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Mary Woods Bennett

A CAREER IN HIGHER EDUCATION: MILLS COLLEGE, 1935-1974

With An Introduction by
Esther Lee Mirmow

An Interview Conducted By
Malca Chall
in 1986

Underwritten by the Endowment of the Class of '31
University of California at Berkeley

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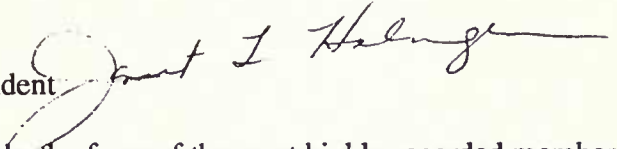
MARY WOODS BENNETT

MILLS

March 26, 1996

To: The Mills Community

From: Janet L. Holmgren, President



With great sadness, I write to report the death of one of the most highly regarded members of the Mills College community. Mary Woods Bennett, Dean of the Faculty and Provost Emerita, Professor Emerita of Psychology and Child Development, died in Concord on March 25 after a long illness. Almost no one served the College longer than she did and, many would say, none better.

Born in Berkeley in 1909, Mary Woods was among the original participants in the Terman study of gifted children. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of University of California at Berkeley, she was valedictorian of the Class of 1931. She came to Mills in 1935 as an instructor in Child Development. President Lynn White appointed her Dean of the Faculty in 1953, in which capacity she served until her retirement in 1974. She also served as Acting President in 1958-59 and again briefly in 1975. Her activity in the world of education extended beyond Mills to leading in the establishment of childcare centers during World War II, and later serving on the boards of the Head-Royce School and the University of Santa Clara. She was instrumental in requiring the licensing of psychologists by the State of California.

Her role as Dean of the Faculty is best expressed by the plaque naming the Faculty Lounge in the Rothwell Center. It reads:

"This lounge is affectionately dedicated to
Mary Woods Bennett, Dean of the Faculty 1953-1974,
By the colleagues who rejoiced in her leadership."

Upon retirement, Mary Woods returned to live in the neighborhood of Berkeley where she grew up. She leaves her sister Jane (now appearing on Broadway in "Moon Over Buffalo") and brother-in-law Gordon Connell, two nieces Missy and Maggie, and her nurse-companion Rosemary Menzies.

No services are planned. The family prefers remembrances be made to the Mary Woods Bennett Professorship, a chair endowed upon her retirement by the Board of Trustees to bring distinguished visiting faculty to Mills.

I join in extending condolences to all those who had the honor of knowing and working with Mary Woods Bennett.

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PREFACE

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our graduation from the University of California, the Class of 1931 elected to present to the University an endowment for an oral history series. Titled "The University of California, Source of Community Leaders," the Class of 1931 Oral History Endowment provides an ongoing source of funding for oral histories by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library. The commitment is to carry out interviews with persons related to the University who have made outstanding contributions to the community, by which is meant the state, the nation, or to a particular field of endeavor. The memoirists, selected by a committee set up by the class, will come from Cal alumni, faculty, and administrators. Those men and women chosen will comprise an historic honor list in the rolls of the University.

To have the ability to make a major educational endowment is a privilege enjoyed by only a few individuals. Where a group joins together in a spirit of gratitude and admiration for their alma mater, dedicating their gift to one cause, they can affect the history of that institution greatly.

The first fruit of the Class of 1931 Endowment was the history of our beloved president, Robert Gordon Sproul, which we presented in November, 1986 to the University of California in memory of that man and of our class.

The 1987 selection is Mary Woods Bennett. A life-long resident of Berkeley, our Class Speaker, a Phi Beta Kappa, who earned both her B.A. and Ph.D. degrees at Berkeley in psychology, she went on to a distinguished thirty-nine year career at Mills College, first as a professor, later as dean of the faculty. Since retiring in 1974 she has rejoined the Berkeley community as a Berkeley Fellow, as a member of the Council of The Friends of The Bancroft Library, and as a member of the Town and Gown Club.

We wish to thank Mary Metz, president of Mills College, for joining the Class of '31 with her gift from the college to produce this oral history.

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INTRODUCTION -- Esther Lee Mirmow

Mary Woods Bennett came to Mills College as a young instructor in 1935 and spent the rest of her professional career there. In 1953, she was appointed Dean of the Faculty by President Lynn T. White, Jr., and remained in that post until her retirement in 1974, serving under three presidents, and twice functioning as acting president herself.* For those of us who served on the faculty during those years, she came to personify the College itself, its continuity in times of change, its devotion to the highest academic standards, its respect for individual differences, and its commitment to human values. For those of us who were left behind at her retirement, it seemed the end of an era.

I myself was fortunate to enjoy the guidance of Dean Bennett even before she became Dean of the Faculty, during the second of the two years in which she served as head of the Department of Psychology. When I arrived for an interview at Mills College in the spring of 1952, a brand new Ph.D. visiting the institution of which I knew little, in a community hitherto completely unknown, I was met at the airport by a woman of whom I had never heard (my previous contact had been with the Dean of Faculty) who introduced herself as "Mary Bennett" and proceeded to take me in tow. Looking back, I can see how all of Dean Bennett's remarkable strengths as Dean of the Faculty were displayed in microcosm during the weekend. She had the two days planned to the last detail, all contingencies covered, no surprises possible, every person concerned knowing exactly what role to play and when. She was able to put the nervous young applicant at ease, thereby eliciting the best but at the same time also evoking a degree of unselfconscious candor in which applicants for jobs seldom allow themselves to indulge. And, most of all, she gave of herself unstintingly, not only taking the time to introduce the visitor to the College thoroughly and painstakingly, but also taking me on my first trip to San Francisco (despite rush hour crowds on the Bridge) and even, despite my abashed protests, rising before dawn to take me to the airport for a six o'clock return plane. I got the job, and for the next year basked in the same kind of generous counsel. When Dr. Bennett was named Dean of the Faculty the following Spring, I felt a sense of loss at having to share her stewardship with the rest of the College.

It seems to me that the salient quality of Dean Bennett's regime as Dean of the Faculty was the degree of trust she inspired in all who worked with her. This trust was based on many factors, first among which was her ability to listen sensitively and non-judgmentally, an ability perhaps honed by her training as a psychologist. Faculty members knew they would get a fair hearing, that their positions would be understood and taken into

* The second occasion was after her retirement in August and September, 1975 during the illness of President Wert.

consideration to the fullest extent possible, even if their requests could, finally, not be fulfilled.

Implicit in this sense of trust was the perception that Dean Bennett herself had no personal axe to grind--no hidden agenda, no self-service drive for power, no temptation toward self-aggrandizement. She once said to me that one of the chief satisfactions for her in her job was that she liked "to make things go." The faculty, I think, felt this, and knew that her sole aim was to meet the needs both of the institution and of the individual as fully as possible. A respect for individuals was apparent in all her dealings, most notably in her reliance on persuasion rather than authority or manipulation in accomplishing her ends. She often spoke of a fantasy in which she spent her retirement years as a parking lot attendant, "pushing around inanimate objects," but if she wearied of her role of moderator, it never showed.

Another thing we trusted was her judgment. Her decisions carried weight because we knew that she always did her homework thoroughly and weighed alternative courses of action calmly and objectively. When, after listening carefully to all sides of a complex or controversial issue, she finally ventured a suggestion for a solution, her proposal always had the compelling ring of truth.

None of these capabilities was at all diminished by her extraordinary memory, her ability to illuminate events by putting them in historical context, and her wry sense of humor, all of which are clearly evident in her oral history.

When Dean Bennett retired, the faculty lounge was named in her honor. The plaque reads: "This lounge is dedicated to Mary Woods Bennett, Dean of the Faculty 1953-1974, by the colleagues who rejoiced in her leadership."

And we did.

Esther Lee Mirmow
Professor of Psychology
Mills College, 1952-1987

October, 1987
Sonoma, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

The Regional Oral History Office, for many years, sought to interview Mary Woods Bennett because of her significance in the history of Mills College and the breadth and duration of her participation in the culture and community life of the Berkeley-Oakland area. Long reluctant to be interviewed, Miss Bennett finally agreed, later conceding that the process is "seductive". The oral history came to fruition under the aegis of the Class of 1931 Oral History Series, and a gift from Mills College through President Mary Metz.

A 1926 graduate of Anna Head School, Miss Bennett went on to the University of California at Berkeley where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa in 1931. While a graduate student in psychology, she joined the Mills College faculty in 1935 as a member of the Department of Child Development. Two years later she earned a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of California. From 1954 to 1974 she was dean of the faculty and provost at Mills College. She is also the recipient of honors from Mills College, the University of California, and Anna Head School, and has served on the board of trustees of Santa Clara University and Anna Head School, and on the Council of The Friends of The Bancroft Library.

The list does not show what Miss Bennett's friends and colleagues have long known, and what the reader of this oral history will immediately discover: Mary Woods Bennett is an exceptionally gifted raconteur, with enviable recall of facts, situations, and illustrative anecdotes that shed light on both the serious and the humorous aspects of her experiences.

Her collection of personal memorabilia, including report cards from elementary school through college, correspondence, dance programs, newspaper clippings, diaries, and itineraries, not only served to prompt memory but also is the source of the illustrative material which the reader will find sprinkled throughout the volume.

Dean Bennett and I first met in the Regional Oral History Office on September 16, 1986, to discuss the general contents of the memoir and select dates for the interviews. The first of eight two-hour sessions began September 30 in the conference room of The Bancroft Library and continued at approximately weekly intervals until December 2.

Working from chronological/topical outlines sent to Miss Bennett prior to each interview session, we covered such diverse topics as the Bennett family; education through high school; the University of California at Berkeley (including academic and extra curricular activities); a year in Seattle; graduate work toward the Ph.D. in psychology; the years at Mills

College as teacher, community worker, and dean; retirement.

Since her career at Mills spanned nearly forty years and was a totally engrossing segment for nearly half her life, Mills College is understandably the focus of the oral history. As a result, there is lively discussion of the personalities, work habits, and educational standards of four Mills presidents, three of whom Mary Woods Bennett worked with as dean of the faculty. The reader learns how this small, women's liberal arts college survived the Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement and its aftermath.

Through it all we sense Mary Woods Bennett's successful adaptation to life on the campus, to each new president, and to the challenges which the changing economic and political situations inside and outside the campus placed before her. Adaptation was possible she claimed because she "enjoyed the problem-solving aspects of the job" and had the capacity to "live with unsolved problems...and sleep at night."

As the table of contents indicates, there is a broad chronological order to the oral history, organized by chapters. But within the broad categories the story unfolds in directions Miss Bennett chose to take, utilizing the sweep of time to make a point, rather than the narrow, artificial time frames posed by the outlines. Once, after a perfectly reasonable digression, she said, "The flow is always getting in the way of your tidy arrangement. I'm sorry about that. Life is not tidy."

Extensive editing was not required. As she carefully reviewed her lightly edited transcript, Miss Bennett corrected the spelling of proper names, revised a few sentences, and added dates and other requested information. The editor reordered a few passages to provide better continuity.

Assistance in developing background for the interviews came through informal conversations with retired Mills Librarian Elizabeth Reynolds; Professor of Economics, Dr. Marion Ross; and former Mills President Robert Wert. Mills reference librarian Eda Regan provided annual reports, copies of President's Letters, and other useful material for perusal in the Mills College Library. Special thanks are due the UC Class of '31 and Mills President Mary Metz for making possible this oral history. It illuminates the life of a notable woman, and adds to the Regional Oral History Office's growing collection of interviews with women in the field of higher education.

Malca Chall
Interviewer-Editor

2 June 1987
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please print or write clearly)

Your full name MARY WOODS BENNETT

Date of birth APRIL 5, 1909 Place of birth OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Father's full name LOUIS WESLEY BENNETT

Birthplace ODEBOLT, IOWA

Occupation ATTORNEY AT LAW

Mother's full name MARY JOSEPHINE ^{SPERRY} BENNETT

Birthplace SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA

Occupation HOUSEWIFE

Where did you grow up ? BERKELEY

Present community BERKELEY

Education BERKELEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (EMERSON, WILLARD JUNIOR HIGH)

ANNA HEAD (1923-26), UC BERKELEY (1926-1937) BA 1931, PH D 1937.

Occupation(s) LABORATORY ASSISTANT, SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (1931-32)

AT MILLS COLLEGE, 1935-1974 (RETIRED) APPOINTED AS COORDINATOR, FAMILY COUNCIL, AND ASSISTANT IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT; INSTRUCTOR--PROFESSOR, 1936-53. DEAN OF THE FACULTY 1953, ALSO PROVOST, 1954-74.

Special interests or activities DURING MILLS YEARS, FULLY ENGAGED IN ALL ACTIVITIES OF THE COLLEGE, ACADEMIC AND EXTRACURRICULAR. TRAVEL IN USA AND ABOARD, OFTEN ON COLLEGE BUSINESS OR PARTLY SO. WITH FRIENDS ON FACULTY ENJOYED CONCERTS, OPERA, OCCASIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (DANCE, HORSEBACK RIDING), THEATRE. SINCE RETIREMENT: OPERA, BALLET, SYMPHONY, THEATRE WITH FRIENDS FROM MILLS OR BERKELEY. HAVE SERVED, SINCE EARLY MILLS DAYS TO PRESENT ON VARIOUS BOARDS: HEAD-ROYCE SCHOOL, FRIENDS OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY, SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY. DURING MILLS YEARS BEFORE DEANSHIP WORKED WITH VARIOUS COMMUNITY AGENCIES MOSTLY IN OAKLAND

I FAMILY BACKGROUND

[Interview 1: September 30, 1986]##

Mother: Mary Josephine Sperry

Chall: We'll start with your parents; you can start with your mother, if you want to.

Bennett: Mother was California born. She was born in San Luis Obispo, grew up there until the age of about ten. Then she and her mother and stepfather and her brothers and younger sister moved to San Jose where they lived for about six years, I think. There were other members of the family living there at the time. And then when she was about high school age they moved to San Francisco.

She went to Saint Rose's Academy in San Francisco. They were not Roman Catholics--this was a Catholic school--but while resident in San Jose she had gone to board for two to three years at the Convent of Notre Dame in Santa Clara. This was simply because it was a small, private girls' school. My grandmother had the feeling that the other school available, which was quite all right for the boys, was a little rough for her daughters. So she persuaded the good sisters to take my mother, although she wasn't Roman Catholic. My grandmother refused to have her dressed in the black that was the customary garb of the young ladies. So she was dressed in snow white and the class pictures taken in those two or three years in her early teens were really very amusing. She's standing out as the pure white woman against all the others.

Chall: I'm surprised they made a concession.

##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 274,

Bennett: Oh, no trouble at all. They made no attempt to turn her into a Roman Catholic. As a matter of fact, she felt affronted at being excluded from some of the activities. But it was quite easy, and worked very well. She was always grateful for it, she liked that experience.

Chall: Was her mother quite interested in the children's education? The boys and the daughter?

Bennett: Yes, of course, I mean everybody was in those days, at least the people they associated with. I had one uncle who, apparently, was a holy terror in the school. His name went down in history as being the one who was thrown out of Hester grammar school for running up the flag upside down, sending up a distress signal. And there are, of course, great family tales about how the boys cut up during their years in San Jose. I have no idea how much of it's true, and how much is invention. Family history says that when the good families were in church, and had their horses and buggies tethered in places provided outside, the boys used to borrow the buggies and horses and have chariot races up and down The Alameda. [laughter] That could be made up out of whole cloth. Who knows?

Chall: I've heard of boys doing that with automobiles they find on the street with the keys inside. They borrow them for a while.

Bennett: In San Jose my mother had a friendship which lasted all her life, and lasted my life as long as that friend lived. She was one of my predecessors at Mills as dean of the faculty, in due course.

Chall: What was her name?

Bennett: Her name was Anna Cox, at the time, later Anna Cox Brinton. Anna had a younger sister, my mother had a younger sister, and there was another pair of sisters in the neighborhood. Those six formed what they called the Eagle's Nest Sporting Club. Mother said, "Don't ask where the name came from," because she hadn't any idea.

But the association was so firm that when I was already grown and working at Mills, when someone was being interviewed for a summer job at Mills, I suddenly heard footsteps coming my way and the head of my department brought in this middle-aged lady. She looked at me and she said, "Can this be snuggle-tight?" I was the first baby born to any of those six and because I was tiny they called me "snuggle-tight". [laughter] Can you imagine my mingled pleasure and embarrassment? But it was a very firm and lasting friendship.

Anna Brinton and her younger sister Catharine were not only very much in my life, but they helped to form my own education because Mother left high school to marry my father. She never darkened the door of an educational institution again, and relied

Bennett: on these two friends, who both had Stanford Ph.D's and went on to some distinction in their field. So it was a useful, as well as a very rewarding relationship.

Chall: How many boys were there in your mother's--

Bennett: Mother had three surviving brothers, and one sister--a half sister, actually. Her own father died when she was about two years old, and she never remembers another father save this stepfather, whom we always regarded as our grandfather. His one daughter was Mother's only sister, and very much cherished. She died of a bungled appendectomy when she was about twenty-three to twenty-four. But she was very much a presence in the family.

Chall: Was she the only half-sibling?

Bennett: Yes, and Mother's only sister, and I never heard Mother refer to her as anything but her sister.

Chall: So your mother was probably the youngest born then?

Bennett: No, there was one boy. My grandmother had children by her first husband in '83, '85, '87, '88, '89. Mother was born in '88, and her youngest brother in '89, just short of her first birthday. She [grandmother] lived to be seventy.

Chall: What was her name? Both names, maiden name and her married name.

Bennett: My mother or my grandmother you're talking about now?

Chall: Well, your grandmother and then your mother.

Bennett: My grandmother was born Mary Woods Phillips. It's clear that I was named for her. She in turn had been named for her grandmother.

Chall: Was she also American born?

Bennett: My grandmother was American born; she was born in Wisconsin. Her parents were both Americans, but my mother's grandmother--my mother's mother's mother was born of Irish parents. That's where the Woods family comes in.

Chall: That's a name that's been carried on. What was your mother's name?

Bennett: My mother's maiden name was Sperry, Mary Josephine Sperry.*

Chall: Was that the name of her stepfather?

* For more on the Sperry family, see chapter V, p.270-273.

Bennett: No, her stepfather was Reginald Wills-Sandford, an Englishman. It's an amusing tale, perhaps has nothing to do with my history, but my grandmother's family was in San Luis Obispo; that's where her husband was. She was the second wife of a man old enough to be her father. [Henry Austin Sperry] Her second husband was one of group of young Englishmen who came out to the Peninsula, and ranched, introduced polo, and brought their "tallyho" with them, and cut quite a swath. There's a little recounting of that era in the works of one Horace Annesley Vachell, who, as my colleague at Mills, Franklin Walker said, wasn't a very good writer. But he did write quite a bit with a setting of that early California era which is not so early--after all, it's mid-nineteenth century.

They had, apparently, a knack, those Phillips girls, for picking off all the eligible men that came along. My grandmother married this one, who was a bachelor when she was widowed. Then two of her sisters were married to two brothers who happened to be cousins of my stepgrandfather. Both those brothers married Phillips girls; both lost their wives in childbirth; both returned to England to have their children reared by their sister, because they had no facilities for taking care of them in San Luis Obispo, and with their wives gone they were going to be hard put to it. So they went back.

One of the loveliest friendships I ever developed was for one of the cousins who was the product of one of those marriages. She lived in Bath. I visited her and had a lovely time with her, and was so struck by family resemblence! And then she died. But there was this life in San Luis Obispo that got transported to San Jose and then up into San Francisco.

Chall: When your mother moved to San Franciaco, and was in high school, then she really was separated from her Eagle's Nest friends.

Bennett: Yes, she was. They lived on Van Ness Avenue. They were there at the time of the earthquake and fire. The fire stopped just on the other side of Van Ness. They lived in a tent at Fort Mason for a while until it was regarded as safe to go back. Then her family moved to Berkeley, after that time. Their house was not destroyed, but after that, they thought they had better get to firmer ground, so they moved to Berkeley. That was the house, that Berkeley house, where my mother was living when my father met her.

Chall: How did they happen to meet? She was so young.

Bennett: He was visiting his brother who was married to a neighbor. There was a household up the street from our Garber Street house that harbored two sisters and the husbands and children of both, and an elderly mother of the two sisters. My father's younger brother was husband to one of the sisters, and my father was visiting him.

Bennett: He had worked first in southern California, where he grew up, and then in San Francisco. He had come to visit this brother, perhaps on a trip from the south, perhaps when he was living in San Francisco, I don't know. But at any rate, they were walking home, up the hill to the house where my uncle lived, and my grandmother and her daughters were taking the air on the front porch. And so there was a conversation. It was very strange. My mother thought her white knight had come on foot, and he was ripe for it--of an age to be contemplating marriage. He felt secure that this was a proper introduction to a nice eligible girl. And they got married.

Chall: After a proper courtship, I'm sure.

Bennett: After a proper courtship and with some difficulty because my mother's stepfather felt very firmly that no young man should contemplate marriage unless he had had a house of his own and was on firm financial footing, and my father was a long way from that. Besides that, my grandfather, being old-fashioned, thought he ought not to be a Methodist, if he was going to marry his fine Episcopalian daughter. So my father went down and got himself confirmed at St. Mark's Church, and had many a talk with Edward Lamb Parsons who was not yet the bishop. My mother sang in the choir at that church.

I once asked my father--he never darkened the door of a church again, if he could help it--what he did that for? Did he make a compromise in some of his principles? If he had agnostic principles, that was all right too, but what did he go through this for? He said, "What would you do if you were a young man in love?" [laughter]

Chall: When your parents moved to Berkeley, that's when your mother changed to Anna Head, is that right?

Bennett: Yes. She took only French and music at Anna Head. She had been trained from an early age to play the piano. I say trained advisedly because it was a prolonged and intensive exposure built on the theory that if she ever had to earn her living, giving music lessons was a good way to do it. She had clearly some musical aptitude. But in spite of having studied with the best teachers in San Francisco, and devoting a great deal of time to it, practicing long hours every day, for a long time, when she married she dropped it, and never again seriously played the piano. She played all the time for us. She had a wonderful ear. She could pick up anything. Indeed, once in a while she would discipline herself, and go down to the music store and get a book, and exercises, and bring it home and work on it. This never lasted very long.

She played songs for my brother who turned out to have a lovely voice, and a good ear for music too. She taught him so young some of the California football songs that this tiny child

Bennett: would come forth with these songs at the drop of a hat. And do you know, at the invocation that we went to this last week, I could sing every single word of the Jonah song because my brother had learned that at age two. [laughs] Jonah song! Stanford's Jonsh. "Like our friend Mr. Jonah Stanford's team will be found in the tummy of the Golden Bear" it says.

Chall: Not being a graduate of either school, I don't know those things.

Bennett: You don't really appreciate that.

Chall: No. So your mother was how old when she married?

Bennett: Nineteen.

Chall: She would have been a senior, is that about right? Or she would have graduated?

Bennett: She was probably a special student, because music and French were her commitments there. I don't know whether this was because she spent so much time practicing or what. But that was the case.

Chall: She never had a high school diploma then?

Bennett: No, she never did.

Chall: With whom did she study French and music in San Francisco?

Bennett: She studied with May Sinsheimer in San Francisco, that I know. There were Sinsheimers on this side of the bay too. It could be that she studied on this side. But that is the name, I remember, as being the name of her last teacher.

Chall: Piano teacher. And French, was that at school?

Bennett: That was at school, dear old Mlle. Clavé, who taught more generations of Anna Head students that you could shake a stick at.

Father: Louis Wesley Bennett

Chall: Tell me about your father.

Bennett: My father had a completely different kind of upbringing. He was one of the ten children of his mother. His mother was second wife to his father, who had had three sons by the first wife. So he was number eight, I think, in his family of ten. His mother had come to the rescue of her aunt's widower. My Grandfather Bennett was left a widower with two small boys, one of the three children

Bennett: that they had of that marriage having died somewhere along the line. He was left with these two boys seven or eight years old, and he simply married the niece of his wife, who took him on. He was therefore considerably older than she. She also was about sixteen or eighteen when she married.

She had not long been married when she set out with her husband for Denver from Iowa, where they lived. They're the only family I ever heard of that went both ways in a covered wagon. They went by a wagon from Clinton, or whatever, in Iowa, to Denver. What my Grandfather Bennett was going to do there, I don't know, but it didn't pan out. So they packed up and took the wagon back home.

Chall: They just still had the two children--his two children?

Bennett: She was pregnant with her first. No, the older boys were left at home with other relatives on this trip. I have my grandmother's letters from that trip, her letters back home. I have not read all of them, but she regarded it as a lark. She makes references to the fact that she is pregnant with her first child, although in much more flowery terms than that. But, apparently, at this stage, the marriage was all sweetness and light. It soured later. After ten children, I can imagine. I think her child was born in Denver, but I could be wrong, it could be that they made it back to Iowa before he was born. This I have no information on. My grandfather's autobiography does exist, and someday I'll find out.

Chall: You have it?

Bennett: Yes, I have a copy of it.

Chall: Where was your father among the ten?

Bennett: He was number eight. There was one more born after they got to San Diego. One more boy came along.

Chall: Did you say they were all boys?

Bennett: No, there were eight boys and two girls. But the two girls were together, one after the other. They immediately preceded my father. Actually, because my grandfather was always making efforts to get West, there was a long hiatus after the first five children. So they were significantly older than the last five.

When my father was about six years old Grandfather Bennett sent for them. Grandmother Bennett came out with her two girls and two little boys, and with at least one of the big boys to take care of the family cow which came along in a baggage car so that the

Bennett: children could have milk on the trip to San Diego. My grandparents were still living in San Diego when I visited them. I visited them two or three times around 1915.

Chall: You were a little girl.

Bennett: A very little girl. Dad and Mother just felt it an obligation to take the grandchildren down, and we went down on the old Harvard, or the Yale. Remember those boats? No, you didn't know them. They used to ply between San Francisco and San Diego. Then we had one train trip when I was about six years old. It was very fine, except there were no camels in that desert that we went over and I was very much disappointed at that. So we knew that pair of grandparents, and my Grandfather Bennett lived to be in his ninety-second year. So he was very much a presence.

Chall: He outlived your grandmother?

Bennett: She died about three months after he did.

Chall: Oh, yea, but she was much younger.

Bennett: She was much younger. But I think she must have had some kind of complication of kidney or liver, whatever. She had what they called in those days dropsy which meant nothing except it referred to the swelling that went with the disease. He died, I think, like the one-horse shay, I think he just ran down.

Chall: What was your father's name?

Bennett: Louis.

Chall: Did he have a middle name?

Bennett: Wesley.

Chall: Bennett?

Bennett: Bennett.

Chall: And the year of his birth?

Bennett: Eighteen eighty-one.

Chall: So his grandparents--parents and grandparents--were also American?

Bennett: Yes. It's very interesting to me that in the broad sweep the two family strains that I come from did the same thing. They came from the British Isles to New England, sojourned a while in the Midwest, and then came to California. It's fun picking up the bits and pieces. They never knew each other. Although we did verify the

Bennett: fact that a couple of generations back they were contemporaries in Vermont. There's no record that they ever met or anything. But it was Vermont and Massachusetts that remained the places from which they came.

Chall: But the religions--one family being Episcopalian and the other Methodist. Your mother was Episcopalian?

Bennett: Yes, and this, I'm sure, was the stepfather's influence. As a matter of fact, my grandmother told me, that her father had given the lots for two churches in San Luis Obispo. One a Presbyterian and one Episcopalian. She was an ardent Episcopalian by the time I knew her. It could have been that she grew up a Presbyterian, I just don't know. I think that in those towns, in the valleys in California in those days, one went to the church that everybody went to. I think churchgoing was a social function, and you went to what was there; this is my guess. But my grandmother became aggressively Episcopalian. Indeed, at St. Stephen's Church in San Luis Obispo, they did some fund raising by putting on a performance of Pinafore. I had never heard the last of the fact that my grandmother sang the role of Josephine in Pinafore. When I visited St. Stephen's Church once for old times sake there it was in the record. [laughter]

Dad's mother was very narrowly Methodist. This constituted a problem for him as he grew to manhood and realized that you really can't just hold your nose and run past every saloon door; you have to do something different. [laughter]

Chall: Yes, I had forgotten about that part of it. And his father?

Bennett: His father was wholly without church. I don't think he was necessarily an irreligious man.

##

Bennett: My father followed his father in feeling no obligation to join a church. It was an indifference toward organized church that was characteristic of his life. He never disparaged religion, but he simply did not feel motivated to attend to it. He made no objection to our going to Sunday school when Mother wanted us to. We went in spurts. We went most intensively when my brother's voice was such that he was wanted as the boy soprano in the choir. This was a happy time for Mother. She loved this.

My brother, who could sing the songs all right, hated it, hated the exposure to the public, and as soon as he could gracefully do it he wiggled out of that. He liked singing. I think if he had turned out to be a tenor he would have tried to be a singer at least avocationally, but he had no use for a baritone voice which his turned out to be.

Chall: What a disappointment for him!

Bennett: But as a little fellow he used to stand on one arm of my father's Morris Chair and belt out songs accompanying whoever was singing on our Victrola. Usually it was Caruso. He gave Enrico a good run for his money.

Chall: This is the little fellow who sang the Jonah song?

Bennett: Yes. Just loved to sing, and could sing anything, once taught.

Chall: What was the name of your church in Berkeley that you went to?

Bennett: Well, we went to St. Mark's at times. Mother and Dad were married there. At the time my brother was singing in the choir we went to All Souls in North Berkeley, because it had a boy choir. Mother found out which Episcopal church in the area had a choir. She was very faithful about getting him there for rehearsal and performance. He enjoyed the connection, he really did.

I went along to go to Sunday school with my agemates simply because he was going, and began to realize for the first time that Sunday school is very ill taught in most places. If I had had a better run at it I think I would have enjoyed the analysis of the scripture which the rector was giving to my class, by the time my brother was of an age to sing in the choir. But mine was simply a by-product of his singing.

Later, much later, Mother's younger children both went to Sunday school and were in the children's choir at that same church. Partly because my sister, who's sixteen years younger than I, by the way, had a nurse, a venerable lady by this time, who had made a career of bringing up other people's children, an Englishwoman, who was a communicant at All Souls church. And she willingly took on this child for Sunday assignments and so forth. So this had the effect of exposure to the Episcopal church as we grew up. Indeed, my brother and I were confirmed at All Souls because we were of the age of the class that was being confirmed at the time he was singing in the choir.

I used to enjoy the sermons of the men who were rectors there at the time, Mr. Trelease, and later Mr. Montgomery. But this was spotty, there was nothing consistent about our church-going or membership. Mother never got around to it because she was too busy getting us ready to go--there was always a baby at home.

The Bennett Siblings and Family Life

Chall: Tell me about your own family then, and we'll get back to your parents as we go along. I don't know anything about the fact that one of your sisters is sixteen years younger than you.

Bennett: She was born my senior year in high school.

Chall: This is all from the same mother and the same father?

Bennett: Yes, same mother and father.

Chall: I see. Well, all right, let's get into that.

Bennett: There are two boys in between.

Chall: So who comes--?

Bennett: I'm the oldest.

Chall: You were born in 1909?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Mary Woods. Then who comes next?

Bennett: My brother Jack, John Holbrook Bennett; he was born in 1911. In December. I'm two years and eight months older than he. John Holbrook is the name of one of those Vermont ancestors on the Bennett side. Dad just liked the name, so that's what he was called.

Then seven years later, in October of 1918, right amidst that first flu epidemic, came the second brother. He was Louis Wesley Bennett, Jr. The first time I saw my mother out of bed following that child's birth, she came in in the middle of the night to tell me that the racket outside meant that the War was over. Then seven years to the month after that birth date my little sister was born.

Chall: And her name?

Bennett: Jane Sperry Bennett.

Chall: Seven years. Nineteen twenty-five.

Bennett: As the doctor said to my mother on one occasion, "Mrs. Bennett, you have just been too long in the baby business."

Chall: [Laughter] Only four of them. Well your mother was still pretty young.

Bennett: She seemed old. I remember that this last one was the first one that she went to a proper obstetrician for. The others were just delivered by our general practitioner.

Chall: Where? At home?

Bennett: No. The two younger ones at Merritt Hospital in Oakland, and my brother Jack and I were both born at a hospital that no longer exists that used to be, roughly, on a parking lot back of Capwell's. It was called the Oakland Central Hospital.

Chall: When were your parents married?

Bennett: In May, 1908, and I was born in April, 1909.

Chall: She spaced her children pretty well, considering. Well, there was birth control in those days.

Bennett: Accident rather than design.

Chall: What's the name of the lady who was so active in the birth control movement?

Bennett; Margaret Sanger?

Chall: Margaret Sanger.

Bennett: My father wouldn't have her name mentioned in the house.
[laughter]

Chall: Is that so? [laughter]

Bennett: He was very prim about people interfering with the intimate life of domesticity. Very prim.

Chall: There weren't any stillbirths or deaths then, in between?

Bennett: No. No troubles along the line at all. There was trouble with the second boy. The birth was proving difficult. Progress was not being made and this was allowed to go on too long for the quite simple reason that our doctor came down with the flu in the delivery room. This was when people were dying like flies from it. My father told me later that at one time he thought his wife and child had both died because he saw the doctor in tears. But she managed to ask if there was a doctor in the house, and there was one, and he delivered that baby with forceps, I think. But at any rate, when the baby came along, it was in an unfavorable position in some way, and he managed to right it and bring it up. It was all right.

Chall: That's fortunate!

Bennett: They were so desperate that the hospital management came and asked Mother if they could take her special nurse from her to take care of the doctor. Mother said, "If I may have my baby in my room, you can have her." She always had a special nurse in those days, and stayed two weeks in the hospital. So, not only did they allow that, they sent her home in four days which was unheard of in those days. But her nurse came with her. They wanted her out of there and away from possibility of exposure. But that was the only nearly upsetting thing that happened. When the last baby came our general practitioner said to her, "Mrs. Bennett, considering your age, I think you would best go to the specialist."

Chall: That was Jane Sperry in 1925.

Bennett: She's the last one. There were just four of us. Mother had old Dr. Loomis, who had delivered every baby in the county for years and years. He used to call her 'old-timer'. I started to say that she seemed like an old mother to us, but she was only in her middle thirties.

Chall: So there were no other children. That must have been by design.

Bennett: Or chance.

Chall: Still only chance. I see. All right, well that's a pretty good family there.

Bennett: Mother used to laugh at it because she had always in her little girl years thought how nice it would be to have two sons and two daughters. She said that it took her a while.

Chall: She did it! Well, how did you welcome these little strangers into your household?

Bennett: Well, I doted on that baby. I had so much fun being taken for her mother.

Chall: Yes, you could have been in those days.

Bennett: Once when she was still in a high chair, my mother did one of the things that she did for many years, took my grandmother out for an automobile ride. I went along, and the baby was with us, and we stopped to have some ice cream somewhere. There were four of us sitting around the table, a baby in a high chair. Women referred to the baby as mine. Mother said, "No, she's mine, they're both mine." My grandmother sat there for a minute and said, "They are all mine." So it was fun having that little one.

Her brothers adored her, and her brothers' friends adored her. She certainly grew up the most cherished child. She was everybody's pet. Someone once said that this outspoken

Bennett: Englishwoman who, when this babe was eleven months old, came to take her off the adult's hands in the afternoon, get her a quiet supper in the evening, get her a quiet going-to-bed time at night, someone once said to her that Jane was spoiled. She said, "Of course she's spoiled. A child like that's always spoiled. No harm done!" [laughter]

Chall: And no harm has been done?

Bennett: Oh, no. If ever there was a blessing, this child was it. It was a lovely experience for the family.

Chall: You said that your grandparents on your father's side were not compatible after a number of years. That was just one of those things they accepted, I guess.

Bennett: I haven't any idea what the pros and cons might have been, but I had the task of going through my father's papers, and they included some letters from his mother to him about his father which could have been described conservatively as just plain vitriolic. I never knew the truth of it, and how much there was to be said on each side, and I just quietly burned them. It didn't seem to me it did any bit of good having them around, and could have been the basis for a lot of harm and speculation. I never saw that on the surface. Mother once said something to the effect that no woman was ever good enough to marry one of her sons in Mother Bennett's eyes. But that is hardly an extraordinary characteristic of a mother and father.

She and the other daughters-in-law used occasionally to chat about the role but it was never a monstrous burden. We didn't inhabit the same community, we always, of our free will went to see them, that is Mother and Dad did, and I can remember Mother urging Dad on, "Louis, you should do this, that, or the other for your parents" and so forth. So there was a decent attitude on everybody's side.

Chall: Your parents were compatible?

Bennett: To the extent that two people, radically different from each other, can be. They would no more have thought of separating than they would have thought of jumping over the moon. They were totally different temperaments.

Chall: What were they like?

Bennett: Mother was outgoing, overflowing with energy, not a dull woman at all. But she had no interests that you could identify as intellectual. My father was a student from the word go. He should have been a teacher.

Father Becomes a Lawyer

Chall: Was he a college graduate?

Bennett: By no means. When he was fourteen he was deemed old enough to start fending for himself. I think he had finished the eighth grade; he finished grammar school. He was sent to live with one of his many older brothers and the family of that older brother, in lower California, where he earned his keep by working as a telegraph operator in the town. At age fourteen, mind you. The telegraph office was located in the general store, and he came back with a thorough knowledge of Morse code, and some conversational Spanish, which he and his mother-in-law used to try out on each other all the time.

It was one of their joint interests that they still were interested in Spanish. She had gone, as a young girl when she was first married, to a ranch, where only her husband and the foreman spoke English. One of the California ranches near San Luis Obispo. So she had, perforce, learned some Spanish, and her eldest son spoke Spanish before he spoke English, because of having a Spanish-speaking nursemaid. Heaven knows what her heritage was.

But Dad then came back to San Diego and had a variety of jobs all in the business world. At the age of nineteen or so he was secretary to the vice-president and general manager of the Santa Fe Railroads. He traveled all over the Santa Fe system with this man, which constituted quite an education. Then, when he was in his late twenties or early thirties, married, and the father of two children, his employer had noticed that he was interested in the law, that he had always taken the opportunity to learn the law about this, that or the other phase of business. He suggested that he go to law school. So Dad bearded the lions up here at the state university. We were living in Berkeley. He and my mother settled here so that their children could be guaranteed a good education.

Chall: So they really had that in mind.

Bennett: They had it in mind. Because they might have chosen San Francisco, they might have chosen southern California. But they didn't. So he came up to apply for admission to the law school. Do you know they admitted him to Boalt Hall on the basis of his business experience? It always tickled him that he was in some classes with Earl Warren as a student.

Chall: How did he earn a living during this period?

Bennett: I think he must have been subsidized by his employer. That's the only thing I can think of. I never did ask. We were living with my grandparents, and I suppose this might have been partly a subsidy.

Chall: You were living with them, you children?

Bennett: Yes. Two of us, and Mother. My grandmother, and grandfather, and Mother's bachelor brother.

Chall: In Berkeley?

Bennett: In Berkeley.

Chall: And your father was living--?

Bennett: With us.

Chall: Oh, I see. You moved, then, from your own home into their home?

Bennett: We had been in several different houses in Berkeley in the course of our growing-up time until I was about kindergarten age. My grandmother and grandfather had the house that they had come to after the earthquake and fire. It was a largish house. Their bachelor son was with them. I don't know whether it was wholly a business proposition or whether it wasn't. But at any rate, my parents were invited to come and bring the two of us, and we lived in the same house from the time I was about five till the time I was seven or eight. It was a very pleasant time.

Chall: It's really interesting that those generations can live together--

Bennett: Well, I don't know whether it was economic necessity or what. But it was practical. Mother and Dad had a bedroom, my brother and I slept in the sleeping porch adjacent. There was a small house in the garden, back garden which had been built to house a student. I don't know that a student ever lived there, but that was its original purpose. This was made into a playhouse for us, and all but a few of our toys were kept out there.

We each had a drawer in the dining room, bottom drawer, in the built-in sideboard that was for us. Each of us had his or her own toys that were used downstairs and could be kept there. But Mother was very systematic about keeping us out of the other people's hair. For one thing, she was always on the job.

I had no sense of pressure or of being held down in that place, and I don't think my brother did either. There was a vacant lot next door, and we had ample place to play. We didn't play much with the neighbors, as we were young children. As we grew older, school age, of course we did. But it was pleasant.

Chall: Yes, you were little children then. Your grandmother probably shared the cooking and cleaning chores and all that?

Bennett: Yes, they did, and I can remember occasions in which I was with them, when they were getting the meal. I can remember my grandmother making biscuits. I can remember noting that she used the same vessels in the same amounts of their contents for the same thing over and over and over again, and I thought to myself, "Measurement of some kind, there's something going on here."

Chall: You were aware even as a little girl.

Bennett: I was aware that she was doing her own measuring in her own way and very happily saying that a good cook doesn't need to. No, it was a good time. We had had another joint living situation when my brother was a little younger. Actually, it was at a time when Mother was in bad health. Apparently she needed some repair work done after my brother was born. He was a very big, heavy, baby. Ten pounds and three ounces.

Chall: This is John?

Bennett: Jack, yes. During that period we were with my aunt, mother's aunt, and her husband and two sons and a bachelor uncle of my mother's, and my mother's grandmother.

Chall: Where would that have been? Also in Berkeley?

Bennett: We lived in Oakland on the shores of Lake Merritt in a great big old house with a high wall around it. It was such a huge house, it seemed to me enormous. But we had very pleasant quarters there, and this was a very pleasant interlude.

Chall: So during the period when your father was in law school, you were staying with your grandmother?

Bennett: When we were staying with my grandmother, it was during that period that my father studied. He had pages and pages and pages of questions and we were kept out and kept quiet. Again, we were just told he was studying and had to be left alone. Every once in a while he would feel the need of change and he would take my brother and me up into the hills. We would go up Fish Ranch Road behind the Claremont Hotel, and he would sit on the bank and study, and we would play about. Somehow or other he managed to pass the bar exam.

Chall: And then what did he do?

Bennett: Then he went back to work for the employer who had encouraged him to do this.

Chall: That's the Santa Fe Railroad?

Bennett: No, by this time it was E.M. Smith who had established what is now the AC Transit. The Key Route System. He worked for Mr. Smith for many years. It was Mr. Smith who had egged him on to go to law school.

The Family's Cultural and Community Interests

Chall: What a fine thing to do. But your father, then, always was studying something, is that right? He always was reading or--

Bennett: In one way, yes. He was fond of words. I have copies of the old Out West, poems by him. He was doing a little bit of writing and I have one issue of one those early magazines that had in it a poem by my father and also something by a relative of my mother--I can't remember who it is. But I thought it was amusing that they should be in the same publication. Very modest, never got anywhere with these things, but a lot of interest in doing it. I have several copies of Out West, which I once offered to Mr. Hart [director of the Bancroft Library], but he said they "had plenty, thank you." I also have a couple of copies of Overland Monthly. My father, much much later, when he was a middle-aged man and retired, entered a contest for playwriting. I think it was the WPA [Works Progress Administration] project or some sort. And won! And it was produced!

Chall: Oh, good. He did have talents.

Bennett: He was a very capable man and I always--as I grew to learn more about these things, I regretted very much that he really had, by circumstance, been saddled with responsibilities that he couldn't avoid. Had no wish to avoid. But they did hold him back, I think. If he had had freer reign he would have achieved much more satisfaction in his life.

Chall: Now, you told me last week that you remembered his taking you to-- was it a concert or something in the Greek Theatre? And then I read in one of the Mills publications that all of you in the family had gone to some picnic or concert at Mills when you were a little girl. I wondered about their interest in culture, or in music, and things of this kind around the community.

Bennett: Mother was interested in music in a way that--I hate to call it superficial because it meant more than that to her, but it was not based on any sound musicianship or working at the business of music. However, she at one time in her life belonged to the St. Agnes Guild of All Souls Church during the period my brother was

Bennett: actively connected there. They put on a fund-raising effort and she recruited my father, and her brother, and a colleague of her brother's, and a neighbor, and they made the best Neapolitan singing trio you ever saw in your lives. My father strummed the guitar, had a lovely time with them. They were spontaneous in their enjoyment of that sort of very easygoing, simple, life.

Dad had no musical training at all, but he could play the guitar reasonably enough to pick out tunes. We did a lot of singing at home, or out driving the car on a trip, and so forth. Mother had a lovely voice. And Dad's was good, as a matter of fact. But Mother had had the period of singing in the choir, as well as the long musical training on piano, and could sing anything in the way of the popular songs, that sort of thing.

Chall: Did you have a Victrola in your home?

Bennett: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, when Mother's oldest brother went off to be a soldier in World War One, he sent us one of the small, what passed for a portable Victrola at that time. From then on we had that, and sometimes more elaborate ones, but we kept the little old Victrola because the minute a child would get sick, if the child was not so sick as to have to be lying down all the time, that Victrola would be put on the bed together with the records and could keep the child going for ages.

Chall: The experience at the Greek Theatre, that was just you, with your father?

Bennett: Yes, it was when Jack was a baby. He was babysitting; he was keeping me out of the way while my mother attended to the younger child. I may have spoken here of the incident in which I discovered myself holding the hand of a strange, smiling man who was not my father. My father was watching from several feet behind, and when I looked about in panic he waved and smiled. I tore back to him in confusion. All the people in between laughed and I was embarrassed.

##

One of my friends made me realize one of the assets we had as a family. This was long after I had gone to Mills and we were having, I think, Thanksgiving dinner, and my mother, and father, and little sister came out to join us. This friend of mine had a guitar which she played sometimes and Dad spotted it, and asked her about it, and she brought it out for him to see. He tuned it, and played around with it, and so forth. Something came up that suggested a song that he knew. Mother knew what song he was fishing for in his memory, and she helped him identify it and then they both set forth and sang this song. My friend said to me, "You know, in all the time I was at home,"--she grew up one of the

Bennett: family of six children, very intimate, very closely-knit family-- she said, "I never saw my father and my mother play that way together." This is something that my father and mother maintained to the end--the look across the table, or the sudden joint remembering of an earlier experience, this sort of thing. This, I suspect, is the glue that holds families together all over the place.

Chall: But that's lovely.

Bennett: It's very strong.

Chall: They were close. Did your mother have any interest, as far as you knew, in the Suffrage Movement? You were just a little girl, but still--

Bennett: No, she didn't. I can remember her dealing with the tradesman who came to the door, a solicitor of some sort. He asked one question that made her say, "No, I believe the woman's place is in the home." And he said, "I salute you, madam." [laughter] She told that to my father; he was highly amused.

She was the last one in the world to take it lying down, if she thought she was being put upon. But she really did subscribe to the notion the woman's place is in the home, and the dear Lord knows she gave her time and attention to it in a very thoughtful, dedicated way. I have reason, as I get older, to appreciate how much we got that some other children didn't get. So much, in the way of closeness of the family, in the way of mutual support, everybody rallying around if there was a performance to go to, or someone to be applauded for something, this sort of thing. This is what family is for, as far as she was concerned.

Chall: But even if she felt that a woman's place was in the home, what did she think about a woman voting? Did she vote?

Bennett: Well, I tell you, she didn't give a hoot about voting. But she discovered that we had in this country an institution known as the secret ballot. Her husband was forever goading her on to vote and exercise her right to vote. She really wasn't much interested. But she did, when conveyed to the scene of the voting, she did vote. It drove him crazy that she would never tell him how she voted.

Chall: Isn't that interesting?

Bennett: I don't know whether it was devilment, whether she just discovered that this would get under his skin, or whether she had a point. But he had a perfectly rational belief, it's irrational if you want to call it that, but he operated on the principle that a vote represents a family. Apparently there's some legal support for this notion that there is a head of the family who speaks for the family. I don't know.

- Chall: Surely before women could vote that might have been so, philosophically perhaps.
- Bennett: Well, it drove him quite insane to think that his vote might be canceled by a member of his family, you see, and then the net result would be nothing.
- Chall: Now, that means they really didn't discuss politics much in the house prior to the election?
- Bennett: They didn't really much, although it came up at election times and so forth, but no, they were not aggressively interested in what was going on politically.
- Chall: What do you think your father was, a Republican or a Democrat?
- Bennett: I would say he was probably Republican but I do not honestly know.
- Chall: Because let's see, you grew up during the--Well, you were in college and high school and could have understood about politics during the time of the Depression. The Roosevelt era was certainly important, and the WPA which your father participated in.
- Bennett: He won a prize.
- Chall: That's right, he took advantage of it. But you don't know how he felt about--
- Bennett: I don't know. He didn't talk about politics, we really didn't. Or about political situations. The franchise was not a big item in our lives at all.
- Chall: Your father had work, of course, all the time during the Depression? It really was not a problem?
- Bennett: Well, he had difficulties which came about as a result of his efforts to go it alone, to operate his own practice.
- Chall: Oh, he did try that?
- Bennett: Yes.
- Chall: Did he leave Smith and the Key System?
- Bennett: Yes. He didn't succeed, and I always felt that he simply didn't know how to win friends and influence people. He didn't have the talent for socializing, for making the kinds of friends who would be of advantage to him. He was a scrupulous lawyer, and, as far as I know, a capable one. When he was still with Mr. Smith he had some

Bennett: significant successes in court, and in negotiating settlements, and that sort of thing. But he was a scholar of the law rather than a practitioner of the profession among others. He didn't succeed.

Chall: How long did he remain with Smith after he passed the bar exam?

Bennett: I don't really remember. Except that it was about the time I entered college.

Chall: That he then went into private practice?

Bennett: He was in private practice during the time I was in college, and it was during that time that it became apparent that he was getting nowhere, and he gave up the San Francisco office that he had. Then he did some work for other attorneys, and attempted to get a foothold with a firm. This never did quite pan out. Part of the time it was apparently his own resistance to doing business in the way he didn't approve of, and part of it that he simply was not a social animal. So he fell on hard times, and he didn't have an easy time as he grew older.

Chall: With four children to put through school.

Brothers: Jack and Louis

Bennett: Well, of course, it was not an expensive education that my brother and I had settled for in those days. But I'm sure my brothers, particularly Jack, would have gone farther in college if he hadn't felt the need to help out.

Chall: What did he do? Did he finish college?

Bennett: He finished two years.

Chall: Where?

Bennett: Here. [U.C. Berkeley] We all went here. All four of us.

Chall: That's Jack. What happened with Louis?

Bennett: I talked to him about going to college and he said, "Let's face it, I'm not a student. I could probably go, but I don't really think it's worth it for me." He said, "Better I get a job." So he did. He worked for C&H Sugar people; then came World War II, and he felt the need to get into defense effort of some sort. He tried to enlist several times. He was working in southern California for a

Bennett: while. He went down there--we had relatives still in San Diego-- and worked there for some business concern, a large retail establishment. At any rate, he soon got into the aircraft industry in San Diego, kept trying to enlist and they wouldn't have him. He wanted to go into the navy.

Chall: He wasn't married?

Bennett: He wasn't married. He had an eye that went off to one side from time to time. A muscular imbalance. He could bring it back voluntarily, but this was enough of a defect. So he was classified 4-F. He compensated by working for the aircraft industry and doing what he could for the war effort. Then, when they got to scraping the bottom of the barrel, he was drafted. He was in the infantry. When the doctors in the army had this ocular defect brought to their attention, they simply built special lenses into his gas mask, and trained him to be a truck driver or something. He served. He was as far toward the Asian theater as Saipan when the war was finished.

Jack had a career in the army as well, but he had had a professional career in broadcasting by the time he went in. He enlisted first, and was in ordnance, and was actually sent as an enlisted man to a special school for ordnance personnel. They learned fire--fire control? At any rate, they learned how to aim these huge, monstrous guns. No sooner had he come back from learning how to be a first-rate weapons man, than he got an opportunity to go to the Armed Forces Radio Service training which is what he had wanted all along. He was headed for North Africa, for the invasion, when the need for surgery came to the attention of officers, and by the time he had had his quadruple hernia operation they didn't want him anymore for that training effort. That was the point at which they sent him to the Armed Forces Radio Service training.

He fetched up as director of the Armed Forces Radio Station in the China-India-Burma theater, stationed in Rangoon, I think. Or I guess it was outside the city. But he was in Burma during that period. Came home unscathed but with a shoulder patch that every knowledgeable girl on the whole way home wanted. Because I think there were only eleven of them in the whole army. So the boys both had their war service and both came quite close to perilous conditions. Neither of them was actually under fire.

Chall: Then have they settled into careers?

Bennett: Yes. My brother had a career first in teaching.

Chall: That's Jack?

Bennett: Jack. First in teaching at radio schools in Los Angeles. He did a stint of writing. He was quite successful in preparing scripts for radio shows. Do you remember a show called "You Were There"? Did you ever hear that?

Chall: Yes.

Bennett: He wrote several of those scripts, and would have liked to keep on writing for radio but couldn't get enough action into his other ventures. That is, he was set on that mold, and it suited him, and he loved doing it, but that vein was played out. Ultimately, his wife persuaded him to join her in the real estate business. He found himself with a great fondness for it and they had a splendid career in real estate together.

Chall: And that was in southern California?

Bennett: Yes. He retired when business got so terribly bad. He didn't need to worry about it. But there was no point in maintaining an office with hired help and so forth. They got rid of that. But when I was down there this last summer and saw him, I saw his new offices. He and his wife have taken new offices in a mall and work part-time; but they enjoy it. They're doing very well.

Chall: What happened to Louis?

Bennett: When Lou came back he went to the university on the GI Bill.

Chall: Oh, the very fellow who wasn't cut out to be a student.

Bennett: He enjoyed two years very, very much. By this time his baby sister and mine was engaged in a venture called the Straw Hat Theater.

Chall: Oh, yes.

Bennett: All right. They were both in it, [Jane Bennett Connell and her husband Gordon Connell], and he joined them. At the same time, needing to keep body and soul together, he had to make a career decision. He's a very gifted actor. As he often told me, he just liked to live at home with all his toys around him. The gypsy life was not for him. So he got a job at another kind of enterprise which he was also interested in, which was selling. He was with Grodins for years, and ended up his career there being the head of their data processing.

Chall: Was he a floor salesman or did he work in merchandising?

Bennett: No, he worked in inventory, I guess the various aspects of merchandising. When they decided to computerize the stock and so forth, he was the man who was right ready for it. He had very good

Bennett: treatment there in the sense that they always liked to play into his hands. When he had an interest in photography, they got him equipment and had him do a lot of layouts for them and so forth. He's only just retired after a long career with Grodins.

In pursuit of the theater he met a young man with whom, by the way, he performed in Waiting for Godot, which is one of the hardest things in the world to do. They met through the Theater of the Golden Hinde, I think. Kenneth was a very good actor, and got even national recognition. I can't remember what critic it was from a New York paper who saw him in Murder in the Cathedral and commented in the national press about the strength of his performance. That young man was about the age of my brother; they've shared a house for many years. He is now very ill with cancer. My brother's giving a great deal of attention to him. It's very, very sad.

Sister: Jane Bennett Connell

Chall: Yes. Now Grodins has been sold. Well, those men have had good careers. And your sister. Has she been a director, an actress, a writer, one or all of these theatrical specialties?

Bennett: She was an actress. She's just opened in New York in a smash hit.

Chall: She's still acting? Is Jane Connell her name?

Bennett: Jane Connell.

Chall: Yes, I remember, we used to go to the Straw Hat and enjoy it.

Bennett: She and Gordon are both on Broadway right now.

Chall: Is that so! Doing what?

Bennett: He's in Big River which is the musical based on the Huck Finn story--now in its second year. He's playing Mark Twain. She is in a musical show called Me and My Girl which opened on the tenth of August to riotous reviews. It is the top show in New York at the moment. Although it is now in its second year Big River never had the all out critical acclaim that Me and My Girl earned.

Chall: So they went on to New York successfully. How do you think she came by this flair for the dramatic?

Bennett: I don't know, except that I know she had it at age five. Never for one moment did she doubt what she was going to do with her life.

Chall: How did your parents accept this?

Bennett: They were much relaxed parents by the time number four came along. We've often thought as a family together, about what a different kind of family life the two younger ones had. The parents were so much more relaxed, so much more easygoing, and much better able to swing with the punches. They didn't have to prove anything.

Chall: The first born, like you, does feel pressure.

Bennett: Mother always said, to my chagrin, that any parent ought to be able to put the first one in the ash can.

Chall: One of my friends said, "It's like the first pancake." She said it's a trial cake. It's never quite as good as the ones that follow when everything's just right on the skillet.

Bennett: Yes, Mother felt very strongly. She was forthright about that kind of thing.

II EDUCATION

Chall: Let's see, your father was probably trying his hand at private practice when you went to Anna Head. How did that come about and how could your parents afford it?

Bennett: It was just after that that he began having troubles. While I was at Anna Head it was all right. But it was after I left and was in the first years of the university, that he began encountering difficulties that were partly Depression caused, because business everywhere was tight. But I did stay out a year when he needed a period of sort of stabilization.

Chall: Out of college?

Bennett: Out of college, between my first and second year, and helped with the baby and so forth. But I came back, and finished, and had scholarships in the later part of my career here, and while I was a graduate student. I took a job fresh out of a college for a year in Seattle. I was employed by the Seattle public schools. In those early days you could get a job with four years of psychology doing what Warner Brown of this department here used to call "giving a Binnett [Binet] a minute" in the public school system. It was a play on the word Binet.

It was a very interesting year; it was my first year away from home. I enjoyed it. But I was already under obligation to come back and start graduate study because my mentor, Harold Jones, told me that he felt it his bounden duty to set my feet on the road toward a Ph.D.

Bennett: So I came back. Marjorie Honzik and I shared two appointments. One of them was an assistant research job at the Institute of Child Welfare. The other one was a teaching assistantship. We swapped in midyear.

Chall: Before I get you into graduate school, we'll have to go back a bit. I want to ask you about Anna Head. That was a private girls'

Chall: school?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: You had been in public grammar school and junior high--

Bennett: I had been at the Emerson School in Berkeley from kindergarten through sixth grade. I had entered it with the first kindergarten that was established there.

Chall: Yes, I wondered, because they weren't too common.

Bennett: Berkeley got around to having them in the public schools, and I had been going to a small private kindergarten whose teacher was invited to come and open the one at Emerson School. So I just moved in with her and a lot of the other people. Then I went to the Willard School, which everybody did on graduating from Emerson.

Chall: That's a junior high. Now, those were coeducational schools, weren't they?

Bennett: Oh, yes. Public schools.

High School at Anna Head, 1923-1926

Chall: So, you moved then, into a private school. That was because your mother had been at Anna Head?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: There was a cost, of course, involved in that?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: You were taking a full high school course. How did that seem to you after a public school?

Bennett: I liked it.

Chall: Classes were much smaller, of course, at Anna Head, weren't they?

Bennett: Yes. I never had any problem with school work. The very first day I was there I found a companion in someone I had known slightly at Willard. We became fast friends. We still are. Her grandchild was married this summer in San Luis Obispo in that same St. Stephen's Church.

Chall; Who is she?

Bennett: That's Eleanor Burgess, she was then. She married first Bauer Kramer; they were divorced. Their three children are some of my adult friends now. She remarried Ernest Hauselt and lived in the Mother Lode country up in Murphys. We are still fast friends.

Chall: Was it common for some young girls to go from the public junior high school to Anna Head?

Bennett: It was quite common. As a matter of fact, there was an infusion of new students at the tenth grade for just that reason. Willard was not the only feeder school. A good many other girls went. I suppose there was the vague notion in the back of the heads of some people that it was a good finisher for a girl. Certainly if you were going to an eastern college it was almost a necessity.

You see, Anna Head was one of the very few schools of its sort that survived the Depression. Miss [Mary Elizabeth] Wilson herself told me once that this was done by dint of some very hard decisions on her part. For example, she used part of her insurance in some way to insure the continuation of the school during the Depression. At any rate, it served me extremely well.

Chall: What did you study?

Bennett: Regular course. We had English; I studied Latin, and French, history, math, chemistry. A standard high school program.

Chall: How about the faculty, were they mainly women, or men, or both?

Bennett: I had mainly women. There were some men.

Chall: They were well trained, I assume.

Bennett: They tended to be University of California people. Professor Gudde taught German.

Chall: Oh, I see. It was like a part-time job for the professor?

Bennett: Yes. My teacher of chemistry was a graduate student here under Dr. Hildebrand. Also, she was my colleague at Mills. That was a very interesting--

Chall: Who was she?

Bennett: Leona Young. I found that my preparation was completely adequate. Also, I found that the Anna Head school training was a wonderful preparation for college because Miss Wilson just believed in making it a steppingstone towards your university experience. We had regular final examinations at the end of every term; we wrote them

THE ANNA HEAD SCHOOL

Berkeley, Calif.

Period from Dec. 4 to Jan. 22, 1926.

MARY WOODS BENNETT

		Exam.	Av.
English	IV	1+	1++
French	III	1+	1+
Chemistry		1+	1+
Composition		1+	1+
History	U. S.	1+	1
Spelling		1+	1+

Remarks: First Honors for the month, for examinations, and for averages. This is the highest record in the school.

MARY E. WILSON,
Principal.

Explanation of marks.

100-95 or 1+	Distinguished	84-80 or 2	Recommending
94-90 or 1	Excellent	79-70 or 3	Passing
89-85 or 2+	Good	4	Failure
Inc.--Incomplete.			

Bennett: in blue books. There were no nasty surprises when we got to college, as far as studying was concerned. The entrance to the university was traumatic for me, but it had nothing to do with ability to do the work.

Chall: Who was Miss Wilson?

Bennett: Miss Mary Elizabeth Wilson owned the Anna Head School. She had bought it from Miss Head in, I think, 1909--had a long career there. She was a Smith College woman herself, and a very capable headmistress.

Chall: Was she anything like Mrs. Reinhardt? Did they have some qualities alike?

Bennett: They belonged to the same club.

Chall: By the same club meaning--?

Bennett: It was a small organization of women called The Score because there were twenty people in it.

Chall: Oh. It had nothing to do with being headmistress or anything like that?

Bennett: No. But there was room for two new members, and one of the joys of my later career was that I was asked to be a member of The Score.

Chall: Tell me about The Score. Did you join? I'm sure you did.

Bennett: Oh, yes.

Chall: So there were always twenty?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: And if anyone died then another one was invited in?

Bennett: I was nearly the last one. Katherine Towle was a member, and Martha Gerbode, whose husband you probably read a lot about, and Georgiana Gerlinger Stevens.

Chall: Oh, yes!

Bennett: You've probably done an oral history of Dr. Gerbode.

Chall: Yes.

Bennett: G.G. (Georgiana) was a graduate student when I entered Cal, and I liked her very much. She was a sorority sister as well as turning up in The Score when I joined.

Chall: What did The Score women do?

Bennett: Well, when I joined we had dinner together once a month at the home of one or the other of them. Just a pleasant dinner and some conversation; and little bit of a planned program in the evening. It was just splendid. Just met together. One of my former professors here at Berkeley was also in the group, Olga Bridgman, who was a remarkable woman in the psychology department.

Chall: Does it still go on, The Score?

Bennett: No, the founders all died off, or became infirm, and the momentum was lost.

##

Bennett: Mary Hutchinson, her name was, was the other new one.

Chall: Why did you decide to let it die out?

Bennett: Because it was already showing signs of doing this, and there was no machinery for people taking hold and doing more. I remember that I learned there had been serious arguments among the members as to whether they should add Mary Hutchinson and me or just let the group evaporate with the passage of time. In the context it would have seemed presumptuous for the "young fry" to take hold and do things about the group. It had been a very informal organization. It was meant to be partly volunteer folk, and partly professional women. It was that to a certain extent. Mrs. Graupner, who was very important in the Mother's Milk Bank in San Francisco was a member. Mrs. Alfred McLaughlin was a member. As I said, Katherine Towle was, and Georgiana Stevens, and Martha Gerbode. But we were the younger fry. Ruth Turner, Emily Huntington belonged.

Chall: We've interviewed many of these women, I would have to check, but I'll bet they never talked about it. I'm so glad you brought it up.

Bennett: It was a very informal, very enjoyable group.

Chall: Who organized it, do you think?

Bennett: I haven't any idea what its history was. Some of the McClatchys from Sacramento were in it, and van Loben Sels, and people like this. But they were all very old ladies by the time I came along. It didn't have enough organization to suggest somebody filling in the spaces and so forth. It died a natural death.

Chall: It certainly was an interesting group while it was there.

Submitted to Dean Katherine Towle by Dr. Olga Bridgman - Spring 1969
Notes on early members of "Score".

Dear Katherine -

It has been harder than I thought to dig up from memory the early days of "The Score" and I have probably slipped up on some of the details. It was about 1920 when Cornelia Stanwood and June Lucas asked me to lunch with them at the Womens' Faculty Club and then invited me to be one of a group they were selecting who would meet once a month to have dinner and discuss anything of interest to them. These were to be women with varied interests. I am listing the early members with a few words about most of them which are probably pretty inadequate.

(1) Katherine Felton had graduated from Berkeley in 1895 as one of the Gold Medalists. She was interested with social problems, particularly as they concerned children, founded the Childrens' Agency and practically single handedly raised the money for the building on Gough Street now used by the Family Service Agency of San Francisco. As long as she lived she managed the Agency, selected and trained her staff of workers without regard to their formal education or previous experience.

(2) Sarah Gregory (U C 93) worked with Katherine Felton, and was involved in numerous community projects.

(3) Jessica Peixotto (U C 94) was probably the fore-runner of the School of Social Welfare, although she objected to the term "Social Welfare" preferring "Social Economics." She worked closely with Katherine Felton and with any number of other community leaders beside managing her university responsibilities. Her position in the university is

generally known to everyone.

(4) Hattie Sloss was also a strong backer of Katherine Felton, had many other community interests, and later had her own regular radio program for the reading of poetry.

(5) Elizabeth Ashe, a trained nurse was largely responsible for the Telegraph Hill Neighborhood Center, and for the Bothin Convalescent Home in Marin County.

(6) Alice Griffith, a devoted friend of Elizabeth Ashe, worked with her at Telegraph Hill and in Marin, and when Elizabeth Ashe died Alice Griffith felt that the Score should cease to exist since its most important member was gone. Alice Griffith was herself largely responsible for the development of the Western Addition in San Francisco which she had hoped would become a happily integrated housing project.

