Could I go back a second? I think it's more like, for your history, it's probably important that when my parents were here early and were married, and my mother had lived in California and my dad had brought her back here to live, they had planned to build a home, where I said I had lived most of my life. And they bought some property on College Avenue, and they were going to build. And they had saved, and they were young, and I think at that time the salaries were not very good. So they had saved to pay for the land, and they were going to build, and then when they got ready to build, they were told they could not, because they were of Japanese origin. So they were gonna have to try to sell that land. Then they found out about some other property, where they eventually did live, on Bonita Way, and I think that was called University Estates at the time. After they did that, they were told they could not live there; there was some small clause that might have been an opening. And somebody learned of their plight, and I believe it was actually Grady Gammage, Sr., the president of ASU, and a couple of other faculty members who came to their aid and either vouched for them, supported, or advocated in order for them to be able to build their house, which, like I said, they still have, our Dad still lives in. But it is amazing.

They also did have people threaten them at the outbreak of the war. And Dad, while he was a faculty member at the university, because of particular rules where they cordoned off sections of the Valley where Japanese Americans could not go, Dad could go to work, but he couldn't get his mail. Mother was enrolled for a class as simple as typing, which

was what they had then, and she was withdrawn from school on the basis of national security, which is pretty hard to believe, but I have seen the transcript.

At the same time, he (*dad*) became part of what is now a very famous unit, the 442<sup>nd</sup>, which was an all-Japanese American, all-volunteer, unit that started in Hawaii, the same place where Pearl Harbor was attacked. All these people knew was American life, and they were Americans, so they all volunteered at the same time their families were being rounded up. My dad was already a professional, already had his degree, but he volunteered to join them, and then was gone. My mother lost two brothers, a third was wounded, the fourth was sent home because of the sole survivors policy, but they all belonged to the same unit.

And that is why I was born in Salt Lake City, because her parents were in relocation camps, in a holding area, and she went up there to be with them to deliver, and then we waited for my dad to come home. Otherwise, I probably would have been \_\_\_\_\_.

And then one other point kind of in my memory is as they started to quarantine or decide where the Japanese Americans had to be, then former Governor Pyle, but he was a radio broadcaster at the time, went on air on the news and actually said something about “Margaret and Bill Kajikawa, if you’re listening to this or wherever you might be, you have friends.” And even now, it seems pretty amazing that . . . . You think, “Well, of course,” but at the time, there was such a frenzy, that for people to speak out was very courageous, and other faculty helped Mom and Dad (*voice breaking*). We have to stop.

INT: Okay; would you like me to pause?

*(Interviewer’s note: Hardships of Japanese internment camps and issues of discrimination and prejudice during World War II off the record, at Christine’s request.)*

INT: And we’re back, and we’re going to talk a little bit now about your career path, and specifically your work here at ASU, which we know is very storied, so we’ll try and hit some of the biggest points. Can you please tell me when you first came to ASU, and what made you choose the university as your employer?

CW: I want to say I’m not real sure. I think I came in the fall of ’69 or ’70, I think. I had always wanted to be a high school English teacher and counselor, and I did that, each for a year-and-a-half, and yet, I was very active as an undergraduate student leader here, involved in a number of activities. And during the summer, a former activities advisor actually called me up, and they had just finished an expansion of the M.U. (*Memorial Union*). And it’s quite amazing, having the university be out of the Union for seven months, how you lose, actually, the whole community spirit. And I read in the paper today how a student said that, how she had no idea what a difference it made, and how important a building like that was. Anyway, they were out of the building for a whole year. They just told everybody to leave, and they renovated the building. So when they came back, all of the activities had kind of dropped off, and because I had been involved, they wanted to know if I would come back as a professional and rebuild the student activities at ASU. I actually couldn’t believe it, because I never planned to be at a

university. And I thought that would be real exciting, to be a part of it, and to engage with students. And I was still pretty close in age to all of them too, so it made it really quite fun, and started my career. Now it's about fifteen positions later.

