Murray's Universe:

An Oral History with UCSC Professor Murray Baumgarten, 1966-2014

Interviewed and Edited by

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Santa Cruz
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Interview History

The Regional History Project conducted this oral history with Murray Baumgarten, Distinguished Professor of English & Comparative Literature, as part of its University History Series. Baumgarten arrived at the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1966 as a professor in the literature board and affiliated with Stevenson College. In 2014, as this oral history goes to press, he still teaches full time at UC Santa Cruz, which makes him the longest-serving full-time faculty member on campus.

Baumgarten was born in 1938 on a ship carrying his family from Nazi Europe to refuge in Panama. His father's family was originally from Lvov, Poland and his mother's family came from Czernowitz in the Ukraine. Both families had immigrated to Vienna, where they met and were married. In this oral history he vividly describes the family's flight from Europe. He has also written eloquently about this journey and his life growing up in Panama in two essays, "My Panama" and "Shape Shifters," both available through his website.[1]

In 1948, when Murray was ten, his family immigrated to New York City, to the Bronx, where he first encountered the work of Charles Dickens, for whom he was to have a lifetime affinity. He quickly became fluent in English, learned American ways such as baseball and stoopball, and went on to attend the

[1] http://humweb.ucsc.edu/dickens/wp/?page_id=74

prestigious Bronx High School of Science. He later earned his BA in English Literature (1960) at Columbia College of Columbia University, and then his PhD in English Literature at UC Berkeley in 1966. He taught at Williams College from 1964 until 1966 and then arrived at UC Santa Cruz in 1966 as a professor in the literature board.

Baumgarten's contributions to the development of UCSC are substantial and marvelously eclectic. They begin with the initiation of the Strouse Carlyle Collection at the University Library. In 1966, Baumgarten's keen interest in the nineteenth century writer Thomas Carlyle, on whom he had written his dissertation, persuaded book collector Norman Strouse to gift the UCSC Library with his personal collection of rare and unusual materials by and about Carlyle. While collaborating with other scholars on the literary study of Carlyle in the late 1960s, Baumgarten made innovative use of what was then brand-new mainframe computer technology in order to compare different versions of the same Carlyle text. He later served as the founding editor-in-chief of the University of California Press's Carlyle Critical Edition. From his early adoption of computer technology to study both Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens, to his recent online course on Coursera, Baumgarten has pioneered the digital humanities.

In the early years of the campus, Baumgarten also was the first chair of UCSC's (and now dissolved) Modern Society and Social Thought major offered through Stevenson College. This nationally renowned program took an international and interdisciplinary approach to studying social conditions and human problems in

industrial societies and how they could be framed in terms of theories of social change.

Modern Society and Social Thought eventually provided the first home for Baumgarten's groundbreaking course *Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry*. He and his longtime colleague, Professor of History Peter Kenez, began teaching this course in 1986. It was one of the first college courses on the Holocaust on any college campus. In 2013 they began offering the course online through Coursera as the campus's first MOOC [Massive Open Online Course]. Baumgarten and Kenez also held the endowed Neufeld-Levin Chair in Holocaust Studies from 1995 until 2000.

From the very first years of UCSC, even though Santa Cruz was "a very small town with a lot of history of antisemitism," Baumgarten immersed himself in Jewish culture, history, and religion. He became the first UCSC faculty member to join Temple Beth El, the local reform synagogue, and hosted Passover Seders and Shabbat morning Torah Study sessions for students. In the 1960s and 1970s, Baumgarten taught Jewish-themed courses for UCSC's [now disestablished] religious studies board, and mentored many students who went on to become rabbis, including Rabbi Lawrence Raphael, who now serves as the senior rabbi at Temple Sherith Israel in San Francisco.

Baumgarten continues to be a leader in the field of Jewish studies at UCSC and beyond. In 1999 he founded the Jewish Studies program and undergraduate

minor and major at UCSC, endowed by the Helen and Sanford Diller Family Endowment for Jewish Studies. He still co-directs this program with Nathaniel Deutsch. From 1994 to 2006 he edited *Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, published by the American Jewish Congress. In 2009 he created the Venice Center for International Jewish Studies. Baumgarten's visionary legacy is now honored by the Baumgarten Endowed Chair for Jewish Studies.

The other most visible part of Baumgarten's career centers on Charles Dickens. In 1981, he and his colleagues, John Jordan, and Ed Eigner, a professor at UC Riverside, founded The Dickens Project, a Multicampus Research Unit, which was the first UC-wide humanities initiative. Headquartered at UCSC, this consortium of faculty and graduate students from American and international universities, "creates opportunities for collaborative research on Dickens and the Victorian age, and disseminates research findings through annual conferences, institutes, and publications. It supports the professional development of graduate students and produces curricular material for teaching Victorian literature at both secondary and post-secondary levels."[2] Perhaps the most popular component of the Dickens Project is the Dickens Universe, a kind of summer conference or summer camp for scholars, teachers, students, and readers with a passion for the works of Charles Dickens. This is one of the very few

[2] http://dickens.ucsc.edu/about/index.html

literary conferences which crosses the borders between the academy and the community.[3]

"Wherever Murray is, is a center for fun as well as collaborative work," said his close colleague and current director of The Dickens Project, John Jordan, when I met with him in preparation for this oral history. "Murray is an idea man, an entrepreneur who gets people to do things and makes them feel welcome," Jordan added. Collaboration lies at the core of Baumgarten's approach to both teaching and scholarship, a philosophy, which as he describes in his oral history, is rooted in the Jewish tradition of *Chevruta,* study partners who delve into text study in deeply-connected pairs and intimate groups.

Baumgarten retains his Latin American and European roots and brings those broad influences to his vision for UCSC's Jewish Studies program, which is far more international in scope than many programs of its kind. Baumgarten's late colleague, the great Sephardic literary scholar, Joseph Silverman, once humorously introduced Baumgarten as "an enchilatke." But there is a more melancholy side to being a refugee, also explored in this oral history, when Baumgarten says, "I explain to my students, I have two heads. One is in my suitcase. You know, I'm an alien."

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[3] See Jill Lepore, "Dickens in Eden: Summer Vacation with 'Great Expectations,'" *The New Yorker*, August 29, 2011. http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/08/29/dickens-in-eden

Since an oral history is a cocreation by both the narrator and the interviewer, I think it is important to reveal that the interviewer/editor of this oral history is the daughter of two Holocaust refugees. Like Baumgarten, my father, a Jewish refugee from Hungary, spent part of his childhood in Latin America, in his case Venezuela. These resonances between Baumgarten's family history and my own shaped some of the questions and interactions recorded in the oral history.

I wish to thank several individuals who generously helped me with my background research for this endeavor. Linda Rosewood [Hooper] shared her fond recollections of working with Baumgarten when she was Project Coordinator for the Dickens Project in the late 1980s and early 1990s. My longtime colleague, Lee Jaffe, who for many years was the librarian for Jewish Studies at the UCSC Library, talked with me about Baumgarten's visionary work in Jewish studies and in the larger Jewish community. Professor John Jordan graciously provided background on the Dickens Project and on Murray's long academic career. Thanks also to Bruce Thompson, Chris Vanden Bossche, and Harry Berger for their support and suggestions, and to Mim Eisenberg of WordCraft, for her excellent and engaged transcription services. She, too, was drawn into Murray's Universe, and ordered her very own signed copy of *The Jewish Street*.

Copies of this volume are on deposit in Special Collections and in the circulating stacks at the UCSC Library, as well as on the library's website. The full audio of this oral history is also available online through the library's website. The

Regional History Project is supported administratively by Elisabeth Remak-Honnef, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Elizabeth Cowell.

—Irene Reti, Director, Regional History Project, University Library

University of California, Santa Cruz, October 1, 2014

Reti: It's January 23rd, 2014, and this is Irene Reti, and I'm here with Professor Murray Baumgarten for our first in a series of interviews for his oral history.

Early Life and Family History

Baumgarten: I'm glad you called me Murray Baumgarten. I was actually named Mauricio Baumgarten, and I have a Panamanian birth certificate, which was done a little after I was born, where I'm Mauricio Baumgarten y Rosenberg, which was my mother's name.

Reti: Rosenberg was her last name?

Baumgarten: Yes. And, of course, in the Spanish way you add your mother's last name— I remember when I started to write my name that way—various school things—my father was very upset that I added Rosenberg. I have no idea why because he loved my mother. But anyway, I was a Baumgarten. And, of course, I was called at home Maury. But when I came to this country, my Aunt Estelle said that in this country I would be called Murray, not Mauricio and not Maury, Morey, because there was at the time a particular comic called Morey Amsterdam, whom she didn't like.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So anyway, it didn't bother me because I was already at home, M-a-u-r-y, and now I'm M-u-r-r-a-y, which is a more Scottified, Scotch spelling. So I've had name changes that are almost different from, a little different from who I was before. And, of course, I'm always telling people that Jews didn't have last names until the census, when they were asked to have last names. Before that, they were known in their communities as the son and daughter of the mother and father. So I have, of course, a Hebrew name, Meir Yosef. And I have a friend here who was president of the Jewish community when I came, and he always used to call me Moish, and I would say, "No, no, my name is not Moish," because he thought Murray had to be Moses, Moshe. But it's okay. I go by many names. I've been called many things.

Reti: So tell me about your family's history in Europe before the whole Panama chapter.

Baumgarten: My father's family was basically from near Lvov, which is now known as Lviv. They lived in a town near Lvov called Zborov, a small town with many Jews, that was particularly nastily treated by the Nazis, about which much has been written by survivors. The big town was Lvov, or Lviv.

My mother's family came from Czernowitz—her father was one of twin rabbis from the area of Vizhnitz. They're in a Czech encyclopedia about Vizhnitz. They were twin rabbis, and they were known as the twin Zionist rabbis, when to be a rabbi and a Zionist was unusual. I'm named after her father, Meir Yosef.

On my father's side, the family were sort of Chassidic Kabbalists and did various things, and that explains, for me, why I was taught to put on my tefillin in a clockwise way, rather than the standard Ashkenazi way, which is counterclockwise. This is a small difference, and I still maintain it, but my cousin says it's not that we are Sephardic in any way, although I had an uncle who claimed we were. My cousin says it was because we were Chassidic Kabbalists, and this was Kabbalistic. I haven't yet sorted all this out.

Reti: Because of Kabbalah coming from Spain?

Baumgarten: Right, right.

Reti: Or part of it coming from Spain.

Baumgarten: Exactly, right. I've often thought perhaps I should switch, but I haven't. But anyway, that's a family quirk, if you will, for me. I have two daughters, so neither of them put on tefillin, although they could, and some modern women do. And I have a cousin in Israel, Albert Baumgarten, a retired professor from Bar-Ilan. We grew up together in New York, but he's now an Israeli, who has become the keeper of family history, along with Fred Baumgarten, a New Yorker and businessman.

Reti: So your family—where were they living in the 1930s?

Baumgarten: My father's family emigrated to Vienna in World War I, just towards the beginning of World War I. His mother had gotten a residence permit. She went to Vienna from Zborov and the story goes they actually did part of the way by walking, and she was carrying her youngest daughter. They were very concerned because soldiers kept coming along and asking if they could hold the child, and they were sure the child would get stolen.

They went to Vienna; my grandfather had already been drafted into the Austrian army, and he fought against the Russians and promptly was captured and put in a prison camp, as many Austrian soldiers were. This is in the First World War. My grandmother opened a home business designing clothes, and my aunt, the one that was being carried to Vienna, quickly became a designer of children's clothes. Everybody worked in the business, including my father and his brothers.

My father met my mother in Vienna. My mother's family from Czernowitz was a relatively learned family, and her brother was actually a doctor of jurisprudence and also came to Vienna. The whole family moved to Vienna. And they met in Vienna and were married there. I think it was in 1934 that they were married. I can check on the date with my older sister, who might know some detail.

And then in 1936, my father graduated from business school. My mother was going to be a lawyer; she was in law school in Vienna—both of them being modern Jews but relatively traditional as well. My father and his younger brother and my mother then went to Curacao. Curacao, of course, was a

transshipment place. My father and his brother represented many Austrian companies with materials they stored in Curacao, in the Caribbean. They were salesmen for eighteen or twenty different companies, a whole range of companies, as traveling salesmen. And my sister was born in Curacao in the Dutch West Indies.

Reti: So they left—

Baumgarten: Vienna.

Reti: —Vienna, for a time.

Baumgarten: Right, for a time. And my mother cooked for my father and his brother and gave birth there. The story was she cooked on a one-burner stove, in very close quarters. My uncle then eventually went on to the Caribbean and stayed in Venezuela for a while and then made his way to the United States. Had different jobs, as I understood. Actually did some work in a newspaper for a while. Then he went on to the United States, where his maternal grandfather had emigrated. And when we came to the United States in 1948, we were the last members of my father's family to get to the United States.

But after Curacao, my father and my sister returned to Vienna in 1936. My sister—and there are pictures of her—remembers snow in Vienna, which for us in Panama was a big deal. It was clear there were not many financial and

economic opportunities for [my father]. My father went back to helping my grandmother in her business, and he did various things. His younger brother was still there. The older brother, the brother that was in Curacao, was named Marcus. The younger brother was named Eli. My aunt was named Ina. My father worked in various selling jobs and worked in stores, as well as helping his mother. They were always very close. And he studied and graduated from a business college in Vienna.

Fleeing Hitler's Europe for Refuge in Panama

And then my father said that after Anschluss, when Austria and Germany merged, he knew something terrible was happening, that this was not just a temporary thing, so the story of our exit is the one I've been given and is as follows:

My father went to the bank, got most of his money out—it wasn't a lot, but he left some in there, so as not to arouse suspicion. He then bought some food to take with him. And my mother's passport had expired, but my mother's passport had my sister on it. They went to the train station. My father shows his passport to the Nazi guard at the train station. He sort of waves my mother's passport at the guard. The Nazi looks at my sister, who was blonde and blue-eyed, and he chucks her under the chin and says, "What a beautiful Aryan child."

So, of course, we get on the train. They got on the train. My mother is pregnant with me. We go to Rotterdam, from which we take a boat to Curacao, and they stay in Curacao for a bit. Now, the rules then, as I understand it, as I've been told, were that you could stay for up to six weeks if you were not Dutch. And they were not Dutch. So my mother goes to the doctor in Curacao, and the Curacao doctor says, "You have plenty of time, Mrs. Baumgarten." At this point, my father doesn't have much money, if anything, so he goes to a jeweler in Curacao, whom he always remembered, named Stern. There're Stern's jewelers all over Latin America. They may be all the same family. And the man, my father said, opened his cash register and took out two hundred dollars, which was a huge amount then in 1938. He said, "You'll pay me back when you can." My father said, "I paid him back every penny later on."

Reti: Wow.

Baumgarten: And they got on the boat. The boat was a cross between a ferry and an ocean liner, because it was a little more than three days' journey from Curacao to Panama.

Reti: Why were they choosing Panama, in particular?

Baumgarten: They could get a visa.

Reti: Because of their previous work, or because it was one of the places that was open?

Baumgarten: Both, as far as I know. I'm sure they had to pay for the visa. But they then got in the boat. They ended up going to Colón, which is on the Caribbean side. But the story goes that as soon as the boat leaves the dock, my mother goes into labor. My sister remembers being thrown out of the stateroom, putting her back to the stateroom while my mother gives birth.

Reti: Good God!

Baumgarten: So one result is that the captain gave my family a little wine cup with the emblem of the ship on it and a spoon. The wine cup seems to have disappeared in various of our moves. We still have the spoon. The story was that I was going to get the name of the ship, the Simon Bolivar, as a middle name.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: They decided not to name me after the ship. We arrived there, and I'm premature. So I get put into the hospital, but I'm not like one of the preemies that happen now. I'm a couple—maybe a month—I don't know—premature. And that's when they go to the Dutch consul, and the Dutch consul—I don't know where this letter is, but I have seen it among my parents' papers, saying that when I'm twenty-one I can decide if I'm a Dutch citizen or not. In the

meantime, we in Panama are stateless, but we then eventually become Panamanians.

And I go to school, and I grow up in Panama along with my sister. My younger sister was born three years later. My father and his brother Eli, who by that time has come to Panama as well—and there's a story there—opened a store called the New York Store, which sells many things, including women's fashions.

My father and my uncle make contact with friends and relatives in the United States and get stuff to sell sent to them, clothes. And at one point they even sell watches, and they sell souvenirs of Panama, especially to the American servicemen who are there.

My father makes connections with the American authorities in Panama and actually translates some German documents. Later on, this confuses things when we are trying to get to the United States because we know German and that might make us enemies.

The store doesn't do badly, but then there's a big fire and a flood in Colón. Eventually they move to another area, and I remember going to the store after school. I was too young to do much to help there. My sister helped a little bit.

I go to school in Panama. The public schools at the time are run by the Catholic church, so I go to kindergarten and learn my catechism and get asked every once

in a while to go to the front of the class to recite the catechism. We talk about this at home, and we explain that we have to say these things, but we don't have to kneel, and we don't have to make the sign of the cross, and there's some accommodation. My teachers are the nuns with the big wimples. This is not our easygoing, informal American Catholics.

My sister goes through the fourth grade, and she learns both Spanish and she starts to learn English. I'm learning Spanish in the school. We talk Yiddish and German at home. We are all interested in the United States, and we have a little bit of English, but nobody really knows English. But then my father gets me into the Canal Zone school for children of the workers of the canal.

When I'm in first grade, I come home after the first day, and everybody says, "How was it?" And I say, "My teacher is a liar." And they say, "What do you mean?" And I say, "My teacher said that she's from Minnesota, and where she's from, in the summer the sun sets at ten or even eleven o'clock at night." I say, "Everybody knows the sun sets around six o'clock at night all the time." Because Panama is near the Equator. So there are many things for me to learn about, and I go through that school.

Reti: Was that an English-speaking school?

Baumgarten: An English-speaking school, English-reading. But by that point, I'm already reading Hebrew. Another refugee has arrived in Colón, who is a

Hebrew teacher, when I'm four and a half, five, and they collect all the Jewish children—and by this point, my father has organized, with his other Ashkenazi refugees, a congregation—and they eventually build a synagogue called Centro Israelita Cultural. So the children are all collected, me and my older sister, and we start learning Hebrew from the Hebrew teacher. So the first language I read and write is Hebrew. And then I learned English, et cetera.

Reti: Was your family Orthodox?

Baumgarten: Yes. Pretty much traditional. But modern Orthodox.

When they arrive in Panama, in Colón, they are greeted, among other things, by Jewish refugees from Aleppo [Syria], who, in the 1920s, in the first Arab revolt—there's rioting in Aleppo. They leave, and they end up in Colón. And many of these Aleppo Jews are in their own Sephardic congregations. They're in Syrian congregations. Many of them have also intermarried, but they welcome my parents and the other Jews and help them significantly. My father starts, he tells me, by getting some merchandise and making little packets of things—a shirt, a tie and some underwear—and he wraps it and peddles it on the street. So he goes through that classic Jewish business of peddler and then eventually opening a store and so on.

