



## **Starr McMullen Oral History Interview, September 4, 2015**

### **Title**

“Of Economics and Fiddling”

### **Date**

September 4, 2015

### **Location**

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

### **Summary**

In the interview, McMullen discusses her upbringing in New York City and New York state, her early education and interests in music, and the path that she took to pursuing economics as an academic major. From there, she describes her experiences as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, noting her movement toward studying transportation economics, Berkeley faculty who were important to her, and her becoming a mother while on the Ph.D. track.

After a brief note on her first academic position at Central Michigan University, McMullen turns her attention to her years at Oregon State University. In this, she shares her recollections of arriving in Corvallis and of early colleagues in Economics including Bill Wilkins, Charlie Vars, Ze'ev Orzech, and Emery Castle. She likewise reflects on the historical connection between the Economics and Agricultural and Resource Economics departments at OSU; her research in transportation economics and macroeconomics; raising three children while pursuing tenure; her association with the Transportation Research Forum; the history of the OSU Transportation Institute; and her role in helping to create a graduate program in Economics at Oregon State.

From there, McMullen recalls the impact of Ballot Measure 5 on operations at OSU. She then provides detailed insight into her years as department chair and the faculty dissension that led to the dissolution of the Economics graduate program. As she rounds out her OSU memories, McMullen speaks of her experiences with the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors, as well as her involvement with the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate, the Triad Club, and the OSU Symphony.

The session nears its conclusion with a conversation on fiddling, including McMullen's first involvement with the discipline and a discussion of fiddling culture. The interview concludes with thoughts on the uneven advancement of women within the economics profession and McMullen's sense of OSU's direction moving forward.

### **Interviewee**

Starr McMullen

### **Interviewer**

Chris Petersen

### **Website**

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/mcmullen/>

## Transcript

**Chris Petersen:** Alright, today is September 4th, 2015 and we are with Starr McMullen, who is emeritus faculty from Economics. And we'll talk a lot about her association with OSU and her research, but I'd like to begin at the beginning and develop a broader sense of your life. Where were you born?

**Starr McMullen:** I was born in Manhattan.

**CP:** Oh really? And what were your parents' backgrounds?

**SM:** My parents met while they were in the theater in Manhattan, and that's where they lived when I was born. And I lived in upstate New York a little bit, forty miles north of the city, for high school.

**CP:** So your parents were theater professionals?

**SM:** They were aspiring theater professionals, both of them. They met in an Off-Broadway; they both wanted to be actors.

**CP:** And how long did you live in New York City?

**SM:** I lived there until I was in fourth grade, nine years old.

**CP:** So there's probably some memories from a New York City childhood?

**SM:** Oh yeah. [sound of a baby crying]

**CP:** There's a day care center right next to us. [laughs]

**SM:** [laughs] What is that?

**CP:** Anything that sticks out?

**SM:** Well, it was sort of interesting, we were on Central Park West. I could walk to my school and go for school and take our recesses in the park. We'd go to a lot of museums – the Natural History Museum, the Indian museum. There was a doll museum my mother dragged me through. Those sorts of things.

**CP:** And what precipitated the move up-state?

**SM:** My dad was always going from – he was always out of work. So we ended up moving in with my grandmother upstate, in Yorktown. Actually, she was in Peekskill, which is about forty miles north of the city up the Hudson River Line, up the railway.

**CP:** And that's where you went to high school?

**SM:** I went to high school in Yorktown – Yorktown High School. And my folks moved there specifically because they had heard it was a good school district, and it was.

**CP:** So what were your interests growing up?

**SM:** My interests? I liked astronomy; I wanted to be an astronomer. I went to the library and read every book I could find on astronomy when I was in about fourth and fifth grade. And I always wanted to play the violin because my grandfather - who I never really met, he died when I was eighteen months old - he had been sort of a child prodigy. And so my dad had a closet full of violins that he lost when he put them in storage and didn't pay the fees. But I always wanted to play, so I started in fifth grade strings. And other than that, any specific interests? Not really. Do you have anything in mind?

**CP:** No. The violin is obviously important. So that's something that you stuck with, I'm guessing, through your whole life. Or was there a period of time when it went away?

**SM:** Oh yeah, it went away. I played in fifth grade strings, I had a private – I went to the same music teacher, an older lady, name Mrs. Chesnow, who was from a Soviet bloc country someplace. And she was always trying to groom me for being a concert violinist. But I played in an orchestra through about sophomore year in high school when other things took my interest, and I didn't really play again until I was in college. And then I played for a couple of years in college. Then when I went to grad school I didn't play. And when I got my first job, which was at Central Michigan University, I took a year of violin lessons and played in their orchestra. So when I came here, the orchestra conductor there said, "you need to go out for their orchestra." And so I did; I came here and the first thing I did was go into the OSU Symphony for seven years, before I started fiddling.

**CP:** Was it something that you had an aptitude for from the beginning?

**SM:** No, I don't think so. It was all hard work. [laughs] I don't have a whole lot of natural aptitude for it, but I just like it a lot.

**CP:** What was school like growing up?

**SM:** Well, in the city I went to a private school and it was great. It was called Alexander Robertson. It was founded in, I think, about 1778. And I met some of the friends that I still am friends with to this day; I still visit them when I go to Washington, D.C. And it gave me a good foundation. When I went up to Westchester County, I went to one school where the academics were a couple of years behind where I had been, so they were always trying to put me into more advanced classes. And back then, they used to track you – they would sort of test you and you would be in the accelerated or the enriched or whatever – and fortunately they did put me in the accelerated group, where I had a really good peer group of academic students with me. They studied and I didn't, but I made it through.

**CP:** Was there always the expectation you were going to go to college?

**SM:** Not really. The reason I went to college is because in New York state they gave you regent's tests, which are basically tests in subject areas. And then when you're a senior, you took the National Merit Scholarship thing, for which I was a semi-finalist, and then they gave you the regent's scholarship test, and that determined whether they gave you scholarships for New York state schools. And my test scores were such that I got into New York state schools with tuition paid, which is why I went.

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My father had gone to a couple years of college. His father had been a lawyer; he came from a family of lawyers. They had been educated. My mom's side, not so much. So there wasn't expectation, but since I got a free scholarship, I went to Stony Brook, SUNY-Stony Brook, at the time. And got a degree there in four years, and then came here. Or, I went to Berkeley; went to the west coast, I mean.

**CP:** So tell me about your academic progression at Stony Brook.

**SM:** Stony Brook, I spent the first year mostly listening to a lot of rock and roll concerts – the Grateful Dead and all these people, Neil Young came to Stony Brook and I was very much involved in that. Jefferson Starship. This is probably what you want to hear. And at the end of the second semester, I ended up taking an economics class, because I had to take a social science requirement. And my then-boyfriend, his brother was an economist and he said, "oh, you should take this class with this friend of my brother's." So I did, and I really liked the class and everybody else hated it. So I figured maybe I had a comparative advantage.

And meanwhile, I'd never really done much with the music. I'd taken a couple of music classes and I had sat in on a music theory class where I went in on the first day and they played chords and they wanted me to tell them what chords they were. And I had no idea, because the violin is a melody instrument; I had never been taught anything about chords. So I figured I probably wasn't going to do so well if I went into music. And by that time I had friends, so I decided that I would stay for the next year. And after that I got serious about school and I had a 4.0 for the rest of my academic career at Stony Brook. The Math department tried to talk me into being a math major, but I had already been accepted to grad school at Berkeley in economics, so I did not stay for a math major.