INT: We may talk about that in a little bit, some of the various positions that you've held. But I'd also like to ask you now, what are some of the major changes that you've seen happen at ASU since you got here? You can relate that either to your own career, or the university as a whole.

CW: I think the university has matured, in a very positive way. It has, obviously, grown exponentially over that time. There was a person by the name of Tillman Krantz (*sp?*), who I found a pen or pencil calculation of what the enrollment would be, he probably did that in maybe the late '50s, and it showed such a steep trajectory, I'm sure most of the people thought he was just absolutely crazy. And I believe we did exactly that. So there were people well ahead of us, and well ahead of computers and fancy equipment, who already knew that projection.

I think the presidents, each in their tenure, have done a great deal to move us forward. I think it was a very good teachers college, then became a very good regional university, and now a large public extensive research university, which makes it one of the leaders of not only disseminating knowledge, but creating knowledge, advancing knowledge. And that is part of the mission of a public research university that a lot of people forget—that it will make a difference in peoples' lives overall, as well as prepare the next generation of leaders. So from a mission and scope, it's been a natural but probably an exponential growth; it has not been a gradual one.

From a physical structure, it has changed from a university which was literally part of Tempe. The malls that you see in the Tempe campus were all city streets. Where some of the buildings are now were all neighborhoods; in fact, faculty/staff lived in those neighborhoods. And the Tempe Center was a little shopping center and a grocery store. So it was a college that grew up with its town. I think the growth of the other campuses, Poly and the West campus and the downtown campus, are reflective of the growth and the need for expanding higher education. I think it's good it has remained as one university, because it, in a way, reduces redundancy, it reduces the need for multiple layers of bureaucracy; so while some people may believe it is already, it definitely reduces the way in which this is run, because you don't have multiple state colleges. While I think our population doesn't need it yet, it probably will in the future.

And I think the last part, which I would be remiss if I didn't say so, the growth and the diversity of the students has been remarkable. We always did attract a good number of metropolitan students, students that lived in Maricopa County, but we now attract students not only from Arizona overall, but nationally; we are seen as a national university, and the attraction of students, not only students in general, but students who are extremely bright. It's not one person's opinion; we can give you any number of records of achievement of our students and what they're getting in fellowships and graduate assistantships, and the schools that they're going to for graduate school. And

also the caliber of students who are now coming here for graduate school who never thought about us before.

And then the last piece: We have always believed, and the current president certainly has stated it over and over again, in access. And I think I would have a difficult time being part of any university that didn't see that as an important mission. So the ethnic diversity has continued to be strong and grow. And it's ethnic and economic diversity.

INT: My next question might be the most difficult for you, because there are so many to choose from. But what one accomplishment from your tenure at ASU are you most proud of?

CW: Hmm. I think being part of the team that did prepare future leaders, and that I have seen the results of that through these individuals and the ones that I have stayed in contact with, which I get, every single week, some contact back from individuals who I've worked with or students who I have known. So that is part, preparing the future leaders.

I think the other is actually working and developing staff, which would have been part of my role, and seeing them grow, and helping them to advance the university, and for them to see that all their roles are really important in advancing, and that we have to think beyond our unit. If we only think about our specific role or our unit's role, we're never going to advance, so we always need to think about the university overall and then go from there. And as I've progressed, it's probably helping to advance the overall enterprise, and you can be proud of that as you reflect back on it.

INT: What was the biggest innovation that's come out of your tenure here at ASU?

CW: It may not be seen as innovation, I think maybe it reflects back to the previous question, but I think the focus on the individual and the focus on the development of individuals. So as large as this institution has become, we still have to have as a hallmark our focus on the individual and the individual experience, and for people to believe that we actually believe that and we carry that out. And I see that much more than probably some. But there is a particular spirit at ASU that I think is different. I hope I've been a leader in that part.

INT: Can you tell me about what you consider to be the greatest success of your career?

CW: Some of these sound kind of related. Greatest success?