(7) Adelaide Brown, an important figure in the growth of the Childrens' Hospital in San Francisco, had been in charge of a part of the Childrens' Year activities, and was responsible for developing the Baby Hygiene Committee of the A A U W which still carries on as the Mothers' Milk Bank, Inc.

(8) Elise Graupner, who for years was a sort of informal secretary for the Score was also closely associated with Adelaide Brown in the work of the Baby Hygiene Committee and was largely responsible for developing the Mothers' Milk Bank which was named in honor of Adelaide Brown.

(9) Cornelia Stanwood was much interested in politics and was also head of the ^{Sarah Dix Hamlin} ~~Katherine Burke~~ School for girls.

(10) June Lucas had a good many general interests but was primarily interested in building up the reputation of Dr. Lucas at U C.

(11) Mary Yost was Dean of Women at Stanford.

(12) Edith Mirrielees was on the English faculty at Stanford, a member of the Breadloaf Writers' Conference, a contributor to many magazines, and author of "Stanford - The Story of a University."

(13) Mary Wilson was head of the Anna Head School for girls.

(14) Aurelia Reinhardt, (15) Helen Douglas, (16) Lucy Stebbins, and (17) Emma McLaughlin are all well known to you. (18) Della van Loben Sels, like me, was one of the early members.

Among some of our not so early members were Edith Stebbins, a gifted dramatist from Mills College, Evelyn Little, Emma Willetts, a San Francisco surgeon; Mrs. Alexander Meiklejohn, Mrs. Duncan MacDuffie, and Dorothy Williams. (For a short time Margaret James^{*} whose married name I cannot remember, the daughter of William James, was with us until her early death.) Our present list of members you know. I'm pretty sure I've missed some short term members and know I haven't given credit for many achievements, but this will give you some idea of our beginnings. Sorry I have been so poky about getting this to you.

Alga Bulzger

* Mrs. Bruce Porter

1967 Members of "Score"

Dr. Mary Woods Bennett, Provost and Dean of the Faculty,
Mills College

Olga Bridgman, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics, Emeritus, UC,
Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, UC

Mrs. Philip Conley (Phoebe), member of Board of Trustees of
the State Colleges, lives in Fresno

Dean Katherine A. Towle, Dean of Students, Emeritus, UC,
Col. U.S.M.C., retired

Dr. Emily Huntington, Professor of Economics, Emeritus, UC

Mrs. Mary Hutchinson, formerly with U.S. Department of Labor
and Employment. Now retired.

Dr. Mary H. Layman, physician, Stanford University, Emeritus

Dr. Evelyn Steel Little, Librarian, Emeritus, Mills College

Mrs. Harley Stevens (Georgiana), writer on international affairs

Miss Ruth Turner, volunteer worker, on Children's Hospital Board,
former president of League of Women Voters, San Francisco,
Juvenile Probation Committee

Mrs. James van Loben Sels (Della) and

Mrs. Emma McLaughlin

Bennett: Yes, it's the sort of thing that exists through the vigor of the people who belong at the moment and it has no dynastic pretensions.

Chall: It lasted for quite a while, all things considered. So these two women [Mary Wilson and Aurelia Reinhardt] had that in common.

Bennett: They were quite different people as they would have needed to be, but I think Mary Elizabeth Wilson was a first-rate headmistress. She had a deep appreciation for what Miss Head had done with the school, and I think that she shared some of Miss Head's views. Miss Head said she didn't care what people wanted to do in the way of progressive education as long as they would let her teach the students how to write legibly and spell. She by no means was a stickler just for the form, but she couldn't see any sense in excusing people for not being able to read and write. [laughter]

Chall: Beyond that it was up to them.

Bennett: Yes. You know, it's wonderful that there have always been these women who will do this sort of thing and there was no nonsense about this woman. She was sister-in-law to Josiah Royce. Mrs. Royce was Anna Head's sister.

Chall: So she had it for quite a long time and then retired and sold it?

Bennett: Yes. I remember being introduced to her when she was a very old lady. Mother would take us for walks sometimes and we would pass Miss Head working in her garden, and Mother would pass the time of day with her.

Chall: Because your mother had been in school with Miss Head? The school--where was it? It was in Oakland originally, wasn't it?

Bennett: No, it was originally in Berkeley. It was the cluster of buildings that the university now owns on Bowditch--

Chall: Oh, yes, of course, the big brown building.

Bennett: --Channing and Haste.

Chall: Yes, a familiar place. All right. You went right away into the university? Nineteen twenty-seven?

Bennett: Twenty-six, actually.

Chall: Twenty-six, all right.

Bennett: Miss Wilson was always furious that more of her students didn't go East to colleges. We nearly all went to either Cal or Stanford. Not all. But we did the thing that-- Well, I was in a groove,

there was no way that I would even think of doing anything else.
Chall; Did some of the girls not go to college at all?

Bennett: Not very many. They were oriented toward college. Of course there were some who married immediately, and a few didn't go.

Chall: But you were all headed toward college?

Bennett: Which is the reason it's a college prep school.

The University of California at Berkeley, 1926-1931

The First Year

Chall: Why was the transfer to the university here traumatic, as you put it a few minutes ago?

Bennett: You know, I will never know, but here I was, having grown up in Berkeley with a firm expectation all my life of going to the university. I had done well in school, no problem about admission. I was being "rushed". There was a great to-do about rushing in those days.

Chall: Your parents expected you might go into a sorority?

Bennett: They hadn't talked with me much about it, but they were nothing loath. It was perfectly clear that I was going to have a chance to join the house that I wanted. Everything was fine. I was so homesick, though living at home, I could hardly stand it.

Chall: Did you join the sorority?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Which was--?

Bennett: Kappa Alpha Theta.

Chall: But you were homesick?

Bennett: But I was talking about it a couple of years later with the younger sister of Anna Brinton, who was a psychologist by training. She did her work under Lewis Terman. I said, "I think it was partly the feeling of being overwhelmed by the size of it. Because it was not that I wanted to do anything. I was far from knowing what I wanted. But I felt completely powerless to do anything, had I

wanted to do it." And she said, "It's probably as good a description as any. You were just at sea." And I was. Didn't
 Bennett: last long, but it was a miserable time. Mother used to come and fetch me when I was ready to go home. She would find out when I would be out of classes, and she would pick me up at the gate. Tears. I just--it was an emotional upheaval for me. Mother set it down to the fact that I had never gone to school with boys before, and that it was too much of a social leap. Well that's poppycock. I had been amongst boys all my life and they had never bothered me one way or the other. That was not it. It was just being overwhelmed by something that seemed too large for me to handle.

Chall: Or just the change in classes?

Bennett: Yes, and I did foolish things partly because I had no adequate advising. I think if the advising system then had been adequate I could have been straightened out in jig time by someone who knew what she was talking about. But I got the notion that I wanted to take languages. This was one of the things that had been easy for me in high school, and I thought that would be fun. I got talked out of taking the beginning German class which I had registered for because it was a five-unit course, and someone said to me, some older student whom I was listening to for want of a better source, said, "If you flunk it, it's five units in your total program, it's a big hole in your program. You had better take a course with fewer units."

So I took philosophy instead. I could have taken two Germans and done better than I did in philosophy. Not, mind you, that I didn't get an A in it, because I did, but I didn't know what I was talking about. People made that kind of misjudgment about what I could do, or should do, or what would be easy--from the best of intentions. But I just didn't get adequate counseling. I took too little, really. I was not ready for the probing that philosophy did. I would have been much better off had I got my feet on the ground first, and troubled myself about the eternal questions a little later in my career. [laughter] But I do remember with pleasure some of the experiences I had as a freshman.

Chall: Was it your total freshman year that was--

Bennett: No, it was just the beginning.

Chall: Just the first semester?

Bennett: Just the beginning of it. No, I got my feet under me. I went out for the Daily Cal because we were told in the house that everybody must have an activity, and I thought that would be useful. I hated it. I just hated it. But I waited until I had survived the first cut. From self-respect I did that. Then I resigned. I will always be grateful to the older student who herself later became a

Bennett: headmistress, by the way. A junior she was. She took me aside. People were saying, "Oh, you shouldn't have given up the activity, you know it's--"

Chall: This was in the sorority house?

Bennett: Yes. She took me aside, she said, "Look, if you want to go out after that little gold key, do it." That isn't the reason that I left it at all. But she accurately knew that I could do the academic part hands down, and that there might be satisfaction in it for me. Furthermore, she saw a desperate person's need for a little encouragement. It was all she said, but it was what I needed to make me feel that I was not a pariah.

Chall: Wasn't that interesting? She was young and as you say, she went on to be a headmistress, but she had some special ability already.

Bennett: She was at the Katherine Delmar Burke School as headmistress. She was wise. It was that kind of help that I could have used, had I had it earlier in the advising process. They tried. They had a system of kind of sponsors among upper classmen, but they couldn't give academic advice, you know. They knew what courses they had taken, and what were reputed to be hard and so forth.

Then when I was talking about a major, my first thought was an English major. I immediately got scared out by the fact that it had a comprehensive exam at the end that everybody said was a horror. I didn't have anyone that would sit me down and say to me, "Look, you've never failed a course in your life; you would have had to work hard at it to get a low grade. So what's this business of being afraid of the academic hurdles? If others have done it, you certainly can." Nobody had sense enough to say that. I was not about to tell anybody. I didn't know.

Chall: You didn't know enough to ask the question. You didn't have enough self-confidence, either, obviously.

Bennett: I never took an exam that I did not think might be the one I would fail. I remember once one of my teachers asked me how I ever managed to take an exam. This was Harold Jones. He got me hooked up to his psycho-galvanic reflex apparatus, and was testing me for how I would respond to surprise stimuli. Well, he couldn't get his machine stabilized, because inside I was wobbling back and forth and the key showed it. He said, "How did you ever take an examination?"

Chall: So you always felt apprehensive?

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

AWARD OF KRAFT PRIZE

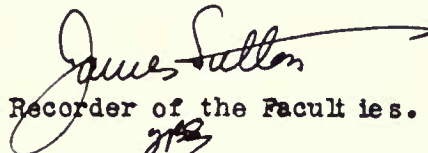
To: Miss Mary W. Bennett
2800 Garber St.
Berkeley, Calif.

Acting under instructions received from the President of the University, I have the honor to inform you that the President has named you to receive one of the Edward Frank Kraft Prize awards, amounting to fifty dollars.

These prizes have been provided by the will of the late Edward Frank Kraft, and, in accordance with the provisions of Mr. Kraft's bequest, are given to freshmen in the academic departments at the close of their first semester in the University, in recognition of distinguished scholarship.

The amount of the prize is payable on March 25, 1927, by the Comptroller, at his office, 106 California Hall, upon presentation of this letter.

Very truly yours,


Recorder of the Faculty.

February 5, 1927.
Berkeley, California.

- Bennett: I always felt tense, I always reviewed everything in the world there was, and I almost never got a grade lower than a B. I got a preponderance of A's throughout my career. Not all, but preponderance. Never a C. I just did not realize that my track record was good enough to give me confidence.
- Chall: At what point did you become what is known as the Terman genius? Was that in high school? Somebody had told me that, so I thought I had better check, since you tell me that you really weren't sure about exams and all of this. When did this happen?
- Bennett: [Laughs] This was during the period that Terman was developing his genetic studies of genius. I was selected along with a batch of others at about fifth or sixth grade level for testing and for follow-up studies with the family. The place is alive with people who were in that study.
- Chall: Yes, and they're doing a follow-up study right now. I think they're finding out about the geniuses in retirement--a Stanford professor told me last year that he was working on it.
- Bennett: That was an interesting experience partly because Catharine Cox Miles, the younger sister of Anna Brinton worked with Terman. She wrote the second volume of his genetic studies of genius--she was the senior author--called Early Mental Traits of 300 Geniuses. She had gone back and analyzed the writings, whatever existed, of people who have many, many lines of type in an encyclopedia, and tried to assess them in terms of an I.Q. on the basis of their writings. It was very interesting. I actually worked formulas for her all one afternoon, I remember that with great pride. So I just was interested in the study, but it didn't cut much of a figure for me.
- Chall: I see. You were picked from what? A test?
- Bennett: Somebody administered the Stanford-Binet, and I think it was on this basis. But I don't know. Of course they never confided in the children.
- Chall: Did they interview the parents? Or did they study the family?
- Bennett: They had some communication with the parents.
- Chall: Otherwise they would just check on you from time to time, is that how it worked?
- Bennett: We had physical exams, and a variety of other things. Proved that we weren't queers. Rather normal sample. As a matter of fact, I think what they ultimately figured out was that they got a lot of people who were relatively high achievers. They didn't, in their net, get many geniuses. Just high scorers which is quite different from the genius type.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

May 20, 1931

Miss Mary Woods Bennett,
2800 Garber Street,
Berkeley, California.

My dear Miss Bennett:

I have just learned of the signal honor that you have received at the University of California and I want to offer you my most sincere congratulations. It is an unfailing source of pleasure to me to learn of the triumphs of you young people - members of my adopted "family" - and I am delighted with your success. That the future will bring you still more of such triumphs is my earnest hope and confident expectation.

Yours very cordially,

Leura M. Teruan

Department of Psychology,
University of California,
Berkeley, California.
February 14, 1934.

Professor Lewis M. Terman,
Department of Psychology,
Stanford University, California.

Dear Professor Terman:

Once more I am taking the liberty of asking you for assistance, this time to further my application for a graduate scholarship or fellowship at the University of California for the year 1934-35. If you find it convenient, I should appreciate your filling out and returning the enclosed form as soon as possible.

I am working ^{toward} for a doctor's degree in psychology and am engaged on a problem in the mental testing field which I should like to finish up next year. Of course you have no first hand information concerning the quality of my present work, but your recommendations have been so effective on two past occasions that I am making bold to ask you for another.

I am deeply grateful for your many kindnesses to a member of your "adopted family", and trust that this request will in no way inconvenience you.

Yours very sincerely,

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

March, 1936

Dear Miss Bennett:

You will no doubt recall that a good many years ago you were given a number of tests in connection with a Stanford University study of intellectually superior children. You were one of 1,000 subjects selected for study from a total school population of about 250,000. The purpose of the study was to secure all the facts possible about the physical and mental traits of gifted children and to find out by prolonged follow-up how such children develop in later years. No comparable investigation had ever been undertaken, and the results to date have attracted world-wide attention from psychologists, sociologists, and educators.

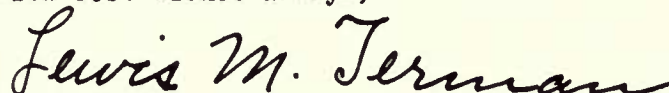
The ultimate scientific and educational value of this project lies in following every member of the group as far as possible into adult life, in order to learn of their successes and their failures, their interests and plans for the future, and so far as possible to find out how the factors of endowment and early training are related to adult activities and accomplishments. The first important follow-up was made in 1928, when the accessible subjects were given additional tests and both the subjects and their parents filled out information blanks. I am grateful for the almost one hundred per cent perfect co-operation which was given at that time and confidently hope for its continuance in the years to come.

A second follow-up is now being undertaken with the help of a small research grant recently made available. The enclosed blank indicates the kind of information I wish to secure at this time. I shall greatly appreciate it if you will fill out the blank fully and frankly and return it to me in the enclosed envelope. All the information collected is held as confidential. It is kept in locked files and will be used only for statistical purposes, without names.

I am anxious to have the information as complete as possible, whether favorable or unfavorable. Letters in addition to the filled blanks will be welcome. If there is information which you would hesitate to put in the blank, please write a separate letter marking it "personal and confidential." Such letters will be kept in a special file in my home or (if you request it) will be destroyed immediately.

It will help me greatly in keeping my records if you will always inform me of changes in your address. Do not hesitate to write me whenever I can be of service to you by way of recommendations or by educational or vocational advice.

With best wishes always,



Lewis M. Terman

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

May 19, 1936

Miss Mary W. Bennett
2957 Magnolia Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Miss Bennett:

I have been much interested in the information you sent me on my report blank. You have had a splendid academic record so far. I hope the opportunity offers soon to complete your work for the doctor's degree. Anytime I can help you in landing a position, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Lewis M. Terman

Chall: So, here you are in college and uncertain of your major. This was in your freshman year. Were you expected to consider a major as a freshman?

Bennett: Yes, we talked about it, and I said that I would like to do English, and I discarded that, as I told you; I was scared out. Then I thought maybe French, because that went very well in my freshman year. I went to see my French teacher, whose name was Miss Magee. I had liked my course with her, and I went to see her about registering the next year, or maybe it was even the next semester. I don't remember whether it was the half year or the full year. She said, "If you are thinking of majoring in French, and I think you're a good candidate, go to a French teacher, don't come to me." She said, "You ought to begin planning right now for a year of study abroad." That scared me. And I had once said to a so-called faculty advisor, that I thought I would like to study languages, and his one sentence to me that falls under the heading of advising was, "You can't do that. You have to pick one, or a family of languages." And I didn't even know what he was talking about. So that was that.

Decision to Major in Psychology

Bennett: I was still at sea when I took that year off between my freshman and sophomore years. If you would like to know what really happened, it was this. I went for a Sunday ride with a friend of mine and her parents. A cousin of hers who was older than we were, but not a great deal older, a very bright young man, who ultimately perfected the first practical lie detector, was with us. He was Leonarde Keeler, whose father had, amongst other achievements, written "All Hail Blue & Gold".

Leonarde was with us and he was an excited graduate student in his field. His young cousin, who was my age mate, Marion Gorrill, whose parents were taking us on this ride, had decided on a psychology major. I had had this experience of helping Catharine Miles do her bit, and I thought, well, why not? So I did.

Chall: Oh. So that was how it all came about.

Bennett: It was really happenstance. I was, years later, much relieved by hearing one of my professors, Jean Walker Macfarlane say, "You know, most people don't really choose what they're going to do in life. They're either pushed or pulled by the forces around them." And I was pushed or pulled.

Chall: Now at that time, you had told me earlier about your mother's friends in, was it San Jose, who had always been sort of advisors to--

Bennett: Anna Cox Brinton's younger sister Catharine was a psychologist. She was the one for whom I worked formulas. She's the one who worked on the Terman study.

Chall: That was accidental too. Because she didn't advise you in any way, did she?

Bennett: No. But one of the things was that that connection was a hook on which I could hang the whole thing, make sense out of the choice.

Chall: Then you felt more confident coming back? Of course, you were already a year older, which may have helped.

Bennett: Yes, it helped. The people at the sorority house I will always be grateful to. The mother of one of them had been a mover and shaker in the national sorority. She had put her daughter up to it. I was given the job of treasurer which carried a small stipend when I went back. She got them to offer me that job when she knew I was staying out the year, and realized that it was probably finances. She furthermore lent me money. I had another friend who lent me a little money when I needed it to get going again.

Chall: Those are the kindly things that so many people don't think about.

Bennett: You know it means so much, and so often you never know when you're doing it even. It's certainly marvelous when it's done. I had help along the way.

Chall: When you came back and finally decided what you were going to major in, then you began to take classes in education and psychology?

Bennett: The whole prescribed bit.

Chall: Yes. That didn't lead you back into foreign languages or anything of that kind?

Bennett: Well, I want to tell you, I had the great good fortune of having Olga Bridgman, who was later my friend in *The Score*, as a major advisor in the psychology department. I can remember the first time I went to see her was the beginning of my junior year, when I was entrenched as a major and had done the preliminary work with catalogues that you needed to. I had the program all laid out. I took it to her and showed it to her, and she said, "I don't see any literature courses." I have realized how lucky I was.

I had taken one course that I had heard about, had a great reputation. It was Arthur Ryder's course in "Sanskrit Literature in Translation" and I had had that. I said to Dr. Bridgman, "Maybe that is frivolous. Maybe I should be getting down to brass tacks." She said, "You have enough brass tacks in there." [laughter]

Chall: Good for her!

Bennett: It was one of the loveliest courses I ever had. Sheer pleasure.

Chall: Did you take any others? Did you have time for other literature classes?

Bennett: Yes, yes. I took Professor Whipple's course in--what was it?-- Contemporary? No. Modern American Literature, something like that. I took a variety of English courses. When I got to be a senior I was bold enough to take the freshman course in physics, just because I thought I ought to have a little exposure to that field. By that time I was relaxed enough as a student, so I didn't care whether I didn't understand it or not. No, I had a good time my last few years and had no difficulty moving through the courses in psychology.

Chall: Did you feel comfortable, then, about having decided on psychology once you did it? I mean, it's one thing to decide to do it, and another is to think, "Oh, my, what am I doing here?"

Bennett: Yes, I did. Partly because I got a job right away.

Chall: But you didn't know that.

Bennett: I knew it in the spring before I graduated.

Chall: But while you were taking the classes and all, you were satisfied enough with your professors and with the subject matter?

Bennett: Yes, and I hadn't any idea about what vocational opportunities might be, but I discovered I was employed before the end of my senior semester. Before the second semester of my senior year I had the job offer.

Chall: That was pretty soon.

Bennett: This was a feature of the Depression. Women, because they went in for the applied fields more than likely, had a better chance. I was appointed to the school system.

Chall: What school?

Bennett: This is in Seattle.

Chall: I thought Seattle came after you had graduated, but it was--

Bennett: It's after I graduated with my B.A. I came back after the Seattle experience to start my graduate work.

Chall: But you already knew you were going at the time?

Bennett: This was when Dr. Jones extracted a promise from me to be sure and come back.

Chall: What was psychology in those days?

Bennett: Well, it was the study of the schools that were at war with each other. Now, as an undergraduate, I don't remember so much of this except that it was very important to know about the separate schools of psychology. Psychology as an overall whole didn't appear to be an entity. It was made up of the experimentalists, and the this, that, and the other people. The Gestalt people were becoming very much in the forefront. It seemed sort of fractionated, sort of pulled apart from the inside. I felt better about that aspect after—I suppose the year in Seattle gave me a little confidence that one could sort things out ultimately and get a job related to the interest. But it was not until I got back and got into courses with Edward Tolman that I began to get some orientation toward psychology as a discipline, and how the several parts fit together.

Chall: In your undergraduate years when you were taking classes in the various theories, were those taught by proponents of the theory?

Bennett: It varied. For one thing, the department at Berkeley did not have those lines as sharply drawn. It was small enough so that the people still talked to each other. You see, this was before World War II. People knew what the other fellow was thinking, and you had more of a sense of unity. It was a small department. It became gigantic after World War II. Because everybody and his brother who had been overseas wanted to come back and be a clinical psychologist.

But when I went through, just before then, we had a good representation of the field of clinical psychology, and Olga Bridgman, and Jean Walker Macfarlane were my teachers there. They were superb, and they had close ties with the practical applications in the area, and one could see where one might go there. Even the work in experimental I enjoyed, although I didn't have the same interest in it, that I had in the other. The work in developmental, in child psychology, was very interesting to me, and I followed that out. So I got a mix.

As I say, the people were not at daggers drawn in our department. They were assessing the various contributions. One of the things Tolman tried to do is to draw things together under one system. All the known facts, the observable phenomena, into one overarching conceptual framework. That's why he was interesting to work with.

Chall: Where was Freud in all of this?

Bennett: Freud was read assiduously. But not fallen for hook, line, and sinker.

Chall: Because it wasn't something you could quantify?

Bennett: I started out my doctoral dissertation trying to find a problem that I could attack in some way that would yield to quantification. I spent six months doing that before Harold Jones said to me, "Want another subject?" [laughs] I read interminably and tried to come up with something but couldn't lay hold of it. I was not sophisticated enough.

##

Sorority Life

Chall: Tell me about your sorority life. How did you happen to decide to pledge? Were you planning to do that when you came on campus?

Bennett: I had no ideas about it one way or the other because I had not been much aware of what went on. I knew there were sororities. But in the summer preceding my coming to the university, some people that I knew vaguely, older women from the Anna Head connection, or friends of the family, or so forth, took me out to tea, did the usual things, at the Sign of the Piper which no longer exists. It was a tea room on the second story of that artsy-craftsy building that Tupper and Reed built. I think a little place called Cafe Metropole is there now with a bistro downstairs. But at any rate, it was the Tupper and Reed building at the time with a nice little tea room at the top called the Sign of the Piper. I can remember going there.

I did not make any decision for or against pledging; I simply went along with the tide. I liked the people, and a certain percentage of them I knew by reputation or from the Anna Head connection, or whatever. It just seemed the normal thing to do to accept invitations that were offered. I didn't have sense enough to read the sign to know that you passed certain hurdles and so forth. It pleased me, but it didn't surprise me particularly that I was invited to join. I had dated at other sororities.

Chall: You were rushed by others?

Bennett: Not very hard. I heard the rumor afterwards that my reputation was that I was all sewed up anyway, and this was courtesy because of some alumna or something. But I don't know, and I don't know why they knew I was all sewed up at all, or whether that was indeed fact. But it was very easygoing, and I had my moments of anxiety

Bennett: when I was far enough along in the process to know that letters should be coming or an invitation should be coming, or that sort of thing. But I never got to the phase of sturm und drang at all. So I went.

Chall: It just came about. So, having got in, were there any problems? Were you aware that there might be costs involved?

Bennett: Well, there were not the same kinds of costs I think that there are now. I was among the majority in being a nonresident in the little old Theta house that has been supplanted by a massive one on the same site. It was a lovely Julia Morgan building, and a very pleasant house. But too small, as it later turned out. I don't know how much economics entered into the conception of need for a bigger place, and how much other factors. But the costs were not great.

However, in the Depression years which we were into shortly, the cost even at that seemed more than we could bear, and that was one of the reasons that I stayed out for a year between my first and second years. I maintained my meetings with the group and that sort of thing, and I was a welcome member, but I did not participate. Then, by maneuvering that I learned about later, the mother of one of the members said, "That woman can be treasurer", only they didn't say woman in those days, they said, "That girl". And I was treasurer for a couple of years.

Chall: That was a paid position?

Bennett: A small amount, but it about covered the fees. The final year, I had a scholarship at the university. I can't remember how long that period went on, but at any rate, the house eased me through. One of the lovely parts of my having stayed out a year, my last year there I was a senior citizen. I had helped to rush every single girl in the house, and enjoyed that sense of knowing what had gone on. Several of my good friends became president.

I notice that you have indicated here [the outline] the concern about exclusivity. I had none. It never occurred to me. Some of the older girls were thinking of it. I think I considered it when I was a graduate student, and renewed acquaintance with a sorority sister who had been an older member at that time, dropped out of undergraduate life for a marriage, and had come back as a student when I was a graduate student. We renewed our friendship and had many conversations, among others, the value of this experience. She always maintained that there was more argument in favor of fraternities than sororities because fraternities did do a job of taking care of the brothers afterwards. Seeing that they got placed in positions and that sort of thing--took care of them. She didn't think that sororities did that so well. I wouldn't say that, because I know I was boosted along several times and in

2709 Claremont Blvd., Berkeley,
July 19, 1929.

My dear Helen Pratt:

Some few months ago I wrote you concerning an application for a scholarship loan for our Mary Woods Bennett. The application was not then sent in for the family managed to meet the emergency, but it has arisen again, and Mary Woods would be unable to return without financial help. She is a very valuable girl to us and so true a Theta her loss, even as an active, would be serious. Her grades, as you see, are very fine. Her character is rare, and even among upstanding girls she is a very precious person. She took on the Treasurership in April, and Omega hadn't a cent owing in the house at the close of the college semester. That was due to Margaret Martin's excellent system, which Mary Woods kept in operation. This position tided her over the close of the year, but with it alone she hasn't enough to go on. There is a baby sister now three years old, and her mother's health and the care of the baby have made a full life and a character development unusual in girls of her age. She is a graduate of Miss Head's, and Miss Wilson, the principal, feels that she is one of the strongest girls they ever graduated. She was recommended by the Goucher delegate to the San Francisco convention, herself a little Southern lady, and Mary Woods is the same type, with an extraordinarily acute brain, mature analysis of character, and steadiness of purpose. She is majoring in Psychology, has been in close touch with assistants of Terman's, of Stanford (cousins), and will make her mark in this advanced field, I feel sure, and be able to turn her ability into salary-producing results. I have advised her strongly to apply for this loan, for I know she will do it credit, and I feel it is better for her to continue and graduate than to stop now and try to produce a reserve when she is unskilled. We have some sweet girls in Omega, and a few strong ones, and too many ordinary ones, and Mary Woods is both sweet and very strong and she has not a thread of the ordinary about her. She has been Chaplain, and a beautiful one, and Scholarship Adviser, and now Treasurer, and at all social affairs she has the rare hostess' gift that comes from gentle breeding and true worth. I recommend her for a scholarship loan from the Thea scholarship fund, and rejoice that we have such a blessing and that I may recommend her whole heartedly. I should be glad if you would advise me of the progress of the application for in case there should be any doubt or delay, I should want to take steps to secure the amount she needs, for I feel the matter is vital to her.

With best wishes,

Loyally in Theta,
Marion Whipple Garretson
Omega, 1898.

Bennett: several places by older members whom I met when I was an undergraduate. One of them was Leslie Garyard, does that name mean anything to you?

Chall: Oh, yes.

Bennett: Leslie was a very loyal Theta. So was Catharine DeMotte Greene, who was in the economics department here. She was later an assistant dean of women. Incidentally, she served on the staff at Mills for a while when I was there, before I was dean, but while I was there. Those women were a considerable influence in my life. They were role models, if you will, a term we didn't use at the time, but they certainly were. That was Leslie and Catharine.

Chall: Leslie Garyard had already graduated?

Bennett: Oh, yes, long before. She was already employed by the University of California, at I think Bureau of Occupations, was it?

Chall: I don't know. I know the name in connection with foundations.

Bennett: Oh, well, that was long after.

Chall: Yes, later.

Bennett: No, she was an employee of the University of California, and it was before her child was born. She was married a long time before the child was born. Every once in a while those women who were a generation or so ahead in the house would come by. I met a great many older Thetas that way. Not terribly much older, mind you, but some.

Chall: When I was thinking of exclusivity, too, I was thinking of the fact that sometimes there's a certain snobbishness.

Bennett: Yes there is that about it, and I am sure it existed, and maybe still does. I am equally sure that without a small group in which I felt intimate, I wouldn't have survived at the university. There are enough of them; I think there was something more than seventeen sororities when I was in college.

Chall: That's quite a few.

Bennett: Yes, and it counted for several hundred women. I'm not sure that the same thing wouldn't have happened if I had gotten into a good dormitory group. There weren't dormitories at the time. There was nothing like it. There were some boarding houses that were carefully enough run so that they served the function. I think it's the matter of breaking the mass down into a manageable group that is important. The sororities served that function. I know that for me, that is the function it served, because the good Lord knows

Bennett: I was never a social butterfly. We had some in the house, but we also had ones like the one who talked to me sagely about the difference between fraternities and sororities later, and the one who advised me to go after the little gold key, as that was my bent, and some others. In retrospect, I realize that some of the more mature women, even among the undergraduates in the house, didn't seek me out so much, as the fact that friendship was very easy for them.

Chall: So that just within the group itself you had your own special friends?

Bennett: It was a very useful social experience for me, quite apart from the fact that I loved it. It was a good connection, and it stood me in very good stead, as will come out later when we talk about Seattle.

Chall: What about social life? You were, primarily, a student, but there must have been some.

Bennett: Well, I would have had none, I think, if I hadn't been in that sorority. One of my friends doggedly insisted on arranging double dates now and then. That was very nice; she was a Theta sister. I had known her--she was the age of my brother, and she had been in class from kindergarten on with my brother, but we happened, because of my year's hiatus, to be close together in the house. We are still fast friends. Her first child is now well in his forties; he's an elected official in Fresno County. I spent every weekend in the first six months of his life, practically, in that house, so that the young family that was terribly held down could have some respite. Because Papa was an intern and then a resident in the hospital and had to have the telephone very carefully monitored. So I had a vocation for a while.

Chall: How nice to have such a friend.

Bennett: Yes, and it was not that I didn't have a family, and a devoted family at home, it's just that this other dimension was there, and it was great for me.

Two of the girls who became president while I was there were my close friends. One of them was from my later elementary school days, and we were very close friends. Not in elementary school so much as when we were freshmen together at Berkeley. Her family, particularly her mother, was one of the good influences in my growing-up years, because she was a motherly person, but totally different from my own mother, and much more realistic in facing real life's problems, and talking about them. I had always felt that she, and the mother of the one who doggedly pursued the double date business with me, were very logical and useful extensions of the motherly presence in my life. I gained a lot from both those mothers.

Chall: That's very important too in your life.

Bennett: So all in all, the sorority was a jolly good thing in my life. No matter what its negative features might have had in the society at large.

Chall: I see. So if you were to answer what you learned from membership which you might not have learned otherwise-- I'm not sure if learn is quite the right word.

Bennett: I think learn is right in the sense that it was a period of social growth, a much broadening of the horizons, and I learned a lot from the others, including the social butterflies. I learned a great deal. I did participate in the formalized social life; I did go to the formals, and discovered that, you know, I could make my way in those. But I had no skills in dealing with the opposite sex. Absolutely none. I learned something about what was amiss there, too. [laughs] The mother of one of my friends said at one time, I needed to learn to flirt a little.

Chall: You were bookish?

Bennett: I was terribly sobersided, and I think maybe we spoke of this before. I think it came from being the first child of very earnest parents who were themselves, both, somewhat limited in their social exposure.

Chall: Yes, that's right, you had said that they rarely did anything outside the family. That makes a difference, even though you did have a brother, but he was younger, so you couldn't learn much from him.

Bennett: He was younger, and if there was anyone in our family that could be called a loner, he was it. He went off on his own. Two and a half years difference, at that stage, is enormous. If it had been the other way around, I think he would have taken care of me. But as it was, he suffered from being the boy child after a much cherished and not exactly reticent-in-the-family girl child. I think little boys are very hard put to it if they have a big sister. He never got over it.

Chall: Suffers to this day.

Bennett: We talk about it now.

Chall: Were you shy?

Bennett: It depends on how you look at it. I didn't push myself forward, certainly, but I was not handicapped in a social group; I simply was not aggressive. I hadn't any of the delicate skills that some people develop much earlier.

Chall: Yes, you could watch them and see the difference.

Bennett: Yes.

Campus Activities

Chall: I was wondering what you might have done outside of your academic life.

Bennett: Nothing in the way of sports, absolutely nothing. I think I had batted a few balls across the tennis net with one of my Theta friends, one of the ones I had known a long time who became president. I went off with her to Claremont Country Club where her family was a member, and we played very bad tennis for a very short time. The swimming I did at Fallen Leaf Lake with another one of the active ones. One of my steps up toward adulthood was when I discovered that I didn't have to go head first into Fallen Leaf Lake.

Chall: Could just walk in?

Bennett: I could go in feet first if I wanted to, but I had taken swimming at the Hearst gym, and I was trained to always dive in. I was a bad diver.

Chall: Were you required to take gym here?

Bennett: Oh, yes. It was required of me in my program during transition stage from the temporary barracks we were in, because of the fire to the old women's gym, and the completion of the new. I was in the first class that used the new gym, and we still occasionally ran into workmen when we were going scantily clad in one Turkish towel from dressing room to shower and back. But it was bright and new when I moved in. I learned to swim in that large pool.

Chall: I had been reading in some of the background material on the campus that there were lots of senior class activities and such things as banquets and formals, and there were Junior Farces and Senior Extravaganzas and big C Circuses, and all that sort of thing. How about those?

Bennett: You mentioned a scrapbook, and this turns out to be the closest approach I have to it. [Shows material from her student days] It's not so well organized.

Chall: Oh! Wonderful!

Bennett: You ask about dances, there's proof that I went to a couple.

Class of 1931
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

*Presents the
Senior Extravaganza*

“Night of the Garter”

By

HELEN SHUMAKER
CECILA SILVERMAN
JACK CURTS

Music by

CLAUDE ANDERSON
EVERETT GLASS
Director

MERLE MARSTON
Dance and Chorus Director

JACK VANCE
Musical Director

ARTHUR BEALS
Manager

GILBERT EARLE
Assistant Manager

STAFF

PHILLIP BOYLE
Stage Manager

General Committee

WARD INGRIM
Chairman

REA RADIN
Sub-chairman

Costume Committee

IMOGEN WENTWORTH
Chairman

MARY WOODS BENNETT
Sub-chairman

House Committee

FRANCIS CUNNINGHAM
Chairman

LOIS LANGDON
Sub-chairman

Property Committee

DENTON WALSH
Chairman

MARY BARNETT
Sub-chairman

Choreography by MERLE MARSTON

Chall: Oh, the old programs. Very good.

Bennett: Oh, and I went to the inauguration of Bowles Hall. My boyfriend was among the first residents of that hall, and invited me to go to the opening ball. Senior Extravaganza? Yes. Baccalaureate? Yes!

Chall: Certainly the baccalaureate.

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Good for you, you saved it all.

Bennett: I had a notice inside there. Here. This is the level at which I participated in most activities.

Chall: What did you have to do as vice-chairman of the senior class?

Bennett: I cannot remember. Except that I have a vague memory of being on my hands and knees on a large floor cutting things out for something, and it could have been that. But I was also on the costume committee for the Partheneia when I was a freshman, and made mock Indian tomahawks by the dozen, in a loft over a shop on the block of Telegraph which used to be shops including the Black Sheep, which was the eating place where all the faculty gathered. I did that sort of thing at a very low level.

Chall: Why did you do it?

Bennett: It was the thing to do, to be engaged in some kind of college activity. That was the influence of the sorority.

Chall: I remember that you were asked to find an outlet or find something outside the sorority.

Bennett: We were urged to participate in some way.

Chall: So you continued to do that and always picked out something, is that it?

Bennett: What came naturally.

Chall: Were you as exercised as others about the fact that Stanford stole the ax at a Berkeley rally?

Bennett: Yes, even at this distance in time I had the reaction of a typical undergraduate. [laughter] I went to every single football game that was played in Berkeley while I was an undergraduate and a graduate. I think I went every single Saturday.

Chall: Then you like football?

Bennett: I was trained to like football. When I was a child we used to watch the "Wonder Team". One of the last things I did when I made my final move was to mail to my brother his pictures, which he had not taken with him when he left home, of the "Wonder Team".

Chall: Tell me about the "Wonder Team". What was that?

Bennett: Oh, that was the team that had "Brick" [Harold] Muller on it, who later became an orthopedic surgeon. He was the name that's most famous to me. He threw a forward pass in one, I think it was a Rose Bowl game, that was, for its time the longest completed forward pass on record--something of that sort. He's a huge man. Big, tall, redhead.

My father used to take us. It was long before the stadium was built. There were wooden bleachers in the general area occupied by Edwards Field, (Hearst Gymnasium site), I guess. Or maybe farther east. It was in some area that the Harmon Gym now occupies on Bancroft, adjacent to Bancroft. I don't think east of what is now Sproul Hall, but it may have been right in there. We used to go up there on game days. I once saw some team defeated 103 to nothing--but I can't recall what teams were playing.

In those days there were no proper dressing room facilities in between halves. The teams used to just go to a corner of the field and sit. I can remember our trying to position ourselves where we could be near and see the university team. Way back. It was before I was ever a student. Probably before I was in high school. Maybe even when I was still in elementary school.

Chall: Did your mother go?

Bennett: Sometimes. My father usually took us. We didn't go very often. Mother's brothers, although they never attended Stanford, had all expected to. She, by instinct, voted for Stanford, or sided with Stanford. My father was Cal through and through and through. I think she did it just to inject a little variety into life. I don't think that she was too serious about it.

I can remember one time when the Big Game was afoot, and Mother and Dad came by an extra ticket. They were going together with another couple. Mother thought I ought to go if I wanted to, and I didn't, but they took my brother. He went and he was happy and I stayed home and cleaned out the window benches, I remember, and felt equally fulfilled.

Chall: As if you had really done something important.

Bennett: I was thinking I certainly didn't participate in women's affairs activity, and then I realized I was wrong. There was an institution I did not know by what name, whereby there was

Bennett: tea on one day a week regularly, during the academic year, in the Women's Lounge of Stephens Union. What is now, I think Moses (Stephens) Hall. But that was Stephens Union. I can't remember, I think it was Women's Lounge. I used to go regularly to those being a recipient rather than a creator of the event. But I went regularly, and may have had some slight responsibility for some of them, I don't know. I can remember trying to introduce someone once, and being embarrassed by not being able to remember the girls' name.

But there I met a person whose presence meant a lot to me at the university, and I hadn't remembered it till I looked this up, and that was Mrs. Monroe Deutsch. I noticed that although I think very frequently of Dr. Deutsch and his influence, in the material that I've saved, there's no reference to him. He was very quiet. But you must remember that his was the period when Robert Gordon Sproul was new and was trying to integrate the UCLA and the Berkeley campus into coequal parts of a united university. I'm sure his greatest contribution to the university in the long run was not letting it get pulled apart. Mr. Deutsch ran this place as provost when Robert Gordon Sproul was in southern California. He was very much in the foreground, but a very quiet operator. He's just a dear.

Chall: And his wife?

Bennett: Functioned as a faculty wife. There she was week after week after week at those teas. So was Margaret Beatty. I cannot remember her field, but I have a hunch it was public health or something like that. I don't really remember what it was, but she was a wholly different person, but she was equally faithful. I can remember those two, I can't remember any others.

Chall: What about Dean of Women Lucy Stebbins? Did you know her at that time?

Bennett: I had met her and knew her a little bit, but I had very little truck with the dean's office, and only discovered what I had missed, late. But toward the end of my career I was very much concerned about getting a job, it being Depression time, and the idea of graduate work had not yet taken hold. I went and had an interview, I think with Mrs. [Mary] Davidson.

##

Bennett: That was my first visit, and then the issue became different when people began saying, "You ought to go on to graduate work." By this time I was known to Harold and Mary [Cover] Jones, and they were urging me to take--Harold Jones was suggesting that I take a year off to do something and then come back. He, and I don't know who else in the department, contrived to get this dual appointment for

Bennett: Marjorie Horzik and me by which we shared two jobs, and switched in midstream, switched the jobs at the turn of the year so that each of us had each job for half a year.

Chall: This was as an undergraduate or when you came back?

Bennett: No, as a graduate.

Chall: When you came back.

Bennett: They were talking about this arrangement toward the end. Harold Jones was quite insistent that I return for graduate study. So he said, "It's fine to go away for a year, but be sure you come back."

Chall: So you didn't go on to see the women's advisers anymore?

Bennett: No, this was not a major adviser, because Olga Bridgman was the major adviser, but Dr. Jones was the person who had spotted me, apparently, in the class in child psychology which I was taking as a senior. Also in that class, by the way, was Catherine Landreth, whose name you may know. She retired from the University of California some years ago. But she, through accident of being much older than I and already a professional in New Zealand, came along and got her doctorate under Dr. Jones really just a year or so before I had.

I saw the possibility of graduate work, and also, I had a firm job offer for the one year, from someone who saw the point of my going off from graduate study to work a year, and wasn't fussed by the fact that I would be leaving her employ at the end of the year. She understood such situations exactly. Olga Bridgman urged me to take the job, and I was trained to do it because it was, as Warner Brown described it, giving a "Binnett a minute" in the Seattle public school system. I went to the job of laboratory assistant in the child study laboratory of the Seattle public schools. Olga Bridgman really got me that job when she was asked to recommend someone for it.

Chall: Did they think it was something that would help you understand the field better, a maturing process, to be away for a year?

Bennett: Yes, I think they both recommended that. You see, I had not only been very close to the university and exclusive in the department in a way, but lived here all my life, and knew nothing of other educational institutions. Marjorie Horzik went away at the same time and for the same reason. She went to the National Research Center in Washington, D.C. under the same arrangement. Go, but come back. I think it was just their feeling that a little broadening of horizons was probably indicated.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
PSYCHOLOGICAL LABORATORY
BERKELEY

April Seventh
1932

Miss Mary Woods Bennett,
Child Study Laboratory,
Public Schools,
Seattle, Washington.

Dear Miss Bennett:

The Department has recommended that you be appointed teaching fellow for one semester at \$300 for the year 1932-33, and Professor Jones is recommending you for a position at the Institute of Child Welfare for the other semester.

The decision as to which semester you should teach and which to work at the Institute is to be arranged by you and Professor Jones in conference.

Sincerely yours,

Edward C. Tolman

Edward C. Tolman,
Chairman of the Department.

Please notify me if you are unable to accept this appointment.

Chall: Before I get you off to Seattle we'll finish up here with the university. I guess the campus looked different from how it looks now, of course.

Bennett: You know, I have known the campus all my life, and it is very difficult for me to pinpoint changes because I have been witness to them over the years. I have very firm memories early on of things about the campus. For example, I remember the hue and cry when the Campanile was being built. Everybody was sure it would get shaken down in the first earthquake. There were news stories about the coeds who fed coffee and donuts to the workers, presumably, at some stage of the game--all kinds of things. I was too young to remember anything except patches, but I remember the furor over it.

I remember the furor over the building of the stadium, because everybody was sure the first earthquake would reduce it to rubble. My father was either asked to canvass for it, or to contribute, I can't remember. I can remember a conversation between him and my mother over this project. They were by no means involved closely with the university, but because of my father's having gone to law school, there was a kind of a tie that they recognized. They had, after all, intended to have their children go there, and all four of them did, as a matter of fact. So it was something quite planned in that respect.

Chall: I noted that while you were on the campus here the International House, Giannini Hall, and the Life Sciences Building were completed.

Bennett: I was in the first class that moved from the old psych building which was up sort of in the neighborhood of Founder's Rock. An old dwelling. We moved down to the Life Sciences Building. I'm sure there were other features of it that were noteworthy, but I remember particularly that it was supposed to be earthquake proof. I remember sitting in a small seminar room, or something of that sort, and feeling an earthquake, and thinking, so this is the way it goes. It was definitely rocking. I was scandalized the other day when I read that it was sadly in need of updating and so forth because it had stayed in my memory way back in those old days when it was the new and beautiful place.

Chall: Someplace I read that it was one of the largest buildings that had been completed. That just doesn't seem possible, now that we see so many large buildings. They are building a major addition on to it which you probably have seen.

Bennett: I heard about their project.

Chall: You just walk right down the street from here, and you'll see it. Of course, Giannini Hall was--

Bennett: It was outside my sphere--The only thing that I remember about that particularly is that I never could figure out how people could get from women's gym, the Hearst new gym--the dedication of which I attended, by the way. I saw it dedicated to the womanhood of America by William Randolph himself. I couldn't figure out how people could get from Hearst Gym, especially if they had had swimming in a ten o'clock class, as I did, how they could get to an eleven o'clock class in Aggie (Agriculture) Hall, as some had to.

Chall: Yes, I wonder how they could, even now.

Bennett: I haven't any idea. I know I went with wet hair, the semesters I took swimming, to my eleven o'clock classes.

Chall: Let's see, of course International House we just accept now.

Bennett: Yes, I remember for a season Little Theater had its plays there, and I was an avid attender, at Little Theater performances. So much so that when the Department of Dramatic Art got finally established here, and I knew Trav [Travis] Bogard very well, I gave him all the programs I had of all the productions I had seen for the departmental files, because he said they didn't have complete files.

Chall: You were a saver.

Bennett: Well, I'm a packrat, and that's why I saved all of this. But I was positively interested in the Little Theater productions. Partly I was interested because I knew people who were involved in it. The lad I went with in my senior year intensively, who later turned out to be a chairman of the anthropology department, was a backstage person--either electrician or carpenter, I can't remember. In the old days we had to do all the productions in Wheeler Hall, in that pitiful little platform. They were so inventive.

Chall: How did you come by this interest in the theater? Was that also part of the family interest?

Bennett: One of my friends in the Theta house was a good actress. Two of them were. I followed their careers. One of them I was visiting in Carmel in the summer. Her family had taken a house down there, when we read in the newspaper that Robert Gordon Sproul had been appointed president. It was between our junior and senior years.

That was the year in which she had been asked by the then-director of Little Theater to be in some shows he was going to do in the Berkeley Community Theater which was in an old church on Allston Way. I think it was Allston. At any rate, one of those streets that runs from the university to Shattuck, parallel to

Bennett: University Avenue. A little brown-shingled church which had been desanctified and devoted to dramatic arts under Sam Hume. Irving Pichel and his wife had performed there and so forth.

So I went with her because she had a quick costume change to make. She was learning her lines that summer, and when we came back to do the theater I went down with her every night to get her into her costume. They were doing the Man of Destiny which required her to get into both a man's uniform and a bouffant kind of gown from the Napoleonic period. Time was of the essence. They were in rehearsal for another show that was to be done Truth About Blades, and Mike Raffetto, who was the director, said, "As long as you're around, why don't you play the maid?" And I did, and was no good. Fortunately, I couldn't hurt it very much. But I knew then, if I had ever thought of it before, and I hadn't, that performance was not for me. But I had great fun just being a hanger-on.

Chall: That's fun. It's important; somebody had to help with all these backstage things.

Bennett: He was very generous, he was a mature enough person, so he knew exactly what he was dealing with in me, and he was a very kind man. Did you ever hear the radio show "One Man's Family"?

Chall: Yes.

Bennett: He was Paul.

Chall: Oh. I remember. A long-running great radio show.

Bennett: Women's affairs as such did not specially interest me, but I realize in meditating about this, two things. One is, that one of my good friends in the Theta house was very much interested in women's affairs, and she was elected Senior Women's Representative at Large on the Associated Students organization, whatever it was. Also, of course, Ruth Waldo, as she was then, Ruth Newhall, was a very living presence all this time because we were contemporaries at the university. I admired then, as I do now, her great energy, competence, and maturity. She knew how to work things and did. There wasn't such a thing as a woman's movement at the time, but I think every woman on campus secretly rejoiced when, illness or something of the sort forced her to function as the president of ASUC.

Chall: Yes, I notice the men were always the presidents and the women were usually vice-president.

Bennett: Well, that was par for the course. Nobody made a great fuss over it. But she demonstrated she was good.

Election to Phi Beta Kappa

Chall: In your junior year you were elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

Bennett: Yes, I just happen to have here--

Chall: Good, your little boxful.

Bennett: Isn't it nice that I'm a tidy packrat.

Chall: You are.

Bennett: This all has to do with graduation. This is later. There we are. You asked me, did I really make a speech? Yes, I did. There are my notes. What is the date there?

Chall: This is October 10, 1929.

Bennett: That was when I was initiated.

Chall: Initiated into Phi Beta Kappa. So you had to make a little speech?

Bennett: Yes, on behalf of the juniors who were being initiated.

Chall: Did every one of the juniors have to make a little speech?

Bennett: No. I did it on behalf of the juniors.

Chall: They chose you?

Bennett; Yes. Somebody chose me.

Chall: When you were told that you probably were seeking after the little key, you weren't really--you weren't really planning for Phi Beta Kappa?

Bennett: I wasn't even aware of this as a possibility. I probably thought Phi Beta Kappa was too far above me. Because that was my tendency. Percival B. Fay [Professor of French] was married to a high school friend of my mother's who was also a Theta.

Chall: There were connections. Your grades were good, of course. Were you surprised at being taken into Phi Beta Kappa? By that time you were a junior, you understood what it was.

Bennett: Yes, and I was gratified.

Chall: What then, did it mean to be there? Were there meetings or gatherings of any kind?

Bennett: Well, it indicates here that I was secretary. I couldn't imagine what you meant by that, and I found here evidence that I was indeed appointed secretary and it meant not one thing. I don't think we had a single meeting.

Chall: It did have a president and that was Jack Curts, and a vice-president, Robert Varney, and you were the secretary.

Bennett: That's right. I think we must have had some meetings. I think it must have been in such a meeting that I met Joel Hildebrand. He was a figurehead even then. But the person who really functioned in Phi Beta Kappa and in bridging the gap between faculty and students, in my life, was Lawrence Harper. He was a member of the history department and he was a devotee of tennis. His wife was Louise Harper, the tennis player. My co-member in the Theta house as well as my classmate at Anna Head, was Helen Jacobs, who later became champion. Incidentally, she was an Anna Head School graduate as was Helen Wills Moody. Lawrence Harper took hold of the students he met in the Phi Beta Kappa connection and was a very useful friend to have.

Chall: In what ways?

Bennett: For one thing, he personalized the relationship between faculty and student. He served as informal adviser on all kinds of questions and was the person to whom I turned in some agony, when I was facing my qualifying exam later as a graduate student. He was someone I knew from this connection who became a faculty member that I would seek out for help and advice and just an opportunity to talk. Which is the sort of thing the university didn't provide too well for. But he filled that gap. I always appreciated it. I have a feeling that he may have been the one that suggested that I be a speaker. I have that feeling.

Chall: He knew you already?

Bennett: Yes, because you see I was a junior by that time. We did have little meetings. I can remember Robert Varney; I can remember Jack Curts. For Phi Beta Kappa as such, there's just not very much room for a meeting, even if you're elected in your junior year, there isn't much time.

Chall: Did you continue with the little meetings, or whatever they had, when you came back as a graduate student?

Bennett: I think I must have had some involvement, but the graduate work is so department centered, that I didn't do much general activity. One doesn't as a graduate student here. It's all localized in the department. At least that was true.

Chall: It probably still is. I don't know.

Bennett: In other words, Phi Beta Kappa provided for me something like the experience that the sorority did in just introducing me to a different group, but one which was selected for interest and sort of a way of life.

Chall: Scholarship.

Bennett: Yes. Bob Varney, for example, was a very bright student, extremely bright.

Chall: I noticed in the Phi Beta Kappa list the name Max Radin.

Bennett: Oh, yes, and I remember him at one of the Phi Beta Kappa meetings because he believed firmly that election should be only on grade point average. Strictly. And this kept out his daughter, who was a very bright girl.

Chall: Were they actually always picked on terms of the grade only, and was there some concern that they might also want to consider something else?

Bennett: I think that the rules, which I didn't bother to refresh my memory on, and know more from my contacts at Mills with a chapter there than I do here, considered as a requirement good moral character, or whatever, or some kind of evidence of more than dirty digging. But how you tell that is very difficult to say, and I'm sure that Mr. Radin was on grounds which are perfectly defensible when he said the only fair thing to do was to make it straight grade point average and have that alone. But I was interested in seeing him perform, because I had heard a lot about him. Rea was one of my classmates at Anna Head.

Chall: His daughter?

Bennett: She went on to a distinguished career as a professional woman. I can't remember where--I think on the East Coast.

Chall: Sometime in the following decade wasn't Max Radin in the news because some governor, Culbert Olson, I think, wanted to appoint him to the state supreme court and he was rejected as being too liberal?

Bennett: I'm afraid that it was partly just plain discrimination. I think he had more than one experience of rejection on that score. I knew him partly because he was brother-in-law to one of my colleagues at Mills, Margaret Prall. She was a very able woman, a musicologist by training. She had very high regard for his intellectual powers. I was glad to have had that one experience of just meeting him face to face and seeing him in action. I may never have met him again; if I did, it was in a purely social context.

Classes and Professors

Chall: Now we can go into your classes and professors. That's my next item.

Bennett: Oh, I can give you cards and spades on that on account of I have every report card I ever had. Now, Arthur Ryder, there's an odd one to have been an influential professor. But he was the Department of Sanskrit. He did offer a course in translation, literature in translation--

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Bennett: --with no purpose in the world but to gather a little group of people who could be interested in the great literature in Sanskrit. He had to keep the class small, so he said that four years of study of a classical language was a prerequisite. He said, "Of course, in these decadent days, that means four years of high school Latin, but that's okay, that keeps the size of the class down." So that's how I got in. There were fifteen, twenty people in the class. Mostly, I learned about it from a friend who had taken it, and I think mostly people were there because of the word of mouth. There was no other person teaching Sanskrit at the university at the time. He was a translator of much of the work. The only person I ever heard comment on his translations was one Robert Oppenheimer who disapproved of his translations and thought his words were ill chosen in one particular passage. [laughter]

Chall: Because Oppenheimer could read Sanskrit too?

Bennett: Oh, sure. He could do anything. He lived at the Faculty Club where Arthur Ryder also lived.

Chall: That was many years later?

Bennett: Must have been when I was a graduate student. He had Sikhs in the class. I think they were not his students. I think just there maybe because they were homesick. I don't know. But three or four

Bennett: used to sit in the front row, and were easily recognized, of course, because of their turbans. I think they were Sikhs, I could have been wrong, but at any rate, they wore turbans, and they were clearly from that part of the country. Every once in a while, so that we would know what he was talking about, he would read in Sanskrit. When he read a poem he would intone it as the Sanskrit scholars apparently did, and sway a little bit. I snuck a look once at one of those bearded gentleman. Tears were coming right down his face. It was a lovely course. Looking through all this stuff I found my notes from that course. It's the only set of notes I kept. Well, it was a whole new door to my life. How else would I have ever read the Bhagavad Gita and the Mahabharata or whatever you call it.

Chall: And read it in English, of course?

Bennett: Oh, of course.

Chall: The course was simply to acquaint you with the culture and that language.

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: That was an opening.

Bennett: So this is for the first semester of my senior year, I noticed, and that was the year I gathered my forces and could face Physics 10 which was devised for freshmen. But I thought I ought to know something about physics.

Chall: How did you manage?

Bennett: Oh, I was fine, I got an A in that. Easy. I didn't understand physics much better, but I had some exposure to it. I took an English course which must have been with Whipple, and I took German, I was taking German by this time. And I took a couple of psych courses, one with Olga Bridgman, and one with Jean Macfarlane, as might be expected. But I think it's interesting that Olga Bridgman was my adviser at this time. She was the one who encouraged me to take the Sanskrit, when I wanted to do the second semester and wondered whether it was appropriate for a psych major to be cluttering up her program like that. She said, "Why not?" Also, I took English and German along with my psych in the second semester of my senior year. That's another one of Whipple's courses. I used to like working with Mr. Whipple. Did you know him at all?

Chall: No.

Bennett: He was a dear. I did have a course with the legendary Paul Cadman. He was a member of the economics department, and I always admired

Bennett: him because he left the university for a year, maybe longer, to take a job related to the stock exchange in San Francisco, to get practical experience. But he was the kind of professor who was very popular with students, and was a much desired speaker on a great many occasions. Someone once told me, someone I knew at Mills told me, that his father, possibly also his mother, had been preachers of sorts. I don't know whether that's true or not. But he had that kind of oratorical impact.

On the other hand, when I was sitting once on the stage of the Greek Theatre, I think representing Mills College in an academic procession, at some festival in the Greek Theatre, there was a great deal of racket up toward the Big C, and the person who stopped it was Paul Cadman. He got out complete in cap and gown, and ran up the road far enough to encounter them and to quiet them down. I think he served a term, maybe, in some deanish capacity. But, at any rate, he was quite a presence, quite well known, and I enjoyed that.

I took the Econ 1B first, you could take them separately, and that was a good idea because it was a little easier for me to stomach than 1A was, which I took with Ira Cross. I will never regret having had the experience of a class with Ira Cross. The joke on poor Ira is that I was taking that course in the fall of '29. You may remember an event of some economic importance to the country in the fall of '29. He talked about it in class and said that people were saying that that Depression wouldn't be over till Christmas. And he said, "You mark my words, it'll be spring before it's over."

Chall: Well, he was a little more farsighted than others. [laughter]

Bennett: [Whispers] Not much! But it was an experience to have a class with him.

Chall: Was he an interesting professor and exciting in any way special? I knew he had a great reputation on the campus.

Bennett: I think that probably the material was well presented. I didn't find it as easy to understand as had been the case with Paul Cadman. I don't know whether the segment of economics that Paul Cadman taught was intrinsically easier to a person who knew nothing of the field, or whether Cross was more rigorous. I have no way of evaluating. All I know is that this was a personality to experience.

Chall: He was known to be that?

Bennett: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He was a legend. He thought nothing of throwing out of the class in Wheeler Hall any student whom he observed to be reading the Daily Californian instead of taking notes. He would say, "I will wait until that student in the middle

Bennett: of row such and such removes himself from the room." And he would.

Chall: Had to pay attention!

Bennett: I think that, considering the state of abysmal ignorance in which I now live, about economics, and of which I'm very much aware because one of my best friends is the chief economist at Mills College, I think I didn't learn any more of that than I did of philosophy when I took it as a freshman. I took econ later in my career.

Philosophy I got As in, through no fault of my own, or the teacher's. A good memory. I could always recognize that I had read something in the questions, and I could see my notes in my mind's eye, and come up with the right words, which is not real learning. But I did it satisfactorily. And gained great respect for Jacob Loewenberg who was the teacher.

Chall: In those days, what was the study of economics? It was a little simpler, I guess, than it is today?

Bennett: I just couldn't get the hang of it. One of the difficulties was that the concepts, which were difficult for me, were beyond the capacity of the section leaders to explain. If I had a terrible criticism to make of the university system, it's the lack of teaching ability in most of the section leaders I had. Because that was your only hope getting a question answered. The ones in econ were abysmally bad. The one that I had in Econ 1A was I think worse than--I can't remember. Doesn't matter. But they were not up to reducing the material to terms that I could understand.

Chall: A lot of jargon or they just didn't know that much more than you did?

Bennett: No, I think that some of them knew so much that they didn't know how to reduce it to possible terms. The worst teaching I ever was witness to at the University of California occurred not at the hands of a section leader, but at the hands of a full staff member in my own department. I found this out when I was a graduate student and reading papers. He was so bad I went to the chairman of the department, and I said, "I don't think it is right for me to make this complaint, but I've just plain got to. He is standing up there in front of the class and reading to them out of the text book." And he said, "I know, but you know these young people have to start learning somewhere." For a man who was rigorous about his own teaching, that was a terrible admission to make of the nature of the system. They cared not about the teaching skill.

Chall: Has anything changed here do you think?

Bennett: I don't know. I must say, I was not exposed to that dreadful level of teaching myself. Another person who interested me a lot and influenced me a lot was Samuel Holmes, whose famous Zoo 10 was

Bennett: taken by everybody in the world. It was the generally available course for people who needed a biological science. Zoo 10.

Chall: Was it a lab class?

Bennett: No. Lecture. He dealt with the problem of science versus religion as Loewenberg did with philosophy, as a discipline destructive of religious values. In both cases students had made protests, and in the case of Loewenberg, the parents of a student had made a protest, about his ruining their child's faith. They both dealt with those problems very directly, and I was always grateful for that. That is the main thing I got from both of them. Dealing with an issue that the subject matter raised that was larger than the scope of the class actually.

Chall: How did they handle this religion versus science? Where did they stand on it?

Bennett: Holmes, who was very elderly at the time, and who had written the text that we used, and who had squatter's rights on this field as far as the department was concerned, I'm afraid ridiculed people who made these protests. I recall one occasion when he was making some point in one of his lectures in Wheeler Hall, and remarked that students got angry when he made this kind of a statement. I cannot remember the point he was making or in what way he was saying this, which I think was his point, but the gist of it was that where science had provided an answer, you have to accept it, religion is for the area in which we do not know the answers. But he said it in such a way as to offend the sensibilities of someone, and a young man got up and walked out. Holmes just watched him go out, and then he grinned, and he said, "He's mad too."

Chall: He probably had come across this all the time.

Bennett: Oh, many times he had dealt with it--He tended to ridicule. But Loewenberg went right at it. Did I not tell you this tale before?

Chall: No.

Bennett: The parent of a student had written in. He said, before he began his lecture on this occasion, he said, "I feel it necessary to reply to the class, because this is a question frequently raised, but it's never been raised as seriously as this before." This parent had written in--I think it was a mother; I don't even know whether he identified the parent--saying that he had no right to destroy the religious belief of her child. He said, "I have only this to say. If your religious faith is such that is shaken by a few questions posed in a class in philosophy, it isn't worth a nickel, and the sooner you get rid of it the better."

Bennett: I was in the last class he taught, his own course, philosophy 4A, B. After that I understood that the department went into a vaudeville-type presentation of the basic material in philosophy. Everybody taught a section. Everybody gave the lectures on his own specialty. There's much to be said in terms of exposure of the members of the faculty to the students, and that sort of thing. But I think that this course, which was his very own, and was beautifully organized, and so forth, was probably a better introduction to philosophy. I don't know that.

Chall: Was the introduction to philosophy about the Greek philosophy?

Bennett: We had Plato one semester, and Berkeley, Hume, and Locke, I guess, the second.

Chall: And this shook the--?

Bennett: Shook the young man's religious faith.

Chall: That's interesting. Well, that is a subject area that hasn't been cleared up at all yet, has it?

Bennett: No, but I had the benefit of a very thoughtful man at Mills who devoted his most productive years to a college chaplaincy. George Hedley. He could speak such sense about this sort of thing.

Chall: Students must have come to him. This has been a problem in every school, whether it's high school, or grade school. It still is.

Bennett: He wrote so sensibly and so well.

Chall: What about your own department? You speak of Olga Bridgman.

Bennett: I never worked with George Stratton, and I think I told you that before. Although I remembered that I had been at the dinner, and I must have been a graduate student by this time, at which the department celebrated him. It was a small dinner in the small dining room at Women's Faculty Club, I can remember. I sat next, there, to Herman Adler. That was the only time, other than at my qualifying exam, that I had ever talked with Herman Adler. On that occasion he mentioned that he had been on the committee, and I remembered it, and he said some nice things about it.

Chall: On what committee?

Bennett: He was on the examining committee in my qualifying exam for Ph.D. That's the only time I ever talked with him. I remember him very well, because on this occasion, later, when I was a graduate student and sat next to him and he had made this comment about it, I said I was scared to death. He said, "Why couldn't you be?" He

Bennett: said, "It was a hurdle to be passed in your whole chosen career."
Of course he spoke as a psychiatrist. I always appreciated that.

Chall: What interested me, when I looked through the catalogs, was that he was on the staff only about maybe four years from '33 to '37, and then he didn't show up again.

Bennett: He never taught in the psych department, as far as I know. He was attached more to the medical school.

Chall: But he does show up in the catalogs in the psych department.

Bennett: Yes. He had an office right next to the departmental office.

Chall: But he didn't teach?

Bennett: No.

Chall: Though he did have a function as a committee member.

Bennett: He was a resource. I don't know whether they referred special projects to him or not, but he was the little man that wasn't there, as far as I was concerned. If he hadn't turned up on my qualifying committee, I would never have met him by way of academic work. If he hadn't been included because of his residence in the corridor, I wouldn't have known who he was at that dinner for George Stratton.