My uncle, in the meantime, has arrived in Panama. He has been in Vienna, and the day of Kristallnacht, the day before it's about to happen (he'd been involved

in union politics and other things), somebody who worked with him said, "Eli, here's some money. Don't go home tonight."

Reti: [Sharp inhalation.]

Baumgarten: So he goes underground and eventually makes his way, with various adventures, getting beaten up a little bit here and there, to Panama. My uncle in the United States at this point has gotten a visa for his parents and his younger sister, and it arrives on Kristallnacht, when, the story goes, my grandfather has been arrested and taken off in a truck. My aunt has the visa, and she goes with the visa and finds him and then helps get him out.

They go to Panama for a while, and I remember them in our apartment. So we're all living together, and my uncle lived with us for many years while he was in Panama. We were close, my uncle and I. And then, my grandparents have the visa. They go to the United States. My aunt goes with them. In the United States she opens a business, with the help of other relatives, in children's clothing. Later on, when I was in high school, I worked a little bit for them in the summer. My uncle eventually leaves and goes to the United States. So after World War II, we are the last members of my father's family that are not in New York.

On my mother's side, various members have gone to Israel. How come? Well, one, my uncle on my mother's side, who was in Vienna, is married to a medical doctor, and he also happens to have a mistress who is married to a high-up

official in the Nazi Party, and she says to him, "You must leave." So he gets the word. My other uncle, who's the doctor of jurisprudence, gets taken to Dachau when it's just been set up, and gets made to look at the sun and at night into the headlights of cars, as part of persuading the Jews to get them to leave and leave what they own behind. And he does, and he goes to Israel. And my first cousin is born in Israel, and there are a couple of others. So on my mother's side, when I go to Israel I visit those relatives.

And my cousin, George Rosenberg, who was born there to the doctor of jurisprudence and his wife—everybody says we look alike. He's about three and a half years older than I am. He's taller. That family then ended up moving to Canada in 1947, early '48, but then my cousin married another Canadian, and they made aliyah, and they lived in Israel for many years. He is a doctor of jurisprudence, himself, but runs a law practice which is in Tel Aviv and also in Zurich. He commutes to Zurich, and he works with a lot of different international situations. His wife, Dorothy, the Canadian, is also an ardent Zionist, so their kids are Israelis. They also use their Hebrew names, Yisrael and D'vora and their children only have Hebrew names, Ari and Yarden. Ari, the older one of the kids, works with him in the law business and runs the Tel Aviv office. He is also tall and a basketball player like his father and was on the Israeli national basketball team. He's married and has children, lives in a little moshav. His brother, Yarden, lives near Tel Aviv with his wife and children.

Reti: What about your mom's interest in law? Did she ever pursue that after—

Baumgarten: She never did. She never did.

And her cousins are also in Israel. One of her half-sisters, Ruth, has a wonderful little history. She goes—this is in 1937, '38—she goes into a program where Jews are preparing to go to the land of Israel. They do get a visa to go to Palestine, from the British. Every visa entitles a couple, so she marries somebody in her group, and they get on the boat and they go to Palestine. When they get to Haifa, where the ship lands, as soon as they get off the ship, they get divorced. And then she marries the counselor who was leading the group, with whom she's in love, Zvi Schwartz.

Reti: Oh, my goodness. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Zvi died recently.

Reti: That's quite a story.

Baumgarten: But, you know, these are ways of negotiating a society that isn't exactly interested in your welfare, isn't interested in you, in helping you, but in keeping you in your place. And these are, after all, ways that Jews have negotiated. For many generations, in Europe, Jews didn't get married, because to get married you had to have permission to live in a town, in a city like Berlin. In the 18th century Moses Mendelssohn gets special permission to live in Berlin because he's a philosopher who's made a splash. Before that, you couldn't, as a

Jew. It took emancipation, citizenship for Jews to live everywhere and marry without special permission. So the notion of marriage, civil marriage, is a different kind of thing than Jewish marriage. So there're all of these kinds of things.

So on my mother's side, the relatives are mostly in Israel. Some eventually do come to the United States in various ways, from Europe after the Holocaust, that survived. But then my other cousin, Albert, gets married to an American, and he and she make aliyah. He just retired from Bar Ilan University, as a historian of Hellenistic Judaism. He's got four daughters, three of whom are themselves academics, and two of their husbands are, and we keep joking that we're going to have a conference—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: —where only Baumgartens will present.

Reti: [Laughs.] So I have a couple of follow-up questions for you.

Baumgarten: Please.

Reti: One is, what was your consciousness of the Holocaust during that period, while you were living in Panama as a child? You were there until you were about twelve?

Baumgarten: Just almost eleven. Well, a couple of things. One is, we talked about it; we talked about escaping. My uncle is there; my aunt, my grandparents. On the other hand, all I know about is Panama. I know about it as a country with Americans in the Canal Zone, with airplanes that the Americans are flying that are taking off every night during the war, as a kind of shield to protect the soldiers, but also with an American presence that will only let the Panamanian government do certain things because of the Canal Zone.

We also know that there are Nazi sympathizers throughout Latin America. So, again, there's a tight control. I know that there have been very nasty things that went on in Europe. And then after the war, we get various groups of Holocaust refugees, survivors, coming through Panama, either to go to other parts of Latin America or to other countries: the United States, Australia.

And at that point, we have the synagogue. We have a community center. We are spending a lot of time welcoming them, making them feel comfortable. And my sister always makes, with my mother, the potato salad for the potluck at the synagogue. Things of that kind. We get stories. There are all kinds of soldiers around, and we have several of them come to our Passover Seder, and they befriend us. That means also that they can take us to the PX [post exchange], and we can get certain things you can't get in Panama. But that's also a sense of Panama as a port city with all kinds of people, all kinds of people trying to make a living, and with opportunities, but also a very difficult level of poverty for the general population but, as well, all kinds of modern qualities.

They take me to the doctor. I'd been born prematurely. I seem to be having trouble gaining weight. I don't remember this exactly, but the doctor decides that I need greater shots of protein, so he tells my family that "Murray must be fed ham."

Reti: Oh!

Baumgarten: Doctor's orders—my family remembers—I barely remember it, that when I was a young kid my father would bring ham wrapped up, and I'd go downstairs from the apartment house [where] we were living, and I'd eat it outside.

Reti: Because it wasn't kosher.

Baumgarten: Right, we have a kosher home. And, of course, I remember my mother and the kosher home. I also, when I'm just about two, go out on the balcony to help—my mother's hanging up the clothing, and I promptly slip and break my leg.

Reti: Oh!

Baumgarten: So I'm in the hospital again, with my leg up in the air in traction, right at the groin.

Reti: Oy!

Baumgarten: But, you know, there I am. My sister remembers visiting me and so on. My younger sister isn't born at this time. So my mother had a tough time, besides giving birth to me, besides giving birth to my sister in Curacao. She's had a tough time, and she dies shortly after we come to the United States. And so at the age of about twelve, I'm at the synagogue saying Kaddish, and so on. But then, of course, later on we discover that [my wife] Sheila's father died when she was about twelve, and we don't discover this until much later in our relationship. He'd had heart problems most of his life. He was a good bit older than her mother.

Reti: To have that in common is unusual. And poignant.

Baumgarten: So there is that.

Moving to New York

We were always joking at home that the store in Panama was called the New York Store, so that when we moved to the United States, as we were hoping to, they would open a store called the Panama Store.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Which they didn't, but they did open a store, with some success, called Doreen Shops, women's clothing. My father, knowing from his mother about women's clothing and manufacturing and having worked in that industry,

opened it with his younger brother, Eli. It was in an upscale neighborhood, a good neighborhood of Queens called Astoria. But then the neighborhood went down, and the shops went down. My father eventually gives it to his brother, and he then goes and opens, with the help of the other brother, Marcus, who's now in textiles, in piece goods—corduroy, velvet—which he's also been helped by Harvey, his cousin, who is there before, who was actually quite wealthy, having been a manufacturer of velvet and corduroy—my father then opens a little place to sell remnants. You know, when they make the big bolts, there are pieces left over, so he buys the remnants and sells them, especially to hat manufacturers or to people who use it for trimming. And he does various things.

When he retires, he actually sells the business to someone who doesn't make a go of it, but the idea was that he would pay him off a little bit at a time. And I used to work in the store, in the place with him, and I'm always laughing at home when my wife says, "Oh, where are we going to put this?" I say, "I can make room."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Because my father would say, "We'll make room," when the new shipment of remnants would arrive. I was useful and not so useful. In the summer before I got married, before I was a senior in college, I get a job in the building of my father's business, running the freight elevator. I enjoyed that. And, of course, then I have lots of conversations with lots of people, but then I

was working in the building before. My father was a wonderful and gregarious person. My uncles used to think of him as not such a great businessman, but he did fine. But this was my Uncle Harry, whose company, Majestic Fabrics, manufactured corduroy and so on, and other people were in that business as well.

And now I'm friendly with Harry's younger son, Fred, and Fred and I have this odd relationship. In 1969-70 I go to Israel to teach at the Hebrew University, and a couple of undergraduates from Santa Cruz come as well. They were there on the junior year abroad. And Fred appears, and he's not sure if he's going to leave New York and make aliyah or not. And we hang out together—he shows up, and he's welcomed into the family. And he eventually goes back, and he says, "You know, I went from an Orthodox Marxist to an Orthodox Jew."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: We're still in touch. His father's business eventually goes to China and then is undone because all of textile manufacturing is in China or India now. But we're still in touch now and then, in all kinds of ways. He's much closer to my cousin Albert, the son of my father's younger brother, who has made aliyah and lives in Israel as well. Two of Fred's children are currently in Israel. One of them has just entered the army, and both of them live on a kibbutz right now. And there's an oldest son, who's a law student at Georgetown University, and

we've actually been friendly with him in various ways, have seen him off and on. So there's always been an effort to keep the family contacts.

Reti: Yes, I can see.

Baumgarten: Just this past January, I was in a bat mitzvah, and many people came together in different ways, and we try to stay in touch. But that also was my experience in the United States and in Panama. There were lots of occasions when family members and extended family members get together, and it was often a little confusing for me because I would never quite be told *how* So-and-So was related, besides the immediate ones.

Reti: I can relate to that.[4]

Baumgarten: Right? You know, it's just the way it is.

Reti: That experience of everybody sort of being scattered but staying in touch.

Baumgarten: Right. And I was always the one who, as my father said, "had his nose in a book."

Reti: So you loved books at an early age.

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[4] The interviewer also is from a family scattered by the Holocaust across several continents.

Baumgarten: Yes. So this was natural for me, to think about books. And various people said, "What will you become?"

In the meantime, my older sister, Theadora—Teddie, as we call her— showed a real gift for music. She has perfect pitch. Right away in Panama she's playing the piano, and my father would come home from work, we'd have dinner, and he'd ask Teddie to play, and she would play. So if she has a gift, what about Murray? Well, he's a failure as a pianist, so we try him on the violin. He's not great on the violin. But when I come to the United States, my aunt buys me a violin, which I still have. I haven't played it in many years because, among other things, I was told when I start playing the violin, the rats leave.

Reti: Oh, no! [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: I have a real interest in music. In lots of ways, I don't have Teddie's talent. But I had a real interest and quite a bit of knowledge that I, over the years, learned.

Reti: So when you had your nose in these books, what language were these books in?

Baumgarten: Well, there were lots of Hebrew books, and there were lots of English books. And since my father was very devoted to his mother, we would

almost every Saturday go to his mother's house. We lived in the Bronx, near Jerome Avenue, at 33 East 208th Street, if that means anything.

Reti: I'm a California girl.

Baumgarten: Jerome Avenue was a big commercial area. And ironically there was a bakery there called Scheff's Bakery. It turns out that Paula Marcus, who is the rabbi at the synagogue [in Aptos]—that was her cousin.

Reti: Oh, my gosh.

Baumgarten: Or her uncle. So we would go to visit my grandparents. My grandparents lived with my aunt, the younger daughter, and her husband, and their children in a large apartment near the Grand Concourse, on Walton Avenue, not far from Yankee Stadium. And actually I was bar mitzvahed in the synagogue *they* went to, not the synagogue we went to, so that Grandmother could come and hear me, or whatever. So it was very close. And to the end of his life, my father, after a whole day of work, every day would visit his mother on the way home. And my stepmother—

Reti: Every day.

Baumgarten: Every day. My stepmother would say, "This is a good son," and she was always boasting about that, with a little ambivalence that he went first to his mother. But, you know, all right. So I would go on Saturday morning, and

we'd do various things. We'd go to the synagogue; we'd be at home; we'd be at their house. There wasn't much to read, but there was the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. And I read through it.

Reti: But no literature.

Baumgarten: There was a little bit of literature there that I read there, but by this time—when we came to the United States in 1948, we came on a boat. My father had not done badly in Panama, and we came on a boat. I remember seeing the Statue of Liberty as we come through New York Harbor, and we went to an apartment that the family had rented for us and equipped completely: a little clothing, furniture, and very soon we bought the *Junior Encyclopedia*. I read that.

Reti: I had them. Those are great books.

Baumgarten: And then there were various books that I got. I remember getting a book called *Abraham Lincoln's World*, which was a wonderful book, which we found later on and I gave to various people at their bat mitzvah or bar mitzvah. But I also remember getting—they had a collection of the works of Charles Dickens.

Reti: Aha!

Baumgarten: And I remember just sitting and reading through it when I was in junior high school.

Reti: Did you have an immediate passion for Dickens?

Baumgarten: I thought they were great books. But, you know, what was Murray going to be? The question was, was I going to be a doctor, a lawyer, or a rabbi?

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: So then, in junior high school, many of my friends went to something called the Rapid Advance, where, rather than going to seventh, eighth and ninth grade, they went to seventh and ninth and skipped a grade. And I, it turns out, didn't get into that. Well, it turns out later it was because I was an alien. I was not yet a citizen. You weren't allowed. So I went through seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. It was a little boring, but then I applied, and we had to take the equivalent—well, what it was at the time *was* the SAT test, and I get into the Bronx High School of Science.

So I go to the Bronx High School of Science, and I'm good in math, but I'm not as good as some of my friends. When I'm a sophomore in high school, they're taking courses at Columbia [College; now Columbia University]. They're really whizzes. Okay. And I'm not bad in science.

Reti: Was language an issue for you, Murray? You knew some English already, of course, because you attended the school in Panama—

Baumgarten: I was reading English and listening to the radio programs, so I knew English. But I was mispronouncing English right and left because I just read the words. I hadn't heard them used. I could read. I also had very thick glasses, but I kept reading. And that probably is just genetic, but it was claimed that I kept reading while I had the measles and it was dark, but who knows? Anyway, later on I had cataract surgery, and that's when they tweaked my corneas, so I have much better vision now than I ever did [chuckles], with or without glasses.

But—so in the United States, I was reading English. And I go to the Bronx High School of Science, and what shall I do? So I'm thinking, Okay, medicine. But I was so embarrassed about how much glassware I broke in chemistry lab. I just couldn't see. And it turns out that was also one of the problems with my musical work because I couldn't quite see the music that I was supposed to be playing. But, you know, that's okay. I accommodated. I gravitated towards literature, so I was also taking classes at the Jewish Theological Seminary as a student at Columbia. There was a joint program. I had a couple of wonderful teachers there, especially one named Abraham [S.] Halkin. This is when I'm in college. But I already knew his son, Hillel, because we were actually in high school together.

We move, when I'm a senior [in high school], to Manhattan. We all move to Manhattan. All the family somehow left the Bronx and moved to Manhattan. And it turned out that my father, who had remarried—we moved into the same building as her brother lived in, my stepmother's brother. And I used to hang out

with the brother's kid, who was my age. He now—years ago retired from work as a computer scientist in Canada, and I hung out with various other cousins who were living there, children my age: a son who's still working in Boston, runs a lab and so on, Mickey Klagsbrun. And then Blanche Korngold, the older stepdaughter of the brother and his wife, I knew, and I've still connected with her recently, and her kids. So the family has maintained connections.

So we're in Manhattan, and I go to high school. Abraham Halkin's son turns out to be my classmate. I was going to go to City College [of New York], but we talked about it, and I win a Regents Scholarship, and then I say, well, this isn't enough to pay for tuition. It turns out that I get another scholarship, a small scholarship, and then my father pulls out—he says, "And I have collected silver dollars."

Reti: Ohh!

Baumgarten: And so they send me to Columbia. My sister, in the meantime, has gone to Hunter College, and she's had to decide about whether she's going to become a professional musician or not. She says, "It's too hard," especially as a pianist because you have to be a concert pianist. So she goes on into social work, and other things and meets somebody, and they want to get married, and then he's drafted. And they can't quite get married, for various reasons, including, I understand, my father saying, "No, you can't marry her." Everything is ready, but then he doesn't want her to get married. And then she says, "I'm going to

marry him." In the meantime, he's been drafted, and he's training in Fort Dix [New Jersey]. So part of my job as brother was to accompany my older sister to her music lessons at Julliard. I'm twelve, thirteen; she's fifteen, sixteen. But I'm her bodyguard. Going together is a big difference from her going there alone. But we feel very safe in New York. And yet I did this. And then she says, "I have to go visit Burt in Fort Dix. I can't go by myself. Murray, you're coming with me." So I would go on some Sundays with her. We would take the bus to New Jersey, to Fort Dix, and my sister and Burt would disappear.

Reti: You were the chaperone.

Baumgarten: And I walked around. [Laughs.]

Reti: You weren't really a chaperone. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: The chaperone—the designated chaperone.

Reti: The designated chaperone, who would let them disappear. [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: But it's family kinds of things. And my sister and I are close in some ways. Burt then gets sent to Germany, and she gets on a boat—my father, accepting it or not—she gets on a boat and goes and meets him in Germany. Turns out on the boat, she meets a distinguished rabbi from New York, and when they arrive there, he marries them. So we don't have a marriage ceremony for them.

Reti: That's quite a story.

Baumgarten: We're a headstrong, independent-minded, wandering, traveling Jewish family. They're still married. They've recently moved from Florida to one of these assisted living spaces. But they're doing just fine on their own right now. Near Silver Spring [Maryland], where her youngest daughter and grandchildren are, and her husband is quite lively. They're now in a somewhat challenging environment. She runs now, in this new place, Riderwood, as she did in the other place they lived in in Palm Isles in Florida, this gated community, a musical concert series, as well as herself performing all the time with local folks, except that this is a much bigger one. So rather than six or eight times a year, every month she has to organize a concert or performance.

Reti: That's a lot.

Baumgarten: You know, she's a busy person. But this just happened recently.

Reti: So I want to take you back—

Baumgarten: Please.

Reti: —a bit. So how was the transition for you culturally, coming from Panama to New York: fitting in with other kids—

Baumgarten: Well, I have to fit in. I don't quite speak proper English, but I'm learning. I have people teaching me to be American, what it is to be an American. My uncle takes me to a [New York] Yankees baseball game. Stuff like that. I try to play stickball, but I can't see the ball, and I strike out, but I'm good at box ball or stoop ball. A friend once said that I give professional talks like I'm playing punch ball or stoop ball in New York. Who knows?