I have been given the opportunity to either initiate new programs that have continued to be part of the core, or started new programs, new departments, new offices. I think that I have been seen as either someone who could handle multiple tasks and responsibilities simultaneously, and/or one who was called to literally start whole programs. Of the multiple positions I've been, almost every one of them, I have been either the first in the position or the first to develop the whole program, almost in every single case. And I hadn't known that until somebody asked me to put some of these down. And I love



doing that. I think that probably is . . . . If you ask people that have worked with me more closely, I think that's probably what they would say—they have known me to be the one that would be tapped to do these kinds of things.

INT: Can you tell me what ASU excels at the most today?

CW: I think many people would have different perspectives on that. But I think we are graduating more students than anybody in the state, and probably most universities across the nation. I think we do add value, so that . . . . Our students come from just a huge diversity of backgrounds. We are not a university that takes only the top three percent, and so while I admire those universities, to what extent do you add value to people who already are right up there? And, in fact, we could possibly do harm. (laughter) But for us . . . .

I love commencement; I've participated in commencement for several decades. And while some might find it tedious, I think it's just a culmination of a life dream, for an individual and his or her family. But we ask, "How many of you are the first ones to graduate from your family?" And I bet three-fourths of the people stand up who are graduating. "How many of you worked while you were going through school?" Almost all of the people stood up. And, "How many of you volunteered while you were going through school?" Probably seventy-five percent. We do that very well. We bring in students who are the first generation. How you make a difference. I gave a university welcome at a U.S. naturalization ceremony this last year, and you wanted to go to every one of them, and how proud they were, and that was just their first step. And then it makes you realize why education is so extremely important. So I think we do a very good job of doing that.

People would also say we are becoming one of the major leaders in research, and we have selected areas, we're not gonna do it across the board, we're gonna select the areas that we think we could make a difference. And I think that would be a strong point.

And then the other is that not all universities do, but we feel very committed to the economic development and the quality of life for the community in which we are a part. So we are not just doing esoteric research, we actually are doing applied research, like yourself, that either preserves history or advances a neighborhood or a city. Being part of the bond election in downtown Phoenix and placing a school there, which in and of itself was important, it actually was part of the revitalization of the whole downtown. I mean, look at what's happening there. And the fact that at night there's nothing going on—wait until we have our critical mass. You literally can revitalize whole neighborhoods or whole towns through the development and leadership of a university.

INT: I'd also like to ask you, in your eyes, what some of ASU's weaknesses are today? But just before you answer that, I'll give you a hand signal when we're running low on this side of the tape so I don't cut you off; if I need to switch it, I'll let you know.

CW: So, again, challenges, or what did you say?

INT: In your eyes, what are some of ASU's weaknesses today?

CW: Okay. I think it would be more the challenges we have, which is in meeting this huge demand of growth while not being adequately funded just to meet the growth, much less the quality. So we will not turn away students, but it also means it stretches everybody pretty thin. So there hasn't really been as much support of the overall infrastructure to help that, and you may have seen that yourself. So it's everything from the things are more mundane but are so important, like classroom renovation, to putting technology into the classroom where it's needed so that faculty can actually use it, so while it's available in the general market, your classrooms need that. So I think that is a tug.

I think retaining top-flight faculty, and I would also add staff, is important, because as people gain national exposure, and even if they have the national exposure and they come here, there are many reasons they've reached that pinnacle, and we don't want them spirited away. So that's a constant challenge of what does it take to retain, whether it's salary, compensation, facility enhancement, or just direct support; I think those are the most challenging.

What we work on also is retention and graduation of students, and having, again, enough resources to do that on a regular basis. And going back to my other question, focusing on the individual and using technology to do that in a combination of direct staff support is, I think, something that dozens of people throughout the university are working on, to try to improve; you know, what is it that we can do to help improve that?

INT: I'll conclude Side A of the Tempe Historical Museum's renovation interview with Christine Wilkinson.

*(end of recording)*

### Side B

INT: This is Side B of the Tempe Historical Museum's renovation interview with Christine Wilkinson, and today is July 18, 2008.

We'll continue to talk about your career and work at Arizona State University. How did ASU change as an organization since your tenure began?