**CP:** But that's something you also had a facility with obviously.

**SM:** I liked math, yes. I've always liked math.

**CP:** What was it about economics that captivated you?

**SM:** Well, what I think that I liked about it was the analytics. It was an application, using your math skills, but it had an application that made sense to me. And I was also very much interested – I went to school, you know, in 1969, it was the peak of the Vietnam era – and I was very much into politics and I thought I wanted to be a politician, don't ask me why. [laughs] And I realized that I sure didn't want to be a politician, but that the economics should be informing the politicians. And it really hasn't gotten a whole lot better. They just pick and choose what they want to hear from economists. But that was sort of the idea, is that I was really interested in real life policy issues and the economics application to them gave me a way to look at the behavioral side of things; social science.

**CP:** And you were a teaching assistant as well during that time period.

**SM:** As an undergrad? Yeah, I actually was. I went to an econometrics class, which was with a guy named Williams Dawes, whose distant relative rode a horse with Paul Revere, and they have a little square to him in Boston these days. But Dawes was an absolutely phenomenal teacher and he had brought the econometrics enrollment from Stony Brook from – you know, it's not a very popular class – and he brought it from, it's like usually twenty-five people, and he had 150 students in it for two quarters. And he was great; he taught probability and statistics. And I was one of his top students, so he had us help him be TA's for the next class. First we did grading and we did tutoring and things like that. And he is the one who made me go into economics as a profession. And it's interesting, because he was there at Stony Brook for many years, won all their teaching awards, won the New York State University System teaching awards, and they finally tenured him but it took them a long time to promote him to associate professor because his publications weren't as good as they wanted. But he was the best teacher in whole system.

And, actually, I went back and visited with him when I was department chair and he was the department chair at Stony Brook – we actually went to AEA meetings for department chairs together. And then I visited him at Stony Brook about five years ago. And they'd given me the Outstanding Economics Award at the end of my college career there, and he'd had a beer mug engraved for me. But apparently it hadn't gotten there in time, so he gave it to me when I was visiting him about five years ago, because he'd kept it on his shelf all that time. He's very interesting.

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**CP:** Well, so we've discerned the reason why you decided to pursue academia as a profession, and as somebody who was apparently very engaged in the time period, you decided to go to Berkeley. And that was a center point for a lot of what was going on in American society – maybe a little bit before then – but the lingering effects of that, I'm sure, were still around. So I'm interested in this initial perspective on Berkeley for you.

**SM:** Well the decision to go to Berkeley was partially because it was the best school that I got into that was in a place that I wanted to go. I had applied to Stanford and Harvard as well, and I was a Danforth finalist. And I went for my Danforth interview, my brother, who was having some issues, came and visited me, and I had him down in the lobby. I had a terrible Danforth interview, so I did not get the scholarship. And as soon as I got rejected for that, Stanford and Harvard didn't accept me, but Berkeley did. And I could have gone to Colorado or San Diego, where they gave me full rides, but I figured Berkeley would be better in the long run, and it was a good choice.

The other thing is this big music scene in Berkeley going on at the time, which I took full advantage of.

**CP:** Any particularly memorable moments from that?

**SM:** Well, I used to go to Grateful Dead concerts. I met my husband at the Keystone Berkeley going to a Merl Saunders/Jerry Garcia concert. I went and saw a band called Asleep at the Wheel, which I had kept thinking was from Berkeley because we used to see them down there all the time. They moved to Austin, Texas, and now I have a fiddle friend who plays with Asleep at the Wheel and I just saw them last week up in Portland, and that brought back lots of memories. Actually, I've had a couple friends who've played with them over the years – fiddlers move around a lot.

Anyway, so yes, and Berkeley was a quite interesting place at the time. What I was surprised at was that Berkeley, the campus itself, was a lot more conservative than I had thought it was going to be. It's the community that was more of the radical element. Whereas, when I was at Stony Brook and they had the marches on Washington and stuff like that, it was the whole campus. They had riots on campus; it was crazy at Stony Brook at the time. And so the campus at Berkeley was a lot more conservative than I had expected.

**CP:** Was it a pretty easy adjustment for you, moving to the west coast?

**SM:** Moving to the west coast was an easy adjustment, going from undergraduate to graduate school at Berkeley was not quite so easy, because what I found was a lot of the people who were starting grad school at Berkeley already had master's degrees from somewhere else, because it was a Ph.D. program. Whereas I just had a bachelor's degree, so it took me a while to catch up that first year because it sort of slammed me. I didn't know how to do things that they knew how to do, because they'd already taken these classes. And so it took a while to adjust.

**CP:** So you jumped right into the Ph.D. track then.

**SM:** There's only a Ph.D. track at Berkeley. At a lot of the better schools they did not, at that time, have any master's-only programs. What you do is you get a master's-in-passing, which is when you get done with your coursework, and if you pass your field exams, they'll give you a master's degree. Because a lot of people go to Berkeley and finish all that, but then they never finish a Ph.D. degree and they won't have something to show. So I panicked in year three and took a master's degree just in case, but I did finish.

**CP:** Well at some point you got a research assistantship at the Sloan Foundation for Research in Transportation.

**SM:** That was at Berkeley. The Sloan Foundation, which does sponsor a lot of research in transportation, they sponsored fellowships at Berkeley for a program to promote people doing research in transportation. And it was joint – people in Engineering had it and Economics. And I got into it because I was in industrial organization, which looks at different industries, and transportation is just a different industry. And they had fellowships available and I TA'd my first two years at Berkeley and found that that wasn't giving me a whole lot of time to find a thesis topic. And so, I applied for this Sloan Fellowship. And there was a group of us, probably fifteen students, and every week we would get together for a seminar, we'd have a speaker, one of them would talk about their research, and then we would each work with an individual professor. And we all did Ph.D.'s in some aspect of transportation.

**CP:** So transportation economics has been central to your research for your whole career-

**SM:** It has turned out that way, yes.

**CP:** So you were not necessarily anticipating that though, this was just an opportunity for you at Berkeley and what kind of led to this?

**SM:** Well, my interest was macroeconomics, which is why I'm actually on the Governor's Council of Economic Advisors; that's what I've always been very interested in. But at the time, the macroeconomists at Berkeley – there was Aaron Gordon who had been president of the AEA, he retired and it turned out he had just been diagnosed cancer and he ended up dying. And then we had Barry Bosworth from the Brookings Institute come out for a little bit, but he was there for a year and then went back because the west coast was not close enough to the news. He had to be right on top of it in Washington, D.C.

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So macro wasn't a real big field there. And then the other field I took was industrial org, because I liked looking at the way that regulations and the government affected the way industries performed, and then also how industries figure into the overall economy. And transportation is one that started out there, and I did my thesis on the cost of capital to the airline industry, because airlines were being deregulated. And it was a great opportunity to compare the industry pre- and post-regulation. And that's what I spent the early part of my career doing, most of my research was on that.

I would like to have done more macro, but macro changed a whole lot, and it went from looking at business cycles and short-term economic policies – more Keynesian economics that got sort of taken over by growth theory and mathematicians who basically do a lot of dynamic optimization and do all this stuff. But they can't tell you anything about short-term economic fluctuations, whether they think they can or not, which is one reason why I didn't pursue that direction, because the only thing you can get published in that direction is this new growth theory. And you what you have in macro, even today, is a lot of people who are trained in mathematics, are A.B.D. in mathematics, and then they switch over to economics just to apply it over here. But a lot of them have never even taken a principles class, which is one reason why macroeconomics, as a field to teach and to take classes at in a university, is a disaster.

And it also is one reason why we've had several years of problems trying to figure out what's going on in the economy, especially in the 1990s and the 2000s. Because you've got a whole generation of economists who are just trained in dynamic optimization and growth theory, and don't do short-term fluctuations. That's probably more than you wanted to hear about macro.