But my father is engaged in community building his whole life, and he helps develop various congregations and do various things. So he gives speeches at communal organizations. So I have that. He's learned English. My sister has learned English, and she can help me. And my younger sister is learning. And I'm reading.

The family unit is very tight. My older sister is basically helping to raise us because my mother is gone in June 1950, and my father has a housekeeper, and then my stepmother arrives. And so in that sense, the family unit was always very strong, and I'm still there with my sisters and my father. And I have the role model of my father going to work and doing what needs to be done to support the family.

It's tricky for me in junior high school, but I have like-minded friends. And it's a point at which there are differences in what is expected of me. On the other hand, I'm good in school, so there's some benefit there. And I have various friends of various kinds. But I also go to Hebrew school, so there's a lot of

schoolwork off and on, all the time. I'm used to it. I'm always doing homework or reading another book. In that sense, I'm oblivious. I just do what needs to be done in front of me. I don't have a sense that things should be different. I feel glad I'm alive.

Reti: Was there a lot of fear in your family? I mean, they'd been through a lot—I think about the kind of anxiety that's in my family, also a Holocaust refugee family. There was this pitch of anxiety.

Baumgarten: It got expressed, in my father's life, in my father's relationships but also in the problem of how he made a living and how he worked with his relatives and so on. But, on the other hand, they were living in another big city, and they knew about big cities.

Yes, there was anxiety. I remember having many dreams about being killed, about being tortured. But, on the other hand, I was sheltered. My problems were probably more from being premature and not gaining weight, or whatever it was. I remember my mother having to come and comfort me so I would sleep. My sister, my older sister says that she was the apple of the eye until me, and then I got all the attention. Well, I got it because I was a boy, but I also got it because I was sickly.

I realized that I was premature only much later in life. No one gave me that information. One day my father, who would go to the synagogue and study a

little bit, later on, came home and said, "We talked about the passage in the Talmud about circumcision." I said, "Yes." And he said, "It says that if the child is under a certain weight, you can't circumcise the boy at eight days." And he says, "And that was you." That's how I knew about it.

So, in that sense, my life has been interwoven into traditional Jewish learning, and my discoveries have come out of that. I've thought about that as a way of understanding what's happening in my culture. I was always aware that other people might have had better things—cars and other things, vacations. My uncle goes to Florida, and the next thing we know, we get a box of fruit sent from Florida, when it was a big deal. So I knew about that. But I didn't feel jealous about it.

I was quite happy with my family, and my sisters and I have always been close. We were close in Panama. My sister and I have been writing some memoirs and talking about it, and we've talked about the games we played, building forts from pillows and various things. I remember in Panama, my father brought home one day a very elaborate Czechoslovakian-made Erector set that was metal. Well, it was beyond me. I was six, seven. I couldn't do much with it, but I played a little bit with it. Then, when I'm nine or so, he comes home with a Daisy rifle.

Reti: Oh, my goodness.

Baumgarten: You know, an air rifle? One of these— And I can't get it to work. But all of a sudden, a cousin arrives, and he wants to use my rifle. So we set up a tin can, and he shoots. My use of the rifle was in a synagogue play. I was the guard at a kibbutz. And I got to walk around with the rifle. And ever since then, I've said, maybe I should buy a Daisy rifle. But it hasn't happened, okay?

Schooling

So in that sense, I was somebody who didn't know a lot about options of other kinds that would have made me dissatisfied. My friend, Fred Bomse says, "Let's apply to Bronx High School of Science. Tell them you want to be a scientist." I said, "Okay, I'll tell them." One of the results has been in my career as an academic, when I've related to people in the sciences who run our campus and our world of the university, and I let slip that I went to the Bronx High School of Science—

Reti: It's a very prestigious place.

Baumgarten: Yeah, and I know various people [who went there] who became quite well known. And, of course, there are Nobel laureates and so on. But it became very clear that I was smart, whatever that meant. Yeah, I was smart. But then what was I going to do? I was lousy in chemistry lab. I had some talent in math, but it wasn't super whiz, you know. So eventually I end up doing English literature, and I remember taking a class in Columbia College with Charles Van

Doren, who then became quite famous as a winner of the *$64,000 Quiz Show*. They made a movie about him. They fed him the answers in the quiz show. And he says to me one day, "You should go to graduate school." I said, "Oh?" He says, "You know a lot." He says, "You know the Bible." I said I didn't know I knew the Bible; I just knew what I knew. [Laughs.]

Reti: Yeah. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: I thought about it. So when I'm finishing, Sputnik goes off, and the U.S. government says, "We need more graduate students." So I win a scholarship to go to graduate school in English literature. I considered going on and doing the foreign language thing, which was an even better scholarship, but I looked around, and I didn't want to do the kinds of things that the foreign language people were doing in comparative literature. Comparative literature at the time was having an identity crisis. I said, I'll do English literature, and I'll have two different professional lives. I'll teach English literature and I'll be a Jewish intellectual on the other side. Parallel.

So I get a scholarship, and my mother-in-law-to-be—[my future wife] Sheila and I had met—says, "You'll go to Cornell [University], and Sheila will finish at Barnard [College]," where she had gone to school and we'd met. So we decided we'd get married and go to [University of California,] Berkeley.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Years later, [Robert M.] Bob Durling arrives at Stevenson College when I do. He's a senior faculty member. I think he came the year after I did. And he comes across the hall. He says, "Baumgarten, we were waiting for you." I said, "Huh?" He says, "Yes! I was at Cornell, and you were going to be my graduate student." [chuckles] You know, small world. So I wasn't his graduate student; I've been his colleague.

And so it isn't till I'm twenty-one that I learn how to drive a car.

Reti: Because you were a New Yorker.

Baumgarten: Right. But how do I do this? I discover there's somebody from someplace at Columbia, at Teachers College or something, learning to be an instructor in automobile licensing, so he teaches me. I pass the test. And ever since then, Sheila, who's practically born in an automobile—you know, was always surprised that my driving—it's very different. A little joke. I said, "I have no problem driving. I close my eyes, and I drive."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: "What do I see?" But now, of course, it's a different game. So we get married and we go to Berkeley. And, of course, that was when you didn't just up and live together. So we got married.

UC Berkeley

Reti: So you went to Berkeley—

Baumgarten: As a graduate student.

Reti: —in what, '61?

Baumgarten: Sixty.

Reti: Sixty.

Baumgarten: And I'm there from '60 to '64. And when I arrive in the English department, they'd just had a study of time-to-degree in graduate departments at the University of California at Berkeley, and the English department has the winner. It takes nineteen years for the typical English department graduate student to get a PhD.

Reti: Good God!

Baumgarten: I say, this is ridiculous.

Reti: Nineteen years?

Baumgarten: Nineteen years. So in six years, from 1960 to 1966, I get my degree. But I finish everything in '64, in four years, and then I go off—because they were hiring people, I go and teach while I'm finishing my dissertation.

Williams College

Reti: And you were teaching back in—

Baumgarten: I went to teach at Williams [College]. I had two job offers that year. One is at Williams, and one is at the University of Michigan. And I get a letter from Michigan saying, "If you don't finish your dissertation by the time you come to Michigan, you get a thousand dollars less." They offered me seventy-two hundred dollars a year.

Williams says, "Yeah, you'll come and you'll teach, and eventually you'll get your degree." They don't worry about the degree. They're a small liberal arts college with a different interest. So I go to Williams. We say, "We'll be in the East. We'll be near our relatives" and all of that, and various possibilities.

So I teach at Williams, and we have a very interesting two years. I finish my dissertation, and the first year, right away, I meet George [T.] Amis, who was my officemate. And one day George Amis comes back, and he's having a terrible time with the English department people. They really are picking on him for various reasons. He comes to me, and he says, "I've been offered a job to come to

California." I said, "Oh, that's great." "To Santa Cruz." I said, "Oh." He says, "You were just there. What's it like?" I said, "Huh?" He says, "Yeah, Santa Cruz." And I say, "Oh, yes. When I'm at Berkeley, I have friends who tell me they're going to go to Santa Cruz to go to the amusement park and for surfing." And they say, "Are you going to come with us?" And I say, "I think I'll read another book."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So eventually George gets offered the job, and he says, "Should I go?" He's having a terrible time.

Reti: This is 1965, right when it was opening?

Baumgarten: Yes, it was before, in 1964. And his wife Sarah, who was a wonderful woman, who has basically a PhD—George hasn't finished his dissertation at this point—but his wife is finishing in classics. I said, "George, yes, you should go." And at this point, I have figured out that every department at Williams has a chair who went to Williams as an undergraduate. I say, Ehh, there's a problem here. So I say, "George, you should go, and you should get me a job, too." And eventually I meet people, and there's a long story there.

Reti: Right, and we'll save that for the UC Santa Cruz interview.

Baumgarten: Yeah.

Reti: But can I just backtrack a little bit—

Baumgarten: Please, please.

Always a Refugee

Reti: So given that you end up teaching Holocaust studies later in your career—

Baumgarten: When did I know about this?

Reti: Well, that, but do you, personally see yourself as a Holocaust refugee? Is this part of your background?

Baumgarten: It's part of my life that I'm a refugee. It's part of my life that when I was in New York City, there were signs all over that said "All aliens must report."

Reti: Report?

Baumgarten: I'm not yet an American citizen. Eventually I become an American citizen.

Reti: There were signs all over New York, saying—

Baumgarten: All over New York, in the buses and subways—and I'm an alien. So I explain to my students, I have two heads. One is in my suitcase. You know, I'm an alien. That's what they think an alien is. But I was an alien.

Reti: Yeah. Report to where? Where were you supposed to report to? The signs that said, "All aliens must report."

Baumgarten: You have to be registered. You have to be known in the police station. You're an alien. I'm not a citizen.

Reti: Now I understand.

Baumgarten: Right? So eventually I become a citizen, and this takes care of it. But the signs are still there for many years. So I'm a refugee. I'm very aware of being a refugee. I'm very interested in what it is to be a refugee, and I've written a couple of little things, I think you've seen them, called *Refugee Snapshots*.

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: And this, of course, is due to the Nazis and the Holocaust but also to European antisemitism. I often thought I would teach something about this but when I was in graduate school there was a real structure to the curriculum and to what literature was about. When I teach at Williams, I go into Williams, and they say, "We have a sequence. You teach in the sequence of English literature. So you're a nineteenth-century scholar. You'll start in the eighteenth

century, and you'll teach in the sequence because that's how things are." This is before the transformation of literary study.

So I'm saying to myself, well, I'll do that in a different way.

When I come to Santa Cruz, in the first year at Stevenson College, it's a much more open environment. I came here because I knew that UCSC was going to do something different in university education. Because [earlier] there I was in Williams, and I'm teaching students who are well educated, who are groomed, and who are going to be English majors because they're going to then go into teaching in prep schools where they came from, or they're going to go on to become lawyers and then maybe go on into the Wall Street world. There are all these things that are set up for them. Or they'll come back to Williams to teach at Williams. What I see is that there's a difference between the world of the teacher and the world of what the student does. The students at Williams say to me that I really upset them because in the seminars that I'm teaching, I get them to talk. They say to me, "At Williams there's a tradition of the gentleman's B minus. That's all we need. And, in addition to which, no gentleman speaks more than twice in a seminar class." I come from a tradition where, if there's not an argument, it's not a good class.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: We used to argue with our colleagues, with our professors at Columbia, all the time. We had knock-down-drag-outs. The professors were quite surprised. It's a very different understanding of democratic discussion, dialogue, and so on.

Coming to UC Santa Cruz

So I come to UC Santa Cruz. There was a contest about what a new college should be like, that was organized as part of various initiatives in California, and one of my colleagues at Williams won that. His name was Neil McGaw, and he came up with the college system and a whole series of things, and he shows me this, and I'm very interested. It's a notion that is very important in the history of Santa Cruz, and for me personally, in that education is student-centered in what students are to learn, not teacher-centered, which was the standard thing that we—

And so I come to Santa Cruz, and we keep talking about how our purpose is not to produce university professors, or clones of who we are, but to make learning something that engages the student who wants to learn. And the writers that I study in Victorian culture, including Thomas Carlyle, are all about teaching people to learn for themselves, to study and become an active learner.

So Santa Cruz, after a first year of really different kinds of learning environments—I'm the one who says the core course should meet—the students

are living in dorms; let's meet in the college dorm lounge. So we have the sections there. It's a very different experience. I help to organize the Modern Society and Social Thought major. And David Thomas, who was in philosophy, comes to me and says, "Larry Veysey is very important in organizing this, but he is not a kind of person that we want to run this. Will you be the chair?" So I was the first chair of Modern Society and Social Thought. And I invented things like little lunch gatherings, brown-bag lunches with the faculty and the students, where we'd talk informally and make presentations. This is not credit. This is outside of the classroom. But it's everything *in* the classroom.

So it is part of the sense that learning goes on, not because you get credit, but because you're engaged by the material. In other words, learning is something that intellectuals do all the time. So that's what I do. There are a whole series of questions: What courses shall we teach? So Larry Veysey invents a course called *The History of the American Dream of Success*. I teach in that. It's a great course. I also am asked, what courses do I want to teach? Because my paycheck says 50 percent of my time is in the college, and 50 percent is in the university. So I'm teaching five courses, so sometimes it's three for the department, or the board of study, it's called.

Reti: And that's literature.

Baumgarten: And that's literature. And two for the college. So there are these courses on modernity. Stevenson College has a sociological emphasis.

Early Jewish Life at UC Santa Cruz

And I'm interested, so I say, "I'll teach a course on *The Jews and Modernity*." And everybody says, "Oh, that's great." So for the first time, the two sides of my intellectual life come together. I teach that class, and I teach it a number of years. Some of the kids who took it—I've taught their children. And some of the kids who took it went on and helped to revive a kibbutz in Israel named Gezer, and they were very interested in it.

So right away I see that—and this is part of my experience—that learning is not something that happens only in English culture or American culture, but is global and that there are Jewish components and issues. So in 1969, through some help, I go and teach at the Hebrew University for a year. And by this point, the students at Santa Cruz, the Jewish students, have said they want to study Hebrew, and they have a petition. So part of my effort is to see if there can be somebody to come to Santa Cruz to teach Hebrew here.

The very first year I'm here, in 1966, a graduate from UC Santa Cruz named [Lawrence W.] Larry Raphael, who's now the senior rabbi at Temple Sherith Israel in San Francisco, comes to me and says, "I just graduated. Dean [E.] McHenry asked me to help found the alumni association. I want to become a rabbi. Will you teach me Hebrew?" So I teach him Hebrew and he babysits my kids. So there's already an interest in this that I can see.

So I go to Israel, and I teach in the English department, a very English English department, and I find Mishael [M.] Caspi and he comes here to teach for us. He brings charisma and excitement and connectedness to Israel. And then there's the founding of the Israel program, where Santa Cruz students go for a semester, the summer and the fall, to a quarter at kibbutz. So Gildas Hamel goes and meets Amy there on the kibbutz program. He is from France, but he meets her there. They get married and then come back here, and he has taught here. So there're a lot of connections, and there's an understanding of global Jewish culture.

Reti: What was the climate like for Jewish students and faculty in those very early years of the campus, before you got all this going?

Baumgarten: Sue Berrin writes a senior thesis with me about the Jews of Santa Cruz. We still can't find it anywhere. That was for a Stevenson College major. The climate is a very small town with a lot of history of antisemitism. Martin Kanes, who taught French here for years, tries to build a house. He wants to build a house. He buys a plot. And it says, "No Jews or members of the Ottoman Empire can buy property in the United States."

Reti: And this is—

Baumgarten: In Santa Cruz County.

Reti: —in the mid to late 1960s?

Baumgarten: Yeah.

Reti: Wow.

Baumgarten: So, of course, that restriction gets thrown out. But there had been, at this point, the civil rights revolution of the sixties. So things are in the process of changing. Lots of Jews come to Santa Cruz as undergraduates in the early years because McHenry has recruited them from the big cities: in L.A. and San Francisco, and because they're pioneers. They know that this is a new place and it doesn't have those historic traditions of quotas and all the rest for Jews. They come, and they're very excited and they're very active. And they are taking ownership of their education because that's what they want. And, besides, the Vietnam War is telling them it's good to own your education. So there's a reason to be an intellectual. We have lots and lots of friends, still, who were students then, and who are doing different things, and who talk with us all the time. When I say "us," I mean Sheila. Sheila was a graduate student here briefly, in sociology; then she went on to some planning courses in San Jose State [University] and eventually ended up in arts administration, which really has been a home for her.

So Sheila and I talk: What is it to be an intellectual—not to be a professor—what is it to be an intellectual? A Jew and an intellectual. Well, the first thing we do when we arrive in Santa Cruz, we join the synagogue.[5]

Reti: So this is Temple Beth El, when it was down on Bay Street?

Baumgarten: Yes. Many, many people say that I was the first faculty member here to join. Well, it was true at Williams. There were other Jewish faculty. But we were the first faculty members to join the synagogue. It was in the next town over, North Adams. The year after we joined, another colleague came, and he moved next door to the synagogue. He didn't want to drive on Shabbat.

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[5] Baumgarten added the following comment during the editing of this oral history: Sheila and I have connected the Santa Cruz Jewish Community and the campus in various ways, from student-Temple Beth El Joint projects to Hillel and the program in Jewish studies. The faculty in Jewish studies has been in great demand to give lectures; and the Neufeld Levin Holocaust Chair endowment included reaching out to the community, and so co-sponsored lectures and events. And the local community, especially the Jewish Community, has come to lectures and events on campus in ever-increasing numbers. One telling story – early in the campus's history, many students applied to rabbinic school at the Reform Movement's California campus – and that year one-third of all the admitted students were from Santa Cruz. Later that year I got a phone call from the dean, Leonard Thall. He asked me who was the local rabbi who had so inspired our students. And he was surprised when I told him we didn't have a rabbi, the congregation at the time was led by lay-people, including Arnold Levine, the president, and myself. We couldn't afford a rabbi, I said. So he came for a visit, and the congregation quickly agreed to affiliate with the reform movement – it had been nominally conservative but everyone lived in the reform style – and he said he would arrange for a student rabbi to come up, twice a month, to lead services and do pastoral work, including the Hebrew school which was staffed by UCSC students and local members of the congregation. The dean sent us the brilliant young guitar playing rabbinical student – Richard Litvak. We could afford bringing him twice a month, just barely, and he stayed in people's homes when he came up, beginning with our home. Rick was a great success and the following year we had another student rabbi, who was good, and then one more; and then as Rick was graduating and being ordained, members of the congregation who had stayed in touch with him decided to see if we could hire him. They figured it out and with the help of the San Francisco Federation, which agreed to pay him if he would found Hillel on the campus, he began as our rabbi—Murray Baumgarten.

So we were strange at Williams, but that's neither here nor there. But it didn't seem to matter to me. As a refugee, I don't have the same social sensitivities and awarenesses that other people might. Peter [Kenez] shares this with me, or I share it with him. We don't quite notice—

Reti: Notice what?