CW: It is definitely much more of a national university. It's much more extensively involved in research. The enrollment, gosh, I'd have to look . . . I think it probably has doubled in that time, and you were already starting from a pretty big base, so . . . . And we have added, well, we've probably added all the campuses since I started. The West campus had already been in preparation, but it didn't have its home base yet, it was kind of in a satellite way. And I have been a part of two of those three, in developing the services and the transition for them. So I think that's been huge, just one university in multiple places, if nothing else.

INT: Let's look ahead to the future a little bit. I always like to ask where you think the university will be in the year 2071, which is Tempe's bicentennial. If you don't want to look that far ahead, can you tell me where you think ASU will be in the future?

CW: Even by 2012 or 2015, let's see, let me think this through again. By 2015, and now I think it might be 2020, but they are expecting ASU to have over 90,000 students, so that alone, and you have another fifty years beyond that that you've just mentioned. If you look at it, as the Valley spreads out, the Phoenix metropolitan area is larger than the L.A. basin, and if you mirror that population on top of that, you can see where that would go. There actually is the capacity to grow on all of the other campuses, probably up to 15,000 to 20,000, so we do have that kind of capacity.

At the same time, I think there will be much more, not solely, but there will be a lot of people who will use technology and do more combination of in-person and online, whatever they will call it by then, but online education. But the learning styles are so different, and the direct in-person contact, I think, would counter the demise of what some people are projecting that there would be no colleges, that there would be no physical structure campuses that exist now. I just don't believe that; I think it will still be the very nature of it. And when students go to college who are traditional-age students, they want kind of a total experience, that you cannot get through an online education.

But where would we be? I think it's more, where will higher education be in 2050? I think 2050 is certainly enough for me to go that far out. I think for the state of Arizona, the population will be such, since we are one of the fastest-growing states, by then there will probably be a state college system, plus a university system. They really need to be planning now for that. People in higher education remarked at how California had a master plan, that I'm sure they need to revisit from time to time and they need to revisit it now, but that has actually put them in very good stead in how they budget, plan, and prepare students for higher education. There's always tugs, but overall it's a good plan.

I think there will also be more private higher education, although it is more of an Eastern approach. The sheer population will probably drive some more private, not-for-profit education in the Valley.

There could be—in fact, sooner than that—there could be like a chancellor of a system to coordinate the mission and scope and the emphasis areas of the different colleges, and that probably is needed, so some people who have the ability and the wherewithal to look at more of a master plan and a long-range one, while the rest of us are working on where we are now, five years out and ten years out, working there, that somebody needs to do it on a much larger scope. I think that will be the case.

We will be a very different mix of students, I think the ethnic profile will be very different. Perhaps, and I don't know this, but perhaps the Hispanic population will be—I mean, it is in general—but it will be the dominant population at the university. In the California UC system, it's the Asian population; at some of their campuses, it actually is

the majority population at this point. So that will then have people think through services, programs, and all of that.

INT: Can you tell me a funny story from your time in office, anything from a public address blooper, something funny from a board meeting, anything that immediately comes to mind?

CW: I have tons of funny stories. (laughter) Most, actually, occurred when I was in Admissions, because you have opportunity for many of those things to take place. When you do admissions, you're also recruiting. When you recruit, in and out of state, people are always having to—in the future, it will be different, because of technology—but you still visited high schools. So we always said if you needed to find a high school, you look for the flagpole or the football field, and you do that sort of thing. Oh, gosh, I have so many; I'll just give you a couple.

One, where I had gone to a high school, and we were wearing blazers at the time, and our school colors are maroon and gold, and we had on maroon blazers. And somebody called back and said they couldn't believe that we spent the money to buy all gold blazers and that they were of the highest material, which, of course, was false.