Chall: It's interesting, because I thought perhaps the psych department was moving or at least exposing itself to another point of view in some way.

Bennett: Apparently not. I don't know why he was there. The fact that Olga Bridgman was also on the faculty of the medical school might have had something to do with it. But I don't know why he was there. Maybe it was just a vacant office available to a person who was essentially engaged in research. I don't know.

I never took a course with Bob Tryon, although I read for him a couple of times later, and oddly enough, he had an influence upon me out of all proportion to the amount of time we spent together. I read during a summer session for him, and so I had a little contact with him then.

Chall: What was his field?

Bennett: He had done a very interesting experiment on intelligence in rats. He had bred successive generations of rats that had performed in certain ways on a maze. He was trying to make points about the heritability of intelligence. He was Tolman's man, obviously. His wife was a graduate student when I was; we got our degrees about the same time. But I had with him an interesting conversation once,

Bennett: and I think it must have been during the summer when I was reading for him, when I must have been a graduate student, about the virtue of the small liberal arts college, and why he wasn't having his children go to Cal.

Chall: Oh. Where was he sending them at that time?

Bennett: He was talking about the virtues of Mills. I had some comment about its being very small. He was making the point that it was what was required, really.

Chall: I see he started out in '29 and '30 as a research fellow and then came up in genetic psychology. Then he gradually worked his way up through the campus. Jean Walker Macfarlane, you mentioned having taking classes with her. She remained an assistant professor all the years that I looked at the catalogs, whereas others of them more or less moved up.

Bennett: I'm sure she moved up ultimately, probably after the retirement of Olga. They were both in clinical.

Chall: And in pediatrics, too, I noticed.

Bennett: Well, Olga Bridgman was a pediatrician as well as psychologist. She's a very bright woman. I have in my satchel something that I brought to you because I had mentioned The Score. I found out that she wrote something about it. Here is The Score, and here is Olga Bridgman's account of its origin. Here, for some reason clipped to it, is a news clipping of Mary Cover Jones, still going great guns at age God knows what. The Oakland Tribune, November 4, 1985. She's just as vivacious now as she was then. Those others in the picture are children from guidance study at Berkeley which was what I cut my teeth on. No, the adolescent study.

Chall: How would you characterize your major, since you didn't study with everybody.

Bennett: No, it was Bridgman and Macfarlane who were a part of the team for the clinical, and Warner Brown and Clarence Brown were where we got the meat and potatoes, that is the experimental and the statistical. Tolman--I think I didn't study with as an undergraduate. I think it was only as a graduate student, and it was eminently worthwhile.

Chall: His field, again, was what?

Bennett: Well, he was the great--he had just finished a volume when I took courses with him called Purposive Behavior in Animals and Men. I took with him, as a graduate student, a course in advanced General Psychology, and one in animal, which was his field, and which I hadn't studied at all. It was then that I met what you might call the overarching intelligence. He made systematic efforts to

Bennett: get all the observable phenomena of psychology--the kinds of things that came from experiments that could be replicated into one conceptual scheme. Never to his own satisfaction, and often to the bemusement of students. But I was a mature enough student that I could take the bemusement then. It was terribly stimulating.

Chall: How about the rest of the faculty, were they accepting of this overarching--?

Bennett: I never was aware of any faculty dissension. Never. I think there was some. But it was certainly obscured from us.

The Tolmans had the graduate group to their house for Thanksgiving dinner. See, it was small enough in those days. The graduate fellows, not the whole graduate group. We were in one office, for heaven sake. They used to have departmental functions, a picnic or something like that, that would include graduate fellows.

George Kuznets who recently died at Stanford was one of the-- he wasn't a fellow, he was a reader. Jimmy Hamilton, who is now a psychiatrist, in San Fransisco, I think, got both a Ph.D. and then later an M.D. and was very active. Edgerton Ballachey and Eddie Ghiselli, who both returned from other appointments to be chairman of the department here, were my fellow graduate students. It was a choice group.

Chall: Yes. Definitely. And Ms. Honzik?

Bennett: Marjorie Pyles Honzik, if she was doing anything, she was in research. She had a genius for research. She is to this day carrying out research. She has a huge grant here now. She's the continuity in the guidance study that Jean Walker Macfarlane established. She was, I think, responsible for much of the writing on that body of work that came out. She had a genius for picking out the elements of a study in progress that could be made into an article that made sense. She just is very good.

Chall: She was one of the fellows too?

Bennett: Yes, she and I shared the research assistantship.
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Bennett: I know she was infinitely better than I in the research capacity. I have a feeling I may have been an easier teacher for the students but I don't know that. I think that this is true. There was one season in my graduate year when I had charge of all the demonstration sections. It was possible in the pre-World War II days. Six sections, I think, a week. I did them all. Of course we all did reading like mad. I remember one conversation I had with Warner Brown when he said that the machines that they were

Bennett: beginning to introduce for the scoring of tests were driving him crazy, and I said, "Well, at least you'll get accuracy." He said, "They're not more accurate than the likes of you." [laughter]

Chall: Oh. All that long ago.

Bennett: I used to care whether I was maintaining the same standards at the end of the--you know, hundreds of papers. True-false justification questions, things like that. I used to check out and the others could change standards without knowing they had done it. So he taught me how to be a good user of the true-false justification questions, and how to deal with problem cases. He was a good teacher as a director of the fellows.

Chall: But did you make up your own tests? Your own true-false tests?

Bennett: There was a large array of true-false tests that had been used on prior occasions, and these were published in a mimeographed pamphlet and made available to the students. Selections from these were chosen. Sometimes we did straight true-false, but more often there was a statement, and you had to indicate whether it was true or false, and then you had to say why. Which meant that if it was possible for a question to be answered either way, you had the chance to give your supporting reason. Also, Dr. Brown was scrupulous about recognizing the possibility of ambiguity in a statement. If any question ever got asked about this he just dumped the question. "Just leave it out."

We had in the class at that time, when I was a graduate student this was, twin boys, who were--together with Mark Goodson, whose name you may remember--the one, two, and three ranking students in Psych 1A, B which took place in Wheeler Hall. I was doing all the demonstrations and reading some of the papers, and reading some of the finals, at that time. I had occasion to count the seats, 825 seats. They never ranked lower than three, either one of them, but the three used to jockey for position. I used to have a wonderful time with that group.

Mark Goodson was a very nervous student. Very anxious. Never fell below number three out of 825. The boys were devil-may-care, the twins. One of them was in a nonprofessional climbing group that got to the top of one of those Himalayan peaks by himself. The other is a superior court judge in Sacramento. They were headed for law school. They used to challenge Professor Brown. Every once in a while he would say, "Knock it out" and I would say, "But, you know, it really doesn't say what they said it said." He said, "Never mind. They're Philadelphia lawyers, and this is not worth arguing about." That was the virtue of giving enough questions so you could always knock one out.

Bennett: He was very careful, and he taught us something about how the distribution of grades ought to look in a class that large. Also, he was very good at picking up cheating. I remember once standing with him before a class and watching the students, and he said, "Look at the couple over there, in row such and such." He said, "They're just copying right off each other's papers." And they were. But he didn't make a great thing about uncovering cheating.

But on one occasion there seemed to be more of it than we should be asked to tolerate. I remember this was when Jimmy Hamilton was among us. He and one of the other fellows set up a plan whereby he had pairs of papers saved out from a batch given back where the answers were identical. When the errors get to be identical you begin to wonder. So Professor Brown went along with this and announced to the class that the papers were returned, but some had been held out, and for reasons that could be explained, and people who were missing theirs could please go and fetch them. So, interestingly enough, pairs would come in for them. Jimmy very systematically would get the name of one student, and then look up the data that he had recorded, and say, "Ah, yes, and you sat next to so and so, didn't you?" And they were all baffled. But they had them dead to rights. I don't think they reported them.

Chall: That probably taught them a lesson. You didn't make them sit one chair apart?

Bennett: Wasn't room enough. That's the preferred way, of course.

Chall: Yes. You've remained friends, then, with many of these students-- your fellows, and some of the professors over the years?

Bennett: I retained some contact with Jimmy Hamilton, although I haven't seen him. But he was instrumental in getting a Burmese student into Mills, someone he had met during World War II when he was stationed in Southeast Asia. But I don't think I have met many of them except Marjorie, and I'm quite close to Marjorie Honzik. Jean Walker Macfarlane is quite aged and not too strong, I think. Of course, one of the troubles is, all these people just do die off.

Chall: Yes, well, they, of course, were much older than you were at that time.

Bennett: The nature of the department changed wholly with World War II. What happened was that the department was deluged with young men who came back from the war and decided on clinical psychology for a field. As Marjorie said, they all wanted to go into clinical psychology because a lot of them had either noted its presence or noted its absence in World War II, and were hell-bent to do something about it. It got to be a fiercely competitive situation. As Marjorie said, the ones who succeeded were definitely the ones

Bennett: who ought to be kept out of clinical psychology. It was just dreadfully competitive. I don't know what the situation's like now, but it was a very awkward time.

I remember being at a reunion of sorts at the department during those years, and standing next to Jean Macfarlane who said to me, "You know, I don't recognize most of the people here. And yet, they are all from the department."

Chall: So they must have increased the size of the faculty as well?

Bennett: Oh, enormously. Enormously. The press of numbers changed the whole thing very quickly. I have no idea what the state of affairs is now.

Chall: I suppose that the field has changed a bit too.

Bennett: Well, the field was a growing one as I came up through it, and it got a tremendous boost and impetus from World War II. Tremendous. Then the field itself developed so many specializations that it got quite fractionated.

I don't know whether I've done justice to all the professors. You asked me which ones were the least stimulating. I had one experience with a person who had never taught before that nearly drove me crazy.

There was one woman, by the way, that I should mention, the person who taught Physiology 1A, B. I can't remember her name. But I took it because of my intent to major in psychology. When I went in to see her for my grade, which we were allowed to do-- we could get our grade by going in and asking about it in advance--I got an A, and I said, "Oh, I'm so glad, because that's what I was working for." And she said, "Surely you were working for more than that." I said, "No, I was working for an A in physiology because I had talked myself into believing that I never could cut up a frog." She said, "Well, I'll allow that." [laughs]

Chall: She wanted you to get more out of it than just the grade?

Bennett: I took that--it went against the grain. She was a very stimulating teacher, and much respected by the group. Much respected.

Chall: She must have been one of the few women on the campus at that time.

Bennett: Could have been. I had a chance to learn from Edna Bailey, who was the only woman with enough seniority to have a seat on the academic senate, how grim the position of women was. But you see, in my department, there were two women who were given great prominence. This was partly George Stratton's doing.

Chall: Had he been the head of the department for many years?

Bennett: Well, he was the head of the department that brought in clinical psychology. He said he had been persuaded that it ought to be added, so he felt, he said, he had better get someone good to do it. He looked around and, he indicated, quite amusingly, that they had to settle for a woman. This was said at the dinner in his honor referred to earlier.

Chall: Oh. He did say that?

Bennett: I'm not sure how he said it, but he said it in such a way that everybody was enchanted with the way he said it. I don't think the women in the psych department were discriminated against, as happened in some others. I really don't. For one thing, they were too independent; they wouldn't have stood it. Another thing was the fact that Olga Bridgman was already an established member of the faculty in the medical school and this militated against any discrimination. Jean Walker Macfarlane wouldn't have stood for it; she would fight.

Chall: In order to get where they did in those days as women they would have had to be very assertive.

Bennett: Olga Bridgman was tiny, and sort of sweet looking. You could be fooled by her. But oh, my, she was sharp. She also was compassionate. She never threw her weight around. It was sheer ability that came through. I discovered, when I was a fellow member in The Score with her, something more about her aggressiveness, which was really there, and more than I had known before. It could have been I saw an aging woman.

Chall: She was already older?

Bennett: Long retired when I joined The Score. She was still on some faculty committees, admission to medical school, I think. But I also, to my disillusionment, discovered how biased she was against certain ethnic groups. You know, you can't completely divorce yourself from your own generation. She was a Middle Westerner in origin. That was that. You see, staying in the same place, I get mixed up between undergraduate and graduate years.

Chall: Yes, that's all right, it doesn't really matter, because we just get a feel for the whole department.

Bennett: I think the continuity which it represents is a feather in the cap of the department.

Chall: Yes, these people were there for many years, as a very small group, as you say, probably up until after World War II.

Bennett: I think that if I had picked a major like history, or even English, I would have been sunk, because it would have been so difficult for me to find the group that I could identify with.

Chall; Yes, because they were already fractionated.

Bennett: Right. I didn't have to tear them apart. As a matter of fact, there was a positive educational value in the small stable department in which I took my major.

##

You asked me about classes and professors, and those most stimulating, and those least so. I mentioned the young man, whose name I can't remember, who was what we students called a rat psychologist, and who read to the students in lecture out of the textbook. I don't know how politic it is to say this, but I was in the first class that Worth Ryder taught on this campus. He was a bad teacher at first and he recognized it. Whether that had to do with the fact that his niece, Miriam Dungan, later Miriam Dungan Cross, told him, because she was a student there at the time, I don't know. She was just a year ahead of me, I think. Or by this time she may have been two years ahead of me, because of that year I stayed out. She graduated from Anna Head a year ahead of me. Whether it was that she told him so, or whether he knew it, just of his knowledge, I can't say. But he was so disorganized that when he told us to prepare for the final, he told us to ignore everything that had gone on in the class from the beginning to the midterm time. He as much as said, "I botched it." He also told us, "You must know how to draw a map of the Mediterranean freehand." [chuckles] I have every confidence that he learned in time.

C.W. Brown was also new to teaching. But he knew what the teaching process was about, and he worked on it. He was a very interesting man who later became chair of the department. He was a farm boy out of Utah, I think--sounded like it. The King's English was not his strong suit. However, he told us that he had discovered in his middle twenties--and I quote now a former student of mine, not him--that he was getting older and nowhere at the same time. So he just decided he would go to college, and get a degree. In some incredibly short time, five or six years, he had done that, he had a Ph.D. in psychology. His field was statistics, and he was one of the first ones who said to me, "Why don't you just take a B sometimes? And do something else with your time." In a way, Olga Bridgman had said that sort of thing.

Parental Components in Molding the Personalities of the Bennett Children

Bennett: I was beginning to get, from various contexts, one of them through the housemother, a very wise woman in the Theta house, who said, when I was protesting that a particular lad that I was going with didn't seem very stimulating, she said, "No, my dear, you need to be taught how to play, and he's not the right one to do it." So I began to get input, as you call it now, from elders I respected, that maybe I had been too narrowly brought up by conscientious parents, who were in their first experiment with childrearing.

Now, I realize, that this didn't have the same effect on my siblings. So, you know, we're not putty for someone to form. Something's inside that limits what they can do. I was far too impressionable, far too biddable, and too much of my satisfaction came out of doing what I was expected to do. So when I began to get feedback from people that questioned this policy, it was very useful that it came to me that early in life. I'm not sure I would have got it if I hadn't been in an academic setting.

Chall: Did you change your way of working? Were you less driven? This is probably what they saw in you, an over-achiever--?

Bennett: They saw in me a person who was sort of sobersided, and conscientious, maybe to a fault. Well, it was, even in the mother of the friend of mine whom I quoted once saying, "You know, she needs to learn how to flirt." I was still arguing this in my mind when my father brought it up on what was almost his deathbed. It was only about two and a half years, I think, that he lived, after a massive cancer operation. He confided one of the matters of regret in his life, as he surveyed his life which seemed to be close to its end. He said, "They tell me that I'm the reason you never married."

Chall: Oh, dear. What a guilt trip.

Bennett: This was devastating him at this time. In a sense this is absolutely true. Because I think my mother and father were aware that they had found marriage hard-going and they didn't see much in it to recommend. They didn't push me into it. But every once in a while my mother would think, "But at her age she ought to be doing this." Then she would consult a relative who had a daughter about the same age and I was not ready for whatever it was she thought I should be doing.

Bennett: I was insulted when a lad threw a bouquet of roses on the front porch of my grandmother's house when we graduated from the sixth grade. Because I thought that was an insult. Both my mother and grandmother were astounded that I had that reaction. They didn't know they had planted the seed.

Chall: Even that far back.

Bennett: Yes. So it was a long-standing thing, and I lost my conscience with great difficulty and at great age.

Chall: Of course, if they had said, as so many parents do, and did, "Oh, you know, so and so she's not married, and look, she's twenty-five, or she's thirty..." Then it puts you into a worry that--

Bennett: No, my parents were only too pleased that I was a serious student, and that I probably was headed for self-support which they thought a good thing. Even although they were far from feminists, they thought the more I could go it alone the better off I would be. So, in a sense they were thinking of my best interests as they saw them. I certainly never felt abused.

We were talking, the four of us--or three of us. We've never gotten together more than three at a time for a long, long time. But three of us were talking and saying how wonderful it was to grow up in an atmosphere of total acceptance and total support. Predictable support.

Chall: But did any of you stray off the reservation very far so that you would have even been concerned about support?

Bennett: We had friends. My mother and father fussed more about the kind of friends and the kind of activities that came up with the older two than they did with the younger ones. They were much different parents with the two younger ones.

Chall: They had so many years in between.

Bennett: They were so relaxed and so accepting of the crazy things, from the family's point of view, that the Straw Hatters [Straw Hat Theater] did, and so forth. But they learned, they were capable of learning by experience. They knew we wouldn't break for once. [Laughs]

The brother who's close to me in age shared the same view of my parents. While I was a graduate student he was enormously helpful to me because we could talk things out together. He was supportive of the family at a time of low financial ebb, and before World War II. But they made the mistake of teasing him about his girlfriends, whereupon he shut up and never spoke of them again.

Bennett: When he married, he went off with a person who had been married before, to Reno, or Carson City, Nevada, and was married and then told us afterwards.

I think it was part of what made him pull back from the role of boy soprano in the choir. He did not like public exposure of any kind. He got a lot of it as a child because he was on Walter Christie's football team which was made up of tiny children. Walt Christie was a great track coach at Berkeley. Between the halves of football games, before there was such a thing as pompom girls and things like that, Walt Christie's team would come on the field. My brother was always short for his age, and he was a towhead, and he got newspaper attention. He had had a picture of himself taken in the old Call Bulletin in the football stands. It was because he was so tiny. Someone called him the "split second" because of his speed.

He played football seriously and grimly when he was a student at Berkeley High. When he came up for my mother's funeral, one of the people who came to the funeral, having read the obituary notice, was a member of the staff with whom he had been very friendly at Berkeley High. He had played on the Berkeley High football team. Not the varsity, because he wasn't big enough for it, but the Berkeley Bees, I think they called them, rather than Yellow Jackets, which was the varsity. That was terrible strain because they hadn't lost a game in seven years. He used to play his heart out on Saturdays, and then have nightmares all Saturday night. My bedroom was across the hall from him, and I know well at what costs to his peace of mind those games demanded. But he was rugged.

I can remember once my father came into the house laughing. My mother asked him what was up, and he said, he had been standing out there, and he had been watching the little boys play in the vacant lot across from the Emerson School which was their playground. My brother always had all the athletic equipment there was, because my parents were scared for his life, he was so daring. He had this football helmet, pads, everything. But this was baseball, and he was standing with his baseball bat in his hand right over two boys that were tussling. My father had a mind to go down there and stop it, but a man walked up and stopped, and had a word with the boys, and so my father decided he wouldn't make a fuss about it, perhaps it's all right.

When the man came up he was giggling to himself, and he said to my father, "You see those boys down there?" My father said, "Yes, I'm watching them. One of them's my son." The man said, "You see the little fellow with the baseball bat?" My father said, "Yes, that's the one." He said, "Well, he was saying to the others, 'You fight and fight square or I'll bat your heads in.'" [laughter] That's the vigor with which he did everything.

Bennett: So he had his own emotional side, and we do talk now about these things. He calls me more often than he used to. We've got to the stage where we just chortle over these memories and love them.

Chall: But did it do any good, did it help you to relax, or change directions in any way, when even your professors told you?

Bennett: Oh, sure. I listened to them. I would always take in advice.

Chall: Yes, but what did you do? How did you change, at least, at that point?

Bennett: I don't know, it's too gradual. There was no dramatic shift. But I thought, well, maybe they're right. I certainly became less prissy in my attitude toward other people. I can remember one of my friends once asked me what it would take for a man to be a successful suitor. I outlined my views, and she said, "Well, good luck. You're never going to find him." [laughs] I think that this was only half the point. I think the point was I took too readily to the suggestions that this was not the way to go. There was a time in my life when I felt that there had been a loss from this but one lives through that.

Chall: So there was no one suitor whom you ultimately rejected?

Bennett: I never let it get that far. There was one who was undoubtedly serious. This came in my senior year, and maintained itself through part of the year I was in Seattle and later. I wasn't ready, that's all. There was a fellow graduate student who made endeavors. I went on a picnic with his family when they came up from the south and so forth. He teased me a little bit in front of the other graduate students because we had that office that I described last time. But not ready.

I talked with one of my older friends about it in the department. She was urging me on to more exposure to the opposite sex. She nearly died when I took the job at Mills College. She thought it was just the dead wrong thing to do. But she was more eager that I branch out and have experience in heterosexual activity than I was. That's all.

Chall: Yes. I think it depends on what you're ready for, your personality. You know all that already.

Bennett: Yes, and I was confused by what seemed to be contradictory advice, even from my parents. Every once in a while they would be startled that I was acting in a way that I thought absolutely consistent. It seemed to me as if they were doing a right about-face. Actually, they were not, in that had I showed the slightest interest in one of these things, they would have gone along with it.

Bennett: Mother did her best. I went to dancing school at the Town and Gown Club where everybody in Berkeley learned how to dance under Miss Shafter. She was very careful to see that I was decently dressed. She had better taste than I had. When I entered college she saw to it that I had a proper formal. She saw an appropriate dress for a formal in a store window once and she bought it for me, and brought it home. One of my peers in the Theta house admired it very much. I thought, "Well, she knows what she's doing."

She asked advice of her sisters-in-law. I had about three cousins near my own age. One a first cousin, one a first cousin of Mother's, and one a first cousin once removed of Mother's. They were about my age within two or three years. She consulted them about what to do and how to do it.

But, when I had graduated from college I was talking with one of those estimable ladies with whom Mother had childhood acquaintance and developed a lifelong friendship. I was concerned about the apparent discord between my parents of which I was more aware when they were at a stage where they were not striving together to do common things with the family. She gave me good advice. She said to remember that when people cared a very great deal they frequently found themselves at loggerheads over issues because it mattered to them that they could make a go of it. She said to me something I've never forgotten. She said, "Mary Woods, I regard your mother as a very smart woman." Now no one had ever said to me in so many words, "this is the fact."

But it is a fact that these two women, both of whom married late in life, used to consult Mother for advice on the care and rearing of children. One of them married into a difficult situation. She married a widower with three teenaged children. The younger of the two, Catharine Miles, used to consult Mother. She knew, just from sane reasoning, that she should stay off the disciplinary kick. But, what constituted reasonable expectations, and that sort of thing, they used to ask Mother about.

When Anna Brinton went off to Asia, when her youngest was six months old, she weaned that child in order to go to a PanPacific conference, in Hawaii, I guess it was. Or it could have been in Japan. Mother was the one whom the baby sitters were instructed to call if anything went amiss. So, she was not ignorant at all. It did me good to hear Catharine Miles, who knew what she was talking about, say, "Your mother is a very smart woman." At age nineteen she started concentrating on motherhood. She was a very good observer.

Bennett: But better than that, it never occurred to her to doubt that she could not be a successful mother. I think that is what dogs parents to death. It never occurred to her that this was beyond her. She coped. So it was not grim. It was not grim. There was a lot of laughter in our family.

Chall: Yes. It sounds that way. It's just that everyone has his own way of reacting to situations. It always sounded, from what you said, as if you had a very happy--a confined home life--but still happy.

Bennett: I went through an agonizing period. We're way off the topic.

Chall: Well that's all right, it's all part of your life.

Bennett: I went through an agonizing period when my father disapproved of my being away from home. At the home of a relative, for example, and that sort of thing, I learned to recognize this as a kind of desperation in him about his personal status, and the fact that he seemed to have petered out as a provider, and that sort of thing. It was directed at me because I was still within his sphere of influence, and the more likely to meet the outside contacts. He was more ready to allow a son to go his own way.

Chall: So there was a difference, in the way they perceived the roles of a daughter and a son, or boy and girl?

Bennett: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! My mother was all for a boy getting out and making his way Horatio Alger style. And my father, I early on became aware of the meaning to him of the deprivation he had survived going out, really, to work at age fourteen. He was very protective of my brother. He didn't want him to take a job that would, as he thought, deflect him from the normal pursuits of youths. He didn't want him to go away from home to a summer job, which Mother succeeded in getting for my brother, because he knew he would be homesick. He worked out a code with him, so that if he wrote a letter home and said such and such a thing was happening, I think it was if he saw the big dipper--my father would know that as a sign. And he got in the car, and went off and fetched him home.

Chall: Did this happen?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: How old was this little boy?

Bennett: A teenager, a young teenager.

Chall: He didn't want him to be homesick, whereas homesickness is really sort of part of life?

Bennett: No, it's because he had too much of it too soon. He didn't want his son to have to face that. It is a matter of timing and of the judgment of parents when these things are done or not done. Then, of course, growing up, I could not understand why my brother went places with Dad overnight. Dad would have to go on business on the train, and he would take a child for company. Always the boy. It was finally Mother, screwing up her courage and explaining it to me, saying, "It's the bathroom problem." Oh. That never occurred to me. So they used to go off together.

Chall: They had a close relationship, the boys with their father?

Bennett: Yes. Dad used to read to us. He read us Two Years Before the Mast. And always Mark Twain. Mother would sit with us, with her sewing basket in her lap, and promptly fall asleep. Sheer exhaustion. She went like a steam engine all day. But she was not too interested in reading or the story telling bit, or in poetry, which Dad not only liked to read, he wrote it. Not very good but he wrote it. Some of his early stuff was published in the old Out West. Something like that it was called. So he had an eye for and an interest in the arts that Mother didn't have. The arts were more social for my mother. So there we are. I don't know what started that outpouring.

Commencement Speaker and Follow-up

Chall: We'll come back to this personality development at other times. It paints a fascinating picture of the factors behind your considerable achievements. However, now we can talk a bit about your commencement and speech. First of all, how did it happen that you were chosen to be the speaker?

Bennett: Somewhere you have the letter of appointment. I was notified, I think, by Robert Gordon Sproul that I had been chosen--the letter is in that batch I gave you--and was asked to consult with Professor Flaherty of the speech department for advice. The advice was marvelous. I don't know what he told me about my speech, but he provided me with a one-liner which I have cherished all my life. He was the one who said, "We are raising a nation of crude specialists." He was for a liberal education.

Chall: Was it because of your grades, or did people recommend you?

Bennett: My hunch is, and I have no way of confirming this, that Lawrence Harper might have been asked, and might have recommended me.

Chall: Otherwise, it isn't solely on grades?

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 29, 1931

Miss Mary Woods Bennett,
2800 Garber Street,
Berkeley, California.

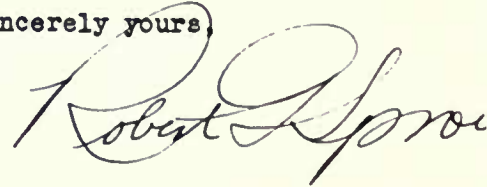
My dear Miss Bennett:

I take this opportunity of congratulating you most heartily upon your selection as one of the two Commencement speakers by the Committee on Commencement Speakers. We are all looking forward with anticipation to hearing you.

Will you kindly send me, at your early convenience, the title of your Address, and at a little later date I should appreciate having a copy of your remarks.

Trusting that you can accept the appointment, of which you will have been informed by the Recorder of the Faculties, I am

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Robert A. Sproul". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed closing "Very sincerely yours,".

Bennett: I don't know. Now maybe Garff Wilson might know because he also was asked to be a speaker.* I've never asked him how come. But it's perfectly easy in his case. He had been with the debating team through the tour of Europe just before.

Chall: Probably a well-known speaker.

Bennett: He was an English major, I think. It may be that the departments were asked to nominate. I, of course, had always had good grades. This was not the point, but I was not the medalist.

##

Bennett: Hackles were raised at the selection of medalist for our class, because there were those who felt that Bob Varney should have had it. The recipient Morvyth McQueen-Williams had very good grades, being one of the best grade-getters of all time. She went on to a professional career in research at Yale, and there's no question but what she's bright.

When Garff and I arrived at the designated place, because we had to walk in a special place in the academic procession, it was Monroe Deutsch who met us, who took us over, and said, "Your Grace, may I present.." He was the most colorful figure in the whole commencement.

Chall: Archbishop Hanna.

Bennett: He was a colorful figure in San Francisco anyway, and he had his lovely magenta cape on, and then the blue and gold hood. He was an elegant bird of paradise. Of course Jimmie Rolph was a grandstand player from a way back. You know the terrible joke they made about him?

Chall: No, I don't think so.

Bennett: How do you get the mayor of San Francisco? You cross the jackass with the gardenia. He usually wore a boutonniere.

##

Chall: How did you happen to choose the subject of the talk that you gave? It seems, as I read it, that you could have written it today.

Bennett: Well, the thing is that I had a tendency, which I only fully realized when I was working at Mills, to adopt everything that I read or hear that seems compatible as my own. I think that I am not an original thinker. I patch things together very well. This was a patchwork job done when I talked with people, including Anna Brinton, and including my professors. I talked directly with Lawrence Harper about it, although he was not formally an

*See Garff Wilson, The Invisible Man, an oral history interview conducted in 1980, The Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1981.

Bennett: adviser. It came through their willingness to talk with me about their views of what was pertinent.

I know I got the idea from Anna Brinton, because her husband, a Quaker, was about to make a major speech himself, and had been doing a lot of reading in the field, and I simply soaked up everything that was said by all these people. I had read the Walt Whitman in my English Literature class, and I began looking up material in this direction. Oh, there's a wonderful point made by Robert Louis Stevenson, and I don't know why I didn't use it, I was surprised that it wasn't in there.

Chall: You did quote him at one point.

Bennett: Yes, but this was another one. "What in God's name is all this pother about?", he said. I think it was in Virginibus Puerisque. My father could have suggested that to me, I don't know. But I just lapped up every usable idea that came when I talked with people about this, and put them together. But I would always argue this isn't a very original work.

Chall: Well, it surely is an interesting paper.

Bennett: It's stitchery of a very efficient sort.

Chall: That's all right. I had wondered whether you had read some of the people that you quoted?

Bennett: I read passages, but it didn't come from the depth of my reading, believe me.

Chall: Did it come from the depths of your soul?

Bennett: It was a compatible idea.

Chall: I see, because it sounds as if it did, and also, knowing what you said about your family and their rather close--

Bennett: It was completely compatible.

Chall: And compatible with your future?

Bennett: Yes. I once made a sermon at Mills College that had something of the same title. Not a very good sermon, I didn't give enough time to it.

Chall: You write very well, at least what I've read.

Bennett: I can use the English language in a more or less literate fashion.

Chall: It's clear, it's interesting, and it also has a touch of wit.

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Commencement Address

May 13, 1931

"WHY SO SEEMING FAST?"

Many hundreds of years ago a battle took place in the wood of Ephraim, in which Absalom, the son of David, met his death. Ahimaaz, the son of Zadok, asked to be allowed to carry the tidings to the king, but as it happened, another messenger had already been sent to bear the news. When he was told that there was no message for him to carry, Ahimaaz answered, "Come what may, I will run." Time has passed since Ahimaaz ran, but men and women of the twentieth century are still running to no purpose. We are still placing emphasis on energy, rather than on intelligence. "Extreme busyness" is the bane of modern existence.

Although the whole world today is charged with unrest and hyperactivity, it is the United States which displays the tendency to the greatest degree and which has been the object of most criticism concerning it. From all over Europe, and from within this country itself, has come essay after essay, book after book, dealing with America's meaningless activity. Many writers content themselves with finding fault; more thoughtful ones ask, "Why such speed, and what is attained by it?"

Matthew Arnold believed that the tendency of the modern world toward activity and away from thinking was due to the triumph of Hebraism over Hellenism. The Greek wanted to see things as they are, to get rid of ignorance; the Jew wanted to obey the law, and overcome sin. The aim of both disciplines was the perfection or salvation of man, but the methods were

different. The Greek way was thinking, the Hebrew way was doing. The one led to ease and contentment, the other to ceaseless activity. In the conflict between the two, it was Hebraism which prevailed and which bequeathed to us our heritage of action. It comes down to us in Christianity, which, although devoted to the following of a self-sacrificing example instead of to the following of the law, still finds its greatest expression in action. The Christian is enjoined to be a "doer of the work."

In America it is Calvinism which has had most influence in developing us into a nation of doers. Max Weber, in his book on "The Protestant Ethic," shows the direct relationship between the religion of early New England and the capitalism of modern America. The Puritan believed in predestination. He had no way of knowing whether he was elected or damned, but he strove to perform, for the glory of God, any task God's providence prepared for him. He followed the commandment to "Work hard in his calling." Waste of time was a sin. Diligence, thrift, sobriety and prudence were virtues. Such qualities led not only to the glory of God but to worldly prosperity; and wealth, according to the Puritan, was not evil unless used for enjoyment. It was actually good and necessary if acquired in the fulfillment of one's duty. It was John Wesley who said, "We must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich."

It was not long, of course, before people lost sight of

the search for the Kingdom of God, and devoted themselves to the practice of economic virtue. The goal of American activity disappeared, but the activity itself remained. Benjamin Franklin's utilitarian worldliness is expressed in many a cryptic saying familiar to us all. "Time is money," said he. "He that idly loses five shillings worth of time loses five shillings and might as prudently throw five shillings into the sea."

Today we are become more devoted to activity than ever. Activity is still a virtue, inactivity a vice. There are those who maintain that times of stress and restlessness are times which foster new ideas and lead to new developments. It is equally true, however, that tranquillity and repose, time for meditation and reflection, are necessary for creative thinking. And where, in America, can one find tranquillity and repose?---not in the home, which is often nowadays just a place where a family eats and sleeps; not in the office, where efficiency experts are constantly devising new and better ways to do things; not in the school, where a round of curricular and extra-curricular activities leaves the student breathless at Commencement.

Not only does the American find little respite from his activity, but he is usually uneasy in his rare moments of leisure. He goes to the movies to watch others dash about, or participates in a football game from the bleachers. If nothing better offers, he hangs over a fence and watches a steam shovel work, or stands on a bridge and gazes at the moving stream. If he cannot be active himself, he must watch activity,

else time hangs heavy on his hands and he must find something to do.

Nowhere in America today is restlessness and meaningless activity more rampant than in our universities. There are students who hold that "college is contacts," and that the best possible way to obtain the greatest good from university training is to behave like a colony of ants, and go about brushing feelers with as many individuals as possible. Charles Mills Gayley, who has had opportunity to observe at first hand the so-called college activities, offers an alarming array of means by which the student may keep "busy to no purpose." "Class meetings, business meetings, committee meetings, editorial meetings, football rallies, pyjama rallies; vicarious athletics on the bleachers, garrulous athletics in diningroom and parlor and on the porch, rehearsals of the glee club, rehearsals of the mandolin club and of the banjo, rehearsals for dramatics (a word to stand the hair on end), college dances and class banquets, fraternity dances and suppers, preparations for the dances and banquets, more committees for the preparation; a running up and down the campus for ephemeral items for ephemeral articles in ephemeral papers, a soliciting of advertisements, a running up and down for subscriptions to the dances and the dinners, and the papers and the clubs; a running up and down in college politics, making tickets, pulling wires, adjusting combinations, canvassing for votes---canvassing the girls for votes, spending hours at sorority houses for votes---spending hours at

sorority houses for sentiment;---what margin of leisure," asks Mr. Gayley, "is left for the one activity of the college, which is study?"

But those who devote themselves too wholeheartedly to practical studies, are often in the same situation. Many courses in our universities train a man, not how to be something, but how to do something so that he may have something. They teach him how to make a living, but not how to live. He may be a success in life, as they say, but frequently he cannot live at peace with his own mind.

On leaving college, one is immediately caught in a whirl of activity. Often it does not matter what we do, as long as we do something, and presently we find ourselves like a squirrel in a wheel---going nowhere fast. We run for dear life from early morn till dewy eve, and find we have not moved an inch. Our only achievement has been, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, to "sow hurry and reap indigestion."

With all our desire to be eternally doing something we have completely forgotten why we are doing it. In our excitement over perfecting the process, we have overlooked the goal. We make money in order to make more money, not to gain increased human satisfaction. We have dozens of devices for speeding up the recording of words, and we have instruments which can carry those words almost instantly to the four corners of the earth, but these mechanisms have taught us no new words to say. The mechanical excellence of our printing plants often reveals

startlingly the absence of real thinking in that which is printed. Our interest has been in the instrument, and instruments are admittedly necessary, but in the perfecting of them we have forgotten what we might accomplish with them. Inventions have given us, not leisure to try what Stevenson calls "the liveableness of life," but more ways to do things. We make inventions to save time and labor, to make more money to finance new inventions. When man conquered the air, all humanity stood amazed and watched to see what prophetic words this great creation would write across the heavens, and the airplane wrote---"Lucky Strike."

America suffers today from an affliction of aimless activity ---activity which leads to the mechanization of life, but not to the simplification of it. Our lives are faster and fuller, but not richer. Only very recently have we begun to turn back to the music and art which the "poor benighted heathen" never saw fit to abandon. Not until we devote our activity to the attainment of a goal will that activity be justified. Not until our activity leads us to peace and a quiet mind will our devotion to it be vindicated. As it is, we are running miles and getting nowhere. It was this characteristic of American life, observed by Thoreau some seventy-five years ago, which made him ask, "Why so seeming fast but deadly slow?"

Bennett: This is deceptive, because it sounds as if it's good writing, and it's not, if it isn't something that comes from the creative process in you. And this I regard as a kind of a reproductive process.

Chall: We all need that. It serves its purpose, and some people do it well, and some people don't.

Bennett: Right, you have to, and, unfortunately, a place like the University of California, or any other large university, fosters this in students. First, I had to learn from the chairman of my department at Mills, and then I had to learn to look for it in students. But the difference is between a tidy collection of reading notes and a genuinely good paper. I used to drive students crazy by giving them B's for well-organized reading notes.

Chall: You wanted them to sit down and be totally creative? Put it together in a different way? Or original?

Bennett: Well, you can spot the originality when it comes, and it comes, sometimes, of course, from the tendency to argue with the authorities. But, let's put it this way, the easiest part of my dissertation to write was the review of the bibliography, which is where you exactly do that, put together your reading notes and comment thereon.

Chall: That's what it's all about.

Bennett: That's what it's all about. So there are things in the system that encourage the tendency.

Chall: I was impressed when I went through your papers with the number of people--friends of your own, but mainly friends of the family--who wrote and congratulated you. I thought it was just lovely that people would do that.

Bennett: And the mothers of my friends.

Chall: It was just lovely.

Bennett: Ava Barber wrote a very sweet letter.

Chall: Yes, written from Portland, while there on a business trip with her husband. It was very nice that they all did it from the bottom of their hearts. They also said, your parents must be very proud of you, and I wondered about how your parents--how proud they were of you.

Bennett: Oh, they were. They were fit to be tied, they were so excited.

Mrs L. W. Bennett
 2800 Garber Street
 Farm M. Russell - (Nana)

This is to certify to all concerned - and the many who are not - that Mrs Louis W. Bennett graduates Cum Laude this day from a twentytwo years course of loving watching and hoping in the careful guardianship of her eldest child, who now fulfils her mother's many prayers.
 May 13th 1931.

LAW OFFICE OF
LOUIS BARTLETT
1700 CLAUS SPRECKELS BUILDING
SAN FRANCISCO
TELEPHONE KEARNY 5750

May 18, 1931

Mr. Louis W. Bennett
465 California Street
San Francisco, California

Dear Mr. Bennett:

Mrs. Bartlett and I want to congratulate you and Mrs. Bennett upon the great success of Mary Woods' commencement address.

I didn't hear it, but the newspaper accounts indicate that she had something worth while to say, and said it well.

Sincerely yours,

Louis Bartlett

LB:GEB

Chall: And your brothers, and your sister? She was still a young girl then, but they must have been there.

Interesting Memories

Bennett: Oh, my sister was there in full flower at age five at the commencement. My mother's cousin, who was still in the regular army, into which he had gone in World War I when he was a cadet at Berkeley, came in uniform to please my mother. It was peacetime, he didn't wear his uniform. But he was stationed in San Leandro so that he could mastermind the preparation of the Caterpillar plant so that it could be transformed overnight to manufacture tanks. He was in ordnance, and this is what he did all between the wars period.

Chall: This was 1931?

Bennett: Yes. He had never gone out. He was with the batch of troops that went with General Barrows to Siberia, and thereby hangs a wonderful tale. When he was an undergraduate at Berkeley, he needed to fill a gap in his program, so he began looking through that schedule of classes, whatever it was then, for a course that would fit. He found one that was elementary Russian. So he thought, "Well, five days a week, what could be better? It just fills in that gap at eleven o'clock in the morning." Or whenever it was. So he took it, and at the end of the first semester, the professor went to him and said, "Mr. Winningstad"--he had a Norwegian father--"I think you had better drop the course. You simply have no gift for it, and it's uphill work." But that was the wrong thing to say to a stubborn half-Norseman. He said, "Thank you very much for telling me, I'll work harder." Well, he took not only one, but two years.

You know, that's a true story. Years later I was telling this to a bunch of graduate students at Mills. This was a wartime group that had come to us, and they were all mature women, learning how to be directors of childcare centers. One of them happened to be half-Russian, and among other things, she had taken, as a student, Russian. She grinned from ear to ear. She said, "The professor still tells that story." Because the upshot of it was, when Olaf got sent in this batch of troops, they were all given commissions--cadet corps people. They went on transport to Siberia under General Barrows' aegis. He spent all his time teaching the other troops, you know, work-a-day Russian, so they could fend for themselves. He was the only one on board who knew any Russian. Not well, you understand.

Chall: But enough to get by, probably quite well, from what you said.

Bennett: Better than nothing.

Chall: But two years, so he managed--

Bennett: Then at the end of the war [World War I] the army sent him to M.I.T. for his ordnance training, and he was an officer in ordnance all between the wars. His job was to go around to the various plants. He lived in the communities, and worked a long time making sure that those plants could be translated to wartime use when war came. The terrible irony of it is, his professional life would have been wasted, had he not been able to put it all into practice. He was in the Aleutians early on which were terribly under-defensed and helped to build the West Coast defenses. He came out and was stationed at the Presidio. So it was, in itself, an interesting saga.

I'm very much interested now in ballet, and there was another student of that early generation that emerged in my life later, by reputation, not by name. We lived for a while, following the birth of my little brother, in a boarding house called the San Marcos. It was across the street from St. Mark's Church. A great big house, and it housed, among others, some students who waited on table in return for their board and room, and various working men and women around the community, and I suppose some retired people, I don't know, I think maybe some faculty people. Actually, my playmates were the two sons of the woman who ran it, who had been in the choir at St. Mark's with my mother. That's why my mother knew her. Mother being unwell, my father saw the place where she could have housekeeping chores lifted from her, and we were there for some months.

Ed [Barnhart], who was the older of the two children in the family, later turned out to be my fellow student as a graduate student in psychology, and he became a member of the faculty of this university in the speech department.

Well, there was one of the boys in residence who waited on table, and I was enchanted by him because as we played around the yard, a fairly spacious yard, I could look in the window, which was above ground level, into his downstairs room where he lived and studied. I could always see, hanging on the back of his door, his powder blue or gray cadet uniform which he went off in a certain number of days a week. I was very much impressed by this uniform.

Mother said he was very kind to her. He used to help her up the stairs with the baby carriage, and I was allowed to walk to the corner with him when he was on his way to the campus, and then scurry back. He would tell someone I was going, and someone would be waiting for me, and this was a routine.

Bennett: His name was Hubert. Mother said, "You know"--later, many years later, she said--"I always thought he was a Miss Nancy" [whispers]. He was just too tender with the children, and so forth. But he was a sprinter, and he had some respect as a sprinter. Well, the thing that made him a "Miss Nancy" was that he was a "dancer". Of such an ilk that he was partner to Pavlova at a stage in her career. He changed his name from Hubert Stowe to Hubert Stowitz. There must be records of him here, in our dance department.

The Speech

Bennett: Now, "Why So Seeming fast?" The title came from Thoreau. Thoreau of course made sense, and of course I had been reading Thoreau in my class. It was a survey of American literature that Whipple taught. So it was not made up out of whole cloth, but it was a compatible suggestion. I realize now, that it looks as if I had read all those splendid authors, and actually what happened was that I plucked bits from them that fit and made the usual tidy patchwork quilt.

Chall: It made enough of a splash so that a couple of churches asked you to come and [speak]?

Bennett: Oh, yes, but this was almost predictable, wasn't it?

Chall: Both Presbyterian churches, at their evening services. Did you read the entire speech? Is that what they wanted? Or did they want you to talk?

Bennett: No, I read the entire speech.

Chall: Did they talk about what it meant?

Bennett: I don't think so. I think they used it as a filler for their evening service. That's my private opinion. But I don't wish to downgrade them. I didn't know the people at First Presbyterian, but I had been brought up in the neighborhood of St. John's, and knew it, and I knew Stanley Hunter by reputation, was interested in that [reputation]. Of course I still live near that old church which is a lovely building, the Julia Morgan Theater now.

Chall: You must have been kind of on cloud nine yourself.

Bennett: I was, but I had a very funny experience. I had cleared my program, so that I had nothing to do but write that speech at the very end. This was the way I always did things. I did things in concentrated form. I was no good at this spreading

Bennett: out your study over a long period business. So I was locked in my room, sitting on the bed, legs crossed, writing like mad. I developed a terrible cough. Mother said, "Go to the doctor." I was still going to the same doctor who had brought me into this world. [Eva L. Harris] So I went puddledy-puddledy down to her office and said, "I'm in this bind, I'm making this speech, and this cough worries me. I don't know that I can get through it." So she thumped me around, and she said, "Well, tell you what I'll do, I'll tape your ribs right now so they won't hurt when you cough." Because this was what bothered me.

Chall: Oh, you really had a serious cough. When your ribs hurt you're in trouble.

Bennett: Yes, the muscles had been wrenched by my coughing. She said, "That'll take care of the pain; it won't cure it. But," she said, "I'll make you a little bet. I think as soon as you start speaking, that cough is going to disappear." And it did.

Chall: Oh! A bright lady.

Bennett: This was when I first discovered the ease with which I developed physical symptoms from stress, and it's with me to this day.

This was a homeopathic woman physician who turned out to have come from about the same area that Olga Bridgman had come from, I would love to know what there was about the climate of the north central part of the country and their generation that produced these rugged women who went out after degrees that women did not traditionally get. But there she was. That was an influence I was exposed to early, too.

She was the one who said to me when I was wondering whether, with a baby at home, and things at sixes and sevens because of economic conditions, I should even go to the first job that was offered me, which was a summer job at Yale, by Catharine Cox Miles and her husband. I was to travel with the Brintons through the canal to the East Coast, sojourn at New Haven working for my room and board, working in the office that they had there. They were on leave for a year and then returned to Stanford for a year and went back to Yale for good. My job was to accompany her West among other things. She had a three year old child. She said, "Take it. You must."

Chall: Did you?

Bennett: Yes. She said, "You are past the age of staying at home for family reasons." She said, "It's the family's problem that they have a little child, it's not yours."

Chall: A wise woman. Stand on your own.

Bennett: I couldn't actually do that, and once later, an older friend said, during my graduate years, "You know, I can get you a job where you can be live-in and not be at home with all that commotion." But I couldn't walk away from it.

The Year in Seattle: Child Study Laboratory, Seattle Public Schools, 1931-1932

Chall: Now, you did go to Seattle though.

Bennett: Oh, I certainly did, with great support from my parents. They told me when I got back at Christmas time that they had been in family consultations as to whether or not I would have taken up smoking when I was away, because this was a terrible issue in the family. I had a cousin my age who smoked like a chimney but never in the sight of her family, and they were convinced she didn't smoke. Everybody in the town knew she smoked like a chimney. They didn't want that kind of thing, so they had agreed that they would roll with the punches if I came home a smoker. [laughter]

Chall: Isn't that interesting how they were totally concerned with your whole life.

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: But you were now really on your own? It was time to leave?

Bennett: Yes, I had the munificent salary--I don't remember its global amount, but it turned out to be a check for \$108 every month. One of my friends in Seattle with whom I was intimate enough to let her know what I was getting said, "Ah, well you have a living wage." You realize, I saved money on it, and came home for Christmas on it without borrowing from anybody.

Chall: A hundred and eight dollars a month. So how did you live? Where? You went up there as a total stranger?

Friends

Bennett: No, I wasn't a total stranger. I had an aunt, the mother of one of those cousins near my age--she is actually an aunt of Mother's. She had a friend there who was marvelously kind to me. That aunt, by the way, died in September, just a month short of her hundred and third birthday. She was an aunt by marriage. But she was one

Bennett: of the interesting people in my life because over so long a period we could touch base and talk familiarly, and she grew to be a very wise woman.

This friend of hers was the kind of take charge lady, the pillar of the DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution], racist as they come, but a woman of principle nonetheless. She got on jury duty, and she was the bane of the existence of the other jurors because she would not convict a known bootlegger on trumped up evidence. Her husband was an attorney and she was damned if she would let a jury get by with getting the right person in jail for the wrong reasons. So she said she was anathema. They couldn't stand her.

Chall: How strong! That takes strength.

Bennett: She was a wonderfully strong help. Her husband took me around to his bank and got me my little account started and so forth. For the first six months I was there I spent every weekend with them on their place on Bainbridge Island. It was a lovely respite, and it was a lovely place to be able to go and feel at home. When I was in Seattle visiting my sister when her play took her there about four years ago, we found the cabin that I had been in. A friend that she had at the University of Washington took a trip to Bainbridge Island and we found it, and looked in the windows and saw it. So that was one resource.

Then Mother had a friend from her childhood whose name I don't even remember who was living there who had married late in life and had a six year old child, and she wrote to her and said I would be coming. I called on that lady, she was kind. My good friend Betty Barber Hadden had an aunt there, her mother's brother and sister-in-law, and they were kind. So I had that support, so to speak, from the older generation, which made all the difference in the world.

Then, because I discovered the value of belonging to a sorority, I telephoned the person whose name was in our journal as being the alumnae club representative, whatever, in Seattle. She said, "I'll pick you up next Monday night, there's a meeting, come along." Wonderful. So I went. There I met Harriet Parsons, who was one of those older Thetas who used to come back along with Leslie Garyard, and Frances Fisher, and some others, I can't remember all of them--Betty Garrett.

Harriet and I took one look at each other--we'd met--we were at once fast friends. We left the meeting and went off to a movie together to celebrate. She told me later that she told her father, who was Bishop Parsons in San Francisco, that it was fun that we had met because we would go to church together. She said, "I didn't tell him I went to church every other Sunday and went skiing

Bennett: every other Sunday. She said, "You went to church every Sunday." [Laughs] Well, I went because it was home. Not because I was specially a church-goer.

It was fun to go with Harriet because, of course, she had letters from her father to the people there, and we went and heard the Bishop of Puget Sound, or whatever his title was. She introduced herself to him, she said, "I have a letter to you, but I didn't bring it with me today." He said, "I doubt that people are going around masquerading as the daughter of the Anglican bishop."

That was a wonderful friendship. We took a tour of the Olympic Peninsula together. We got stopped at the border by the guards who were looking for the kidnappers of the Lindbergh baby. It was terrible weather but we went anyway in her little open car, had a lovely time. She was older, more sophisticated than I. We unburdened our souls to each other as people do when they're away from home, and meet someone who looks like a best friend because it's a familiar face.

Chall: Was she working?

Bennett: Yes, I think she was doing landscape architecture, something like that. But maybe I'm all wrong, but I think that was it. She was sort of at a loose end looking for a job, and she left Seattle and went back home shortly after. But she showed me some of the sights. She had been there longer than I, and we had, of course, mutual friends. Her father had been the one who had seen to it that my father qualified for confirmation in the Episcopal Church. I learned a little bit about him. I learned that he started out in life a Presbyterian but became lapsed because he could not accept the doctrine of predestination, and therefore became an Episcopalian. All that. He, by the way, was a trustee of Mills College for many years.

Chall: Oh, yes, that's where I've run across that name.

Bennett: Yes, so I had that connection with him later. Then I worked for a remarkable woman, whose name was Frances Gaw. She was, I think it must have been of Canadian ancestry, but at any rate, she was a Britisher, and had had her degree from the University of London in psychology. She was the director of the Child Study Laboratory of the Seattle public schools. She had, for her dissertation, standardized one of the sets of performance tests of intelligence. She was hideously crippled from a childhood polio. Hideously, so that you could recognize the lurch with which she walked a mile away, you could always tell it was Frances Gaw coming. She refused to have any kind of aid. She played basketball! I don't think she had a brace.

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Bennett: She gave a party for the staff. We had about, let's see, one, two, three, four, five, including myself--people doing tests, doing a "Binnett a minute" as Warner Brown said.

Chall: Your responsibility was testing the children in the school system?

Bennett: Yes. We did two different things. One was that we visited schools that had sent in a request for someone to come out and test. So I got to know the whole municipal railway system. [I] could get anywhere in Seattle by streetcar. Then, if there was someone that they felt needed special attention, or was a behavior problem of some sort, or if they didn't have enough for a person to go and test in the school, they would send someone down to our central office. So there was always someone in the office testing.

There were two older people who had been school teachers who were on the staff. There was one young woman who was headed for a career in social work who was on the staff. There was one woman, Dorothy Granneberg who went to that strange little college that my Aunt Anna had gone to teach in, a Mills woman for heaven sake, before Milla meant much to me except that Mother's friend had been there. She was a very pleasant friend to have. She was a widow. Her husband was in the merchant marine and had been killed by a crewman who had gone berserk. She had had a dreadful time, but she was pulling herself together, and she was a good person to know. So that was the in group of those of us who worked. They were very pleasant people, all of them, and very supportive.

Chall: You were the youngest, I take it? You were there just a year.

Bennett: Yes. Frances Gaw was among those who saw that I was too docile.

Chall: Oh, is that so? She spoke to you about this too?

Bennett: She gave a little party, and instead of place cards at the card tables in her living room, there was some kind of saying that was supposed to let each person identify the one that belonged to him. Mine was "Should you learn to say no?"

Chall: Did you find it readily?

Bennett: Yes. Regrettably, by this time I had-- One of my teachers in the psychology department was a sharp-tongued lady, this was Jean Walker Macfarlane, whom I really loved very much. But once during my senior year we had started a class and there was this dead silence. She said, "Who will begin?" I said, "Well, I will." She said, "Always ready to jump into the spot." I thought, is this me? But I realized that what she later called my tendency to be relentlessly adaptable was already known, and it did me good to

Bennett: hear that said. I was. But that's what I had been taught to be. So it was not easy to change my spots. I'm still learning to say no. I do it better and more often.

Chall: Well, you've had a few years in between.

Bennett: Yes. You can see that I had a good time in Seattle. I was bitterly homesick the first week or so. Terribly. The reason I called the experience I had in entering college homesickness was that I had the same feeling--it had the same feeling to me. Everything was going right, nothing wrong. But I was terribly, uncontrollably homesick. I wept all the time.

Chall: In Seattle too?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Fortunately you had all these friends.

Bennett: I had all these friends, and I made use of them. And the other thing I discovered was that going to movies was splendid because there were all those people I knew out there. It was that I just couldn't cope with the enormity of adaptation to an environment in which I felt unsure, lost, and in spite of all the supports, felt powerless to do anything.

Chall: How long did that last?

Bennett: Oh, a week or two. I had a wonderful time. I used to schedule my days off the premises, when I would get down to some central point in downtown Seattle from which I could walk home, so that I could walk by the Y and take a swim on my way home. Very often I would be the only one in the pool between five and six. I was a little bit overweight at the time, and I'm not sure that it did anything but relax me, but it did that, and it was good for me.

Housing

Chall: Where did you live? Did you live in a boarding house?

Bennett: I lived in a boarding house which at one time had been the Swedish consul's residence. It was across the street from the Swedish Hospital. The Swedish Hospital exists, but the house itself was swept away by freeway development. We looked for it. My sister tried to locate it for me when I went up to stay with her. A wonderful Swedish woman named Mrs. Morrison ran it. Actually, my friend, Mrs. Williams, came in to help me find a place to live. We had seen Mrs. Morrison's place, and I liked it because it was a

Bennett: former residence. She had facilities for three girls on what would have been the third floor, almost attic rooms, but they were singles. They were cozily furnished, and I could see out my window trees, gardens, and so forth. There were few of us enough so that, though we had to share a bathroom, it was not all that much of a problem; down below there were more problems.

But my friend said, "No, this faces north, or east, or whatever it was, and the place that we saw over the hill and down on Broadway, whatever it was, is located on the streetcar line, and the sun is pouring in the window as we're looking at it now. You've got to take this." Well she talked me into it. I hated it, absolutely hated it. The gentlemen came down to their meals in their suspenders and bedroom slippers, and this seemed to me to set a tone that I just couldn't abide. You know, I was not one for extending my horizons in that direction, at least not at the time. I couldn't stand it.

After the first night there I went back to Mrs. Morrison's place, and said, "Is that place still empty?" She said, "Yes." I said, "I'm coming. I want to come, I don't like where I am." I said, "Do you want me to give you a deposit?" She said, "No, I think you know what you want."

So I went back and I had a little time separating myself from the lady in charge because she said her credibility as a person who ran the place and so forth was at stake. I didn't care that I had paid a deposit on the place. She stood by while I readily telephoned the person whose name she gave me and explained that it was purely a personal choice, that is moving, and had nothing whatever to do with the place. There was nothing wrong with it, except there was nothing right with it.

So I got out of it and was very happy at Mrs. Morrison's for the year. I rented a typewriter and taught myself to type. I borrowed a book from one of the fellow residents and learned to type according to the touch system, sort of the right way. I wrote to my mother every night to practice my typing. I happily lent the typewriter to young men who were wanting to apply for jobs and borrowed it. They would usually clean it and put it into good shape. That was fine.

I didn't make friends except with a couple of schoolteachers who had a big room on the floor below me. They were both from Minnesota, they were both of Swedish extraction. One of them was a tearing blond, and quite a social butterfly, the other had dark eyes and dark hair, as so many Swedes do. It comes from those French who went there at one time, I think. We saw quite a bit of each other. They were very generous about letting me use their place and their radio.

Bennett: It was at the time when the Chinese-Japanese fracas was very much in the wind, and we were keeping abreast of that sort of thing, and it gave me a change of indoor space, and I always appreciated that.

They were fresh out of Minnesota, and from some respects, they had never left it. They had gone to Mankato College which is one of the many teacher's colleges in that area, and they had gotten good jobs. As I say, one of them was a social butterfly and had boys on the string, and the other one not. Therefore, the other one and I went around together quite a bit. But mostly I went around with Harriet.

But it was a very strange thing that I should be so terribly homesick, but I was, and then I got over it. Then things settled down to a very pleasant--I enjoyed the independence, enjoyed it very much, and being my own boss.

It was a long time later that I learned that I walked through the neighborhood housing the prostitutes routinely on my way from the terminal where I got off the streetcar usually, and the walk to my place. But one of the young women finally put me wise. I was a little skittish about men. I was walking once from somewhere to somewhere--there was a public school nearby where one could take one's clothes for cleaning at the vocational classes. One could get one's hair done there. I used a few of the services. I don't think I got my hair done there, I was doing my own hair at the time. But I did take my cleaning there. At any rate, I was walking that short distance and a car stopped and a man said, "Want a ride?" And I looked firmly ahead, and he said, "What's the matter, do you think I'm trying to pick you up?" It was one of the people from the boarding house, and he was making just a good-hearted offer.

Chall: Yes, and you hadn't even recognized him?

Bennett: No, I hadn't recognized him. I hadn't looked at him long enough to see who it was because I didn't think I should. But I felt my way, and to my surprise, I guess, no one in the residence situation exploited that at all. If I had been more experienced I would have realized that's the last place they would try, because Mrs. Morrison held pretty high standards. People did have their ties and jackets on for meals, and so forth. She wasn't prissy, but she was careful. She was not motherly except that she really did keep a look-out.

I lived through a few of the agonies of some of the girls. One of them was having a successful venture, and one of them got left at the altar. I learned a little about life. Also, I learned about the working girl's life which was interesting to me. One of the interesting features that I really was fascinated by, was the

Bennett: mixture of Canadian girls that was very strong there. Also, I learned about the Finns as a race apart, because these strange names began appearing on the surnames of children who were tested.

Chall: Oh, yes, in the schools.

The Assignments

Bennett: The Pihas and the Huhas and the others fascinated me. Also, it was an interesting time to be testing school children because a very large number of them were children of bootleggers, rumrunners, whatever, and they were predictably reticent about what their fathers did, which was one of the things we always asked them, because we had a little questionnaire for each case. But one learned how they coped. Also, one learned to value the experience of the former schoolteachers who were in this business, in testing. In very difficult schools, or places where the principals weren't too friendly toward us, they would send out one of those experienced women.

Chall: Was there a feeling against the tester, the testing process?

Bennett: Yes. Some principals, particularly female principals, felt threatened, as if their adequacy was somehow being challenged. The men were few and far between in the elementary schools, which was usually where we tested. The most charitable thing to say is that this was before the generations where more men went into working with young children.

One of the lovely parts of it was that Seattle had a ruling that any four year old who tested at the mental age of five, when ready for admission to kindergarten, could be admitted, although five was the legal age. So we had these terribly bright young ones brought in for testing, usually referred by the University of Washington, whose Stevenson Smith, a child psychologist, had been consulted about the development of the child. It was great fun testing those bright ones. Of course, we always also got the dull ones, at the other end.

One of my minor achievements that nobody appreciated but me was that I was left holding the sack in the office one day when a child was brought in without an appointment. She proved to be a very well trained, but very defective non-English speaking child, She was Japanese. Somebody had taken out all the performance tests which was all you could use with such a child, form boards and puzzles of various kinds, and so forth. So I had to improvise from the items in Stanford-Binet which I could administer to her, and from what was left of the score boards, and get an approximation of

Bennett: the mental age, and from that you can work out an I.Q. I confessed all to Frances Gaw, and she said, "Well, you did the best you could with the material available to you." I was very glad of that experience. But mostly things went like clockwork. I was introduced, also, to bad language there which I had to consult with my brother about.

Chall: Bad language from--?

Bennett: From school children. Not spoken, but written. Every once in a while an indecent remark would be penciled on the back of the sign that I would put over the library, or whatever it was we had been stuck in for testing. "Test in progress. Do not disturb." And then something one more often sees nowadays would be written below. So I didn't know what that meant, and I had to ask my brother about that. Even he was a little bit reluctant, but by circumlocution we got around to what it was--It was what I thought it was.

Chall: You couldn't find it in the dictionary, of course, not in those days.

Bennett: Ooh! A four letter word!? [laughter] Well, it was a broadening experience. Also, I learned about the narrow base from which teachers were chosen. I remember testing one child who seemed perfectly all right to me--you know, he tested reasonably well, not brilliant, to be sure, but nothing wrong. I talked to the teacher. Usually I had lunch there, in the teachers' dining rooms, because they had someone cook for them, and it was a way to get informally to talk with them. I said, "Just what is it that this child does, that makes you think he should be tested? What does he do?" She said, "Everything he hadn't oughta, and what he should do, he don't do." He was too much for her; that was the sum and substance of it. But I learned enough about scraping the bottom of the barrel in later life, so that I grew to be not too critical of that.

However, it was a good experience, and, one of the best things about it was that I was going home. I had a terminal interview with Dr. Gaw, who wanted me to know that I would be invited back. But she said, "I think you're wise to go back, and get on with your education."

Chall: That's right, you were committed to going back to graduate school.

Bennett: Yes. So I left with very good feelings about the experience. I had some later contact with Dorothy Granneberg; no later contact at all, except on very rare occasions, with Harriet Parsons. We just moved in different circles down here. But we fell into each other's arms every time we did meet, but that was it.

Bennett: When I was in Seattle with my sister four years ago, or so, I met a woman. Jane had dredged up the woman who was in the Historical Society on Bainbridge Island. Through her I met a woman who had known Mrs. Williams, who gave me a portrait of her from her-- apparently she was cleaning out her files. She said, "I don't know who would want this, but you might." And I sent it to that aunt of mine, who had been her friend, who was by this time a hundred years old, and she wrote me back, "Thank you for Genevieve's portrait, what do I do with it now?" I wrote back and I said, "You're the end of the line, put it in your waste basket." So, that was a thoroughly good experience. I went home at Christmas time, much against my grandfather's better judgment, he thought I should save my money.

Chall: Your grandfather had an influence there too?

Bennett: By this time he was writing to me quite a lot, because he was widowed. My grandmother died while I was away. I asked Mother whether I should come home, and she said she didn't think it would do a bit of good, and I had better stay there. She had called Mrs. Williams to tell me. Mrs. Williams dutifully called me, and then a telegram was delivered, and the waitress was careful to tell me that it had bad news in it, and I said, "Yes, I'm expecting it." So, I was surrounded by people who were thoughtful, and cared--even the hired help. So it was fine.

Chall: But your grandfather didn't think you should come home for Christmas?

Bennett: No, he didn't.

Chall: But you did.

Bennett: I did.

Chall: Was it hard to go away again, or by that time had you gotten used to it?

Bennett: No, it was fine. I didn't have any trouble going away, I rather liked it. My sister couldn't stand it, and she chased the train all down the track, "Don't want my sister to go away." [imitates her sister crying]. I had told her that I would send her a copy of a certain book that she liked as soon as she learned how to read, so she managed to learn how to read very quickly. I think that's all that we should talk about Seattle.

Chall: Yes, I think that takes care of Seattle.

Bennett: One thing that didn't happen there was that I took no work at the university which Dr. Jones thought was an omission that maybe wasn't all to the good. I did meet Stevenson Smith, who was the

Bennett: child development man at the University of Washington. Incidentally, he turned out to have been a very great friend of Dr. [Lovisa] Wagoner, whom I ultimately worked for. She grew up in Bremerton.