Baumgarten: That people are picking on us in certain ways because we're different. Although it became clear to me that I was thought of as "the Jew on the campus" for years, by Jews who didn't belong to the synagogue. But that's a different story.

I remember we came up to Stevenson College to one of the early parties as we're starting the year. We're at some event, at a party or something, and a colleague comes around and says, "You're Jewish, aren't you?" I say, "Oh, yeah." He says, "I'm going around picking out the Jews in the party." I said, "Oh, that's great." I said, "Do you want to know how to join the synagogue?" "Oh, I wouldn't do THAT!"

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Right? That would be *too* Jewish, right? Anyway, he didn't get tenure and he went on to other things. So did his wife. But it was always a very

clear part of who I was and who Sheila was, which didn't mean that we didn't have non-Jewish friends.

Reti: So you weren't living in a totally Jewish world.

Baumgarten: Right. It wasn't that.

But the Holocaust stuff became very present to me when I was a senior in high school and I'm already at the Jewish Theological Seminary as a student there. I was a senior in high school and then in college. And just on my own, because I always used to think that I didn't learn enough in classes, I'd read other books. So I read *A History of the Jews* by Solomon Grayzel, a very good book of its time, and I get to the Holocaust, and the numbers are staggering to me. And they connect with what I know personally, but the numbers are— So it became clear to me that this is one of the great transformational experiences in Western culture, in world culture.

Creating the Course: *Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry*

And so I'm waiting to think about that, and a little bit of that comes into my *Jews and Modernity* course. But then—I think it's the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz—David Kaun is provost of Stevenson, and he meets Paul [Leopold "Poldek"] Pfefferberg from *Schindler's List*. *Schindler's List* has recently come [by Thomas Keneally], as a book. He has a conference about Auschwitz

and the Holocaust. I'm part of it. Peter is part of it. We expect that there'll be twenty people. 150 people show up. It's a big deal. At the end of the conference, we're having a wrap up session, and Pfefferberg says, "You should have a course." So suddenly everybody looks at me and says, "Murray, will you teach a course." I said, "I've thought about teaching it for many years, but I don't want to teach it just as literature." I say, "You have to have history and literature together." Peter [Kenez] says, "I'll teach it with you."

Reti: That's how the course on the Holocaust started?[6]

Baumgarten: Yeah. And this is before there are graduate courses or undergraduate courses in the Holocaust. We offered one of the very first courses.

Reti: Because there's not a field of Holocaust studies at that point.

Baumgarten: Nothing. In 1961 with the [Adolf] Eichmann trial, things start, and a few books [later]. But it's also Philip Roth's story, "Eli, the Fanatic," where this little town has a Holocaust survivor, and the town wants him to shut up, the Jews in the town. It's in the *Goodbye, Columbus* collection. So it's a whole set of things that are now happening in the culture, and people say to me I should do it. I'm teaching *Jews and Modernity*. We've always talked about that in the class, but it's not been— And it's also the change from semesters to quarters. I don't

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[6] *The Holocaust*, Modern Society and Social Thought 154C, was first offered in the winter of 1986.

remember quite when that happened, but it was around that time. Instead of having large classes that go for fourteen weeks, where there are many topics, you have sprints of ten weeks. So you have to have different kinds of courses. So that made sense.

Undermining the Quarter System

But I'm, at this point, still trying to invent ways of undermining the quarter system. So one of the things I did do—and this came out of my experience teaching in Israel—in Israel, for a long time, there were courses that went for a year. You meet once a week, sort of like master's degree courses. So I said one day, "I'll teach a Dickens class for a year, but students will not get credit until the spring. They'll sign up for zero credit." And then people said, "How can you do this in the quarter system?" I said, "I don't know. We'll try."

So then I discovered the music department had these courses that were practice courses. Students would come, take the class in the fall, the winter, and then in the spring they'd get five units. By the way, the Registrar is still hounding me because I would just give them continuing credit. They wanted to know, "What grade should they get in the fall quarter?" And what would happen would be typically students would come in the spring quarter and say they want to join the Dickens class, and the *students* would tell them, "Sorry, you can't. You weren't here in the fall and the winter." And, again, learning is not to be done in ten weeks' time, tie a bow, and thank you very much. But that's what we've

become, a world in which everything is packaged and it's bookkeeping. So at one point, the department said, "Okay, so each course will be two units." That misses the point, doesn't it?

Reti: Yeah.

Baumgarten: But, of course, part of our problem is instead of it being three-unit courses that you could tie together, it's a five-unit course, so students can only take three courses, or four at the most.

So this is part of my sense that I can't control structural things in the society. I have to learn how to work around them, or undermine them, or be part of a counterculture. Early in my education, I figure out that there are a lot of books being published about literature that I disagree with, that I think are not very good, but there are a lot of small magazines publishing articles that are really important, and that's, of course, how some of the great writers started. So since then, I've just been writing [laughs] subversive articles, I hope. But nobody notices them. So that's fine—you know, because if you get noticed, you get picked on or whatever, or you get organized into this or that.

So anyway, so that's what I've been up to. I think the range of things that I do is connected to my sense that Dickens is too important to be left to the university; so, too, is English literature; and so, too, is Jewish culture. The university has a role in all of this. And one of the big examples for me is how women's studies

comes to the university. It wasn't part of the university. When I taught at Williams, there were only men there. I was part of a group of young faculty who stood up at a faculty meeting and said, "We need to have women." And one of my best students, who really loved us, who took us to his ancestral home in New Hampshire, came up to me after that and said, "Why are you doing this?" I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "You're going to have women at Williams? It's going to ruin the spirit." I said, "That's the idea."

Reti: [Sighs.]

More on Jewish Studies

Baumgarten: Right? So how did women get into the university curriculum? Not because—and we were reading Thomas [S.] Kuhn, about paradigms, not because it was part of the paradigm, because it was outside; it was what was left out: the unvoiced, the unrepresented. I said, "Hello, that's me. I'm the Jew. I'm left out of Western culture." We had this argument at Columbia. We read these great books, and the great history of Western culture, and the Jews are barely mentioned except as part of "the Judeo-Christian tradition; let's go on and talk about serious things," right? So I said, "There are things that are left out, unvoiced, unincluded because that's what the culture wants." And the culture has these structures. So I've learned to go around them. People would say, "That's why he's not in the mainstream." I think, well, you can have the mainstream, but I feel lucky enough that this is a rich enough culture that it

hasn't collapsed and said, "Only the mainstream gets funded." In a whole series of ways. And, of course, it's because of that diversity and autonomy in the culture and the wealth in the culture—but Europe was like this.

Reti: Right.

Baumgarten: Right?

Reti: Right, so you can't think we're safe just because of that.

Baumgarten: And so it becomes a matter of speaking out and standing out.

Reti: Did you ever feel Latin American?

Baumgarten: All the time. I kept on with my Spanish. I regularly tried to teach some Latin American literature. And I used to hang out with Latin Americans. One of my great sadnesses is the early death of Joseph Silverman, who was a wonderful colleague and a really important one.[7] And it was when he came that Mishael Caspi and Joe and I together could help do some Jewish studies programs. And we used to have several independent majors in Jewish studies, before there was a Jewish studies program. But he died. Various things happened. Now Mishael has died.

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[7] Joseph Silverman, Professor of Literature at UC Santa Cruz, died in 1989.

Reti: Yeah.

Baumgarten: And I'm next, I guess. Well, I'm in a line. The Latin American stuff was something that was very important to me. And the whole history of what happened in Spain to Jews. And one of the things that I've done recently in studying the Jews of Venice is the ways in which Venice was a place that conversos could come to and become Jewish again. And, of course, that led to stuff that happened in Venice but also, later on, in Amsterdam, which drew its rabbis from Venice. Amsterdam was a place where many conversos went to rediscover who they were as Jews. There were even courses in what does it mean to become Jewish, because you didn't know anymore. And in some ways, that's part of our experience now. So many people have discovered what it is to—and it wasn't that the parents knew what it was to be Jewish; the children wanted to know, and the parents hadn't taught them. So it's a matter of reclaiming.

And so I used to think and talk with Mishael and with Joe about the crises in Jewish life and how Jews and Jewish culture responded to the great crises. And this, of course, is also how did Western culture [respond]. One of the things Mishael used to say is that at every crisis there have been creative Jewish responses that have transformed this. And, again, I would go back to my teacher, Abraham Halkin—and what we had studied in Jewish history in terms of the transformative things. And Gerson D. Cohen, who at one point became the chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, but was my teacher in a course on

Jewish sects and how the Jewish sects, in Hellenistic Judaism, became part of the larger group.

Jewish Spaces

These days, one of the things I've been interested in is what makes a Jewish space. In fact, I'm going to be running a summer workshop in Jerusalem on how the Venice ghetto is an example of and helps us ask: What constitutes a Jewish space? I'm teaching this under the aegis of The Van Leer [Jerusalem] Institute, which is part of the Israel Academy [of Sciences and Humanities]. But we want to get people from all over.

And one of the ways in which Jews figured out, from the Pharisees, how to make a Jewish space is to have an *eruv*. An *eruv* is this wire that designates a public space as a private space. That means that religious Jews can carry things, and people can push baby carriages outside because it's a private space. You can say it's a fiction. It is a fiction, but it grows out of an argument with the Sadducees. The Sadducees were very wealthy. They had servants. They would sit in their room, and the servants would come and help them on the Sabbath. Do no work. The Pharisees were the small people, the little people. They didn't have servants who could help them with this. So you'd like to be able to do some on your own; therefore you make a—since the houses are close by, you put them together as a courtyard, and the courtyard then becomes private space.

Reti: Ah. So that's where that comes from.

Baumgarten: Yes.

Reti: Fascinating.

Baumgarten: So the whole notion of an *eruv*. And, by the way, there have been huge arguments and votes about—in Jewish areas of London and other places—whether they should agree to it where you string wires and you make a space. But then we know that we live in imaginary communities. All communities are imaginary. They're not something that are clans; we all live together these days, right?

Reti: Right.

Baumgarten: So why is this more imaginary than being Sikhs together or—

Reti: Or virtual communities.

Baumgarten: Yeah, or baseball fans, or— You know? All kinds of things. So that's been part of my understanding of what I do.

Reti: I think that's a good place to stop for today.

Thomas Carlyle

Reti: So today is Wednesday, January 29th, 2014. I am in McHenry Library, on the fourth floor, with Professor Murray Baumgarten for our second interview in his oral history. And today, Murray, we're going to focus on [Thomas] Carlyle and on the long story of the [Charles] Dickens Project.

So I wanted to start out by asking you about your interest in Carlyle even before you met Norman Strouse. Was Carlyle was one of the authors that you were interested in from your graduate studies?

Baumgarten: Yes, I actually ended up writing a dissertation on the relationship and differing views of Carlyle and John Stuart Mill. They were friends for a while. Mill got Carlyle most of the books he needed for his *French Revolution*, which was his great work. They then had a falling out about many different things. Some of this I covered in my dissertation and published a few bits from. The place of Carlyle in English culture and English literature is a difficult one because he spans a lot of eras. He's born in the eighteenth century and dies in 1881, practically towards the end of the nineteenth century. He lives a long time. And he has a lot of views that are thought of as antidemocratic, racist. He gets involved in all sorts of controversies, including the controversy over how the slave revolt in Jamaica was put down by the then British governor, Governor [Edward] Eyre. Carlyle spoke in favor and organized the committee in favor of the governor and the harsh treatment he meted out, and Mill attacked that.

And there're all kinds of other things, but you have to remember that Carlyle's *French Revolution* was made into a national bestseller because John Stuart Mill wrote this phenomenal review of it when it came out in 1837. The Governor Eyre revolt is more than twenty-five years later. There's a book about it.

So I was interested in Carlyle, as part of what I might call the afterlife of the French Revolution—what happened to English culture in the light of the French Revolution, what happened to European culture—and thought this was an important thing to think about later as all kinds of people were wondering what it meant to have a Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union and all of that. Various people had written books about revolutions as structural elements. So I was quite interested in that and wrote about their ideas of history in terms of what revolutions and all the rest were about. Both Carlyle and Mill were very influential in terms of what their ideas of history were and how people should think about history. And this is, of course, the age of the great nineteenth-century histories and also of the beginning of social science. Mill is at the beginning of that and one of the founders.

So I came to Santa Cruz with the manuscript of the dissertation just about done. I had finished writing it while I was teaching at Williams [College]. I should mention, also, that I had studied with Eric Bentley at Columbia, as an undergraduate. He wrote a book called *A Century of Hero Worship*, in which Carlyle is one of the people that he thinks is a bad person, and the whole view of hero worship leads to [Adolf] Hitler.

Reti: Ah. I see.

Baumgarten: And so Carlyle was certainly there, and it was hard to talk about Carlyle as somebody who had an authoritarian streak and an authoritarian view of things without being tarred as attacking—as being part of the Bentley school. But that all got sorted out in various ways.

So I came to Santa Cruz, and Gurdon Mooser, who was then our founding director of development, went around, and there I was in Stevenson College, and I met him. And he said, "Do you know anyone who's interested in Carlyle?" And I said, "Me."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: And Norman Strouse, who had been Gurden Mooser's boss at J. Walter Thompson [advertising agency], had a Carlyle collection that he had started from the time he was in high school—

Reti: Oh, my goodness.

Baumgarten: —Norman Strouse had saved lunch money and bought books. And he bought and read these books, including Carlyle. He wanted to give them to somebody. He eventually gave them to Santa Cruz, and I was sort of the keeper of these. And with the help of many people in the library and the library's

Special Collections department—thank you Rita Bottoms and Jerry James—we added to it, and we got some additional funds.[8]

One of the things that I was interested in is how Carlyle's *French Revolution*, for example, was translated. It was translated into Spanish by Miguel de Unamuno, who's one of the great writers and philosophers of Hispanic culture, of Spain. And we have a copy of the translation, in Special Collections [at the UCSC Library], of Unamuno, and he has a wonderful introduction and talks about it. And everybody was attracted to the very up-to-date qualities, the Romantic qualities but also the fascinating rhetorical strategies that Carlyle uses to write his *French* Revolution. Unlike later historians of the nineteenth century, he doesn't write a history where everything is seen from the point of view of God or eternity.

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[8] Baumgarten added the following written comment during the editing of this oral history: McHenry Library has been a wonderful place to work in, and the staff wonderful to work with throughout the years. At the beginning I relied on interlibrary loan help – Martha Ben-Susan was terrific at helping me get unusual and even arcane books. Jerry James and I had been in graduate school together and it was a pleasure to discover he was now at Santa Cruz – he participated actively in the work of developing the Strouse collection and its occasional publications, including letting people know what it contained via regular bibliographical information that became more and more central to our Carlyle publications. Margaret Gordon also helped with this work and Rita Berner Bottoms, founding head of Special Collections kept in regular contact with Norman Strouse – and the Strouse Carlyle collection was a remarkable resource. Ada Nisbet gave us her wonderful Dickens collection in 1990, and we gained a nifty library of Victorian books, as well as first editions and serial parts of Dickens novels, that continue to enrich our students and the work of the Dickens Project. She also gave us the ongoing work of her Dickens world-wide bibliographies, and they have now led to Michael Hollington's updating and publication of two volumes, attesting to Dickens's role as a world-class writer with world-wide impact. I continue to be amazed at the pleasure I get from working in our library – airy, bright, comfortable. After the enclosing library spaces I had worked in before coming to Santa Cruz, it was and continues to be a delight. It was thus easy for me to turn to Lee Jaffe and work with him in compiling and publishing our anthology, *The Jewish Street*. And I was pleased to be interviewed by Irene Reti for this oral history—Murray Baumgarten.

Reti: An omniscient point of view.

Baumgarten: Right. But, rather, he includes his own efforts to understand it. So he's a character in his history, and so are other people. It's brilliant writing and brilliant character sketches. And he's very interested in the notion of visual portraits of characters that he writes about, that he has portraits of, and in doing, in effect, a portrait in prose, which, after all, came out of eighteenth-century habits, as well, in English literature.

So I got involved in that. And as I collected these materials and thought about it, I wondered if other colleagues would be interested. And, indeed, several were, because of their interest in other writers, their central interest in [William] Wordsworth and other people. And eventually Chris [R.] Vanden Bossche, a graduate student, wrote his dissertation on Carlyle, and then he's continued editing, being the general editor of the Carlyle edition. After I finished with it, he took it over, and at [the University of] Notre Dame he's carried it through to several volumes that have been published under his stewardship, because we collected a whole bunch of people to edit the different materials and to find them. And this was an interesting bit of work.

I thought more colleagues of ours here would be interested, and we talked, and there was some interest. Marshall Leicester, for example, wrote a wonderful essay about the French Revolution that eventually was published in the publications of the Modern Language Association.

[Thomas A.] Tom Vogler had some interest, and so did Jerry James in the library, and we then got to ask: What does it mean that Carlyle had had so many different editions in his lifetime that had new errors introduced, that there wasn't a good edition? So various people agreed to do this work. And Fred Kaplan came along and got a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to do an edition of *The French Revolution*.

Reti: Now, who is Fred Kaplan?

Baumgarten: He was a professor of English at Queens College and the City University of New York. He had spent time at the Huntington Library, and had spent time in England and knew the English Carlyleans better than most of us in America. And he had written a biography of Carlyle, which was very, very good.

So he got a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities to do *The French Revolution*, and he started working on it. That led a group to work on Carlyle and he thought that it made sense.

By that time, we had the Dickens Project underway, and there was a lot of overlap. Dickens was very influenced by Carlyle—who was a friend—including in writing *Hard Times* and in writing *A Tale of Two Cities*. And at this point, there were a group of scholars from all over the world, basically, who came together, and we all agreed to work on Carlyle and to help each other. But none of us were

textualists, textual scholars, and none of us had had any experience in comparing the different editions and working with it in different ways.

So we had to learn how to do that, and we got some people to help us, including someone who had been the head of the Bibliographical Society of America, a man named David Nordloh. And we made contact with other people, like the people—Catherine Kerrigan, who was editing Robert Louis Stevenson, from a Canadian university. She was at I think it was [the University of] Guelph.

So there were a whole series of things we had to learn. And in the process we knew that we needed some help, so we got various bits of funding from the campus, from Norman Strouse, from other colleagues, from people in town—Marshall Sachs in particular—who were interested in supporting our work. And we looked around, and we hired Mark Engel, whom I didn't know at the time—well, very peripherally. I knew his parents, and Mark had been a student here and was constantly thinking of going to graduate school in philosophy, but he really didn't want to go to graduate school. But he had been editing various publications on campus and was a great copy editor. He's continued to edit the newsletter of the library. Sheila [Baumgarten] had known him because he worked on the Shakespeare newsletter when Sheila was there, and we met, and he's—

Reti: Shakespeare Santa Cruz?

Baumgarten: Yes. Mark is a meticulous and very careful reader and editor, and it seemed just great. And he has enormous patience and was able to do a great job on helping us get through the textual comparisons, which can be very tedious, not only of different syntactical choices—but commas, hyphens, foreign words, a whole series of things—producing brilliant results, so we were able to show that indeed the later editions—some had some corrections by Carlyle, but most of them were just mistakes or things that were added by other people who were trying to understand the writing and, you know, would add a word or two.

