



## Ilene Kleinsorge Oral History Interview, February 10, 2015

### **Title**

“Rejuvenating the College of Business”

### **Date**

February 10, 2015

### **Location**

Austin Hall, Oregon State University.

### **Summary**

In the interview, Kleinsorge describes her upbringing on a cattle farm in rural Kansas, and her educational experiences growing up. She then shares the story of her path through early adulthood, including marrying at a young age, becoming a mother, and finding employment as a factory worker and as a bookkeeper. From there she recounts the process by which she returned to school to earn a nursing degree, her years working as an emergency room nurse, her later education and work as an accountant, and her ultimate decision to pursue a doctorate and a career in academia.

After discussing her experiences as a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Kansas, Kleinsorge shares her memories of being recruited by OSU and making the decision to join the faculty of OSU's College of Business.

The remainder of the interview focuses on Kleinsorge's career and achievements at Oregon State. She notes the different positions that she has held within the College of Business, including her movement up the administrative ranks to the Dean's office, where she started in 2003. She describes the strategic planning process that she oversaw near the beginning of her tenure as Dean, and the impact that this process made on transforming what had been a moribund unit plagued by low morale into an energetic and innovative college optimistic about its future.

The session concludes with Kleinsorge sharing her memories of working with Ken and Joan Austin, and recounting the story behind the conceptualization, design, construction and use of the college's new home facility, Austin Hall.

### **Interviewee**

Ilene Kleinsorge

### **Interviewer**

Chris Petersen

### **Website**

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

## Transcript

**Chris Petersen:** Okay Dr. Kleinsorge, if you could please introduce yourself with your name, today's date and our location.

**Ilene Kleinsorge:** I'm Ilene Kleinsorge, Dean of the College of Business and today's date is February 10th, 2015. We're in Austin Hall.

**CP:** So, we are going to talk about your upbringing, your path through academia and we'll talk a lot about the College of Business during your tenure at OSU. We'll start at the beginning. Where were you born?

**IK:** I was born in Emporia, Kansas. But I, at the time we were living in Coffey County. My parents were, my dad was a farmer and a rancher and at about the age of four we moved to Chase County, Kansas where I lived until I left home. And so I consider that I was raised around Cottonwood Falls, Kansas.

**CP:** In a very rural environment.

**IK:** Very rural environment. Cottonwood Falls is the oldest county seat in Kansas at 1861 and it had nine hundred and fifty people in it. It still has about nine hundred and fifty people in it but the closest community was Bazaar, Kansas, which was only four miles away and it had twenty-three people. But it was where the Atchison, the Topeka and the Santa Fe Railroads came together and some cattle drives all came into Bazaar, Kansas. So, in the early days Bazaar was more bustling than twenty-three people. But when we moved out in the early fifties, it still had a post office but that was about it. And once it lost its post office the families kind of died out. But there was a two-room schoolhouse four miles from where I lived. But I went into Cottonwood Falls to school because I was in that school district, not the school district with the two-room schoolhouse four miles away. So, I was the first one off the bus, or on the bus in the morning, and the last one off at night.

**CP:** Do you have recollections of the cattle drives or were they still going at that time?

**IK:** Well, I mean all cattlemen would drive their cattle. I don't have memories of driving to the trains. I have memories of us driving our cattle into pens that could be loaded on trucks. My dad had both a cow and calf operation but we also had a full feed operation as well. And the history of Chase County, Kansas is documented very well with William Least Heat-Moon, wrote a book called *PrairyErth*. And *PrairyErth* is about the, kind of the founding families of Chase County, all of whom I knew. I know the people that they talk about. But because of that kind of history of cowboy country, it was very difficult as an outsider to find grasslands to rent and so we had a twelve hundred acre farm, ranch, six hundred acres of tillable soil and six hundred of tall prairie grass that we would put our cattle out on. But we also, my father, to find the grasslands that were necessary for his cattle, had to rent pasture land in Oklahoma, in Nebraska. Oftentimes he left cattle in feed lots. Arkansas was a place that he frequently bought cattle and he would put those cattle into feed lots there to bring to market.

So, it was a difficult year. I remember my father, the first few years we were there, was a cattle bust. And so my father, in order to provide for us, helped to build the Kansas Turnpike. And he worked at night on the Turnpike down by Matfield Green and he farmed during the day. And I remember my mom loading us kids, my brother and me at the time, I didn't have my sister yet, in the 1951 black international pick-up and driving us down to give my dad his dinner like at midnight and taking his lunch box down. And then somehow we'd go back home, we'd go to bed and in the morning when I'd get up Dad would be home. But he'd be now going out to the field. So, I'm not sure in those years when he actually slept. But he worked really hard and I remember my mom, my mom only had, during those years, my mom only had one dress that was good enough to wear to town and so for three years she wore the same dress to town and to church. But because we were on the farm, we were never hungry. We always had plenty of food.

[0:05:55]

**CP:** Well, what was it like growing up on the farm?

**IK:** A lot of work, a lot of play. We—there was only one other family with children that was close by and Mary, my one girlfriend, her parents—we didn't make enough money but what her parents didn't want us all playing together. But we were only maybe three quarters of a mile away from each other and between our houses was the creek. A creek. We lived on a creek but there was this creek and we deemed it the swimming hole. It had a bridge over it and lots of leeches but we would meet, we were allowed in the summer to meet at the swimming hole. And so we spent time swimming. We had our bikes. This is in the Flint Hills and so a lot of flint rock, which means you have a lot of flat tires. And so, you know, I learned to change a tire on a car when I was probably ten years old because I was driving by the age of eleven. And my folks would send me into town to pick up supplies, which was twelve miles away. And so I could drive in. And at the time you could actually, you could get a learner's permit at eleven, if I remember correctly, at least my parents allowed me to do it. But you have a legitimate driver's license by the age of fourteen to run family errands or to drive yourself to school or those kinds of things. And then a regular driver's license at sixteen.