Dr. Gaw took us calling on him, and I learned from him at first hand, that even child psychologists sometimes have difficulty, maybe more than others, managing their own children. He had said, in the midst of trying to get his child out of the room with her dolls, and doll clothes, [imitating his voice] "Never try to demonstrate in front of company." He was no good at it. He had a spoiled child. It was good to have met him.

Dr. Jones thought I might have taken a seminar at the University of Washington, and he was quite right--I might have. Had my heart been in my graduate study, rather than in exploiting other aspects of the Seattle experience, I would have done it. But I was glad not to be in a class.

Chall: Yes. You just needed the change?

Bennett: I needed the change, and I could make very good use of the full time of the exchange, and I think it was good use, I think it was just as much a learning experience, and that's what I meant when I told Dr. Jones that I didn't think that I would have learned all that much in a seminar. He said, "Oh, I think you could have learned from Ed Guthrie." I know I could have, but that was not the point, that's not what I was in the business of learning.

The Election of 1932: The Changing Political Outlook

Chall: Yes. In November 1932, there was an election, and this would have been your first national election. You were the right age. Did you vote?

Bennett: I voted. I was a resident of California, technically. They regarded me as a resident in California, having been on leave. I was classified, after some difficulty, as a resident of California, and admitted to graduate study as a California resident.

Chall: Did you vote an absentee ballot?

Bennett: No, I voted in the fall of '32 right here.

Chall: Oh, you were here?

Bennett: Yes. I went to Seattle in September, and I came home in June.

Chall: Oh, I see. There was just the school year, then, actually.

Bennett: Yes. Dr. Jones got a job for me at the institute. I did statistics of some sort at the institute for the summer. I remember it well because I voted for Hoover, I think it's predictable. Nobody but me was impressed by the fact that he had had a long connection with Mills College, and with the Brintons, they were related. Anna Brinton taught in the summer session at Stanford; I saw her in '32. She had had some nuns in her class, and they were so excited because they, of course, were going to vote for Al Smith, the first Roman Catholic.

Chall: No, Al Smith--didn't he run in '28? It was Roosevelt who was running in '32, I think. It was Roosevelt and Hoover.

Bennett: I think you're probably right. The first term she had had nuns in her class in Stanford summer session, and they had been very excited about the opportunity to vote for the first Catholic. She said, "I said nothing about the fact that Hoover was the first Quaker candidate." I was very much interested in the way the bitterness got directed at Hoover.

##

I recalled his activity during World War I. Anna Brinton actually had met Howard Brinton when they were both feeding the children of Central Europe after World War I. I learned later that the great effort on behalf of children which he headed just after World War I fetched up its tour with a surplus, and that was translated into moneys made available to institutions of higher education for work with children. That was why Mills had a large graduate contingent in child development, when I went there, because Herbert Hoover had been a trustee of Mills and was on the Mills College Council, I think it was called--a group of men.

He still had a connection, so that when somebody called and wanted to speak with Mr. Hoover, who was in fact on the Mills campus, he got, from the student operator of the switchboard, a very sarcastic reply. But he was a friend of Mills, later on I discovered.

Chall: How did you feel about your first election? Did that mean something to you?

Bennett: Yes, it meant something to me, and I remember the discussion that came out of the election among the graduate students. I was the only one who had voted for Hoover. I learned then that being a Republican was not necessarily something that you're born with--that you could change.

Chall: As far as you knew, your parents--well, your mother, of course, never told you how she voted. Your father, did he ever tell you?

Bennett: Oh, yes, he was a Republican on principle, and I don't know why. I think it was inertia. I think that there had been a time when his father was a Republican, and it just went with the territory. He just was a Republican.

But I soon learned not to do that. Then I decided that I would register as an Independent, and I discovered that that's no go, because you don't get a crack at the primaries. So then I registered Democratic.

Do you know, until as late as the time Nixon was in office, I was being mistaken for a Republican. I can trace that back to the wife of President [Robert] Wert at Mills. I got a telephone call, which befuddled me terribly, from the White House. Someone speaking for President Nixon was asking me would I be on a national committee for this, for that, or the other thing. Somewhere along the line the conversation led me to say, "You should know, that I am a registered Democrat." Whereupon the lady gasped, and said, "Well you can understand how the President normally likes to distribute these invitations among members of his party." And I said, "Yes, I can understand that." Never heard from them again.

The president's wife had been asked--whether she was asked directly or whether she had been asked to suggest people...she had taken for granted that I was a Republican. I think that I surprise everybody with the knowledge that I'm a registered Democrat; no one expects it.

Chall: When did you change your registration? Sometime during the thirties or forties? From Independent to--

Bennett: I voted for Roosevelt the last few times. I changed the registration I think just one more time. Just one round of being out of the primaries.

Chall: Well, I guess you kept your counsel pretty well, then.

Bennett: I didn't tell people how I voted anyway. But there was no room for politics in what I was doing, really, except chat among the graduate students, and I learned a lot from that. Also, of course, I came in with Roosevelt. I was collecting my data at the Claremont School, which was the official locus of the activities of the adolescent program which Dr. and Mrs. Jones had invited me to join. I was there at the time of the 1933 bank freeze, and saw the dramatic way he turned the country around, and was sold on him. Voted for him every time.

##

Return to the University at Berkeley

The Dissertation for the Ph.D.

Chall: How did you go about selecting your dissertation topic?

Bennett: Yes, the dissertation topic. Harold Jones told me early on that there was no sense my spending time on a master's degree. He said, "You don't need it, you can't have a career in psychology without the doctorate, just go for it," unimpaired by the detour for the master's degree. I was well prepared for it. The routine there was to prove competence in seven out of ten fields, or something. That was your hurdle as a graduate student. Then to devote yourself, once admitted, to the dissertation program, to finishing that.

Along the way, since we all had to read in some specialization, I had specialized in child psychology and in clinical. I was interested in the fact--irritated by the fact--that the psychoanalysts built theory--I didn't realize this was what it was--but they built theory out of observed clinical cases. But where Freud made his initial mistake, if one can be so pompous as to say that, is that he built an elaborate theoretical structure on the basis of some conclusions from clinical material. There was little examination of how much invention, on Freud's part, had gone into this theoretical structure, and how much could be defended on the basis of observable fact.

So I had talked about this with Harold Jones, and said, "I really would like to try to come to grips with this, and see if we can explore something on a basis that is replicable, that can be presented as objective study." He said, "Well, go for it, see if you can find a topic." I spent about six months reading, and got more and more befuddled. In those days, at any rate, most of the material that you read was best summarized by the statement I heard in a seminar group gathered together in San Francisco by a Freudian practitioner in San Francisco. He knew perfectly well what the trouble with academic psychologists was. He said, "Up to a certain point what I believe in and what you believe in we can agree upon because we can agree upon the proof each of us can present. Beyond that point I cannot prove to you in terms acceptable to you what I am saying from a psychoanalytical point of view. But I am convinced." [laughter]

Chall: It's like the difference between religion and science. After a certain point you take it on faith.

Bennett: Right, and I lacked the conviction. At any rate, I floundered for that six months. I got more and more mired down as I read. I finally told Harold Jones that I didn't see that I was getting anywhere, that I couldn't lay hold of it. I think I was not--I was going to say a skillful enough researcher. I was not a researcher of any kind, really, at that time. He said, "Do you want a new topic?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay, find one." I said, "Well, I have one."

I was interested in the factor of time as possibly influencing performance on mental tests, and therefore, on the rating that people got on an I.Q., or whatever measure was being taken. So I finally defined it. Now wait a minute, I happen to have my graduate program here. [looks through papers] "Factors Influencing Performance on Group and Individual Tests of Intelligence" is what I picked. One of them was rate of work, and one of them was social facilitation. Whether you do it in the presence of other people or not, does it make a difference.

Chall: So you actually conducted clinical tests on this?

Bennett: I did tests perforce on the adolescent group that was just being formed. Early on in the year, my first year of graduate study, Harold and Mary Jones took me to lunch, Women's Faculty Club, I think, and told me about the study on adolescence they were embarking on. And, would I like to join the effort? I said I would. It was a wonderful opportunity to work with the two of them.

Speaking of role models, Mary was a wonderful one, because never did she flag on her research, though she was wife and mother, and though she did give a sensible amount of attention to both roles, and didn't bother about the fact that it cut down on her productivity. But then she was bright enough, and she had connections to the university, so she could always get a job when she wanted it.

Chall: Was she in the department?

Bennett: Not technically. She was on the staff of the institute. Institute of Child Welfare it was called then.* But she demonstrated how gracefully this dual role of women could be managed if circumstances were right. One had to admit that her own good qualities were part of what made the circumstances right. But the circumstances were there. Her husband was director of the institute by this time. Herbert Stolz had been the first director, but by

* See interview with Mary Cover Jones, Harold E. Jones and Mary Cover Jones, Partners in Longitudinal Studies. An oral history conducted 1981-1982, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1983.

Bennett: the time I worked with Harold Jones, he was the director. He helped me set up the program so that I tested the adolescent sample. I tested half of it, actually. Because they did a great many studies where they divided the group, and used one group as controls, and the others the experimental ones. I tested the children individually, timing their responses as I did it, with a gadget, that Harold, who was a great gadgeteer, got for me. So that in fractions of seconds we could record how long it took to respond. We used the items on a test that could be administered as a group test, so then I could get a match group to provide scores for the test given in a group situation.

The bulk of the material that I used for the one on rate of work was recorded in such a way that if there hadn't been the W.P.A. and a lot of cheap help available I never would have gotten it done. Guess who helped me on part of it? Mark Goodson, then a graduate student in psychology. He was an interesting fellow to have around.

So I had masses of data on the individually timed responses of children to the separate items on a standardized test, and could therefore devise which represented the time spent by individual children. As Harold Jones said, the fact that you get negative results does not invalidate the enterprise. I couldn't prove anything dramatic.

The other part, whether or not there was evidence of social facilitation--that is the sight and sound of other people doing the same thing at the same time--I didn't have very satisfactory data for because I could not observe the same students doing the same thing under group and individual conditions. I had lots of test scores for the experimental group, including individual ones. It was part of the data collection for the group, but they were not the same material.

So I made use of all the data available on the adolescent study sample that would enable me to try to dope out whether they did better in a group or better separately. I used that to the best I could but didn't get any clear-cut indications. My general hunch is that students vary enormously. Sometimes the same student will do better under certain conditions and under changed conditions will do equally well, and sometimes will do worse.

But at any rate, I busied myself and got it organized, and got the dissertation written, and then got a job at Mills. Just at the wrong time, as it turned out, for me to finish up my doctorate. I spent the two summers following my appointment at Mills finishing it. I spent the first year, even the second, making sure that I would get the literature up-to-date. I would use the Mills College library partly, and the university library some. In the summers following my first two years I wrote. Well, I analyzed data,

SIGMA XI
California Chapter

Mary Woods Bennett

I have the pleasure to inform you that
at a meeting held March 14 you
were elected to Full membership
in the California Chapter of Sigma Xi.

You are requested to be present for
initiation on April 10, 1935 at
8.15 pm in the Faculty Club

The initiation fee is two dollars, payable
to the treasurer, H. E. White at
the time of initiation.

J. E. Troxell
Secretary

Berkeley, March 22, 1935

Bennett: mostly, the first year, and then did the writing of the actual dissertation. In those innocent days I occupied an office in the Institute of Child Welfare, which was on the site of Boalt Hall, until ten o'clock at night all by myself, and walked home along Piedmont Avenue. Can you imagine?

But I had to put myself on that kind of summer thing in order to get it done. I would leave home at breakfast--stayed at my mother's and father's house in Berkeley--walk to the institute, and work until lunch. I had a decent lunch. I went back, worked until dinner, had a decent dinner, and worked all evening. Doing it that way I could get it done, and did.

Chall: Your professors felt that you could handle this in that way? They didn't discourage you from taking your position at Mills, did they?

Bennett: Well, I think they differed. Jobs were too hard to come by. I think Warner Brown had his doubts that I ever would finish. I think that if they had known the woman that I went to work for, they would have ceased to doubt. I think Harold, through Mary, knew her.

##

Continuing Association with the University

Chall: I thought that before we got into discussing your years at Mills that we would finish up with the University of California, Berkeley. I was interested in whether or not you retained an association with the university as an alumna, and whether you returned for charter days and all this kind of thing over the years. What have you done with respect to the university?

Bennett: Over the years?

Chall: Yes.

Bennett: Sometimes I came as a representative of Mills College in the academic procession.

Chall: What about representing yourself? I know that you were asked to give a talk on the milestones on the education of women, but that was--

Bennett: That was much later, that was the Bicentennial, and Garff Wilson issued that invitation. I did do a speech on that. [April 1, 1976]

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OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

February 24, 1976

Dr. Mary Woods Bennett
2601 College Avenue
Berkeley, California

Dear Dr. Bennett:

It is a pleasure to confirm the invitation extended you by Professor Garff Wilson, Chairman of Public Ceremonies, to deliver one of the Distinguished Faculty-Alumni Lectures on April 1, 1976. We shall look forward to welcoming you to the campus once again.

As you know from Professor Wilson, the lecture series is a major event in a three day celebration which will honor the nation's Bicentennial as well as the University's Charter Day. The theme of the series is "200 Years of Achievement in America" and each speaker will represent a particular field of achievement. Yours will be achievement in Education as illustrated by the growth of education for women.

There will be three groups of lectures: the first at 9:30 a.m., the second at 11 a.m., and the third at 2:30 p.m. You are scheduled to speak at 9:30 a.m. in Room 155 Dwinelle Hall. I hope this is satisfactory. If not, please let me know.

Each lecture period will be one hour long and you are invited to use the time in any way you feel will be most effective. For example, you may wish to use part of your time to answer questions or to show slides or to use visual aids and demonstrations. You will be introduced by a member of the Alumni Council who will get in touch with you well in advance of April 1st.

Your willingness to participate in this important series is deeply appreciated. Please accept my thanks and the thanks of the Bicentennial - Charter Day Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Albert H. Bowker
Chancellor



THE CHANCELLOR

and the

ADVISORY COUNCIL OF THE BERKELEY FELLOWS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

have the pleasure to announce

that

Mary Woods Bennett

has been elected to membership number 89 in

THE BERKELEY FELLOWS

an honorific society of one hundred fellows

established in 1968 on the occasion of the

University's One Hundredth Anniversary

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY 94720

Chall: Yes, and then, in the last few years, you've become a Berkeley Fellow, number eighty-nine, I think it is. [1974] So you have retained some association with the campus?

Bennett: Oh, heavens, yes. Actually, I have recovered some since I've retired, because I have the time and access. But I was in Mills up to my eyebrows, and usually working on Mills' problems. I can realize how complete that is when I realize how much I have enjoyed a friendship with Marion Gorrill whose parents are both graduates of Berkeley, and who was my peer during my undergraduate years here; a person I've known all my life. I didn't see her at all; we exchanged Christmas cards. I simply didn't have a chance to relish the university connection. I was always glad when I had a chance to renew it. In my early days at Mills, when I was still working on my dissertation, it was a little easier, because I had contacts with people.

##

III MILLS COLLEGE: MEMBER OF THE FACULTY: CHILD DEVELOPMENT/
PSYCHOLOGY, 1935-1953*

Brief Background on Mills College

Bennett: There is some disagreement about the founding dates of the college. You can take the earlier date of Mills, the date of founding of the young ladies' seminary in Benicia. This, one of our own professors always claimed, was a completely fraudulent claim, because it was not a collegiate level institution. The Mills's bought the seminary in '67, I think it was, moved it to Oakland in '71. But it was not until '85 that it was chartered by the state of California to grant the degree. So it began as Mount Holyoke did, as a young ladies' seminary, and for much the same reasons because Susan Mills was a student of Mary Lyon.

The gentlemen of Benicia, the businessmen of Benicia, got fed up with sending their daughters either, via the Isthmus of Panama to the East Coast or to Hawaii, which some of them did, to Punahou, College of Oahu, it was called at the time. They engaged two men who went around founding colleges. They were both ministers of the gospel, and they sort of operated on that wave which flowed West educationally--church-connected small institutions of higher learning clear across the continent. These were hired up, I can't tell you their names now, but they're available if it's important to you.

* In 1935 I was appointed Assistant in Child Development and Coordinator of the Family Council. In a year or two I became Instructor, then Assistant Professor. I was promoted to Associate Professor by Dr. Reinhardt on her retirement in 1943 and did not become full professor until my appointment as dean in 1953. Somewhere along the line "psychology" was added to the "child development" in the title. This is documented in Who's Who of American Women, I think, with precise dates. [M.W.B.]

Chall: Not to me, but it may be important to somebody who can find all the facts.

Bennett: They were hired by the businessmen and they organized this place, hired a young woman to run it, and she promptly got married after a year. So they then hit upon Mary Atkins, who had more stick-to-itiveness, to run the place. My grandmother went to the other seminary in Benicia when she was a girl living in San Luis Obispo. She went up by steamer from San Luis Obispo to San Francisco and found her way to Benicia. But she went to the academy run by the Episcopal church, I think. This was the other one.

Chall: Hm. Two in Benicia.

Bennett: It was the capital of the state for a while. The gentlemen who set it up did, apparently, very well. They then went down to Oakland and set up a thing called the College of Oakland. Apparently it was a going concern from the word go, and there are very interesting tales about its early existence. The good gentleman, Dr. Cyrus Mills, who was from Williams College, had been trained as a missionary. He and his wife, Susan, who graduated from Mount Holyoke, Susan Tolman, her name was, went out with him as missionary. The fact that they were two different denominations, seemed to make no difference to them. But they went out, and they ran Batticotta Mission in Ceylon until their health gave out.

They came back to the states, recovered their health, went out and bought the College of Oahu, I think, or ran it, anyway. Then they came to the mainland, I think the date was '67, and bought the seminary. At the same time they bought this tract of land in Brooklyn Township, County of Alameda, and planted eucalyptus trees on it, to show the fact that it was being improved, and built Old Mills Hall which went into operation in 1871. At the celebration of its centennial we noted that fact with the sign that goes over its front door. That used to house the whole bit, a school through the seminary years, and all the administrative offices, the residence quarters, the classrooms, and everything.

There was once a suggestion that it be torn down, and a new building put up there. There was one point when the fortunes of the college were low and it was closed down as the least efficient of the residences. But it's a grand old place and we justify its use as the administration building now, by not having anybody inhabit the top floors. There are some hair-raising tales about how the girls made their way after hours from window to window on the narrow ledge outside the third-floor windows.

Chall: Yes, I think I read an account of that.

Bennett: They scare you to death. I was telling this once as a horror story to students, and one of the students looked right at me and said, "Dean Bennett, they still do." [laughter] But imagine doing this in long skirts. I talked with a woman who had done that too. She had wanted to go to the great University of California. Her father was a farmer in Contra Costa County, and the family said, "No way. You go to Mills College for a couple of years, and then if all goes well you can go to the university." And do you know, to this day, there are people who send their daughters to Mills, thinking that it's a protected place, for two years, with a pledge that they can then transfer to Berkeley.

We've surrounded that issue, though, by getting in this arrangement whereby we have a bus that goes to Berkeley, and there's this inter-institutional arrangement among all the four year institutions in the East Bay for mutual exchange of students. I passed on my way home the other day up Bancroft Way, the Mills College bus that was waiting for its collection of students. Now, of course we have some University of California students living on the campus to ease the housing crisis. So relations have always been cordial. There is on record in the Mills archives, and I don't know whether you found that or not, a letter from the Associated Students of Mills College congratulating the students at Berkeley on their move from Oakland to the Berkeley campus, I think. That was way back.

Chall: No, I didn't look for things like that.

Bennett: Could it have been that early? At any rate, something was happening which had happened years before at Mills, and the Mills students were congratulating them on it. Mills has the oldest student government in existence, I think, 1914 to '16. Do you know who was the president of the board of trustees at the time? David Prescott Barrows. There's a long connection of the Barrows family with the Mills family.

Chall: Yes, the Hagers.

Bennett: Mrs. Hagar remembers their trips on furlough from the Philippines when they always stayed with Auntie Mills on the Mills campus. Well, we had a student revolt at Mills in 1914, or thereabouts. It must have been after the end of World War I. The general was back here. He was chairman of the board at Mills.

What had happened was that there was a president at Mills who did not take seriously the difference between college women and seminary girls. She did much to uplift the academic level of the college, but she had no sense about recognizing college women as more mature human beings than the seminary girls. The students

Bennett: protested. The board of trustees wisely said, "We leave this in the hands of the president of the board," because he was intimate with the Mills situation.

The Barrowsees moved on to the Mills campus, which was no great difference from what they had done, stayed a while. President Barrows went back to his board and said, "The students are right." Then, I don't know whether the precise date is '14 or '15, or what, but along in there, the board of trustees gave to the students the grant of powers, which enables students to organize and direct all non-academic activities on the campus. This has never been violated. The only time that anyone can remember was when the question was raised as to whether the trustees should mandate that smoking might take place only in certain areas where they could be sure of the fire control. A member of the board of trustees said to his colleagues, "Gentlemen, are we going back on our word?" They said, "No." And they never have.

Chall: That takes quite a bit of discipline, doesn't it, on the part of the board and the faculty?

Bennett: Yes, and one of the most illuminating experiences I ever had in my life was when I discovered that you can't do it in a college for men.

Chall: Oh! It won't work?

Bennett: A difference in maturity is one of the things that justifies the existence of the women's college. It does boys no good to be in a college where they can be outdistanced by the women in the first and second year, and yet they can be. I remember being in a small seminar group of like-minded people at a Danforth Conference. The Danforth Conferences used to recruit teams of four from institutions of higher learning, liberal arts colleges mainly, about thirty institutions. It would make a nice little group. They would break them into various seminars, and they would have some joint meetings. They would discuss common problems.

I was aghast at some of the problems that some of the delegates from men's colleges were reporting, and I raised some questions about it. It was perfectly clear that they regarded as impossible the kind of self-control that the Mills students were used to.

Now, some of the force of student government has been eroded at Mills over time because it thrived in a period in which more than 90 percent of students lived on campus, and they were all of the same age. In this homogeneous group, in a residential setting, you could do things that cannot happen when a very large proportion of your group are minorities with whom the college is making a demonstration of some kind. Also, where a large proportion of them are over-age, and where for these reasons, you have almost half

Bennett: nonresidents. They're married women with families of their own, or they're people who cannot afford to live on campus and so forth. So the situation has changed.

But in its heyday, when Mills was homogeneous, and a residential group so that the play time as well as the work time was shared, they could put on legislative conferences whose business it was to amend their constitution, if necessary. I have never seen a group, anywhere, that operated so well, fumbling as they might, their way through a complex agenda with strict adherence to Robert's Rules of Order.

I think this is why for years, and years, and years, and it may still be the case, but for years, and years, and years, I know, Mills women upset every community they moved into because they knew how to run it, and did. People from Palo Alto have commented on this to our former president. Mills women are everywhere. Well, they knew how to run a PTA meeting, and they knew how to run the League of Women Voters, and they knew how to do this, and they did. It was a fascinating sociological phenomenon. Something that Aurelia Reinhardt not only knew very well, but was a prime mover in. See, for twenty-six or twenty-seven years she was the president of that institution, and your role model. That's where Mills students got the notion there was nothing they could not do. It was partly having a strong woman at the head.

That's why, in my view, it has never worked as well when men have been president, because the strong woman is not clearly in view. Now, if you do what Smith did, and people your faculty with men, you've lost the cause right then and there. Mills didn't do that, because Aurelia set a very firm course in making sure that these young women were exposed to adults of both sexes. It was part of my job, maybe self-appointed, but it was part of my job as dean of the faculty to see to it that the fifty-fifty ratio was maintained. It always has been, and as far as I know, still is. It's easier now, because you don't have to convince some reluctant departments. But I used to have a broken record kind of comment, "Are you sure you have explored women candidates, and let people know that we will be as receptive toward women's applications as men's," and so forth and so on.

Chall: Was there a period when there were fewer women capable of coming in?

Bennett: Well, in the older generation, in Aurelia Reinhardt's generation, that generation bred enough women. The trouble came in the fifties, early fifties, when women didn't go in for it. The pool was smaller, and, at the same time, demand for them had risen. So we had a hard time. Then when we got to minority groups, and we wanted not only minority, but women, then we had a terribly hard time. We finally got some very good advice. We had some faculty

Bennett: members who knew people, who knew people, who knew people, and we finally got to the chief adviser to the president of the United States on the recruitment of minorities in the Hispanic group. His first question was, "How much are you willing to pay?" He said, "These people are scarce as hen's teeth, and they have their pick of jobs, and unless you are offering a salary which is competitive, you haven't a chance." He said, "You're better off to grow your own."

For reasons that have to do with demography more than anything else, it was a little easier to find black women. But we had a domestic problem which I think is due to Mills' location in Oakland which gave us a bad time because we absorbed a group of black students quickly, which were in no way like the white students we recruited. So that we had a situation in which a group of students, who were all recruited according to the same effort to spread ourselves out geographically, and to have a varied student group, got all mixed up with the fact that we had an almost indigestible mass from West Oakland.

In some respects this got the agony over with sooner, but in other respects, it was very disruptive of the college. Among the black students, we had some who were trained in revolutionary tactics, so that we had a hairy time for a few years. It was just after Easton Rothwell left, and just after Rob Wert came on. I don't know how we would have made it with the prior president. Robert Wert had had exposure to it at Stanford, and could keep his cool, and did, and simply lived it through. But it was tough.

Chall: Yes, I wanted to take that up when we talk about his term as president, because I know that that came about. But it does help to sort of get the flow of it, the history.

Bennett: I realize that the flow is always getting into the way of your tidy arrangement, [the outline] and I'm sorry about that.

Chall: No, no, I wouldn't worry about that, because I think we can always go back and pick up facts, but the flow is, I think, important to see. Sometimes it's better to see it that way. Nothing has to be tidy about it. We'll get it all in due course.

Bennett: Life is not tidy.

##

Chall: In 1935 you were still working on your dissertation?

Bennett: Yes. I had all the course work done in those first three years of graduate study. I had spent the summer of '35 working on it, and also spent the summer of '36 working on it, and I guess '37. At

Bennett: any rate, I did the writing--the analysis of data, essentially, in '35 and '36, and the preliminary writing in '36, and final writing in '37.

Chall: In '35 however you went to Mills?

Bennett: I went to Mills.

The Department of Child Development

Chall: Now how did that come about?

Bennett: Mills was looking for a new staff member in child development. Dr. Lovisa Wagoner had consulted her friend Mary Cover Jones about the possibility of finding someone. Mary had been my companion, really, for a year or two because we turned up at the same time doing our research at the Claremont School where the adolescent study was located, and we tended to have our lunches together. She had two daughters who were roughly the age of my little sister. So we talked about child rearing as well.

She was a very good friend. She thought, "Aha, here is a woman who has reached that stage where she could take a job 'cause it's only the writing left." And at this point in the career, why not? Because there I was, an unfledged psychologist with no particular bent except that I had concentrated on what we even now call developmental psychology; we called it child then--clinical--and it seemed to fit the job. So Mrs. Jones brought us together on Saint Patrick's Day in 1935, and served us shamrock-shaped cookies with our tea. I will never forget it. [laughter] With little green things on them. She doesn't remember that, I talked with her once about it, but I remember every bit of it.

At any rate, I do not know how things proceeded exactly from then, but ultimately I had a letter offering me a job--a letter from Aurelia Henry Reinhardt--which I eagerly accepted because I desperately wanted a job. Those were Depression years, and if I had got a job selling something over the counter at Capwell's I would have been very happy. You know, one wanted a job at that time. I had talked with people in the dean's office about this.

When I talked once with Harold Jones about it--I think this must have been nearer the end of my period as a graduate student, it must have been when I was looking for a job on the completion of my doctorate--as I left his office one day he said, "Do you ever think about deaning?" I think he meant dean of students, dean of women, but I thought that rather interesting that this early in my career he had recognized certain personality traits, I think. He

2957 Magnolia Street
Berkeley, California
June 26, 1935.

Dr. Monroe E. Deutsch,
Vice-President and Provost,
University of California,
Berkeley, California.

Dear Dr. Deutsch:

This is to express to you my gratitude at being appointed Abraham Rosenberg Research Fellow in Psychology for the academic year 1935-1936.

As I have already indicated through the office of the Graduate Division, I shall be obliged to decline the appointment. Shortly before I received your letter I was offered the post of Coordinator of the Family Council and resident assistant in Child Development at Mills College. Since this position offers opportunity for teaching, study and practical work in my chosen field I have decided to accept it.

Of course I intend to return to the University to complete work for the doctor's degree. In the meantime I should like to express my appreciation to the University for this and other offers of assistance in pursuing my studies.

Yours very sincerely,

Bennett: knew I was no researcher by then. He knew it very well. [laughs] And he knew that my field would be in the practical applications. I have that clearly etched in memory that he did ask that question.

Chall: How interesting. Were you supposed to teach as well as work with the children?

Bennett: I didn't work with the children at all. Let me tell you that there was another aspect in why I was positively inclined toward Mills. Mother's lifelong friend Anna Cox Brinton was then on the staff there. She was the dean of the faculty. She had nothing whatever to do with my appointment. Mother learned it from her before I had a chance to tell Mother. So that was a rather nice connection. Anna Brinton left Mills after my first year there. So she had very little impact on my career. But it is a fact that we overlapped by one year which was a matter of satisfaction to me. When I got my honorary doctorate from Mills on the occasion of my retirement her granddaughter was present in the audience, and I felt that very nice.

Chall: You were interviewed only by Lovisa Wagoner?

Bennett: Yes. I had made some sporadic efforts to follow up on jobs available. I remember one particularly in Nebraska. I wouldn't have hired me on the basis of the letter I wrote, I was not surprised that they were polite, but not encouraging. This was some place--it was not only Nebraska, it was an obscure part of Nebraska. [laughs] Harold Jones laughed when I told him that I was discouraged from that. He said, "Well, maybe that place is a place people go from and not to." He was not concerned. But he knew about this other offer when it came and approved my taking it. It's very interesting. I think I showed you the evidence that I had a very nice fellowship offered me here for that year which I turned down because I had to. I had to have that job. A job.

Chall: So you did get a job that was worth--?

Bennett: I tell you, I got \$1,400 a year and room and board, and that was good in those days.

Living Arrangements

Chall: Where was the room and board?

Bennett: In one of the residence halls. For three years I had that as part of my salary. That's one way Aurelia Reinhardt kept the college going.

Chall: By keeping her faculty there?

Bennett: By offering this, where there were empty rooms, Depression time was hard times for the college.

Chall: So you mingled with some of the students then?

Bennett: Yes, we were given sort of star boarder status. In the dining room where I dined, lunch and dinner--we had breakfast, a common cafeteria-style breakfast, in Old Mills Hall--but at lunches I sat at a table which included other faculty members who were in residence on campus as part of their compensation. One of them was the great art historian Alfred Neumeyer and his wife. He came to Mills the same year I went there in '35, and was there until his retirement, and really set up our work in art history, and on, shall I say, a plane that attracted some national and international note.

There also was Barbara Garcia, who was an extraordinary woman, head of our foreign language department, when she retired. She was an American who had married a Spaniard, mathematician, who had been displaced by the political affairs in Spain. He was a Loyalist, loyal to the government, and ousted by the Franco forces in some manner. Those two were an interesting addition. Barbara Garcia was sharp as she could be, a very good scholar, not one who published a lot, but a very sound one. She had edited, or hoped to edit, a monumental Spanish-American dictionary? Encyclopedia? Something of the sort at the University of Chicago.

Also there was an exchange teacher from Britain with whom I had a long friendship. She was in our department. Clarissa Hallowell, she was then; she's no longer living.

The presiding person at the table was Harriet Sandri who was a Mills alumna who had come back to work as the head resident--social head--for graduate students who were housed in that building along with a mix of undergraduate students. The graduate students had a special floor. Mrs. Sandri was their guide philosopher and friend. Her husband was a graduate student at Berkeley. A tall, blond, rosey-cheeked, somewhat raw-boned Italian. A Venetian. That was a nice friendship.

Those were very informative days for me at that lunch and dinner table, because these were worldly-wise people who had been around, traveled as I hadn't, represented different centers of culture in Madrid, Berlin. The Neumeyers had been not only in Berlin, they had sojourned for a while in Venice while he was pursuing his art history and so forth. Hallowell had come from London, but was born in the north of England, to which I was

Bennett: introduced by her. It was an international medium for a very domesticated person. It was an enlarging experience; I much appreciated that opportunity.

Mrs. Reinhardt, without asking me yes or no, moved me out of there to another residence hall after one year, where I had more commodious quarters. At the end of two years, one more year, that is, a total of three years, she moved me out, and increased my salary on the theory that I shouldn't go on living in an undergraduate residence hall, no matter in what status. I don't know whether the example of one of my colleagues--who embraced this opportunity, and never left it till she retired--was something that gave Mrs. Reinhardt pause or not. But she clearly felt that an undergraduate surrounding was not the appropriate thing. Actually, I was in the third year when I passed my final oral, and then she thought that was the signal for me to get out.

Chall: So she moved you where?

Bennett: She moved me up in salary, so that I could afford to live off campus. She was a wily and thoughtful woman.

Chall: What about the others? The Neumeyers?

Bennett: Oh, the Neumeyers got their own house as soon as they could afford it. They were refugees. As soon as they could get their feet under them they moved off. So did the Garcias.

Chall: At that time there was no housing on the campus? Just the president's house? She lived on the campus?

Bennett: Yes.

##

Chall: When did you move onto the campus?

Bennett: During World War II. My housemate and I had lived in a little house off campus that was once the studio of Roi Partridge, and on the same plot of land in which Imogen [Cunningham] was still living with three boys. This had been occupied by another Mills person who was on leave getting a doctorate. I became their tenant, and later I moved in there, after I moved out of residence in the residence halls. I moved in with a colleague from Mills, one of the graduate students who was an older woman, and was much more near my age than that of other graduate students. I lived with her there for two years. Then, the person with whom I lived for thirty-four years on the Mills campus, returned to Mills after having had a job elsewhere. We took up residence together in that little house.

Bennett: In that period, while I was living with Frances Ruth Armstrong in the little studio cottage of the Partridges--this was after Imogen and Roi were divorced--war broke out. It was a long walk to and from our place and up a long steep hill; not very good public transportation in those days. My father and brother got me a Model A Ford third-hand, which helped some. But when war broke out, and the matter of gas rationing and everything came in, Frances Ruth Armstrong and I took the opportunity of taking a faculty duplex on campus. From then on, I lived on campus, and it was very useful to be there, as dean of the faculty, because it meant that if somebody had to be called in the middle of the night, it was another resource.

Chall: Oh, dear. Did that happen very often?

Bennett: A few times. Once I was wakened by a very aggressive public relations woman that we had, and she said, "We have just got a telephone call from Paris wanting to know about the death of Darius Milhaud." I said, "Well, I don't think he's dead. I haven't heard anything." We lived in the same duplex. His bedroom and mine were cheek by jowl separated only by the air space that the architect prudently put in because he knew a noise maker was going to be in the other one. I said, "But I will find out; and I'll call you back." So I got up at something like four o'clock in the morning, and went roaming around. Well, there wasn't a light on, there was no evidence of commotion, nothing going on. So I called Maggie and said, "I think all is well."

Chall: A strange rumor.

Bennett: Well, I listened, and when I heard Madeleine Milhaud put on her shoes, and walk from her bedroom to her kitchen, which I could do, because the architect forgot that sound travels through the floor boards, I called her, and said this had happened. She said, "Oh, God, I'll call the kids." Her son and daughter-in-law were in France. She said, "No, it's because at the concert of the Oakland Symphony last night, they played Milhaud's Dirge for Koussevitzky. It had to be that," she said.

Chall: Oh! What a crazy rumor.

Bennett: Historically it's interesting to me that I happened to be the one to get the telephone call when Milhaud had, in fact, died. The president was not on campus. Then there was a bad accident once, and Maggie called me to ask for the telephone number of the mother of the young man who was killed, because she wanted to make sure that she got word to this person, who worked on campus, before she was just confronted with the news.

##

Campus Life

Chall: You always had a period of being very homesick when you started something new. How did you feel about this?

Bennett: Nothing like that happened. For one thing, Lovisa Wagoner saw to it that her people were inducted, introduced, taken care of. Always. I had no qualms about that at all. As a matter of fact, it was with some grudging, acknowledged only to myself, that I went home for weekends. I just enjoyed very much what I was doing.

There was a lot of activity in the evenings and on weekends because about 95 percent of the students lived on campus. It wasn't a closed community, and it was not a female community. The faculty then, as now, was about fifty-fifty men and women, very deliberately so in Aurelia's time. But it was a bunch of girls, essentially. Not so large, it was maybe six hundred, five or six hundred undergraduate students, and a hundred or so graduates who served as teaching fellows, or in some such capacity, and lived in what is now called Alderwood Hall. We called it Graduate House then.

It had been built as the--it had a Chinese name, Ming Quong. A home for Chinese girls. It had been built by the Presbyterian Missionary Society to replace an inadequate facility in West Oakland. It was an old institution which the late Donaldina Cameron had started in old Chinatown before the fire. At the time of the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco the young children had been moved to West Oakland. The good ladies of the Presbyterian missionary group finally got money out of Captain Dollar, Stanley Dollar, and built the Chinese style house just across from one edge of the campus. One of the things that made it very interesting when the college finally acquired that building was that the chairman of the building committee was Mrs. Lynn White, Senior. It was a Julia Morgan building.

Chall: Was it moved across then?

Bennett: No. We extended the campus. It's a beautifully built building, and has gone through many phases. At present it's used for conferences, as a residence for alumnae at reunion time, and similar kinds of activity. Also it accommodates overnight guests at times when parents converge on the campus. It's too small for a successful residence hall because the others number about a hundred, give or take a few. This will not accommodate fifty without some crowding. We've used it when crowded. We rented it to the Sisters of the Holy Names when they were building in our neighborhood, and I think that's the only group who occupied it for any length of time.

Chall: You enjoyed the activity on the campus, then?

Bennett: Very much. We had many more prescribed activities at that time than is stylish now. We had a weekly assembly which was compulsory for students. I don't know what happened to students who absented themselves because certainly some did. I suppose I could dredge up what it was, but at any rate, it was not enough to bother anybody. People came and brought their knitting, or their letter writing, and sat in the back rows if they didn't appreciate what was going on. [laughs]

Chall: What was it about?

Bennett: Sometimes we had visiting speakers, and we had extraordinary ones from time to time. Every once in a while Mrs. Reinhardt would talk to the students on college affairs. This would include informative talks as well as what you might call laying down the law. She was never narrow and petty about laying down the law. She always operated on grand principle. She sometimes, as she got older, rambled a bit. She was not so careful about the organization of what she had to say. She was known for this. But when she introduced that young man to the students who was to be her successor, what she said was, "Well, girls, here he is." Period. [laughs] Then she sat down.

Teaching

Chall: That's pretty succinct. Let's get to finding out about what you were hired to do.

Bennett: I was hired to assist with the teaching of graduate students in child development. We had five or six fellows. I think I told you last time about the moneys made available through the residue of the children's fund that Hoover had at his disposal when he was feeding children in Central Europe. We had benefit of that. It provided fellowships for graduate students. One of them went to the psychology department, and five or six came to child development.

Miss Wagoner had been brought to Mills to establish a nursery school. She had come from Vassar where she had worked in this capacity. Her training was excellent. She had a doctorate from the State University of Iowa in Iowa City on top of a University of Washington education where her major was English. She was ready for more responsibility and more originality in what she was doing and there wasn't room for advancement for her in Vassar. Aurelia found by whatever her grapevine was, I don't know, and invited her to come to Mills.

Bennett: For the twenty years of her tenure there from '31 to '51 we had a Department of Child Development which was out of place, in a way, because it covered educational development, physical health and growth, and psychology, each of which was represented in another department. I heard this only by indirection, but I gathered that Mrs. Reinhardt couldn't recruit, from her own faculty, the people to do the job that she thought ought to be done, which was to run a program in which all these departments related would participate.

She couldn't get the cooperation so she up and founded a new department and brought in Miss Wagoner to build it, which did not make Miss Wagoner's position a very easy one. But it was a distinguished department in the sense that Miss Wagoner had boundless connections in the field, which was the time of the great flowering of the child development movement. I benefited from that because, in 1939, when I took my first trip to the East Coast on behalf of Mills, she introduced me to everybody under the sun. I had a schedule of appointments and letters of introduction with all these people, and had a whee of a time. Just a marvelous time.

Chall: You had to become acquainted with the field of child development, which as such you really didn't know?

Bennett: No. Didn't really know.

Chall: How did you learn? How did you teach?

Bennett: I did teach a course called "The Child in the Family" which was related to the major. Dr. Reinhardt, ever mindful of economical use of whatever talent she had at her disposal, looked at my perfectly conventional, straightforward, and sound psychology major and decreed that I should assist in the teaching of the elementary psychology course. Now, this was not the easiest thing in the world to do because the head of the psychology department was one who thoroughly disapproved of the establishment of the Department of child development, and thoroughly disapproved of the fact that Mrs. Reinhardt decreed that Dr. Wagoner should teach the course in child psychology.

However, be it said to our mutual credit, that the head of the psychology department, and I, and a third person--who was the only survivor at Mills of the era in which you could produce a psychologist out of the Department of Philosophy--worked together as a team very well. I think it was just because we were well-intentioned and not trying to throw monkey wrenches into the machinery. I think there was a lot of personal antipathy among the ladies, but they never showed it.

Chall: These were women who were in charge of teaching psychology?

Bennett: And the teaching of elementary psychology was one of the legends. Everybody who went to Mills took Psych 1A, B with Dr. Smith. Everybody. I must say, she was the kind of teacher who was impressive to students. She made it stick. I could quarrel from a theoretical point of view with some of the things she said, but not really, not much. I enjoyed that experience because it introduced me to a wide range of undergraduates, because I conducted sections, which I never would have had otherwise. Furthermore, I participated in the discussions on selection of textbooks and so forth. And I learned quite a lot about how you go about teaching what was for us a huge course to a bunch of sophomores, because I think they couldn't take it as freshmen, I think they had to be sophomores to take it.

At any rate, I also have, among my casual friends, people with whom I exchange Christmas cards, and people who look me up when they come back for a reunion, quite a few friends from that group. I had a letter from London not very long ago from one of the people who was in one of my sections then, and we've been friends ever since. Casual, but friends. She is the retired head of a music publishing house in London, which she took on when her husband died. When I get to London we do things together. It's very rewarding to have a medium out of which really persisting friendships can develop, and this is what happened.

I had to learn how to behave like one of the grown-ups rather than one of the students. But I think every young teacher has that task. You have to learn to be an adult in a sub-adult world, and you can't hang on to your student status, although there is a sore temptation to be both a faculty member and one of the kids. You have to resist this and learn not to do it. Learn to let them hold the door open for you and so forth. [laughs]

Chall: But among the graduate students many of them were not too much younger than you?

Bennett: Some of them even would quiz me on this to determine exactly how much difference there was. There was about four years difference between me and them.

Chall: They called you Dr. Bennett in those days?

Bennett: Oh, yes. We called them Miss, or Mrs., as the case might be.

Chall: Times have changed.

Bennett: Yes they have, indeed.

Chall: Did you continue to teach that subject? That was elementary psychology?

Bennett: No, I gave that up when course work became such that I had to teach such courses as "Observation of Young Children", and I taught the course in child psychology from time to time when Miss Wagoner was on leave or something like that. Early on I took over direction of the seminars. There were two different seminars--one a problems course and one a seminar in child development, which was useful for me because I became familiar with the child development literature, especially in the fields which I had not been exposed to.

Also, it was a learning experience to discuss these matters with students. Sometimes I learned more from the students than they learned from me, I fear. But there was a body of them, you see. There were the six fellows, all of whom were cream of the crop. They were picked as highly desirable students for us and in the early and late thirties graduate students desperately needed financial assistance, and we had them from all over the country. It was a very informative experience. This was where I learned that you can get excellent grades in a large institution, whether it's public or private, and be a total loss in exchanging ideas in a classroom situation where you have to think on your feet.

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Usually if they had a fellowship they put in a certain number of hours of work a week. Some of them worked in the Children's School and some of them assisted me in a venture that was called the Family Council. This was a device whereby we offered to parents in the community in general the same kind of opportunity for consultation that we offered to parents in the children's school.

Counseling

Chall: For a fee?

Bennett: If they wanted to pay a fee. Some people felt better, but there was no effort to make it support itself. It was a service.

Chall: You served as a family counselor?

Bennett: In a sense. With all the difficulties at the outset that this would imply because sometimes I was young enough to be the child of the people I was talking with. I gradually learned how not to offend them, and not to appear to be telling them what to do and how to do it, when they had been through the ropes. This was an interesting experience in itself because one mother once said to

Bennett: me, "Why, you're nothing but a kid yourself." I had to admit that there was merit in what she was saying. I very quickly got off the business of telling them what to do and how to do it.

But the opportunity to talk, and to discuss, and so forth, was helpful to them. Sometimes I could come through with suggestions that they liked and would follow up. Sometimes it would work miraculously if I could hit on the suggestion that was logical outgrowth of what the parent already knew. It was interesting to discover areas in which I could do nothing but be the sounding board, and areas in which I could be of some specific possible help.

Chall: Where did you get some kind of training in this?

Bennett: I consulted frequently with Miss Wagoner. But the truth of the matter is that I got training on the job, and have a little bad conscience about what people went through. I think Miss Wagoner overestimated my competence to deal with this thing. I hadn't had field work except that I had interviewed the parents of children I had tested in the juvenile court and in the children's hospital when I had done my student testing. But I was green at it and I had to learn. Fortunately, not the hard way. There was no disaster of any sort that I knew about. I think that probably some time was wasted in blind alleys trying to do things that were fundamentally impossible.

Chall: Well, maybe they still are.

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Even though there's a great field, a background of literature and experience behind it now.

Bennett: You know, Jean Macfarlane did a monumental study on the efficacy of guidance and came to the conclusion that some people were helped and some were not helped. She did a matched sample of youngsters whose parents the institute knew a lot about, whose contacts with her were frequent. But half the group had guidance, specifically about behavior problems, and the other half had none. She could not prove that the guidance did very much, and herself become much reluctant to meddle in relationships, and very sympathetic with parents.

Chall: How long did these graduate students stay? Was it a master's degree?

Bennett: A couple of years, yes. They usually took two years for a master's degree. My job included supervising theses.

The Children's School

- Chall: What about the child center? That was the nursery school. Let's see, you had Miss Wagoner.
- Bennett: She was the principal of the school. She didn't teach in it except in case of an emergency. But there was a staff. There was one trained person in the field—or two. The school grew enormously from the time I went there until I left. It was about three times as big when I left.
- Chall: When do you mean? When you left to be dean?
- Bennett: Yes.
- Chall: It was three times the size. It was a nursery school or a kindergarten or both?
- Bennett: We have at several times attached kindergarten, so we always call it the Children's School, lest somebody be offended by the name. But more often it has been the standard two, three, and four-year-olds. Four, until they're kindergarten age, and then they move right on to kindergarten.
- Chall: These were children from the community and children--
- Bennett: Community and the faculty, and occasionally we would have a child recommended by a pediatrician or a social worker who thought that it would do the child good. But, as a matter of fact, Miss Wagoner was quite firm in her contention that as long as it was used as an educational opportunity for students, you couldn't mix therapy with children in this very sensibly. I'm sure she was right. I'm absolutely convinced she was right that you could use the school as a training device in one dimension, but you couldn't use it in all dimensions at once, and still have it a decent experience for the children. She insisted upon this: setting the stage for effective learning and teaching grown-up students how to do it.
- Chall: These graduate students of yours were really learning how to work with little children, or children in the school setting?
- Bennett: Yes. Some of them had experience elsewhere, and they would immediately be co-opted by the people in charge of the school for regular slots as teachers. Others worked with me in gathering data on a child's experience in the home of people who didn't have children in the school but wanted the opportunity of consultation with a professional staff about their problems.

Bennett: We used to make many home visits and talk with people in their own homes, getting a lot of insight as to what was wrong with the child by getting a more extended idea of what it was like than is yielded simply by a conference with a troubled parent. Because we learned, for one thing, that inevitably a parent gives you one side of the picture when there are other things to be learned. So we expanded our knowledge so as to expand our opportunity to talk to some purpose with parents. Also, I began to realize the limitations on each member. You don't change the habits of a lifetime by saying, "Don't do this, do that." Furthermore, some people have a built-in capacity for creating the problem situations for their children and there's nothing you can do to stop them. Nothing. It was useful to recognize that we were not going to change the world. Sometimes we could ease it for some people.

Chall: What background were you using? There were so many schools of psychology floating around at that time, as there still are.

Bennett: I think that Miss Wagoner's approach was compatible with what I had grown up with. I think that's one reason she was interested in my going there. She knew we wouldn't be fighting each other on doctrine all the time.

Also she helped me select reading matter for the students that I was working with, and was a very good guide. I mean, she broke me of the habit of thinking that the books I had been brought up by were necessarily right for now, and taught me to look for recent works in a given field where I already knew older ones, and so forth. We had to file our outlines of courses regularly. She was a real help in just teaching me how to be a teacher.

Chall: I see, yes. One has to learn.

Colleagues and Curriculum

Bennett: One has to learn it. The only person I've ever known whom I describe as a natural born teacher was Frances Ruth Armstrong, with whom I shared a house for thirty-four years on the Mills campus, and who fetched up as director of the school. She was identified by an adult who ran the Day Nursery in Colorado Springs, as a person with a real gift for working with children. This person said to her, "You go get yourself trained, because you've got it." So she went to Mills about the time I started work on my doctorate. She had spent a year as an undergraduate at Mills. She graduated from Colorado College, went there two years, came to Mills her junior year, went back and graduated from Colorado College. This, then, was a return to Mills as a graduate student.

Bennett: She spent her time then--and when she joined our staff after a sojourn at the San Francisco Presbyterian Orphanage in Marin County--learning why what she did worked. So that she could verbalize it for students. She used to drive students crazy by being able to get children to do things that students had been trying unsuccessfully to get them to do all morning. Of course, she had authority with the students. Lynn White once said, when he had children in our Children's School, that the authority of Miss Armstrong among the young is second only to that of the pope among the faithful.

Chall: [Laughs] Well stated.

Bennett: Lynn had a lovely way with words. But she was a natural. She learned how to discuss the psychology of learning in terms that were compatible with what the students from the other end were learning. But she had to learn it. The only guide other than native ability that she had was her mother's example. Her mother was a very intelligent mother of six children.

Chall: Must have been, yes. Who was Rosalind Cassidy, whose name I read along the way?

Bennett: She was our most prolific with the production of the printed matter. She was a Mills student who came to be professor of education. I remember an instance when Rosalind and I were entertained at a dinner party--a large dinner party, I think the entertaining of us was casual--in the president's house, and each of us had on her chair, as we sat down to dinner, a nice pile of books, gift of Aurelia Reinhardt. Books that she had read which were in our field. Rosalind had returned from Columbia where she got her doctorate, and I had come less distance from my doctorate. She was finally lured away from Mills by UCLA where she became head of physical education for women.

But with us she was in the physical education department--I guess we called it physical education then; it goes by an entirely different name now--and ultimately, because Aurelia had known her as an undergraduate student, and knew her loyalty and her prodigious capacity for hard work, she became more of a person in general education, and headed up our Department of Education. She was thoroughly devoted to Mills College. She was thoroughly in accord with Aurelia Reinhardt in extending her interest in education to a broader range so that she was "convenor", as we called it, of our School of Education and Community Services which was one of the pigeonholes into which we put several departments. I think colleagues tended to be amused at the amount of the printed page she could generate. She always felt better if she had something in writing in her hands to work from.

Bennett: She was a power in the college as long as she was there because she had Aurelia's ear and because she was just downright true blue, all wool, and a yard wide for Mills, and not without a national reputation, and even international. She was invited to Israel and some such places in her later years after she was at UCLA to give them advice on education for women, particularly physical education. She was not a narrow exercise girl at all. She was very broad in her views, read a lot. I used to enjoy her.

Chall: You certainly had some stimulating people in those first number of years.

Bennett: Elinor Heller joined the board of trustees of Mills the year I went there.*

Chall: She was the youngest trustee, I think, ever to have been put on the board, maybe still.

Bennett: The first time she turned up and she swam into my ken, we were both on our way to the Wednesday assembly. She had come over to attend it. She said, "I have been put on a committee which makes it necessary for me to become acquainted with all the faculty members that I don't know, for one thing, and I know that you've come to Mills." And we had a talk on the way down. Ellie and I had many a talk from then on in, but she's a wonder. Someone of whom Mills was very, very proud.

Chall: With good reason. Just before we go on to another subject, Dr. White, in the Mills Magazine, at the time of your retirement wrote, "Mary Woods Bennett had for years been second in command of child development under the formidable Lovisa Wagoner. Being Dr. Wagoner's lieutenant did not offer much room for maneuver." What did he mean by that?

Bennett: I suppose it's only fair to say that he and Miss Wagoner didn't see eye to eye. She tended to freeze if challenged. Now, she knew perfectly well that he was not only a change from Mrs. Reinhardt, but probably was a good thing for the college. I can remember coming home from his first talk in assembly, after his appointment, when he was there functioning as president, and we were chuckling over some of the things he had said. She said, "He hath a pretty wit."
[laughter]

He would challenge her and she did not take kindly to people who challenged her without informing themselves fully of what her past history was, who she was, and what she represented. He thought that she was a bit uptight and could broaden out and do things, and in this evaluation he was correct, I think. But they got at loggerheads too early. I think that he would have liked to work things through, but she, in this sort of circumstance, simply froze.

*See Elinor R. Heller, A Volunteer in Politics, in Higher Education, and on Governing Boards, an oral history interview conducted 1974-1980 Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1984

Chall: How long was she there?

Bennett: She was there from '31 to '51.

Chall: So she left shortly after he came in. He came in in '48?

Bennett: No, he came in '43.

Chall: Oh, that's right. So she stayed on for a long period.

Bennett: He had no idea to what extent I still needed Dr. Wagoner's leadership. He had some examples that he quoted to me of other heads of departments who were pushing their younger people ahead faster. He told me that he felt that I had been held down by Miss Wagoner and I think he didn't realize how much I had been benefiting by the fact that I was learning from a person who knew a lot, had been around more, and was trying to push me ahead. But I didn't push terribly easily. [laughs]

Chall: You were satisfied generally?

Bennett: I did not feel as subjugated as he did. I think he sensed that Miss Wagoner regarded him as a bit of a brash young boy. He was only in his thirties, you know, when he went to Mills. Miss Wagoner had a habit of picking out the people whose opinion she respected, although she never demeaned herself by gossip about this sort of thing. She identified members of the faculty, sooner or later, whose opinion she valued highly, and they were the cream. There's no question. Some of the cream she let go down the drain, but there's no question but the ones she had picked were the right ones as far as intellectual acumen and just plain accomplishment were concerned.

Chall: When she left in '51 did she retire?

Bennett: Yes, it was a mandatory retirement.

Chall: Then she went to Bremerton [Community College]?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Now I think last week you told me that she had written some exceptional basic book on child development?

Bennett: She wrote a book called Development of Learning in Young Children.

Chall: And that it hadn't been widely received?

Bennett: No, it was her book on Physical Growth that just went down the drain because McGraw-Hill, who had encouraged her to write it, simply was appalled at the cost of producing it, and the prospect of never being able to sell it to the students. She simply wouldn't cut it down.

Chall: So, after she left in '51 she continued writing?

Bennett: Yes. She wrote some things of the mimeographed spiral-binding sort for Bremerton Community College. She did some work with parents there, and some adult education.

Chall: She certainly had the background. What was mandatory retirement age, sixty-five?

Bennett: Yes. At the end of the year in which one became sixty-five. It was still in effect when I retired.

Chall: Surely she could carry on for a number of years after that.

Bennett: She did. It was good for her to return to Washington. Her parents had owned property on Puget Sound, and she built herself a little house, and it was right next to a state park. I visited her there once, stayed with her overnight. She had a view of Mount Rainier out her bedroom window. I think she had a good time there. She became very crippled with arthritis.

When we redid the health center at Mills to become the Children's School, we brought her down. Hundreds of people came to the reception that was given for her. She had to come in with a wheelchair. She was terribly crippled with arthritis. Two of our former faculty members--a woman who was a former faculty member, and her husband--met her at the plane, and got her to a motel in the neighborhood of the college where she could go over a sill from the parking level and not get out of her wheelchair. We took food over to her, or collected her, and took her to dinner on campus, and so forth. This made it possible for her to come, and it was well worth it for her. She enjoyed it.

She had nice blue eyes, and she had had a beautiful new dress made, and seemed not to have changed at all to the people who had known her. In a twenty-year time one gets to know an awful lot of families, and colleagues. It was a joyous occasion. I was awfully glad that the college was able to do that.

Chall: After she left in '51, before you become dean in '53, were you promoted by Dr. White?

Bennett: I was promoted to an associate professor by Aurelia Reinhardt. I was promoted to full professor by Lynn White, who said, "You need it." [laughs] He thought that I would have a bad time with the faculty unless I had a professorship.

Chall: Who replaced Dr. Wagoner when she retired? In her slot?

Bennett: No one, really. What happened was that in '51 the college was at a very low ebb in terms of finances. This was a time in which small, independent colleges were just dropping like flies all over the country. We were meeting the trough of the lowered birthrate because of World War II. That is, students were not available. Lynn White predicted that this situation would not be eased until--he got it right on the nose--the end of the fifties. He was exactly right. Burgeoning birthrate after World War II produced a generation.

At any rate, our Department of Home Economics, our Department of Child Development, and psychology lost their heads, [laughs] their chairmen, to retirement simultaneously. Lynn took the opportunity to reduce the number of separate departments, and against everybody's advice, made the work in child development an adjunct of the work in home economics. He appointed as chair of the Department of Home Economics one Hazel Kramer who was a graduate of the University of California, who was the first person through in a major in child development. She had her first graduate training under Dr. Agnes Fay Morgan. She was a nutritionist by training up through that period, but she had her Ph.D. in a newfangled interdepartmental major in child development.

In other words, she really was prepared, although she was rather short on the child development aspect of the training. She was of such a sunny nature, and so well intentioned, and such a nice person, that she made it work. We enjoyed her. Frances Ruth Armstrong and I both enjoyed her very much. She fully knew what Frances Ruth Armstrong was accomplishing. Fully. Partly because she had two children in school. As long as she was there, it worked.

Then she got an offer from the University of Hawaii which she couldn't refuse. She was responsible for the family's finances, for the basic stability of them. Her husband was a research man who had such a narrow field of research that only with special grants could he do anything. He got them, but he managed to alienate everyone he had ever worked for, and thereby hung another tale. But at any rate, she went back to Hawaii.

Bennett: They had been in Hawaii before. They've had a good career there; they're still there. She's retired from the university, but she's at the East-West Center there. She was quite influential in developing the work in child development, and in the work with parents at the University of Hawaii, and also developing a Pacific base, and international programs.

Then, after she left, the child development area was buffeted about. It was preserved. We never gave it up, and we never gave up the school, knowing how much we would lose if we did, but it resolved itself only when the state of California got around to recognizing child development as a basis for a credential. Once this happened--although Miss Wagoner would certainly have turned over in her grave, had she known it--the sensible move was to make the work in child development part and parcel of our program in education, preparation of teachers. Miss Wagoner had always resisted this identification, because she thought it too narrow.

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Bennett: There still is the Children's School, and the fact that it survived being hustled about from one administrative head to another, backwards and forwards until it settled down in education is due entirely to Frances Ruth Armstrong, for the fact that she made it work and continued it. I think her role is not sufficiently appreciated, except with those who knew at firsthand what she did, because she was far too modest about her accomplishments and far too ill-equipped to do any kind of public relations job. She just was not that sort of person.

There were times when administration questioned whether the college should have the school. They regarded it as something that was, in the long run, an expensive thing to do, although, of course it did bring in income. The fact of the matter is that it has been a stable resource for the community for years, and years, and years, since the mid-twenties. Visitors to the school have always been--I can't say what it's like now, I simply don't know--have always been impressed by the fact that it is an honest-to-God school.

A young woman who moved to this community, to the University of California, at some time in her professional career, was attached to the institute, visited us one day. When she left she said to me--I happened to be the one on duty that day--she said, "I am so glad to see that there is an honest-to-goodness nursery school in the area, because I had begun to wonder whether there was." She came from the University of Minnesota, which, through some of its people, had a well-established training center for nursery school people, and had one of the institutes that was set up by the general education fund in the mid-twenties.

Chall: In her annual report Mrs. Reinhardt listed the outside activities of the faculty. I was interested in yours and how you dealt with them.

The College Atmosphere

Bennett: We skipped over college atmosphere. [on the outline]

Chall: Yes, would you like to deal with that?

Bennett: I think it's important because the college as I knew it when I first went there had the kind of out-of-class life which you might expect in a community of bright and lively students, all of whom were living away from home, all of whom were living on campus--nearly all of them, not all--and who had a marvelously effective student government still in operation. I think we talked about that once before.

Now, it was part and parcel of that out-of-class influence that the residence halls that were built in Aurelia's time were quite impressive structures. Her argument was simply this, that, "if I have to choose between the residence hall and the classroom building, I choose the residence hall, because this is the home away from home nine months of the year, for four of the most important years of these children's lives."

Dixie Lee Ray, who fetched up as governor of the state of Washington was a Mills girl, and she was amused always to tell the tale of having come down out of the hills one Sunday when she had been off with the hiking club. She said, just like flower children, they had wild flowers stuck in the buttonholes of their hiking clothes, and burst into the entrance of Ethel Moore Hall, to find a tea party going in full regalia. Mrs. Reinhardt was in a long receiving line, with her long dress on, greeting important guests, and so forth. Dixie Lee sort of backed up, and started to get out of there, and Mrs. Reinhardt said, "Come in Dixie, my dear. After all, this is your home." She introduced them down the line and sent them off upstairs. So there was that aspect.

Religion had a place. Mills never was a church-connected college, but it had a chaplain. Mrs. Reinhardt was moderator of the Unitarian Church while she was actively the president. We had a Unitarian chaplain, in Robert Leavens. We had had a Quaker lady as head of the chapel in the past. We had for many years the late George Hedley as chaplain, who was, according to many Mills people, far too high-churchly Methodist; he wasn't even Episcopalian. He was Methodist of the British variety, and was quite properly following the usage that he was used to, that is its possible usage

Bennett: for him. Of course, he did make headlines when he and Bishop Pike of San Francisco managed to get him ordained also as an Episcopal priest, even though he never left the Methodist community.

Chall: He was quite well loved, I gather.

Bennett: He was well loved. He was made fun of a little bit by some, but he was the kind of sociologist who used to, as he would say, take his false teeth out and put on his gardening clothes, and live among the itinerant workers in the fields in California in the summertime. He was of no use in wartime service during World War I, but he made himself the fastest typist on record, and he worked in a government office of some sort during that time. I think he still held records as far as his skill in typing went [laughs] even when I knew him.

He was an extraordinary person, and for many students-- homesick ones, troubled ones, ones who were looking forward to mixed marriages, this sort of thing--a very present help in time of trouble. He was thoroughly the chaplain of the college.

Lynn White admired him very much, and relied a lot on him. Later presidents less so. He symbolized the fact that a chapel and a chaplain were a part of the paraphernalia of the college. There was no compulsory chapel by the time we came along. Hedley wouldn't have had it. He didn't think that it would take if it were compulsory. But he gave marvelous sermons, and he wrote them. They were only fifteen minutes long or so. He not only wrote them, he mimeographed them, and made them available, and students could buy them for a dime, and many did. This went to the cost of producing them. But they were intelligent material that students could accept in terms of the kind of education they were being exposed to, closely argued, if it got onto ecclesiastical or theological matters, but perfectly straightforward in their interpretation of the Hebrew-Christian tradition as a molding force in the life of people.

His books were, some of them, extraordinarily helpful. He was known all over the country as the college chaplain par excellence, and was invited to give a lecture series in various places, and so forth. He was quite a person.

Chall: Your friend, I've forgotten her name, the economist--

Bennett: Marion Ross.

Chall: --Marion Ross was very fond of him. In fact, she told me she thinks she majored in Dr. Hedley. [laughs]

Bennett: He was a member of our Department of Sociology-Economics. We didn't have enough of either to have it one department. Later on that all changed, but she would have been exposed to him. That, along with Glenn Hoover, who was as different as night from day-- also had a salutary effect.

Chall: All right. You've told me a little bit about the faculty, your own relationships with the faculty. Generally speaking--despite some of the problems that the faculty had about how Aurelia Reinhardt set up the departments--was there a common feeling of understanding and enjoyment among the faculty members?

Bennett: Yes, it was a happy place to be. I remember having a talk with Miss Wagoner about some of the faculty early on. She made no bones about identifying certain of them as ones that she thought would be acceptable teachers anywhere, and some that she thought had just lazily stayed in the easiest place. But she had respect for them, and I grew to have great respect for them. There was a good feeling within the faculty. Still is. Not that they don't have their differences, of course they do. But the backbiting and competitiveness that you find in some larger places I did not find at Mills. It's partly because you soon lose credibility in a community that small if you're not an acceptable member of the social group.

I have been to affairs since I retired, when I look at it with a somewhat different eye as to what goes on, and the same feeling is there. We can have a whee of a good time all by ourselves at dinner and do from time to time. It's pleasant. Furthermore, it's very educational because they meet their colleagues in different disciplines. There's a great deal of cross-fertilization.

Chall: You'll probably want to compare the large university that you came from with Mills.

Bennett: I tell you one thing that I learned, that is that sheer size is a very important factor in shaping the quality of the educational experience. This I got to know years later when I was on that trip around the world, when I visited the headquarters for Stanford in Florence. I had heard, by one of our many presidents with a Stanford background, how salutary this European experience was for the Stanford students, how they really blossomed after being abroad, and shouldn't Mills have a program abroad, et cetera.

I visited the headquarters. It happened to be between quarters, and except for the religious and the director there was no one around. The friars were going about in their robes doing the housekeeping. Stanford had rented a villa from some order of brothers. I had a long interview with the director.