Reti: This whole form of literary study is based on comparing different versions of the same text. You have to discover whether this is a significant difference or it's just a trivial thing.

Baumgarten: Right, accidental or whatever. And in all of this, we were helped because someone in Australia had just come up with a way of using computers to do this. But the system worked on a very antiquated, and even at that point, a clunky IBM system.

Reti: This was in the late sixties.

Baumgarten: Yes. Eventually that system was translated for the Macintosh, and became much quicker, and Mark used that. But the person who really worked on that at first was Chris Vanden Bossche. We got him to go and learn how to use it. And Mark went and did a couple of courses on textual editing. And we would

then have these discussions: Was this change Carlyle's change or somebody else's?

Reti: And this was all part of producing the California Carlyle Critical Edition?

Baumgarten: Right, exactly. And to this point, I think there are five or six volumes, and *The French Revolution* is just coming forward to the UC Press. We got people from UC Press involved, and they said, "You know, this is a very large book [*The French Revolution*]. Why don't we start with something smaller?"

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: They were quite right, so we immediately went to *Heroes and Hero Worship*, which Michael Goldberg of Vancouver edited, and that became the first volume that we published. But that, too, became a major issue. Mark became very good at the textual issues and I worked with him constantly. He and I would have constant discussions, and Chris then became part of it, and he's carried that forward. We knew then we were getting closer to what the text really said, that Carlyle wrote, and we had to footnote it. And then came the question of: What is a footnote? Because most of us were critical scholars, but we didn't specialize in footnotes; we specialized in long essays.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: And how could we make the footnotes footnotes?

Reti: As opposed to legnotes, right?

Baumgarten: Right.

Reti: [Laughs.] Yes.

Baumgarten: And we had long discussions. And, again, Mark helped with that. We had another couple of people working on that. It was, again, a back and forth. And part of my job was when Mark would look at something and say, you know, he's carrying on and on about this, and he's writing a whole, elaborate explanation, whereas the footnote is there for the person who's reading it to be able to get the information and make up her or his own mind. I would often have to intervene and arm wrestle—

Reti: So you were the editor?

Baumgarten: I was the editor-in-chief. And why did I become editor-in-chief? Because the group of scholars all gathered, and they thought that I should do this because we had the Strouse collection. It was not the best collection; it was not the most complete collection; but it was the most usable collection. And we had all sorts of connections, through Strouse, with other collections. The Duke collection has all the letters, but we would get copies. If Norman Strouse bought a letter, he would make a copy for Duke. And every once in a while, Duke, buying a new letter, would make us a copy.

Reti: I'm not clear on why it was the most usable collection.

Baumgarten: Well, people could get to it and work with it. Whereas at Duke you had to be working on the letters, and they would tell you what was in them, except for what had been published. But then we managed to get some of the people, especially Clyde Ryals, working on the Duke letters collection to work with our edition. So it became better and better in terms of knowing what the letters said, and in fact, the current editor of the Duke collection, David Sorensen, is also one of the editors of *The French Revolution*, who took it over from Fred Kaplan.

Reti: So this book is now finally coming to publication?

Baumgarten: We think so.

Reti: Forty years after you started this project.

Baumgarten: Yes, it took a long time. But, in effect, we had to learn new tasks, new skills, and we also had to master a whole bunch of things. Now, David [R.] Sorensen, who is this person who now runs the Duke letters, is also one of the editors of *The French Revolution*, and he's working with Mark Engel and with a young-ish man named Mark Cumming, who teaches in Canada, and who wrote a very good book about *The French Revolution*. But David Sorensen is also Canadian, knows French, and Carlyle had used a lot of French. And the other

editions of *The French Revolution*, the other scholarly editions, would say, well, we don't know what the sources of his French are. There was a suspicion that Carlyle made it up. There was a strange feeling about him because he was called a man of letters. David Sorensen has found the sources for each and every one of Carlyle's French materials in *The French Revolution*. It's been for years that he's done this.

Reti: Incredible.

Baumgarten: It required finding all kinds of libraries and work. But this is part of the painstaking work of editing, footnoting, getting the text right. We felt that we were doing this for future scholars. Nowadays suddenly there's renewed interest in Carlyle and what he actually wrote. Part of *my* effort, though, was to get people to see that we needed evidence for what we were asserting because we had unique situations where colleagues who were working on different things would basically say, "I know this is what Carlyle said," and I would say, "How do you know this?" And they would explain basically that they were Carlyle come back to life. They knew because they had an intuition.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So my job was to say, "Evidence?" And this, it seemed to me, was also a moment in literary study when the notion of evidence and the careful working with historical materials was slipping away in favor of other

approaches, some of which have become very important, but people were being a little bit fast and loose. So we would make jokes about evidence, and I would try to make sure my colleagues not only made jokes but also found the evidence for their assertions. So this was going on for years.

The Founding of the Dickens Project

And we did have, the second year of the Dickens Project, a conference on Carlyle and Dickens. But this is a chance for me to say that as I was working on Carlyle, it became clear to me that there were other colleagues here, including John [O.] Jordan, who were interested in Victorian literature but especially Victorian fiction or Victorian poetry, not what was then known as "Victorian prose."

Reti: What's the difference?

Baumgarten: Nonfiction. There is a whole section of the Modern Language Association meetings, even, because the Victorians are great writers of essays and nonfiction, et cetera. This was the era of, let's call it the emergence of the public intellectual, who wrote for these new magazines.

Charles [J.] Hitch, the former assistant secretary of defense, got the job of being president of the University of California. Janet [A.] Napolitano is only the second person since then to come from the federal government to run the University of California. And Charles Hitch said that the campuses were competing with each

other, rather than collaborating, so he put forward a fund for intercampus collaboration, and at that point, I had met Ed Eigner, who taught at UC Riverside. We had met when we were both going off to run UC programs abroad. Ed was going to England, and I was going to Jerusalem. And then, when I came back to Santa Cruz, his daughter was my student. So we had some further connections.

Charles Hitch put out this call, and Ed said, "Well, each of the campuses, almost all of them, have a Dickens scholar. But we never meet each other in California; we only meet each other at national meetings of the Modern Language Association. Wouldn't it be good if we could do something together?" So Ed and John Jordan and I did various things. We used intercampus transfer funds, and John and I were teaching a class up here in Dickens together. We invited Ed to come and lecture. He was teaching a Dickens class there at Riverside. He invited us. So out of this grew the chance to talk about who the Dickens scholars were at the different campuses and to have a planning meeting and then to launch the Dickens Project.

Reti: John Jordan said in your backyard you had a meeting where you planned the whole concept of the Dickens Project.

Baumgarten: Yeah. Yeah, and Ed and John and I had different ideas from our different experiences at other campuses. I had just come from teaching and working in Israel, and Ed had been in England, and John had been in France, so

we had a lot of different ideas. Right away, we came up with a range of things. Ed said, "Let's have a graduate student conference as part of this, where the graduate students who worked in the summer with the faculty and the general public get to present their papers, and these will probably be the first papers they present, as scholars." So that worked.

And we talked about making sure that the faculty could lecture but the graduate students would teach the novels to the people who came for the general course. And we wanted to make sure that they did not teach them with their colleague from their campus. So we always got them to meet each other. And years later, we talked about this as making sure that graduate students had an experience which got them out of being prisoners of their department. And that's been very valuable.

I had met and knew several excellent scholars in Jerusalem, and we immediately asked the Hebrew University to join the Dickens Project because of this very fine work. And mind you, that was when Dickens was still regarded as the great entertainer, so there was all this question about, "Well, you're not really working on Dickens. He's not serious." We were changing that.

Hebrew University said, "You know, we would be delighted to send a faculty member and two graduate students every summer, but it's a long way, and it costs a lot more money for us. Could we be forgiven the contribution to supporting the administrative part?" So we said, "Sure, as long as you agree to

have a conference on Dickens in the next five or six years." And that turned out to be a very good thing for them and for us.

So, again, we created this network where people would come and lecture, and talk, and meet each other, and get to see what they were doing. I kept saying, "This has got to be not just a conference but a scientific laboratory. And we need to use that model." The scientific model means that just as people do all kinds of things in a lab, they also go and visit each other's labs and learn from each other, so that this couldn't be just a standard conference. And it's developed in that way. It's got major research lectures. It's got a general course that's open to the public.

And Ed Eigner kept saying, "You know, there are people who have read and reread Dickens and have never let him go out of print, who know more Dickens than we do. We need to engage them." There are teachers and teacher training seminars. There are now, in the Dickens Project, bits of additional seminars for faculty members who just want to come, whose campuses don't belong. There's a nineteenth-century seminar. So it developed in many ways. But the core part of it was graduate students taking an active role, faculty members taking an active role, and the general public taking an active role.

Reti: Where did this idea come from? Was it from your Bronx High School of Science education?

Baumgarten: In what sense?

Reti: In the sense of bringing a scientific model to the study of humanities. Do you have any sense of where you got that idea?

Baumgarten: Me.

Reti: But where did it come from?

Baumgarten: It came also from my being someone who could have gone into science, natural science, but instead went to Berkeley for English literature. What I experienced in Berkeley, was that the difference between my experience as an English department scholar, in training, as a graduate student, and my colleagues in the social sciences and the natural sciences was indeed the notion of a laboratory and the notion of a center. I said, "Why can't *we* do this? We're doing something just as important."

So I tried to use that model, and every once in a while things would come up, and we would reiterate what made us the equal of a scientific laboratory. In fact, at one point, the Dickens Project applied for the rank of multicampus research unit, and we went through all the hoops, and we called ourselves "Project" because that was one of the official designations of scientific projects, scientific groups. Before you became a center, you were a project. But what happened was that we went through all the hoops, all the committees, and we arrived on the

desk of the president of the system, David Gardner. And his comment was, "What are *these* people doing here? Multicampus research units are for the sciences." But this was exactly at the moment when he realized the humanities needed something, and he then invented the Humanities Research Institute, which was eventually housed in Irvine but has little groups on each campus. So at one point, we were a multicampus research unit.

Reti: But not anymore?

Baumgarten: Well, they've all shifted and the funding has changed. But that was the point at which multicampus research units received their own line item in the state budget. That has changed, and we never got there. We never got that. But one of the things that I learned from Carlyle was how the Lick Observatory people operated. Why? I have a friend named John Faulkner. Our children knew each other and so on. And I said, "One of our problems, John, is that we have these manuscripts or different editions of the books, and we look at them, and what we've seen is that you can't just read them; you need to compare them. So the traditional way was that two people would read them to each other and make notations of difference." I said, "Surely there is another way to do this."

And he said, "You know, we have a machine that compares star charts that are taken of the same piece of the sky at different times. You put them together, and the machine puts them one on top of each other, and the differences come up."

And for a while, we used his machine. He showed it to us, and we were able to use it to see the differences in Carlylean texts.

Reti: That's a fascinating example of interdisciplinary cross-fertilization at UCSC. That's amazing.

Baumgarten: I met John Faulkner, and we talked. You know, "What are you up to?" Anyway—

But then, after that, the computer program was developed that allowed us to enter the material. But there, too, was a story. A young man named James Ganong, who had been an undergraduate here as well and was a computer whiz, mentioned to us there were different ways to do things. He told us about a scanner that could scan print and turn it into computer text, and then we could compare them. So we actually tried using the scanner. The only trouble was that on nineteenth-century texts the scanner made a mistake on every line. And we discovered typists did better. So we got money, and we paid typists, and they entered the different editions, and then we would correct them. Then, when we compared them using the comparison program, we would then check if the mistakes were really mistakes in the texts, or typos that the typists had made. So we now have a great group of computer-readable nineteenth-century texts that Chris Vanden Bossche now oversees as part of the archive that he has at Notre Dame, where he was, at one point, chair of English. So there's a whole bunch of materials for the history of the book, if you want to work on that.

The Dickens Universe

But anyway, that was Carlyle leading into Dickens. And the Dickens Project, I ran for five years. We didn't start it by having orientation; everybody showed up at once, we had a lecture, we had arguments, we discussed, and people said, "Well, it would be good if we could orient the faculty and the graduate students first."

Reti: I heard that there was kind of a rebellion at the end of the first conference.

Baumgarten: Right. Well, it was a rebellion. It wasn't at the end. But it was a funny moment because we were reading papers, research papers, and here were these people who had come to the general course. And they didn't want to have us read papers to them. We tried to explain that we didn't want to just talk; we wanted to be very serious. And there was a group of people who said, "We really appreciate that you're not talking down to us." So there was a split.

And there were also little problems. There was one person who came and parked his Mercedes under eucalyptus trees in one of the parking lots, and they got the eucalyptus trees' sap [on their car]—you know, it went on and on. [Vice Chancellor] John Marcum was wonderful about this person. Yes, there were problems, but we persevered. John Jordan and Ed Eigner, and I—but especially John and then Chris Vanden Bossche—we were just running around, doing all of this like a mom-and-pop store.

The reason I wanted the multicampus research unit designation, among other things, was that it came not only with a line item in the budget but it came with an FTE [full-time equivalent] for a director. So I'd go around saying, "When are we going to get a nationwide search for a director?" Well, we never did get that. But that whole notion of somebody who would have that as part of his or her job, the way all the science centers have—and I watched the engineers, and I was on the Graduate Council; I could see all of this. I said, "Why are we so badly funded?" I mean, it went on and on. So we never got the FTE, but we kept looking for that.

After about four or five years of this, I had other things I needed to do. And John had been working right along, and at this point John had spent more time on Dickens than he had to start with. So for a year we were both co-directors, and then he took it over.

I laugh because I said that it was a classic case of the Weberian notion that founding societies involve charisma, and then they lead to bureaucracy. And John immediately had committees—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: —and associate directors. He's been brilliant at coordinating things that way and running things with these different groups. I just didn't—to start with, didn't need, didn't have time, and John and Chris and other people just did

jobs, and we all worked together. But it was inevitable and wonderful that John could take it over and work with people in this way. And, of course, we did various things to let people know about it because one of the things that the scientists do is they give each other prizes, and it makes a big noise. And we kept asking, "How do we let people know about the Dickens Project?" And, of course, it was word of mouth; it was teachers who were hungry for this. We kept pointing out that we were a very serious research unit, not just adult education. And it's maintained that status until we had that article in *The New Yorker*, which made—"*The New Yorker"*—people said, "Oh, this is serious." But by that point, we had already done huge things.

Reti: My goodness. That's late, yeah.

Baumgarten: We'd made contact with—right away, because Dickens was so theatrical, we developed something with the help of a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education: a group of materials for teachers that included tapes and CDs and cassette tapes (we're that old) of dramatizations of sections of Dickens. And various people decided they would help us with the music that Dickens knew and that was part of his world—Gene Lewis who's now gone; Robert Fenwick, an actor; and then Kate Hawley now—she was Rickman at the time—Kate wrote the scripts, and she and Paul Whitworth and other people—and there was, again, a crossover with Shakespeare Santa Cruz. And Sheila was running Shakespeare Santa Cruz, and we had a weekend where we did Shakespeare and Dickens together for teachers, and there was back and

forth. People would regularly go to Shakespeare from the Dickens Universe. So we kept doing these kinds of things and kept giving everybody a sense of Dickens in his own time. It was a great theatrical event and was performed in the theaters even before he'd finished finish the novel sometimes. We have a record of Dickens going to see a performance—I think it was of *Oliver Twist*—before he finished writing the novel. He wrote the novel in serial parts. But the theater—whoever was putting it on had decided he knew the ending. [Laughs.]

Reti: [Laughs.] Wow!

Baumgarten: So after that, Dickens tried to control the theatrical—but by that point, he was quite famous, so he had more power to do that, rather than just to get somebody, "Oh, I'll finish Dickens' novel."

So we had that theatrical element, and once that got out, we had various people in from the theater, including Miriam Margolyes, who has come now on her own and has performed a whole series of things like that.

And we had other conferences that were the result of gathering together. So at Texas at one point there was Dramatic Dickens, where, in Texas, in Austin, they even performed a play.

Reti: Is this the Dickens Players that are performing?

Baumgarten: The Dickens Players were the ones that got the theater stuff going.

My only regret, really—well, there're two parts of the original plan that haven't been fully carried forward. I think having Miriam Margolyes is terrific. She is a world-class actress. But the Dickens Players were an ensemble group, and I would love to see versions of that again because Dickens writes ensemble theater, if you will, with fiction.

The other was that we invented something early on called the Dickens Circuit, which grew out of the fact that Ed Eigner had close relations with UC San Diego. It turns out that they were the only campus without a Dickens scholar, and at one point, they invited him to teach a Dickens class. And they sent someone from San Diego to teach a theory class at Riverside. But we kept saying that what we would do to encourage each other in research is we would teach with each other but that, since you have to pay the bookkeeper for it, rather than my teaching in exchange for somebody from UCLA, I would teach in UCLA with my colleague there, and then he would come up and teach here while I was here. And we actually did that, and Ed Eigner did some Riverside stuff for a little bit.

But it didn't take off fully. It got complicated because people had families, didn't want to go back and forth. But that was also something that the campuses were interested in: more intercampus teaching. And at one point, they invented a form called a university professor, and his or her job would be to go from campus to campus and give lectures. The European universities now do all kinds of things of that sort, but we're [at the University of California] still a bit stodgy, as you know. We could do more now with Skype if we wanted to, and online courses—

Reti: Online courses make it easier to have more of a multicampus effort.

Baumgarten: But that's the future.

Reti: I think so.

Baumgarten: As it is, right now we have the Graduate Conference, which is President's Day Weekend this year, at UCLA, and we have our weeklong, really ten days with the orientation, et cetera, gathering in Santa Cruz.

Reti: And that's the Dickens Universe.

Baumgarten: Right. And people love that. Part of the problem with the Dickens Universe is that there's so much going on that there isn't quite enough time, often, just for the important conversations that weren't scripted. But it works out. But I remember someone sitting and saying—he came, I think, from New Jersey. He said, "My whole life, I've been used to being cold in the winter and hot in the summer, and here I am in the summer in Santa Cruz and I'm cold."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: People love the climate and the possibilities, and John has this thing about "the fog is your friend. Then it won't be too warm in the middle of the day," you know. And there were various other things. We have Shakespeare Santa Cruz. We have the Cabrillo Music Festival. But at one point, in the early

years, we also had these bagpipers who were here. And the funniest thing was there would be fog in the morning. The bagpipers would be rehearsing, practicing, but they would all go far away from each other, and they'd be hidden in the fog, and you'd walk from the dining hall [and hear the bagpipes in the fog]— So, people lived together, ate together, talked about Dickens, sang songs together late at night, drank beer late at night.

Reti: And there's a dance, too, isn't there?

Baumgarten: And then there's a Victorian dance. It's all now got a shape to it that people expect and very much enjoy, including, at the end, there's the announcement of the book for the following year, and the selling of the book and so on.