But my dad stuck me on a tractor when I was six and put it in gear and told me to just steer it because he would be in the back in the trailer folding feed into the bunks or picking up hay or whatever it was. And so, we were always, we had a truck garden and so I was Grand Champion Garden at the county fair, went to the state fair with things. We had—we raised our own chickens, we raised our own beef. My dad was an inventor and so he converted all of his tractors and his pick-up to propane in the sixties. But we were driving, you know, he never had a new tractor. He never had a new piece of equipment. So then he invented, he created this, he was selling Kelly Ryan feed wagons. But it was difficult from; well I'm trying to think of the name of the silo. Like a trench silo. That's not the right name but it's where you put ensilage. And so the difficulty was getting the ensilage from the silo in—or from the silo into the wagon, the feed wagon. And so he invented kind of a, it's not an auger but it was a way to pull this implement back into the trench, into the place where the ensilage was, and then you could put it onto this...I can't, my words are escaping me today.

[0:10:12]

It was a way to move the ensilage from back to front. And so that would pull along the Kelly Ryan feed wagon and then he didn't have to break his back pitching the ensilage to the front of the wagon. And ended up going through that process—he invented a couple of other things where he applied for, got patents, produced them, sold them. And so, as kids we were, you know, we thought nothing of getting inside of a grain bin with an open auger shoveling grain. But we knew, we knew, my dad told us if we were not careful we would cut off our legs or our arms or whatever, because you had to just be very cautious of the auger. And so we were very cautious of the auger.

But you know, today we probably don't stuff our kids inside of a grain bin and tell them "push the seed into the auger and we'll tell you when it's enough." Yeah, but it was good. We, as I say, we lived on a creek, my mother fished; we played all kinds of games, but yeah. I didn't have a store-bought dress until I was a junior in high school. My mom made all my clothes. She knitted my sweaters. But we had plenty to eat, we were loved and we worked hard.

**CP:** What was school like for you? Besides the bus rides.

**IK:** Yeah, no I enjoyed school. I enjoyed it a lot. I had one year that was very difficult. We were Catholic and we were in a community that discriminated against Catholics to the point where when there was going to be the Ecumenical Christian Breakfast, they would call my mom and tell her to call the priest and tell him he was not invited. I mean, that's how tense it was. But for Catholics, and my father was the Catholic, my mother was the convert, and the year that you make your first communion is a very important year, at that time in the Catholic faith. And there was, so Cottonwood Falls had nine hundred and fifty people. A mile north was Strong City and Strong City had about four hundred and fifty people and that's where the Catholic Church was. But the Catholic Church had a Catholic, two-room Catholic school. A parochial school. And so my parents felt it was really important that when I was in second grade, which is about the time you make your first communion, first confession, that I go to parochial school, be properly educated. And the problem was that of course there was no school bus to the Catholic, at the parochial school. So, I would have to ride the school bus with the public school students who had a hot lunch program. We didn't have a hot lunch program at the Catholic School, so I had to carry a lunch. And it opened up the opportunity for bullying, to give up my lunch and I was just this little eight year old kid.

But they worked with the school bus driver, that he was willing to drop the public school kids off and then drive me one mile more to the parochial school. And so the first four grades were all in one room. And I think there were either three or four second graders. So, anytime you wanted to do anything, because there maybe were, I don't know, forty kids total

in the school, might have been sixty, but if you wanted to play baseball then everybody has to play or you can't field two teams. And so I learned early on that I am always the last one chosen. I have no athletic abilities and as a little second grader, you know. It was just, it was awful. And the nuns loved baseball. It was the year the Dodgers were in the World Series. And I just couldn't imagine why at school we were listening to a baseball game. But that was what we could actually do, you know?

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But I loved school and I was very successful in school. And I had good teachers. I loved Mrs. Lambert. I didn't go to kindergarten because it was, my parents couldn't afford to come in to town half day, you know, pick me up at half days. So, I missed kindergarten but Mrs. Lambert in first grade, she was wonderful. And even Sister Mary Ohmer in second grade was a wonderful teacher. But I always pretty much excelled intellectually. I had most difficulty with math. That was where I had to work the hardest. But we had a good old school that's still there, still serves the community, the same building. It's—they built onto it three or four years ago. I haven't been back in about ten or fifteen years. My children and I, I took my children, grandchildren with me back and we walked around. And the high school's still there. This high school there were ninety-two people, ninety-two students. There were thirty, thirty-one I think in my graduating class. So we were a pretty big class.

But again, if that's all you have then everybody has to do something, you know. You have to be in many clubs, you've got—in order to make a club go, everybody's got to participate. When the band—I was in the band. I sang. In high school I was a member of the Tritones, which were nine women, girls, that we sang all around the state. We sang on the State Legislature, we did, we were very proud of ourselves. We thought we were pretty good. And music was very important, very important. But you know, you could walk downtown to the one drug store. We had two restaurants. At that time we had two restaurants, now there's down to one. We had two grocery stores, now they're down to one. We had two dress shops, or where you could get clothes that were just kind of regular clothes, and then there was this one, the Jim Bell & Son, at the time was a well-known western wear shop and people would come from all around to go to Jim Bell & Son. Later when I became a nurse, Jim Bell developed early onset of Alzheimer's. And this man that I had so admired in my community ended up in the small hospital where I was working. It was about forty miles away. And it's really, you know as a young person to see someone that you admire so much have such a debilitating disease was really impactful.