Bennett: I suddenly got to realize that this is where Stanford students got the small-college experience. It had nothing to do with it being in Europe. It had nothing to do with it being Stanford. It was the small, intimate, educational environment. Close contact with professors. They did an awful lot of tripping around. The head of the operation there, a man named Mammarella, as I remember it, a Florentine. He said, "They never get inside Florentine society. It's too closed. They are outsiders here. They flock together, and they go off sightseeing, and they learn a lot. But it may not be what Stanford intends them to learn." It was a broadening experience, but knowing a bit about how effective the small unit is in an educational sense, I would credit a great deal of the success of that program to the fact that for once, in a way, Stanford students are in a small intimate group. Just my off the-top-of-the-head diagnosis.

I think it's the sense of remoteness in the large college that bothers me. I had this reflected in the experience of students who came to us as graduate students and couldn't do anything but get grades. You know, nothing went on up there [pointing to her head], really, except taking up and dishing it out. This could happen even in women's colleges if the methods used were such as to deal with the students in the mass and not to break it down to the individualized experience that is possible, albeit terribly expensive. But it is possible if you have better faculty-student ratio.

Chall: Did you have difficulty with some of the graduate students who came in who were not able, as you put it, to think. Do they last? Was there a weeding out within the first year of some of these graduates?

Bennett: No. Our people came right off the cream of the crop, and you couldn't, really, flunk them out.

Chall: You could just change their way of working?

Bennett: You tried to, and did not always succeed. They were a good bunch to start with. They were serious students. In the early part of my stay there, of course, they were there because they were graduate students for economic reasons as well as any other. But that didn't prevent their being serious students. Some of them were excellent, went on to doctorates. We sent quite a crop to the Fels Research Institute in Yellow Springs, Ohio. By no means all of them went on to a doctorate, but they turned out to be movers and shakers. One of them is head of a distinguished girl's school in Dallas, I think. Hockaday School? Is that its name? Some of them went on in the nursery school field. One of them went on to research in the field. Some of them simply followed a more traditional course. But they were a good bunch. Some of them went on to professional specialization. I remember one of them went into work with cerebral palsy children.

Community Activities

Chall: So you were teaching, and counseling, and also working in the community. At least in the first few years. Perhaps you did community work for many years after, but it doesn't show up in annual reports.

Bennett: No, I did it more in the first years because from '53 on there wasn't much chance of it.

Chall: Oh, yes, you wouldn't have had time. But you still had from 1935 to 1953. That's quite a number of years.

Bennett: Yes, some of these were long-time commitments. I think it was maybe ten years that I was secretary-treasurer of the Family Relations Council of Northern California. That may be stretching, but it was a long time. The late Noel Keys of the University of California School of Education was one of the people whom I dealt with most in that connection.

Chall: The Case Committee of the Big Sisters of Alameda County?

Bennett: That I got because Mrs. Burkhalter, who was chairman of the board, telephoned me--I knew her daughter slightly from college--and invited me to be a member of the board. That was a very interesting experience. It led to one of the most interesting community experiences I had. I had to do this, of course, with the approval of Mrs. Reinhardt, but she approved, and so did Miss Wagoner. I was in a sense the person attached to the Department of Child Development who went out into the community activities. So it was grist to our mill in that sort of way.

Chall: What did the Big Sisters mean to you?

Bennett: Big Sisters was my first experience on a board of directors of a voluntary agency. I learned a lot from the social worker who was the executive director. She later went to work in the relocation centers that the Japanese were sent to during World War II. She was the child of a minister. She was the first experience I had of a fact, and I think it was a fact which enchanted me, that children of ministers of the gospel turned up in the field of social welfare work more often than you might expect. I never checked out the data precisely, but I was stumbling across them.

Chall: Girl children?

Bennett: I don't know about the boys. Big Sisters of Alameda County was established, as I heard it, at the time of World War I, when the young men in uniform stationed in the Bay Area, lackaday, weren't too careful about their behavior with teenage girls. This was a

Bennett: rescue operation for girls in trouble on that account. By the time I was a member of the board they were maintaining a small residence in Berkeley, may have been in Oakland, for adolescent girls who for one reason or another could not at the moment live in their own households. They had a much wider service for girls of this description in a kind of counseling relationship.

This is where I began to learn about the seamier side of life. These girls were not so different in age from me at that time, but I didn't realize how much I didn't know and how protected I had been. I did realize how protected I had been. The program, of necessity, changed with time. I stayed with them for a long time. I can't remember how long, although I could look up the statistic if it's important.

Chall: As a board member?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: The Children's Agency?

Bennett: Big Sisters changed to the Girl's Agency of Alameda County, and then to the Children's Agency of Alameda County, and then that led directly into an involvement in the community that in some ways was the most important of the experiences I had as a member of a voluntary organization in Oakland. Oakland was oversupplied with facilities for the institutional care of small children. The professional field had turned its face away from accommodating dependent children in institutions. Foster homes were thought to be better. I'm not sure they always were, but thought to be better. There was the Ladies' Relief Society which maintained a children's home in Oakland. There was the West Oakland Home Association. I may have the names mixed up. West Oakland Home had built Lincoln Home on Lincoln Avenue in Oakland which was a residence for dependent children.

Chall: Fannie Wall Home had the black children.

Bennett: Yes. That we had less to do with. But there was the children's home maintained by the--I think it was called the Ladies' Relief Society, which also had interest in a home for the elderly. The home for the elderly still exists, I think, in Oakland. It's named for a woman whose surname was Brown, and I can't remember the first name of that woman. But the agency for children--maybe it was called the Children's Home Society.

Chall: There was a Children's Home Society but I think that was an adoption home.

Bennett: That's the adoption agency. This was a facility, a residential facility for young children. Then there was the Children's Agency, which was a case work facility. Now there were these three, of which the Children's Agency had the advantage in that it maintained no premises by this time. I think even the home for adolescents had been given up. They were accommodated elsewhere. Whereas not only did those large structures exist, there was a dedicated group of women going into the third generation supporting each of them. Reason said we ought to cut down the facilities for care of children in institutions, and we oughtn't to have three different groups of people doing it. We ought to head this up.

So I became, I think, the chairman of a committee made up of representatives of the Children's Agency, West Oakland Home (or Lincoln Home for Children) and the other one. Scandalous I can't remember. Ladies' Relief Society, I guess it was. We fought, bled, and died for months, and months, and months before we hammered out a merger agreement. But we did. The West Oakland Home had the money. The Children's Home of the Ladies Relief Society, located west of--

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Bennett: --Technical High School in Oakland, in that general area had a support group of well-informed young people who were mostly children of the founders. Some of them getting on to be even grandchildren of founders. The Children's Agency was in the wonderful position of being quite willing to give up what it was doing if it was in the public interest. We did work out a merger so that the Children's Agency disappeared completely, and although they wouldn't like it segregated this way, West Oakland Home Society became the funding agency, and the real pizzazz was provided by the women's group with the other agency. Matilda Brown Home is what I'm thinking of in Oakland, related to it was the support of this Children's Home, which is now defunct. That was a learning experience.

But I can remember Mrs. Lawrence Fletcher, who was a formidable woman, a community worker par excellence, a volunteer, who went to the trouble of taking courses in social welfare administration, and so forth. She said to me once, as this committee disbanded, "Do you suppose we'll ever make it? Do you suppose we'll ever get anywhere with this committee?" I said, "Yes, I think we will." She said, "Why do you think so? I'm thoroughly discouraged." I said, "Because it's the only thing that makes any sense." So we just stuck to it until it worked out.

I was always very pleased to have been part of that. Voting yourself out of existence is not the easiest thing for a well-entrenched agency which has all kinds of social superstructure

Bennett: adhering to it by the time you get to the third generation. It's very difficult to let go. Of course, Lincoln Home for Children still exists, and does something else, but--

Chall: It's for troubled juveniles.--teenagers, I think.

Bennett: They had a long period of being a place where children with learning difficulties were accommodated, and so forth. But, you know, it's good work needing to be done, and each group has to define in its contemporary terms what its work should be, but there's always a wrench in making a shift, when the older ones don't want to let go.

Chall: What about the Alameda County Charities Commission?

Bennett: No, actually, these were Community Chest agencies, the merger that I speak of. I don't remember being chairman of a group called the Children's Committee, but what happened was that I was detached from Mills College for a period of about six weeks--in I think it must have been the spring of '43, maybe '42--to work for the Alameda County Charities Commission. I think it was actually the Alameda County Welfare Commission by this time.

Chall: Yes, in 1943 it was the Alameda County Welfare Commission Child Care Survey.

Bennett: This is what I did on that six-week stint. Now thereby hangs a tale. S.H. Thompson was director of the Alameda County Charities Commission and of the Alameda County Welfare Commission when it changed its name. He had been in college with Aurelia Reinhardt. So Mr. S.H. Thompson moved large in our awareness in the community. He wanted a study made of child care needs because this was foreseen as being something that communities would have to attend to because of the fact that we were now in the war.

So for six weeks I sojourned down at the headquarters of the Alameda County Welfare Commission, and learned a lot. Another person from Mills came with me. A couple of social workers, two or three maybe, one man and two women were appointed from Mr. Thompson's staff, to make a survey as best we could on short notice, of what the child care needs were likely to be as the war took shape, and as the employment of women increased.

It was not the best survey in the world that could have been done because, even as a much younger, and much less experienced person than Mr. Thompson, I knew some of his methods were very faulty. But we did the best we could to estimate the pressures that would build.

Bennett: He had a lot of information which he was not privileged to share with us about the presence of the atom smasher on the Berkeley campus, and the probable effect on a civilian population of a bomb dropped, on that which was the prime target in the whole Bay Area, of course. Not until many years later did I learn that all the well-laid plans that people made--the Children's School at Mills among them--to move people East, if there were an attack on the West, all would have gone to naught because nobody would have been allowed to go straight East. The railroads would have been kept open for troop movements. We could have gone North and South, but never East. But we had it all laid out to move to Colorado Springs. Mr. Thompson was knowledgeable, but he was very discreet, and I think we spun our wheels a bit on what we did. But at any rate, we gathered some data.

I left at the end of six weeks--even though he would have been pleased had we continued--because I didn't think we were going to get any farther than we were. Already by this time we were in the ridiculous position of people living in Oakland driving miles, and miles, and miles, to their wartime work, which was burgeoning. And people living miles, and miles away bringing tired and sleepy children to Oakland so that they could start work in the shipyards and other places in this area that were offering employment. Things were chaos. But we got some data about the city of Oakland and its probable needs, and I learned a little bit about research techniques. I think that, for the moment, we gave Mr. Thompson ammunition for doing what probably had to be done anyway.

Chall: Set up child care centers or children's homes or what? What needed to be done?

Bennett: Well, the question became moot because the federal government got into the act. The Lanham Act provided for the establishment of child care centers with federal funds. What happened was really amusing. All during the Depression there had been W.P.A. nursery schools developed very carefully on educational grounds to the extent that it was possible to staff them adequately because people could only get jobs if they came off the relief rolls. But, nevertheless, the W.P.A. nursery schools were in existence, they were federally supported, and doing a job for the children of people who were not employed. For one thing, they got some food into the children during the day.

Well, overnight, we lost the whole army of the unemployed. Everybody was employed. It actually happened in the city of Oakland that organizations which closed down upon a Friday night as W.P.A. nursery schools going out of business because there were no unemployed parents, opened Monday morning, same children, same families, caring for children of wartime workers, especially mothers. Mothers of families who could work if their children were cared for. It was a very dramatic shift, and very quick.

Bennett: The thing that happened, of course, was that in the rush to get women into industry the decision had been made--better provide child care at public expense than encourage high school kids to leave. So the whole pressure was on keeping high school students in school, and tapping this other resource for workers, that is women who normally would stay home with their own children.

This was all very good except that it didn't quite work out as planned. For one thing, mothers didn't give over their household responsibilities when they went to work. They simply did things on the weekend, that normally they would have done another time. They wore out. They would have to stop. They were no longer women at wartime work whose children needed care, therefore their children had to come out of the schools. There was a continual flux of the population of the children in the schools.

When this changing population of the schools was discovered, the why question was asked, and it was found out that women simply couldn't stand up under the double load in general. Of course there were exceptions all the way. Where it really worked was if there was another adult in the household, a grandmother, usually, who could take over the homemaking function and supervision of children, and then the women could work. But this was just the way things moved very quickly in a bad time.

Chall: I noticed that you made a report on parent's co-ops in the Bay Area, in 1947, that's a few years later.

Bennett: Yes. During the war, besides the child care centers financed by Lanham Act funds, there were play centers which were part of another federal project, different funding. These were more like--well, what shall I say--they were established on a different premise. They were an outgrowth of I think a recreation program, and there tended to be some loggerheads developing between the people who were trying to run child care centers as schools, which had an infusion of well-ranked people in them, and the children's centers, which did not lay claim to the title educational at all, which were of the shorter school day, and so forth. These latter remained in existence in very many places after the emergency was over because parents got to like them, and the whole parent cooperative movement in this area seems to have grown from that fact.

I did go around, I visited all of them, some of them extremely well run, some of them I would not have wanted my child to be in. Parents took over, and ran them, sometimes they hired a professional, sometimes they decided they could do it better themselves. I did a report, and I forget for whom I did it now in which I said rather firmly that standards were not always of the best, and these parent cooperatives varied enormously from one to one. I got taken to task for making that kind of a negative remark

Bennett: after they had been so hospitable. It's true they were hospitable, but it's true some of the places should have been shut down, and there was no agency with responsibility for doing this. Some of the parent cooperatives were remarkable, really remarkable, and some of them had started--Berkeley was one of the places where they had started--as adult education devices.

So, following the wartime period there was a myriad of different strands still in existence in the community. Lines along which the wartime effort, on behalf of children, was distributed into various kinds of community activity, and parent cooperatives was one of them. Besides that, Berkeley had a very lively program of parent-child centers, as they call them, and I think that they're part of the adult education program.

Chall: You really learned a lot about your community.

Bennett: There was a tremendous amount to learn. One of my most amusing experiences came when I was visiting the parent cooperatives, or children's groups of various kinds--I think this must have been still during World War II. There was rumor of one being run in Berkeley, and I asked if I could come and visit it, and they somewhat reluctantly said yes.

It turns out that it was being run by Mrs. S.H. Thompson and a friend of hers. They were trying to set up a model of what such a thing would be like at a well-run place. They had come up with some ideas about the staffing required for x number of children, and this sort of thing, which could have been told within ten minutes if they had consulted professional sources. [laughs] But they had found it out through trial and error. Mr. Thompson told me afterwards--I guess it was while I was working on that survey of Alameda County that I made the visit--he said, "You got me in trouble with my wife." Because she didn't expect it to be a visit by a knowledgeable person. [Chuckles]

Mrs. Thompson's doing had the approval of the education establishment at the university. They were trying, reasonably enough, to develop a pattern to be followed by novices in the field, to keep the children safe, and for a variety of useful things.

Chall: In 1942, in the Journal of Consulting Psychology, you wrote an article, "The Psychologist in Family Consultation Service." I suppose that was taken from your experience as a counselor?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: I think we've covered your activities--

Bennett: You haven't mentioned the East Bay Adult Education Council.

Chall: No. That's right. Tell me about that. You were later president of that. What was the [East Bay] Adult Education Council? I really don't know about it.

Bennett: It was a community group, as the name suggests. Aurelia Reinhardt told me I had to do that one. They wanted her on it, and she hadn't the time for it, and she said I would be on it, and I was. There was another member of the Mills faculty who was actually a trained worker in adult education. She was the wife of a faculty member at Mills, and we didn't have enough scope for her at the college. Mrs. Reinhardt was always looking for jobs for her to do. She was one of the ones who became interested. There was an adult education movement quite lively in this area at the time. This was simply our local manifestation of it. People who represented various agencies engaged in adult education, got together I think once a month. We had lunch together at a restaurant in Oakland, and would hear somebody speak. The one person I remember very clearly on it is Mrs. Walter Gordon. You probably have an oral history of Walter Gordon.

Chall: We do.*

Bennett: I had a lovely visit with him one day when he joined us for a meal. He must have given us a talk. By this time he had a state office and was very well known in the field. I remember we discussed how you kept children healthy in East Bay houses that were built on the assumption that central heating was not needed in this climate. There were two young men that I remember particularly, and I never did know under whose auspices they were working, who were doing a lot of outreach, moving into satellite communities, and conducting adult education courses. I can remember Santa Rosa was one of the places where they went. It seems to me that one of them had a surname Cohen and one of them had a surname Hogan, and that's all I can reconstruct.

Chall: They weren't part of the Alinsky program, or anything like that, which was usually urban?

Bennett: I think the name that I have them connected with is Mortimer Adler, and I cannot for the life of me figure out what the connection was. Because I don't think we were talking great books to these groups, but at any rate, I remember one of them speaking of the fact that

* Walter Gordon, Athlete, Officer in Law Enforcement and Administration, Governor of the Virgin Islands, an oral history interview conducted 1971, 1976-1979, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1979. In two volumes.

Bennett: he had unsettled a group that he had met with in Santa Rosa, telling them that the American family was breaking down. I said, "Why didn't you tell them that the American family is changing its form?" [laughter]

Chall: There's the diplomat.

Bennett: I was nasty to him. But he goofed. He shouldn't have done that. At any rate, this was another highly educational experience for me, exposing me to people in the community who were, in one way or another--engaging in adult education. Of course the public school people were heavily represented, but also volunteer agencies like the YM and YWCA, and so on.

The Hazen Conferences

Bennett: The Hazen Conferences. This was wholly a Mills-centered activity, and here is a little documentation. [Gives material to Chall] I was involved in two of them, '38 and '40. In '40 I was chairman of the planning committee, '38 was the first one I went to.

Chall: Student Guidance and Counseling. That was the thrust of their meetings?

Bennett: Yes. The Hazen Foundation, among other things, financed conferences regionally. I think there's a program on the front cover of that one I gave you.

Chall: Yes. In 1938, there was one in Asilomar, and one at the Association Camp, Colorado, and one at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Were they similar in each of these places?

Bennett: Yes. I went as a Mills delegate. We were invited to send delegates the first time, and the second time I was on the planning committee.

Chall: Asilomar?

Bennett: Yes. This was an interesting experience because it gathered together "deanish" types from a variety of institutions, public and private. It was a group of thirty to fifty people, so it was a manageable group, and we met as a whole, throughout the entire thing, so that there was an ongoing discussion. Everybody had heard everything that anybody had said, which has its advantages.

The different problems that present themselves to people engaged in what you might call student guidance and counseling became clear to me here for the first time. The fact that even

Bennett: these professionals could talk with each other and not realize they were talking about different things. For example, somehow or other we got into the role of failure in the life of a student. A person who thought it was a jolly good thing for a student to fall flat on his face and have to pick himself up and learn from the experience was in argument with a man who was vice-president, a guidance person of some sort, in a very large community college. He was challenging the notion that failure was a healthful experience.

Finally somebody sorted it out. I never would have hit on it, left to my own devices, but now I see it was perfectly logical. Somebody said, "You're not talking about the same thing at all. One of you is talking as an administrative officer in a highly selective institution of higher technical learning, School of Mines, I think it was. The other of you is talking as a chief officer in a community college system open to all comers. You're just not talking about the same experience. In the School of Mines you're talking about the experiences of potentially successful people who need to learn that they are fallible. They probably have not failed at anything in their lives up to now. The other of you is speaking from the point of view of someone who talks day in and day out with people who have never quite made it. This is entirely different." You know, it was so useful for me to get that juxtaposition so clearly presented. This is the sort of thing that the Hazen Conferences did for me, and I was very grateful to them.

Chall: Did you attend them regularly?

Bennett: Only those two.

Chall: But they probably were useful for the rest of your "deanish" career?

Bennett: Oh, yes! Oh, yes, they were, and I met some very interesting people. Including someone named Margaret Bennett. I never was gladder to meet anyone in my life. Because I had been getting credit for her work for a long time. [laughs] She was older than I and more clearly in the realm of counselor. It was a delight to meet her. But we had a good representation of people who were in the forefront of the guidance and counseling movement which was very prominent then. I think that it's just taken as a matter of course now. I don't think it is being highlighted as much as it was then. That's why the foundation, of course, was financing it. It was the thing of interest at the moment.

Chall: We've moved on down the outline. We have covered the examples of your outside professional activities I think.

Bennett: Yes. These were the chief ones, certainly.

Chall: They're the only ones I picked up, now you may have others.

Bennett: Ones that I think of come later. They appear in the sixties.

Other Education and Counseling Organizations

Bennett: The fact that I had brought those two Hazen things, which I found just in the business of sifting through my material, suggests that I was on the right track of the sort of thing you wanted to know about. This was a good sampling of what I did. The Family Relations Council of Northern California was the flowering of another movement that held public attention for a long, long time, maybe a decade, and then sort of subsided. There was a National Council on Family Relations as well, and I used to go to some of those meetings.

This was when marriage education was very, very popular. I don't think it was new. But it had the spotlight for a long time. I never will forget the charming discovery that someone made when we were in a group that this kind of activity--education for marriage, within the bounds of a formal educational system--was carried on everywhere in the world from departments of anatomy to departments of zoology, depending on the faculty member who was interested in doing it and could do it successfully. At the University of California it was done by Noel Keys of the Department of Education, School of Education. I guess he was chairman of the Department of Education. But he gave his life to this activity for a while. He taught enormous classes in the subject at this campus, and he traveled all over the country talking with people who were trying to do it.

Chall: But the Family Relations Council then was made up of people who were teaching this? They weren't private--?

Bennett: Teaching or counseling. It was the mix. When I was on the board, as I was when I was secretary-treasurer, we used to have Saturday morning meetings in San Francisco at the office of one Henry Grant, who was a man with essentially a schoolman's or teacher's approach to counseling.

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Chall: You wanted to start today with the Family Relations Council of Northern California. I think that's where we were when we finished last week. You were talking about Henry Grant.

Bennett: I have not yet uncovered the documents or folder which will tell me the stretch of years in which I served on that outfit but my memory is it was about ten. The late Noel Keys, who was a professor of education here, was a guiding force in it. But at the

Bennett: period of time when I was secretary-treasurer we used to have Saturday morning board meetings. I can't remember how many, maybe once a month. We met at his headquarters and I grew to know Henry. I met him in at least one national meeting, national council on family relations, and grew to like him very much. He was a layman as far as the physicians were concerned, but he was an adviser to whom physicians would turn over problems that they felt lay outside the medical field, but were intrinsic to the marriage relationship. Henry apparently was very good at this. He was a great, big, handsome, bluff--not too bluff, he was a gentle person--but he looked as if he could move mountains. He talked softly.

Chall: Was he a psychologist?

Bennett: I think he had a great deal of psychology in his training, but he was a bit reticent about what his specific training had been, and I don't know whether this was just modesty or whether it was minimal. But at any rate, at least a certain group of doctors--physicians in San Francisco relied on him very heavily. He was a marvelous help in guiding one away from the phonies. [laughs]

Chall: Now exactly what was the council made up of?

Bennett: It was made up of people who in one way or another touched this field of family relations. Some of them were marriage counselors in the narrow sense, some of them dealt with the intricacies of relationships that are coped with now, I think, in various kinds of support groups. It was the beginning of this sort of thing. There's a certain amount of quackery involved in it, and it was very necessary to have someone you trusted help you sort out the sheep from the goats. Some of the goats had long, large followings, and were very noisy, and some of them had defects of character that had nothing to do with their competence, and others had defects all through, and you needed to be able to discriminate.

Chall: Were they a part of the council?

Bennett: Some of them were.

Chall: The council was all-encompassing?

Bennett: Well, yes. It offered membership to those who applied. I can't remember whether there were restraints on it or not. It was a very small organization in terms of funds. Very small, barely supported itself in terms of postage and this kind of thing, and never so much as to send people to meetings or anything like that. All that sort of thing I got done by Mills College to the extent that I went.

Chall: So they met on Saturdays once a month?

Bennett: I think it may have been once a month.

Chall: They had meetings discussing--

Bennett: Discussing plans for conferences, program plans for the council, essentially. It was made up of some people who for me--I can't remember everyone on the council at any one time, but the five or six of us who would gather together had three or four members who were quite constant. I remember among them someone who had a big clientele and was undoubtedly on the side of the angels, but was the most neurotic human being I've ever seen. It gave one a great deal of insight into the personalities that went into this kind of field which at that time was newish as a field with a name in capital letters. God knows marriage counseling has been going on since Adam and Eve got the wrong lead from somebody once.
[laughs]

But the formalization of it was fairly new at that time, and since I was the person in our department with the community outlook and outreach, this got to be my baby. Once, for my sins, I had to give a course on marriage and family relations [laughs] because everybody fell short at the last moment, and I was the one teaching the course in the child and the family, and serving in this thing, and so the president of the college said to me, "You do it." I said, "But I am not qualified." I was still protesting in this vein when I was talking with Miss Wagoner about it. She said, "You don't have to lay an egg to make an omelet" [laughter] which is one of my favorite sayings. I think it was not her original one, but she had taken to it, and I found it very comforting.

Incidentally, in the course of teaching that, I recruited a woman that I had met before through Dr. Wagoner's good offices, and she was a person whose family I'm sure you must have records on. It was Mrs. Ralph [Margaret] Fisher, and her son Galen, who's a faculty member at Dominican. I see Galen and his wife, both of whose children went to our Children's School, now and again in our shopping area, and I'm fond of both of them. But Margaret Fisher and her husband Ralph were towering figures in the lay membership of all the community agencies in Oakland. Did you overlap Ralph Fisher by any chance in any context?*

* Mrs. Chall was employed by the Oakland Area Community Chest and Council of Social Agencies, 1948-1950 and knew many of the same agency and community people talked about in this interview. Mutual experiences and acquaintances were discussed off tape.

Chall: I don't think so.

Bennett: I used to be so relieved when I would see him rear up in a meeting--in which there was a miscellany of community representation--because he always spoke sense. This great big imposing-looking man. He would get up and you would see this big thing come. In a quiet, soft spoken, but hardheaded way he would set things straight. I just appreciated him.

I knew her very much better because she was one of a small group of people in the community who let their names be used as consultants to our little family council in the department. When I asked her if she would help me teach--because the students were bound to say, "Well, what do you know about it anyway?" and I wanted to forestall this if I could--she was marvelous. She did not overstep by one-half inch the limits that a lay person should set. But she was so attractive, as well as so common-sensical.

I have learned later from other sources, people who knew her children as contemporaries, that she was somewhat off-putting of them, that she was held in so much awe by their elders and betters, and was a reserved person in a way, so they felt a little bit afraid of her. But I never had that kind of relationship with her. She came to my rescue [laughs] when I desperately needed her and performed beautifully. She's the kind of person with whom I could relate very readily, and she did worlds of good in a very quiet way for the community. Mostly Oakland, because that was her center of operations, but she was very well known throughout the Bay Area.

Chall: What was his business?

Bennett: I can't tell you. He was not an academic, I think. He may have been a professional man, he may have been in business. I just don't know.

Chall: She served on your council at Mills?

Bennett: Yes. We had sort of an advisory group that was a back-up for our little family council, it's just a name we gave to the operation that I was recruited to carry on, and I learned more than I gave, I'm afraid. I was young at it, and didn't have the training of say, a social worker, which would have given a vocabulary, and a modus operandi that would have helped me. But it did mean that I was not stranded in the field in which I was very new, and could go to older and wiser people for advice, and she was one of them I liked very much. Everybody in the community knew her. Your predecessors in the work you did would all have been with her.

Bennett: Now that was partly in connection with the Family Relations Council activities that I mentioned her. But I was thinking, after our last interview, that she was the kind of person I would want to mention as one who was very influential in the community at the time I was functioning in the community as part of my Mills operation.

Chall: That would have been the thirties and forties?

Bennett: Yes, this would have been more forties. I remember Henry Grant telling me--we were riding up to Central City together from a national meeting held in Denver, we were in the bus, sitting beside each other--and he told me tales of his practice which had made him humble about giving outright advice. It was this sort of thing, his putting his own brakes on himself when it came to delivering from on high, that I think impressed physicians and made me impressed with him as a human being you could deal with.

Chall: Apparently there were many physicians, then, in this field?

Bennett: There were some who were drawn to it because they were obstetricians and gynecologists, some who had a glancing blow, so to speak, because they were psychiatrists. The membership was small, and I knew it because I was the secretary-treasurer and collected the dues. It was a hodgepodge. Some educators as such, some people who had a counseling connection with the school system or a college, and some from institutions affluent enough to join it because it was tangential to what they were doing, and that sort of thing.

So we ranged all the way from practitioners, as you might say, including some physicians, to a Mr. Grant kind of person, who was a practitioner, but without specific technical training--he was essentially an educator--and then some hangers-on, as there always are at this kind of group. They flit from group to group to group to group, depending on the professional specialty that's getting the most publicity at the moment, you know, and this seemed to be getting quite a lot. There was a woman named--I can't call her whole name--her surname was Duvall, I think, and she was the national chairman.

Varying Professional Trends in Social Work and Education

Bennett: At the national meetings you would get a broader range, and some really good specialists. I can remember on one occasion at a national meeting, everything seemed to be given over to the

Bennett: psychiatrists, including the whole field of social work. It was just one of those trends that one could see. Everywhere you went the psychiatrist cum social worker combination was gaining ascendancy.

I can remember this man, whose name was Ernest Osborne--I knew him only in professional meetings. He was a tall, lanky fellow, with a wry sense of humor. It was in an era in which in most professional groups I went to those days--national meetings--the educational ones, as well as ones like this, they were all going into this business, even the strictly educational ones, like the old Progressive Education Association. Some went so far as to say you couldn't do the job unless you were psychoanalyzed first, this sort of thing. Ernest Osborne just leaned forward and said to nobody in particular, "And who's going to analyze the psychoanalysts?"

They were not speaking about psychoanalysis in general, they were speaking about psychiatry as a field. He was a little alarmed at the prospect of this field of endeavor getting so narrow as to be within the clutches of any particular professional group. Because of necessity, you tap the skills of a variety of professional groups if you're any good at it.

Chall: That certainly came to the fore in the late sixties and seventies when everything just burst open.

Bennett: Frances Ruth Armstrong, with whom I shared a house, who was head of our nursery school at Mills, and I, used to despair sometimes of the field of early childhood education--because I used to go with her to those meetings, we often went to the same ones--to see the take-over by a professional group. There was a later period in which the anthropologists had it all. My poor friend used to come home and say, "I wonder when the teachers are going to have their innings." [laughter]

Because year in and year out, while they were doing the work, the other people were fussing around with the difficult children that ordinary teaching methods in an ordinary school situation either couldn't cope with or didn't choose to cope with. It was good to be able to be old enough to live through these movements, as they came along, and to see what the solid core was. I mean, your skin-and-bones child with the skin-and-bones teacher were what really mattered. Everything else was either gravy or necessary nuisance or every source to be used skillfully when you had to have it. But expert teaching was given short shrift except in educational meetings as such.

Bennett: The thing that I worried about sometimes was that the early childhood field, because of the natural impact in adult education, parent education particularly, is particularly vulnerable to this business of everybody messing around with it, being everybody's baby to deal with, almost literally.

We had in the state of California a remarkable woman named Gertrude Laws.

Chall: I haven't heard that name for a long, long time.

Bennett: She put a lot of sense into the field. She was someone whom Dr. Wagoner knew and liked very much, and it was through her that I met her. Time and time again, Miss Wagoner's wide acquaintance among the movers and shakers in the field of child development was of inestimable value because it was the flowering of that movement that she was part of. So, so much for Henry Grant, that was a long tale.

Chall: Well, that's fine. What's happened? Is there still a Family Relations Council? I'm not sure whether I still see the name or not.

Bennett: I don't think so. I would suppose that it has gone the way of under-funded voluntary organizations, but I just don't know. Came a time when I had to give my attention elsewhere, and we don't any of us know what happened except that World War II changed everything. Mills was very active in World War II, but we'll come to that.

Aurelia Reinhardt Retires, 1943

Chall: Yes, we'll come to that. We might as well now retire President Reinhardt.

Bennett: She is not a retiring woman, and I quote Lynn White. He appreciated so much that she just left the country when he took over.

Chall: Oh, good for her. For a short time, and then returned?

Bennett: About six months, six or eight months.

Chall: Well that was a very noble thing for her to do, actually. It sounds as if she knew what she was doing.

Bennett: He mentioned it, I think it was in his inaugural speech. He said, she was not a retiring woman, and he gave her great credit for having vacated the country.

- Chall: When I talked to him recently, about his own appointment, and why a man was then appointed, he said that the board of trustees just said it had to be a man.
- Bennett: It had to be as different as possible from Aurelia.
- Chall: Because a man couldn't challenge the comparison, and so at that time they sought a man.
- Bennett: They found an excellent one, because he had no defensiveness about woman's education whatsoever. [Whispers] I can't say the same thing about the others.
- Chall: I've read that she was impetuous, disorganized, that she had no understanding of finances, but one of the things Lynn White said, was that she had greater influence than any other president of a campus.
- Bennett: I'm sure he's correct. I have gone back recently to a fiftieth reunion of the first class I saw graduate.
- Chall: The class of 1936?
- Bennett: Yes. The alumnae there included one who has gone to her sixtieth reunion, Miss Margaret Long. Do you happen to know her?
- Chall: No, I don't. I think that she wrote something for one of the quarterly magazines, and I think I read that.
- Bennett: She's a very loyal alumna, although she told me the other day that she felt like the world's oldest living inhabitant. People of her vintage, up and down the scale, everyone who knew Aurelia, was marked by her. I think the mark was in a positive direction--some were afraid of her, she was so big, and in a sense, overwhelming.
- Chall: She was a large woman?
- Bennett: She was a large woman and she held herself regally, and she had a taste for amateur theatrics. She offended some people. I had no patience with people who were offended by her because she was larger than life. That's what most of the students felt who were impressed by her, and they didn't think too highly of fellow faculty members of Mrs. Reinhardt, who privately would say that she ought to curb this, or she ought to do that.

We had a couple of people on deck that I can think of who were conventionally capable, and by no means the kind of person Mrs. Reinhardt was. One of them very domineering, the other very subtle, and not friends of each other particularly. They

Bennett: privately thought it was appalling that there should be such rambunctiousness in the head of an institution. I mean such-- almost play-acting. It wasn't, because it was real to her. But her use of language was unusual.

She was in every sense a woman of the old school in terms of her ideas of decorum, but she wasn't petty. She disliked serving liquor at home, and it was only when her son was in the foreign service and persuaded her that the world wouldn't fall apart if there were a sherry bottle in the small dining room when there was a party [laughs] that she gave into the inevitable.

She disliked cigarette smoke very much, and one of her very closest friends on the faculty--a woman who was I think a Berkeleyan when Mrs. Reinhardt was a young Berkeley faculty wife, who was one of the first people she invited to go and teach there--systematically smoked at every dinner party I ever attended with her in Dr. Reinhardt's house because it was a matter of principle with her. There shouldn't be this kind of prohibition. Mrs. Reinhardt had tolerance for this. Mrs. Reinhardt could forgive almost anything in a capable person. Not everything, but almost.

I remember once we were talking, just in general, about a former faculty member, and she was saying, "But that woman had a quality, hadn't she?" This was someone that she had employed out of hand when she was out of the country and met her under, I think, the auspices of the International Federation of University Women.

Chall: Oh, AAUW?

Bennett: Yes, on the international scale. She employed her, and foisted her upon her unknowing department when she got to Mills. [laughs] She was doing that all the time.

Chall: Did she get away with it?

Bennett: People fussed, but they never questioned her authority. I had one colleague who didn't take a sabbatical leave for seventeen years because she was afraid her job would be gone when she got back.

Chall: So she was almost like an autocrat?

Bennett: Well, I couldn't call her that, because you could talk to her face to face, woman to woman, no problem.

Chall: But her administrative methods were authoritative?

Bennett: Her administrative methods were impulsive rather than autocratic. Now Lynn White was not himself guiltless of this kind of behavior. But he was of the sort who would rush into my office and say, "I have committed an indiscretion. I have invited someone to teach courses and nobody knows it yet." [laughs]

Chall: Then what would you do?

Bennett: He knew it was an indiscretion, see.

Chall: But she didn't consider it so?

Bennett: No. One forgave Lynn because it was simply that he got the cart before the horse. It wasn't that he didn't know the rules. I have a feeling that Aurelia's motto was to hell with the rules, if they get in the way of progress. I don't know that, and she might not have verbalized it but that's the way it seemed to be.

I can remember once being in a meeting of faculty members who were advisers to students. This meeting was held over the subject of students who were in academic difficulties. I don't know how else the body was brought together. We were in the small dining room attached to one of the large dining rooms in one of the residence halls, and Mrs. Reinhardt was there. The dean of students was there, one Esther Dayman Strong. She wasn't Mrs. Strong then, she was Esther Dayman still. And also present was Daniel Dewey. Do you have some notion of who Daniel Dewey was?

Chall: Yes, I do.

Bennett: Dan Dewey was a card, if ever there was one. He was a wonderfully witty person. At this meeting someone mentioned that a particular student had very great difficulty getting to eight o'clock classes, and it turned out that she couldn't get up in the morning. Well, to make a long story short it was a fact that her metabolism was all screwed up, and she couldn't get herself going early. But Mrs. Reinhardt expressed herself as simply not believing that any girl with one friend would need to be late to an eight o'clock class. She would say, "All you need is one friend to wake you up." [laughter]

Chall: That is just lovely.

Bennett: Esther Strong, who had been the president of the Associated Students of Mills College, when Mrs. Reinhardt was appointed, and had come back to be dean of students, wasn't about to be held up on this score, and she diverted the conversation. I came in on a conversation in front of our tea room on campus later in that day, in which Dan Dewey was kidding Esther for diverting Mrs. Reinhardt's attention to some more worthy subject. She was saying, "Well I was just damned if I was going to let that meeting

Bennett: break up over an alarm clock. Didn't seem worth it." She said, "Dan, let's just admit we work for a benevolent despot." In dealing with the same territory that Esther dealt with in some ways, but remotely, Mrs. Reinhardt was a benevolent despot, but she was benevolent. It never occurred to anyone that it was not a genuine statement when she said she never could really understand--

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Bennett: The thing was that one could overlook her grandiose expressions, her occasional untidiness in her remarks. She would meet the students at one of the weekly assemblies to talk with them about the state of the campus, and ramble a bit, because she hadn't prepared. This got worse as she got older. When she was hewing to a line believe me, she hit it, and right on the nose. A line can be hit on the nose?

One of the students wrote of her in a meeting following her death that she moved along the eucalyptus pathways like a ship in full sail, and there never was a truer statement. She owned it, and she would pick up the litter in her way. Lynn White once brought down the house in a similar meeting generations later speaking about Mrs. Reinhardt's tendency to pick up the "kleenices" [plural of kleenex] that she found-- [laughs]

Chall: A great lady. I read some of her annual reports. There wasn't very much else that she wrote that I could find. But I got the feeling that she really had a zeal of a missionary for women's education.

Bennett: She had, and do you know why? The issue came up once when we were talking--and I was reminded of it when I read something that she had written later--she couldn't see any disadvantage in being a woman. She said, "Women can do anything a man can do, if they're capable. But a man can't bear children. So the woman has the advantage." Of course, in her hands, in her life, it was so

Her one weakness, maybe, in evaluating other people, was that she was quite sure that they could do what she did. I was told once by the college physician, whom I had asked about the state of health of a colleague in whom we were both interested, she said, "Like so many other women on the Mills campus, she's killing herself trying to keep up with Aurelia Reinhardt. She doesn't know yet she can't do it."

Chall: Did Aurelia Reinhardt expect other women to keep up with her?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: So you all worked very hard.

Bennett: We were obliged, we were answerable. She didn't expect the same thing out of everybody, and she was vastly sympathetic toward the faculty wives, who, a lot of them, had insufficient income, really, to live up to the kinds of expectations that faculty have for themselves and their children. She didn't think there was anything bad about staying home and doing the work, and taking care of your family.

She just thought if you did it with a dead mind, you were gone, that's all, and that you couldn't allow yourself to be inactive in the world or not to attend to things beyond the household. Because for one thing children grow up in a world into which they go, whether we like it or not, and they've got to be ready for it. So, Mrs. Reinhardt telling her elementary school-aged boys why the motormen and the conductor on the streetcar that took them to their Sunday school in Berkeley, could fight over the virgin birth, was her idea of what parents had to do for children. You know, not darn their socks.

It has to be said, in all honesty, that she had the priceless help of a younger sister who was unmarried, and who moved into the household. Having tea with Miss Alice was one of the things that students learned to enjoy. Miss Alice supervised the household, saw to it that the family dinner--which was a must on Sunday afternoon--included the president's brother and sister-in-law, and sometimes miscellaneous nephews and nieces, and later on another sister, who came from war-torn England, with her English husband, who lived on campus.

She preserved what were to her the important elements of family life. You wouldn't believe the letters that her sons wrote her. The letters of Fred alone who finished up his career as our ambassador to Rome, would fill a book, just in terms of a mother-son relationship. She read me once, in the spring of '43--I went to call on her just before she left, just a more social call than anything else. She had been reading a letter from Fred, and at this time he was the counselor of the State Department, I think. At any rate, he was high up in the State Department as a career man. He was telling her what our union with the Soviets over this world war was going to do to our relationships in the future. He was right. I think he had had the Russian desk, as his mother told me somewhat proudly. Of course, she was standing on the curbstone watching it, when Hitler moved into Vienna. I mean, she just was incredibly lucky to be visiting Fred in his duties abroad when some of these events happened. But it was a durable, and enduring family relationship.

When she died she was living with her other son Paul, the physician, who lived in Palo Alto, and his daughter, and their three or four sons. The last child in that family was a child named Aurelia. I think there were three boys and a girl. I knew

Bennett: that child as an undergraduate at Mills. She was not her grandmother's match intellectually, but she was a dead ringer for her as a young girl.

This was when I learned, and I learned this partly through George Hedley's book on Mrs. Reinhardt, Mrs. Reinhardt had been a good-looking young woman. [Granddaughter] Aurelia was downright pretty, which I don't think Mrs. Reinhardt had been, but she was a belle when she went to teach in Idaho, was our Aurelia. Aurelia Henry, as she was then. There are correspondences, and letters, apparently, which Hedley had access to, that demonstrate this quite clearly. She was the belle of the ball in a couple of institutions of higher learning in Idaho when she taught.

But she had her problems there. She told me once that dealing with parents had its down side. She said she had never forgotten the experience of trying to explain to a father why his daughter must take the prescribed course in foreign language. He was a "agin" this. He thought English was plenty good enough. She said she gave up arguing with him when he said to her, "Miss Henry" or "Dean Henry", whatever she was called then, "The language of Jesus of Nazareth is good enough for my child."

Chall: [Laughs] That's wonderful! Oh, my! I guess we haven't gotten too far from that, have we?

Bennett: But you see, Mrs. Reinhardt had a wonderful sense of humor. There was a time when I came back--Did I tell you about my interview with Miss Edith Abbott?

Chall: I think you told one off tape. That's such a charming story, I would like to have it on tape.

Bennett: In this trip I made in '39, I had visited schools of social work.

Chall: In '39 you went around the country?

Bennett: Yes. This was partly because--there's no other term for it-- Aurelia was being bugged by Sam Thompson to establish a school of social work at Mills. Aurelia knew that we couldn't afford it; we couldn't do it to meet the standards of the American Society of Schools of Social Work, I think it was called. American Association of Schools of Social Work. Isn't that its full name?

Chall: It sounds right.

Bennett: There were standards, and they were quite rigid, and someone I interviewed at the University of Michigan was a great help to me in saying, "You know, it is a new profession, they are gaining respectability, and they're having to do exactly what the RNs did

Bennett: a few years ago. They are going overboard on establishing a professional credentialing. Well, '39 was the depths of the Depression.

I had a very interesting time in finding out different attitudes toward the preparation of social workers. That went all the way from Sam Thompson's simply expressed notion of just turning out intelligent girls who have learned to say yes and no to their teachers. You can make a social worker of them in a few weeks, if you put them in the right department, and set the right professional on their trail.

This did not set well with Aurelia, and she knew it would be expensive to set up professional training according to the standards that existed. She knew, also, that the University of Washington had a good program, and she knew also that Dominican College had a good program, and that the University of California program was in existence, though not very highly regarded in the profession. So, I talked with members of schools of social work staffs from Denver on East, and through the north central part of the country. I had quite an informative visit, and wrote a little report for Aurelia when I got back.

Chall: You wanted to tell me about having met Edith Abbott. Now where was she, in Chicago?

Bennett: Yes. She had a Mills alumna on her staff. She said, "I know you would graduate girls who are good enough to do it, so why don't you have a school of social work? You should do it." She was advocating it very strongly, "And of course there should be one." You see, this was in the era where the WPA was turning out people, just grinding them out to do social work.

Chall: Well, you could call it social work.

Bennett: Yes, well, that's right. As somebody said in a meeting once of people who were wondering how you could train a social worker in three months to do this, that, and the other, "But they have to, with the relief rolls to deal with," and so forth. I heard someone, whose name was famous in the field, speaking to a group, and someone asked the question, "How do you get a professional worker out of this?" He was silent for a minute and he said, "You can't teach horse sense." That was a very useful notion for me.

But at any rate, I met all those, and Edith had said we had to have one, so I said to Mrs. Reinhardt--I didn't put everything about my interview with Miss Abbott in the report because some of it was just plain vituperative. She was angry that people don't realize that people ought to have the same standards as her school has.

Chall: They were high.

Bennett: Yes. The young student of ours that she had in her school was plenty good enough. She said, "I know you have the students, you can do it." Mrs. Reinhardt put her hand on my shoulder--I was leaving her house, I had been at lunch with her, I think--she said, "My dear, let's just admit Miss Edith Abbott is not quite a Christian."

Chall: [Laughs] That's such an incredible statement.

Bennett: Well, she was a fierce old lady. Now her sister, Grace Abbott, had quite an influence on my line of work because by great good fortune, when the nation went into the WPA nursery school business, they put an educator at the head of the operation. The WPA nursery schools got off on the educational pattern rather than the day nursery pattern, and that made all the difference in the quality of the schools, and also it laid the groundwork for some of the scraps between WPA nursery schools and the play centers that were organized by a recreation project. But there was a move in the direction of setting those schools on the basis of an educational pattern, which meant, ultimately, that because of the use of personnel in different categories, it meant that the programs for migratory workers got off on an essentially educational setting rather than the day nursery, or just park-your-kids-setting.

Chall: That meant standards, then, for the staff--some kind of educational standards?

Bennett: Yes, from which they departed frequently, of necessity. I can remember one marvelous woman whose name I forget, who was a regional director for the migratory workers. The conditions in the migrant camps were just dreadful for children--schooling so interrupted, to say nothing of their whole lives shattered by the move West. She said, "The facilities ultimately established for these children, although not ideal, were an improvement over existing conditions. Fundamental values can survive translation into these terms."

She knew what she was speaking about because the nursery schools on which American ones were patterned had been established after World War I to relieve the lives of children in slum settings. The early English training of nursery school teachers, which was the pattern for ours, was for children who were in nursery schools not because their mothers were employed, or not because their mothers were unemployed, but because they lived in such hellish conditions.

Bennett: So if you knew enough, and worked hard enough, you could draw the parallels. A beautiful example of that is the fact that we happily accommodated in our nursery school a person, Joyce Bolton, who was a graduate student, who had come from England, from the Mather Training College, where Grace Owen had established the fundamental training for teachers to carry out the provisions of the Fisher Act in England following World War I. She worked for us very well, she also worked in San Francisco's Chinatown, with a non-English speaking population, very well. She worked at a day nursery for a while; she worked in Colorado at one of the--not the University of Colorado--but one of the state colleges, I can't remember which one now, in a nursery school setting, and she finished up her career at San Jose State in charge of the nursery school, which is in a Department of Home Economics, or was, in a somewhat traditional sense.

This friend is not only long retired, she's been, for several years, dead, but she could adapt to any of those settings including ours, which was, by comparison, a simple one, and a very favored one, because we could do the things that the textbooks say you ought to. In these other places, most of them, you had to compromise, and you have to know an awful lot to compromise without losing the fundamental values.

Chall: She had the fundamentals.

Bennett: Yes. They were very well trained. We had two such from that school.

Chall: I think we've covered Aurelia pretty well.

Bennett: Well, her relations with the faculty varied. Some stormy; some hated her, and there were some who just disapproved of her heartily. I can remember that I felt my hackles rise once when I was walking down the hill from the terminal picnic at the college one day, and I was in front of a set of brash young staff members who had come as graduate students and were staying on as assistants to the dean of students, I think they were. One of them was saying, "This was the best picnic ever, it's the first time in five years I haven't heard a reference to Mrs. Reinhardt." I could have killed her on the spot. It was all I could do to keep from turning around and saying, "You don't know what you're talking about. The reason Mills is the kind of college it is is because Mrs. Reinhardt was here." It was still true, even though this was much, much later.

Chall: Did she have a good strong hand in all the hiring?

Bennett: Oh, heavens, yes. She did some of it out of hand. [laughter] She was apt to act first, and consult with the relevant faculty afterwards, and this was a bad habit. I'm not sure she made many

Bennett: mistakes. I know of one she made, because she was interested in the quality of the person rather than in the quality of the skills necessary for the job. This sort of thing she was likely to be doing. If it was an interesting person who had some substance of some sort, she could be impressed, and whether that person was digestible in a particular department--because all our departments were small--it rested on the lap of the gods.

Furthermore, the men of the faculty, although I think they were not in a minority, they felt overwhelmed, and they formed a protective organization which was known by the name of Kiva. Do you know what a kiva is? It is that secret place where the tribal council meets in the southwestern part of the United States. It no longer exists. It would be anachronistic now; we have a faculty club. As a matter of fact, it's a faculty-staff club. But they had the feeling, the need to escape from Aurelia's long arm. She tolerated this; this didn't bother her at all.

Chall: Mrs. Reinhardt knew that the group had organized, or that there was this organization?

Bennett: Oh, sure. She was far too smart a woman not to know, also far too smart a woman to object to it. The early faculty meetings I attended were very interesting to me because of the production element. She would stand there regally and make her comments and her speeches, and she would entertain views from the faculty. I must say, I was never aware of anyone pulling punches. They might have. Some were more polite than others, but we tended, in those days, to be generally polite in discourse. As I can remember, we didn't have unseemly rows, although there was plenty of evidence of dissatisfaction, and perhaps even festering sores here and there. But it went along.

Chall: I guess that's not too unusual in a faculty, is it?

Bennett: No. I think that by and large--I think I've said this before--there was less backbiting, and less competitiveness than is evident, even, I think, to the casual observer of a place like Berkeley, which is so big, where the competition is built in.

There's no question but what students on the whole admired her hugely. There were some who were frightened by her, and some very much put off by her. But she has admirers, and I suppose more among those who maintain a continuing interest in the college, and in the demonstrations of loyalty such as handsome gifts, and so forth and so on.

She was always open to students from any country, encouraged this very much, and was equally eager for our students to get experience elsewhere. Nothing narrow or confining about her attitude. It was all preparation for the next step, which would

- Bennett: be out into the world. You better be ready for it. As she told one student who asked her, "Why a liberal arts education?" She said, "So you will be a more interesting woman at forty than you are at twenty."
- Chall: A wise lady. So she left. Now was that with some reluctance, or did the board decide that it was time for her to retire?
- Bennett: She stayed, actually, two and a half years after the mandatory retirement age.
- Chall: I see, so there was a mandatory age?
- Bennett: There's a mandatory retirement age at sixty-five, and she reminded the board of this fact, in line of duty. Rumor has it that she did not expect anyone to tell her it was time for her to go. But the board--this is just my guess--the board seized the opportunity. But it took its time about finding a successor, and persuaded her to stay on the two and a half years that it took them to locate Lynn White. I don't know how purposefully they looked for a person with some understanding of, some sympathy for, some commitment to what we would now call the woman's movement. But they certainly got one.

Lynn White Appointed President of Mills College, 1943-1958

- Chall: So he came in in '43?
- Bennett: Yes.
- Chall: What changes then occurred among faculty?
- Bennett: Some of them were very obvious. He found to his horror no retirement system. He immediately set to work on that. He also found no faculty handbook, no printed material that faculty members could rely on for guidance, and he started working on that. He had announced himself as eager to advance, at least to the status of equal attention with other disciplines, the whole development of the United States, its history, its literature, and its outlook on life. He had the pleasure of appointing three important faculty members, who came on as full professors, just bing, bing, bing, supported by funds that had been given in honor of Aurelia Reinhardt.

There was a professor of American history, and there was a professor of American literature, who was Franklin Walker, and Franklin turned out to be the survivor of that group. George Mowry left after, I think, maybe three years as professor of

Bennett: history, went to the Department of History at UCLA, and it was to his department that Lynn went when he retired. George just was not the man for as small an operation as we were, and he did well while he was with us, but needed to move on for his own satisfaction.

He was succeeded by Richard Current who became the Lincoln man in the field of history, and needed to go back nearer the source of the Lincoln material, and was at the University of Illinois for some years, and then went to Chapel Hill, perhaps, or University of Chicago, or something like that. I think the catalogs would say, or the Who's Who. But he needed to be nearer the scene of his Lincoln stuff. Although both children were in our Children's School, and his daughter ultimately came back to graduate from Mills, although she declined ever to be identified with a past at Mills.

Then the late Laurence Sears was the third member of that triumvirate.

Chall: Oh, yes. He was another beloved person. I've heard his name a lot, and his wife's name.

Bennett: Christine was a wonderful woman. I liked her very much.

Chall: She was a practicing psychologist.

Bennett: She was an M.D. in Ohio, but she turned to the psychology when she came here, and the opening that seemed available to her was at the Children's Hospital of the East Bay, with Ann Martin and that crowd. I used to see Christine off and on all the time in various connections.

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Bennett: Larry was a professor of American philosophy and political theory, who filled the Hohfeld professorship. He came off a successful career of teaching servicemen in World War II. He had been, I think, at one phase of his career, a minister of the gospel. In any event, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between his teaching and his preaching. The person who felt this most acutely, I think, was Mr. Hedley. [laughs] But I think that Larry Sears was innocent of any effort to unseat anybody, it was simply that he didn't see that he was, in a sense, poaching on other people's territory. He was a very serious man about what he was doing and how he was doing it, and very intense. Students who were fond of him were extremely fond of him.

But I happen to have had one advisee, about whom I had information that other members of the faculty didn't have. She was not your ordinary freshman. She was a twenty-six year old

Bennett: veteran of World War II. She had decided, courtesy of the G.I. Bill, that she would embrace the opportunity to go to college, which she had always thought would be beyond her, beyond her resources. She wanted a typical college experience, she didn't want to be the senior citizen in a bunch of kids. So she got the admissions office, and I think just her faculty adviser, to suppress the information about her age. They didn't do it with fanfare, they just didn't tell anybody. She lived as an ordinary freshman in an ordinary residence hall.

This was in the days when there was a freshman humanities course taught by these three men--in which Willa Baum, by the way, did some teaching at one time. They did lectures themselves, and then there were discussion meetings. I think there were two discussion meetings a week, and one lecture a week, or maybe it was the other way around. At any rate, the whole freshman class was required to take this course. It enraged the faculties in English, and in philosophy, and in history, because the courses that had been developed carefully over the years for the beginning students were now no good, they got the cream taken off in this course.

This student came storming into my office one day, and she said, "Miss Bennett, something has got to give. I sat for fourteen months on an island off the coast of Alaska as a member of the SPARS. [Women's Reserve, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, WW II] I am sick and tired of being told to wake up and think about my role as a citizen of the United States. What shall I do about it?" I said, "Leave it to me, Shirley, I'm sure I can take care of it."

It happened that Larry Sears was at the same time offering an extension course for teachers, mainly Oakland teachers, but for teachers in general, based on the same materials that he was using for the freshman humanities course. I called him, and I said, "Larry, we have a problem with one of your students." I explained to him what the problem was, and he said, "For God's sake, get her out of there. Get her into the extension course, and we'll arrange to have her get course credit for that." He was perfectly reasonable. What he was trying to do was to wake up the lazy freshmen. But a veteran of World War II is not interested in being included in that category. It was a funny thing, but he was completely capable of preaching.

He also was capable of losing his perspective. He was not in good health toward the end of his career at Mills. As a matter of fact, he was in such dreadful health that he was under heavy sedation to the point that sometimes he lacked control of his body, and he got thought to be drunk by the students. The fact that everyone was in collusion to obscure the fact that he was a sick man left them to imagine the worst, and that he was under

Bennett: the weather with drink sometimes, and that this was a fact known to but blinked at by the administration. It was an uncomfortable time. But it was done out of love for Larry and appreciation for what he could do. One of his strongest supporters was one of his fellow faculty members who simply carried the load for him as much as he could.

The Freshman Humanities Course and Other Experimental Courses

Bennett: Now, it must be said that the freshman humanities course, which was so closely argued in faculty meeting when it was finally adopted, that Lynn White broke the tie that made it a mandatory course for freshmen, gained such distinction among the faculty that there was a fight when it was abandoned. This was about a ten-year period, I guess.

Chall: As long as you had the men there, some of them.

Bennett: I think that it lost its vitality when it lost its heads. There came to be a time when Franklin Walker and Rey [Reynold] Wik, who ultimately replaced both Mowry and Current, couldn't carry it alone. Or putting it the other way around, there never was a satisfactory replacement for Larry Sears. The faculty began to be restive in due course about required courses of all kinds. The minute it was put on an optional basis there wasn't enough student registration--there was some--but there wasn't enough student registration to support a very expensive outlay for the faculty so that the support services from assistants in the teaching, such as Willa Baum, couldn't be hired.

Then there's no question but what in a very real way Larry was the heart and soul of it, and the others lost their leader when he was not able to do it anymore. The combination of losing him and of its no longer being a required course decimated it. Then it was offered by people who had had no part in the formation of it, and we attempted for a while to keep it going within the division of social sciences with the literature course added. This didn't go off.

But on the other hand we did have a final Carnegie grant to run an experiment which was dear to the hearts of the three founders--by this time Rey Wik was almost a co-founder, he had been with the project longer than either Mowry or Current had been. That last grant came through the good offices of Robert Wert, before he was our president.

Bennett: We got money to offer the humanities course as a senior course in a very different format, a seminar format limited to senior students who had taken the freshman course, to beef it up to a more intensive study of a particular era. I think they took the period of the twenties, of American political thought, and history, and literature, and so forth. The students who took that course were terribly excited by it. Terribly excited by it. So in that sense it was not an inglorious end, but the evidence was that --the only way they could control what they could assume to be the background of the senior students was to ensure that they had had the freshman humanities course when it was still a required course.

Chall: That would be limiting after a couple of years.

Bennett: Yes. This was a very exciting educational experience for the students and the teachers themselves, because part of the deal was that they should have time to instruct each other on recent trends in their own special fields. They had released time for this, so that it was a very luxurious experience both for the teachers and the students, and defensible as an experiment, but you couldn't do this for all students.

One member of the English department who had had his fill of being told about what the seminar for freshmen would accomplish educationally, just wouldn't have it. He said, "At a college like Mills, what's good for a few students is good for the bunch." That is the admissions standards are high enough. "We cannot discriminate in this undemocratic fashion. We have to make them available to everybody." Now when they were compulsory they were available to everybody.

It was interesting that this was a man in the English department, and that he, although he was not the originator of the idea, was the one who said, "All right, let's keep our requirement for English," --which was ultimately abandoned in the long course of curricular development, when we got to the stage where everybody was abandoning every requirement. "We can get as much reading and writing in in one semester as in a year if we have every freshman take half a year instead of a full year, and half a year in classes half the size. That is a seminar of no more than fifteen students will get the job done." You know, it worked so well that it was very heavily enrolled by freshmen after it ceased to be compulsory. But English is the only field in which the timing was right, and in which that worked out, but it did.

Then we had an opportunity, with some special Ford funds to try something like--I think maybe I mentioned this once before--a seminar in adolescence. It was done for freshmen, and we let it get about that this was done for the group that had just finished being adolescent. We had a psychologist, a biologist, and a

Bennett: sociologist teaching that, and it was a bang-up course. I was invited to attend one seminar when some reports were being made, and one of the students reporting said, "This is what I thought college would all be about. This is the way I thought college would be."

But we couldn't fund it for more than one go-through, you see, with special moneys. Because what the people would have been doing otherwise than working on this-- Three of them together in one meeting, always, not seriatim, not a vaudeville course, but the interplay of those mature minds, as well as the students'. Simply wonderful, but you can't fund it for very long. What you have to keep hoping for is that every once in a while a little knot of faculty will get a bee in their bonnet, and will do something like this, and will ask for money for it, and then you can make a pitch for the money, and get it, and you can try it.

Lynn White was once taken to task for seeming to play favorites with the humanities group, and he said, "My only comment is, thank God I've got some professors who get bees in their bonnets." There was always a tendency in our Educational Policy Committee meetings to be protective of one's own territory first and foremost, and not to do college-wide planning.

Chall: That isn't unusual at all.

Bennett: Not at all unusual, but it is death to innovation.

Chall: Yes. Unless you've got a strong leader who simply insists.

Bennett: Well, this is the role that Aurelia played, that Lynn played, and to a certain extent, Easton Rothwell. Easton did for Asian studies what Lynn did for American studies, and it is not that Mills was innocent of Asian studies before, because it was Aurelia Reinhardt who appointed Alfred Salmony in history of art, and Otto Maenchen to teach in Asian civilizations, and so forth and so on. We had work in Asian civilizations. But Easton was interested in focus.

Lynn had been interested in focus. Lynn had very cagily thought that we should specialize in Korea because Japan and China were so well covered by the titans in our area. But this came to nothing, as many ideas do that presidents have when they're generating ideas as fast as they can.

Chall: That was a period both of growth and depression, I think. Almost all the time Lynn White was there, he was trying to raise money. He did get grants, but it was for the faculty he needed funds.

Bennett: Oh, it was very difficult. The college had an awfully bad time in the early fifties.

Chall: The enrollment wasn't going anywhere.

Bennett: Oh, no, and this was partly due to perfectly rational causes, it was that birthrate curve that had suffered during World War II. Lynn was completely accurate in his predictions of when we would see a reversal of that, when the baby boom would hit us.

The thing that's terribly entertaining for anyone who has been there long enough, is that Lynn instigated a series of courses which made absolute sense if you took the trouble to learn what the Mills curriculum is all about. It was a series of courses leading to the bachelor of science degree which would give a student an opportunity to major in personnel work, in secretarial studies, or in merchandising.

Chall: Yes, I saw that in one of his speeches, [reads] " This is where it's coming, young women get out there, where you'll have your opportunities."

Bennett: This was in the early fifties. It was bitterly opposed by a great many of the faculty. Barely passed. I can remember one of our faculty members, oh, this was a meeting at the president's house in the evening, and we were going at it hammer and tongs in the president's living room. This very bright young woman from Johns Hopkins was arguing against the bachelor of science program as a vitiation of what all we tried to stand for, and do, and so forth.

Chall: Yes, one can understand it.

Bennett: He said to her, "Libby, I am trying to protect your job." She said, "Mr. President, I would rather it disappeared." He said, "Libby, not all my faculty have the freedom of movement that an independent income gives them." That was the real basis, that was the nitty-gritty of it. There was a dreadfully low point in enrollment and it was a matter of history that these majors did not bring us an influx of students. We tinkered in all sorts of ways with the curriculum to try to point out what the vocational outcomes could be of a traditional liberal arts major.

As a matter of fact, we worked so hard on that, that I found once, in rummaging through my papers, a memorandum I had written to the faculty when I was acting president, saying, "We simply have to take out of our catalogue all the material that makes us look as if we were a vocational school, because that is the reputation we are getting." It never happened, in fact. Never.

Chall: It never happened that you got that reputation or that you took it out?

Bennett: We began to get it. It's an interesting fact that one way in which we were able to stop the rumor from getting abroad was that the person we had to do merchandising was a very capable woman who had been the right-hand woman of Mildred Horton in the WAVES [Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service, W.W. II] When Mildred Horton was alarmed at the tack that Mills seemed to be taking, she wrote to Tova Wiley and said, "What in the world is happening to Mills students?" So Tova sounded off at length-- and she was a very good letter writer--and she brought the letter in to me to see. She said, "This is what happened, and this is what I'm about to write, and I want you to know what I'm writing." She wrote, "Nothing has happened to Mills College, except the addition of a few courses that will give employers the notion that the students are not strangers to the fields. It has done nothing to vitiate the essential liberal arts program."

But there began to be a kind of a clamor of Mills going vocational, and every once in a while you would see a general article in the journal on the tendency toward vocationalism in schools. But, of course, this thing comes in waves. They came during the big Depression, it came during this period [in the fifties] and it has come recently. Every time it gets terribly expensive to send children to college, and economic times get hard, it comes.

Chall: Yes, because if you send your children to college, you want to be sure they can come out and get a job right away.

Bennett: The effect of World War II and the Korean War was something that was terribly interesting. We found at the outset of World War II, when Lynn was quite new, that there was an upswing in the enrollment at Mills. Lynn said, in the marvelous use of language that he has, he said casually, at a luncheon where I was present, "Clearly parents want to send their daughters to an institution which is not uniformly male." [laughs] So we did get a boost in the number of students. We also, for the first time, began having war widows in our classes, as well as wives whose husbands were on active service.

Chall: But they were young?

Bennett: We had a married, and widowed student as the president of the senior class, and she was of the same age as other students. We had war wives and war widows in residence halls. We had a change of complexion on the campus, and of course we had our own struggles with the exclusion of Japanese, because we had a fairly high representation of Japanese students.

World War II: Japanese and Foreign Students

Chall: What was it like on the campus when the Japanese students were fearful of leaving? Well, not only fearful, they knew what was coming. That was a troublesome period.

Bennett: Well, we connived in getting them out of there back to their homes--at least in some instances I know this to be the case--so that wherever they went they would be evacuated with their families. We had one girl whose family was in Berkeley, and she had been, with another student, resident in the president's house; they worked for their board and room by helping out, mainly in serving meals at the president's house. The president was devoted to both of them.