We were concerned a couple of years ago when the university decided that it had contributed enough and pulled our funding. The people in the Dickens Universe stepped forward and have supported the project. And now the university is giving us a little bit, and we actually will be looking for someone in literature, who will teach nineteenth-century literature and eventually will replace John as director.

Reti: The people who come to Dickens University are supported financially in coming. Is that correct?

Baumgarten: The faculty, the graduate students—their campuses send them. And we now have thirty-five members of the consortium.

Reti: That's part of the consortium membership, that they get to come.

Baumgarten: Right. And it helps pay for an administrative structure that is necessary. We work with [UCSC] Extension and with the summer housing office. The major costs are the housing, food and lodging, registration fees help pay for the administrative costs, including the salary of the Dickens Project coordinator, the wonderful JoAnna Rottke.

Now, John knows, through his wife, that these conferences that people go to for professional reasons charge much more. But they get, then, professional benefits. Well, some people come to our program and they get professional benefits. The teachers get education credits. But he's also put together a summer school course. Students come, and they take everything, because there are discussion sections and seminars and so on, and then they meet in a class throughout the week with a faculty member. (I've taught this many times, and John has as well.) Then they write a paper, and they get summer school credit for it. This has become a favorite way for some students, who need one more course to graduate. But it's just the way in which this has developed. So, again, there's a structure of, shall I say, interlocking work.

Scientists give each other prizes—you know, the best essay and so on. We've now done something parallel. Through the help of some donors, there is an essay contest for high school students all over the country. And the student and her or his teacher, who's helped, come as a prize. At some point, we also had prizes for community college students. And there has been various kind of fundraising from the Friends of the Dickens Project that we've organized, and that's helped support visiting scholars, who aren't members of the consortium, but who are doing something that we would like to have them come and speak [about] and/or people like Miriam Margolyes, the actress. We also had, last year, Dickens' great-grandnephew and granddaughter, who came and who are themselves carrying on the Dickens traditions. So they were also supported by these kinds of prizes that we have developed.

The biggest prize would be to have somebody who would continue running the Dickens Project when John retires. I had stepped in one year when John was on sabbatical and another colleague was running things, but he needed some additional help. So I guess I'm—people ask me what my role is—I do errands.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: But, of course, I'm in there, still and go to different gatherings. We've now been part of a network of Dickens gatherings, especially around 2012, with the 200th anniversary. And different papers have been published and are

still to be published, books and so on. And then John went to the major celebration at Westminster Abbey.

Reti: This is the 200th anniversary of Dickens' birth?

Baumgarten: Right, right. And so that's fine. That was a wonderful thing, that he could go and could celebrate this occasion.

And we are now a place that—we don't have room for all the people who *want* to lecture. We've seen different generations of scholars come through. In the early years, British scholars—well, Dickens to them is something local, that they think walking down the street they might meet him or they might pop into a pub where he had a drink. That's a different relationship than anything we have. And the result was, for a while a lot of people were spending time saying, "This was the pub he drank in" and working on that.

Reti: Literary tourism.

Baumgarten: Right. And we were interested in different kinds of things. And, again, this was when the explosion of different perspectives on literary study had happened, so we worked with that much more and have had younger generations of scholars come through, working in this way. And then, of course, younger British scholars also were interested in these new perspectives.

But right from the beginning, we had a most wonderful experience. We met Philip Collins, and Philip Collins had done some of the major work on Dickens, as an English scholar who combined this sense of "Dickens is a local" and "Dickens is world literature"—so he wrote some wonderful books, and he came and visited Stanford [University], and we met him. We were invited. Stanford was part of the consortium early, because John's thesis chair was Robert [M.] Polhemus, who had been my colleague at Berkeley as a graduate student. John got invited and I got invited, and we went to hear Philip Collins read at Stanford. We met him, and we said, "You should come to the Dickens Project." He did. And he loved it. He would come every year he possibly could. Again, the Friends of the Dickens Project helped. One year he had a problem: His travel agent bought him a ticket to San Jose, Costa Rica.

Reti: [Chuckles.] That's easy to do. [Both chuckle.]

Baumgarten: But he managed. And as he got older, he gave a lecture once by videotape, by Skype. He actually left us a little legacy in his will. He kept telling people in England about us, and that we were not just silly, and not just adult education, and not just play-acting, or doing reenactments. And that was hugely important in making sure that people knew who we were. And, of course, then our going to other conferences and sponsoring other conferences with other campuses, because people wanted that.

The graduate student conference has moved around. Originally, we thought it would be in Southern California in the winter. But we've had them in all kinds of places, including in Rutgers [University] a little later than Presidents Day Weekend. So we had it over quarter break, and it snowed in New Jersey. But everybody overcame that. And the graduate students have not stopped loving it.

Reti: And they still come to the Dickens Universe and teach there as well?

Baumgarten: Right.

Reti: It's just that they present their papers at this conference.

Baumgarten: In the winter conference. And there's a great crisis because they come once, and that's it. But then they are trying desperately to figure out how to come again.

Reti: They have to get support.

Baumgarten: They have to get support, and they have to find a role. And we want to spread—so they have different roles. John has developed different roles and they come up with different ideas. And, you know, they're so creative, these graduate students, these young people! And that's great.

Reti: What would be an example of a role?

Baumgarten: Well, because there are now so many graduate students, John has two people, graduate students, whom he calls "the cruise directors."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: They're in charge of making sure that people have parties, where they talk about Dickens and everything else. This is something that requires people who have been here before. So this is the repeating, right? And different kinds of roles that he has developed. He's been very adept at it.

At one point, we had conferences after our week of Dickens, with related things. Often, the Thursday night conference we would call the swing lecture between the conference and the emphasis on the novel. So there would be this group of people who would come to just the conference Thursday, Friday and Saturday and sometimes Sunday. And they would say, "Who are all these other people who have been here, who seem to know each other and keep talking about other lectures we haven't heard?"

Reti: It was like coming in the middle of a party.

Baumgarten: Right. So then we thought about having the conference just Saturday and Sunday, but that didn't quite work. And people would stay over, or not. Then at one point we had the conference *before* our Dickens week, and

then people said, "Well, yes, but by the end of those two days of conferences, they were so intense, we were exhausted, and we still had a week to go."

Reti: [Laughs.] That's a lot!

Baumgarten: And when we had the conferences afterwards, on Thursday and Friday, people would say, "Oh, we've been here five, six, seven days already. And here were these people with clean clothes."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So we've suspended the conference and instead have these other things, like a nineteenth-century seminar, where people come during the week and just work on that. And they're not affiliated necessarily, but it's ongoing. Maybe we should go longer, but a week seems about right for these kinds of things. But then we've had many other gatherings at other times, which is a very nice thing.

At one point, when we were working on Carlyle, we would have meetings with the Carlylean editors before the Dickens Project, and they would be very focused on our editing work. But even that then became more conferences in different places, as opportunities for the editors to meet.

Reti: Do you think that this model of the Dickens Universe could be used with any other author besides Dickens?

Baumgarten: Well, I think the model could be used with other areas of study in the humanities, no question about it. But it would require a sense of collaboration. There was an effort to do Shakespeare, and there was the Shakespeare Forum. That lasted for five or six years, but it really didn't get launched in the same way. It was a multicampus research group. It wasn't launched out of Santa Cruz, but Santa Cruz was part of this. I have various thoughts about why it didn't work. It worked for five or six years, but it didn't sustain itself.

So one of my little jokes that was very useful as I would talk to the scientists who administer our world—the chancellor and so on—and say, "I think we need some funding,"—and I remember Chancellor [Robert L.] Sinsheimer, and he'd say, "What do you need funding for?" I'd say, "Well, I think it's great that you support the second-best writer in English, but you need to support the *best* writer in English." And, you know, these administrators have lists of who's the most important—number one, number two—and so they were supporting Shakespeare Santa Cruz. And I would say, "Well, Shakespeare is number two."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: And then their ears would perk up.

Reti: That gets their attention.

Baumgarten: So how do you get people to understand that it's not a zero sum game and that Shakespeare is one of Dickens' great models, that he's constantly thinking, "What would Shakespeare have done?" So there's a back and forth. It may be time for another Dickens and Shakespeare conference. When I ran things it tended to be more comparative, so we had Dickens and Film conference, and we had Dickens and [Mark] Twain conference. And the impact of Dickens on Twain came out, as a result of that conference, as it had not in Twain studies before, which is, again, the benefit of these kinds of gatherings. That's part of the effect of what we've done.

John has emphasized Victorian culture, and he's been much more centered in Victorian English culture than I, by training or by inclination. But could this model be used? Yes, I think it could, and in some ways there are little bits like it that happen.

When I came to Santa Cruz, there was one of the colleges called Methuselah College. It was there for adult education. There was all this discussion about how the workforce is going to retire at fifty; what are people going to do? But I think there's now great interest in people doing serious learning during their holidays, their vacations, or in retirement. The effect has been that many universities have actually built projects for older alumni to come and live there. Stanford has that and so does the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. These are places that have assisted living possibilities, and they're full. Ann Arbor is just thriving in that way. So I think that there is great interest in a whole series of things. It just

requires a group of people who want to collaborate: academics, administrators and graduate students who see a benefit in sharing work together.

Dickens did such a huge universe of stuff. I would say that Dickens is the train station which everything in the nineteenth century goes through. After all, he edited major journals, magazines. John would say, because of his French interest, that Dickens is the discourse that encompasses the nineteenth century. And we wouldn't disagree, but it depended whom we were talking to, whether we did the discourse or the train.

Reti: The term *discourse* is probably not going to make sense outside of academia.

Baumgarten: Or for scientists, right. But I can think of many ways in which one could do this. We actually have experimented in different times by [pairing] two novels: one by Dickens and one by a colleague. So this past summer we did *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which Dickens didn't finish, and a novel by his friend and colleague, Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone.* And that went very well. People were really able to see the benefit of comparisons, which, again, was part of what *I* used to do. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is short, and *The Moonstone* is a page turner, right? So how much can people read? But they most of them have read the novels before the week begins.

Reti: So you don't have problems with people reading less than they used to before the age of the Internet?

Baumgarten: No, they want to talk about the novel. But the key, I think, is not only people who want to collaborate with each other but people who—well, it's Ed Eigner's notion. These people know more Dickens than anybody because they've been reading and rereading him. Because these people want not only to hear other people talk about it, but they want to talk. And it has to be a structure which gives them the opportunity to participate.

So one of the things that happened is the Friends of the Dickens Project said, "Victorian culture. Dickens. We need to have tea." So there's tea! And how shall I explain it? People come from lectures and discussion groups and films, and then they all gather and we have tea. We talk. I kept saying to John, "We need more time without programming," but now it's very hard to avoid that because so many people want to speak who really have something interesting to say. But even so, people manage. But that's another thing that this model needs to take into account, that people need to be able to talk to each other.

Our Mutual Friend

Reti: Several people wanted me to ask you if you have a favorite Dickens book.

Baumgarten: Yes, I do. *Our Mutual Friend*, which we're going to study this summer, which I'll have some things to say about. It brings together many of my interests because, as I pointed out to people and wrote a little essay about, there's an episode in it where the Byronic hero and the dogged schoolteacher are

pursuing the same woman, and the Byronic hero, who's upper class, takes the schoolteacher on these mad walks through London, and he talks about doing something and taking him through Venetian thoroughfares. Dickens had been to Italy, had been to Venice, and he understood how Venetian streets were places that you could stalk people, and fool them, and there's that moment. And that's in *Our Mutual Friend*.

But the other thing about *Our Mutual Friend*—and it's something that I've written about and I'm waiting to see a publication that's part of a book—and a new essay I've been promising to write involves the other woman, not the invisible woman that we're going to see the movie of Thursday evening[9] but a woman—she and her husband bought Dickens' house on Tavistock Square in 1863 or so. You have to remember that it wasn't till just 1850, just about, that Jews were allowed to sit in Parliament and didn't have to swear on the New Testament to be allowed in. So emancipation came late. But she and her husband bought his house, and a year or so later, two years later—and Dickens has some worries he expresses in his correspondence that he's had "no problems with this Jew."

Reti: So these are Jewish people who—

Baumgarten: These were Jewish people, Eliza and James Davis. I've been working on finding out more about them. She writes him a letter. Now, Dickens

burned about 50,000 of his letters. He didn't want anybody to see them. So this is one of the longest exchanges of letters between Dickens and somebody who wasn't a close associate. And they have this back and forth, and she writes him a letter. She was part of a group of people who were creating a monument, a convalescent home for Lady Judith Montefiore. Lady Judith Montefiore was married to Moses Montefiore, who was one of the most famous Jews of England at the time, who became a kind of unofficial ambassador of Jews all over the world. He went to Syria when, in the 1840s, there was a claim that the Jews had murdered some local Christians and used their blood for matzoh, *the blood libel*, which actually is an English invention following the Romans, but that's—you know, we can have a whole history of this.

Anyway, Judith Montefiore dies, and she had accompanied her husband, Moses Montefiore—among other things, visited many, many Jewish communities. And he was quite wealthy. His Rothschild cousin had actually floated the loan that the British government used to buy out the slaveholders in the Caribbean, a very important role. And they didn't make any money on that loan. Moses Montefiore has enough funds. He stops working and becomes this unofficial ambassador of the Jews of England, as the most enlightened Jews and the most important Jewish community in the world, and he visits various countries, including Israel seven times. He builds the first area of Jerusalem which is outside the walls of

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[9]On January 30, 2014, Murray Baumgarten and John Jordan led a discussion at the Nickelodeon Theatre in Santa Cruz after a screening of the film "The Invisible Woman."

the Old City, and he builds a windmill there so that the Jews can grind grain and make a living.

Judith Montefiore dies. There's an effort to put together a fund to build a convalescent home in her honor especially for women, and Eliza Davis writes to Dickens and says, "We would like you to be on the subscription list." In other words, you look at who has given money, and Dickens and other people have, so *you'll* give money. And she writes him a wonderful letter of a very courageous and resolute woman, in which she says, among other things—this is an exchange of letters at this point—that *Oliver Twist* has Fagin in it and that he is a libel on the Jewish people.

Reti: I was going to ask you about that.

Baumgarten: And she and Dickens have a long correspondence. And the result is that in the novel he was writing, *Our Mutual Friend,* he has a character in it who is Jewish, who is, if you will, a rewriting of that problem.

Reti: Ohh! Very interesting. So her challenge changes his writing.

Baumgarten: He makes up for it. Yes. And he tells her about it, and he writes it, and they have some more correspondence. She's a very interesting woman. And it's sort of like a Carlylian heroine. Who is she? Where did she come from? Boom! She pops up.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Right. And [Librarian] Frank Gravier and I have been hunting for information about her in various ways. She was born in Jamaica because her grandfather, who was the minister, the reader, it was called, of the synagogue in Jamaica, and came from England. And she goes back to England, and she marries her cousin. Many Jews married their cousins. The problem with finding out things is they had the same last name. This doesn't help.

Reti: No. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: We've been able to trace various members of the family, but she is the most interesting person because she speaks so forthrightly to Dickens and has a back and forth with him, and then she does a critique of this new character in *Our Mutual Friend*. Her name, Riah, is connected to the Hebrew word for "friend." That's one of the words for "friend" in Hebrew. And so she and Dickens have this relationship. And she's very important, then, because the character, Riah, does a whole series of things in the novel that bring it to a more or less happy conclusion. He helps the woman that the Byronic hero and the schoolteacher are stalking, both of them, to hide with, as she says—the Jews who own the paper mill where she was hidden, where she was working, are some of the most wonderful people she knows. So there's a whole series of thing, reversals of the English Jewish stereotypes.

As a result, Dickens also revises, in his later editions of *Oliver Twist*, some of the ways in which he used "the Jew" as an epithet. So this seems to me a very wonderful connection about a new Jewish population that is now fully English, but still Jewish, and responding to Dickens. So that's one of the reasons I think *Our Mutual Friend* is so interesting.

I also think of it as a very modern book in a whole series of ways—about women's lives—it's also about people who learn to read and write and some of whom take that as a reason to spurn those who don't know how to read and write, and to be snobs, and some don't.

And it has wonderful characters. Boffin doesn't know how to read and write and was the foreman of a man who became quite wealthy being a junk man, a recycler or, as they say in England, a dustman. Boffin now comes into money, and he goes and he finds someone to read to him. Well, the guy he finds to read to him is a charlatan. He says, "I'd like you to read to me." And there's this book, and he means Gibbons' *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*]. He says, "Oh, yes, yes, history of the Russian Empire. I'll read it to you." And then they start talking, and he says—the charlatan, Silas Wegg, says, "Wait a minute. Are you talking about me reading poetry to you? Well, if you want me to read poetry to you, it'll cost you twice as much because poetry weakens the mind."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So it's a whole series of wonderful things that are going on, in a very elaborate plot, including questions about who owns the human body. And this was a legal issue in England as well, that a husband even owned the bones of his wife. And there's a taxidermist there, and he is in love with a young woman, and she doesn't want to connect with him because she says, "You're going to look at me in a professional way."

Reti: Oh, this sounds like a *great* book.

Baumgarten: It's a great book. So it's my favorite book, and it's acknowledged to be one of his greatest books. It's the last book he finished before he started *Edwin Drood* and died in the middle of it, so it's the last book he finished.

Reti: I was going to ask you about whether there are tensions between your Jewish studies perspective and your love of Dickens.

Baumgarten: Well, here you go. [laughs] I was able to bring [the topics] together—

Reti: You brought it together; it's wonderful.

Baumgarten: But, of course, there are always issues about English literature, where [Geoffrey] Chaucer has the Prioress, who tells the tale of a blood libel very, very jovially. And the most famous Jew in England is Shylock, which takes me back to the Venice world that I worked on. And then there's Fagin. I haven't

bothered with Evelyn Waugh and other contemporary folks, but what does it tell you about the history of English literature and the problem of stereotypes? And that's one of my interests, the question of stereotypes and stereotyping. And it goes on and on. Today I get various things in email. I see an article about someone who has complained in Poland that the church in the little town has a picture of a blood libel and this is an ongoing question about stereotyping.

Reti: Absolutely, yeah.

Baumgarten: And in that sense, I guess I have interests that lead me out of literary study to social science kinds of things. But then I thought, when I came here, that I was just an intellectual and I shouldn't be limited to being a victim of my training in literature but that, as an intellectual, I had to pursue these issues. So that's been a wonderful possibility for me in Santa Cruz.

Supporters of the Dickens Project

Reti: There were some people that were mentioned to me by John Jordan, and I'd like to ask you about them. So you mentioned Barbara Keller.

Baumgarten: She's one of the ongoing heads of the Friends of the Dickens Project, and she was a teacher and then a trainer of teachers. So is Trude Hoffacker. Julie Minnis is another person, and both of them have been wonderful supports for the Dickens Project and wonderful participants, and function as

members of the public who are also teachers of people. And they led—Barbara Keller in particular—the push to have Victorian tea. John has worked very closely with them in some ways.