**CP:** Yeah.

**IK:** Yeah. Moving.

**CP:** Well, I've interviewed a lot of academics for this project and virtually all of them, after they finished high school, went to college. Your path was very different. You want to talk about that?

**IK:** Well, sure. I chose a different path but when I was in high school I always, all I wanted to do was to be a pediatrician. But I had had this one date, one boy that I had dated, didn't start dating him until I was about a junior probably, junior in high school, and my parents didn't make it obvious that I had a financial path forward, you know? I never asked them but I've never asked my parents for anything. So, we decided we were going to get married, and right out of high school. He took a job and lived with his brother and I took a job and lived with my cousin until we were married, graduated in June or May and we were married in September. But I always had a real desire to do something more. I had a child then, by the time I was nineteen and nine months after I was married I had my son.

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And my mother encouraged me to go to the vocational technical school just for office machines. You know, to—because the jobs that I was qualified as a high school graduate, even back in the late sixties, early seventies, were not good jobs. They were, you know, I could wait tables, I sewed in a, literally a sweatshop in Kansas, a factory where no air conditioning, middle of the summer, it's a hundred and some degrees where you're working and I was sewing hassocks and we were doing hassocks, cool cushions and pillows and life preservers, were the four products that this factory sewed. Crawford's? Manufacturing. So, it was very difficult jobs, whereas my cousins knew how—they could type. And I'd had one year of typing in high school but I wasn't proficient at it. So my mom thought to get me off the shop floor and into a clerical position perhaps I needed to take office machines. And so she took it with me. She drove down to Emporia,

which is; well it was a forty-five mile trip for her, one way. And so, ten-key adder and typewriter and comptroller and all of those things, that allowed me to get a job as a bookkeeper for Cable Vision. And again, I had this one baby and now I'm pregnant with a second. So, then I decided when I was pregnant with my second that I might not be able to be a pediatrician but perhaps I could study nursing. Maybe I could get into health care in some way. And so there's only been one year of my life that I did not work outside the home, or yeah, that I didn't work outside the home. And that was the first year that my daughter was born and I stayed home with her. And what I did then was I applied to the nursing program and was accepted. And so then it was okay, how was I going to pay for this?

But I went to school and I worked part time while I was going to school and got my license; I was an LPN. And in that process, I thrived in that environment academically. But I also, I got involved with what it was like to really take ownership of the way I do things. And I tell people, you know, when—anyone can be taught how to give a bed bath but until you've had my bed bath, you know? I took a real sense of ownership of how I could care differently than others. It's not that it's better or worse or anything else, it's just mine. And I got a lot of affirmation of taking that sense of ownership. So, I had asked for labor and delivery or the nursery and I was assigned after graduation. I was assigned emergency room and critical care, acute care.

So, I then became an emergency medical tech back in the day. I worked with a lot of terminally ill patients, always them teaching me so much more than I could ever give to them in terms of care. And at the time, back in the seventies, people might come to the hospital and be in the hospital for a year or two. There wasn't any of this mandatory dismissal or anything. And we had several patients that I took care of for more than a year who had terminal illnesses but family didn't want to bring them home. So, I worked with—the hospice movement was just starting in the United States, in the early seventies. In the Midwest our physicians did not embrace the hospice movement. They resisted it. And so I did, I was asked to participate on panels for the death and dying workshops after Dr. Kübler-Ross's work came out and became more prominent in our community.

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Our community was Emporia, Kansas and at the time there were only about thirteen thousand people but it was the big city where you would go to for shopping and things. And that's where my husband and I lived. And then some difficulties in the marriage and I went, because of depression, I asked the doctor what I should do and he suggested that I take a course to make myself feel better about myself. So, I went home and I said "well, the doctor says I need to go to school full-time" and so I went to Emporia State University and the advisors there, I told them my husband worked nights and he slept during the day and my daughter was then in Kindergarten and I said "I need to take courses between eight and twelve and I want a full course load because I work at the hospital on the weekends and I need to be home for my daughter, I need to be available to my family." And essentially I tried to make it so that no one at home could feel that I was in school, essentially. And they worked with me and I did it and then I ended up having to divorce and I continued. I just took four jobs and took a full course load, took care of my two children and I was the benefactor, the American Businessman's Association gave me a scholarship and they helped me every year. I had Pell grants and in my undergraduate work I never was required to take out a student loan. I just, well is that true?...Yeah, I think maybe, no I can't remember if I had a student loan. If it did, it was very small. Very small amount. But, I was always on the Dean's Honor Roll and I did really well in school.

But I studied accounting and because in the small community—so there wasn't a nursing program that you could get a degree. They had the vocational nurse and they had a diploma nurse but they didn't have a degreed RN. And what I wanted to do was to be a nurse practitioner but that program was eighty-five miles away at the University of Kansas. So, that, so what could I study to be a professional, assuming—when I was a freshman I was still married and assumed I would always live in this smaller community—what could I study to be at the top of a profession if it wasn't medicine? So, a CPA was what would be possible. So, I did that and when I finished then I took a job in that community with an accounting firm. But there was a lot of sexism in accounting in the late seventies. And it was a very difficult position. And they knew I wasn't happy. So then the question was how to not throw away the accounting but get back to what the same levels of job satisfaction that I had with nursing. And the end result became education. And I knew that I didn't have the patience for small children, because I'd had some of my own, and I knew I needed, I needed some level of rational reason that, you know, I could have a conversation with the person. And so that meant higher education.