But transportation turned out be an area that is a very interdisciplinary field and there, at that time, were not a whole lot of economists who were doing work in it. There's still not; they do it sort of tangentially. And what happens is there's a lot of other people who love to do the economics work, and they do not do it correctly. So you have a lot of engineers who think they can do economics because they can count and they can calculate how much things cost, but that's not economics, that's accounting. And so I sort of have a little niche in there, and it's still there.

**CP:** Did you have a mentor at Berkeley?

**SM:** Yes, Ted Keeler. Ted Keeler was the – I told you I got to Berkeley really unprepared for these graduate classes, and so the first year I took micro theory and then they had you taking the exam at the end of the year to qualify, a qualifying exam. Well, my first quarter I got a B- in my micro class, and then I got a B+ , and then I got an A-. Well, those aren't stellar grades for Berkeley but, you know, it's Berkeley, what the heck. I didn't know what I was doing the first quarter. And I took the prelim in micro and I got the highest grade. They decided that year that the prelims couldn't possibly be relied upon, so they went back and said if you had less than a B in any class you had to re-take it and do all this stuff.

So when I went to re-take that first class I took it with Ted Keeler and he was teaching and he said, "why are you in here?" And I explained to him and he said, "well, that's ridiculous." And so we worked out a deal where I took industrial organization in the field that year and I re-took that one class, but I took the industrial organization field that year and they waived any more restrictions on me. I also got the highest grade in the macro prelims, but I'd also gotten A's in all those classes, so that didn't count. So I sort of stumble, in a way, into industrial org, but that was an area that was real interesting to me because it had regulation, anti-trust, and industry structure. And how industries behave. I mean, I guess I could have become an anti-trust or something like that.

**CP:** You became a mother as a grad student as well.

**SM:** Towards the end of my last year. Yeah, I defended when I was pregnant and then my daughter was born - she was born before the last year...I defended my final thesis with her, I had my daughter already. Which is interesting because my office partner and I both were pregnant the same year and Ted Keeler, who was my thesis advisor and who was a transportation economist and industrial organization guy, he was great. I just went right through and did great at everything. Her thesis advisor was a woman named Clair Vickery, who had been recently divorced. And she chewed her out for getting pregnant and told her she would never have a career. And my officemate ended up dropping out of grad school. So that's sort of like, you asked about being a woman in economics, there were only four of us in my year when we came into the program there, and only two of us finished with Ph.D.'s

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**CP:** And how did you organize your life with a new baby and trying to finish up a Ph.D., seems like a very-

**SM:** Well, I was fortunate because I did have the Sloan fellowship, so I'd have to go to my seminars every week but with thesis I could work at home. And I worked at home quite a bit with a new baby, and then my husband, he took her sometimes. I wasn't sure what he did with her, but yes he did take her quite a bit. And that was what actually – you asked

something about me deciding to go into academics, well deciding to go into academics was, I did have a family and I knew that an academic schedule could be flexible, other than you have to be at your classes and you have to fulfill your obligations. You can do your work late at night after the child's gone to sleep or that sort of thing. And so my days and my hours could be flexed, and that's the main reason I went into academics. But I also like keeping in touch with students, which has been very interesting over the years.

**CP:** Well your first job after grad school was at Central Michigan, but it was very short-lived. What was the story there?

**SM:** Well I'm from New York, my husband's from California. He said he would not go farther east than Michigan. And so, that was the only tenure-track job that I got offered that year. I got a couple of non-tenure track jobs and I took that one; that's what my advisor suggested. And once we'd lived in Michigan for a year, we realized that either coast would have been better than being in Michigan.

And so I interviewed for jobs back here and got this job at OSU, which was a strange job in the sense that it was not a tenure-track job because they told me that the college was over-tenured and so until the college tenure ratio went down they were not hiring any professors on anything but a fixed-term position. But that it was pretty much going to be conducted the same as a tenure-track position, and they sort of sucked me in. Because my husband was trained in forestry and we wanted to get back to the west coast. And so it was an actual job, it wasn't like I was filling in for someone. It was a line item, but it was not a tenure-track job.

So I came here and I was here five years and I was promoted to associate professor before they changed the job to tenure-track. A fellow – you may be familiar with him, his name is Graham Spanier, he's the one who was the president at Penn who got into all sorts of trouble the last year or two – he was here at the time as the associate v.p. and he basically said, "these fixed-term things are not appropriate. You either make them tenure-track or else make them temporary and don't rehire them." So they made us tenure-track. So once they made it tenure-track I had to go up for tenure, and I had to go up for tenure after I had just gone up for associate professor. So I got tenure but you had to go through the whole-year process again for that. So I had like two associate professor reviews, one for tenure separate from my one for associate.

**CP:** Spanier comes up a lot, it sounds like he really made a big impact, especially in the liberal arts at OSU.

**SM:** Well he did, because what was happening in the liberal arts was they were not having tenure-track faculty, they were having these fixed-term faculty. And then the fixed-term faculty were here like eight or ten years, and that's getting past the seven-year thing, and it was really clear they were using them to avoid tenure-track slots. And he, in all fairness, he said "that's it." He got rid of those, which was really good. Of course, now we have sort of the same problem again, except for those people now are not being told that they're the exact same as the others but they're not tenure-track. So, yeah.

And he did promote – I think he promoted the liberal arts pretty well. I think he understood the importance of liberal arts, whereas, until then, OSU was not the liberal arts college, we were the ag college. So the liberal arts, a lot of the programs weren't really even full undergraduate programs. I don't believe Economics got a full undergraduate degree until the late '60s. There had been a big hiring spurt then. This is why I asked you whether you had interviewed people, because when it started out, Economics only had two years' worth of classes, it was not a four-year degree. And in the late '60s, I think, there was a guy named Friday who was the chair of the department, and he hired a lot of the people like John Farrell and Charlie Vars and Floyd McFarland and probably Bill Wilkins. And all of these people got hired at that time to beef up the department, because they were going to go to a real economics major. And so that's what they did in the late '60s, but then it was always still like you can't have graduate programs in the liberal arts because that's the U of O's province, despite the fact that PSU was starting them by the early '80s.

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**CP:** What do you remember about your early impressions of the university and of the community when you arrived here?

**SM:** Well, I thought it was quite interesting. I had a hard time getting people to rent to use because it was my job, because I was the one who was the bread-winner, and I think that – we had a lot of people refuse to rent to us. [laughs] Of course, we did have kids and dogs and stuff, but so did other people. And then, towards the end of our first year here, we tried to buy some property down in Alpine to build a house on. And it was financed through the Federal Farm Bureau. And when

we went in and it was obvious I was pregnant, they just said they wouldn't give me the farm loan. [laughs] They wouldn't give the loan at all. So it was quite interesting coming here, in that sort of sense.

I was the only woman in the department that was on a – well, I was on a fixed-term position but I was the only one who had a full position. Martha [Fraundorf] was filling in, and she and her husband had both been part-timers filling in for people on breaks. And then I told you about Jean Dost, who had been in the Economics department with a Ph.D. from Harvard. And she had been denied tenure, had sued the university, and been granted tenure but pulled out of the Economics department. And so I was in this interesting position. But I must say that the people who were here at the time - which was like Ken Patterson, Charlie Vars - were extremely, really very very supportive and very helpful. They were helping me any way they could to succeed, I felt, at that time.

**CP:** Yeah, it sounds like it was a pretty potent collection of faculty in Economics on some level; names that I've heard a lot of in other areas. Bill Wilkins is one, who went on to become a dean; Vars become mayor of Corvallis.