Julie Minnis—well, I should stop for a minute more. At one point, having come back from Israel—I learned that in Israel, the Hebrew University, because it was so oriented at one point to the master's degree—classes would go for a whole year. They'd meet once a week. And I said, why can't I teach a Dickens class for a whole year? And when I did that, I decided that I would teach it in the late afternoon, when local people might also come and take it. And Julie and other people have often come and taken that class.

Reti: Because they could come after they finish teaching for the day.

Baumgarten: Exactly. And I thought of that as part of my public service, but also that they would contribute a great deal. I had one very funny year. I think I mentioned that class before, where people wouldn't get credit.

Reti: Yes, you did.

Baumgarten: And one year, Julie Minnis was the teacher of my younger daughter.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: And she regularly brought my younger daughter to the class. It took one student till the end of the year to figure out who she was because we were very careful about that. We read *Bleak House*. And in *Bleak House* there's a young woman who marries a lord—she's Lady, and he's Lord Dedlock; the very name suggests a problem. And eventually Lord Dedlock realizes what a wonderful woman she is and responds. And a student, in the course of the year, as we're reading it in monthly numbers—he kept attacking Lord Dedlock as a jerk.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: And towards the end of the year, he stood up in class and apologized to the class. [Laughter.] Right? But this is part of monthly numbers.

Reti: That's right.

Baumgarten: So it worked.

Ask me about some other people.

Reti: Okay. Herbert Furst, who brought the book fair to the Dickens Universe.

Baumgarten: Okay. Herbert was somebody from Chicago who was a book collector, and he heard about us, and he decided he'd come and sell books. Well,

he got engaged in the work, and he'd come every year, and he'd bring books, and we'd have a book auction.

Reti: How fun!

Baumgarten: Then suddenly people realized he was telling them things about books that they wanted to know. He died several years ago, and we have now an annual lecture in his honor, which mentions some things about him but is then just a regular research lecture. This is a wonderful way to honor him and his love of books. And a couple of times I was in Chicago, visiting my older daughter, and I'd meet Herbert, and once he insisted on picking me up from the airport. It was a lovely relationship.

Reti: This has really become a community.

Baumgarten: Ahh!

Reti: I got it. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Because of Dickens, right?

Reti: Because of Dickens.

Baumgarten: And that's the question: Can you have Jane Austin become a community?

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: We keep getting asked that all the time.

Reti: Interesting question, yes. Okay, Ernie Ingram?

Baumgarten: Yes. He and his wife came from Seattle, and they were among the earliest participants. He knew a great deal about Victorian culture. He was retired. Early on, he then said, "We need to help support the Dickens Project" and led that process.

We kept getting told by the development people that there were angels in the wings, but they didn't appear much. But these were foot soldiers who helped us significantly, and also helped us develop that sense of community, because people would meet each other and say, "Ernie said…" and so on. And this led to the graduate fellowship, the Anne and Jim Bay Fellowship Endowment for Victorian Literature. And they were good friends: Barbara Keller, Herbert Furst, the Ingrams.

Trude Hoffacker is someone who's been here every year, and she too has been a mainstay, again, talking about how this has changed her life. Now she's part of a community of Dickens readers.

The Dickens Project Pioneering the Use of New Technology

Reti: The other question I have related to this, is about the staff, the administrative staff that have worked with you over the years. I did get a chance to speak with Linda Rosewood Hooper—

Baumgarten: Sure.

Reti: —who spoke to me about some of the ways in which you were a pioneer in terms of using technology—

Baumgarten: [Chuckles.]

Reti: —in the early days. And she said you got her a used Mac Plus that she did the multimedia curriculum book on, and then you had her playing SimCity to test—to see whether it would be a good teaching tool. And this was in the 1980s.

Baumgarten: Right, we were trying right away to do different kinds of things, and she helped me put together the grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education while producing little portfolios of questions and texts and the cassettes of the Dickens Players and also other computer kinds of things. Linda was fabulous! I remember she would say, "When are we going to do this?" I would say, "I don't have time, so let's meet on—" I said, "But that's Christmas Day."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: But we met on Christmas Day! She was amazing in that way, and that helped launch her in her computing activity. And early on, we did do some things online with the Dickens Project. That was very early.

And we had different people. Jon [M.] Varese, who was a graduate student and then somebody who worked in computing and who has continued to do both, finished his thesis a couple of years ago and is now the head of our digital side, if you will. He worked with Linda on putting some materials from Dickens online. I kept saying, "It isn't enough just to have a name and activities; we have to have content." So they, early on, put one of the monthly numbers of *Our Mutual Friend* on. They found ways to get people to look at the illustrations. And it became then a rich body of material.

And one day, Jon gets a letter from the consul, the English consul in Turkey, who thanked us for putting materials on the Web. This is early on. "Because," he said, "Turkish students want to read Dickens. They don't have access." So we felt very justified in what we were doing and that this was money that we were spending wisely. Things are different now, but we were there at an early time, and it helped, and it helped pave the way for what we do now. And Linda was part of that, and Jon Varese. And we were encouraged by the teachers, who saw this as very valuable.

Reti: Linda told me a story about how you went to the dean of humanities, asking for a large computer. [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: Yeah!

Reti: They said, "What do you need that for?" [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Exactly!

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: "Him? Pencils!"

So one of the things that we then did—most recently JoAnna Rottke, who's been our administrator for many years—we started with someone named Doreen, who was very helpful, and Linda then came along and so on, and JoAnna has been wonderful. She has a niece, I think it was, who was a film student at San Francisco State [University] and got her to come, and they ended up putting together a whole little program, a video short on the Dickens Project, which is just wonderful.

Reti: Oh, yes. Yes, I've seen that. It's great.[10]

Baumgarten: And one of the things that we've talked about, that I've now asked John about, because my problem is I would just do these things when I was running them. Now John has committees, and they have to decide. I've been in touch with various people about online courses, and there are several people who want to have such. "But at least," I said, "why don't we have a little module of online discussions of Dickens that could be used in an online course or in just a regular course?" And the executive committee will now consider that.

One of the people who has been talking with me about it is an Australian scholar, a young scholar named Sascha Morrell, and she says that they teach online courses in Australia all the time because people are so scattered geographically. She had some very good thoughts about what an online course is. And, as you know, I did, with Peter Kenez, the first online course offered through the campus, for Coursera, on the Holocaust.

Reti: Next time, I definitely want to talk about that Holocaust course. But I was just thinking that's the perfect connection because you've already been doing this, and why not apply it to Dickens as well?

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[10] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJgV87yGBSs

Baumgarten: Sure. Well, and the difference here is that it would require other people doing the collaboration and working on this, but that's fine. I'm happy to be someone who would initiate this and that other people would be involved and take it over, if necessary, just as I was glad to initiate the Carlyle material and the editing and so delighted that Chris could take it over. I was, for a brief period, an acting graduate dean and I thought that the whole point about administration was to make sure that you got other people ready to do it and to take it over, rather than thinking it was yours!

Reti: Right. You're irreplaceable.

John Jordan

Baumgarten: Right. So that was my sense, and I was so delighted when John could take over the Dickens Project. People ask me why, and I say after a while I got told that "Dickens has to have parties." And I said, "Okay, so John should run it, and now we'll have parties."

Reti: Because that's not your thing? [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: Especially Christmas parties.

Reti: [Laughs.] Right. Yes, of course.

Baumgarten: He's been wonderful.

Reti: You two have had quite a long friendship and collaboration.

Baumgarten: Yes.

Reti: A collaborative friendship.

Baumgarten: We knew each other. We were working in the same field, but he was at a different part of the campus, and then [Chancellor Robert] Sinsheimer reorganized the campus. So I left Stevenson, and we both went to Kresge [College]. And John and I were able to do the Dickens Project together.

Reti: So something good came out of reorganization. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Oh, yes. [laughs] But at one point, when Jewish studies came along, I actually tried to get a college to sponsor it rather than a department, but—you know. I keep thinking the colleges, as cultivators of interdisciplinary synergy—we'll see. [Claps his hands.]

Reti: Yeah. Well, let's talk about that. We'll circle back to the colleges.

Baumgarten: Good. That's a future interview.

Reti: Okay. So I'm going to stop this for today.

More on Jewish Life on the Early UCSC Campus

Reti: Today is February 26th, 2014. This is Irene Reti, and I'm here with Murray Baumgarten for the third interview of Murray's oral history. It's a rainy day at McHenry Library, on the fourth floor. Not raining inside, but we're on the fourth floor. [Chuckles.] And so we're going to start by talking today, Murray, with going back to the early years of UCSC. I was told by a fellow colleague of mine here at the University Library, Lee Jaffe, that you helped organize a Seder the very first year of the campus? Do you remember that?

Baumgarten: I'm not sure that the notion of organizing a Seder was a landmark, but we tried to have a Seder every year, two of them. I know our family did. There were probably a couple of students by then involved as well. We had at that point one child, and what we did besides that—since there was no Jewish student organization, we had a Shabbat morning Torah study at our house. Students would come by, and we'd read passages, read the Torah portion and talk about it, and that got further developed when we lived on campus. I think it was '68, '69. I'm not sure exactly when we lived on campus. We were the first occupants of that little House 1, a house in Stevenson. There's that little house next to it. I was a preceptor, a resident preceptor. Our younger daughter was born there in 1969, so that's how I know the date. And since we were on campus, it was much easier for students to come. We had all kinds of Torah study, mostly on Shabbat.

I don't remember beyond that, but we have been involved in different Seders on the campus, including Hillel Seders. But we were effectively involved. But one of the effects of that was that some students right away came and got interested in Jewish studies. And that led to bringing Mishael Caspi and his wife, Gila Caspi, to UCSC and they were major factors in developing Jewish studies here.

The Online Version of the Holocaust Course

And then, when David Kaun was provost, he had a conference on the liberation of Auschwitz and that led to the Holocaust course that Peter [Kenez] and I have been teaching ever since. It was a conference which we thought just very few people would come to, but lots of people did, so there was obviously interest. After ModSoc was suspended or closed, Peter and I continued to teach the class, but now it's two classes. The Registrar lists it as a course in history and a course in literature, and the two classes meet at the same time, in the same place [chuckles], and some people take it in history and some in literature. Now, this has now come to an end because history is redoing its curriculum, and Peter has retired. So next year it'll only be a literature course, but Peter is going to teach in it. It'll be the same course. And then, of course, as you know, we ended up teaching it on Coursera.

Reti: So tell me about that.

Baumgarten: Well, Ira Pohl, who's a friend of both Peter and myself, knows the people of Coursera, from Stanford [University], when they were graduate students there in computer science. And he thought that this would be a great course for them. So they asked for it. We had arranged to have the Holocaust course videotaped because it was a legacy course. So what we did was we took the hour-and-a-half tapes, which are still available and can be seen, and divided them into what I call arias and then inserted questions and workshop ideas and other kinds of things. I did this with a student who had worked for us as a TA twice, three times before in literature, Shawna Vesco, and she was wonderful about it. We got funding for her to be the moderator of the Coursera course, and she played an important role in monitoring and helping articulate things, especially in the discussion forum, and helping people go through the process.

Now we have to think about redoing certain parts of that material again. For example, when the videotapes were taken, if Peter showed a map, they didn't take a picture of the map. If I was quoting from a text, I would project it on the board, but they didn't photograph that. So we think that there's more to do. And one of the effects of the Coursera course—there were three different groups on Facebook organized: one, international, led by a Brazilian; one in India; one that was conducted in Spanish. At least two students took it in Greek. This is how they discussed it. And, of course, there was a very active discussion forum in English. This is in addition to watching the videotapes. So they could talk about it, and this was part of why we wanted—why *I* wanted to do Coursera, because it allowed people to be much more active in their learning. It brings the promise

that university education will be about student learning, not about a teacher at the podium. So a lot of that happened.

Reti: So you think that in the online version there's more of an opportunity to focus on the students' learning rather than on the professor.

Baumgarten: Because the professor's videotaped already, and it's just like reading a book. And, you know, like reading a book, you have different points of view, and you need to work that through and argue it and so on. There are different problems. There were written assignments, and they were peer reviewed, and it always seems to be that there are some trolls taking the class, who want to disrupt it.

Reti: [Sighs.]

Baumgarten: What happened was that Shawna was very good about it, and we talked about removing the questions the trolls had put up. Right away, somebody said, "What do we know about the Jews? Let's discuss this." So the students, themselves, voted it down. So that, in itself, is part of what I think education is about, knowing—

Reti: They voted down what?

Baumgarten: They voted that this was not a question that should be discussed. So that was a very good thing.

Reti: Interesting.

Baumgarten: And so I'm very pleased that we're talking now about carrying it forward again. It will involve a significant amount of money to redo the videotaping, in parts, and also to hire another moderator and so on. I hope it all works.

Reti: Is this UCSC's first online course?

Baumgarten: It was the first one UCSC's first MOOC—massive open online course, it's called.

Reti: And there was quite a bit of controversy in the Academic Senate about this online course being offered.

Baumgarten: Right, but also from, in particular, the [UC] Santa Cruz Faculty Association and Bob Meister, who were concerned that MOOCs were going to—and many people have had this concern—were going to take over and destroy faculty positions. Well, there's very little evidence that that's really happening, because it's such a different format, but there is very good evidence that there's more student engagement. Of course, this was on the basis of outreach—something we'd never done before—in terms of fifty-nine countries.

Reti: That's remarkable. I can certainly see where the study of the Holocaust, with that potential for international engagement, is an excellent topic for an online course.

Baumgarten: And so in some ways, it fits with the university's call for public service. Many people say it's like publishing a book rather than teaching a class in the usual way. It does—and this, of course, the fear—it does have the potential to change what university education is about, but, of course, Santa Cruz had some of that as part of its mission from the beginning, to make this a place where student learning was central, not just teacher presentation. So we'll see where that all goes.

So that was, I thought, a very nice thing to do, and Peter did as well. We've just come back from an event in the city that the campus sponsored, where we talked about this with our dean and a bunch of alumni and other folks, as part of the getting the word out. So, yes, the Holocaust course is scheduled for next winter, as a literature course, with Peter teaching in it with me, and we'll see how that goes. I mean, it's always had sections.

Reti: Right.

Baumgarten: And, of course, in the online course there are no sections.

Reti: So you're going to continue to teach the course on campus.

Baumgarten: Right. At least next year.

Reti: And are there any other faculty who might be helping with that course over time, or you're not at that point yet?

The Anne Neufeld-Levin Holocaust Endowed Chair

Baumgarten: For fifteen years, Peter and I held the Neufeld-Levin Chair, and now Nathaniel [Deutsch] has that chair. Bruce Thompson teaches a course on *Film and the Holocaust*, and it's very successful, so there is significant presence on the campus. And that, of course, it was one of the ways in which the Jewish studies program got traction, we might say, and people recognized it, although Jewish studies is much larger than that. But it was an important aspect of it.

Reti: So tell me about the Neufeld-Levin Chair and how that came to be.

Baumgarten: Well, I knew Anne Neufeld-Levin and Paul Levin through the synagogue, and she mentioned that her parents had this connection and so on and so forth, and she would ask me questions like, "How do you get things started?" So I said to her, "What we should do is we should have a lecture series." So they first founded it as a lecture series in Stevenson, and now Stevenson still has a lecture on the Holocaust. It's called the Neufeld-Levin Holocaust Lecture.

And then she said, "Well, maybe people will contribute," and I said, "Well, you know, you could make an endowed chair." So then she went to the chancellor, and she found $250,000, and it became an endowed chair. She would say, "It's on the cheap. I got a cheap price." But now it's increased a little bit, and we hope it will be added to, and it makes a huge difference because the money from that has been used to sponsor other courses in Jewish studies and the Holocaust. Bruce Thompson's course on *Film and the Holocaust* is paid for by that endowed chair, et cetera.

The other thing it made possible was something that started when we had our Holocaust course. We knew that we wanted it to have a broader set of speakers than just Peter and me, so we got funding from [Leopold "Poldek"] Paul Pfefferberg from *Schindler's List*, and what's called the 1939 Club in Los Angeles, this group of survivors, and they helped us bring various speakers right away. And what we did in the course was that we would have a two- and three-day conference in the middle of the course, that everybody would come to.

Well, it gradually turned into a series of speakers, but it made a huge difference because we've been able to get, for example, our own graduate, James Young, who is a world authority, to come, and he's been coming every year. The Neufeld-Levin Chair paid for him and other people, and then it paid for the videotaping, et cetera. So it's been a very special moment for the campus and perhaps an opening to many more endowed chairs and activities of this kind.

Reti: Are there other universities in the United States or elsewhere that have a course like this?

Baumgarten: Yes, there are many, many courses in the Holocaust. But when we started, there were almost none. And now people who teach the Holocaust go and get graduate degrees in it.

Reti: But that wasn't the case when the course started.

Baumgarten: No, there was no such thing. So there are a whole series of things that we started, if you will, out of our understanding of where the field was and what was appropriate. And a very important thing was ModSoc, Modern Society and Social Thought, as a major. It allowed us to do interdisciplinary work and to bring history and literature in dialogue with each other and to work together.

Reti: I had no idea that there was a connection between the Holocaust course and Modern Society and Social Thought. That's really important to document.

Baumgarten: And nowadays, people say that Peter and I are so unusual in working together, we respect each other, and on the side they whisper we're the only comedy team doing a Holocaust course.

Reti: You got to have some humor if you teach that subject.

Baumgarten: Right.

Reti: Yeah. But you both have personal experience, having been refugees from the Holocaust, which is probably, at this point, more unusual in professors who teach the Holocaust.

Baumgarten: Right. But we always try to bring someone who went through one of the camps. Dora Sorrell has been doing that, and she's been wonderful, and I hope she'll continue for many years.

Reti: So you have been part of the creation of this field of Holocaust studies.

Baumgarten: Yes, a bit. And we've both published. Now Peter has come out with a book called *The Coming of the Holocaust*, which are the lectures, basically, with revisions. Peter and I had talked about doing it as a book together, where he would do the history and I would do the literature, as we do in the course, so I said, "So, please, Peter, send me the chapter." So he would write it, and then I'd start working on it. He'd say, "Stop. I've just revised it."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: And then it turned out nobody wanted to publish a book in two voices. So I'll see where my version of stuff and material I published in lots of essays, whether they fit together and so on. And that's part of my agenda: Will it make a little book in the future?

Leviathan

Reti: Great. Let's backtrack a bit to *Leviathan*, the newspaper.

Baumgarten: Well, Mishael [Caspi] was really the key figure in that. The students got together, and he said, "You need to have a journal." This was a time when the students were full of initiative, and there were all kinds of possibilities available, so they got some funding from one of the colleges or two of the colleges—I don't remember—and they started it. Now Jewish studies helps to pay for some of it, and it's gotten various grants and so on, and there's a whole tradition of students working in it and passing it on to the next group. It's one of the oldest, if not the very oldest continuously published Jewish student magazine or newspaper in the United States. Mishael, for years, was the adviser, and I would help bring people in to write for it and so on. So it continued, and that's part of his legacy. He was wonderful about working with the students on it.

Reti: It's a great newspaper. I've been reading it since I was a student here.

Baumgarten: There you go!

Reti: I'm happy that it's still going. I think they just had maybe their fortieth anniversary?