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So, a person that I've talked about in recent months who I don't know the woman's name, but she changed my life forever. I had assumed I would do a CPA, MBA and I would, because most of my professors at Emporia State at that time, that was their credentialing. And I didn't know what a PhD was, essentially, didn't know what that meant actually. So, I looked at Kansas State University. My mom and dad had been benefited greatly from Kansas State and my brother had been a graduate in Mechanical Engineering there. And I went to her and I told her what I wanted to do. So, I made an appointment with the MBA director at Kansas State. And I told her what I wanted to do and she just looked at me and said "if that's really what you want to do and you don't want to be a second-class citizen all of your life, then you need a PhD." She didn't say "go to the University of Kansas and get a PhD." She just said "You need a PhD." And I said "thank you very much" and I left. And she just said "and we don't have one," right? "We can't help you." So, I said okay.

But I assumed I would need to pay in-state tuition because I couldn't afford out of state tuition. Again, I was totally naïve. So that meant I had to go to the University of Kansas. And I can't even remember how I did my research because of course we didn't have the internet. But somehow I got some information from the University of Kansas. Or maybe I called to get information and I talked to Dr. Morris Kleiner who was at that time the director of the doctoral program. And I was explaining to him that, you know, I thought I wanted to get a doctorate and I was a CPA and all this stuff. And so he's trying to explain the process to me and he's saying you know, "you can apply and then you can see whether or not you're accepted" and I said "well, I'm a state citizen, I'm a tax payer and you're a public university, if you don't accept me, can you keep me from taking the coursework?" As I say, I was pretty clueless. And he was taken aback, I could tell, and he said "well, I suppose if we didn't accept you, you could enter the university as a special student, demonstrate you could do the coursework and then reapply." I said "oh, okay." So, I hung up the phone, I put my house on the market and I looked for a house in Lawrence, Kansas because I was going to go to school there the next fall.

So, I actually—and again, kind of the way I just go forward in life is I sent my résumé to three firms in Lawrence and I just said "I'm coming, I'm going to live in Lawrence and I'd like to talk with you about a possible job." And I sent, I called, I made sure I knew the partner in charge of personnel in each firm and "I will call you at such and such a date to set up an appointment" and they all three took my appointment and I went in and I told them who I was, I told them I was moving to Lawrence and all three didn't have a position. And I said "well that's okay, I just want you to know I'm coming, you know, something comes up you can call me." And by the end of the week I had two job offers and then I had to make a choice. And so I moved up over Christmas holiday and started to work with the firm that I chose first of January and then resigned in May because they wanted me, once I got accepted—so, I didn't get accepted until March; late February, early March, into the program. I was only one of two, and I don't know that they even do this now, but I was one that didn't have a masters. All of my peers had masters degrees but one. So then they asked if I wanted to teach. So, the first time I ever taught was a summer session of managerial accounting to eight students. And I loved it. I've loved the education ever since.

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**CP:** So, you knew right away that you were where you needed to be.

**IK:** Yeah, I was. And I, I wanted to be a student because when I was an undergrad student, I wasn't really a student, right? When you're working four jobs and taking a full course load and trying to care for two young children, you are jumping hoops, you know, you are not thinking, you're just doing whatever you have to do. So, the first two years I decided that I would not do anything other than my teaching assignment as a graduate student. But over time I couldn't afford all of that. My son had some—the last year he started into college and because he had chosen, when I moved to do my doctoral work, he asked to go and live with his father who was still in the community and Matt didn't want to leave his high school, and so he was fourteen at the time and I allowed him to stay with his father but his father's income made him ineligible for student aid, but his father was not willing to finance his college education. So, as a grad student I took out student loans to pay my son's tuition and to buy the first ever computer that I ever had, which was a 64K Zenith that the state had a special deal and I could get it for thirty-five hundred dollars.

But I had to take other work and so when I was my third year, besides teaching then I also was recruited by two of my professors in my minor, which was healthcare administration. So, my doctorate gave me the opportunity to integrate the accounting and the healthcare so that my research, my dissertation research was in long-term care but it was dealing with managerial accounting kind of techniques and kind of methodologies. But, two of my profs recruited me to their consulting firm in Overland Park. And so I worked Monday through Friday for them and then would teach one evening

or two evenings a week. I still had my daughter at home. She was eleven, twelve years old at the time. But we had kind of role reversal. She would bake the cookies that I could take to the Graduate—I was the president of the Graduate Student Organization, but I'd need to take cookies and so Amy would bake the cookies and I would take them to my club meetings. So, it was—and then the last year I drove eighty-five miles one way to Emporia State University and taught as a lecturer while I finished my coursework and worked on my dissertation.

**CP:** Well, you mentioned taking to teaching very quickly, was research the same—similar situation for you? You enjoyed that?

**IK:** I enjoy asking the question and gathering the data. What I didn't enjoy was; I didn't care if I told anybody. Once I knew the answer, I didn't feel the need to write it. And I'm not a good writer. And—or so I've been told—and it created such a roadblock for me that it was very difficult to write. So, you know, in my leadership roles at the university I have always tried to hire someone who can help me with the writing. I don't have a problem, usually, expressing myself verbally but I have a lot of problems expressing myself in writing. So, the research process was not difficult. The reporting the research was very difficult for me.