Secondly, I went to a high school, and I had all of the viewbooks in my hand, and the counselors were in a portable trailer, six counselors on either side of the trailer, with a very narrow hallway, and we had to step up to get into the trailer. Because I was holding all the viewbooks, I lost my balance on the step, and I went down. The viewbooks scattered entirely all the way through the trailer, down that little hallway, and I landed like however-many pounds I weighed, on the floor, and it sounded like a tree had fallen. It was the most embarrassing thing, and all of the other Admissions representatives were right behind me, so it was kind of like, boom, boom. And I got up, and I thought I had just killed myself. But I was so embarrassed, and everybody came running out, all the counselors, just like a Keystone Cop thing, everybody came running out. "Are you okay? Are you okay?" I said, "I am absolutely just fine, other than my ego." I said I was fine, but I still thought my leg had just died, but I couldn't say it. So that was one.

I had a friend who was an Admissions recruiter and he wanted to be very informal, so he was at Arcadia High School, in the auditorium, and right in the front was the stage and the orchestra pit. So he got up to kind of sit up, put your hands up and hoist yourself up onto the railing, and the next thing he knew, he had slipped, and he fell all the way back and landed on the orchestra pit stands. When he did, he kicked a projector case, and it went down, and at the time, it had slides, so all the slides went out. And all the entire senior class, and there were college representatives, all heard him, because it stopped the entire program. And I looked over and said, "Bob, are you okay?" And he just started laughing, he said, "Yeah, but I think I'm finished now." (laughter) So he never went back to that school, he was so embarrassed.

Stories like that can go on; I have dozens. So those are just a couple of funny ones.

President Crow will tell you that when he interviewed for the Presidency, he was on a platform stage in the Memorial Union with an administrator who was on the committee and so had introduced him, I guess; I wasn't there. And they were both sitting on this stage, and I don't know whether they were chairs with wheels on them or what, but the next thing that happened, they both fell off the stage, in the back, fell off the stage, on the ground, and either one took the other, but they both fell. And this was right during the interview, so then they had to get up and finish, and everybody supposedly was just horrified, but then just kind of went about their way. But he has told that story several times. So it does happen to all of us.

INT: Great. Let's talk a little bit about integration and diversity at Arizona State University. I've heard the school described as a regional leader in integration. Can you share your thoughts or experiences about that?

CW: There are a lot of different approaches to providing access and opportunity for individuals. Sometimes you have whole departments of that. Our philosophy has been that it's everybody's responsibility. So you can say there's pros and cons to all of it, but I am a very strong believer that it is everybody's responsibility. So if you do that, your leaders have to espouse the importance and value of diversity on a regular basis, to consider that as part of the hiring process, to consider that in your programming. And with that, you not only have programs for everyone, you have programs that can target students who might feel less secure about where they are and their environment in higher education, for example.

So I already talked about the fact that we had a lot of first-generation students, so already you have . . . . You could have very faithful, supportive parents, but if they've never experienced it, they can't give you the extra "what is a credit hour," "do I really need to study," "what are these classes," "what does general studies mean?" A faculty member is a faculty member to them. And even balancing your budget. "Well, I got this stipend called a scholarship, but it's this huge amount, so I'm just gonna go out and spend all of it in the first month." And then, "What do I do for the other months?"

So general services, targeted services, hiring diverse faculty, hiring diverse staff, allowing them to be role models. Being careful that you need to hire critical mass so that that one particular person doesn't have to represent the whole. And I probably came in at the front end of a lot of that, so I probably was not only the first in different departments, but probably the first minority, and not necessarily the female minority, but the minority in almost everything along the way.

And I think the other is gender. Even from a gender perspective, I was the first, probably in almost every case, female Director throughout my career. And I think I was only the second female V.P. (*Vice President*) in the history of the university, and the first minority V.P., first female minority V.P., all of that. People have told me that I kind of like work at it, work at work. But unless it was a direct conflict, I have never turned down an opportunity where people have asked me to speak because it was a minority population or to represent. And I usually start out by saying I am pleased to do this; however, I am one

person, with one family history, so to be careful not to do an \_\_\_\_\_ of one, what a lot of people do—that I can't represent all the Asians or all the Japanese or all women, but I can give you a story of my particular career, what has worked or not worked. I think, for the most part, just the sheer fact I was female and usually in an all-male setting on a regular basis, that alone was sometimes something to contend with. Where I would speak up, make a statement, and it would be kind of like passed over, and ten minutes later a male colleague would say the same thing and it was just a brilliant idea. So you have to learn particular strategies to deal with that, and some people are more aggressive in dealing with that, but it's not been either my culture or my nature, and I think it does make it more challenging, along the way.