**SM:** Yes. When I came here, Wilkins was actually on leave at the FAA, because it was during the, let's see, the end of the Carter administration, I think. Is that right?

**CP:** Yeah.

**SM:** And he had an FAA appointment. So I was actually put in his office, which he, I think, wanted to get back when he got back, but Patterson wouldn't give it to him. So I got the big office that was Bill Wilkins' But then Wilkins moved over to the dean's office pretty quickly. And he and I actually got along really well because he was really into aviation and my thesis had been on airlines. So I did some work for them looking at the economic impacts of airports and general aviation reports, and I remember we flew up to a couple of the airport conferences in a little Mooney that the OSU Flying Club had and the state aviation department had. They had a jet at the time, they don't anymore, I don't believe.

**CP:** Tell me a bit more about Charlie Vars.

**SM:** Charlie, he's quite a unique individual. I love Charlie Vars. He had a reputation with students who would say, "he makes us sit in the dark," because he had everything on transparencies. Everything was on transparencies. And he's very very organized, very intellectual, had read a whole lot of things, but he's very focused. And I remember I came to OSU and I had a daughter and I had a son – I came in '80, my son was born in June '81, so I was pregnant the first year I was here, and so was Martha Fraundorf. In '83, when I was pregnant, Martha Fraundorf was pregnant at the same time and my baby was due in March and hers – we ended up having children a week apart. But about in late December, he said something to me like, "what are we going to do when Martha has that baby? What are we going to do about teaching?" And I said, "well, what about me?" And he said, "what about you?" And I was like eight months pregnant and Charlie hadn't noticed, because all Charlie noticed was economics.

And I remember teaching classes for him where he would leave me with his set of transparencies. And then he did go into – he was mayor for about twelve years, I think. That was a great stint of time. I actually took the *Gazette-Times* so that I could keep track of what he was doing; it would always be the subject of talk every day in the office. And then he chaired the department for a couple years.

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**CP:** So he was on faculty during his mayorship as well?

**SM:** Oh yeah, the whole time. The mayor position is not a paid position. No, he was full-time faculty. They may have given him down a course or something for – the fact that whoever is mayor, it helped OSU to have a mayor, the city/gown connection, I think. I think he was a great mayor, I think he just got probably tired of doing it.

**CP:** Another name that's intriguing to me is Ze'ev Orzech. His wife Miriam comes up a lot and she was obviously a very important woman here on campus, but they were both actively involved in the Jewish community as well, as I understand.

**SM:** Yes. Well Ze'ev was interesting because he came here and he did not have a Ph.D. - that did not work to his advantage. And I remember – I told you I was in the tenure-track position but before that I was fixed-term and they

promoted me to associate professor, so I was a fixed-term associate professor, so that put me on the tenure committee. So here I am voting on tenure issues and promotion issues for people who were tenured, but I'm not. And Ze'ev was one who came up and he had a hard time getting full professor because he hadn't published very much. And he tried to say "well, I have a master's degree and you didn't tell me – when I got hired all I was supposed to do was teach, I wasn't supposed to publish," and blah, blah, blah. And so he got denied tenure. Well, he went to the grindstone and he started publishing and he published quite a bit. He impressed everybody else and he got his full professor promotion. He had such an interesting manner – he was sort of intimidating but he was a really nice guy, but it scared me for about two years before I could actually talk to him because he had a very strong presence and was very intimidating.

His wife Mimi was always delightful. I remember her saying to me, "you're lucky because you're starting here while you're really young," and apparently she had waited until her children were out of the house, or at least in school, before she had gone back into academics and into administration. She said, "if I had started at your point I could be a university president but," she said, "I know I'm not going to get there because I didn't start early enough." I should tell her now it didn't make a difference anyway. [laughs]

**CP:** Was there any connection between Economics and Ag Economics at this point?

**SM:** Oh there's always a connection. Actually when I first came here, I talked about macroeconomics, that's actually what they hired me to teach. And part of the reason was because they didn't have anybody who felt confident teaching graduate macroeconomics. And the Econ department didn't have a graduate program but Ag Econ did, and they wanted to have macroeconomics taught. So they were teaching it but it was not really up to whatever it should be. And Dick Towey taught it for a couple of years and then he turned it over.

When I came here, my first quarter I was teaching a class that was a 400- or 500-level class or something. So I had some undergrads but I had graduate students in there and they were the Ag Econ grad students. And I was teaching it for their program, that's one reason I came. When I came Econ did not have a graduate program but they said, "Ag Econ does and we really want to have a graduate program put in and we want you to help us get this graduate program going." So that was definitely an added incentive to come here. So it was really strange being in this class with these Forestry students and these Ag Econ students who were older than me, who had come from industry and stuff. It was quite interesting. I remember, at the very beginning, there was a couple of Middle Eastern students who complained that they couldn't take the class because they were not allowed to look at a woman who was not their wife. But they were told that they would just have to figure it out, so they had to take a class from me anyway.

**CP:** Well we talk about Ag Econ at OSU and very quickly come to the name of Emery Castle. He wasn't there when you first arrived but he came back a few years later, didn't he?

**SM:** He came back at the end of the '80s. When I came here, there was a guy named Gene Nelson who was the head of Ag Econ. And he was quite supportive, but probably the person who I worked with the most when I worked with people in Ag Econ back in the '80s, was Mike Martin. Have you heard of Mike Martin? He left here and he became an associate dean at Minnesota and then University of Florida, and then he was president at New Mexico State – is that the one in Las Cruces? And then he's now president or head or chancellor, whatever they call it, of LSU, Louisiana State. But he's an Ag Econ guy and he did stuff with transportation of ag commodities. So he and I hooked up pretty early; some of my earliest publications are with Mike and Mike's students in Ag Econ.

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And I went over, I remember talking to Steve Buccola as well because there were some theoretical things that I needed to get straight in a couple of papers and Steve was a micro theorist. So that was where the people who really had sort of state of the art, at that time, theory were located. People in Econ were really pretty much teaching faculty at that time.

**CP:** Did you come to know Castle?

**SM:** I knew Emery some, mostly because of the fact that he kind of brought into – I worked all through the '80s putting together this UGFE, the University Graduate Faculty in Economics program, and then when we finally brought it to the board, they decided it was the time, it was around '87 or '88, that was the time when they needed to get somebody who was

well-known to come in and push it through the board and the legislative process. And that was Emery. They brought in Emery and he got behind it, because he was like-minded in the sense that we knew that we had these programs on campus that all depended upon a core of economics, but we didn't have enough resources to have it taught by any one of these departments without losing all the rest of the stuff that they were going to do. So we had to coordinate and cooperate, and I think Emery probably was a proponent of that from the very beginning. And he really shepherded it through the legislature and got the program put in place, and then he stayed for several years and he was a good influence. And he also, I think, had a good relationship with the president, which I think helped, and good connections in economics.

**CP:** You've referenced a few times being pregnant, you had two more children while you were on the tenure track.

**SM:** I've had three.

**CP:** But you had two more after you came to OSU, you've had three total. I can't imagine the complications of your life during that time period, it must have been very busy.

**SM:** Well it's like a blur. It's like a blur. And that's one of the things is that I know – in subsequent years, I've been on the Faculty Senate, on the P and T committee and stuff – so if a woman is out and has children and you give her time off, does that stop her tenure clock? And what I have found is that there are two ways that people view it. One is that, "oh yeah it stops her tenure clock so she gets more time." Other people will say, "oh that means that she has much more time then to do research." [laughs] So I don't think you can win.