[0:40:15]

**CP:** Wow. And that continued through your academic career then?

**IK:** Mhmm.

**CP:** That's interesting.

**IK:** Yeah, yep.

**CP:** Well, how did you come to OSU?

**IK:** Well, it's really strange that you ask, I don't know why I thought about this today but every job I've had at OSU I didn't apply for, including my first job as an assistant prof. So, when I sent out the letters as a doctoral candidate to the universities that I—back in the day you didn't look to see whether or not universities had open positions in accounting, you just, you looked at which of the universities would you consider working for. Send your letter of introduction and your vita and say "would you like to talk with me at the professional meetings?" And I was a non-traditional academic in accounting and so I knew I needed to cast my net very wide. But I received a phone call from Oregon State University and they said they'd like to talk with me. And Oregon State, where is that? I mean, I didn't send you, I didn't send you a letter, how do you know about me? And so they told me how they knew about me and what had happened was one of my dissertation committee members who was quite eccentric had sent my vita and a letter of introduction. And so I went to him and I said Art, why did you do this? And he said "because I worked at the University of Oregon and you don't belong there. You belong at Oregon State University."

So, out of courtesy to him, I already had twenty-three interviews scheduled for two and a half days, but out of courtesy to him I agreed to take this one more interview on late Saturday morning with Oregon State University. And the interview was not what you would have thought of as a typical interview. I was interviewing with Lynn Spruill, Charles Neyhart and Pat Frishkoff. And I mean it was one where I didn't; this wasn't a job I wanted, right? I mean I was just going through the motions, I've already interviewed with like twenty-three other universities, I am exhausted. And I even remember exactly what I wore, which was, I chose not to wear the traditional navy blue suit because I didn't care if I got this job. But I went in and all we did was laugh and we laughed to the point where Pat was very uncomfortable after I left that she called me and she said "you know, we aren't a bunch of clowns, could you meet me for a drink at the bar tonight? You know, I'd really like to have a serious conversation with you." And I said "no, you know, I really, I'm going to the show." I was going to go see *Cats*, my first Broadway show that night and I said "no, I think I know everything I need to know." And then you know, the coffee table books started coming and they subscribed to the *Gazette-Times* and had it sent to my house and there were all these things for me.

So, in the end I agreed, I did five or six campus interviews. Of all the people I interviewed with I think there were eleven that I would have considered and there were six that would consider me. And so I came out and I ended up with four or

five job offers and this one I took because again, I thought as a single parent I could take care of my child here at Oregon State and I also thought I could be successful.

[0:44:51]

My Department Chair job—so, I had just become tenured and I was thinking about sabbatical and I went to dinner with a job candidate with my Chair at the time and at dinner that evening, I can still see the table, I was telling the candidate "yes, you can be successful here, I just got tenure and I'm thinking about my sabbatical" to which the Department Chair says "well, you aren't going on sabbatical, I am and I've asked the Dean to appoint you Chair." And you know, how are you supposed to react in front of the job candidate? What are you talking about, you know? So, that's kind of what happened. So then, in the Dean's job we had done a search for two years and, well when...when I first arrived back in 1987, in the spring of '88 the Dean who hired me resigned to go over to Central Administration. And two of my students were appointed to the search committee. And the students came to my office one morning before a seven-thirty class and they asked, they said "we're on the search committee for the new Dean and we want you to apply to be the Dean." And I can't laugh at them and I said "well, that's a very nice compliment but why would you ask me to apply?" And they said "well, because we had a search committee meeting and they say we need an external Dean. But we think we need an internal Dean and we know you'll take care of the students." And I said "well, you know, if you think I can take care of the students then maybe I can do a better job in the classroom taking care of the students than from the Dean's chair, because then I couldn't be in your class anymore." "Oh, okay."

So, when our Dean resigned in 2001, assistant professors, a few, sent me emails suggesting that I apply. So, I ask a full professor if I should apply for the job and he went to the meeting with the faculty and Provost and he came back to my office at the time I was Department Chair and he said "don't do it. They would never accept you as a Dean." And so I took his advice, I didn't apply for this job. I was appointed to this job, because I never interviewed. The only job I've interviewed for at Oregon State was to be an assistant prof. So, it was an opportunity for me in that, the joke is that God didn't apply and I was the low-cost provider. But the fact is that our college, in 2003, was bankrupt and nobody really did want the job. And what I saw was—I saw the quality of our people and our programs. And I saw their heart, I mean their good heart. We were downtrodden from seventeen years of constant budget reductions. You lose your ability to dream and create with just constant cuts and constant criticism. We were saying "give us your huddled masses" and that's what we were getting, were masses, but we didn't have the resources to deliver the excellence that we so desired to do and had the talent to achieve, but it was just too much.

And so, I might not have applied for it but my heart was in it when I was appointed, because I wanted to demonstrate the value that we deliver here. And I think over the twelve years, the faculty and staff have put their backs into it and they have created and inspired our donor base, to see the possibilities and to help us to achieve.

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Everybody upped their game: the students and what they were willing to invest, to commit to, the talent, the faculty talent. We just had a strategic retreat and I wish we had tape-recorded the passion with which our faculty speak about their students and their student success. And education is our primary mission but you know, we've launched the first ever doctoral program in business.

And what I saw was if you looked at our history, and our history meaning the state and higher education in the state, the state made a very—my opinion—shortsighted decision in 1929. And they made the decision to not invest in redundant programs across the state. And so, what they did was say, they invest—they moved the social science graduate programs to the University of Oregon, which Business, those graduate programs moved to the University of Oregon, but they left all the technical programs here at then Oregon Agricultural College. And what you've just done is separated the business concepts and principles from innovation. And you can't get economic development from innovation, the research, unless you add the business concepts and principles to get it into the marketplace or to get it there for the social good.