So I kind of went from the personal to the general; I should go back to the general. I think all of those programs have helped over time. And I was just asked that this week—what things are successful, what things are not successful, how do you know, what's the data? And I said I think you should take the collective effort and see, are there more students, are they progressing, and are they graduating, in every instance? Because most of them, if you really get down to it, it's probably a collection. The students may say they had a particular mentor, or this was a particular program, which I think is possible; but, mostly, if you really delve into it, it was several different things that intervened along the way, some more important than others, that made the difference.

INT: I did an interview with Lattie Coor (*former ASU President*) earlier this week, and he had mentioned one of major factors fueling the growth of diversity at ASU was a mandate to increase the minority part of the student body by ten percent each year for a minimum of five years. Were you working in the administration at that time? Is there anything you can say about that mandate?

CW: Definitely; I was one of the leads to get it done. And he might have said, and what other people say, is that you need targets and goals that are measurable, because when you do, then people will work towards that; otherwise, things don't get done, or it's harder to get them done, as an individual. So you'll have individual champions, but you won't get the collective, so I do agree with that. And all the goals were met or exceeded, and it was a variety of things. But while things were added, I think it made more people aware of the fact that it was really important, and people in general paid more attention to it, rather than one person or five people. That, I think, was important, and the message continued to be repeated over and over again.

I'm trying to think of the name of that initiative, though . . . I can actually see the front of the book, the front of the pamphlet. There were two Regents, Edie Auslander and Lester Cappon (*sp?*), who were the leaders at the Regent level that made that happen, and they were very dedicated to student success and the diversity, which I think made a difference. But it also had to do with faculty and staff, but primarily students. And you end up hiring people who then are dedicated for a longer period of time, and it becomes part of them, part of their mix.

INT: What do you see as the biggest impacts that ASU has had on Tempe? Culturally, economically, academically?

CW: I think all of those. The university is the largest employer in the city of Tempe. The hotels, the banquets, all of those are just generally impacted. They can just see the activities swell as the students come back. So just from the economics, even in a downturn that everybody's having now, all of the people with those kinds of things in Tempe, they know it's going to be the opposite of all the other economic trends when the students come back. So, if anything, they probably should help support the recruitment and retention of students. So it definitely has an economic impact, even if we did nothing else than do our own business. But the sheer fact that we're trying to do a lot of joint projects with them, I think, is very important.

I think, which every city wants to have, the quality of life is very good and very positive. The fact that the university is a public university and open to the community . . . so people speak to the athletics, but it's the arts, it's the museums, it's the cultural side that people are attracted to. And, in fact, the Morrison Institute did a study, probably four years ago now, that talked about why people are attracted to a state. And two of the major issues had to do with education and what kind of education you can provide to my family, K through 20, and what is the quality of life, beyond safety. You have to have safety, you have to have your infrastructure in there, but it actually was culture, museums, entertainment, something else that was beyond just the basics. And that's what a university provides—quality of life, economic development, education of students. Oh, my gosh, to have a university in your town, I wouldn't even say ASU, but just a university, higher education, is so much of an attraction for people.

That is great, and education should be the core of our country. I could speak to that a little bit more, but . . . They need to pay K through 12 teachers a salary that's commensurate with our celebrity athletes, give them even one-quarter, and it would attract even more to education. They need to do that. Soap box.

INT: That's okay; I agree with you on that point. What is your experience in dealing with the relationship or interactions between ASU and the City of Tempe; more specifically, the City Council, the City legislators?

CW: I've been fortunate, because I grew up here, I know most of them, I grew up with some of them, and I know that the City Council is very dedicated to improving this city for the people who live here. As far as the university's role, though, we do have individuals in the Public Affairs area, people who specialize just in that and the interaction, so I don't interact as much as I do more in general as part of the university and as a private citizen.