So yeah, I did not take any time off. I had one child in June and one child in March, and both times I managed to acquire some sort of a small research funding which would buy me out of a class, and scheduled my classes so that there were time periods like this. And I minimized my time on campus and maximized my time at home. My kids never went to full-time day care, like 8:00 to 4:00 or 8:00 to 5:00, they would go to – when they got a little older they went to Montessori school from 8:00 to noon and then they would sometimes to a baby sitter from 12:00 to 3:00, or whatever I needed to. And then my husband, he actually ended up being pretty flexible too, when he had to. But yeah, it is a blur.

**CP:** Let's talk a bit about your research and getting that set up once you arrived. Again, the focus has definitely been on transportation economics and just looking through your vita, it looks like it's included motor vehicles, airlines and freight, so sort of all-encompassing.

**SM:** Trucks, trains, boats and planes. And passenger and freight. And lately it's gone to sort of tangentially related to urban transportation, which is more like transit and how do you reduce driving in town and highway finance. It morphs from one field – there's so many places you can apply economics. But when I say economics, I'm not talking about just adding up how much it costs to build this piece of road – that's accounting, anybody can do that. The economic question is whether you should build that road or you should put the money over here in transit, or you should put the money over here in rail or some other infrastructure improvement.

**CP:** And your work seems to manifest itself in heavy involvement in a few areas – the Transportation Research Forum is one.

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**SM:** Transportation Research Forum is a group that split off from the American Economic Association in the late '50s, because they felt that the AEA, American Economics Association, didn't have enough practitioners involved and they thought it was just all these academic pie-in-the-sky people. So the Transportation Research Forum broke off from there, it basically created another organization which is supposed to be practitioners of government, academics and industry. So you have three different groups that are involved in transportation. And when they formed, remember a lot of the transportation industries were regulated. You had the Civil Aeronautics Board, you had the Interstate Commerce Commission for trucks and highways. I started getting involved in that in the '80s because I needed to go to conferences and stuff, and there were people in the Northwest who went, like Ken Casavant up at Washington State University, who does their transportation program. And I started going to that back at that time, and I would give papers there and got some publications from meeting people there and learning more about outlets and things, networking.

And so there's two groups. The other one is the Transportation and Public Utilities Group, which is the one that the TRF splintered off from. And that's the oldest affiliated American Economics Association group, so the American Economics Association was formed and the first sub-group it had was the Transportation and Public Utilities Group, which was formed back in the '20s because, of course, back then they were building the highways, you had the railroads, you had the anti-trust stuff and all that stuff, all the regulatory aspects of transportation. Plus the whole utility grid being put on, and those are the topics that are covered there. And yeah, I've been president of both of those groups and I'm still going to the meetings sometimes. I've been fairly active with the TRF; I'm still on the board of editors of their journal.

**CP:** Speaking of which, you edited four volumes of *Research in Transportation Economics*.

**SM:** That was a series that my thesis advisor had been the editor of and he put out two editions of it and just couldn't stay on top of it. It was really hard work because it was hard getting good quality papers. I went through a lot of papers that were really really poor, and that's one of the reasons why there's so few volumes that came out of it, because it took a long time to find that many papers that were really good. That's since been taken over by Elsevier Press, which now has people – they have an editor but that editor gets guest editors, so people have to put one volume together or whatever. But it got to be a lot of work and not much pay-off. When Elsevier came over and said they wanted to put it out three or four times a year and I was lucky if I could get it out every other year. Find somebody else. [laughs] I think Curt Grimm – who is also a UC-Berkeley/Sloan Foundation, he was in the same group – I think he took it over and he's at the University of Maryland. Being near D.C. really helps to get a whole bunch of people to do those guest editor slots.

**CP:** What is the OSU Transportation Research Institute?

**SM:** That was something that was here when I came to campus. It was located in Engineering, Gary Hicks was the head and Ted Vinson was also very heavily involved. And they used to have – transportation engineering is a program in Engineering – and they had people from Business. There was Phil Schary, who was in Business, who was interested in transportation, there was me, and there were people from Geography, and we'd all get together twice a year with people from ODOT and other transportation interest groups, the railroads. And we'd talk about research and what we're doing, what they wanted to have research on.

And then they changed the structure in the late-'80s, and instead of it being a research institute there was some sort of restructuring. And this may have been Risser, I'm not sure exactly, who wanted to get rid of some of these institutes. And they ended up turning it into the Kiewit Center, which is down in Engineering now. And the Kiewit Center was sponsored by the Kiewit Company, which is mostly a construction company, I think. So it's the Kiewit Center for, I think, Structures and Transportation. The transportation part of it has been a little subsumed, and it's all in Engineering, so it's mostly engineers now, although I do work with them – I'm on their list of affiliates and I have worked with some of their faculty. And the student I just finished in June is doing a Ph.D. degree in transportation engineering and I continue to be on that committee as well.

So it was an institute which brought together transportation researchers and resources on campus, but as I say it sort of got subsumed over there because they broke up a lot of the institutes they had on campus.

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**CP:** You mentioned that part of your charge, when you arrived here, was to help get the grad program going. What role did you play in making that happen?

**SM:** They took people from – there was a guy from Statistics, a professor there, and there was, I think it was Stoltenburg from Forestry is the one who was the major impetus, he really wanted a graduate program his Forest Economics people could do. And so we had people from Forestry on this committee, I think Becky Johnson was one of them and maybe Doug Brodie, may have been the two from Forestry. And from Economics it was me and Charlie Vars, and from Ag Econ we had a guy named Bruce McCarl and I can't remember who else was on there – there were two people from each of those departments and we'd get together and we started drafting up what we wanted to have in a graduate program. Charlie was the head of that committee that put together our proposal for the graduate program in Economics. And we worked on that from, I would say, about '82 to about '86-'87 when it was passed. It went through all the processes here and went to go up to the board and the legislature, which is when we brought Emery in to push it forward.

**CP:** And then it came to pass.

**SM:** It came to pass, yeah. It came to pass. Actually my student Hiroshi Tanaka was the first one to get a degree from that program. He got a master's degree and he worked on trucking. Obviously most of my students have because that's where I've had funding and been able to support them.

**CP:** I'm interested in your perspective, as somebody who was here when it happened – a faculty member but also an economist – on Ballot Measure 5 and the impact that it made at OSU. It sounds like it was a crisis for a while.

**SM:** You know, there's been several crises, so I'm trying to remember which one this one was. I know you mentioned it at the beginning of the interview. I know that we went through something.

**CP:** It's the property tax limitation measure.

**SM:** Well, I remember that. What's happened in the state has been, of course, that the university dollars - it used to be like 70% of the university dollars used to come from the state. Now it's below 20%, and I think that's the biggest manifestation of Measure 5. So as a result, the university itself has to go and either raise tuition or else you have to really increase the pressure for outside funding. So in some places, the pressure was really, really strong. And that's basically what it's done. So it's made it so it's more imperative for people to get external funding, and I don't think this is only OSU. I think it's happened to higher ed across the country.

But it makes it a lot more difficult to fund your operations, and they're always looking for short cuts, which is one reason why they have part-timers teaching all over the place, and adjuncts and stuff like that. Because they don't have to have tenure lines, because tenure lines you're making a commitment to, and if you get cut, what are you going to do with them? And I've seen that happen. When I first got here in 1980, they were having – I mean, just think about what it was like in 1980, it wasn't Measure 5 then, it was the economy tanking. And the first thing I heard when I got to campus was, what are they going to do if they start cutting? We're going to have to cut these people first, then we'll get to the tenured people.