So, my message, it was "this is a mistake that needs to be corrected." And so if you put business at the core of the innovation culture, that's its rightful place because it needs to be connected to everything. And so building that over time, if you look at the top ten land grant institutions, they have power houses of business schools because it's about workforce development, it's about helping the economy of those states in which they exist. Business was there at the very beginning,



1858 in Corvallis College, right? So, it was, "okay, let's go back, let's demonstrate value, let's take our position, but let's do it in a way that we have a model that we can shrink if our resources shrink, in a way that we can signal the market appropriately so that there isn't this disappointment but we can still deliver on excellence. And I'm really proud, very proud of our people. We were able to secure a hundred and three million in investments. We count the bonds over the last ten years. And that's transformation for a little college that started out with twenty-six academic positions and today has sixty-three.

And we've built it on youth. Because in 2013 with the PERS decision, Public Employees Retirement System, every person that could retire in the college except one did retire. So, I have work in an environment with sixty percent assistant profs for my twelve years. And that's where our energy, that's where ideas—I only plan with young people, my young faculty. What do you want to be when you grow up? That's where we started in 2004. And they told me where they wanted to be and to invest in that vision, invest their talent and time, and that's what they've done. And so every time I, every time I plan, I've planned with our assistants and associates.

**CP:** So, that's sort of how things came together in 2003. Then you brought these people together and went through some sort of strategic planning process to craft that vision for the future.

**IK:** That's right.

**CP:** And it has a—

**IK:** It was a strategic framework for us to work from.

**CP:** Has it essentially played out the way that you thought it would, or?

[0:54:56]

**IK:** It has. We actually use, well as I thought it would, okay so leaders have to live in la-la land. I want us to continue to aspire. If I had told people in 2003 that we'd be where we are today, or 2004, they wouldn't have believed me. So you have, I had to do it incrementally. And I believe that all schools, well for us, we had to build on a very strong foundation for the undergraduate program. So, you had to build the foundation first. And the challenge for us, the need was so great but in philanthropy people don't give to need, people give to create. So, my explanation was people wanted me to aspire to mink and pearls and I didn't have milk and eggs in the refrigerator. So, the question was how to make milk and eggs look like mink and pearls. And that's what we did.

And after we got the first—and so I have what I called the strategic plan, but the strategic plan is really a strategic management document. It's refreshed annually and the document says who's—it espouses our mission and vision and our desired capabilities and our goals. But around those goals it says all of the tasks that we're going to do that year to achieve that goal and then who's accountable for it and by what time. And what I intuited about three years in is I was standing in front of the faculty in a classroom, because every year I present at the faculty and I say that's what I'm saying we're doing and that's how I'm investing money. Now, if you got other ideas, you got to tell me now, kind of thing. But I realized what I was doing was I was using it exactly like a syllabus. This is my course, right? This is my course. This is my syllabus, this is what we're going to do, this is when things are due by, this is who's doing it, so if you, you know, if we called the meeting, you know why we're calling the meeting, you know? And if everybody buys into it then we'll move on. And that's how we've made progress year after year after year. We have a plan and we have a list of activities and we resist the plan and our goals every year. I have the plan next to my computer, I look at it monthly; okay, did I miss paying somebody who it was, they were supposed to do this? We've had to be flexible, I mean there have been things that we've put into it that well, we never imagined the accelerator. It was an opportunity so it gets put into the plan and now, what other responsibilities around that?

So, each of my programs has to have a plan. My plan refers to their plan but when I meet with them I ask "how are you doing with your plan?" So, that's really worked for us. And so we built the undergrad foundation first, and programs of excellence where I used the model as Department Chair of accounting. Accounting has always benefited from a strong professional support and I took the accounting discipline model and I imposed it on the rest of the college. If it was good for accounting students, that connection with their profession, that connection to advisory boards and opportunities for a

professional student club and all of those things, every student in our college today has the same opportunities of access to impactful, experiential or transformational kinds of opportunities. It's not just one class of students; that they get it all and nobody else gets it. So, we did that at the undergrad and then the second time we went through a planning process it was "okay, now what does the graduate, top look like to this foundation?"

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That planning session was more about what Ilene had promised outside the college and how were they going to help me deliver on it, all the time understanding financial strategy. So, if I could show the faculty how the dollars would flow back into the college from their work and how they would be the benefactors, where I invest, where student demand is, where you know, tuition dollars or whatever comes back, that trust. Then they help to identify the path forward for diversifying the MBA, creating a PhD program.

But again, we were challenging a system that in 1929 said we would never have multiple discipline specific majors, we would only deliver a general MBA program and we would never have a doctoral program. If you listen to the people who had been here the longest, they would have been, back in 2003 or '4, initially they approved everything because they didn't think we'd ever be allowed to do it. I remember the day of the faculty meeting when it was like Rip Van Winkle, oh god, and it was like eighteen months in and things are happening and it was like "maybe we ought to start reviewing this stuff because we aren't going to be told no at a higher level." But it was just, it was an interesting—but I got a lot done in that eighteen months. But it was, you know, so it's been purposeful, it's been—and our most recent, I knew that I was going to retire and so I purposely created a planning process that was not directional but was aspirational but defined priorities, values and culture, so that I could say "you know who you are, you know what your priorities are and you know what culture you want to retain, so now you can hire your next leader based on knowing that," you know. Or "is the next leader going to help you to achieve those things?" And so I'm confident that they speak pretty much with one voice.