We have been fortunate in the past with both—there are others—but Harry Mitchell had such a long tenure as the Mayor, and Neil Giuliano had a long tenure as the Mayor, and they are both ASU alums. And they both had, and still do, a deep commitment to the partnership with the university and the role of the university. So I think even before the

current Mayor, we had that. And I actually have known Hugh Hallman since he was in high school, so I know he also wants to do the same, even though he is not a graduate.

INT: Let's switch gears one more time and talk a little bit about your civic involvement. We do know that you are involved Valley-wide in many, many boards and committees and organizations, but for the purposes of this interview, let's stick strictly to the city of Tempe, if you don't mind. Can you tell me what civic organizations you are involved in in Tempe?

CW: It's interesting, because I've been tapped for different boards, so that actually has moved me more from Tempe, so most of my involvement in the past or as an individual is people have asked me to do particular things, but not on boards. So the ones that I have served on before have been the Tempe Community Council, and the Tempe Leadership Advisory Group for a short period of time, although I wasn't one of the Leadership group, so it was a different experience. And the Tempe Salvation Army, which I did enjoy very much and felt that they were doing a good job in meeting particular needs. Those are the ones I had probably a sustained one with. I have served on several City committees, one was a visioning group. And then the Tempe Sports Authority. I guess I have been involved in several more. (laughter) So as people ask, I certainly volunteer to assist. Then I've also served on different advisory committees for the Tempe Union High School District.

INT: And just for posterity's sake, can you tell us a little bit about what else you do around the Valley in terms of civic organizations? Why not?

CW: Sure. My kind of long-standing commitment has actually been to the American Red Cross, and I have served as both the chair of the local board and chaired the national convention, and also was selected for the National Board of Governors for the Red Cross and was eligible for two terms, and I served two terms there. So that has been a major commitment.

I've served on boards that have supported the development and advocacy for women, as I feel that that is extremely important.

More recently though, probably the last five years, I have been asked to serve on, and still do, a number of boards that relate to health care. One is Advocacy, which is the association for Arizona hospitals and health care organizations that is comprised of the CEOs of hospitals, and they have three people they appoint who are more lay people, and I am one of those. And I'm on the St. Luke's Health Initiatives board, which works in public policy related to health care and also as a grant-making board. I currently serve as the chair of the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation board, to help support the cause of health care. And the SARRC board, which is the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center, for probably one of the most exploding areas of childhood—who also grow up to be adults—but childhood disease that has had more and more news about it and it's of great, great concern.



And, I think, about three other boards related to women.

I enjoy it. I think it's very important. It is one of the legacies, I think my mother probably was one of the major influences in my life on that, that we need to be a part of our communities.

INT: Let me kind of wrap up the interview with a couple of very broad questions. What defines your life experience in Tempe? Culturally, career, organizations, locations, any of that.

CW: It's a very good question. Regardless of where I live—I know this relates to Tempe—but regardless, I think it consists of a commitment to my life's work, which has been the university, and helping to lead and advance that, as a contributor to both individuals and to society. Secondly, really a commitment to the place in which I live. Although, at this point, I believe it's more in response to being asked to serve rather than seeking it out. And third, and equally important, although we haven't discussed it as much, is a commitment to my family, however extended that family is. So my spouse is part of the Tempe high school district, and once again, it's education, which is important, and I fully support everything that I believe he and his district stand for.

INT: My next question is probably very similar, so you don't need to go into too much detail if you don't want to. But in what way do you feel most connected to Tempe, or in a broader sense, the Valley?

CW: I guess more in the broader sense, I think. You hope that you have—it sounds kind of cliché—but that you have you have made some difference in the improvement of where you live. And one other thing that I think is an important principle of mine is, and it comes from a quote, is that “we are all a part of whom we have met,” and I am a part of all whom I have met. So you hope that you have a positive influence on others; you know that others have had that on you. And that we shouldn't just be unto ourselves. We really need to reach out and help, beyond our family, to build a community. And certainly the city of Tempe is a critical part of that.

INT: If you can, tell me about one of your fondest or best memories, something that stands out for you, about living and working in Tempe?