And we've had that discussion three or four times since I've been on campus; serious discussions about – we actually, in the '80s I believe, we cut, there used to be a media program, a Journalism program. And what they decided was – and I think that this was Spanier – decided that rather than cutting faculty in each department and diluting everything, they would cut programs so they could try to strengthen programs that they identified as being the key programs. So they cut the whole Journalism program out, everybody left. Landscape Architecture, we lost that. But I thought that was before that. I mean, I don't know which set of cuts that was in.

And then we went through another big planning thing, and I think it was probably about fifteen years ago, around 2000, they went through a big thing where I remember everyone was supposed to be working on this plan for 2007 or something, I can't remember what it was. There were all these meetings and everybody's being consulted, and I don't think they really followed through on much of that except for the fact that I know that we ended up with, instead of departments, we ended up with schools. CLA was totally reorganized, for a variety of reasons. In some ways, I think it sort of brought – personally, my feeling – it sort of brought it back towards what it was before Spanier was here. It sort of diluted things again. But, that's what happened. Because the argument was "we reduced administration," but I don't think it really did any savings.

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**CP:** You referenced briefly earlier, you were the chair of Econ for three years – you had been acting chair a couple times before that. I'm interested in your experiences as chair of Economics.

**SM:** It was hell. And that played a large role in the fact that I'm an emeritus now as opposed to continuing to be an active faculty member, because it was awful. Basically the department, in the late '90s, early 2000s – I'm sure Emery talked to you about it a lot – they really felt that the graduate program in Economics was theirs and that it should serve their purpose, which was totally different. They refocused the purpose orientation away from – which traditionally had been trying to provide support for these applied programs in Ag Econ, Forestry and some particular fields in Econ that were policy-oriented and real world-oriented – they wanted to have a theoretical department. Sort of like MIT or Harvard or someplace where they actually could do it.

**CP:** These are members of the faculty?

**SM:** Members of the faculty. And it's sort of hard because they sort of recruited a little bloc, and there's some couples, which really created issues – I never thought it would, but it did. And so by the time we got to when I was appointed acting chair – the chair had gone on sabbatical and the dean really didn't want the chair to come back, I think, and so she said, "we're going to have a new chair." And that faction fought it the whole time. What she wanted, and what the administration wanted – our stated purpose to me – was they wanted to hold this graduate program in Economics together, because it had been headlined as a big success story, and it was. We had a great program going. It really strengthened the Econ department, the Ag Econ department, Forestry department. And they knew, the feeling of these faculty that were in this group, was that "the university can't survive without our graduate program in Economics, so they're going to give us more money to do what we want to do." And it was just totally unrealistic.

And they said, "we want you to get in there and try to keep this program together," and I tried. And every time I did, this little group of people would run over to the dean and say, "she's doing this or that. She put the word 'applied' in our Econometrics ad. An applied econometrician." Because that's what we wanted – we wanted someone who could do the econometric theory and teach it, but then show the people who to apply it to these different real world issues. They had an absolute fit about this, and they went to the dean and the dean would buckle down and say, "oh yeah, you have to do what they say." I mean, it was just terrible. And basically what happened was, it got to the point where I could not operate in that environment anymore. My term was coming up, so I said, "I'll take a sabbatical now and you figure out what you're doing."

And what happened was, the president decided to have a review of the program, because there had been so much trouble. They brought in an external review team – which I'm sure you've heard about this – and the external review team was only supposed to meet with the administration. By this time, the old department chair was back there holding the line, and apparently they had been on campus for two hours before they had heard my name so many times they figured they'd better talk to me. And that first night they took me to dinner and we spent about three hours talking about what's going on. And they said, "we know exactly what's going on here. There is bullying activity going on here." They were telling – oh, it was miserable – they drove out all the good junior faculty because they were doing applied work and they wanted to continue to work with all of these other departments. Even after that, junior faculty would come in and soon as they would try to make a link with one of the other departments, all the sudden they couldn't talk to you. It was just incredible.

So basically, they went through this review and the review team said, "these people have totally unrealistic expectations, they're not in the real world." And the review team also said that the administration was not fulfilling their responsibility; the administration should take a stance and just do away with this. But instead of doing that, they dissolved the graduate program in Economics, they promoted this program in public policy, they got rid of the Economics department, so to speak, merged it with this Public Policy school. And it really is, because the Econ group was so forceful in their obstructionist activities, they wanted to form a faculty so that they didn't have a majority anymore in the faculty decisions. I mean, it's crazy.

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And then what they did with that program, with the master's in public policy and now the Ph.D., is they let them create courses, economics classes, which at some cases are at a lower level than the undergraduate classes.

But then what they did was, they pulled all the resources that had been teaching all those center economics classes from Ag Econ and gave them to Econ for this public policy program. So the Applied Economics program is really struggling along. And it's really been very bad for the whole area. And it was such an area of – it was a great example of a success story, of consolidating resources, of putting together a program that gave OSU a niche that was really becoming well-known. And a lot of our former students have contacted me and said, "what happened? Why is this happening?" And then some of them who have dealt with some of the individuals know what the issues are.

But it made it very hard for me in the department, and when I got to department meetings they wouldn't let me talk. And they would wait until I went out of the room to take votes and then say I couldn't have any say in determining what was being taught in my classes. I asked to be changed to a different department. What they did was they let me change to Ag Econ, but the bad part was they left my funding in Economics. So every year I'd go to teach and they'd say, "oh, we'll

have you teach four classes of principles with 250 people in them a piece." And I'd go, "I'm bringing in all this research money and I need to buy out of classes." And they'd go, "oh no, you can't." So I'd have to fight every year about what my teaching load was and classes were. And Ag Econ, the classes they needed taught are not the classes that I teach.

So it went on for a while and I finally just decided it was easier for me to retire so I didn't have to deal with the teaching aspects and keep dealing with Economics, which I was supposed to be, by moving departments, my tenure home and everything got moved over there, but my funding didn't. And I've never been able to figure out how that could be legal. Because the reason I went there was so they wouldn't continue to try to retaliate against me, basically, because they hold me responsible for them losing their program. It just got to the point where - what I really enjoy doing is my research and I like working with my grad students, and so I still have some research contracts. Bill Furman put some money into a transportation economics fellowship fund, so I still have money to give out to students who are doing research in that area, if they're doing the real economics research and I think it's going to be something that's of use. Bill Furman had a master's degree in economics from Washington State and did his work in transportation, and really knows the value of having practical applications of economics to transportation issues. So I still have a little bit more funding in that fund and I plan to continue to work with students until that's gone and until I get tired of writing grant contracts.

**CP:** Well, hopefully a happier topic here – the Oregon Governor's Council of Economic Advisors. You've been involved with that, or were involved with that, for quite a long time. Can you tell me a bit about that experience?

**SM:** Yeah, so prior to me being on the council, Becky Johnson was on that council for many years. And then they had an opening, and the former state economist was – not state economist, the state forecaster – was Dae Baek, who also taught here for a while. And then Tom Pitowski was head of the Governor's Council. And I knew them through other things and they suggested I apply, so I've been on that for the last twelve years. Although I must say that none of us on the council, for the last two years, formally have had an appointment, because Governor Kitzhaber didn't get around to approving any of them. And now that he's not there, Governor Brown, I don't know whether she's, I think she's probably going to get to it. So all of us for the last two years have been serving, but sort of without our official appointment letters.

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**CP:** And what is the role?