**CP:** So, it will be a very different process than the one that you went through when you were—

**IK:** Yeah, yeah.

**CP:** Well, two people I want to make sure we talk about who have been very important to the college and the university are Ken and Joan Austin. Can you tell me about your relationship with that family and first the Austin Entrepreneurship Program and then of course this beautiful building we're in right now.

**IK:** Yeah. I met Ken, I had been asked to—the university had a very different process in the early 2000s than it does today in terms of onboarding leaders. Today the new—the Dean, when chosen, will be immediately introduced to the Austins and to other important constituents, but back in 2003 I was not introduced to these individuals. And so I had been asked to give a presentation at the Golden Jubilee about the Austin Entrepreneurship Program that we had just launched in 2004. And it happened to be the Golden, or maybe that was, yeah, it would have been, we launched the program in the fall of 2004. This would have been in June of 2004 and it happened to be the Golden Jubilee for Ken Austin and he was in the audience. And so he came up and introduced himself to me and I had been given I think the best advice I ever got, was "don't ask for money, ask for advice." And Ken and Joan were very generous with their advice, but they listened and I learned so much from both of them. So, I told Ken at the time, I said "well, what I've always wondered what was your dream when you gave the, then four million dollars for Weatherford for the Austin Entrepreneurship Program?"

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And he said "well you know, maybe you ought to just come up to Newberg and sit down with Joan and me and we can meet each other and talk about it. And so that was my first introduction to Ken and Joan. And we did that routinely and after that I always had a cellphone number. If there were problems with that program or the Austin Family Business Program, whatever, pick up the phone, Ken and Joan would be in the car, they'd put me on speakerphone and they've just always been there for me if I needed to reach out. When I decided I was going to tell the faculty and staff, before eight o'clock I called Ken. He was in Phoenix looking at old cars and I told him my decision and he thanked me for all of my work.

But they are very interesting philanthropists in that they don't just give money. They steward their own investment and so there isn't anything that they contribute to that they aren't interested in enough in that they don't want to check back and see how it's going and, you know, what some of the barriers are that you're coming or what your successes are. Joan spoke to my businessman's network that I founded here, telling about her vision of the Allison Inn & Spa. Ken has spoken many times to the students over in the Austin Entrepreneurship Program.

But, the building itself, we were ninety-two years behind the nearest PAC-12 school for renovation or new facility in business. I did not have the original conversations with them, the president. I had the first conversations with Reser, with Al Reser, but not with Ken and Joan. We had had a feasibility study done as people began to ask what about a building, what about a building, and so the foundation had hired a consulting firm and that report, I think, if I recall, the report was that they had never seen such a positive feasibility study, that something like ninety percent of the people interviewed said that they would contribute to the building, and they interviewed sixty-five people. And so that report was ratified to go forward and try to identify the major gifts. It was ratified September 30th of 2008 and on October 1st the market dropped seven hundred and fifty points or something godly, you know, it was just like, and so everything was up in the air, everything. And the Resers, the Austins, everybody wanted to go ahead and do something but until the market settled down, you couldn't. And we were not allowed to take a gift until half the philanthropic goal had been achieved by one to three donors. And it was policy of the foundation. So, it was like, I mean I've got ninety percent of sixty-five people who said they'd contribute but I can't sign a gift agreement, I can't ask what that's going to be, so it was like having, for two years until May 6th of 2010, I know exactly when it was, it was at that point actually that the Austins flew back from Washington D.C. and they were kind of the final linchpin. But they flew back to sign the papers to come to the awards dinner that I didn't know if I got to announce it until an hour before we launched the program.

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And it was just, so it was like having planes that you couldn't land. They're all just circling the runway. So, between the Austins and the Resers, that night we were able to announce sixteen million of a thirty million dollar goal and we needed twenty-five million to go to the State Legislature. And so between May 6th and December 31st, we got the commitment for the total of twenty-five million, at four-thirty in the afternoon on December 31st of 2010. And then they went to the Legislature in 2011 and got the bonds approved. But it, you know, I just, it humbles me how generous our alums have been with us. It just—and they've been there for me. They gave me the confidence to retire than anybody thought was possible.

But, when I look out over the capital campaign, I don't see targets, I don't see, I see life, you know. Ten years is a long time. There are a lot of milestone events. We lost Al, we lost Joan, I lost my husband. Ed Ray lost Beth, you know. Some people had their first grandchild, others retired, some people's children went off to college or graduated, you know, I mean these people became a part of our family and it was just life was happening all around us in that process. People were investing in future and that's a benefit that our students feel today. But just extraordinary families, extraordinary generosity, but they were always there for me. They didn't say "are you out of your mind?" They may have said it privately but they never said it to me and they never made me feel that way. They just, they all were encouraging.

**CP:** Well, the building itself is striking, I wonder if you could talk a bit about the design of the building and the impact that it's made on the college?

**IK:** So, we went through a very interesting process to design the building. We worked with architects, THA out of Portland, and we began, we were the first to use a process that we referred to as impression workshops. And there was, I was a part of the building steering committee and all of us, there were five of us from the college that worked with the architects to design this building; we participated in or observed every impression workshop. And the impression workshops were that, it was to try to help create a vision for the building. They were photographic images and in small groups, faculty and staff and students were asked to choose imagery that reflected the culture, the feel of Bexell, where we were in the college then and where it would be whenever this new facility is built. And what it gave us was the opportunity, because we knew there were certain things we wanted to retain and other things, the chaos of and, you know, if it were needing renovated we wanted to give that up, right? But it helped.