In the period in which it seemed necessary to get them to their families they were given a leave of absence. But in this period one Grace Fujii, whose father was a Japanese Christian minister in Berkeley, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Mrs. Reinhardt was damned if she was going to let a little thing like a war prevent Grace from being initiated. Especially anything as irrational as the evacuation of the Japanese. So she telephoned the general of the Sixth Army and demanded a pass for her car to go through the lines and get Grace. By this time Japanese weren't allowed to leave the city. Got it. Grace arrived from Berkeley in the presidential Packard, a great big old hearse-like vehicle driven by the presidential chauffeur, who had gone to fetch her, complete with a military pass, and had brought her back to spend the day on the Mills campus, and get initiated into Phi Beta Kappa.

Chall: Isn't that really a great story. What was the attitude of the students toward the Japanese?

Bennett: They were completely color-blind. We were so used, since the Mills's day, to seeing Orientals on campus. See they had had their career in Asia, and many Oriental students were here before Aurelia ever came, and this was continued. Our former Asian students sent their own students, they sent their children, and their daughters.

Chall: So they were coming from abroad even?

Bennett: Yes. We had both Chinese and Japanese students in residence at the outbreak of the war. One of our Japanese students had to go home--I guess she could wait till the end of the semester, I don't know whether she had to leave early. Because she was an alien, she had no special status. She left her best kimono to be auctioned for the benefit of students who were stuck. One of them was seen making a Japanese bow to a Chinese student on campus, and apologizing for what my country has done to your country.

Chall: That's really rare that you could get that kind of feeling among those--

Bennett: Well, there was the sisterhood, you know, lower case, and never talked about, but there was the feeling of membership. Of course there was a terribly mixed feeling among our non-Oriental students. I can remember one student--I think this was the first class meeting I had with them after Pearl Harbor, and of course, some of them had boyfriends, or husbands, who were already in the war. It was eight o'clock in the morning, or something like that. It was very early after, and one particularly outspoken student was just seething. She made some reference about "those yellow-skinned barbarians." And I said to her, "And what of our friends, the Chinese?" It had never occurred to her that she was making a racial slur that could be misinterpreted. I think that people who could keep their heads helped students, and other faculty members, sort things out. But it was a very confused and difficult time.

Mrs. Reinhardt spent, I think, twenty-four hours a day for two or three days--at least enough time, so that there had been a little lapse of time since the declaration of hostilities and the time she could gather the student body together for a mass meeting. She spent the time on the telephone convincing parents on the East Coast, that they were closer to a fighting war than we were.

Chall: I guess there must have been quite a bit of anxiety.

Bennett: They expected the Japanese to turn up off the coast of California any minute, and they didn't realize how much ocean lay between. Not very many students were pulled out; they didn't want to go. Although we had our scares in that first week--there was a blackout when I happened to be at the Women's Faculty Club, at a meeting of the East Bay Adult Education Council. A Mills faculty member who was new to the campus, who was Dean Rusk's successor, actually, was going to give the speech, and did it in the total blackness.

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Chall: Well, those were difficult days.

Bennett: They were difficult because nobody knew what to do.

Chall: Just prior to the war, during the Spanish Civil War, there was a great deal of controversy that emanated up and down the political scale, and I know that it also affected students on the campus. Were your students affected?

Bennett: I don't really remember very much. You see, we had in residence at the time Barbara Garcia whose maiden name was White, I think, or McMillan, something like that, married to Fausto Garcia who had left Spain because of the troubles. He was part of the liberal persuasion, and anti-Franco, and he had to get out, because he would have been liable for military duty. So we knew what the issues were about, and I remember discussion about it, I remember hearing talks, and being exposed to people who were fighting the good fight, so to speak, but it didn't have the same kind of impact on the campus that I think it might have had, had we had a male population, some of which could have gone off and offered themselves on the battlefield. Our male population was apt to be married, and to have children, to think twice about what it did. I don't know that we had anyone who volunteered for the cause, although I would bet that there was money raising, and things like that. There was discussion of it, certainly.

The Search for Dean of the Faculty

- Chall: Maybe we can, in the last half-hour that we have left today, get you appointed [to dean].
- Bennett: [Laughs]
- Chall: We'll look at the outline here, but it seems to me we discussed curriculum changes and financial constraints, and we'll probably be touching on them quite a bit from time-to-time.
- Bennett: We've spoken about Lynn's major curriculum change--two of them, the emphasis on American studies, and what he did trying to lure more students.
- Chall: He appointed you dean of the faculty after he had assigned a couple of other faculty deans. Mrs. [Evelyn] Little and Mary Burch. Is that correct?
- Bennett: Yes. Mary Burch came back from retirement to hold the post until he should find a dean. He, as he always called it, scoured the country looking for someone outside, because he thought he must consider both people from outside, as well as people from inside.
- Chall: I understand he tried to bring in Vera Micheles Dean, but Herbert Hoover put the kibosh on that one. [laughs]
- Bennett: She was a good friend of the college always, and came to summer sessions and taught in our summer sessions.

- Chall: Oh, I see. I was interested because it seemed to me like calling her out of the blue to bring her in. I wondered where that idea originated.
- Bennett: No, she had participated in the International Institute, I think it was called, in our summer sessions. She was very well known on campus.
- Chall: So it wasn't just a--
- Bennett: No, it was not a shot in the dark at all.
- Chall: I always thought it might have been, but then I didn't know whence it came.
- Bennett: No, she was well known to the campus. I think that's one reason that--
- Chall: He thought of her.
- Bennett: If he did indeed—I would have thought she was sought as president at some time.
- Chall: Yes, I'm a little confused about that.
- Bennett: I think she was sought as president at one time, following Aurelia, maybe.
- Chall: He told me once before that he had tried to bring her onto the campus, so I think it would have been as dean. I'm not sure.
- Bennett: I wonder if it could have been to fill Larry Sears's spot.
- Chall: That could be too.
- Bennett: Although Larry was--
- Chall: He was there for a long time. No, he remembered it as dean. Whatever, he did try to bring her onto the campus, and Herbert Hoover--was it Herbert Hoover?
- Bennett: Yes.
- Chall: Yes, Dr. White is never going to forget that.
- Bennett: Or was it Glenn Hoover of our faculty?
- Chall: No, he said it was Herbert Hoover. He was a trustee, but never attended any meetings, but if he got wind of anything which he didn't like, he would use the telephone. He made it known in no uncertain terms that she was not to be brought onto the campus.

Bennett: This I did not know. Very interesting.

Chall: So, Mrs. Little for a while. Was she the librarian?

Bennett: Yes. She was a librarian but a woman of considerable talents in writing, a very graceful writing style, and a person broader in scope than you think of as a librarian. She was, I think, not the kind of administrative officer that he had hoped she would be because she found it very difficult to make decisions. But she was certainly respected, and she was dedicated. She did have a lovely writing style.

Chall: He would have appreciated that, surely.

Bennett: Yes. It always worried him when a person that he had appointed was long on research but short on writing skills. [laughs]

Chall: So he brought Mary Burch back, then, just for the interim?

Bennett: Yes.

Mary Woods Bennett Apointed Dean of the Faculty

Chall: And then looked around. How long was she there until he finally settled on you?

Bennett: Well, see, Dean Little went back to the library, and this was partly because she suffered a heart attack, and needed lighter demands on her, and she could, in a sense, do the librarian's job with one hand tied behind her, and had good support staff. Fifty-three, what would have happened? Oh, Mary Burch's retirement. She had been appointed--[trying to recall]

Chall: Well, I'm sure it's all in the record.

Bennett: It's all in the record. My immediate predecessor was Mary Burch, but that was because she had been called back to fill in when, I guess, David French left. But never mind, that will show in the record. Lynn scoured the country, both scoured the country and scoured the campus. He told me in no uncertain terms that either those from off campus didn't want the job, or were not favorably responded to by faculty members. I don't know how much of this response from faculty members came out of the depths of Kiva. I do know from some of my male colleagues, who volunteered the information, that mine was among the names bandied about.

Chall: To help the president make a choice?

Bennett: Apparently. He told me that he had considered three people, but that what with a tendency to panic on the part of one, and a proclivity for making enemies on the part of the other, he thought I was the one. He didn't really say he was reduced to the last one, but he indicated that there had been a choice. I knew of the job only what I read in the little faculty handbook, which, by the way, Dean Rusk had had a hand in writing. The role was never too well defined. Lynn said to me, "You will find out what the job is."

Chall: Were you eager to take it when it was offered to you?

Bennett: It never occurred to me I had a choice. I suppose I had. But he was author of the notion that somehow Lovisa Wagoner held people back, and he thought--

Chall: Oh, I see, this was your opportunity to get ahead.

Bennett: It was interesting, it was a new challenge. I never would have succeeded to Lovisa Wagoner's position anyway. I hadn't, and I wouldn't have, because I lacked the training of direct work with young children, so I was marginal in the department. As it happened, when I was appointed, I was, from desperation, the chairman of the Department of Psychology. There was no Department of Psychology head after Mary Burch left, and I was appointed to that post because my training more closely approximated that required than anybody else's.

But I got myself out of that role just as quickly as I could because I was not properly qualified to succeed Mary Burch, who had been great. She was a student of Lewis Terman, and a great community person. In her quiet way she had very good relations with the public schools. She had been a public school teacher at one time in her life, a teacher of math, I think. I had a happy working relationship with her in all the years I worked on the freshman psychology course. She was there as head of the department in our three-person meetings. Mrs. Ethel Sabin Smith was there as the teacher, and I was there as the also ran, as the person who did some of the section work.

But she was not one of the persons I would have thought of as my predecessor as dean of the faculty. She was in fact, in point of time, a predecessor, but she had been appointed to that post because Lynn needed one right away, and because he couldn't find one. This is what happened. I think it was when Mrs. Little went to the hospital with that heart attack.

But I had, for observation, Anna Brinton, who had been the dean of the faculty; Marian Long Stebbins, who was head of our Department of Drama--we called it Speech and Dramatic Art at the time. She was Aurelia's old, old friend, and she had replaced

- Bennett: Aurelia as acting president for a while. She had served as dean of the faculty, she was a good administrator. I had as examples Dean Rusk, and David French, who followed him, and I discovered later, only recently, I think, that he had been a fellow Rhodes Scholar.
- Chall: Of Dean Rusk?
- Bennett: Yes. His wife was a physician, and that was a very happy appointment for us. He succeeded Dean as dean of the faculty. I expect after him had come this temporary appointment of--no, he left, I think in '51.
- Chall: Dave French?
- Bennett: Yes. He had been preceded by--well, I can't quite remember where Evelyn Little fitted in as dean of the faculty, I would have to look that up. She was librarian, then dean of the faculty, then back to librarian, and she had a heart attack in the midst of--Elizabeth Reynolds would know in a shot.* It should be in the literature too.
- Chall: I suppose you could observe them and consider them in ways which you would consider good, and in other ways which you would not want to emulate--either way.
- Bennett: Before I took the job I talked with Mary Burch at length, and I had talked with Dave French at the time of his withdrawal from it. I said to Dave, "Why are you giving it up?" He said, "Because I want to be able to read a book of my own choice through." In her own way Mary Burch had said the same thing, "You do as much reading as you ever have, but it will be a whole different collection of things." And she was so right.
- Chall: And you'll be very busy.
- Bennett: It was at that moment that I ceased to be a psychologist. It really was. You cannot keep up. I taught for about five years. I finally went to Lynn, who believed in administrators teaching.
- Chall: You continued to teach your course?
- Bennett: No, I taught some. I said, "I can't do it, it's a fraud on the students because I am not able to keep up with the reading in my professional field, and I've just got to stop it." So he let me off the hook. I also was director of graduate study, and I had to be let off that hook too. Those things theoretically can go together, but I didn't have any assistant, and it was more than I could do.

Evelyn Little was dean, 1944-1950 (E.R.)

Bennett: Furthermore, the two people I observed in prior manifestations other than Evelyn Little were Dean Rusk, who left because of return to active service, and Dave French, who left to go to the State Department. I had had very friendly relations with both those men but I was not in a position to deal with them as you would with a dean because I didn't have the status in my department. I had dealings with them of one sort or another, but usually in connection with faculty committee work of some kind.

IV DEAN OF THE FACULTY/PROVOST, MILLS COLLEGE, 1953-1974

Expectations and Challenges

Chall: What were Lynn White's expectations for the position?

Bennett: Lynn said he didn't know what to expect, but he sure enough would know soon, and if I wasn't doing what he wanted done, he would tell me. He said he would feel perfectly free after a year to tell me that to go on was a wrong choice. So that I understood. I made a couple of mistakes at the outset, and he set me right forthwith.

Chall: What did you do?

Bennett: One thing I did was to come down hard on the letter of the law in one of our regulations when in fact the college had, whether it said so or not, made a commitment to a student. And he was exactly right. He said the college cannot play fast and loose with its commitments to people, and with a parent as well as the student involved. I was being literal, according to the letter of the law, and this was not the moment for that. You had to look first at what the college had promised. He was exactly right, and I always appreciated that.

But he was very easy to talk to on this. When he wrote me a note and said, "We can't do this." I said, "I will undo it." The next thing I wrote was, "Want a new dean?" He wrote back, "Nope". [laughter] It was always that simple to deal with him. So it was a very happy relationship. He didn't know beans when the bag was open about administrative procedure when he took over, but I learned it from him nonetheless.

Chall: He had had about five years already or more.

Bennett: He had developed a technique, and he was capable of prodigious stretches of work himself. He would come in--we had those old dictaphones with cylinders--he would come in on a Saturday morning and his secretary would face a regular forest of work when she came in on Monday morning. Of course, he wrote beautifully, and he took great pains with his writing, and it irritated him no end to have people say he did it so easily. "I said it doesn't come easily, I sweat over these things." Well, he sweated to good effect.

Those Presidents' Letters that he wrote, which were really marvelously informative, as well as well written, those were submitted to what we called the cabinet, a group of administrative

Bennett: officers--a representative of the alumnae association, the chaplain of the college, whose English diction, among other things, Lynn relied on, and the treasurer of the college, the major officers, the development officer--Lynn submitted the rough draft of every one of those. We went over them, and if he liked a criticism, or thought it just, he would accept it. If he didn't he would say, "Well, I see your point but I'm going to put it this way." There never was any question about whose final decision it was.

Once, I can remember a time, and I can't remember what the issue was, we were really picking it to pieces, and the most conservative, staid member of the group said, "Look, we are not improving the text, and we're ruining the president's style. Let's just stop it. It's his letter." I always thought that was praise from the right source. Everybody recognized them as an invaluable tool.

Chall: Yes, they were most interesting. Out of them I could get quite a bit of understanding, not only about what was happening at the college at the time, but primarily how he felt about educating women. He spent quite a bit of time discussing this matter, and liberal arts with respect to women. He was writing to the parents, and alumnae, and people who cared about the college. He had a special constituency that he was dealing with here.

Bennett: They were very good of their kind. I've gotten things from college presidents before and since; I've never seen anything better.

Chall: Easton Rothwell's message, or his letters changed, the tone was different; they were essays of a different kind.

Bennett: He didn't have Lynn's facility of use of English. He was clear, and he was comprehensive in his statements, and he was very careful, and he worked hard on them, but he simply hadn't the gift; he didn't have the light touch even.

Chall: But his direction in them was different.

Bennett: Yes. This was deliberate.

Chall: I didn't see any of Robert Wert's, so I suspect that there weren't any.

Bennett: I think he didn't try it. Easton was appointed in a different time. He had been one of our trustees, you see, as Rob Wert had been when he was appointed. Easton had helped in the search for a president.

Chall: Following Lynn White?

Bennett: Yes.

Alumnae all over the country with whom he met began getting the word back. "What are we looking for? Here is the man." He was very persuasive. He was the most gregarious kind in the world, and very appealing to people. His all-wool-and-a-yard-wide quality came through. He was a realist, a man of the world, and he had been places, and done things, and was quite confident in that. The fact that he came, well, it's a little bit of a detour through the Hoover Institution, it wasn't exactly the same thing as coming out of a department at Stanford. The three men who came to us from Stanford in succession were from completely different bailiwicks. Lynn from the Department of History, Easton from the Hoover Institution, Rob Wert from the administration.

Chall: I understand, from something that Lynn White wrote, that when he took on the presidency he insisted that, to the board of trustees, be added two academic positions, two positions of people from academia.

Bennett: To whom was this credited?

Chall: I thought he credited it to himself.

Bennett: Lynn?

Chall: Yes.

Bennett: I think he, maybe, formalized it, but Monroe Deutsch, I'm sure, had been on our board at Mills in the period before I went there.

Chall: But could he have been appointed simply--

Bennett: He could have been appointed out of Aurelia's friendship. I think that others had been appointed from time to time, but Lynn formalized it.

Rob Wert and I had the opportunity years later to appreciate the value of this. There was a time in higher education, and this was in Robert Wert's administration, when people were questioning the whole concept of tenure. Remember? We had at the time Jim Hart on our board, and Al Hastorf of Stanford--Department of Psychology, I think he was. He later became a deanish type there. Rob Wert and I realized that this was ticklish. This was a time when we started the college year each year with a trustee retreat. With the help of the Trefethens we went to Silverado Country Club and had ourselves a whee of a time, and had a retreat up there.

Chall: Otherwise I think there were some at Asilomar?

Bennett: Yes, but this one was, I'm sure, at Silverado. On the agenda for this extended series of trustee committees, there was an extended meeting of the trustee Committee on Educational Policy, and the matter of tenure was to be brought up. Rob and I got every publication we could lay our hands on that was portable, and had a big packet ready for every board member, arguments for and against. I think Rob was presiding at this meeting, and it was formally opened. We got into the question of tenure, and Jim Hart, and Al Hastorf led the argument. Rob and I didn't say a word. That comes from having the academic members disinterested. Believe me, having served on the board of trustees at Santa Clara, which has everything--it has faculty representation, and it has all kinds of things that we don't have--the virtue of having the academic voice there in a disinterested way has proved itself. That's why I'm still on the board at Santa Clara, for one thing.

Chall: You see the value of it yourself?

Bennett: Oh, yes, if I hadn't before. My colleagues at Santa Clara, who have been on committees with me, who are Santa Clara faculty, as well as on the board, have voiced in ways they don't realize to be so revealing as they are, the great strain they're under, if they are at once the bosses and the servants of the college administration. It is a conflict of interest.

Changing Relationships with Colleagues: Differing Views of the Dean's Role

Chall: I think this is about where we start today. [referring to the item on the outline: Changing Relationships with colleagues]

Bennett: I have an interesting anecdote to comment on that.

Chall: On the changing relationships with colleagues?

Bennett: Yes. Lynn White talked with me about many aspects of the job, but he didn't particularly stress that one. One of the colleagues that I admired most was talking with me once about some departmental matter, and she said, "If you aren't going to be one of us any longer..." She started her sentence that way, and I said, "Well, Margaret, I am." She said, "You can't be." [chuckles]

The fact is that it's exactly like the transition from graduate student to teacher. That is, you have to recognize a difference in the relationship without regarding it as a calamity,

Bennett: and without assuming that all the pleasant things about a former relationship have to go. They don't. But you do have to be more discreet, you can't afford to gossip, and you have to be even-handed. This is very hard if you've been identified for a long time with one department. It's hard on you because the expectations of both department members, and others, although they probably couldn't verbalize it, are that of course you will function as a department member. And you can't. There was no obvious or overt tension over it, but one had to find one's new place, that's all.

Chall: Did that take a while?

Bennett: I was not aware of any trauma. When Rob Wert came to be the president of Mills, he asked each one of us who had held an administrative post, to put down in writing what the job was. I tried to make the case that the dean's job as I understood it in our place, which is not to say it would be the same anywhere else necessarily, was to serve as a vehicle, or a channel, for two-way communication. I said to Rob when I gave it to him, "I just don't want it ever to be a barrier between the president and the faculty." I said, "I don't want to be in-between the president and the faculty." He said, "Mary Woods, you are in-between." [laughs] That was the way his job had functioned at Stanford.

One thing I quickly learned about-- I got quite a dose of adjusting to new presidents; they were all good-natured about it, but they administered in their own style, as was reasonable. He, more than any other, expected me to be the president's man--the president's woman--and to, in a sense, function to--protect is too strong a word--but to save him from undue confrontation with faculty and so forth.

This was diametrically opposed to Lynn White's view, and to Aurelia's view, I think, which was that the dean of the faculty is as much an interpreter of faculty opinion in the councils of the college, as an interpreter of the president's opinion in councils of the faculty. I had no difficulty in doing both, but the presidents differed in the degree to which they wished it to be done this way.

Now, my present successor is in charge of the academic program, while Mary Metz, who goes off and gets herself recognized as one of the leading presidents of liberal arts colleges, is a public relations person and fund raiser. It's not that she can't set an academic tone, because she can--she has a doctorate in French literature--but she does not regard it as her job to deal with the curriculum. Whereas Aurelia, and Lynn, certainly, and Easton in his way, regarded it as part of their job to be what the bylaws of the board of trustees say they are, that is the chief

Bennett: academic officer of the college. It was only when Rob Wert came that this definition got changed, and the present provost runs the academic deal, while the president is the outside woman.

Chall: Was there a change just in--

Bennett: Just in practice, never enunciated. I saw it clearly, and more clearly than anybody else. Part of my job was to ease the transition for faculty who had gotten used, in three different cases, to one way of operating.

Chall: So that the operations were somewhat the same with Aurelia Reinhardt, Lynn White, and Easton Rothwell, and quite different with Robert Wert?

Bennett: It was quite different with Robert Wert, but not so different that one lost contact. It was just a bit of a chore at the outset, finding out where the emphasis lay in a given administrator. Of course, they all thought they were doing exactly the same thing. The faculty knew perfectly well that they weren't. I would get a lot of desk pounding in my office for a while. It was good they had a safety valve. I had, in each case, to live through the era in which they felt themselves deserted by their dean.

Chall: Did it mean that the president more or less gave directives, and you were supposed to hand them down to the faculty in the best way possible?

Bennett: A president of Mills gives directives at his peril, he has the legal authority. But, early in his own career, when challenged once in a faculty meeting, I heard Lynn White quote chapter and verse to indicate that he was indeed acting legally. But he was a much wiser president by the time he left, and he knew that wasn't the way to do it.

Chall: What does it mean then, when you say that there was desk pounding, that the people felt abandoned by their dean? How did your relationship with them change as a result of the change in the president?

Bennett: It changed only in that I was attempting to interpret a somewhat different mode of administration, and trying to help the faculty see, if not eye to eye with the president, see what the president was attempting to do, what he thought was the right procedure to follow. One of the more senior faculty members said to me once-- and I can't remember which president he was talking about, either fore or aft--he said, "We used to think of you as our voice with the president, and we can't do that anymore." He was the only one who ever said it that way. This was early on. He got to know better.

- Chall: I guess, because I haven't done this kind of administration, I don't quite see exactly what difference it was making.
- Bennett: Well, let me tell you this. In one sense Aurelia Reinhardt, Lynn White, Easton Rothwell were the same. Aurelia had with my predecessors, and I had with Lynn and Easton, weekly meetings. Rob would have none of that. So I lost my regular avenue for discussing the nitty-gritty day-by-day problems of the college in an ordinary, low-keyed way. Only in crisis. Not really, it was that unless I wanted to be pestering him every minute, and he was a very patient man, I had to wait until there was a crisis. I do not believe in dealing with an ongoing managerial responsibility in terms of waiting for the crisis to happen. This was difficult for me to get used to.
- Chall: What was his avenue with the faculty?
- Bennett: He was always accessible but never by appointment. Never any regular commitment to it.
- Chall: Did you feel constrained about going in to see him?
- Bennett: I didn't really feel constrained except by the necessity to do it at need rather than as part and parcel of an ongoing, monitoring situation. I felt much more comfortable with a regular appointment in which I could go in with my little list, and if the time wasn't available for the whole list, I rearranged the priorities if I needed to.

Easton Rothwell made an amusing comment. When I was ready to retire there was a meeting of the board of trustees in which former presidents were present and talked a bit about what life was like with me as dean. Easton couldn't be there, but he sent a tape. He mentioned being terrified at my list when I saw the time was getting short, cutting my way through. [laughs]

But he was more aware of procedure, I think, than the others were, because of his State Department experience, and because of a variety of things that he had done. He also was, in a curious way, more sympathetic, because he was a Reed College graduate himself. He knew the small college as an entity, and I don't think that either Rob or Lynn did. Except that Lynn knew San Francisco Theological Seminary in Ross, where he grew up, where his father was the much beloved professor, also named Lynn White. He knew the difference between the Stanford he had gone to, and a place like Mills. Knew it very well.

- Chall: I can see why your colleagues on the faculty would feel that they didn't have a voice. Did that mean that you had to settle problems yourself, or concerns yourself?

Bennett: I was always concerned with them. Lynn White, early on, when I worked with him, said something that was very helpful to me always. When certain hard decisions came up, he would say, "You do it, and I will be the supreme court." He said, "It is better in this situation for them to be able to make an appeal, and there's no way of doing it unless you take the action, and then I countermand it."--if need be. Every once in a while he would say, "I like your suggestion, I'm going to follow it. If you don't mind, I'm not going to give you credit for it"--for this, that, or the other reason.

Once it came to a silly thing. He was asked to nominate some woman connected with Mills, could be faculty, faculty wife, whatever, for some kind of national meeting that--I think the Ladies Home Journal was putting on--and I made a suggestion of a faculty wife, and he liked it. He said, "That's an excellent suggestion, I'm going to follow it, and I'm not going to give you credit for it." [laughs] One knew always where one stood with Lynn. It was not that he was not subtle, he was capable of great subtlety, but there were certain things he didn't see any point in beating about the bush. This helped.

As far as I know, Lynn never reversed a decision that I had made without letting me know about it or telling me in advance. With subsequent presidents it was taken for granted that the president could change, and sometimes I didn't get told, and this could lead to a little awkwardness. It was not intentional. But if a departmental decision had been made, and I had let a department head, or a division chairman know what my stance was, and if I had made the recommendation to the president, and even he might have seen the college officer involved, and apparently we were in agreement, when speaking to the person concerned he could reverse himself, and feel free to do so. He didn't hide it, but he never made a point of remembering--of clearing--with the fact that he had done it.

So in a few places a department head and I thought that we had paved the way for informing a person that her contract would not be renewed, and we got scuttled. This was hard to take. I suppose because I was trained in by Lynn, it worked very smoothly with him. But with his two successors--radically different people, but from Stanford--the situation could go the other way, and it was taken as a matter of course, not anything that needed to be dealt with. The subtleties of the way Aurelia and Lynn saw the job were what I was trained in with, so that it was easier for me to continue doing this, and harder for me to adapt to the others. But I did adapt, as Rob Wert said when I graduated, so to speak, I had survived five presidencies including my own. [laughs]

Chall: Yes, and each one different. Now did that create a certain amount of tension within you while you were learning it, adapting to it?

Bennett: I enjoyed the problem solving aspects of the job. I really did. I couldn't have survived if I hadn't. I had then the capacity to live with unsolved problems. I could sleep at nights. If you can't do that, this is not the kind of a job for you. But I suspect this is true of the officer called the dean of the faculty. If the officer is called the academic vice-president, it's a different kettle of fish. I found that out in national meetings.

I would go to meetings that seemed to be of academic deans, that is deans who were not deans of students, and there was more variety in what they actually did than you would find in the lot of the dean of students, for example. They went all the way from people who were completely in charge of the academic program in their institution, to the likes of me as originally conceived, an adviser to the faculty. According to the bylaws of the board, the dean of the faculty was the second ranking academic officer, and the second ranking executive officer of the college.

Chall: Did it vary depending upon the size and type of college, or even with the small liberal arts colleges?

Bennett: It varied with the small liberal arts colleges, as Mills itself has varied. There's no question but what my present successor is in charge of the academic program, that's what he was got for. They call him provost more than dean of the faculty.

Chall: Does that mean that he's in charge of curriculum, as well as faculty promotions, tenure?

Bennett: He isn't completely in charge of that because the faculty has its own rules for that. This was something worked out, I guess in Rob Wert's administration, formally. Before that we had too small a faculty to be too elaborate in structure. There was a head, period. Everybody else was an underling in the department. We had many two or three person disciplines, you see. But we grew enormously with Easton Rothwell in administrative folk. There was much muttering and talk about the burgeoning administrative staff.

As happens, I think, as life becomes more complex, and it does if you survive, you operate in an environment in which inter-institutional communication is very much more frequent, but it also uses all the sophisticated devices. So, although you may be able to get along with a slide rule, you've got to have a computer. You can't answer the questionnaires unless you have a computer.

Chall: What does it do to the college itself if you begin to have layers of administrative staff?

Bennett: People grouse about it. They used to grouse very openly. It was easier when Easton was president, up through Easton, because he would have meetings. Left to his own devices I think Rob Wert would not have had any meetings ever with anybody.

Chall: He must have consulted with somebody. He wasn't a one-man orchestra. With whom would he consult over these things?

Bennett: It was a hangover, I think, of his practices at Stanford. He and I used frequently to walk away from a committee meeting together, because we were both headed back to the administration building. We had been through one rugged meeting in which two of our faculty members, pig-headed in a way that you easily accept as applicable to their ethnic origins [chuckles]—stubborn, northern Europeans--while they had not collaborated in stymieing the meeting, they had pretty nearly scuttled it by simply being so stubborn, by not being able to let go of a problem. As we walked away Rob just shook his head and said, "How do you stand it?" But it was part of his code that he never would speak up in a faculty committee meeting unless asked.

Robert Wert and the Black Student Movement

Chall: So the faculty never knew exactly where he stood?

Bennett: It was hard to know where he stood. Let us point out that he was the one who really took the brunt of the student uprisings. The black student problem was beginning to make itself felt, but it had really not erupted until after Easton left. Rob got the whole bit. I always thought it particularly fortunate for the college that he had had his baptism of fire at Stanford, because, although I think he was distressed by it always--he was not a well man, really--he kept his cool.

We had a wild time when we had a trained revolutionary amongst our black students. The upshot of the rally which they engineered, was their invasion of a faculty meeting that Rob called, so that you really couldn't get any business done. They brought their guest, name of Kathleen Cleaver. I don't know how other presidents would have coped with this, but he could keep his cool. He could wait them out, and he didn't lose his temper.

He was giggling to me once about it. The black students invaded his office, and they came in through the windows, the ground floor windows in the old administration building, as well as in through the door to the outside--it was an escape route for the president out the back door of his office--they came in through there and through the normal entry way through the

- Bennett: president's secretary's office. There were two doors leading from different offices, both of which house secretaries. They crowded around his desk and he just sat there. Someone was struggling in one of the windows, and he went over and helped her in. [laughs]
- Chall: Then he just sat in his office and waited till they left? Did he talk to them?
- Bennett: Till they said something. He made no overt move. It's a very good cooling down device.
- Chall: I have been told that this was his general demeanor even as president, I mean that he was--nobody has used the word laid back, perhaps benign neglect, something like that--that in terms of seeming to care, or deliver, he was different from the other presidents.
- Bennett: He did not make it so much his own instrument. He believed that since the faculty had an organization, and since there was a small group of faculty very vocal about this, that they should run the show.
- Chall: Yes, and I guess that the few people that I've talked to have a rather strong opinion about it, and that's probably what you were feeling, that they were feeling neglected by their president. Did it make much difference to the way the college moved? Was this a sort of interim period of growth that could handle this kind of presidency?
- Bennett: Let me tell you an anecdote that perhaps reveals what the climate was. At one point Rob had thought he had found a person who had a bright idea academically about what to do. We're always looking, at Mills, for that which will attract more students than we have. He, out of hand, gave this person an appointment in our Division of Social Sciences, which didn't go down well at all. But he did it. At one point one of our wily faculty members--who happened at that time to be chairing our faculty colloquium program, a once-a-month meeting of the faculty, when some member tells what he's up to in the way of research, really--invited this man to make a presentation, and he made a perfect ass of himself, which was exactly what the faculty member anticipated.

As we left, in his usual courteous way, Rob was giving his arm to a very badly crippled member of our faculty. She walked with very heavy braces; she needed always a steadying hand. She had had a childhood polio that came before the era in which better treatment would have protected her against this hideous degree of crippling, but her spirit was undaunted. As we walked out, I heard her say to him, "How could you, Mr. President, how could you?" He said, "Well, Libby, we all make mistakes."

Bennett: This was the faculty member who had raised a terrible row when Lynn White introduced his modest little curricula in business studies in 1951, and she had said something to him, about vitiating this splendid liberal arts atmosphere with this thing, and he said "I'm trying to save your job." She said, "I would rather lose it." And he said, "Not all my faculty have that wealth of resources."

Mary Metz

Bennett: Faculty and administration at Mills have always been able to talk face-to-face, and some have been easier than others. I think there's no question but what in Lynn's case, the faculty recognized a fellow academic, as they had not in any other. As the presidencies have gone on, I think, including the present one, the separation of activities, the division of labor, has become more clear-cut, almost because it's had to. So that the present president spends a great deal of time in off-campus activities cultivating the alumnae association, and making herself well-known in the academic world.

I noticed that in the most recent issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education, I think it's the most recent issue, Clark Kerr's Carnegie Commission has got out a list of the most effective college presidents by institutions classified according to whether they offer the doctorate, whether they offer any work toward a first professional degree, and so forth. Mills is in the liberal arts Roman I category. I think Roman II is the kind that stops dead-end at the bachelor's degree. We prepare teachers, and we give an M.A., and so forth. At any rate, Mary Metz is right up there in the small list of people who are outstanding administrators of liberal arts colleges.

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Bennett: She has her own academic credentials, which is important. In her early days, because some alumnae of Mills told her she had to, she gave a speech at the Town and Gown Club in Berkeley. She is a member of the Town and Gown Club, although she said, "You ought to know, I am never going to be able to attend meetings probably." They said, "Never mind, Aurelia Henry Reinhardt was an honorary member, and you better be a member." So she is. She gave a superb speech on education of women. She had sense enough to find out the nature of her audience--two generations (sometimes three), mixed university (Berkeley) and community representation, a newly-elected president at forty-five, granddaughter of a former president who held the post when she was forty-five.

Bennett: She's perfect for the job she's doing, which is to present an image of a bright and up-and-coming woman. It does make a difference when a woman is the head of the arrangement. I have seen Aurelia operate, I saw Barbara White during her brief stay, and Mary Metz, and there is a different attitude on campus when the undeniable first lady is the president, and not the wife of the president. It makes an enormous difference. Even though I have no criticism to level at the wives of presidents I have known. It is simply that the role model is there. If anything gets done, it's a woman who does it. You don't need to argue the point because it's demonstrated.

When I was a young dean of the faculty, and the dean of students reached retirement age, Lynn had said to me, "You know, a college this size doesn't need two deans. You think about the possibility of our having one dean, with two strong assistants, one to deal with student affairs, and one to deal with academic affairs. See how you like it." The next time I saw him he said, "Changed my mind. As long as a man is the president of this institution, there needs to be two strong women."

The Deans of Students

Chall: But now the academic dean is a man. How about the dean of students?

Bennett: The dean of students was appointed before he was. In the period when I went back to do two months as acting president when Rob had a heart attack, I had a chance to get well acquainted with her because she was still feeling her way along. I think it was her first year, it could have been her second, but I think it was her first. She's fine, she's doing very well.

Chall: So it's a woman?

Bennett: Yes. I don't see a man being dean of students as long as Mills is a woman's college; it's not impossible, but I don't see it.

Chall: What was your relationship with the dean of students?

Bennett: I had a very happy relationship. When I became dean of the faculty we had as dean of students an old pro, Anna Rose Hawkes. Her husband had been dean of Columbia College in New York. Two years after he became president (and before my appointment), Lynn discovered that he had the wrong dean of students—I think he had appointed her—but two years proved that she really did belong back in the secondary level, where she had come from.

Bennett: He had a chance to appoint Ann Hawkes, and he did. Ann did much for Mills. She brought a sense of competence; there is nothing tentative about Ann Hawkes. She was a biggish woman, noisy, and very good. Worked hard, knew a lot of the tricks of the trade already. She had been dean, I think, of students, at George Washington University, and had, I think, served as a volunteer mainly when she married Herbert Hawkes.

She did get herself confused. She referred to herself frequently as "the dean of Mills College". In one sense it was true because Lynn learned a lot from her. He was still a green young president, and she was an experienced person devoted to him, and he to her. She taught him a lot. She taught me a lot. But she was very hard for me to deal with as an equal. I was not up to it.

That's when the title of provost got introduced, to make it perfectly clear who was in charge of the college if the president was off the premises. It was a much more graceful way of doing it than trying to get Ann Hawkes to pipe down, because you couldn't. There wasn't a mean bone in her body, and I got along extremely well with her, I lived to realize that she was at daggers drawn with other officers of the college because her heavy hand got in their way. But she never did anything but support me, and I was very careful not to undercut her, very careful indeed. But I could live with that. Her successor was not a success.

Chall: Is that the person with whom Easton Rothwell had difficulty?

Bennett: No, it was Lynn who had difficulty.

Chall: Oh, I see. Easton Rothwell had difficulty with some dean of students, I think.

Bennett: Yes, and so did Rob with the same one, and that came to a very ungraceful end, which I shall always be sorry about, because I had no trouble with that dean at all. She's the kind of person who would pick up her telephone and say, "So and so has come to see me, I think this is your bailiwick, not mine, may I send her down?" She would expect me to do the same. We kept out of each other's hair, we were very good friends, and I never suffered any interference. But I do know that faculty members who got in her way got the rough edge of her tongue. She treated them in a way that she never tried with me. I don't know how much of it was that I gave her plenty of room to operate in, and how much of it was that we liked each other, saw a lot of each other socially.

She was essentially an appointment that I had a great deal to do with because we had made a bad appointment of a dean who, after two years, had to be told that she wouldn't be reappointed, and

Bennett: she wisely left at the end of that year rather than waiting for the third year to roll around. She injected herself too much into student affairs, she was running them too hard.

Chall: Oh, that's not done at Mills.

Bennett: Not done. She had certain peculiarities of personality that were hard to deal with. I had good relations with her. When she told me that the president had told her she must go she said, "I'm sorry I let you down." Short of saying things that would ruin a woman's self-esteem, there was nothing that I could say except, "You didn't let me down."

I met her frequently at professional meetings thereafter. She went from one deanship to another. I think the fact that she changed so often was perhaps significant, but when I last heard from her she was still chief administrative officer in some Florida institution of higher learning. I think she would do better, probably, in a larger place, where she could manipulate figures and ideas in the general rather than dealing with people. But be that as it may, there was no question but what she had to go from us, we couldn't digest her.

Chall: So then you made another appointment.

Bennett: We made an appointment which was made in the last semester of Lynn White's tenure. He really let me make the choice, and I suppose that may be one reason why I worked so well with that gal. She came to us recommended by the assistant dean of students at Berkeley, and the dean. She had been a member of the dean's staff there. Katherine Towle was very kind, we had known each other, she was an older Theta. I belonged to that sorority. She had always been friendly when we needed staff, and so forth. She had given me the lead, and I found this a very good relationship. Now she did not do so well with Easton or Rob Wert, and I think that the fact that I was a woman maybe helped our relationship. I never saw the side of her that I saw her exhibit toward the others sometimes.

Chall: Toward the men?

Bennett: Yes. Another thing was that she was very protective of the records of students for all the right reasons, for all the reasons that the deaning fraternity always advertises. But she had no tact about saying, "You know, we don't let student records go out of the office, but I will find this question that you asked. I'll find out what it is, and I'll make an appointment to see you about it; we'll go over it." "No," was her answer.

Bennett: There came to be a great animosity toward her, I'm afraid. I did not feel that I enjoyed a relationship with her that enabled me to say that to her directly. But she was fired in a most unprofessional, most ungracious way. This was simply because that was one of the hard things to do that Rob Wert did not like to do, and did not do very well.

Chall: But it was his job to do it?

Bennett: It was his job to do it, and he did it. I felt very badly about that because he didn't give me a sufficient warning. I knew things were going from bad to worse, but he did not say, "You know, I have an appointment this afternoon at such and such an hour, and you better be ready to stand by, because this is..." something like that. She called me to tell me what had befallen and I was horrified.

Chall: You didn't expect it? You had no reason to, I suppose?

More on the Black Student Movement

Bennett: No. I think he may have thought he had told me. But it came very hard to his gentle nature to come right out and say the hard thing. On the other hand, it was the same characteristic that, in a sense, made him so good when we had our really bad times with the black students.

The young revolutionary that I spoke of, whom we got courtesy of a former Mills student, who knew the girl's mother, and thought this was a good, sound, black family for Mills to sponsor--oh, that girl was a terrible pain in the neck--she was a member of the Upward Bound program the first year she came, and she was the trained revolutionary who just got everybody up in arms. They were saying dreadful things about the woman who was directing the Upward Bound program in the summertime. Just terrible things.

There was a meeting. Rob called a meeting at his house, I think it was, and she was there, and the students were there, and they were attacking her in his presence, verbally, all verbally. I heard it from her that he moved around behind her chair, and at one point, when students were getting very rough, he said, "I'm the president of this college, and I will not stand for any officer on my staff to be abused as you're doing now. I won't have it." She said she always appreciated this statement.

In this dreadful day, the same girl had stirred up the black students to open rebellion. They promised to invade the trustees' meeting, which was scheduled for later in that week.

Bennett: Well, Gene Trefethen was the president of our board of trustees, and one cannot be a Gene Trefethen without knowing a trick or two. So, all of a sudden it turned out that the president of the college and I were to meet with the trustees informally in Mr. Trefethen's office. I don't know how I got the word, I guess Rob said, "Be ready, I'll drive you down." But at any rate, we got down there, and Gene said, "Well, the whole board's here, we might as well have a board meeting." [laughs]

Chall: He had quietly invited everybody to his office?

Bennett: Yes. Rob looked drawn and tired by this time, I can tell you. Oh it was a grueling day. This meeting was called because the faculty had adopted a report which had been devised by some of our Young Turks, but had not been formally approved. The students were demanding that this be accepted by the faculty, you know, giving them practically the kitchen stove. Some younger, more innocent members of the faculty were supporting this. The faculty, regrettably, in that meeting, which had been infiltrated by militant black students, voted on it, and accepted it. It was illegal for them to act in certain of those areas; they didn't have the authority. Dear Wally Haas said, "I suppose what we need to know is simply this, did the faculty operate under duress?" Rob said, "I think it is fair to state that they did." So then Gene said, "All right, then we go on from there."

The faculty Educational Policies Committee spent the whole weekend at the president's house sorting out what the areas were in that document which were a faculty function, and what the areas were that the faculty had no business voting on. The amended statement of what the faculty had to consider was then presented to the next formal meeting of the Educational Policies Committee, and from there went with recommendation to the full faculty for action. By this time it had been winnowed down to something that the faculty could vote on, and could work with.

Chall: By that time they weren't being infiltrated?

Bennett: No, that was over. That had been done.

Chall: They had made their point, whatever the point was?

Bennett: Yes. I must say, that Rob was intelligent in how he handled this. For one thing, we got into the program of Upward Bound a very bright young man, who had been identified by one of our faculty members, as well as some of our alumnae, as a very sound teacher of American History at Menlo-Atherton High School, I think it was. He came to be the head of our Upward Bound program.

Chall: After the woman that they didn't like?

Bennett: Yes. The woman they didn't like unfortunately was from Texas and had a southern accent. She was completely competent, but because of her southern background--and I think partly because she was a woman--remember we're dealing with black adolescents right out of West Oakland--on two scores she was suspect.

She was actually very well qualified. She knew more about working with black academic officers than all the rest of the colleagues put together. She could defend the rights of the black students without fear. There was one time--we had a very irritable assistant plant manager, and he had caught a boy in what he thought was misbehavior. The black man who was the assistant director of our summer Upward Bound program had come to her in great distress and said, "You've got to stop this. I can't stop this man." She walked right out and called him by name, and she said, "Put that boy down. Take your hands off him." She made him. She was not afraid to do this to a white man in front of a black man and boy. No, she was good. It was simply that you couldn't be a Texan with a strong Texas accent and succeed in this role. You couldn't get the black community with you.

Chall: She was white?

Bennett: Yes. When she retired we invited the public school people that she had known in her career, and some of them Oakland public school people she had known in her career before she ever came to Oakland. The very first person who arrived at that party was Marcus Foster whom she had known in Pennsylvania. He came with his white assistant. It was not long before he was dead.

Chall: That's right. Those were very difficult years.

Bennett: She had many black friends and former colleagues, so that theoretically she was ideal, practically speaking it didn't work. It had not worked when we had white males directing that program because they were all of the do-gooder variety, heart of gold, idealistic, no experience. We righted it.

He [Ike Tribble] came at Rob's invitation. He had his ups and downs with various faculty members because he was not above pulling rank, being the president's number one man in this field, and he and Pat [Patricia Brauel, dean of students] didn't get along together at all. I never had five minutes trouble with him.

When I went back to be acting president, this time he had been boosted up into some kind of an administrative role in the president's staff, and he was looking for a full-time job elsewhere. He had completed the doctorate at Stanford, or was in the act of completing it. Our relations were such that when I got to be the acting president for that two-month period, and discovered that the accounts of our Upward Bound program, by this

Bennett: time run by somebody else, were in a mess, I called him and said, "Ike, you've got to get me out of this. Straighten it up. I don't know how you're going to do it, but you do it." And he did it. He is now the executive director of a large foundation in Florida, McKnight, I think it is. I read about him in the pages of the Chronicle of Higher Education lately.

Chall: He's the person you were telling me earlier had all of the right qualifications whom you had appointed after the woman?

Bennett: Yes. He grew up in New Jersey. He was not a southern black, but he could speak the southern black tongue. It was very enlightening to hear him when he talked with the students, the black students in the Upward Bound program, or their parents. He would take on the cadence of black English perfectly well. But I could trust him.

In one of our summer programs in which we had boys and girls in one residence hall--they were separated in some way--the girls complained of a prowler. One had found one in her room. The boys in the program were about to protect the sisters, and what would solve the problem would be taking down a partition--I think this was the way it went, something of this order--between the corridor where the boys lived, and the corridor where the girls lived, giving the boys freedom to respond to calls for help.

Ike came in. I recognized a desperate faculty member if I ever saw one, and he said, "We have got to put the boys in a position of helping out, because we have not solved this problem of who's pestering someone, and we're going to have an explosion here if we don't do it." I had no hesitation at all in calling the plant manager and saying, "It's got to be done," and even dealing with the treasurer, who said, "This will cost us money." I said, "I don't care. It has to be done." I trusted his ability to handle the boys and girls, and I trusted his integrity in dealing with me on it. It worked.

There was a prowler that we caught during the regular session when he invaded the room of one of our Asian students. He had been working for ages getting up over balconies into sleeping porches, and roaming through them.

Chall: The same person, you think, all these months?

Bennett: Oh, yes. No one was so happy as Ike when we finally found him. Talk about changing relationships with colleagues! [laughs]

Functions as Dean

Chall: Talk about changing relationships! I understand that your door was always open. That was a decision that you made early on?

Bennett: It seemed to me essential. I couldn't function otherwise in my relations with faculty, and this is true, and with students. I had to deal with the sticky ones, where students complained about faculty. I learned quite a lot of things about how you figure out whether it's a real complaint, or whether somebody just is using the avenue because she's stressed about a bad grade or something.

Chall: Then you would have to take that up with the dean of students or with the faculty?

Bennett: The faculty. I remember saying, in what seems to me now a rather melodramatic way, to one young faculty member who didn't stay with us long, "Your credentials for teaching German are good, but we cannot tolerate you if you can't keep the bedroom and the bathroom out of the classroom."

Chall: That's well stated. How did he react?

Bennett: He got the point.

Chall: The faculty began to call you, then, Dean Bennett. How did you feel about that?

Bennett: Most of them didn't change their mode of address.

Chall: Oh, they didn't? I guess just the young ones?

Bennett: No, we didn't get too fancy. I realized that I had reached a turning point in my career when the number of people who "knew me when," was significantly less, because I was in the job long enough so that some people didn't know I had ever taught. I taught eighteen years, I think, at the place, before I became dean.

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Bennett: It got to the point where most of them regarded me simply as another administrator. One of the younger colleagues--I laugh when I call him younger because he's a graybeard now, and two daughters have graduated from college, and one's in high school--I can remember his saying in one committee meeting, when they were hammering out this statement of what the responsibilities of the faculty were, and the privileges, that he didn't want such and such a suggestion if it was from the administration, from the "establishment".

Chall: It surely made you feel undesirable when you're part of that side.

Bennett: But I must say, I didn't fight the faculty members. I got yelled at once by a former faculty member, I can remember. I had taken the hard stand and supported a faculty member's decision not to certify that a student was ready for the awarding of a professional degree. It was not a matter of the bachelor's degree, I think it was a professional degree in occupational therapy, or something of the sort. This was a returning student who, according to the former faculty member--who had been her teacher when she was an undergraduate in earlier years, and was on the side of that student--everything that that student did, including gathering tons of material, seemed just right and proper. The sharper evaluation of the teacher was that this was a lot of junk, and didn't have anything to do with it, or not enough to do with the salient features. I had to back the faculty person. This woman let fly. She was furious.

I will say that once when I encountered her on the Berkeley campus--she taught at one point, she was a member of the Women's Faculty Club--she saw me as I walking in academic procession down from the Greek Theatre, and she mentioned my name loudly enough, so that I looked up, and saw her. She was grinning from ear to ear, and waving at me. She didn't bear the grudge, but I bore the scars for the rest of my life. I had never been shouted at, so. No, people were polite. It was not that they weren't forthright, they were. If they didn't approve, they would say so. But they didn't call names to my face, and they didn't hurl uncomplimentary remarks at me. Only this lady.

Chall: Well, you had countered her too hard from her point of view. You didn't back down.

Bennett: Oh, I couldn't back down.

Chall: You wouldn't have, I guess?

Bennett: No, one has to back up a teacher. After all, you hire them for their competence. Once, I cannot remember the details of it, but once a student brought me a record, all the writing she had ever done for this particular professor, and it was absolutely true that there was no way, from the record--and there was a lot of written work--you could justify the grade she got. I think I persuaded that faculty member that this amounted to a clerical error, actually, in recording. But change grades, no. We did insist on straightforward treatment of students. There couldn't be anything whimsical or quixotic about the grading. I lived through many vacillations about how to grade.

Chall: I'm sure there are always these uncertain areas.

Bennett: Well, I think that any lively institution gives faculty members, who have a bee in their bonnet, a chance to make the case. Every once in a while you do the swing of the pendulum. It's as predictable as anything. If you live long enough in an academic environment, you go from one extreme to the other.

Changes in Curriculum to Meet Changing Expectations

Chall: In ideas of grading? Or in the attitudes toward students?

Bennett: Yes, but also in attitudes toward curriculum. For example, Easton Rothwell was just as convinced when he came to office, as Lynn White had been when he came, that things needed changing. Easton chose to pare back the curriculum to the liberal arts core, to essentials.

His particular curricular thrust was in the direction of Asian studies. We had had them before, but he got money—I think it was part of our Ford money—and mounted a series of faculty seminars, in which faculty members from all different disciplines met with the late Professor Harold Fisher of Stanford, and talked about Asian materials, and the relevance of Asian materials for their own research. We got an enormous number, considering the size of our faculty, to Asia. We facilitated their getting summer Fulbrights to India, or Taiwan, and motivated those who had sabbaticals to take them in Asia, and did quite a bit in familiarizing a broad spectrum of the faculty with the Asian presence in our world, and with the relevance for their work of Asian sources, and materials, and people.

Chall: Yes. I also remember that he was interested in promoting the Russian language, I think, and got into a little trouble.

Bennett: He tried that several times. We had several troubles with that. We did offer it for a while in several guises. But the trouble is that the student interest in curriculum, and in participating in curriculum ran ahead of their knowledge about the subject. They were quite willing to advocate strongly the addition of courses that they had no intention of taking. When we got into the realm of ethnic studies under Rob's administration, we had instances of students insisting on the teaching of the Chinese language, and not being able to recruit a class for the young teacher that we had hired for them.

Bennett: It fell to me--the business of gathering together our Student Ethnic Studies Committee and saying, "Okay, you mandated this, now you dredge up the students for it. Because we've committed ourselves by contract to a teacher." And they did. They would come through with the necessary five. We published the facts, as far back as Aurelia's day, that we would feel free to cancel any course for which fewer than five students registered.

The Ethnic Studies Program

Bennett: That was one of the things that made the Ethnic Studies program so difficult. The students were great on advocating what should be in the courses, and it was very interesting to see these young women work. They would go off into the public institutions in the area which were under quite a different kind of pressure, and also had a very different student body, and would come back with reams, and reams, and reams of mimeographed material about what should go into every course, and then they couldn't see why Mills couldn't turn right around and give all these courses.

The Hispanic students acted as an entity, and for a while the black students did, until Ike Tribble got them by the scruff of the neck and taught them what was really to their self-interest about the business of learning first, and sounding off afterwards.

Chall: Who helped them understand that?

Bennett: Ike, who was our model director of our Upward Bound program. He kept drumming into the youngsters who came in Upward Bound, and he kept drumming into the students who were part of our Ethnic Studies program, that their main job, as well as their main opportunity at college was to learn to use the English language well. With the Upward Bound students he stressed the importance of mathematics, and with the connivance of counselors in the schools throughout Oakland, he got them convinced that learning how to cope with the language and the number system was the first step.

Chall: That then made them a part of the Mills student body without separating them that much? I mean they were willing to accept it without fighting, using the so-called mau-mau tactics--?

Bennett: We have two different things getting intermingled here. One was our Upward Bound program, and I think our Upward Bound program still goes on. The other was the regularly registered Mills students who happened to be black.

Chall: Did he interact with them all?

Bennett: Oh, yes, he did. He was their unofficial counselor for a long time. The really remarkable woman who was his secretary, name of Bonnie Guiton, was the one who did the real counseling for the girls. She was worth her weight in gold. For a time we occupied offices across from each other in the administration building when Ike was director of the Upward Bound program, but also held other administrative posts under Rob Wert. She was a tremendous asset because the black students flocked to her partly because she was so beautiful and so well-dressed. She's gone to greener fields now on the East Coast, but she was a remarkable young woman.*

We did try to make use of such assets and nobody made a thing of it. She was never formally a counselor at that stage of her career. At one point, how she did it I will never know, she got a bachelor's degree from Mills, and she got a master's I think from Hayward State, or it may have been from Mills, and she went on to a doctorate. Her husband had a heart attack, and I don't know how she survived with a small child, and this demanding job, and her academic program, but it was just sheer native ability, apparently. Very smart woman. Before she left she had become formally a member of the dean of students staff.

I felt so proud of her when she came back in the early days of Mary Metz's administration. She came back with a group of other Mills alumnae talking about women in the business world, and in the areas where women had been less noticeable, or nonexistent before. There she was, in the very toned down dress that she affected late in her career. She was just a beautiful fashion plate when she was Ike's secretary, but she was now dressed in very severe business suits, had her hair closely cropped, and she was dressing a part that she had chosen for herself.

And do you know, the thing that is good to remember is that when she was on the secretarial staff of Kaiser Industries, and when Kaiser, as an enlightened employer, began to see what needed to be done to straighten out the workplace, she was given the most prominent desk, right out there where the whole world could see. I think she was in the executive suite, and I think she sort of monitored the people coming in, and so forth, got them into the right pigeonholes. She was right out there to see. This was so long before student uprisings, that in the flick of a wrist she became a member of the Mills College staff, when we needed it.

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*Bonnie Guiton has recently been appointed Assistant Secretary of Education in Washington, D.C. M.W.B.

Chall: We were going to continue to talk about the development of the Ethnic Studies program. You said something about your meeting Herman Blake and his part in the program.

Bennett: I had met Herman Blake as a teacher. What we had done when the black students began demanding-- Well, actually, the crisis came at the time of the Kathleen Cleaver visit. The faculty was eager to meet them half-way. That is not quite the right expression, but was eager to do what it could in terms of meeting their demands. We have always used another word; I can't remember what. We added some courses, and some people.

One of the people added was Paul Williams, who came to us as director of Ethnic Studies, and another one was Herman Blake, who had already been identified by one of our regular faculty members as a superb person, and had indeed given lectures on the Mills campus. We had had Martin Luther King and his wife on our campus to meet with our freshman humanities course, years before any of this commotion had started.

In one way the faculty of Mills was miles ahead of the game in terms of introducing the students to this sort of information and experience. What actually happened, of course, was that nothing that had been instigated by the college was given any credit. Only that which was instigated by the students themselves was given credit. That was their evaluation.

I remember a perfectly stunned student, who came to me and demanded we do something about having black faculty. I said to her, "I suppose you don't know James White of the music department, do you?" Well of course she didn't, because he was our specialist on secondary school music education. He had an M.A. from Mills, and was a member of the teaching staff of the Oakland Public Schools. But we used him for that part-time specialty, and he was regularly listed on our catalogue. I said, "I suppose you don't know, because you're not a music major, but James White is Black." That threw her.

I remember when early on at Mills I was asked by a member of our very small economics staff to be on the committee for a master's thesis by one of the graduate students. He was careful to tell me--and this was one of the most liberal people we had, but this, mind you, was back in the thirties--he said, "This student is not on campus very much. For one thing she's getting a master's degree in sociology/economics, and therefore is not in undergraduate classes; she's in some advanced classes, but very small ones. People don't see her, don't know her. I just want to

Bennett: let you know she's black." She was. This was not being kept under wraps, it simply was not being given any attention. But in the late thirties we had one black candidate.

I don't know when Jim got his degree, but it was early on. There was no discrimination at Mills. It's that you didn't have candidates, and we were not up to the business of getting them in by hook or crook, which is what would have been one step wiser.

Chall: Is that what you did in the sixties? Is that the reason that you had so many more black students?

Bennett: We made a very grave effort. Our admissions office made a very, very strong effort to get more. It was partly a result of the fact that for financial reasons we needed to take ones who didn't require total scholarship support. For political reasons, I suppose, we needed to take Oakland residents as much as we could. We had a very heavy infusion of an almost indigestible number of black students, many of whom had never thought of going to college in their lives, had come from families that had never thought of college for them.

Chall: So they weren't really prepared?

Bennett: They weren't oriented toward it. Now this is not true of all. But we had too many of ones who were there to make the black protest first, and to break down the barriers of a lily-white institution, as they thought it. It was, but it was through no action of the college that it was so. As the movement in favor of more opportunity for black students swept West, we began to get words from alumnae as to why we didn't have more black students, et cetera, et cetera. It was like a tidal wave moving West.

We had our own upsurge in black population as a result of World War II, when they came in droves to become a part of our military complex, and part of our supporting industrial complex. Then the established black citizens of Oakland tended to move to Berkeley. So that we had had established in West Oakland--which was the traditional location of black people here--a much inflated population, and many of them strangers to the west, and to California. As a result we had a tremendous shift of the black population.

It was from the newly arrived families that we got students who, if they were bright enough, let's face it, saw the opportunity in the black movement as it came along, and either capitalized on it themselves, or were the willing pawns of people who manipulated.

Bennett: I have no question but what Kathleen Cleaver was a figurehead when she visited our campus, and, with a lot of students, disrupted a faculty meeting. But if you read the recent statements about Kathleen Cleaver and her comments on her own life, you realize how much playacting was going into it. Of course, the students didn't know that, and they didn't know that they were sometimes being led by these black leaders who came to see us, and sometimes being misled.

Chall: Do you think that the demands that they made were wise, at least that some of them pushed Mills forward in some areas faster than it would have moved otherwise?

Bennett: I don't think that all the demands were wise, but that we were made to move faster than we might otherwise have done is certain.

During this time Martin Luther King, Junior was assassinated. The students immediately wanted to have a memorial service, and of course, the ring leaders of this--ring leaders is a pejorative tone that I don't mean--the ones who were instigating this, were black students. I had a talk with the--then chaplain about it, who happened to be a sociologist by training, and was teaching sociology for us as well as being chaplain. He was a Canadian, which helped. It happened that the chairman of our chapel committee was a white student. The chapel committee itself had a quite a few perfectly sincere black students in it.

Bennett: I said to our chaplain, "Do you think it's possible to have the memorial service that the students want so much without its becoming a totally black affair? I think that this is a national tragedy, and it is not a private wake for black students. We need to make it a college function, not a black students' function." He said he would do his best, and he did.

We had some black clergy in the area who were invited to participate. He participated, and the chairman of the chapel committee participated, so it was a mix. One of the black ministers from Oakland took the occasion, when he was supposed to be eulogizing Martin Luther King, Junior, of castigating Mills for not having more black faculty, more black students, and so forth. It was simply bad taste.

No one could fight back, no one could rebut him, and it was out of place. He was trembling with emotion when he said it, and he meant it, so one dealt with very strong feelings. You know, there were two hundred years of persecution, but the present generation was not really responsible for that, and couldn't be expected single-handedly overnight to work the revolution that was about to take place. So it was just a plain hard season to live through.

Chall: How did you feel about it?

Bennett: Well, I spent so much time putting out brush fires that I don't know that I ever analyzed my thoughts. One had to deal with problems as they came up, and in the light of the best information that one could bring to bear on the subject. As we began to acquire black staff we were fortunate in never acquiring one who did not see the picture and the plight of the college. I think we were partly plain lucky, but it was partly care in the selection. We tended very quickly to learn to rely on these members of our own staff who had status because of their skin color, but who were carefully enough selected from high school people, as well as available college people to help out. Herman Blake was one of those who responded to the call, and was simply magnificent.

Chall: I think before I discovered we had problems with the tape recorder, you told me that in one of Herman Blake's classes there was a young woman who dropped because she thought that he only gave A's.

Bennett: Yes, to black students, but nothing better than a C to a white student.

Chall: I would like you to tell me that story again.

Bennett: I was not willing to insult Herman by asking him if this were true. I didn't know him well enough at that time, so I consulted Paul Williams, who was married to a Mills alumna, and who was a career oriented young black aspiring toward the headship of a community college. He, for a few years, was our director of Ethnic Studies, when we appointed such an officer. This had been part of what the students had asked for, of course. He was totally acceptable. The only flaw in his appointment was that he was trained as an educational administrator in agencies that recognize this specialization and stressed it in their training. His concept of what an administrator did, and what a teacher did were quite different from what was indigenous to Mills. But nonetheless, we got along very well.

When I said to him, "Paul, what in the world do I do about this student, and what do I do about Herman?" He said, "Talk to him, he's as relaxed as possible." He said, "I can assure you that the academic black has a rotten time of it right now, and he knows exactly what the problem is."

So I did then talk to Herman, and I said, "I don't for a minute believe this, but I need to talk with you about it." He said, "I get it both ways. The students who are black, a fair proportion of them, won't do a lick of work, and they expect As." He said, "They're going to be awfully surprised when they get failing grades, or D's, or C's, whatever." He said, "They don't

Bennett: realize that I mean it when I say they've got to work for th grades, and they don't know what I'm talking about when I say being black does not give them the content of my course." He me the paper of a student who had written the best paper in thi huge class, ninety students who poured into it--

Chall: That's a big class at Mills.

Bennett: We didn't think that we could close the door on it. He was willing to take all comers. We got reading help for him from one of his graduate students at Santa Cruz. He promptly sent me the best paper, which was written by a white student. He was an enormous help in separating wheat from chaff. He could do it equally well for black students, because he was not afraid, of course, to talk turkey to them. Nor was Ike Tribble, of our Upward Bound program, afraid to talk turkey, nor was Paul Williams. So once we had these people in place, we were much more secure. As you know, Herman Blake went from U.C. Santa Cruz, where he was provost of one of the colleges, to the presidency of Tougaloo College.

We had a black woman in the dean of students office that we had recruited from a high school faculty, and she helped us out of a terrible mess. It was when Angela Davis came to speak on our campus at student invitation. We had said to the black students, "Yes, you can have her if you will police the meeting. See to it that strangers are kept out, and that order is maintained." They, and the one or two black people we had been able to recruit took it on, and they did their job.

There was a closed meeting for black students afterwards with Angela Davis in the student union. It happened that one of our white students had a bad experience. Angela Davis had with her two young men who must have been from the Black Panthers; they were in uniform. One stood on either side of her. I suspect that the odd-looking boxes on the lectern were guns. I don't know, but it was sort of grim. However, the speech was given, and the group broke up, and as I was walking back to the office of the dean I caught up to this young woman who had been recruited by her, and said, "Did you enjoy the speech?" She said, "I think Angela needs to get a good night's sleep and to write a new speech." [laughs]

But at any rate, that afternoon, while the secret meeting was going on with the black students and Angela Davis, a student came into my office, and my secretary said, "You had better see her, she's mad as a wet hen, and very upset." So she came in. She had tried to get to her office, which was on the staff of the weekly newspaper of the college, the only access to which was through the room in which this meeting was going on. She had done

Bennett: what everybody has done before--it's a great big room they were meeting in--and she had simply to move through a corner of it from one door to the other.

She started to do that, and the guards, who had transposed themselves to the porch of the student union, not only challenged her, but forcibly were going to restrain her. They put their hands on her, at which she turned and fled; she came right to my office. She was white as a sheet, trembling all over. I sat her down, and I called this woman in the dean of student's office, and said, in a word, "Help. Come. We have this to deal with."

So she came up, and she sat down, and she heard the story from the student. She said--I will never forget this, because she clearly had organized her thoughts, first thing's first, and worked out a solution--she said, "In the first place, let me apologize. This should never have happened. You had every right to go to your office. The young men had no right to deny you access, and especially they had no right to lay hands on you, and I apologize for their behavior." She said, "You must understand that black people at this stage in history do not like to have their disagreements before an audience of white people. That is the reason for the exclusivity of this meeting, and that's why they want no one with a white face there. Now, I will accompany you to your office right now, and we will go through the barricade, whatever it is, and get you to your office, and you either stay there if you want, or I'll wait with you while you come away. I will take care of this."

So she did that. She didn't need any prompting from anybody to do it. This is what pleased me about her behavior. She could sort things out for the student. Both the white ones, and those rambunctious boys in their fatigues, their camouflage material uniforms on the front porch. They looked terribly fierce. We just did have that kind of competence.

Chall: That was really fortunate; you needed that. Mills gave opportunities to people who didn't have the Ph.D., but were capable?