**SM:** It's not actually – of the governors we've served, there's Kitzhaber and Kulongoski; Kitzhaber's the one who just got ousted. Kulongoski actually came and met with us a few time and actually asked our advice on things. That was nice. Kitzhaber never has. But we meet, because the state is mandated to have a balanced budget, and so they have to do a revenue forecast. And then they base the budget on the revenue forecast and, as you know, if the revenue exceeds the forecast by more than a certain amount, there's a kicker that goes back. And so basically what the Governor's Council is supposed to be is a group of people from government and industry and academics that can give their opinion on what the forecast is saying is going to happen. So we spent a lot of time sort of debating upon whether the forecast is treating Oregon accurately, because it derives from the DRI forecast, which is for the U.S. And then they have a component for Oregon, but the people on the board have a better idea of what the Oregon economy really looks like and what's important. Interestingly enough, we have continually said that their forecast for housing starts and stuff for the last few years has been way optimistic. And it has been. So they brought their forecast down eventually.

But it's basically a bunch of people who are knowledgeable in the area sitting and there and giving our opinions. But a couple of the people have their own little forecast models. Bill Connerly up in Portland has a little model that he uses and advises his industry clients and business clients, and there's quite a few people from the housing industry or escrow that are on that. And then there's a couple of academics – Tim Duy down at U of O, he does the forecast for U.S. Bank, I think they fund his forecast model. So there's a few of them.

**CP:** Has your focus been on the transportation side?

**SM:** Well you know, the transportation isn't – that's where my fields of interest were macro. I've taught macro until I retired here. But the macro I teach is what the forefront researchers would consider old-fashioned macro, because it deals with business fluctuations. It's basically derived from the Keynesian models, and the model they use to do the forecasting is based on the models I taught. Whereas the models they use are all these fancy growth models that will tell you, if we

keep on this growth path for the next 150 years where we'll be. But really what we want to know is, for the next two years for the budget, what's going to happen.

So it's more my macro stuff, sort of saying what you think that it's going to do, what you think interest rates are going to happen, what you think of the job market. That's been a big thing, the job market and the labor force participation has been really off in Oregon. Which means that there's fewer of the population that are actually in the labor force than have been. And I know they're very concerned about it, but I'd be more concerned about it if the employment was going down faster and the jobs were growing faster. But we all have different opinions on these things. I don't know how much of what we say they actually listen to. And then once a year, they take us on a site meeting. So we met in Pendleton one year and we listened to them talk about their local economy. And it's quite different in different parts of the state.

It's very similar to when I served on the Inter-Institutional Faculty Senate. For a while there, we would meet on different campuses and we'd get to hear about the different campuses, and I'd see how much different they all were from OSU; what things they did. OIT, I never had an idea of what they do out there. They have all those medical programs. Very interesting. They all have different financial problems.

**CP:** Now you were involved with the Faculty Senate here at OSU too, is that correct?

**SM:** You know, I've been involved with the Faculty Senate, but I've never officially been on the Faculty Senate. So that means that I've been on a lot of committees. And one of the things that Ken Patterson, who was the chair when I first came here, taught me, he said, "you need to get a little note that sits by your phone that says 'just say no.'" Because, especially when I first came here in the early '80s, there were not too many faculty women, and so they tried to put me on every committee in the world. And so what I learned was to pick the committees that I thought I could do the most, I had the most benefit. So I've been on special committees in graduate programs in Liberal Arts, I've been on the Faculty Senate P and T committee, I've chaired that committee. That's like a three-year appointment. I've been on the academic awards and recognition committee, which does the students. I've been on a whole bunch of committees. Fixed-term committee, they had a committee on fixed-term people.

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But probably the most recent activity I had was – actually, I was elected to the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate, which is interesting because I've never been elected to the Faculty Senate. But that meant two people from OSU at a time served. Two or three – I think two people. I know it was Joanne Sorte and myself. I think there was three of us at a time were on the Interinstitutional Faculty Senate. And that would meet once every other month during the school year, and that would involve going up there on Friday and meeting all day Friday and half a day on Saturday. And then you would have to report back to the Faculty Senate. And then you would also, when you were the senior member of that committee, you had to meet with the executive committee of the Faculty Senate every Thursday. And then once you did that you were on these sub-committees that dealt with sports and with academics and curriculum. So yeah, I've been involved in a lot. Most of the stuff I've done has been to do with graduate programs, faculty issues, and student recognition, and P and T. A lot of P and T issues especially, as I mentioned, involving women. Like do you stop the clock, do you not stop the clock, and that sort of thing.

**CP:** How about the Triad Club?

**SM:** When I got here the Triad was called the "old men's club," anyway that's what we knew it as. And I spoke at Triad several times. And it used to have like a hundred people, seventy-five people, for lunch all the time. And you'd have to go with a member. And then they sort of loosened up and, towards of the end of the '80s, there were more women in there. Sally Malueg actually was president of the Triad, and eventually they recruited me to Triad. I don't remember when I went in, but I know I served as president twice. I just went back there this spring to give a talk to Triad.

What I find interesting about Triad, and a lot of other groups on campus, is it's very rare that they ask me to talk about my professional work, they want me to talk about my fiddling – that's usually what they want to do. I've found it very interesting though that the university center sponsored by the USDOT, which is located up at Portland State, gave me their researcher of the year award the same year that OSU gave an award to some people in Engineering for developing the software for running this vehicle mile tax thing. But I get the researcher of the year award up there and they get the

researcher of the year award down here, and nobody ever nominated me for it. What they think of me is for my fiddling. So for instance, when the groundbreaking was for this building, I played the groundbreaking. I've played fundraisers. But very rarely did I get asked to talk about transportation economics on campus. Once in a while I have, but I mostly get invited by groups in other parts of the country. One of my faculty colleagues said, "you're better known outside of the university than you are inside."

**CP:** Well, on that note, I'd like to ask you about fiddling. [laughs]

**SM:** Oh really? What would you like to know?

**CP:** So let's begin with the OSU Symphony and your experiences there.

**SM:** Yeah, I came to the OSU Symphony in 1980 and immediately was put in the first violin section. And between then and '87, which is when I stopped playing there regularly – I think I've been back twice since then, I sat with the concertmaster some and back in the sections. And then in '86, a friend of mine from orchestra – I was actually on the board, there was a board for the symphony. I love playing, I mostly really like playing classical stuff. I'm not so fond of "The Pines of Rome" and some really strange stuff. I like Bach and Beethoven and Mozart; give me something with nice melodies and harmonies, I really like that. And I played for years, but I'd go to orchestra and I'd go Tuesday nights at orchestra, but I very rarely practiced during the week, I didn't really have to.

And then in '86 a friend of mine and I decided we were going go for a weekend – my husband agreed to watch the kids and my youngest was three, so I'm really really proud of him – and we went up to Haystack. Portland State had a set of workshops at the coast and Carol Ann Wheeler was teaching a fiddle one. I called her up and I said, "you know, I've played violin for years and I've had people tell me I can't play fiddle because I've played violin." And then she said, "that's nonsense. I have a master's in violin, but I've played fiddle." She'd been the state and national champion. So I went up there and I got hooked, so I started practicing and from about '87 on I practiced like two hours a day.

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It turned out my baby sitter was a gal named Laura Weber, and she was the state fiddle champion. She introduced me to her teacher, Joey McKenzie, who I still go and get advice from. And she ended up moving to Nashville, she toured with Patty Loveless and a whole bunch of people. She married Johnny Cash's son, and I see her now still. I'll see her next month when I go to Greenville, Texas for a contest.

And yeah, I started playing and the rest is history. I needed something for myself, sort of outside of the academics and my family. And it really gives me focus. It's really – I like it.

**CP:** So for those, including myself, who wouldn't know for sure, what is the difference between playing the violin and playing the fiddle?