And to listen to people speak through this imagery, we had over a hundred people participate in that process. All faculty were asked, when they went to the professional meetings, if there were new facilities, new business facilities or new

academic buildings, wherever they were, to go, take pictures of those things that impressed them the most. And we posted that, we used SharePoint. And everyone could see it, so the steering committee could see all of that.

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But we had the voices of faculty, staff and students in our heads as we sat down to try to develop it. I had one designing principle that had to be met and I didn't want no stinking box. That was my—"don't build me no stinking box, and I want a fireplace." That was it. Anything else, I could take. Those were the things I wanted.

Through the students and everyone, we knew we wanted Northwest Professional, which meant you could wear blue jeans, like our governor, with a sports coat, but, right? We wanted to be authentic to who we are, shouldn't be ostentatious. We're humble but it needed to say "we're sophisticated enough." It needed to have an artistic expression. The arts are very important to me. So—and there were some people that chose not to contribute to a new facility because Bexell was always commerce, from 1922. The one thing that every single living alum had in common was that they were educated in Bexell Hall. Every single person alive. So, how do we honor our past while we move forward? You can't forget your past but you can honor it, but we don't have to cling to it.

So, with that then we began the design process. And we also had to work with the historic review which essentially, if you build a stinking box, you can get it through, but if you wanted too, anything too distinctive, because we wanted the space to say "business," we wanted it to say "this is the college of business." I wanted a place that reflected the quality of our people and I believe today when alums come in and they are awe struck and they said "oh my gosh" and I say "I think you see yourself but you didn't know anyone else knew how good you were." And they never deny it. They never deny it. So, there's a real sense of pride that comes out in it.

So, we built, we took all of the needs, the user needs and we began the design process. For those of us who were accountants and information technology specialists and things, it was a very painful process. The iterative process was hard; you know, just tell me what you can do for me but make it look good. And this whole business of having to keep going back and keep "no, I don't like that, I don't like that, I don't like this other thing." But I think in the end they came, they did the right things. We honor our past through our artwork in the building, Ray King, out of New York, the abacus, twenty-four different abaci that are set at milestone dates in the history of OSU and the College of Business, "The Currency of Insight" by Amy Baur, the two-story ceramic tile, I mean she went to the archives and took imagery from the OSU archives. We took the WPA artwork out of Bexell and imprinted that in glass on the east and west entries. And I have my fireplace.

So, you know, I was influenced by an event that happened the summer that we were designing the building. I went in at six-thirty one summer morn and I went to the vending machine room and there was a, in the basement of Bexell, and there was a young man studying by the light of the window and—because he wasn't making enough motion to keep the sensors on for the lighting. And I went over, he had a book and notebook in front of him and I introduced myself, I asked what he was doing and what he was studying and he told me and I said "are we teaching that course this summer? I didn't realize we had offered that course." And he said "oh yes, I'm taking it online." And I said "well then, what are you doing here at six-thirty in the morning?" And he said "well, I'm studying. This is where I come to learn." And that resonated with me that, you know, everyone thinks online learning is about, you know, well students who want to stay home in their pajamas, but the fact was he needed a home to study. Like a library, this was where he comes to learn.

And so that sense of home, we needed a home for Business. So, we have our hearth, we have our living room. Ken Austin Jr. handcrafted this table for me and contributed it, but his vision for this table was the kitchen table, because most small businesses start around a kitchen table. So, I have my kitchen table, I have my hearth, I have my living room, so we have our home for business. And I think that that's what people react to, is that it does feel comfortable when they come in. And the students, they sit a little bit higher—they tell me this—they sit a little bit higher in their chairs, they feel a responsibility to do better work. And I have said in public spaces before, people seem to understand that you can't win athletic events without quality facilities. But no one asks the question for academic performance. What should the quality of the space be for our students, you know, for our leaders, for our—shouldn't space inspire them to do their best rather than making do? And so my faculty report of fall term, students were much more engaged, the level of interaction was higher. I don't know that the grades, the GPAs were higher; I don't know that, I haven't checked it. Our faculty, one of the things that they question is how do we maintain gratitude in our culture? Because there will come a day, sooner for

the students than for the faculty, there'll come a day when people didn't know what it was like before Austin Hall. Today we're very grateful for what we have. How do we retain that gratitude? That sense of gratitude in the work, you know, in the world around us? And it was more than the faculty could ever have imagined possible. And they, we're all doing well here.

**CP:** Yeah.

**IK:** Yeah, I'm very proud of them. And what the building does for us, I think it's, donors talk about a sea change, you know. The facility, we can now compete for top talent that want to study business. So, before if you visited us and you visited the University of Oregon and you visited Paccar Hall up in the University of Washington, you know, it was a rare student, there were some that they saw themselves in Bexell Hall and they really liked it, they felt at home there. But I haven't heard of anyone complain about Austin Hall.

**CP:** I have not heard anything.

**IK:** Yeah.

**CP:** Well, I have other things that I'd like to talk to you about but we're brushing up against the next—

**IK:** Okay, I'm sorry. I talk too much.

**CP:** --meeting across campus. No, not at all, this has been fascinating. So, I really appreciate this and thank you for sharing and good luck with retirement coming up.

**IK:** Thank you, thank you. It's repurposing.

**CP:** Okay.

**IK:** I don't retire, I repurpose.

**CP:** Perfect. Thank you very much.

**IK:** Yeah, good. Thank you, Chris.

[Interview Ends: 1:24:33]