CW: I would start with more memories. I remember, still do to this day, being able to walk from where I lived down Mill Avenue with my grandfather when I was a very small child, and thinking that that was just the most wonderful thing, a very safe environment, a wonderful place.

We haven't talked about climate, but the sheer fact that living here, you can live outdoors, and people tend to look and feel healthy, even though you know disease is around you. It's a very upbeat and uplifting sort of thing.

I think another memory or recollection of living in Tempe is that it was, as I was growing up, we had the wonderful opportunity of it still being a very small town, and a lot of people knew everyone, and people looked out for each other, and you celebrated each other's achievements. And yet, you knew you were part of a larger being, with the university close by, because there were always new people coming in, but you grew up in a very family-oriented environment. Up to when I was about six, I lived in the former, I think, Army barracks, they had young faculty and staff living where Grady Gammage Auditorium is now, and there are some photos of that, so I was literally on campus even then. I actually remember that.

And currently, that the city has done an extremely good job of maturing. And we are location-bound, but we haven't let any particular thing kind of override us, and I don't think there's really any part of this city that has gone down so far that the city hasn't come in and helped rebuild it. And the little downtown part is the absolute perfect example of that. People love being down there. And it had gotten to the point where it either was gonna go completely down and they'd do Southern Avenue as the center, or they would rebuild that, and they did. And they did a beautiful job.

INT: One more question before we conclude the interview. How can Tempe's, or the Valley's, diverse populations come together and form a more cohesive community?

CW: The whole Valley?

INT: Or let's say specifically Tempe; the whole Valley is a little too broad, I think.

CW: And it's hard to bring them all into Tempe. But even in Tempe, you are going to get a different mix.

It's kind of like asking what's the university going to be like, or higher education like, in 2050? I'd be curious to think about what the city of Tempe would be like in 2020, because that's not too far away, but it's far enough. 2020, or 2050.

Will we physically grow up in facilities, will there be more stacked housing, more stacked retail? Which then makes it seem a little different, and we're already starting to see some of that.

Will there be more enclaves? A part of what is different here than the Midwest, and I don't know where you're from, is just the sheer fact that you have pools, you've got walls so that neighbors don't cross over. And you usually have brick walls, not fences or bushes, because of all the green, and you're not supposed to do all that. So what does that do to the sense of community, and will we lose even more and more of that? So there will need to be a very concerted effort to either develop, even in the city of Tempe, not an all-city celebration—you need to have some all-city celebrations—but there could even be more regional or clustering of events, that are beyond neighborhoods, but not the whole city.

So however that would come about. Can you do that through your educational entities, or do you do it through some cultural things, or a combination of both? I think you could actually utilize school settings more. They've got the facilities, they've got the grounds. And they do a lot more with the City of Tempe; I know my husband works a lot with the Parks & Rec area. Even the facilities—one of them has summer school, but the others don't. Are there some things that could even go back to more neighborhood activities that draw people into existing rather than building new facilities? It kind of goes back to a book called "Bowling Alone," the whole concept of people growing up and being part of bowling leagues and parks leagues and all that, and now you would go, and is there anybody ever there? And instead of embracing people, it's kind of like we're wary—who is that and why are they there? And this place has always been one that welcomes people, but we have to continue to do that, in a concerted effort, not a passive effort, or we'll lose that feel of Tempe.

INT: All right. I'd like to conclude the interview here. While we're on the record, if you have any final remarks or statements that you'd like to make, feel free to go ahead.

CW: I think I would end with just what I said at the beginning, that Tempe is just a wonderful place to be. While it doesn't have designated boundaries any more that a stranger would know about, it still has a real draw for people. People want to live here, people know it is known for its quality of life. Even in the current economic slump, the housing market is, relative to the others, still very good, and it's because people want to be here.

INT: Okay. I'd like to thank you very much for your participation, for letting us come in and do this, and especially for your time, because we know you're very, very busy. So we'll conclude the Tempe Historical Museum's renovation interview with Christine Wilkinson on July 18, 2008.

*(end of recording)*

Transcribed by Susan Jensen  
January 2013

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