**SM:** I'm glad you asked me that one and not about different kinds of fiddling, because that's even harder. Well, if you play in an orchestra, the left hand stuff – fingering – that's all the same, no matter what instrument you play. It's the right hand, it's the bowing technique. And if you play in an orchestra, everybody has to do exactly the same thing. You watch the orchestra and everybody's going and everybody's playing exactly the same thing. And if you look far enough back, Mozart and those guys, they wrote the music down but they didn't always play – they did more improv and did stuff off the written sheet. And in order to play with the violin stuff, you have to have people who have the same music, you have to sit in a group, you have to bring your stand and all that stuff.

And in the fiddle stuff, everything I've learned has been from ear, which was a real experience for me because I had never learned by ear. I had always done it from paper. It took me a while. And there are subtleties that – I know that people transcribe things and write fiddle tunes out, and they never write them out the way they're supposed to sound. So I've learned how to use my ear. I play in a style called Texas style and I can always tell when someone is a violin-type person who has taken a transcript and learned it, because it doesn't sound right. It's mostly in the bowing, but each fiddle style has a slightly different technique and sound. So, I mean, I can play a Cajun fiddle tune or two, but they don't sound like when Cajun fiddlers play or when one of the Appalachian fiddlers – all these different styles. And I think the most fun part is I can sit down in a group of people and play for six hours, not repeating the same tune, and nobody ever picks up music.

The guitar players all sit there and they all play with you and it's just so much fun. And you can move around and do it a lot. That's why I go to all of these contests because that's where you get a concentration of the kind of people who play the kind of music I do. I don't know if that answered your question.

**CP:** I'm interested in the culture, fiddling culture, and it sounds like that's a big part of it for you are these, I guess, jam sessions, on some level.

**SM:** The jam sessions are the most fun for me. But when you say "culture," there is a big difference between the violin and the fiddle. Violin people are usually very well-educated people; they may not realize it but sometimes they look down on fiddling a lot. And I can see why they do, because, oh God, there's a whole bunch of fiddling that is just awful. I mean, there's awful musicians in anything, but the really good fiddlers are really good. But the culture is totally different because I go from this academic environment where I'm playing in the orchestra, and I go to this fiddle culture and you have all these families that are totally home schooled and real fundamentalists and the kids are not educated at all. The only thing they do all day is play their instruments. And for some of these kids, it's the only time they ever get out around people other than their family.

And so you see a real diverse lot of people. I have friends in the fiddling who I would never – not because I wouldn't want to be friends with them, but I would never run into them if I just stayed on campus. There's truck drivers, there's horse shoers, there's people who work as engineers on trains. And there's computer geniuses and there's professional musicians. And being a professional musician in the fiddling, like with Asleep at the Wheel, that's different from being a professional musician with the symphony. You're on the road every night, you're on the road 250 nights a year, and you never know where you are, you're in a bus every night. It's a totally different culture, totally different set of people.

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Politics, oh my goodness – we'd start talking about politics, you think there's diversity politics here on campus, oh my heavens. This is why I keep a separate account; I have a Facebook account, it's like nobody I know from work is on that Facebook account with me because I never know what those people are going to be saying. And some of them I just have to turn off, it's just absolutely incredible. And some of these are really good friends of mine, but it's because we have music in common. That's what binds the friendship. It wouldn't be other things. And it's interesting because it makes you see how other people – you're on a university campus and in a university town, you get a very cloistered point of view. And you can academically consider poverty and all this stuff, and I also lived in it when I was a kid, but I also see some of these things up really close that I don't think too many people do.

**CP:** An entrée into a fascinating world.

**SM:** Yeah, it is. And it's the real world; there are different kinds of people that you might read about in a book, but I see them. Pretty interesting. The first time I went to Texas to one of these things, the most common comment to me was, "oh, I knew a nice Yankee girl like you." And there are people down there who are in the fiddling community, some of them are still living with the Mason-Dixon Line. I mean, it's really scary sometimes, some of the people you run into.

**CP:** Well, we've got about ten minutes or so before you need to head out, and I've got a couple broad questions to include here. One is, we've talked a lot about the status of women over the course of time, and you've been involved with the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession, part of the American Economic Association, and I'm interested in your perspective on how things have changed for women in economics over the course of your career.

**SM:** OK, when you say I've been involved in that, I've been a member. But I've never really actively participated in sessions or anything, because they're usually on gender-related issues and that's not my research. As far as women in economics, there's been some change and there's not been some change. I think more of the undergraduate students are economics majors. As I said, when I went to Berkeley, that first year there were four of us out of thirty-five, and only two of us finished. But I don't think it's just the numbers; I think what's still happening is that women in economics are not – there's a glass ceiling. And it's still there, at least in academics. You do get some full professors in economics, but it's hard for them to really make it in academics for a variety of reasons. It's extremely competitive. If you want to have a family, even though everybody says "oh, the husband and the wife share fifty-fifty," there's only certain things that they can do – it's lip service, it doesn't work that way. And it makes it really hard. So basically, I'd say it's still the same as it always was

in the sense that, for a woman to make it in economics, you have to be twice as good, you have to work twice as hard, and you usually don't get paid as much. Even though I was department chair, I got my salary up, still it was behind everybody else's. And no matter what they say, that's still there.

I think it's great that Janet Yellen is the head of the Federal Reserve. She came to Berkeley just after I left there. But I think she's paid probably a really high price to do that. She, of course, is married to – isn't she married to George Akerlof? George Akerlof is a Nobel Prize laureate. I'm pretty sure they're married. He's quite interesting; he was my second-year advisor at Berkeley before I had a chair, and it was just fascinating going in to talk to him. This is when they regulated the airline industry and he said, "so you're looking at regulation and deregulation, you're talking about prices falling, why don't they just auction those seats off? Why don't they just have this deal where they auction the seats off, the highest bidder first, and then they fill the planes?" And that's pretty much what they're doing now, what those programs do. But this was back in '75 and he was talking about it; it's just fascinating.

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But having a husband who is in the same field really probably – it helps and it hinders because what happens is then couples would go to apply for programs and then there's always the trailing spouse. And it's usually the woman that's the trailing spouse, and they usually do not get their fair share. And that's been true here in the Economics department with the women who have trailed as well. And I don't know what the status is of them here now, but I think that they probably don't get tenure as fast. And as they go through the ranks, there's more women who drop out earlier in the assistant professor to take a non-academic job.

**CP:** Well this sort of tailors into the last question that I have for you. We've talked about the tumult in Economics, but I'm interested in your broader perspective on where the university is at right now. This is a sesquicentennial project, we're looking three years down the road, where do you think OSU is right now? Things have changed so much just in the last few years.

**SM:** Things. Well...

**CP:** At least outwardly.

**SM:** Outwardly. They have a really good women's basketball program, great coach. Where are they? I think that probably they're recognized more nationally now than they were when I came. I think that they've built up their programs. But part of that is because of the need for external finance, and it's largely the sciences, I think, that they've built their reputation. I think the liberal arts, it's still a struggle here at OSU. I don't like to say that because I think the liberal arts is really the key to a strong university foundation, but I don't see the strength in liberal arts here that I think that they need to get to be a Tier 1 university. And until they do, I don't think that they're going to be. But I do think that they have great – the sciences have brought in lots of money, you know, the tsunami center. I think it's just a struggle and I think it's because it's an era of scarce resources.

**CP:** Well Starr, I want to thank you for this. This has been, I think, very valuable and I really appreciate you participating.

**SM:** Well, I appreciate you asking me. And if you have any follow-up things, I'm happy to follow-up with you. Instead of having a two-year economics program, I guess they have a four-year sort of economics program now and then they have the public policy program.

**CP:** Thanks, Starr.

**SM:** OK.

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