Bennett: Oh Lord, yes. It was our only way of moving quickly, and I found myself envying institutions that could afford to take time, and I realize that many, including the University of California, took their own sweet time. Not that they didn't move quickly for their own pace, but you can't move a ponderous institution like the university as quickly as we could move at Mills. That enabled us to move more quickly.

For a while there, I think it was Rob Wert, who used to taunt the then-chancellor of the university about Mills having a higher proportion of black faculty than Berkeley had. But we were, of

Bennett: course, dealing in a seller's market, and the eastern insti with huge endowments, began sifting over the candidates avai and paying outrageous salaries to get the people they wanted. would have gone down the drain--I'm not sure if we would--if we hadn't had more flexibility.

A few years later in Robert Wert's administration, we had a black member of our board of trustees, Jim Gibbs, who was one of the handsomest men I have ever seen in my life. Very tall, very well put together, very bright. He was an anthropologist by training, and had a dean's post down there, as I remember it, at Stanford.

Chall: He was one of your academic trustees?

Bennett: That's right. Rob Wert used to shake his head and said, "If only we could get an appointment to the faculty that was the equivalent of Jim Gibbs." Well, you don't find them growing on the trees, and you don't find them in a hurry. If they are available waiting to be plucked, a prestigious institution, like a Stanford, or a Harvard gets first crack at them, and why wouldn't they wait for the best opportunity? So we had to select for quality, degrees if we could find them, but quality all the time.

Later on, we began to get people who were possible to interview for jobs at Mills. I remember one episode which tells you something about the development of our history in this sort of thing. Ike Tribble, by this time, was teaching a course which was--I can't remember its name--it may have been a lineal descendant of Herman Blake's "The Black Experience", but at any rate, it had two or three white girls in it, as well as about fifteen blacks.

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Bennett: He said, "Someone is coming through here who looks to me like a possibility for an appointment to Mills. Will you come to the class?" I did go, and she was the kind of person that we encountered now and again, who--I think we were looking for another director of Ethnic Studies--she had all the technical requirements, and none of the personal attributes, and the students picked it up like that. I could see that they did. I didn't say a word in class; I just listened. Afterwards he came round and said, "What did you think?" I said, "Ike, she's not good enough for us. The students knew that." He said, "You're right."

So there was progress, but it was partly because we had decent people at all levels. Where possible, as in the case of Bonnie, we egged them on. As somebody said, we grew our own.

Bennett: Some man I consulted in Washington--because a faculty member knew somebody who knew somebody--about the possibility of getting an Hispanic woman, said, "They're scarce as hens' teeth. Are you prepared to pay at least eighteen thousand a year?" We weren't paying our full professors that, at the time. He said, "If you can't do that, grow your own." Well it worked in the case of Bonnie, it worked in the case of Ike. While he was with us he got his Ph.D. from Stanford, or Ed.D., maybe, I can't remember which. We were able to put them on the track.

The best director of Ethnic Studies we ever had was a young woman who was a Wellesley graduate, Francile Wilson. Then we had the picture. I was able to call the person who had directed her work at Wellesley because I had met her at an AAUW meeting. We talked about her, and she said, "She's extremely promising. She's inexperienced. She has only a B.A." She had applied for the job, she knew that we were looking for a director of Ethnic Studies. She said, "I know a woman's college," et cetera, et cetera. She held one of the Danforth graduate fellowships for women at one stage in her career. Her husband was a candidate here [U.C. Berkeley] for the doctorate in American history, and that's why we were able to have her.

Chall: She was going to come out anyway?

Bennett: She was already here, because he was studying at Cal. He got a job when he got his doctorate. In the meantime she was keeping herself flexible so that she could go where he went. He went to the University of Pennsylvania on a regular appointment in the history department, a career ladder kind of appointment. I still hear from her now and then.

But it made all the difference in the world having a Mills kind of person. Now, if she had been a little farther along in her academic career, she would have been better off, because our social scientists were a little stuffy about taking a gamble on this youngster, who clearly was headed for distinction. She's got her doctorate since.

Chall: A rich experience for her.

Bennett: Yes. She could talk in comprehensible terms to our faculty, at least those who were not in principle set against the advancement of one with only a B.A. We could have made further progress. But she knew she was in the bastion of unreconstructed conservatives, which sounds crazy for a social sciences department. But they were going to have the respectability if no inspiration, and if they had embraced her, and forwarded her efforts, instead of finding reasons not to accept them because they did not come from the voice of experience, we would all have been better off.

Bennett: However, she made do very well, and she knew perfectly well that she didn't depend on her success at Mills for her ultimate achievement. I was awfully glad that I was acquainted with her, and was able to write letters on her behalf in support of her graduate fellowship from the Danforth. It helped her in one of her years of study, after she left.

Chall: The students did accept her?

Bennett: Oh, Lord, yes. They were enchanted by her.

Chall: Those were difficult times.

Bennett: Oh, yes, they were.

Chall: I'm reminded of the story that you told me earlier of the black students at the time when they were really making their point, and they came to one of your--was it a Mills picnic?

Bennett: Picnic, yes, an annual picnic on the college Hearth--so called--a lovely rock hearth built on the top of Pine Top. Remind me to tell you a funny story about Pine Top. This was early on in the years of black protest, and I think Easton Rothwell may still have been there, but it could possibly have been after Rob Wert came, because that was when things really got rough. At any rate, the black students were seated in a semicircle of chairs right at the edge of the hearth, which meant at the front of the company. All the rest of the people were on the ground, on the coverings that the plant department always brought out for us to sit on while we had our picnic meal.

These students had taken some of the wooden chairs--which were always there for the infirm, and those who, for some reason or other, couldn't get down to ground level--and had made a circle of them right at the edge of the hearth in full view of everybody, blocking the view of some who couldn't see the stage because they were seated there. They were a circle pointed inward, so they were facing each other, and ostentatiously ignoring the rest of the bunch. I remember seeing among them the one girl we had from the Catlin School in Portland, and this bunch of much less typical Mills students from West Oakland.

They were sitting there occupying quite a lot of space, and being the observed of all observers, when one of our older students came in with a friend. The student was white, her friend was about seven feet tall, and he was dressed in white pants and a white pullover sweater, and he had a trimly cut goatee, and his name was Wilt Chamberlain.

Chall: [Laughs]. And they had to turn around?

Bennett: He was the observed of all observers. It was partly the kind of devilment that Mills students were characteristically doing. It was really a very amusing situation. She had one-upped them.

Of course, later on the sober black students could make a point that it was precisely to the disadvantage of the black student, that a sports figure, or a figure from the arts could succeed where nobody else could. It was a learning experience for everybody, but I always felt a little sorry for students who were in Mills just for four years, which covered the most uncomfortable of those years. However, I think they were always proud that the college could make adjustments quickly, and did.

We found a person to appoint full-time to our mathematics department on the faculty of the University of California. A low-level faculty position, but he was available for appointment, and we needed a mathematician. He was in the Department of Mathematics, and he was our first full-scale appointment.

After a while he left just because he really was not in for an academic career. He settled for a career, I think at the high school level, and is doing well. I met him in a Safeway recently with one of his two children. He married a biologist, who was a teacher in the public schools, or in community college, I don't know where. He's grown a little fatter, but we had a happy reunion, and he introduced his boy. He's apparently doing quite well. He's better placed there. He couldn't respond to the goading of his faculty friends to get on with the business of being a college-level academic. But he was a full-time faculty member, and he was therefore very visible.

Chall: When you needed him he was there.

Bennett: He was needed, and he was not in any way out to trip up the college, or its officers, or its faculty. He caught fire when he became a supporter of Ron Dellums. He spent the time that he had at his disposal before Ron Dellums' first successful campaign, campaigning not for Ron Dellums, but to register voters, and he specialized on registering black voters, and he went all over the place getting black voters. I remember meeting him in the hall of our administration building after the election and he said, "We did it, we did it! We used the system and it worked."

Chall: That was important.

Bennett: Very important. Those little steps came along. We had an enormous meeting for Ron Dellums on the Mills campus at Ike Tribble's request. We had something like nine hundred people in our Haas Pavilion, which was built to seat just under a thousand, because a whole different code, a building code comes into force if it seats a thousand.

Bennett: We don't usually have that many in it, but it has chairs that come down from all sides so that it becomes an arena. It was a very impressive meeting, and he was impressive. I think he's less impressive now than he was then. He was on the rise then.

Chall: Probably you could talk for hours and hours about those periods.

Bennett: Oh, forever, and I have raved on about it. In the case of Bonnie Guiton and Kaiser and in the case of the Levi Strauss outfit in San Francisco, it was very interesting for the college to have the higher-ups in those enterprises right on our board of trustees. Because they had always been there, or their families had always been there, it went deep into the forward-looking, imaginative behavior of business men in San Francisco or the East Bay who were humanitarians, and interested in the cultural life of the city as well as the business community. We had wonderful boards of directors at Mills.

I used to take tremendous delight--when Ellie Heller was chairman of the board of regents, and Bill Roth was on the board--in predicting, when I read an article about this, that, or the other issue--(I guess it was before she was chairman, it was when she was on the board, succeeding her husband)-- predicting the way they would vote. And sure enough. [laughter] I always took very great pride that both of them cut their teeth on the Mills' board.

Chall: You said you had a funny story about Pine Top. Why not tell it now before we move on to another subject.

Bennett: We had good relations with the Oakland Police Department and every once in a while a police car would drive through the campus, often taking a run up to Pine Top which was relatively isolated. One such officer encountered President Rothwell on campus and stopped to tell him that he had met a rather "crazy" man hiking on the road to Pine Top. The officer had engaged him in conversation and found that he claimed to be a guest staying at the President's House but he (the officer) said, "I don't know, he said he used to run Russia." It was in fact Alexander Kerensky, one of several distinguished persons recruited from public service or academic realms, here or abroad, to enrich the curricular offerings during short stays on campus. The spectacle of Alexander Kerensky meeting with our handful of students in Russian and with the larger group interested in world affairs was best described by one of the colleagues chuckling over her luncheon date with him: "It was rather like having lunch with Napoleon Bonaparte."*

* See story about Alexander Kerensky in Easton Rothwell, From Mines to Minds, an oral history interview conducted 1984, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1985, pp. 188-192.

Students and College Policy Decisions ##

Chall: We were talking about the student influence at one point in the curriculum, and I guess this came about during the sixties and early seventies. But they also, I understand--I think it was during Dr. Wert's term, arranged it so that two members of the student body were allowed to be members of the board of trustees?

Bennett: I don't know about that. I don't think that's true.

Chall: Well maybe I misunderstood that. My notes are upstairs.

Bennett: I remember the occasion very well, because I had to do something about it. Rob was willing to do this in response to student push, and this was not all black students by any means, all students were beginning to want to be in on the decision-making. Lynn White had always responded to this question about students on the board, he said, "I don't believe in students spending their time and energy spinning their wheels in places where what they do doesn't count. And in any body in which students can be safely outvoted very easily by the grown-ups, it is just useless for them to function. Let them function, and have full sway, in student government, where they really are in charge."

He used to tell this to the students, but of course there came a time when students wouldn't buy it. Partly because students had had some success in moving the world. So we had a period in which giving in to the students, on the theory that they were so much more experienced than students formerly had been, and they were so much brighter, and they knew what was going on in the world, and so forth, we went to excesses doing this, I'm sure. Not just Mills, everybody did, a lot of people did. It was a little easier for Mills to do it with the Black Panthers right at our back door. You know, it was a fact of life that we had a few very uneasy episodes.

So it was taken for granted that students had an interest in this. Rob very innocently said sure, students could have representatives on the Educational Policies Committee of the board. He had forgotten that annually the Educational Policies Committee of the board reviews the whole slate of faculty, everything concerned with their salaries for the last few years, the projected salary for the future, and promotions. This is information that is not given to faculty members. Every individual faculty member had the benefit of confidentiality of his record. To allow students to sit on this would have been preposterous.

Bennett: I can only call it fortunate that this came to a head when I was back for two months as acting president. In a meeting which I attended pro forma because I was the acting president, I said, "We can't have this." The late Lloyd Dinkelspiel was--the junior, the young one, who died too young--was the chairman of that committee. I said, "We simply can't have students having access to private information about the faculty that other faculty members don't have." Just like that, he said, "We'll put it in the hands of the Personnel Committee." This business of faculty promotion and that sort of thing, Salary level was moved right out of the Educational Policies Committee into the Personnel Committee. I don't know what happened after that. It was the immediately available device for protecting the students against--

Chall: Because you couldn't go back on the president's invitation to the students?

Bennett: I didn't feel that one could. But I certainly wasn't going to stand still for students being made party to information of a personal nature about individual faculty members. You really couldn't! If he had thought twice about it, Rob wouldn't either. But the thing is he--this is what the faculty meant by "laid back", he didn't do the homework on this, and he didn't know it by osmosis. He would have had to go back to the--

Chall: He may not have realized, either, that that was the way educational policies operated. He may have thought it was a personnel matter.

Bennett: He may not have realized what was bound to happen, had not thought it through. In that he differed very much from Easton Rothwell, who knew every sentence of every document, and operated accordingly.

Continuing Discussion About Relationships with Presidents and Colleagues

Chall: When I was thinking about your changing relationships with colleagues, I remember that when we first met you told me that you had been in some little faculty dance group with some of the music professors. I wondered whether you had given that up--that was probably when you were a young teacher.

Bennett: I should say immediately that the then-dean of the faculty was in the group as well.

Chall: But then did you give up that kind of informal relationship?

Bennett: Not where it was appropriate. I was a member still of the Women's Faculty Club. We had so few staff members that this was almost peculiar. But I still had faculty status. I was a professor of child development.

Chall: Could you interact in this very informal, social life?

Bennett: Oh sure. No problem.

Chall: As long as they didn't lobby you?

Bennett: I called one faculty member, a senior to me, Francis Herrick, who was a much honored teacher, faculty member, and said, "Francis, I think I need to be off your committee." Now what was the committee? It had to do somehow with relationships between faculty and the college, and it could have been AAUP [American Association of University Professors]. I said, "I am now a member of the administration, I think it is improper for me to be on this committee." He said, "Stuff and nonsense, Mills has not ever been that persnickety about administrative officers." He wouldn't let me resign.

That was the attitude then. There was a vice-president and treasurer, and a vice-president who, anyway you slice it, was the fund raiser, public relations kind of person. There was a dean of students, and a dean of the faculty. Those were the administration. There was a director of admissions, but not regarded as on the same level--this was different later on--but not regarded as the same level. Immediately with Easton we began to get layer upon layer.

The president needed an assistant. We had, to our great tribulation, experience with a lot of people who came in to be assistant to the president because he thought it a good thing to go along with the American Council on Education program in training people to be college presidents. But he didn't see that this immediately put someone in who, if he lacked imagination, would immediately take over all the posts that the dean of the faculty was covering, and couldn't distinguish among them. We had one person who was an expert at distinguishing among them, a former foreign service officer who was out of the foreign service because he contracted a crippling polio. He went into the academic world as one in which he could operate. As a matter of fact, he became, finally, vice-president for public relations for Mills, and went on to function at Hampshire College when that college was established.

Chall: He was one of Easton Rothwell's assistants?

Bennett: Yes, and the only one who ever really could verbalize what made me uneasy about the position. He did keep out of my hair. Others were pleasant enough folk, and tried very hard, but could not think of anything else to do except what the dean of the faculty, by long tradition as well as the written word, was already supposed to be doing.

Chall: In a sense, in a small organization like that, the two deans were the assistants to the president in many ways, weren't they?

Bennett: Exactly! Exactly! It said so, if you went far back enough.

Chall: If the president were to use his deans as one would expect.

Bennett: The thing that made it possible was that everybody was civilized, and nobody fought hard over this sort of thing. We had one fellow in there who had had a very varied experience, much of which was very useful to us, but who was forever stepping on my toes [laughs], and forever finding it out and excusing himself. He went on to be an administrative officer at a large coeducational state-supported institution in the eastern part of the United States.

Chall: How did you react when you found your toes were being stepped on?

Bennett: Well, I would just tell them. Either I was already aware of this, or uh-oh, this is something I should have been aware of.

Chall: Then to whom did you take this?

Bennett: I never took a fight to the president, I just didn't have to.

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Chall: I guess we've probably talked about some of this, but I'm going to quote something that Lynn White had written, I think in his tribute to you, when you retired. He said, [reads]"After you became dean of the faculty, several times you pulled me out of a barrel, and then read me tactfully phrased homilies on how not to be counterproductive." [laughter]

Bennett: He uses that language because he studied for the ministry for one year out of his graduate school life.

Chall: But Dr. Rothwell said, in the same article, that he "tugged against the past, for which you played the role of conservative in the finest meaning of that often misused term." "You worked too steadily, quietly, unflamboyantly. Nobody ever catches you in an anecdote." They were all told to have an anecdote about you, and he couldn't do it. "You used to intrigue me, almost frighten me in fact, with the lists of things to discuss you brought to weekly

Chall: conferences. They were so long, so thoroughly prepared." So I guess not only did each president have his own way of dealing with you but you had your own way of dealing with them.

Bennett: Well, it was a little easier with a regular meeting. But I was not out of communication with Rob.

Lynn White

Chall: When I talked to Lynn White a couple of weeks ago he told me that he looked back upon his years as president as fifteen very bad years from his point of view.

Bennett: Well, he's wrong. I can see how they might have given him worries. But I think that no one could have advanced the essence of Mills, as defined by Aurelia Reinhardt, as well as he did. He was simpatico. He inherited some administrative officers who made no bones about telling him he was a brash young man, and he better not say outrageous things, and antagonize people. But he did it. He spoke up in the councils of the mighty when he went to national meetings, and they put him down as a brash young man of no moment, full of sound and fury.

But I like better a view of him that I have when he had been somewhere in Texas, I think, speechmaking, and had made one of his statements interpreted as outrageous, about the education of women, about women's abilities, or what have you. Students went down to the airport to meet him on his return. They carried an enormous banner which they unrolled, and unfurled, so that he could read it as he came off the plane. It said, "Welcome home anyway." [Laughter]

Chall: That is lovely. The students understood.

Bennett: Yes. Of course, he did himself in in writing that book Educating Our Daughters because he let his flippant tongue show, and he treated lightly matters that the pioneers in the women's movement regarded as sacred. He made a statement, for example, to the effect that rearing children was one of the most hilariously funny activities in the world, and people should enjoy it. Well, they took that to mean that he thought women should be satisfied with staying home and rearing the young.

They took his defense of the field of home economics as being useful in a college where young women, no matter what their intentions, and no matter what they wanted to do, no matter, indeed, what they did, ultimately were likely to concern themselves with household management. He thought they might as

Bennett: well know what the best thought, and study, and experimentation of the matter had to do with this. This was essentially Aurelia's idea. She didn't care whether every student majored in child development, she was jolly sure that she wanted the nursery school located right in the middle of the campus, where students would walk past it every day.

Chall: I think that some of what Lynn White wrote at that time is now being re-considered. I'm not sure, but I think the pendulum has swung a bit.

Bennett: I think that in his later moments in that series of President's Letters, when he was so specific-- Did you happen to see the five publications that were done for our admissions office?

Chall: No.

Bennett: Well, he did them. The first one of them had to do with why go to college? The second one had to do with why a woman's college? The third one had to do with the liberal arts. I can't remember, I think there were five in it.

Chall: I think I may have read some of these.

Bennett: The profile of Mills was--I may be misremembering this--the profile of Mills that appeared for years in our catalogue was written first as one of the President's Letters.

Chall: Yes. He did speak very clearly on those issues. Very.

Bennett: Yea, so much so that once when I attended a conference I was startled to hear the man presiding quote from that profile, because he used the term that Mills is "committed" to doing this for its students. The argument was being made that commitment was important.

Fund Raising and the Presidency

Chall: I guess that it was during Easton Rothwell's period that the major funds were raised.

Bennett: He did a great deal of effective fund raising. He had a huge drive, I now remember, and fourteen million.

Chall: Something like that, yes. Then you began to build new buildings; there was a great deal of building on the campus, too.

Bennett: Yes. We were desperately in need of buildings, and of course, during my administration as acting president it just ground to a halt, nothing happened. One of the questions Easton asked me when he came to talk with me about becoming the president--he said, "What does Mills need?" I said, "It badly needs physical structure tended to." He got this confirmed by engineering studies, and so forth. He tore down some, and strengthened some, and built new ones, and we were dug up for ten years. There had been a little building during Lynn's administration, but this happened during wartime, and it was very limited. We've just redone the life sciences building, which was built during wartime, and suffered all the deprivations that came out of that era.

Chall: During the year that you were acting president, did it ever occur to you that you that you might want to be president, or that you could go on somewhere else and be a college president?

Bennett: I was continually urged to throw my hat into the ring both times. At that time, and when Rob Wert was ultimately appointed, the then-president of the board of trustees urged me to do so. My colleagues sent a delegate from the faculty committee that was assisting the trustee committee in the selection, to make sure that I knew I would be a welcome candidate. I was very much touched by that. But I simply wanted no part of it. I know I'm better off as second in command, I just know it. Didn't want it, that's all.

Chall: Did you enjoy the year or so?

Bennett: Oh, I enjoyed it thoroughly. Glad when it was over. No, of course, as acting president, I didn't have the authority that I would have had, had I been the president just outright. That was fine with me. I didn't want to make any decisions that would shape the future of the college. I had good guidance in this because the board of trustees was very accessible, and very sympathetic, and very friendly.

Chall: So it was an experience.

Bennett: It was a very interesting experience.

Chall: Did you not want the public relations aspect, the fund raising area?

Bennett: This I felt totally inadequate in, and I told Fuller Brawner that. He said, "Well, somebody else could be got to do that." But I think that this is not quite true. I think that the president, in the last analysis, is the chief fund raiser no matter how you slice it. I did not move, and I do not move now, never have moved, in the realms of the well-to-do. I think you have to feel at ease there before you're effective, and I don't think a

Bennett: president, who can't do it, is effective. I had heavy family responsibilities at the time, and I didn't see my way out of those, which was a perfectly personal reason--feeling that I couldn't complicate my life to that extent.

Furthermore, I have a firm conviction that the president of the college needs to have someone to keep the home fires burning, someone to be the homemaker, as Miss Alice Henry was for Aurelia, and as the wives were for the other presidents. Mary Metz has a very strong supporter in her husband. Barbara White seemed to be able to function without this, and that is one reason she finally found four years was enough. She was too used to the hierarchy, and the support which the hierarchy provided for her in the foreign service, to live without it.

Chall: In Mills there just isn't that?

Bennett: There isn't that.

Chall: So you do need a spouse, or somebody close.

Bennett: You need someone. I had not that person. I had a sick mother and a dying father, and you can't do it. I don't know, I never did know how much I took refuge in those family responsibilities, and how much they were the real reason, but it was certainly a complication. It made the matter of my saying, "But no" perfectly easy.

Chall: However, you might have gone on to a woman's college some place else if you wanted to?

Bennett: Had I been footloose and fancy free, I might have.

Chall: Ultimately.

Bennett: But I was too much embroiled in family. You see, I have a sister who's sixteen and a half years younger than I am, and another brother who's nine years younger than I am, besides the one who is close to me in age, so that there was a young family to consider with ailing parents, and so forth.

Chall: The elder often takes that responsibility. Your sister, too, was away a lot, and so was one of your brothers. They just weren't around.

Bennett: My sister, toward the end, yes, she was away, she was married, oh, a long time ago.

Should Mills Become a Co-ed Campus?

Chall: There was a time, perhaps it was during Dr. Wert's period, that there was much study about whether to make Mills College a co-ed school, or to coordinate it with some other men's college. Finally, after a great deal of study, it came to nought. Were you a part of all that?

Bennett: Well it came to nought partly because we were in the midst of a huge fund raising campaign, and it didn't seem like the prudent moment to change our spots. But aside from that there was strong urging in the direction of coeducation at one point. Actually, some of the campus plans that were developed took into account the possibility that we might be twice the size that Mills is, and that we might be coeducational.

We put in a lot of study figuring out that it would be easier to preserve the values of Mills as we saw them, if we had a coordinate men's college on campus, rather than simply trying to open our doors to men. I think that would have been a correct decision, but it became something to put on the back burner when it was perfectly clear that we couldn't go into the large scale reorganization that this would require, and at the same time mount the fund raising campaign that was in the works, successfully. It would look as if we didn't know what we were doing. So, I can remember very well the member of our board of trustees who said, "Well, gentlemen, this has to go on the back burner now if you're serious about this fund raising."

Chall: Many wise heads then.

Bennett: It was very interesting that we had a period of great pressure from the students to go coeducational, and there had always been some feeling that we would be better off if we did. You know the old argument, the world is coeducational, we should begin in college. Well that's just what's wrong with college coeducation, because woman's traditional role is what she occupied in coeducational colleges from the beginning. She was free to follow a curriculum planned on the interests of young men.

Chall: Yes, so Dr. White wrote quite clearly.

Bennett: Very well. This was at a time when Yale was going coeducational, Princeton was also.

Chall: Yes, there was the movement.

Bennett: It was the thing. Williams was the only college brave enough to say why they were doing it. "We need the financial resources, and we have scraped the bottom of the barrel as far as eligible men

Bennett: are concerned. The only alternative is to get the similarly capable young women." Within one college generation that was gone. There was that flipflop in student attitude. I often think it's a fact that it takes us about six months longer to get hold one of these wild ideas, than it does the East Coast. There was that time lapse, and the women's movement emerged at this point, when someone was wise enough to see that coeducation was not necessarily the way. Mt. Holyoke helped, by coming out firmly in favor of remaining a women's college.

The year after she graduated, one of our students who had been one of the agitators for coeducation, wrote back to me and-- (maybe I told you this before) and said, "Miss Bennett, I need to know your views on coeducation." She said, "As an undergraduate student I was very much in favor of it, now I think Mills has everything to gain, and nothing to lose by remaining a college for women." She said, "I have discovered that many of the advantages I had at Mills are those that would be found in any good, small, liberal arts college. But the best of them, if they're coeducational, don't do it. In these, sisterhood and womanpride are hard to find."

Chall: Oh, she found out quite a bit in one year, didn't she?

Bennett: I thought it was very interesting. I don't know, she might have been quoting someone.

Chall: But it became her opinion.

Bennett: It was that quick. There had been a peaking of student interest in coeducation. One of our wily faculty members in English had had a seminar on the subject with students, and they had come out with the conclusion that there was a lot of information on this subject, but they were not so sure at the end of the course, that they were for it. They thought rather they were against it.

Chall: Oh, how interesting. What a good way to get the students to think through a problem.

Bennett: But then the women's movement, and the extraordinary role, really, that Mills had played in educating women without being blatant about it, educating women to believe that they could do anything they were capable of, and who was to stop them--it fit very well.

Chall: And be allowed to do it without all the little problems and hurdles most of the colleges put in their way.

Bennett: It's changed the character of the student body enormously, just as the whole ethnic surge has done.

[Interview 7: November 24, 1986]##

Adopting Procedures For Faculty Selection and Tenure

Chall: I understand that some time during the late sixties there was also a change in the method of selecting and tenuring faculty that Dr. Wert brought in, wanted college-wide procedures, and criteria set forth, changed things.

Bennett: What he was responding to was a strong representation on the part of one faculty member in particular, but a few others went along with him. I laugh, and laugh, and laugh now because he will never know how hard I worked to get him appointed.

Chall: That one faculty member?

Bennett: Yes. Because he was the best available at the time, and we desperately needed someone in his field. But he was one of the ones that made me aware that the times have brought it about that new recruits to the faculty knew me only as an administrative officer, and they didn't know me at all as a teaching colleague. This was a kind of a watershed in my career.

He was against the "establishment" on principle, and what particular problem he addressed himself to at the moment was a matter of chance, and what was going at the moment. But he was a Young Turk at the time, and pushy. Not obnoxious in other ways, certainly not trying to wreck the joint, but eager to recruit people to get some order into things; a somewhat more structured procedure.

It is true that the heritage of Aurelia had been very much a one woman operation with the collaboration of a few trusted-- usually the dean of the faculty and the department chairmen. Rob Wert, after our first meeting with a faculty group--which was, I think, one of our constituent groups, I think it was the Educational Policies Committee of the faculty--said of this young man, "Well, he just wants a committee." So he went right along with it, having come from a much more structured institution at Stanford, you see. This was completely in line with what he was used to, and it didn't bother him at all.

Chall: But you don't think the impetus came from Dr. Wert?

Bennett: No. He went along with it, but he did not create this. He had to approve of it, of course, and he did. But I think he would have rested with what he found had this impetus not come from the faculty, so that to that extent he instituted it, because he gave ultimate approval to it. But the push came from the faculty, and from the fact that we had a younger faculty who were products of their own times, which was clamoring all over the country for more of a voice in faculty decision making. It was not a radical change, it was a next step that was timely.

Chall: Did it in any way affect what you did?

Bennett: No, it put more procedure in place. We began to have a faculty-wide committee that was elected by the faculty as a whole, as I remember it, that had some input on the evaluation of faculty performance, and needed to be consulted if a faculty termination was in view--things of that sort. We just had a few more procedures to work through.

But I can remember talking with this same man some years later, when all this business was in place, about a person who had been appointed in one of our smaller departments with some kind of advanced status, and proved out to be a totally indigestible morsel. For one thing, we discovered that one of his strongest recommendations from the distinguished member of his own field, turned out to have come from his father-in-law. It further turned out that he had not been successful in holding jobs elsewhere, and we decided he had to go.

There's no place to hide at a place as small as Mills. There's no place where you can tuck away a person. Well, it's awkward to dislodge a person who has-- He may have been appointed at the associate professor level, but all associate professors, indeed full professors were appointed for a three year term. On reappointment they were considered to have tenure, and it was within this three years that we were looking at this.

I was visited by our Young Turk, who by this time was the chairman of the faculty committee elected to work on these matters.

Chall: He got his committee?

Bennett: Oh, yes. He got all the structure built in, and all the faculty evaluations, which we did, which turned up exactly what we knew they would. He came to see me about this. I told him what was true when we talked about it. I said, "This is as close to

Bennett: pathology as we have ever come. I think we cannot tolerate it." He bought that argument. But he was supporting the right of the professor to his job until we had had our talk.

By this time in my career he had discovered that I had a wide range of tolerance for odd balls, [laughter] that the one thing I could not condone was building into a permanent structure a person who was an obvious candidate for either early failure or disrupting us for all the rest of our lives. We hadn't enough slots, as we would say. We couldn't accommodate people who couldn't function.

This young man had a wife who had a professional degree herself, she was not an academic, who was driving him crazy. It was perfectly clear that that's why her father had written a strong letter of recommendation for him. He hadn't been able to hold down jobs anywhere, really, when it came down to it. It hadn't looked like that on the record, but it was true. They tolerated him for his father-in-law's sake for as long as they could, and then they let him go.

This was a change that represented, as I said, a next step. It was not catastrophic for Mills. There's always a tendency to write a story about these things that codifies everthing, and suggests that now we have a new page. There was never a radical new page. It's always built on the past.

When Easton Rothwell came he went back to the liberal arts curriculum, and stripped away everything else. The committee, which provided the study, and the work that made it easy for him to make a quick decision on that matter was already in operation because at the beginning of the year in which I was acting president, I had said to a member of the Educational Policies Committee, "Look, a new president coming in is bound to have his own ideas about where the college should go, and the only way for the faculty to be prepared for this is to have its own ideas about which way the college should go, and you better see that it's done." So, quite innocently in a faculty meeting, one of my first, he proposed the formation of a committee to study the function and mission of Mill's College.

Chall: They began to work on it?

Bennett: They were working.

Faculty Activities

Chall: We can move on to the faculty here [item on the outline].

Bennett: Faculty breakfasts were festival occasions. The fall of each year new faculty and staff were introduced to the old. It was a Sunday morning breakfast, the first meeting of the academic year. A rather happy occasion. People who had been on leave sang for their supper--they gave a little talk about what they had been doing.

Chall: Did you always arrange the seating?

Bennett: I had organized them, yes.

Chall: So that people who were compatible were next to each other?

Bennett: Sometimes they were, and sometimes they protested. [laughs] But I tried to arrange the seatings.

Chall: All those years, you did the seating?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: What did you think about when you made the seating arrangements?

Bennett: Well, for one thing, I had to bed new people down in their new department, they had to be placed. Then I had a lovely time playing around with friends. People who spoke the same language, although they didn't know each other. I remember once working on a table where everybody who spoke Czechoslovakian was there.

Chall: You did know your faculty.

Bennett: Well, of course. I mean, that's one of the points of this whole outfit. Of course, I had had enough continuity.

Chall: That's right.

Bennett: It didn't always work. I always had problem tables, but you know any hostess faces that. If I was so unimaginative as to put all those people who were always feeling abused anyway, as being hardworking but looked-down-upon by the rest of the faculty, something like that--if I made the mistake of putting them all together I heard about it.

Chall: How about those Wednesday happy hours?

Bennett: That was a faculty function instigated by the faculty club when we moved into the Rothwell Center. Before that there had been the Women's Faculty Club and Kiva, the Men's Faculty Club, which had been the avenue of respite for men of the faculty in Aurelia's time. The women's club had paid for the addition of a room to Reinhardt Alumnae House, as it's called now. It had raised the money by a couple of bazaars to build that room, and it met there.

Bennett: Kiva met in one of the little shacks that has since been demolished. They served for many years as headquarters for some of the artwork, and they've all been razed and gotten out of there, and our beautiful new art complex has been dedicated.

Chall: Is there still a Kiva?

Bennett: No. The two separate clubs were out of place in the new Rothwell Center. There is now a faculty-staff club which has a lounge and a dining room.

Chall: So you met there automatically every Wednesday evening?

Bennett: The very informal little group of officers of the faculty club established a happy hour on Wednesdays. I think one week out of the month they do it on Tuesday for the people who can't get there on a Wednesday. They first meet and have a drink.

Chall: You always joined them?

Bennett: I was always invited. It was not my doing, nothing to do with me.

Chall: But you were always there, because it was a faculty affair?

Bennett: Yes. I didn't always go, but I went whenever I could. I still go when I can. My "at home" after the freshman welcoming dinner became a fixture, and my housemate helped me enormously in this. All the faculty and staff who were at the dinner got to come to my house for a drink. Our house had been added on to. It was one of the faculty residences, but it was unusually large because when Constance Steel, who was on the registrar's staff, I think, here at Berkeley, retired, she went to live with Evelyn Steel Little, who had been our dean of the faculty, and our librarian. They had added a living room and a bedroom and a bathroom for her. So we had two living rooms, one of which opened into the other. We could accommodate any number of people in a drinking party, where everybody stood on his own feet. So we set up bars in both rooms.

I kept track of one black woman who did work for several of the faculty houses on campus. She never worked for us regularly-- I guess maybe she did, but long after she stopped working for us, she would come back for this affair. She was the littlest person in the world. She could get in and out in the crowd, and see that the tables had food on them and that the drink supplies were there.

Also, the faculty got to know the place so well. Once I went out into the kitchen for something, and found Easton Rothwell on the top of my stepladder getting coffee cups down because he was taking a long drive afterwards and felt coffee would be desirable. They were informal and relaxed. Because it was the first time in

Bennett: which the faculty as a group--this was the weekend, it was just after the dean's dinner for new students--it was the very first event at which the faculty had had a chance to see each other after the summer holiday, and in a relaxed situation. It was a party that went by itself; it was a wonderful party.

Chall: How did you happen to start it?

Bennett: My housemate said to me, "You know what fun we had after the dean's party when we went to Evelyn Urrere's house afterwards for a drink? You should do that."

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Bennett: Attendance at all the faculty activities. [outline item]

Chall: I understand you never missed one. Well, now, that may be an exaggeration.

Bennett: I was there, and, well, it was my job.

Chall: Were you ever bored with some of them, or did you manage to enjoy them all?

Bennett: No. If it was the sort at which I could be bored, it was likely to be the sort at which I had some responsibility.

Chall: I see, so you had to go anyway. How about faculty meetings and trustee meetings? You had to attend them all. Did you find those boring at times?

Bennett: Faculty meetings I was too active making sure that we got done what we needed to get done, because my secretary took the minutes, and I was responsible for the editing of them, and making certain that they were the permanent record.

Chall: You were paying close attention.

Bennett: Also I was monitoring what was going, making certain that things didn't go awry.

Chall: You didn't chair those meetings though, did you?

Bennett: The president chaired them. In his absence I did, and when I was acting president of course I chaired them.

Chall: Would you occasionally meet some people before a meeting if you thought something was coming up that needed to be quite clear in the faculty meeting?

Bennett: We had a system of having reports of committees, and if there were a committee with a particularly important report to make, I would make sure that the person did it, but I had no routine sweep of reminders. For one thing, we got the agenda out first, and made sure that what was going to be said was on the agenda. Sometimes I would pencil in something for my own guidance. I had to make certain that the business that we needed to do got done.

Chall: What about trustees' meetings? What was your role there?

Bennett: I did not have any formal role at trustees' meetings and did not attend them unless I happened at the time to be acting president. But I had a formal role at the meetings of the Educational Policies Committee. I was ex officio a member of that committee. It was in this committee that the proposals were made for promotions and for salary scales.

I never will forget the meeting that pleased me most. It was at the time when women's place in the academic structure was being examined closely. I knew that we were in good shape because I had worked very hard on keeping us that way. Aurelia had left the college in that situation, and sometimes it was a little bit uphill with some of the presidents who thought it didn't matter whether a man or a woman was appointed. The minute you adopted that view in those days you ended up with a superfluity of males. It just was par for the course. You had to look for the females. Some departments I had to push more than others to insure that women were looked at, and that women were not relegated to, let us say, education, or some place "suitable" for women. But that was all. We managed to keep even numbers.

I always briefed Rob Wert before the Educational Policies Committee meeting so that he would know his lesson. He was awfully good at that, picking up facts, and being able to present them right off. I had pointed out that we had twenty-two full professors, eleven men, eleven women, that this was happenstance, I had not, you know, got a full professor here, or a promotion there, or whatever, to contrive it, it just had happened. I think the point I was making was that the top two or three were women. We listed them always in order of seniority. He was interested in that fact. So we went on with our preparation.

Well, at the end of this Educational Policies Committee meeting one of our academic members from Stanford, Al Hastorf said, "Rob, we're not apt to have any revolution on this women business, are we?" Something like that. I think they were feeling it at Stanford; well they might. Rob just said, "Mary Woods, give me that sheet of full professors." [laughs] And he reminded him to look at it. We had not given the information as to whether they were men or women, you see. They were given the information by surname, and certain facts about their original

Bennett: appointment, their last year's salary, their proposed salary for a coming year, et cetera. He said, "Here is our list of full professors. For you information they are female, female.." I think the first three were female.

The salary, going right along the other edge, indicated, perfectly clearly, that there was no discrimination by salary. By rank, yes, but that is by position in the role of professors. The newly appointed ones tend to be low ones. But because of the fact that occasionally we had to appoint a senior in order to get any weight into a department at all, when we had two and three-person departments, we sometimes threw the plan out of kilter. But it was quite pure. We just kept it that way. Someone had to be watchful, you didn't have to push a terrible amount, but you had to be watchful, or you ended up like Smith College, which at one stage, when I counted, had 75 percent males in the faculty. All this from the era that thought it doesn't matter a bit.

Oh, in the early fifties it was impossible. They all gave over their college careers with a B.A. if they lasted that long, and proceeded to have four children. There was a regular thing going; they went back to the basics, they thought. There was a terrible drop in the production of Ph.D's from that period which we felt later when we looked for women for the faculty.

Chall: That's right. But then even in the women's movement for a time there was this general philosophy that gender didn't matter--the sexes were equal.

Bennett: Well, they proved themselves.

Chall: And that didn't work out too well.

Bennett: Didn't work out well at all.

Chall: So now they're back to realizing it does matter.

Some Faculty Remembered: The Milhauds, the Prietos, and Other Notables

Bennett: It does matter, equality isn't with us, that's the real thing.

Chall: Are there any faculty that you remember particularly for any kind of reason? We were talking a little while ago, and we will again, about the Milhauds. That was a pleasant relationship?

- Bennett: Oh, it was a wonderful one. Of course, the Milhauds were refugees. Their appointment was by Aurelia, I think. It could have been--
- Chall: Oh, I think it could go back to maybe Lynn White, but it went back a long way.
- Bennett: Lynn White, maybe. No, I think it was Aurelia. I think that they first came to us in the early forties.
- Chall: I think you're right.
- Bennett: She picked the Milhauds up, but they were latecomers. She picked up from Germany the late Bernhard Blume, who was a writer, had no Ph.D., but he was a successful novelist and playwright. He sojourned at Mills for nine years as head of our German department. He was taken from us by Ohio State University to be chairman of their German department. He was drafted by Harvard University where he ended up occupying an endowed chair in Germanic studies. He was a very bright man, and a darling. His wife was the social worker that I asked you about who worked with the Council of Social Agencies for a while. She was a specialist in adult education.

They had two charming boys. One of them is a lawyer in Guerneville or some such place, speaks perfect German, although all during his school years he did not speak it at all because he and his brother went on a strike and didn't want to be identified as Germans. He changed his name from Wolfgang to Mike, I think he's called. His middle name was Michael. The younger brother is an academic type at the Claremont Colleges I think, got a Ph.D. in psychology. He was Reinhart and he became Frank.

- Chall: Did Professor Blume's wife go by her name Blume?
- Bennett: Yes, she went by her married name, Carola Blume. Her parents, I think, were the ones that they were protecting. She was Jewish, he was not, but they clearly had to move. Somehow or other they got their furniture out of Germany. I don't know what kind of pull he had. They made their way not too laboriously.

Fred Neumeyer, Alfred Neumeyer, an art historian, and his wife were with us from 1935 on till Fred reached retirement age. He gave a considerable amount of distinction to our teaching of art history, and the establishment of our print collection at the Mills Gallery.

We had in the late '30s Alfred Salmony who was a great art historian, probably a better art historian than Fred Neumeyer, and he had his career afterwards at New York University.

Chall: Did you know the Prietos well? You were talking about the art field.

Bennett: Very well.

Chall: They brought distinction to Mills.

Bennett: Oh, yes. Tony was a darling. All his boys were in our Children's School at one time or another. We lived through his tragic death which was just in the early stages of showing trouble when I took my-round-the-world trip. Barbara Wells--bleas her heart, who was in our government department, and was a deanish type if ever I saw one, later became dean of the faculty at Vassar--told me, just two things after sitting at my desk and running the job for four months. Only two things she had to tell me. One was that we had trouble with one of the staff members, which I knew, and she confirmed. The other one was that something was dreadfully wrong with Tony. I don't know whether you ever heard what the diagnosis was, but he had a very rare disease which was called stiff man's syndrome. No one had ever been known to survive it. There were only five or six documented cases of it. He simply perished from a progressive deterioration of his nervous system. It was just incredible.

But they were a very lively presence. He was a good chairman of the department. One of the troubles was that he was a bit flamboyant for some of his faculty colleagues, but most not. Most of them were devoted to him. He was not as much of an artist with the English language as he was with clay. There were picayune people who would bother about this. But he could do things with clay that I've never seen anybody else do. He could teach those who were content to learn from him. For those who came and wanted it writ down in chapter and verse, he was not so acceptable because he couldn't articulate it. But he could do it, and any student worth his salt could learn from him. Bob Arneson was one of his students. And so was the young man who took a degree at Mills--who became an official of the Oakland Museum in its early stages. He attracted a great many potters.

We never had, really, a successful replacement for him. Eunice taught for a while. One of his students taught with her. I learned something about teaching from them that I had not known before. Tony was able, without harnessing their spirits, to exact higher standards from students progressively. His wife was no good at it. She couldn't raise their sights. Everything they did, including the mud pies, she regarded as an act of creation. Tony knew the difference, and he knew how to get the students from hither to yon, and I don't think he knew how he did it. But he was the kind of person who needed apprentices, not students.

Bennett: When someone asked him if he could do an assembly program for the general student population to demonstrate for them what he did, he said, "I can if Miss Armstrong will lend me her four-year-olds." Sure enough, the four-year-olds were invited to go. A wheel was set up in the student union, the students sat on the floor, or in benches around the perimeter. The four-year-olds came over; there were only eight or nine of them. They sat at his feet, and he talked to them with the clay in his hands.

Chall: He could watch them respond.

Bennett: He was exactly on their level in terms of the verbal content. But what grew out of it under his hands was simply miraculous. It was one of the best assemblies we've ever had, and it was those four-year-olds who did it. He used to go to the John Swett School where his boys all went, and do demonstrations for the students. He was a great presence.

We had so many who were worth listening to. I remember Jimmy James, E.O. James, whose daughter, Mary Louise O'Brien, was a student of ours. He was a great professor of English. Everybody wanted to take a course with Jimmy James, and most everybody did. He also wrote a book on the history of Mills. He was a great purist, and he pointed out that Mills had existed as a college only since 1885, and that the story of Cyrus and Susan Mills, which he himself wrote, was pre-collegiate in its significance. He was a bit of a character. Students always wanting him to be in their plays, and that sort of thing. He wrote some lovely poetry, and he was one of the ones everybody wanted to work with.

Dean Rusk was an amazing teacher. He was, of course, one of my predecessors as dean of the faculty. Francis Herrick was a very distinguished teacher of history, still lives, very venerable, in Monterey. Georgiana Melvin, a philosopher, who was one of the most brilliant minds, I'm sure, that we ever had, a thoroughly neurotic woman, living on unearned income which she had inherited while preaching Marxism to everybody. A really splendid mind, much admired by the better students, the ones who really could get into philosophy.

We had in the French department a woman by the name of A. Cécile Réau whom I had taken French 3A, B with on the Berkeley campus. She used to get a great kick out of the fact that I started out our relationship as her student and ended up being "my dean" as she said. [laughs] She was decorated by the French government at one point early in my career at Mills. The French government, being French, sent over a male attaché from the consulate in San Francisco, who, with all the pomp and circumstance you could ask for, pinned on her bosom the insignia of the Legion of Honor.

Bennett: There is, in The Bancroft Library, a work by her in French which is on the influence of Bret Harte on California society. I have a copy that she gave me, and I once asked Jim Hart if he needed it, and he grinned and said, "We have one, thank you." I might have known, because she was on the faculty at Berkeley simultaneously with being on the faculty at Mills.

Chall: I guess many of your professors are distinguished in more ways than one because of their personalities.

Bennett: Yes, I could refresh my memory if I worked on it. We have at the moment at Mills an extraordinary richness in our English department. Chana Bloch who is, as she says, "A Jewish girl out of Brooklyn" has just written a book, or had published a book which I expect to buy from the University of California press on my way home, on George Herbert. She says she hasn't told her mother yet that she's written a book on this great Christian. [laughs] We have also Diana O'Hehir whose father was Willard Farnham of the Berkeley faculty, who is a novelist of some distinction, and a poet of even greater distinction. Chana is also a poet.

Libby Pope, who was for years the head of the department wrote two enormously successful books for young girls. One called the The Sherwood Ring, and one called the The Perilous Gard. She wrote them because she had done stories, these stories, in essence, for her younger sister, when that younger sister was growing up. She wrote them for the age range that she remembered from her own pleasure in St. Nicholas Magazine. So you have a notion of what sort of stories they are. Both of them were right up there for the Newberry Medal, but neither of them got it, I think. But they got medals of one sort or another. Libby told me that her second one was a front runner for the Newberry prize but lost out. She said, "Wouldn't you know it, to a Chicana heroine."

Chall: You've had many renowned people in music, composition.

Bennett: Oh, yes. Domenico Brescia was the predecessor to Milhaud, and his daughter was an undergraduate at Berkeley when I was, Emma Brescia, and she later had a long career in the teaching of Italian at Queens College, I think, in New York.

We had Leon Kirchner, whom we got at exactly the right moment in his career, and we have him because a couple of alert members of our faculty, who had ties, both of them, with the university, knew him. One of them knew him as a fellow graduate student at Berkeley, here, and one of them knew him because it was her business to know musicians. She was Margaret Prall, whose brother David Prall was a member of the Berkeley faculty in philosophy.

Bennett: She was our music historian. A student of hers, whom she shared a house with, was my colleague at Mills, who had known him as a fellow student here.

So when we were combing over the vast array of people who might come and somehow fit into Milhaud's pattern of alternation, we combed through ever so many dossiers on people, and we came to him, and he seemed to be at the right stage in his career. He was at USC [University of Southern California] at the time, I think. But his fellow student said, "Yes, I think he's worth it." And the faculty member with whom she lived, who happened to be the chairman of the music department said, "Why not?"

He was an indigestible morsel because he was not content to alternate with a great man. He was with us for about six years. Very productive years because he had two, I think, teen-age stepdaughters. He knew how to deal with young women, although they had a young family. He had this experience so that he could deal on a friendly basis with girls--and we were much more aware of being girls than anybody is now--without getting the least bit involved. He was young and attractive, and certainly on the rise professionally.

There was a huge full-page spread of him in Life Magazine, right after we had appointed him. Things began popping all over. We caught him at just the right stage in his career. He was six years with us, I think, and went off to Harvard.

That was the year we lost him to Harvard and Luis Monguiò to the Spanish department at Berkeley. We figured that if we could lose people to such distinguished institutions, we were validated in what we did. We just had to catch them earlier.

Chall: Does this attract students to Mills who are interested in, let's say, the particular music, or art program that you would have under these great names?

Bennett: Curiously enough, Milhaud turned out to be a very good teacher of undergraduates of an unconventional sort, and Madeleine always wondered about it. She said, "He enjoys teaching his introductory orchestration class." He said, "There's something about it, that makes me like working with these young girls and helping them with their work." He liked it much better than she thought he might. Of course, there were all kinds of liberty taken with schedules, everything else in the world, but then, he was an unusual man. I never will forget, when I became dean, I think I had been only a few weeks in my office, when I had an appointment with Mr. Milhaud. This was not of my making. He came to ask permission of his dean if he might leave college a little early to attend this, you know, great big bang-up something in his honor somewhere in Europe. I burst right out laughing in his presence. [laughs]

Bennett: They invited me to dinner, and we broke a bottle of special wine for "our dear dean".

Chall: When you were just new, he did that for you as an induction?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: How lovely.

Bennett: I mean, they were just sweet about that sort of thing. They were acting, yes. It was impossible for Madeleine not to act. But they were sincere at the same time.

Chall: Did she teach on the campus?

Bennett: Yes. She taught French. As one of her colleagues said to me once, "If students want to come and take a course in Madeleine Milhaud, that's all right with me, it's worth it." No, she's better than that, and faithful. But she gave her first attention, always, to Darius and his needs, as was proper. She knew that she had dedicated her life to him. She was a good actress, and had taught at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, but simply realized that two independent careers would never work.

##

Bennett: She worked at helping to keep his courage up because he used to get kind of depressed over his physical state, and he sometimes reached a point where the arthritis was so bad he couldn't write. He always did his writing by hand, and if he couldn't do that he was very depressed, so they used to go off to a movie or something. She was his nurse, as well as his intellectual companion, and she was all of that. She was a relative of his, she was a cousin. Her name was the same, her surname, the same as his. But she came from a part of the country where they pronounced it Millo, the Milhaud is an atypical pronunciation.

She was a woman in her own right, and recognized in France, among other things, for the work she did for the French during World War II. She was not above exploiting this. I was staying, the last time I was in Paris, at the Hotel Belfast. I think that was its name. She came in to meet me at the desk there. She didn't need to come in, I was perfectly capable of finding her. She knew perfectly well that if she came and inquired for me, things would be different in the hôtel, and they were.

Chall: For you?

Bennett: Her little red ribbon of the Legion of Honor was in her lapel at all times, a little narrow, narrow, narrow red ribbon.

Chall: They do pay attention to that?

Bennett: They paid attention.

Chall: That means they paid attention to you, then?

Bennett: Yes. She knew it, and she was perfectly willing to exploit it for the benefit of a friend. She was also a very daring woman. I was riding with her and she cut across five lanes of traffic circling around the roundabout because she needed to emanate from that inner circle to get on the road she wanted. So she got into the first--she nosed her little car in between some cars, and said to the driver of the one she was supplanting, "What is the crowd for?" "Hockey game." So she got to the next line, "Who won?" "We did." Then she went to the next one, "What's the score?" [laughs] Oh, she's great, and a woman who would be recognized anywhere for her merits, if she had not deliberately made her career supportive of him. He needed the help, he just sadly needed it, and she gave it.

Chall: Was he suffering from arthritis?

Bennett: From a young man.

Chall: Oh, I see--all the years that you knew him. He wasn't always in a wheelchair though, was he?

Bennett: No, but he walked with difficulty. He used to conduct the San Francisco Symphony sometimes, and I have seen him with the use of two canes walk that long walk from backstage to the podium. He was driving a car when first we knew him. I remember once, he would pick us up on the way down to a function where we were all going done up in our academic robes, and so forth. But he gradually became more-- He had, I think, a metabolic disturbance, and I'm not sure but what he also had diabetes. At any rate, he was heavy at the end. At the end he was in a wheelchair all the time, and he had one that could go up stairs--all the marvelous contraptions he had. But if worse came to worse faculty would gather around him, lift his wheelchair with him in it.

Chall: Yes, he was an important person on the faculty.

Bennett: Many exceptions to our rules were made on his behalf, and one of our more literal-minded faculty members thought that it was a mistake to put so much money on Milhaud, and so much emphasis on the teaching in an area, which, by definition could attract very few students.

Lynn White's view was always that the presence of Milhaud validates the whole effort of the music department. This is what he would say. He said "It doesn't matter if an undergraduate never

Bennett: darkens his door," but the point was they did, and they got to know him, at home as well as in the office. The best of them went on to considerable distinction. Of course, the most noteworthy one, in many ways, is Dave Brubeck. Dave's first child, first of four or five sons, is named Darius.

Chall: Did he teach only orchestration, or did he teach other subjects?

Bennett: No, he taught composition. He taught composition at two levels, and then he supervised dissertations. Elinor Armer, who is on the faculty now of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and who recently did a public presentation in company with Ursula LeGuin, was one of his students. LeGuin, the Bancroft has much of her work. She's the daughter of Kroeber. I think that her papers are here at the Bancroft. She writes science fiction. A very good writer.

Chall: To move on. You wrote a chapter in Logan Wilson's book Emerging Patterns in American Higher Education.

Bennett: It was nothing but the literal statement of a paper I gave. The thing that is noteworthy about the meeting at which I gave it, is that that was the meeting at which Clark Kerr arrived on the day of the student commotion. He was late. Roger Heyns, who was then still at the University of what--Michigan--some midwestern university--he was chairman of the panel that I was on.

Chall: Your paper was "Changes Within a Liberal Arts College."

Bennett: Yes. I was on a panel that was dealing with changes of the times in--I don't know whether it concentrated on administration--but I didn't feel that my presentation made a lick of difference, but there it was. It was a nice association.

Chall: What about the Executive Committee of the American Council of Academic Deans?

Bennett: I probably was on the executive committee, but I do not remember functioning in any particular way; it's one of those things that happens on a letterhead, but not much else.

The Trip Around the World, 1966

Chall: Do we have time to talk about your sabbatical, or should we wait until another time?

Bennett: I brought some papers on it, but it depends on how much you want about it, it was a lovely thing.

Chall: Just a short description about how you happened to take it.

Bennett: I suppose it was a sabbatical.

Chall: You probably were well in need of one by that time.

Bennett: I think that Easton Rothwell was really embarrassed that his dean of the faculty was such an insular person. He used some money that we had from a Ford grant, I think, to send me to India to inquire into women's education there, and the opportunities for developing exchange programs with students in India partly, but also in Japan.

Chall: So that the main focus was going to Asia?

Bennett: Yes. He said, "If you're smart about planning, you'll come home the other way." [laughs]

Chall: There's a well-traveled person. So you did?

Bennett: I did. I went around the world, and had a whee of a time.

Chall: Did you go by yourself?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Then you were picked up by Mills people along the line?

Bennett: Yes. Let me show you. I have documented here the process by which that happened. Just happened to have a copy. [opens folder of papers: itinerary, personal connections in various countries.]*

Chall: This was sent ahead?

Bennett: Yes. This is the kind of material that I got. Here are connections in France. Here they are in Rome.

Chall: When you went to France these were your Mills College connections, was that it?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: You didn't have to inquire about--or were you still inquiring about possible exchange students?

* Sampling of pages follows.

MME. AIME DAUSSARGUES
49 AVENUE BALZAC
VILLE D'AVRAY
SEINE-ET-OISE, FRANCE
SUSANNE VITRY

24

✓ MRS CARSON F KOHLE
27 HAMEAU LES ENGOULEVENTO,
LA CELLE ST CLOUD,
SEINE ET OISE, FRANCE
JANE BOARDMAN

54

MISS BARBARA A RYDLANDER
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CASA MATA
LAS PESAS, PROV. TARRAGONA
SPAIN
BARBARA JANE NORMAN

X 48

MISS CAROLYN B BLEWETT
% VDA. DE BAQUES,
MALDONADO 61,
MADRID, SPAIN

65

MRS GUY A LOSKOT
PASEO DE LA CASTELLANO, 78
MADRID, SPAIN

SUSAN RAND

X 48

MISS ALLYSON E ROSE
CALLE DE LAGASCA 72
MADRID 1, SPAIN

MRS WILLIAM A BEVANS
CALLE SALUD 87
EL TERRENO
PALMA DE MALLORCA, SPAIN
CONSTANCE E MACKINTOSH

MRS FRANCO FENZI
PALAZZO I.N.A.
PIAZZA UNGHERIA
PALERMO ITALY
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VIA BOTTICELLI 57
PRATO, ITALY

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MISS FLORITA BOTTS
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VIALE TERME DI CARACALLA
ROME, ITALY

MISS ANTONIA K DORATI
VIA DEI FORAGGI 74
ROME, ITALY

SIGNORINA PIA LINDSTROM
49, VIALE BRUNO BUOZZI
ROME, ITALY

X MRS EDWARD A MAG
VIA CASSIA ANTICA, 240-1
ROME ITALY

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IAC office 4:45 A

Thu Feb 3	Lv NEW DELHI	IC # 439 403	6:00 AM
	Ar MADRAS		8:45 AM

CONNEMARA HOTEL
~~requested but not confirmed~~

~~5:05 AM - Concl~~
~~6:00 AM~~
~~2:05 PM~~
~~3:00 PM~~

Wed Feb 9	Lv MADRAS	IC #103	
	Ar BANGALORE		

HOTEL WEST END
 requested ~~but not confirmed~~
confirmed from Madras

~~7:30 AM~~
~~5:40 PM~~
~~7:05 PM~~

Sat Feb 12	Lv BANGALORE	IC #136	
	Ar HYDERABAD		

RITZ HOTEL
 requested but not confirmed

Tues Feb 15	Lv HYDERABAD	IC #120	9:40 AM
Mon Feb 14	Ar BOMBAY		7:55 PM 9:50 PM

NATARAJ HOTEL (Taj Mahal much preferable)

Wed Feb 23	Lv BOMBAY	BA #917	10:40 PM
Thu Feb 24	Ar TEHERAN	COACH pick-up 10:15 AM 8:10 PM	12:50 AM

HILTON HOTEL (Park OK? American NG)

Sat Feb 27	Lv TEHERAN	PAA # 119 001	8:30 AM
Sat Feb 26	Ar BEIRUT		9:20 AM

PHOENIX (St Georges better? older)
 HOTEL INTERCONTINENTAL

Open date	Lv BEIRUT *	ME #314	2:30 PM
	Ar JERUSALEM (Jordan)		3:30 PM
Wed Mar 2	Lv JERUSALEM (Jordan)	MS #796	12:20 PM
	Ar CAIRO *		2:30 PM

HOTEL SEMIRAMIS
Lv hotel 10:15 - Eastern 50 P.T. Jan 80

Sat Mar 5	Lv CAIRO	MS #755	12:01 AM
	Ar JEDDAH		2:50 AM

HOTEL RED SEA OR KANDABA PALACE
~~Requested but not confirmed~~

Tue Mar 8	Lv JEDDAH	MS #762	9:50 AM
	Ar CAIRO		10:50 AM

HILTON HOTEL

*My train:
 by St Georges Church Hotel (rec. by Swans)
 on Nablus Road (across from YMCA), Jerusalem
 or - YMCA Hotel
 or Shepherds (new) in Cairo if Hotel not available*

- Bennett: No, that was only in India and in Japan. All these, you see the college years-- [showing lists of contacts].
- Chall: --and the years in which they graduated.
- Bennett: I met this woman. Two of these old girls of about this generation met for the first time in the party that one of them gave for me at her place.
- Chall: Are most of these in Paris or did you travel into other parts of Europe?
- Bennett: Well, here's Spain, here's Rome.
- Chall: Oh, I see, this is all of Europe.
- Bennett: Here is more of France; here we have India; Thailand; this one and this one met me at the airport in Thailand. Here's Hong Kong. This one telephoned me after I got to my hotel room, to see about setting things up. Here's Taipei, Mrs. Gunsun Hoh was this lady. Turns out that she knew Afton Dill of our state Department of Education in this state--sat next to her in the English class at Mills College.
- Chall: That must have been an exciting adventure for you! It was your first major trip outside of the United States.
- Bennett: Oh, I did it up in grand style, and I do mean grand. Look at this, if you want to see grand. [Shows picture]
- Chall: The Ambassador. That looks like Spain.
- Bennett: It was in Spain. That is because he was on first name terms with--
- Chall: Oh, Dean Rusk. [laughs] So you didn't have just an ordinary tour.
- Bennett: No. There's another one here that I was going to show you that was more moderate.
- Chall: And here's a little card from the Milhauds in your Hotel de France. I assume there were flowers with it?
- Bennett: That's the Milhauds' one, yes. So here we have it.
- Chall: Hm, Rome. [reading] This Reinhardt, is he related to--?
- Bennett: Son of.
- Chall: Son of Aurelia.

Bennett: Yes, he was the one who fixed me with an amused look at the party that a Mills person gave for me in Rome. He and his wife attended. He said, "I guess you never knew that I once taught classics at Mills." He was drafted, he was majoring in classics here [UC] when there was an emergency.

Here is a little party that was done for me in Teheran. Now I don't know how much you know about the financial world of Tokyo, but the Nomura Securities is it. This is written by Mr. [Kazuma] Nakayama, who is manager of the secretariat of the board of directors.

Chall: Oh, and this was one of your special reasons for going over there.

Bennett: Yes, and the reason is that the gentleman Mr. Segawa [Minoru] was the chairman of the thing, and it was something to be shown the treasury full of gold bars, and so forth, by Mr. Segawa himself. But Mr. Nakayama was put at my disposal, and I had a wonderful time both in Tokyo and in Kyoto.

Chall: Had you had Japanese women at Mills?

Bennett: Mr. Segawa's daughter [Toshiko] was a senior student at the time.

Chall: Did you manage to make the kind of connections that Easton Rothwell wanted you to make in terms of exchange?

Bennett: I have records here of the meeting I had with the International Christian University faculty, which, by the way, had twenty transfer students from California working with them at the time, and had just come off a six day student strike. You can't tell me it was coincidence. They were shaping up.

Chall: I would like to keep some of this, and look through it.

Bennett: I think I can leave it all with you if you want. Here is the original of that picture that you may have seen in this Mills publication. I've just picked and chosen a few things.

Chall: Oh, fine, because I can pick out a few that might go well with the discussion in the volume.

Bennett: This is the kind of preparation I got from Mills, which was an enormous help. I knew what I was getting into every place I went. Maybe you saw that little article that I wrote for the Mills Quarterly. [August, 1966]

Chall: I did.

Bennett: There's my journal of the trip. If you want it you could keep it but I'll take it home happily.

THE NOMURA SECURITIES CO., LTD.

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KAZUMA NAKAYAMA
MANAGER
SECRETARIAT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

December 20, 1965

Miss Mary W. Bennett
Dean, Mills College
c/o Palace Hotel
Tokyo

Dear Miss Bennett:

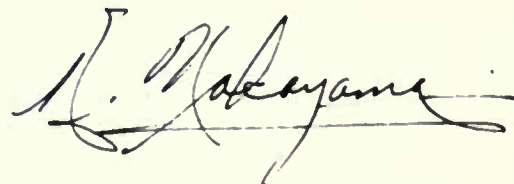
President of my firm and Mrs. Minoru Segawa were informed from their daughter, Miss Toshiko Segawa, a student at your college, of your visit to Japan.

Mr. & Mrs. Segawa would like to have the pleasure of inviting you one evening to their home.

As we do not know your schedule I would get in touch with you in the morning of December 25th (Saturday).

Just in case, my telephone numbers are:
Office (direct) 211-3765
Residence 402-0687

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'K. Nakayama', written in dark ink over a horizontal line.

KN

Holiday Diary: Dean Bennett Around the World

During the last academic year, Dean of the Faculty Mary Woods Bennett worked her way around the world meeting alumnae, examining foreign school systems, and representing Mills. Herewith, her chronicle of holidays abroad—the days she didn't work.

December 24. We are approaching Tokyo at dusk. The coastline seen through a break in the leaden sky looks as if it had been painted by a Japanese artist. That singularly dense-looking cloud looming above the grey mass of the others proves to be no cloud but the crest of Mt. Fuji. On the long flight from Honolulu, where Billie Marshall waved me off amid cries of "Mele Kalikimaka," I had pondered the thought that in addition to losing a day of my life on crossing the International Dateline I was also about to lose a Christmas from my life, irretrievably. The idea brings no dismay; the prospect of setting foot on Asian soil is far too exciting.

Later: Lose Christmas? Christmas carols, Western style, ring out from the public address system of the airport limousine as we ride the freeway into town. A Santa Claus, with sleigh and reindeer, charges across the wintry lawn of a small parkway. Stores and other public buildings are draped with banners whose red and green characters spell out "Merry Christmas." A large sign over the door of the hotel dining room where Ei Kamada and I shared a late supper greets the polyglot guests with the same message, in plain English. At a nearby table a shy young Japanese couple exchange gifts wrapped in unmistakable Christmas paper. The management provides paper hats for all those present. Four young Japanese men at another table put theirs on in festive mood. I ask Ei what it all means for her countrymen. She answers in a word: "commercial."

December 31. Kyoto. It is close to midnight and I am waiting in the hotel lobby for Miss Samata and Mr. Harada. I have learned to recognize the traditional symbols of the coming of the new year — pots of bamboo and pine at the entrance of stores and dwellings, garlands of straw, oranges, and leaves festooned over doorways, neat little "still life" arrangements of rice cakes, sea weed, and fruit in store windows, the hotel lobby, and at domestic shrines. We are going out to hear the bells rung—108 times, the last stroke exactly at midnight. It takes so long that we have a chance to visit several famous bells—the very ancient one at Myoshin-ji where we hear the first stroke, the mellow deep-voiced one at Daitoku-ji, the great bell at Chion-in, biggest in all Japan, where twelve strong boys and men, timed by a priest with stop watch,

finally ring out the old year. For an instant the religious pray in silence. Then the incredibly dense crowd yells "Happy New Year" and starts to move. We are carried along through the park, past the vendors' stalls at Gion shrine. Finally my companions guide me back to the hotel. They puzzle me by thanking me. Grinning goodnatureedly, they admit they've never seen this festival before except on TV.

January 1. I begin the new year by having the traditional soup, O-zoni, for breakfast. Then I walk, for hours, from shrine to shrine with the Japanese people, mostly in Japanese dress, all in holiday mood, family groups, groups of young women, groups of young men. I count seven Caucasians in all the crowd during a five-hour ramble, and discover one Japanese mother unobtrusively pointing me out to her children as a novel sight. I stop in for a cup of tea at the shop run by Miss Samata and her father. He shows me the stone he picked up at the grave of John F. Kennedy.

January 20. Singapore. It is New Year's eve again, this time Chinese style. I dine, at one of the few Chinese restaurants open on this night, with Hie-Pek Dang and members of her family, a very festive occasion. Miss Dang takes care to deliver me back to the hotel before midnight, and hopes I'll get some sleep. Later I know why. All the firecrackers in the world go off just outside my hotel window.

January 21. Kuala Lumpur. On arrival at the hotel I find a message from Elizabeth Carver of USIS. She has been warned of my coming, is concerned lest the holiday closing of practically everything leaves me to spend my weekend in this fascinating city in my hotel room. By telephone I reassure her that I have plans, but I begin to wonder if I'll ever see the New Year in for good.

January 22. My companion and I encounter a Lion Dance in China Town on our way out of town for a sight-seeing tour — part of the Chinese New Year celebration. On our return from tin mines, sports palaces, the University of Malaya, and the National Museum, we try to visit the magnificent new National Mosque but it is shut up tight—in preparation for the Muslim New Year celebration. We arrive at the hotel in time to witness a great burst of firecrackers—Chinese New Year again. We find a sign that craves indulgence of

the hotel's guests for the traditional noise making. It will be repeated at one o'clock next day.

January 23. It is. All 20,000 firecrackers, strung from the seventh floor of the hotel to the marquee over the entrance, go off just outside my hotel window. I fly to Calcutta.

January 24. Calcutta. I find I have not left behind either Chinese influence or Muslim New Year. There are rickshaws everywhere. Every one of them seems to have in it a clay image carried on the lap of the passenger who is almost concealed behind it. My guide tells me these are images of the Indian goddess of learning whose festival is at hand. They are on their way to countless homes, there to be decorated, venerated, and ultimately dissolved in the river. The rickshaws? Possibly the Chinese got them from India in the first place. We go through the Muslim section of town where the presence of great quantities of food for sale signifies the end of the Muslim season of fasting.

January 25. A new holiday, a sad one. I try to visit Lady Brabourne College and find it closed. Some of Mr. Shastri's ashes are to be immersed in the Ganges.

January 26. New Delhi. Republic Day, a proud Indian holiday. Against the advice of the waiter at breakfast and the desk clerk, I join the crowd passing the gates of India International Center in a steady stream. After a long walk I find a seat at the parade quite near the President's throne-like chair. Military units, in both ancient and modern garb, contingents of horse and of elephants, floats, folk dancers, youth groups, athletes, national heroes, all march past, sometimes to Western band music, sometimes to unfamiliar rhythms. I catch a glimpse of the tiny figure of Mrs. Gandhi. A fly-past of jet planes ends the show and I walk back "home," through India Gate, past the statue of George V, lone remaining symbol of Empire. I find myself, or rather my feet, stared at by all ages and conditions of people. They are fascinated by my stockings.

February 14. Valentine's Day. Would never have remembered this "holiday" in Hyderabad if Professor Scherer, an American teaching at University College for Women here, had not tested my orientation by asking me in the presence of some students, "What day is this?" It is a holiday for the students, anyway, the occasion of their annual sports awards. Sitting on the platform in the meeting hall, bedecked with the traditional garland with which a guest is honored in India, I see innumerable small silver cups awarded for excelling in various sports. The students, in a graceful gesture, make gifts of material for new clothing — sari, camise, or dhoti — to the host of servants who make them comfortable.

April 10. Easter Sunday. I have been noting preparations for this day for a month—bought Greek Easter cards in Athens for a few elderly friends and mailed them in Rome; was fascinated by the sumptuous chocolate Easter eggs in the windows of candy stores in Madrid. saw the magnificence of Gothic architecture in Paris among thousands of French tourists, religious, and school children on Easter holiday. Now in this quiet village, a part of Bath, I hear English church bells for the first time. I am glad that this holiday finds me with family. No need to go sightseeing. My cousin and I go down the road to the tiny church of St. Thomas à Becket. Later her daughter, son-in-law, and grandchildren will join us for a holiday meal, but now I look about as we wait for the communion service to begin. The oldest memorial stones carry late fifteenth century dates. I feel as if I have found my roots, know that I am on my way home from my long journey. As we walk back through the raw, grey afternoon toward the welcome warmth of the fireside, I realize that the picture of Easter in my mind's eye has been altered forever. Henceforth it will always include a glimpse of lush green English countryside — and masses of daffodils.



Deen Bennett, with a friend on Valentine's Day in Hyderabad.

Chall: Well, let's see. I might find some little tidbit in there that might be worth looking at.

Bennett: I don't know that you can read it, my handwriting is dreadful, and it gets worse when I'm doing it just for my own consumption.

Chall: It probably wouldn't copy too well, but I'll see.

##

Chall: I think when we left off last week, we were discussing your sabbatical.

Bennett: Yes, I gave you some papers that are indicative of the things that I did.

Chall: Yes. I don't think we have to go through it on a routine basis. You said that you think Dr. Rothwell sent you to broaden your scope, et cetera.

Bennett: I'm sure he did. [laughs]

Chall: Did it? It must have been a very exciting and broadening experience.

Bennett: Oh, it was wonderful. You know, he was such a generous man on that. He finagled some money from the Ford Foundation out of a grant that we had for faculty improvement, I think it was-- something of the sort. At any rate, I went everywhere with the introduction not only of the alumnae office, which I showed you but he gave me letters to a couple of businessmen, one in Thailand, I remember, and that family entertained me at their home, which was very different from the home of our student. The student's home was magnificent because she married a cousin of the king. There must have been wealth there somewhere, because although he was a prince, actually, and he had the responsibility of changing the clothes on the Emerald Buddha four times a year, and that sort of thing, he was a banker, I think, by profession.

He built a house, and within the compound, which was on a klong, he built a school for her. That was the one that Bowman called the only progressive educational institution he saw in all of Thailand. She had a functioning nursery school. She had come to Mills to study. She had chosen to come to Mills, much to the astonishment of the educational authorities in Thailand who were planning the programs in the United States of forty young scholars from Thailand. They said, "Why Mills College?" Well, she had lived next door in Bangkok to a graduate of Mills College. [laughs]

Bennett: Milhaud once said, "This little, tiny, college, you cannot imagine how many Mills connections there are." He gave a concert once in Exeter, I think it was, in England, and a woman came up to him after the concert and said, "Mr. Milhaud, you don't know me, but I am so-and-so of the class of such and such of Mills College." His King David was opened, I think, in Tel Aviv, and backstage came his colleague George Mowry of Mills College to congratulate him.

The influence is widespread, the presence is widespread, and that's one of the things that made my trip so good, because everywhere I had that Mills connection, and was treated like a visiting friend, even by people whom I had never met at Mills.

The people in Teheran were particularly pleasant. I can't remember the name of the young woman, never knew her at the Mills campus, she only spent two years, maybe even only one at Mills, but she was technically a member of the Alumnae Association. She and her husband met me at one o'clock in the morning, or something like that in the Teheran airport. He was a secretary in the embassy. They took me in hand, took me about, arranged parties for me, so that I would meet people. I met one young woman who seemed very American to me, and she said, "Yes, it's because Mr. North Burn gave me a job on the Mills campus when my husband was stationed at the Oakland Army Hospital." So there was that kind of combination of tender memories of Mills, with a sense of responsibility for any Mills person traveling.

Chall: What a great way to take your first trip around the world!

Bennett: Oh, it was simply marvelous. I never would have known what to do alone. Not only that, but because of the letter that North Burn, then assistant to the president, had had sent to all the USIS [United States Information Service] people, or the cultural affairs people in legations, big cities as well as in the embassies, people were expecting me.

When I didn't look people up they came and found me. I was in Calcutta, where I didn't spend many days, but there were a couple of women's colleges there, and I was going to begin by visiting those, because if I had a mission at all, it was to look up the women's education situation in India, and see if it was practical to work out an exchange. So at the desk in the hotel, after breakfast, when I went to see about mail and that sort of thing, I heard someone asking about a library, and heard him being directed down the street to the one maintained by the USIS [United States Information Service], so I thought I would just go there. I went down, and what I always did in a strange library, was to go and look at the psychology shelf, to see sort of where they were-- get myself squared away.

Bennett: There I was, poring over it, and a nice lady came up and said, "Can I help you?" I said, "Thank you, no, this is sheer curiosity; I want to find out what the United States is doing in foreign parts." She fiddled around until I felt called upon to give her my name, and she said, "Oh, we've been looking for you." She took me right in to see the cultural affairs officer; he took me to his home for lunch, he got me entree into the colleges I wanted to visit.

It was like that everywhere. Some people waited for me to call. In other places I met the appropriate officer at a party. He already knew that our alumnae had taken hold, and that they would call on him if needed, but that I didn't need him. It was not quite a hundred percent. Some places, yes, they had my name, did I need anything, could they help me, but other than that, they were going to just let me pass through. That tended to be in the larger cities, or in more westernized cities.

But in India we were watched like a hawk. I have a feeling that they had had so many bad experiences with American students, Fulbrighters and other students going over and stepping all over the taboos, and bothering people, and the right hand not knowing what the left hand was doing, that I found the Ford Foundation, and the Fulbright people in cahoots. That was partly because of personnel. They had several very powerful women who were Americans, but had been born and brought up in India, and that made all the difference in the world to the know-how that went into the programs there.

I had had an interview on the Mills campus with Elizabeth Lamb. She was interested in foreign exchange at the national level. She had given me a rundown on colleges so that I went not unprepared for what I was to see. I had a little distance and a little preparation, but I visited fourteen institutions for women in that month as well as alumnae in Delhi and in Bangalore.

Chall: You were in India one month?

Bennett: Yes. One of our alumnae, I think the first one in the family who came, came as a graduate student in art. By this time she was married and had a child, and was in the Ministry of Tourism. She took me to see my first polo game, in India, at any rate. She told me what hairdresser to go to, and whom to ask for. And she said, "Go to this place, and ask for so-and-so, and you'll get what you ask for, because she knows how to follow directions." She took me out to a meal, and afterwards we went out, and she bought some of the candies being mixed up by some vendor on the street. She said, "I can eat these but you can't." [laughs] "You dare not." It was just old home week, as far as being with her was concerned.

Bennett: Her sister was married to the director of the India Institute for Science in Bangalore. So I had a personally conducted tour of that institute, and learned all about the research that they were doing. Her cousin in Bangalore was married to the head of the National Science Foundation, the Indian equivalent. She took me about, she had been a student at Mills too. So, especially in foreign parts, I had native people. In Japan I was met by one of our alumnae, who was in the Ministry of Health. This government connection on their part helped me.

But wherever they were, private citizens with no connection at all just took responsibility for making sure that I got to see what I wanted to see. This was all loyalty to Mills. It's really remarkable the manifestation of a sense of responsibility about the institution, and affection for it. So I profited enormously.

Then the other thing, of course, was that I profited by the letter that went out to the cultural affairs officers, and, in a few places, profited enormously from the fact that ambassadors, and Dean Rusk were very close friends. This happened in Spain. I had the red carpet all over the place in Spain. I was paged in the airport by somebody sent to meet me, and taken about everywhere. I just had much to be grateful for.

Chall: Yes! I should say.

Bennett: It was fantastic. It couldn't have been better, because it was favorable in every conceivable way.

Education in India

Chall: Were you able to make any kind of exchange with Indian schools?

Bennett: No. I encountered a few American students. But the difficulty is that the level of work in the women's colleges as such, is so far below what we demand of students at the college level.

I found some young American women who had close connections with American colleges. I think they were missionaries in the sense that they were interested in education as a mission. Perhaps they were the children or grandchildren of missionaries.

But on the whole the Indian girls in the colleges for women, which were affiliated with the great universities--they all were affiliated with some university--were young women who were increasing their marriageability by going and getting a B.A. They were not interested in the things of the mind, as far as I could tell. They would memorize the work that is dictated by the

Bennett: outside examiners, who set the examinations, who make a career of setting examinations. These examiners have, usually, American Ph.Ds. They are not attached to any university singly, they make up examinations for courses. The syllabus simply has to be followed.

An American I met at, I think it was Hyderabad, was an exchange professor from Goucher College. He said, "The hardest thing in the world was to motivate those students to read something that was not on the silly syllabus, to get them to do any supplementary reading at all." They just went by rote. The system, of course promoted this.

It differed only when you found a strong-minded American nun, as I did in the Catholic College for Women in Bombay. The Mother Superior, the principal of the college, sent immediately for the American on her staff when I was there. A wonderful woman. When the principal was bemoaning this system which made the education so narrow and circumscribed by the syllabus, the American nun said, "But Mother, we don't have to teach rubbish." My guess is that she bamboozled the students into doing better work. But it was all too easy simply to slide through. I could not figure out where all these bright women came from, who turned out to be the principals of the colleges I visited. They had American Ph.Ds, most of them, some from Stanford.

Chall: So they were well-educated women?

Bennett: They were, but, the thing is, that all the education that mattered took place after the B.A. They went on to graduate work. After some graduate work, they would go for the Ph.D. By this time they had had a real introduction to study. This I found out by visiting the people in New Delhi, who were representatives of the University of Wisconsin. A man and his wife. He was called the dean of the program, and they operated the Wisconsin program in India. They set it up for American students--I think, perhaps, I told you about this in an earlier talk--because they found out that an American student simply could not profit, even the men couldn't, in their college education at the undergraduate level.

They concocted a program which involved taking Hindi, or some other Indian language. The students all got together, and took that course together, and they took it in the home of the dean. He said he was able to give them some sense of belonging to a going concern by having them in his home. He said also it gave him and his wife an opportunity to get some meat and potatoes into them every once in a while. He said it also provided them an opportunity to spot the ones who needed to be sent home right now, because every once in a while there would be some.

Bennett: Then they would arrange for them to register for a graduate level course, a master's program course for their men or women in the university, not in their own college. Then they had them sign up for some independent study working under a handpicked scholar who could get the picture of what it was they were expected to do. I can't remember what the exercise was, but at any rate, it was developed to make it a useful experience for American youngsters at about the junior level.

I certainly would have recommended that any student who wanted to study in India should join the University of Wisconsin program in India. They would accept people on recommendation from other colleges and universities.

But by this time the frenzy of interest in India had passed. It had been very lively a few years before, but the Mills students were not ready to go. I couldn't even recruit them for Japanese places where it was a little easier, especially at the International University, which was a new one and had a half-American half-Japanese staff. I think we had one student ready to go, and then there was a great dust-up over a student demonstration, and her parents, in the last analysis, wouldn't let her go. One of our students did go, and had a satisfactory experience.

But the adjustment is hard. There's culture shock for the students, and then there's such a thing as being so far out of step with what you know, that you don't know how to profit by the experience.

Some colleges are better than others at this. There was one at which I felt very much at home. This was in Madras. I couldn't put my finger on why I felt so much at home in the women's college there. I discovered that it was because the chaplain--I went to a chapel service, got eaten up by mosquitos, I remember; it was an outdoor chapel, much open air about--was a Canadian, and the church in Canada which he had come from was the same merged church, several denominations merged, that the Mills chaplain had come from. There's a similarity to the Anglican service in their liturgy, and so forth. So that was an amusing case.

Also, there was a more basic patterning of the program on American lines. Those differences existed, but the main problem was that the girls were treated like, you know, unruly seniors in a boarding school.

Chall: Was this a hand-me-down from the English system, do you think, and their attitude toward women and class-structured education?

Bennett: No, it was Indian, I think, mainly. The catalogues would say girls could not go to the village, or to the town, or to the big city, nearest which they were located, except in batches. The point was there was no reason to go because dating's out of the question, the parents were arranging all that at home, and the girls expected them to be arranging it. To heck with this business of scrounging for your own boyfriend when your parents were doing a better job, was their attitude. So they were not motivated toward the same kind of performance, and besides that, they were not far enough along in their studies.

We had graduate students at Mills who had been prepared in India, but they had taken courses in the more practical areas. They were in sociology and economics. I found, by visiting the appropriate colleges in India, that when it came down to the matter of preparing people for, say, home economics, or agricultural extension work, or something like that, they were right down to earth, and much more close to what would go on at a good agricultural college in this country. Also, the teacher preparation places were more down to earth, so that the more practical need there was and vocational justification for going to college, the closer they came to actual preparation in realistic terms. But the liberal arts gal, who was getting the B.A. because it made her more marriageable, and had no intention of going on, she would have been a very dull schoolmate for our students.

A student would have simply gone to pot, academically, and she would have gone stir-crazy. They had no library facilities worth anything. Because they were undergraduate women, in most places they would be denied the use of the university library, you see. There were differences, of course, it wasn't a monolith.

I visited Lucknow, and saw a very interesting institution which was run, I'm absolutely certain, by an American black woman. She had a different kind of name, but I think I saw the signs, that she was an American turned Indian. I was sent to the airport, to get the plane, in the company of one young woman who escorted me. She was a very beautiful young woman, and I was interested in her surname, and asked her about its origin, where it came from, and she said, "Well, you know I'm not Indian at all." She was a combination of Armenian and something else. She was a subject of India, she was a citizen, and functioned as such. But it was one of those interesting examples of the fact that we are not the only melting pot.

Chall: So you came back; your mission was accomplished.

Bennett: Yes, and I came back with great—I was broadened. [laughter] It was a wonderful, wonderful experience, personal and professional. Everywhere where there were two or three Mills people who would be gathered together, I would meet with them. A lovely time in Paris, and in London with Mills folk, and in Madrid.

Chall: You've been in Europe and other places since then?

Bennett: Yes. The board of trustees at Mills gave me a trip abroad as a going away present.

Chall: When you retired?

Bennett: Yes.

Travels Abroad After Retiring

Bennett: That was in '74, and I didn't go until '75. I didn't go until I had my ducks lined up, so to speak. I went to Spain, and France, and England, where I visited friends, and had a lovely time. Then in '77 I went again on my own, and I spent all the time in England. When I went in '79 I went with ACT [American Conservatory Theater] on a tour. '79 and in '84.

Chall: Oh, you have done a bit of traveling since then. But mostly in Western Europe?

Bennett: Yes, and mostly in England. You see, I had a cousin living in Bath, and I fetched up there on my round the world tour, and got over the dreadful cold I had picked up on the continent. I sat eight days by her fire [laughs] and got rested up from the tour, really. But there was a very virulent bug going around, and I got it, and of course I was tired. I was open for it, and no immunities, got it good and hard. I visited my relatives while they lived in Bath, and when they moved to Ireland, I visited them there, in '79.

Then, I had a friend who lived in the north of England. I used to love to hear her say she lived in Northumberland. However, they've redivided the political subdivisions up there, and she turned out to be in South Shields, I think. [laughs]

So I saw quite a bit of the north Newcastle-on-Tyne area when I visited her. When I went around the world she was living in Kent with her husband, who was living at the time, and I went down there in April, just before I came home, to visit her. She had been an exchange teacher with us at Mills the first year I taught

Bennett: at Mills, so it was a lovely friendship. It was like old times when I would go to Newcastle and meet with her there. I think I went two or three times.

She lived right on the edge of the North Sea, and had got used to the English cold again, but I nearly froze. This would have been late May or early June by the time I got there, on my second trip, and she got out her wooly underwear, which had been put away for the season, and I was much more comfortable. It was a good exposure to something off the beaten path. We went up to see Hadrian's Wall on a very rainy day, and we climbed up to all the monumental places and saw all the ruins, and the foundations of camps and similar structures still embedded in the ground. We had a cup of hot tea that they had brought along at the right time of day, which certainly did warm the cockles of your heart. But I was not sorry when I had to leave the north of England.

##

The Personal and Professional Demands of the Dean's Office

Chall: We'll get you back now into your working mode, which, I guess, really took up most of your time.

Bennett: And increasingly it took it up as my energy began to get scarce, and I had to use all of it on the job.

Chall: Dr. Ross told me that you did all this work over the years with one secretary.

Bennett: That's right.

Chall: I'm sure after you left there were a couple more.

Bennett: Oh, they multiplied all over the place.

Chall: So you really did have to devote most of your life to it. I gather that your professional work took up what? About 99 percent of your time?

Bennett: It was very hard to separate out my professional from personal because, for example, I went to most of the concerts and other presentations on campus, which I might have done even if I hadn't felt I had to go. But I did feel I had to go, so I took in most of them. Actually, the concerts and the performances of one sort or another on campus were varied enough so that I didn't feel terribly limited. But I made far less use of the resources in San

Bennett: Francisco than I had earlier on, when I hadn't had so many responsibilities, and when they were not as demanding, when I was not so tired.

Balancing the Need for Flexibility and Continuity with Changing Presidents and Curriculum

Chall: When did you begin to feel the demands more?

Bennett: It was such a gradual process, I couldn't say. I suffered some trauma each time we changed presidents, that is, from Lynn White to Easton Rothwell, and from Easton Rothwell to Rob Wert. The ways of operating were so different that I had to adjust to these. In each case, of course, the president could have said, "Thank you, I want someone else to do this job." But he didn't. This required flexibility as I was becoming progressively less flexible.

The hardest part was mediating the change so that the faculty could understand what was going on. They always felt something had been taken away no matter from whom they went, and to whom they went, they felt a wrench. I tried to ease the transition for them. There were changes, and not all of them were acceptable to the people who were being asked to move from a habit well-formed, and expectations well-formed, to something else. I had to find out what the something else was, and I had to sell them on it, in a way. So, just as I would get someone established, then I'd be off to somebody else. So that kept me hustling.

Then the habits of work of the individual presidents were something that I had to adapt to. Rob Wert was so different from Easton Rothwell, that there was more of a wrench there, but I don't know whether that was age, partly, on my part.

Chall: You weren't really getting that old.

Bennett: No, but you do get less flexible as you get older.

Chall: Particularly, since you had all those years behind you of what Mills was, and what you expected of Mills. Somebody, I don't recall now which president it was [Easton Rothwell], said you were conservative in the best meaning of the word.

Bennett: He has a very nice way of putting a good twist on something that he wants to say.

Chall: So, you were standing guard in a way over traditions that you probably felt were important?

Bennett: Yes, and probably emphasized them more than I would have, had a person been moving in a different direction. But, as it became clear that we lost a sense of history as we began to have presidents with six or eight-year tenures, if anybody was going to preserve the sense of continuity, it had to be me. That meant that I was forever doing something that I wouldn't have been doing, had somebody else had that sense of continuity. So, in that sense I'm sure that I appeared to be resistant to change. But it never became an issue.

Chall: You probably couldn't convince the faculty of that because they saw you working as you would have to with the president?

Bennett: The perception of me by the faculty, of course, changed, when we got to the point where more of the faculty knew me only as an administrative officer, not as a colleague. I enjoyed the status of colleague for as long as there was a majority of faculty who remembered me as such. They didn't give over that sense of companionship. But with the new young ones who came in and saw me only as the Administration, with a capital A, it was a whole different relationship.

Chall: Gradually, then, did you lose some of the, what they call collegiality, and feel the loss of it?

Bennett: Well, colleges lost it in general; Mills was not alone. This came about through preoccupation with one's discipline rather than one's institution as a center of loyalty. The whole field of higher education in the United States was influenced by this, and as a matter of fact Mills was a little laggard in adapting to it. Then the socioeconomic conditions within which the college was operating were different from time to time. What was true of Mills in the days of Aurelia Reinhardt ceased to be true as the college grew.

The attitudes of young women changed. We had, in the fifties, a group of students and graduates who were quite willing to say the battle for women's rights has been won, now let's be sensible and have four children each, and concentrate on being wife and mother. That was a setback, in some ways, but you can't go against the tides that are running in the country. We suffered from that retreat of women.

Chall: That was after the war and during the fifties?

Bennett: In the fifties. Besides that, small colleges were dropping like flies all over the place because of the financial pressure, and the smaller pool of students available. We weathered that. When Easton came in he found a means of economizing which suited his concept of what a small liberal arts college should be like. He had us hue to the line of the standard liberal arts curriculum.

Bennett: Now, I could make a case for the fact that the attitude about learning, and the emphasis at Milla didn't change as much as the language did about it. However, it is true that he made a great point of stripping away the excesses that he found, in fragmenting what we were doing into so many different parts. He simplified, got back to the basic liberal arts curriculum, which was of course liberal arts according to his definition. Nevertheless, it was a tenable idea, and one that the faculty understood, and one that he was at great pains to discuss with faculty over, and over again. There's no question but what his heart and soul was in making this the best college possible, and that he saw this as the way to do it. By and large people went along with it.

Chall: Do you feel that it was a strengthening factor at that time?

Bennett: You know, I have lived long enough in the groves of academe to realize that the only way of keeping a faculty lively is involving them in thinking about this. The only way to do it is to stop doing what you've been doing and do that other thing which you haven't been doing. [laughs] In other words, you have to make changes simply to keep alive. Well, let's put it this way, one of Rob Wert's interests was in establishing what has become the most popular major, when I last checked, at Milla, the major in administrative and legal processes.

Chall: Yes, I read about that. I didn't understand what it was.

Bennett: Rob was convinced that one of the areas bound to be opening up for women would be at the management level in business and in law. The major is based on mathematics, economics, government, history, and sociology and provides internship experience in the community in legal offices, banks, and businesses. Graduates have entered law schools, graduate business schools, and management training programs.

It is interesting historically to note that in 1951, when Lynn White introduced some curricula in business, personnel work, and merchandising in an effort to attract students we had not interested before, he was criticized by some faculty members as departing from the liberal arts tradition of the college. The woman's movement, in thirty years, had brought it about that it now appears academically respectable to appeal to somewhat similar interests.

They have an advisory group of people who are functioning in the community. Although we were not lacking in this kind of thing before, the public is more aware of the possibility of people actually involved in fields contributing to the educational process. There's more interchange between business and professional people, and educational institutions now, more

Bennett: programs for a student moving out into internships, and brief assignments, and so forth. So it's of its day, and it emphasizes the leadership possibilities among women more than was done before.

Mills has never been a stridently feminist place. Never. I don't see its ever becoming that. We do have a women studies program, and we do have a group of faculty who are real feminists. They add a little spice to the general stew, but they are not the dominant people.

We have too many alumnae, like our Miss [Marion] Ross, and like Karen Swearingen, who's in biology. I don't know whether she has an official chairmanship, or headship at the moment. She was our own product in biology, has a doctorate from Berkeley, came back to us to teach, and was instrumental not only in working in our present program, but in the whole rebuilding of the biology facilities.

We have too many Mills products, who are deeply involved in not only making Mills as good as it can be in its present day, but making sure that it doesn't lose its past. Now, whether we will always have our Miss Rosses, and our Mrs. Swearingens, I don't know, but we have them now.

Chall: But the Mills idea always has been, I would guess, that women could learn, and could do anything if they wanted to.

Bennett: Well, when Dixie Lee Ray was appointed chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, someone asked her what the ingredients were in her education that made it possible for her to be ready for this post. She said, "I went to a college where it was never questioned whether a woman could do it."

Chall: That's right. So the real problem, then, is not only that you want to do it, but is the society out there ready to take you. That's where the women's movement has had its push.

Bennett: Miss Wagoner once asked Aurelia Reinhardt whether she felt at a disadvantage when her activities took her among men. Now, Aurelia was on the Republican National Committee at one time, and she said, "Yes, there is one way in which my sex interferes." She said, "I cannot go into the smoke-filled rooms," where a lot of the work is done. But she never felt that this was more than just a fact of life, to be dealt with as such. She didn't feel put down by it, she didn't feel personally affronted by it.

Chall: Yes. There's a different attitude today.

Bennett: As I told you, I think, once before, she felt that women had just a tremendous advantage over men, because they could do anything a man could do if they put their mind to it, and they could bear children besides.

Chall: [Laughs] She had a very optimistic perspective.

Bennett: She had these two boys who came quite close together, and would have had a larger family had her husband not died early, left her with these two little boys to support. Ridiculous as it seems of that stately, regal woman, she was a very feminine woman in many ways. One tended to forget this because she was so--aggressive is hardly the word--affirmative in what she did. She was of the generation, you see, that proved what women could do before women's retreat. It was a really very impressive generation of women.

Chall: Yes, indeed, there were many doctors, lawyers, among them, professionals in those days.

Bennett: And enlightened women who had their field in volunteer work. Mrs. [Emma] McLaughlin, for example.

Finding Time for Leisure and Relaxation

Chall: Oh, yes, absolutely. Almost a vanishing breed. Well, I gather there weren't many leisure pursuits not related to the Mills campus?

Bennett: No, not at the end there weren't. I did go to Colorado every summer for a long time. My friend and I would work in the summer session, and then we would take off for Colorado.

Chall: Where? Any special place?

Bennett: Colorado Springs, where her home is, and where she retired. Many's the summer we finished summer session, and then took off in her car to drive there. Sometimes we varied it. Sometimes I would go, stay a little while there, go off, see my sister, and then come back, and join her for the trip home. She has family who go to Martha's Vineyard for summer, and I visited there a couple of times. But in later years I would go off and join my sister wherever she was performing. I've spent some vacations in funny places, like North Tonawanda, New York, and Clio, Michigan, and a few other places where she was doing summer work. So I kept in touch with her and with her children, and then often at Christmas time I would go off and spend Christmas with them, after my mother and father died.

Chall: So your sister has been traveling around in small theater groups, mostly, on the road?

Bennett: Well, she's been on the road recently, but not in small theater groups. She was the original Gooch in Angela Lansbury's production of Mame. She played this for two years with Lansbury on Broadway. Then in summers after that she would join Angela for summer theater presentations of it. One time I went to St. Louis to see them, and one time I went to Springfield, Massachusetts to see them. She had quite a career playing that part, and she played it in the movie that Lucille Ball made of Mame. The movie was not a success, but she devoted six months of her life to working in that movie.

She also was in a musical version of the Mad Woman of Chaillot that Angela Lansbury did, which was called Dear World, and this was not a success. When they knew it was going to close, Jane told me that it simply was not drawing as well as it should, and it was going to close. So, I talked to Rob Wert about this, and I said, "Would it disturb you if I went to New York for the weekend?" He said, "No." [laughs] So I did. Friday, after work, I got on a plane, and I saw the show Saturday night, and then came home Sunday.

Chall: Good for you! What about her husband? He's been in the theater. Has he been traveling in different directions?

Bennett: He's been in Big River since it opened. This doesn't please him too much because Big River got all kinds of prizes the year it was new, and it is still being described as a musical that was the best of its season, but it wasn't a good season. This doesn't sit very well when his wife is in a musical that is wildly successful. But he is in Big River, and has been in it since the beginning, and one thing I have learned about the business end of the business is that if you have a Broadway salary you hold onto it, because this is the only place where you make any money.

Chall: And they have been rearing children through all of this, too. How many children?

Bennett: Two.

Chall: Are they theater children?

Bennett: They're musicians of this variety [puts fingers in her ears].

Chall: [Laughs] Well, that's this era of musical life. What did you do about handling your household? You were living with Miss Armstrong. Did she do most of the housework, or did you share?

Bennett: No, we had a housekeeper who came in periodically to keep us tidy. I used to buy more of her service than Frances Ruth Armstrong did because I had less time to do my own washing and ironing, and that sort of thing. No, we had household help, limited household help. Frances Ruth Armstrong was an awfully good cook, and loved cooking. It happened that she tended to do more of it than I did. She also liked shopping more than I did. But the point is that I think she got the heavier load doing it, although I did some. In a manner of speaking, we alternated responsibilities, but there's no question but what she-- If we had a party--she immediately got out all her cookbooks all around her on the floor, and she would--

Chall: That was her creative activity, she enjoyed it. Did you have parties very often? Except for the one that I know about.

Bennett: Yes, we did. I would entertain new faculty. We would have dinners for six or eight. Sometimes we had facilities for entertaining on campus, which I would embrace when I could, and sometimes we would take people out. We had family parties on Thanksgiving, and would invite everybody and his brother to come. We'd extend our expandable teak table to its full length of a hundred and ten inches and seat ten people. That was fun. Toward the end, the last few years, we certainly were not up to it. We entertained, and we did quite a lot of entertaining, one or two people at a time, the people that we saw most, and so forth.

Chall: Your own good friends, is that it?

Bennett: Well, they tended to be friends on campus, or people who had been on campus, just because we were limited in what we could maintain.

Chall: But it was nice to be able to sit down and visit with them without worrying about the business end of it?

Bennett: My friends were awfully good about that. They didn't gossip, and they didn't plague me for tidbits of gossip. They were just in cahoots on that.

Chall: So you could relax?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: That's important. I was wondering how you might have released strain which certainly would build up.

Bennett: Well, I tell you, I think that Frances Ruth and I both profited by having someone to unload on. As a matter of fact, Lynn White on telling me about some top secret college business, advised me to tell Francis Ruth in these words: Everyone needs someone to talk to.

Chall: You trusted each other?

Bennett: Yes. I knew her family, and was very, very fond of them. They were very accepting, and warm toward me. Both of us had chosen to live with someone else, because we could not conceive of living alone. When it came to the point of our retirement, people began saying, "Oh, what in the world are you going to do? How are you going to find companions?" We laughed, and laughed, and laughed, because the last thing in the world we wanted to do was to try to set up that relationship with someone else. You know, it was thirty-four years in the building, and you just can't do that again in life, there isn't enough time, and there was no inclination. We both knew from the outset that we were going back to family.

Chall: She's where?

Bennett: She's in Colorado Springs, and lives amid seventeen nieces and nephews, and God knows how many grandnieces and grandnephews, and lives within sight of one sister and brother. They are on a mesa together, but far apart. They can see each other's roofs, and that's about all. Lots, and lots of friends. Her grandfather was once mayor of Colorado Springs, and her father was a respected businessman, president of the bank, Colorado Springs National Bank, and there's a building at Colorado College named Armstrong for her father. Regularly the presidents of the college used to be at dinner when I was there visiting. They live very much in the life of the college, and the community, and always have.

Chall: She'll fit right back in then very beautifully.

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: I'm interested to find out how anybody does unload, hence get rid of strain. It's really fortunate that you were able to do that.

Bennett: Yes, I think that we were each other's safety valves.

Chall: Did she act as sounding board, too, if you had any concerns? You could talk to her about ways to think through a problem?

Bennett: Yes, but I tried not to visit specific problems on her. We used to systematically watch television, whatever was on television at dinner time, so that--

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Chall: So this gave you an hour just to relax, then you could talk about the day's concerns if you needed to?

Bennett: We did if we needed to; we didn't make a formal thing of it, except that we tried very hard not to do it when we came home full of it.

Chall: That's very good.

Bennett: We always had a drink, and we might have talked about college affairs, but not about our own particular ones. But you can't help talking about some of the things, sometimes just amusing incidents.

Chall: That too. You want to share.

Bennett: Sometimes there were upsetting things, of course. We had our family tragedies, both of us. She was very supportive when my father died, and also when Mother died. She came and took Melissa, who was a babe, and the older of Jane and Gordon's children, and took her off for the day, and that sort of thing. She functioned like a sister.

Chall: You were fortunate to have fallen into a relationship that was that good over all those years.

Bennett: Yes, you know it was manufactured for us. I was occupying a house which had been the studio in which Roi Partridge worked while first off the campus at Mills, I had spent three years living on campus, and then it was Aurelia herself who said, "You'll want to live off campus." And so I did, and shared a house with Joyce Bolton first, who was an English woman who had been in our department, and who then moved on to other things, although she remained a good friend, and came back occasionally to teach at Mills.

Then I was looking for another housemate, after Joyce had gone on, and Lovisa Wagoner suggested this young woman who was coming to Mills. I had met her in the summer because she had been sent out to see me while I was working on my dissertation, to make sure that she seemed like an acceptable person for the department. She was coming back to Mills. She had spent a junior year at Mills, and had been graduated from Colorado College, and then had gone to work as a volunteer in the day nursery in Colorado Springs. She had been spotted there by a person who said, "You know how to do this, now you go to a college, and get yourself qualified on the record, and you will have a career." So she came back to Mills as a graduate student. Since she was to be on the staff in that capacity, she was sent out to be seen by me, and she seemed fine.

Miss Wagoner had known her in the midst of her family. They had spent a little time together one holiday. She said to me, "I think Frances Ruth Armstrong would be a good housemate." She

Bennett: said, "Why don't you try it for a year?" Well, we were both positively disposed toward not being alone. We were both somewhat reserved people, which helped. It didn't help as much in resolving problems sometimes, because we couldn't--we never had a fight, and I think people who are so reserved miss the release that some people get out of fighting, but we didn't find our release that way. [laughs] At any rate, it was a durable friendship.

When we moved to campus we lived first in one of the smaller faculty dwellings, and then when I was dean of the faculty we headed for the one that we ultimately took because it was larger, and it had facilities for entertaining that would be useful. We were on the list in the right position, so we could get it when we needed it, and that made it possible for us to have big stand up parties when we needed to. We did that after the dean's dinner parties, and on some other occasions. We would have a big do and invite everybody. I've told you about how the house was arranged that made possible those big parties.

Chall: It sounds very good. I'm told by several people that you have a great sense of humor, that it isn't just your sister who has this marvelous sense of humor. In fact some people say it's a "wicked" sense of humor. I have asked them, "When does she show it?" "Oh, it'll just come out when you least expect it." [laughter]

Bennett: [Laughs] It doesn't come on cue, and let me tell you an apocryphal story, because it indicates that a few episodes produced a reputation that was not justified. At the faculty breakfast, the beginning of one year, as always we were trying to get finished in time to dragoon the faculty into going to the opening chapel service of the year. At one point in one breakfast as I was going through this list of introductions of people, and so forth, the chaplain asked to be recognized, and he said, "May I excuse myself, I must go and prepare the chapel." And I said, "Pray do." It was absolutely unintentional. The people roared.

Chall: [Laughs] A wonderful pun.

Bennett: You know, it didn't take very much to get a reputation. [laughs]

Chall: I see, but you really have it.

Bennett: But that was in line with the sort of thing that occasionally--I couldn't manufacture the events at all; they were spontaneous and unrehearsed, and that, of course, was why they were funny.

Chall: Well, apparently, you're known to have that kind of a sense of humor.

Bennett: That's just fine. I didn't get tense over things, and I could slough them off. I think that's really what a sense of humor is, a sense of proportion.

Chall: You felt you had that? Did you develop it as you went along?

Bennett: I got better at it, believe me. You either do that or die on the job, I think—the kind that I had. The tolerance for unsolved problems, and the ability to suspend judgment, and to wait and see, I think are essential to anyone who had the job I had. Now, in some other people it might work a different way, but those things came easily to me. I think I was, therefore, insulated from some of the hard knocks that would have come had I not been able to sort of rock with the punches. I think that's important in that kind of role. It depends so much on dealing with other people. I used to tell people that when I retired I wanted to run a parking lot so that I could move inanimate objects around all day long. To move people without having them feel pushed is quite hard sometimes.

Educating Women for College Administration

Chall: Before we leave the world of academe, what about your interest in education of women toward college presidencies, or administration? Would you encourage women?

Bennett: I had a few talks with people, sometimes at the behest of colleagues. So-and-so, who's the wife of some one of my professional friends at Berkeley, is invited to take this job at so-and-so, would you talk with her? This sort of thing I did. There certainly was one member of the faculty at Mills in the time I was there, who clearly was the material of which my job was made, and I had always wished that she would stay at Mills and succeed me. [Barbara Wells] But she had a mother living on the East Coast; she was oriented toward the East Coast. She went off, and ultimately became the dean of the faculty at Vassar, which was exactly right for her. She's now no longer living. She succumbed to cancer.

But I didn't set out to urge students toward such a career. Now, some of them have become administrative officers, and I discovered, to my amazement, that one or two modeled themselves on me, but this was wholly unknown to me at the time. One of them's now on the administrative staff at U.C. Santa Cruz. She's the one I think of particularly. I certainly made no deliberate attempt to recruit. I certainly helped anyone who wanted to talk about it.

Chall: But you would in general encourage women who want to go into this field to go ahead and try it?

Bennett: Yes, I was asked to talk with some administrative officers at the College of the Holy Names when they were seeking a dean of the faculty. The wife of one of my colleagues, who was teaching at Holy Names at the time, asked me if I would talk with them, and I did, outlining what I thought were the requirements of the job. But I hope I always reminded people that this is just as I saw it for my job, and it could vary enormously in different places, and even at Mills over time.

Mills: The Presidency, the Faculty, and the Small College Experience

Chall: Yes, it would. I was interested in a statement that Dr. White said, I think in his retirement letter. Yes, it was his last letter in January, 1958. He wrote, "In 1943 the college was unbelievably president-centered, partly because in Aurelia Henry Reinhardt it had so amazing a personality as president, my chief ambition became the broad basing of Mills, so that no change in the presidency henceforth would seem more than an incident in the history of a continuing community of scholars. This has been accomplished." It was interesting that he came on because no woman could succeed Mrs. Reinhardt, and then there was a succession of three men. Since then you've had two woman presidents, Do you think that he felt that way when he came in, or decided that he felt that way later, and that his concept was successfully carried out?

Bennett: I think that the tendency to speak of our then having three men masks a fact. He was in spirit and attitude much more like Aurelia than his successors. Much more. He was as unlike Easton Rothwell and Robert Wert as a man could be in many, many ways. They were unlike each other, so that in one way, saying we had three men from Stanford is a misrepresentation of the facts of life. But we did have three men from Stanford. By the time a successor to Rob Wert was being sought I was telephoned by alumnae from as far away as Denver saying, "Miss Bennett, do the trustees know how important it is to have a woman?"

Chall: Yes, at that time it was. Much had transpired during those thirty years.

Bennett: They knew perfectly well that it was. The time had come. It had to be. I think it had to be partly because where— This is probably so injudicious that I will cut it out when I re-edit. It

Bennett: made no difference, as far as Lynn's being there was concerned. For one thing, he was so highly regarded by his colleagues as a scholar, that they had a new interest in the presidency, in a way.

Easton was the patriarch. Rob Wert was a delegator to the point of appearing disinterested. He wasn't, but he appeared. He delegated, and then went off and left it. I think that ill health may have been at the bottom of some of the apparent laid back attitude toward what went on at the college. Also, I think that he, more than the others, suffered from something that I noticed often in new faculty members. That was the absolutely mistaken assumption that a small institution is easier to cope with than a large one. Harder. As you can't encapsule experience. You operate on the whole arena. He had not had the small college experience in his background, and both Lynn and Easton had, Easton being a graduate of Reed, and Lynn having grown up on the campus of a small educational institution. So he knew what it was like even though he went to Stanford and Harvard.

I got to the point of trying to ensure that every faculty member that we knew enough about, so that we knew we would like to think of this as a permanent appointment, had had some kind of exposure to a small liberal arts college. It wasn't so much that he or she had to be actually a product of a liberal arts college, it had to be an exposure which would guarantee that acceptance of an appointment didn't mean settling for less than you wanted. That is, we couldn't afford to have people who regarded an appointment at a place like Mills as a comedown because it wasn't Berkeley, or as a comedown because it was so tiny.

People who knew only large institutions and venerated them could not see anything but a demotion in terms of coming to a place like Mills, whereas a youngster like young Chuck Lutz, whose father was a member of the Amherst faculty, and who himself was a graduate of the University of Washington, as far as his Ph.D. was concerned, knew exactly what he was doing when he came to Mills, and exactly what he could do as a member of a faculty of a small liberal arts college. That makes a tremendous difference.

Every once in a while we made a bad mistake and got someone who either was using Mills deliberately as a stepping stone, till something better turned up, or whose own self-regard was so eroded by his being at Mills, that he never became good enough for us even. And much less was he sought after by others, because, unfortunately, some other institutions have that attitude toward a place like Mills.

But one of my department members, at Berkeley, was the first one who turned my attention toward the small liberal arts college. Well, two of them did, by talking about their own children. One

- Bennett: of them is Edward Tolman, who sent his daughter to the women's college--Scripps. Robert Tryon said he firmly believed that a small liberal arts college was where a youngster should go rather than to a place like Berkeley. So it's not an unknown idea among those who frequent the massive walls of ivy at a place like Berkeley. Clark Kerr, for example, knows perfectly well what it is, good Swarthmore man that he is. With this kind of person one can talk in a known field of endeavor.
- Chall: How supportive of the Equal Rights Amendment were Mills faculty and students? How was it manifested?
- Bennett: There was no organized activity before I left. I have checked with present faculty and found none yet. People seem to discredit it as not likely to accomplish its goal.

V SUMMING UP

The Dean Retires and Continues an Active Life, 1974--

Living Arrangements

Chall: What happened when you retired? That's quite a change.

Bennett: It is indeed.

Chall: How did you decide where to live?

Bennett: I knew I wanted to live in Berkeley, and my friend Frances Ruth Armstrong and I had shopped around. I had not only located the Mark Twain condominiums, or apartments, as they were then, but I had a friend living there, one of my teachers from the Anna Head School, who later became a colleague on the board there, and a fellow member of the Town and Gown Club in Berkeley.

Edith Mereen said yes, I could come and look at her apartment, and I did. So I got my name on that list of people who would be interested in an apartment there. I looked around some other places, but other people began saying, "You know, that's a nice place, and it's in the area that you know, and it's close to the university." My doctor said that, for example.

So I was considering it as a possibility, and then one of the trustees at Mills telephoned me and said, "Did you know Edith Mereen is moving?" I said, "No, I didn't know that." She said, "Go look at her apartment again." So I did. It was beautifully furnished. She's the kind of person who begins by getting an interior designer to come in and do everything to her taste. She had traveled all over the world, not only well, but extensively and expensively. She had beautiful things. She had beautiful inherited family furniture. So it was an elegant place. But the floor plan was also very good.

Mills College

To all to whom these Letters shall come Greeting
 The Trustees of the College by the authority vested in them and on
 the recommendation of the Faculty have conferred upon

Mary Woods Bennett

Mostrious Dean of the Faculty at Mills for more than two decades, whose leadership, strength, dedication, and warm understanding have enriched the lives of all who have known her and contributed immeasurably to the academic and human quality of this College, the degree of

Doctor of Humane Letters honoris causa

with all the Rights, Privileges and Honors thereunto appertaining

Given at Mills College in the State of California on the
 twenty-sixth day of May, in the Year of Our Lord
 One Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy-four.

Robert West
 President of the College

James D. ...
 President of the Board of Trustees

Bennett: I decided that I didn't think I could afford it, and my friend Frances Ruth Armstrong said, "You can too." So I did move in. I not only moved in, I moved in having taken measurements so that I knew exactly what piece would go where. It was a very easy move, and very pleasant.

Chall: Does it have a common dining room? It isn't a retirement home?

Bennett: No. It was an apartment, and it became condominiums beginning in '79.

Chall: I see. That means you have a board of directors.

Bennett: Yes. Nearly killed me off.

Chall: You became the president instead of the operator at a parking lot. [laughs] It was hard work?

Bennett: Yes, and by this time (1985-1986) I had been retired twelve years. I had not really realized how much I was slowing down. The second decade has been much more startling in its revelation of human frailty than the first. It was not a traumatic change. I had plenty to do in getting myself set up in my new apartment. I was invited immediately to join the Town and Gown Club, I was invited to be on the Council of The Friends of the Bancroft Library quickly. All this really happened at the time of my retirement, so that I felt very much a part of Berkeley, and the university again.

The Santa Clara University Board of Trustees, 1972-1986

Chall: You were already on the board of Santa Clara University?

Bennett: Yes. I went on that board in '72.

Chall: Were you reappointed over a number of years?

Bennett: Yes.

Chall: Do you have to go off for any length of time?

Bennett: No.

Chall: They can reappoint you--?

Bennett: They've changed the length of appointments. But this year I said to the president, "You know, it is no surprise to me that I'm finding the trip down such that I don't make it at night anymore

Bennett: alone." I'm not afraid, it's simply I don't know what would happen if I were caught alone with an emergency, and I would

rather not expose myself to it. Everybody would certainly say with reason, "What in the world is a woman of that age doing wandering around loose at night?"

Chall: Santa Clara--that is a bit of a drive, though, isn't it?

Bennett: It's forty-five miles or so.

Chall: Yes, and they meet only at night?

Bennett: No. They have evening functions, and I used to go to evening functions now and then, but I just don't anymore.

Chall: Unless you would stay overnight.

Bennett: Or, as in some cases I can be picked up. It's just, considering the medications I need, and this sort of thing, it's such a hassle to stay any place overnight. I have done it a few times, but not with any pleasure. So I said to the president at the beginning of this current year, I said, "You know, I think you should feel free to tell me the time has come to resign," because I had been on it longer than any other person continuously, and that was 'cause I was a female, and another academic. You see, they don't have other academics except of their own faculty, and this conflict of interest does come up. I've been able to serve them in a couple of instances. A search for a new president, for one, and the evaluation of performance of the president after six years.

Chall: I think that's an important role.

Bennett: Those two things I could do as nobody else could because the lay trustees were afraid of questioning. For example, Is the president performing well? They had no concept of how you might set about evaluating, even coming out with a positive report. To them it always suggests criticism, which they don't intend. They didn't know how to go about the business of looking for a new president. So in those ways I did serve them well.

Then I have been watchful, so that there have been many a time when the academic vice-president and I would exchange glances at a meeting and wait, and if somebody else brought up the point we had in mind, fine. But otherwise I would point out-- For example I was at a committee meeting which was discussing the agenda for a retreat that's going to be held in January, and a newly appointed member of the board was on the same committee. They were discussing things, and I came in the middle of the discussion because I had conflicting committee assignments. They were already far gone in discussion about certain actions which had been taken by the faculty, and whether or not these were justified. I didn't get my oar in because I didn't hear the beginning of the argument, but they were perilously close to

Bennett:

arguing about procedures which are none of the trustees' business, you see. That's the kind of thing that I try to make sure that they head off from.

In this batch was the member, female, of the board, who has just been appointed, so, I'm going to have to watch her, and make sure that she doesn't-- Because I've seen people do this in the Mills' board--sail in, and decide they will make curriculum, or do this, that, or the other thing, with the best of intentions, but not realizing what they're doing. They've got to leave the running of the college in line, indeed, with trustee policy, in the hands of the people we have hired as specialists.

Chall: Very hard for people to recognize that, and it's sometimes difficult for a president to keep people aware of that.

Bennett: Yes. We had one woman on the Mills board who was a menace, because she was going to make us over into a duplicate of Smith College.

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Bennett: Yes. I have not been a doer in the sense of being terribly visible, but I've been there when they needed me. Now, I'm delighted to say, that one of the faculty members turns out to be a woman, and this other woman I mentioned, who's a business woman in the area has been appointed to the board. I had said to the president, "I think that the last thing I want to do is to pull the only woman on the board off it." So these other appointments came up. But he said, "Your current term runs out in '88, why don't we aim for that." So I will do that because by that time, if not before, I'll not be wanting to take the drive, although I love it. I feel like an old horse attached to the fire engine. I just feel in my element driving with all the trucks down to Santa Clara. It makes me feel like a competent driver. [laughs]

Chall: Yes. You never want to give up those feelings.

Bennett: No, I think that maintaining my mobility is one of my major objectives, even though the car and I get old together, and if one of us doesn't give out, the other does.

Anna Head School Board of Trustees, 1957-1979

Chall: Let's see, you were also on the Anna Head Board?

Bennett: Yes, for many years I was, but I got off that. I was on the first board of the school when it had become a non-profit organization, October 1957, and I retired at the end of the school year in 1979 having served almost continuously. I felt I had been on long enough. I've been called back for a couple of things. I participated in the search for a new headmaster, and they asked me to come back and talk about the role of the trustee or something like that; I can't remember what it was. I do that. I'm up there at their bidding if they want me, and they know it. We have an excellent headmaster, and I feel very good about that choice. But it was enough time. I was a long, long time on it.

Chall: So your present board work, then, is the Santa Clara University?

Bennett: Yes. I was on the board for three years of the Town and Gown Club. I was secretary for two years, and that was more demanding in terms of deadlines, and that sort of thing. But I owed it. One owes the service.

Chall: So now your life is primarily social and family? You have family not too close.

Bennett: Well, I try to keep up with them, and I still have the general job of unpacking all my papers and organizing them. But I will be able to get to that after the new year, at least I do not now see what will stop me. Things have a way of happening that stop me willy-nilly, but I'm going to try to get at the sort job because first thing you know I'll drop dead somewhere and some other person will have to sort it through.

Filling in Some Missed Background about Mary Woods Bennett

J. Robert Oppenheimer

Chall: Yes, there's a lot of work in that. I wanted to catch up on a couple of things that we sort of passed by along the way. Somebody had told me, and you mentioned the fact, that you had been a friend of J. Robert Oppenheimer, and knew him well. How did that come about?

Bennett: Not really very well. It came about because Barbara Burks, who was a very good friend of mine during my years of graduate study, introduced me to him, and Jean Walker Macfarlane. Do you know her name?

Chall: Yes, you've mentioned her, and I know who she was.

Bennett: She was once the cause of my going on a double date with Robert Oppenheimer and one of his graduate students--the two of them. That's when I learned about Robert Oppenheimer's fondness for wines--he didn't think I was a very impressive drinker--and Gilbert and Sullivan, and speedy cars. He had a beautiful Chrysler Imperial roadster, and delivered me home after a long, long night because his graduate student was absolutely inarticulate. A shy boy. [laughs] I had to talk for two. We went to see some interesting-- It was a Gilbert and Sullivan thing. We had a splendid dinner beforehand.

Chall: So he was an interesting, dashing young man.

Bennett: He was a very dashing young man, very worldly wise, and innocent at the same time. It was very amusing. Jean invited me to go along, I think, because I was a graduate student.

But Barbara's friendship took this form. She cased the situation and realized what sort of bind I was in in terms of family demands and my graduate study. She was recently widowed, and had been given a research associateship at the Institute of Child Welfare up here. We met in the halls of the Life Sciences Building. I suppose it was on departmental business one way or another. At any rate, I got to know her a little better, and she became very friendly and very supportive of a younger person.

When she realized that I was under considerable stress trying to get ready for my qualifying exams she proposed a plan. We had dinner together twice a week. She said, "I have evening work that I should do. You have to find more time to get ready for your exams. So let's work two nights a week. We'll have dinner together, and we'll have it at my place, but you'll get it one time, and I'll get it the other time. We will go at seven-thirty to study, and we'll work till ten at night in the libraries, and we did that. Every once in a while she would say, "I think we need diversion, and we would go to a movie instead." But she controlled this. When I was reading German for my qualifying exam she read with me. She was simply wonderful being friendly to a younger scholar.

I think by this time she knew I was in the Terman sample. She was the editor of the third of the Terman genetic studies that Jean used. She did the one on "The Promise of Youth" which was the first roundup. She was the one whom Lewis Terman described as the brightest graduate student he had ever had. She was a whiz at statistics among other things. She wrote very penetrating articles on material within the general realms of psychology. She was the voice of reason in many of the acrimonious disputes that arose within the field between the Stanford School and the Iowa School. [laughs] We won't go into those, that would be a whole volume in itself. But she was a great friend.

Bennett: At one stage of the game she talked about Robert because her husband had been his colleague at Cal Tech. Robert, at the time I first knew him, was still alternating semesters at Cal Tech and Berkeley because there were not enough students up to working at what he could provide, which had to do with theoretical physics. He turned up at a party of Barbara's. We talked, and he said, "I'm glad to have met you because, I have to confess, I was on the committee that offered you a fellowship," or something like that. He was extremely pleasant. Barbara invited me to her place for Sunday brunch. She lived in a pleasant apartment north of the campus. Robert came, and Donald Macfarlane came--Jean's divorced husband.

One of the most illuminating exposures I ever had to intellectual conversation was when Donald, who had a Ph.D. and an M.D., and Robert argued about whether psychologists were scientists. Robert maintaining that they lost those qualities they needed as psychologists if they attended too much to the canons of science in what they were doing, and Donald was arguing that they were too scientists. So that was extremely entertaining.

Robert was never one guilty of false modesty, but he was not a vain man in the way that Donald Macfarlane was a vain man. You always wanted to trip Donald up, and I never felt the need to trip Robert up. Although Robert was this sort: there was a newspaper article one day about the fact that a troubled young woman had left the car in which her date for the evening had apparently abandoned her, and sought police help in locating him. He had simply wandered off, got so embroiled in his own thoughts that he forgot he had his car with him, much less his date, and had walked home and was found soundly in bed by the police. When my friend came home from her summer holiday, or winter, whenever it was, she said, "I read an article in the paper that told this fantastic story, was that really--?" I said, "Yes, it was really Robert; he had gone off and forgotten her." [laughs] But it was at Barbara's house that I had my most, not frequent, but intimate exposure to him, and with Jean Macfarlane on this one occasion when we went out double dating.

Chall: Then did you see him over the years and talk to him?

Bennett: No.

Chall: So that was about it, just in his early years?

Bennett: This was just a few times, and then he disappeared from my ken, you see, when he went to Los Alamos. I used to see him on the streets of Berkeley, occasionally, just hello, this would be it. But the old Varsity candy store--you're not an old enough Berkeleyan to remember that. It was at the corner of Bancroft and Telegraph, and

Bennett: it was a meeting place for all kinds of faculty folk. I was passing it one day, and out of the door popped a person who nearly knocked me over, he went so fast, and he went with a very strange scattered gait, as if he were scuttling up the street. I thought to myself, "My God, that's Robert Oppenheimer." I hadn't recognized him, he was so changed.

Chall: This was in the what, the fifties?

Bennett: This was when he had come back from Los Alamos under great secrecy to receive an honorary degree from Berkeley. I think we were still giving them then, or some kind of recognition from the university because of his service to the country. It was the bomb. He looked like a driven soul on that occasion, and after it came out as to what he had been up to, while he was away from us all, I realized that he was from that point forward a hunted, haunted man.

Later, when I learned more about how restricted life was there, and how one wanted the thing to succeed, and at the same time, terrified at the consequences of its succeeding-- Well, the husbands of a lot of my friends at Town and Gown Club were there. I had a friend whose only daughter was on the staff down there, and her mother couldn't go to her wedding. All this hush-hush business. It was a very extraordinary experience for people to be in, and it certainly changed him for good; he was never the same.

But, during the period when he was suspect, I felt furiously loyal to him, because, though as Lynn White always contended, he probably was very naive about political affairs, the thought of his willfully betraying the country was simply ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous.

Chall: Those were the days when they were hunting for something whether it was there or not.

Bennett: He would have been arrogant enough in terms of knowing full well that he knew more than anybody else did. It would have been possible for him to offend people. I think this is what happened.

The Sperry Family Connection

Chall: There's one other little matter--they're probably a lot of them, we've not discussed--but when people have talked about you, they've often said, "She's a member of the Sperry family" as if we should sort of genuflect--

Bennett: [Laughs] You heard of Sperry flour?

- Chall: Yes. [laughter] And the Sperry gyroscope--
- Bennett: Yes, it was cousin Elmer who developed the gyroscope. There's a Sperry much closer, Pauline Sperry, who spent her career here at this university as a member of the Department of Mathematics.
- Chall: When they talk about the Sperry family--one of your relatives developed the gyroscope, the other one the flour. Is it that one family?
- Bennett: It's all family. Mother's father was a Sperry. Her maiden name was Sperry, and her father, named Henry Austin [Sperry] came to California in the early days, I don't know the date. But my grandmother, mother's mother, was not his first wife. He did what many Bostonians--and he had come from Boston--did. He married someone who was descended from an American-California mix. He married a young woman whose surname was Branch. Her father was Zeba Branch, and he had come out from Boston, and married someone who had title to a lot of property.

Henry Austin came out because his cousins, or uncles, I forget which they were, had come out to prospect for gold, and found out that it was more to their advantage to raise wheat for the hordes that did come. One of them, one of the girls in the family married a Crocker, so that the Crocker family that is based in Stockton and is related to the San Francisco Crockers, have Sperry females in the line.

There is a house now in the little town of Murphys in the Sierra foothills that is the Sperry house. We discovered this quite by accident. We had gone off on the spur of the moment on a weekend holiday, going up into the mountains--Dad had just wanted to get into the High Sierra. We had stopped at the Murphys Hotel for lunch, and Mother had seen a picture on the wall of the little parlor. She said, "Why, that's cousin Jim." And it was indeed. Apparently he was a Sperry who had found the grove of big trees up at Calaveras Big Trees.

The Sperry tribe became numerous. My grandfather was Henry Austin, and he had cousins who were Willard and Austin, I think. I think those were the pioneers. He came out to help with the wheat growing industry. Having settled in San Luis Obispo County, where they grew wheat in those days, he had married Louisa Branch. She had died young of tuberculosis leaving two tubercular children. Her husband married almost immediately my grandmother, who was a girl of eighteen, and whose first job was to help nurse the younger of those two children into her early grave, although the Branch grandmother took most of the care of her. I think the little boy lived, although he had what we used

Bennett: to call a tubercular spine. He was all humped over; he was in a wheelchair. I think he lived for some years because the eldest of my uncles remembered him.

Then my grandmother had five children--she lost one--by Henry Austin Sperry, and my only aunt, Mother's half-sister, was the product of a later marriage. The marriage was later but not so much later that it produced a wide age gap. I think my aunt was only four years younger than Mother. My grandmother would never let her second husband adopt the four children that she had when they married because they were Sperrys, and she thought they ought to remain Sperrys. Besides he was a British subject, and it would have been difficult. Though Mother doesn't even remember her father. The only father she remembers is the stepfather who came into her life when she was too young to know anything else except that--she had a vague memory of him as Reggie Sandford, she always called him Reggie Sandford, and then she changed to call him Papa.

I keep running against the Sperry ancestry in San Francisco Society columns occasionally, or in some such publications.

Chall: Still some remnants of the name, then.

Bennett: Mrs. Henry Potter Russell is a Sperry, and the Princess Poniatowski was a Sperry. The whole flock of--

Chall: --society.

Bennett: Yes. The families were close enough in my mother's childhood. Her younger brother, when he had been bounced from the Hester School in San Jose for running up the flag upside down to give a distress signal, decided he had better get on for gainful employment, and he visited cousin Will in his headquarters in the Crocker National Bank in San Francisco, and asked for a job. To Mr. Crocker's eternal credit, let it be said, that this was his reply, "Fred, I couldn't advance you over all the people that have worked for me for so long. I just couldn't do it." [Laughs]

Chall: That took care of an instant career. [laughs]

Bennett: Oh, I have the cut glass bowl that Mr. and Mrs. Crocker gave to my grandmother on her second marriage. You know, they're just little traces, but there's been no contact in recent times.

Chall: And the gyroscope cousin is--?

Bennett: That is a different branch of the family, and that is the one related to Pauline Sperry, who was the professor of mathematics at this college. She was first cousin to my Grandfather Sperry, and I think Elmer was another cousin. But it was certainly that

Bennett: family. Also, the dean of the School of Theology at Harvard, a Unitarian, was named Willard Sperry. The names Austin and Willard are very frequent, and he was a Willard Sperry, and brother to Pauline. He came out and gave a baccalaureate or something at Stanford, and we went trundling down to see him, and he was very jovial and friendly.

Chall: Well you should have an interesting family tree if you set it up.

Bennett: Yes, Pauline gave us what information she could, and I have never addressed myself to working on those. She assured us that there was at least one red Indian and one witch. [laughs]

By the way, Milicent Cooksey--whose husband was Donald Cooksey, on the staff of the Cyclotron-- was Milicent Sperry before her marriage. Her father was an Austin Sperry, her brother was an Austin Sperry, and her father and my grandfather were first cousins.

Chall: We have a little time, not very much, but a little time left on this tape for you to say whatever you might want to that you think you didn't get a chance to cover

Bennett: Oh, dear me, it seems to me I've wandered all over the map, and covered most.

Chall: If you haven't you can add it when you edit and review.

Bennett: It's hard to know what is relevant for this kind of thing, because a personal memoir is not what you're after, really.

Chall: Well, to some degree, yes, because families also use these, and like to have the personal stories.

Bennett: I have made no effort to systematize my ramblings, thinking that that is your job, not mine. [laughs]

Chall: Oh, I don't think I'll need to systematize them. A question gets answered, and that leads off in a certain direction. There's no point in making this or any other oral history look like a syllabus. I don't think that's necessary. Thank you for a most informative interview.

Transcriber: Alexandra Walter
Final Typist: Catherine Woolf

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Malca Chall

Graduated from Reed College in 1942 with a B.A. degree, and from the State University of Iowa in 1943 with an M.A. degree in Political Science.

Wage Rate Analyst with the Twelfth Regional War Labor Board, 1943-1945, specializing in agriculture and services. Research and writing in the New York public relations firm of Edward L. Bernays, 1946-1947, and research and statistics for the Oakland Area Community Chest and Council of Social Agencies 1948-1951.

Active in community affairs as a director and past president of the League of Women Voters of the Hayward Area specializing in state and local government; on county-wide committees in the field of mental health; on election campaign committees for school tax and bond measures, and candidates for school board and state legislature.

Employed in 1967 by the Regional Oral History Office interviewing in fields of agriculture and water resources. Project director, Suffragists Project, California Women Political Leaders Project, and Land-Use Planning Project, and the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program Project.