Baumgarten: We had an anniversary, yes.

Reti: We had a student visiting Special Collections looking at all the issues—

Baumgarten: Right, and we digitized them, and then we had a little conference during the Alumni Weekend, when all kinds of people came to celebrate it.

Reti: Okay. We'll have to footnote that, for sure. Great.[11]

Baumgarten: [Chuckles.]

Joseph Silverman

Reti: And then on Joe Silverman. I'm very sad that we never interviewed Joe Silverman at Regional History, in the early days.

Baumgarten: Well, he had been at UCLA for many years and had worked with various people. He was in the process of collecting the *Romancero*, the Sephardic *Romancero*, with two other people, Samuel [H.] Armistead, who had been teaching at Davis and has just died, and Joseph Katz, a musicologist. They got a huge grant from NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] to collect material from all over the world for this. He came from UCLA to Santa Cruz. He felt that in a new place he would have a little more, let's say, elbow room, a little chance to change, to move things around.

He helped to develop the Spanish literature program—Hispanic literature and so on. And his wife, June, was very important in this, in various ways. And he, as a member of literature, got interested in participating in Jewish studies. He had all kinds of people that he knew at UCLA who were involved, but he felt that they were holding him at arm's length, maybe, or waiting for him to say, "Count me in."

Well, here, we asked him in. He participated and that helped get Jewish studies rolling. So with Joe Silverman, Mishael Caspi and myself—there was a real interest. He was a wonderful friend and colleague, but a very strict teacher in some ways, but students really enjoyed that about him. If you did your homework and you were prepared, there were great treasures to be learned from him.

His interest in the Golden Age of Spanish culture was all about how the Jews and the Moslems and the Christians were able to live together, more or less, and develop a cultural mix that was hugely important. And that was part of what he talked about, and the ways in which writers like Lope de Vega understood the attacks on the Jews. He did major work of this kind in revealing these substrata of these texts as well as the *Romancero*. It's now available online. A student of Samuel Armistead, who's now at the University of Illinois, Bruce Rosenstock,

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[11]At UCSC's Alumni Weekend on April 28, 2013, *Leviathan Jewish Journal* celebrated its 40th anniversary. See http://news.ucsc.edu/2013/02/leviathan-student-magazine-turns-40.html

eventually worked with Sam Armistead and put it online and managed it, so it's now available on the Internet.

Reti: Fabulous. We'll make sure to footnote that, too.[12]

Baumgarten: Right. And he was a great helper, and this is part of Joe's legacy. When Joe died, we then looked for someone who would work in that area, but we didn't find anyone immediately, so we have instead someone who does different kinds of things in Spanish culture. But that's one of the things we have missed. And for a bit, Paula Daccarett, a historian who's been teaching for us part time, has taken up some of that interest, but not at the level of Joe and Joe's work in Peninsular Spanish.

Sheila Baumgarten

Now, one of the things I should say is that for many of these projects—my wife Sheila was very instrumental in both helping them along in the social relations that got people talking and also with the students. She was very welcoming, and she, herself, was at one point a graduate student briefly here, in sociology. We didn't have a graduate program yet, but she did a little bit and taught a little bit, and then went on to study urban planning in San Jose, and then went on into arts administration. But her interest in sociology paralleled mine, and when I came to

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[12]For The Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews see http://www.sephardifolklit.org/

Stevenson College, Stevenson had a sociological emphasis. Everybody was interested in the sociology, so there was a great deal of stuff that Sheila and I talked about. I learned a great deal about urban culture from her and through her. I am indebted as a professional to what she was doing, some of which I learned, so to speak, by osmosis and some of which I pursued in more standard ways, and which we continue still to talk about and work with. And she was someone who kept saying, "It isn't just a program in literature that you're teaching. You're an intellectual, and we need to develop these students as intellectuals, in a broader sense," and that was something people were talking about and thinking about at the time as something that Santa Cruz could do and that the humanities was particularly well poised to do. A little of that has gone away as people have become more departmental rather than collegial, but maybe this idea will come back.

Reti: So you see Modern Society and Social Thought as one of the places where that cultivation of the intellectual was emphasized.

Baumgarten: Right, that interdisciplinary approach. And it coincided with the invention of *The New York Review of Books* and a whole series of things of that sort. And then there was, of course, the student draft that kept the students engaged and talking very seriously about their life choices. Students don't have this kind of problem anymore because we have a volunteer army.

Reti: That was a big part of the student experience in those years, a whole generation.

Baumgarten: Mm-hm. So those were parts of the early years that have continued. And I was concerned that my department wouldn't be as interested in the Holocaust course, but that's not been the case. History, for a long time, honored it as well. But now, of course, they're going through a revision, and they have Nathaniel Deutsch as a faculty member, and he continues to teach the Holocaust.

The New Jewish Studies Major at UCSC

Reti: Yes. So let's segue from that into Jewish studies, the next incarnation of Jewish studies years after religious studies was closed down. I was thinking about what you were saying about the interdisciplinary perspective and about cultivating a deep intellectual understanding across disciplines. I was reading your essay on the Koret Foundation about the argument for why we need Jewish studies, as a way of understanding that "Jewish tradition, history and culture have profoundly altered the course of the modern world."[13] And then you get into talking about physics and medicine. I'd be interested in hearing more about

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[13] See Professor Murray Baumgarten, "Jewish Studies: Attesting to the Importance of the Jewish Imagination in Shaping the Modern World," Koret Foundation, *Perspectives*, Fall 2006 http://koret.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/perspectives_fall_06.pdf

your thoughts about the importance of Jewish studies at Santa Cruz and your vision for the program.

Baumgarten: Well, I was quite upset by the fact that [when] religious studies was closed, Jewish studies was closed, and Mishael [Caspi] never found a niche on the campus. He eventually retired and went to Bates College, where they were overjoyed with him and made him a full professor, et cetera, and he published many books.

But student interest continued, and from the early years—partly it was Mishael's contacts—the San Francisco Jewish Federation had been interested in what we were doing. They then brokered a grant from the Helen Diller Family Foundation], and that helped get Jewish studies started again, and then the Koret Foundation continued to support Jewish studies, and then we have the Gold Foundation that has continued to support us.

It's a little bit of a scramble to keep trying to get grants. Nathaniel thought that my students would like to help, so he invented the notion of the Baumgarten Chair, which has come along very nicely. And, at the same time, we could use another $3 million, and then it would be a regular, full FTE [full time equivalent], but there is also now in the works a position in Jewish studies which will be used as I retire. I think it will go out for call, if it hasn't yet, shortly. It's in the pipeline.

But it became clear that the whole question about the sources of Western culture have changed, and rather than thinking about the Romans only, that once you think about the sources of Western culture, you've got the Greeks and the Jews, and that's been something that's been cooking for a while, at least since the Renaissance, and they both come out of that classical world. And then the Jews get put into Diaspora, into exile, and that also becomes part of the history of Western culture, and the Romans in particular make the Jews "the others" when the Romans become Christianized. So there's a whole history of thinking about these kinds of things.

I kept thinking about how small we were [at UCSC in the earlier days] and that, as a public university, we needed eighteen or nineteen thousand people to be able to do things, and that's what we are now. I kept saying, "We need to grow as a public university," and people would say, "You want to ruin the ecology of Santa Cruz?"

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: I'd say, "Yes."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: And I don't think we have. I think we've enhanced it. We now have a significant-size student body. And, though the student body is no longer

so heavily Jewish because it's grown significantly in all kinds of ways, we still have the largest percentage of Jewish students among the campuses, especially in Northern California. We are the first campus in Northern California, among the UCs, to have a major. And we have as many students in our major as UCLA does.

Reti: What do you think draws Jewish students to UCSC?

Baumgarten: There's a lot of history involved here. The campus recruited in the cities and they were interested in the pioneering group [of students at UCSC], and they wanted to leave Los Angeles [laughs]—all of those kinds of things. Now there's just real interest. And it's just another academic program, but it's seen as a good one. A lot of students take our classes because there's the ethnic studies requirement. So that's been one way to fulfill it. I have heard that students here think that the courses are well taught and they prefer these to other ways of satisfying the requirement. And there's now a program that's going to come into place called Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, not a department of ethnic studies but just a program. And it may take more students. They may go do their ethnic studies in those courses.

Reti: Is Jewish studies going to be involved with that program at all?

Baumgarten: I don't know how it's going to work out. They're just in the process of thinking it through. It turns out there are lots of courses on campus

that do critical race and ethnic studies, as well as Jewish studies. And it's not even a matter of producing more courses; it's a matter of organizing them into some kind of coherence. I think that's where Jewish studies has another advantage because we're seen as being part of a more or less coherent program.

Reti: You've also taken an international approach, encompassing Latin American Jewish studies and Jewish experience in Asia.

Baumgarten: Well, right from the beginning we thought of it as a program where Jews all over the world should be looked at in terms of national differences and the relations of Jews—but it also grows out of what we did in the Holocaust course, where we look at how, country by country, Jews were treated, and that's another indication.

Now, one of the things that makes us different from other Jewish studies programs is that other Jewish studies programs often have a normative view of what the great achievements of Judaism are, and mostly in modern times they stick with, shall I say, German and Eastern European Jewish culture. By looking at it internationally, we have a much broader reach. There's more interesting stuff going on, including in the United States. We're not making judgments or being normative. We have this great course that I helped to encourage Avi Tchamni to do and, before him, Francesco Spagnolo, who was teaching music for us, called *The Music of the Jews from the Lands of Islam*. That's a hugely interesting thing.

Reti: Fascinating.

Baumgarten: And that's not what one thinks of when one thinks of the classic stuff in Jewish culture. But I have an interest in music, and music is often forgotten in the arts. People do visual and everything else. One of the things that I'm interested in, besides, is dance and choreography. When I was editing *Judaism: A Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, a friend wrote a wonderful piece about Jewish choreographers. There have been many, many of them in the history of modern dance, Anna Sokolow, for example, comes to mind. But there are just lots. And they've made a major contribution. But it tends to get forgotten. Do you know [Jerome] "Jerry" Robbins and—you know, all of that. And then there's *West Side Story*.

Reti: True.

Baumgarten: And the whole Jewish musical. And, of course, *Fiddler on the Roof*. [Both chuckle.] Of which we now have the fiftieth anniversary, and there have been celebrations. But I've tried to be, I don't know—one thing leads to another, and I've not been afraid to pursue it, in part with the encouragement of foundations, but also the personal encouragement of Sheila, who says, "Yes, this is important. You should go ahead and do it."

Reti: What kinds of tensions or interplays do you see between the fields of Holocaust studies and Jewish studies?

Baumgarten: In many places, Holocaust studies has all the glamour, so people say that's the only thing students want to study. Well, it's such a huge moment, a rupture, a watershed in Western history. And to have the Jews be at the center of it is something that brings attention to this. It's also a way of studying what World War II really was about. And, as a friend has said, as long as we study about World War II, there won't be a World War III, right? At least that's the hope.

So for a long time, there were great arguments that you shouldn't have so much emphasis on the Holocaust, but now I think people have just accepted it as part of the curriculum. But Holocaust studies are now also outside of Jewish studies and have morphed into genocide studies. And that's been, again, a recent phenomenon since we've started to teach it. There was an interest in it right from the beginning, but now we have so many more genocides to [study].

Reti: Right, and there's that whole argument about exceptionalism, the idea that the Holocaust was an absolutely unique genocide.

Baumgarten: Right. [And] it seems to me—American exceptionalism, the notion that America and the United States is exceptional, is different—all of these kinds of things, it seems to me, are appropriate to what a university should be looking at and communicating to its audience. So I think that this is a healthy thing. It often comes down to resources. In a perfect world there'd be resources for both. You know, who allocates resources and on what basis. There are political issues.

One of the things I did when I was working to have the Dickens Project come into being was I'd go around and talk to people, and they were busy thinking about this and that, and they would say, "Well, how good is Dickens?" Well, when I was in graduate school, Dickens was thought of as the great entertainer. I would say things like, "Well he's the best writer in English." And they'd say, "Shakespeare?" I'd say, "He's number two."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Of course, this is silliness, but I know and you know that many, many people have lists of who are the most important faculty members, what are the most important departments, and they regularly chart them.

Reti: Right.

Baumgarten: Right? And they say, "Well, it isn't just which department brings in the most money. It's which department gets the most publicity, or— So this was a way of inserting, with a little irony and a little humor, that whole question and getting a place for Dickens. And the argument for Koret—the Koret argument that you read is also a way of saying that you need Jewish studies, and that no university worth its weight doesn't have Shakespeare and Dickens.

Reti: Right, and that this is not just about some kind of identity politics, where the Jews go off to study themselves and there's no intellectual reason for anyone else to be interested, or for Jews to think in a broader context.

Baumgarten: Right. And most of the students in the classes are not Jewish.

Reti: Interesting.

Baumgarten: So they benefit in new ways. In fact, last quarter, I had a very bright psychology student. She was a transfer student in the fall. This was her first quarter in Santa Cruz. She came from Redwood City. Almost through the course, she said, "You know, I never met any Jews before." She said, "I lived in a Catholic"—and then she said "*shtetl.*"

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So that's also part of what university education is about, and this is preparation for a lot of things.

Reti: I've also had discussions with people who have said that far too much of American Jewish identity is based upon the Holocaust.

Baumgarten: Well, the argument is the Holocaust and Israel, and the unspoken issue is, "And they don't go to the synagogue." Well, you know, people have argued that Judaism has changed over time, many, many times, and there have

been shifts and so on. But one of the things that's very interesting is how a new generation has become much more interested in ritual and ritual practice and the history of ritual and in reading the classic texts.

Again, I don't think it's just because people have said, "Oh, you shouldn't do this. You should do that." I don't think that it's because of having guilt instilled in them. It's rather to understand that Judaism is a very important civilization. The history of this civilization has many pathways and they were all very important. People are exploring different kinds of them.

I was [recently] in Miami at a conference. I went to the synagogue, and people were saying Kaddish at the end, as you do, in honor of those who had died, and the rabbi—you read the list of people, and the rabbi stood up and he said, "Sid Caesar [the comedian]." He had just died, so people were saying Kaddish. I stood up and said Kaddish for Sid Caesar. There seems to me an important aspect of Jewish culture and Jewish civilization. We have a course in Jewish comedy. There are many places, including Johns Hopkins [University], that have courses in Jewish humor and Jewish comedy, just as there are places that have courses in American humor. So this is part of seeing that we're part of a very old—well, the Chinese think the Jews and the Chinese are the oldest cultures. I'm not going to argue that.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: [It's a] different way of responding to the world that is still very, very engaging and attractive to people, and they want to study the past and think about it as we head to the future.

Reti: It's very exciting that this is now a major at UCSC.

Baumgarten: I think so. And that it continues, and I'm hoping that it will develop into a department, if need be. At one point, when I was trying to think about where it should be, I offered it to a college, but by then the colleges were no longer running programs.

Reti: Having majors, right.

Baumgarten: But who knows? Things might change again.

Reti: So right now it's part of the history department?

Baumgarten: Yes, history administers it. For a while, for about six years, it was administered by literature. Now it's administered by history. It might switch again, or it might go on to something else.

Editing *Judaism*

Reti: Right. These things are organic, have their own trajectory. Well, let's move on to the journal, *Judaism*, that you edited from 1994 to 2006, which is a long time.

Baumgarten: It was twelve years. I was the first person to have anything to do with the editorial side of that journal, west of the Hudson [River].

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: It was just sort of a surprise. I had been writing for various journals. The American Jewish Congress also published a magazine called *Congress Monthly*, and I'd done a couple of essays and reviews, and I got asked, would I edit *Judaism*? I knew the founder of the journal, Rabbi [Robert] Gordis. When I was a kid, I met him, and he was a rabbi in Far Rockaway, and then, in one of the ironies later on, I met the grandson, who lives in Israel. And I got asked, and I thought about it. I remember I went to the then-dean, Gary Lease, who had helped to found and dissolve religious studies. I said I was there to talk to him about it, and I remember Gary covered his mouth. He really didn't know what I was going to ask, and he was trying to keep a poker face.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: He covered his face a little bit, his mouth. And I said that I'd been asked to be the editor of *Judaism*, and I remember Gary saying, "Oh, that's heavy!" And he meant by that, that it was serious. I got some help. Zoe Sodja was then part of a group that was editing and publishing journals and books and so on.

Reti: Yeah, she's fantastic.

Baumgarten: She and I worked together very well. And we made mistakes. We would have to pick a color for the cover, and once we picked the color that looked good on the computer but was yellow and you couldn't read the titles, but except for a few things like that— And right away, I introduced—because [we were close to] "Silicon Valley," I introduced that rather than transliteration, we could have Hebrew in the text, itself. I had that interest as a Hebrew scholar. So she was able to figure out how to put Hebrew words—

Reti: This is in the somewhat earlier days of computer typesetting.

Baumgarten: Right. And we worked very well together on that. I was sort of like the Ancient Mariner. I'd meet somebody on the street, and I'd say, "You should write an article."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Well, it turned out, there were all kinds of people who wanted to write articles for me, and a lot of my job was translating the articles that came in from English into English, because they were written by people who had become departmental, disciplinary and who had all the shortcuts and acronyms, and I'd get them to write for a more general intellectual public.

And, again, it was my work with Dickens, who says that nothing is too complicated or too difficult for people if it's properly explained. He was a real democrat. Me too. So I worked on getting people to do that. I'd get all kinds of things sent in over the transom, and I worked hard at it. I got some pay from the American Jewish Congress for it, and I would try to go to New York to meet them twice a year, and that was a good thing.

And I worked very closely with someone who had been the managing editor of *Judaism* off and on, named Maier Deshell, and he still works in Jewish publishing and Jewish culture, and he's part of a little group. He's a little bit older than I am. And he, like the American Jewish Congress, which is now basically closed except for a little bit of stuff—it was a world in which everybody had secretaries, and the secretaries were crucial. Here we were—Zoe and I working together, and it was not a matter of a secretary. And, again, that was part of the computer revolution. So it was a very different culture.

Reti: Did you have graduate student help or undergraduates involved with the journal?

Baumgarten: They were involved, but they didn't help me, in that sense. It was Zoe and Murray.

Reti: There was nobody doing administrative support.

Baumgarten: I immediately brought new colleagues into the editorial board and they wrote reviews and essays for the journal. But they didn't do administration. I was working with [the] publisher and so on and so forth. Then it turned out that a classmate of mine from high school, who was the son of a survivor—had been, before my time, the publisher of *Judaism* for the American Jewish Congress but then they switched to a different publisher, before I got involved. And I only did certain things with the publishing side. I knew that I didn't have enough standing to be able to change a lot of things, but I published four issues a year and did a whole bunch of things. I opened it up to new people, including a couple of undergraduates, who wrote things, and all kinds of new poets and all kinds of well-published other people, including Robert Alter. I'd go to conferences, and I'd collect papers from major figures, as well as people who were on the way up, and people who had never imagined they would [write] for *Judaism*. So a friend of mine, a philosopher, Noam Cook, ended up writing about what it means to read in Genesis, the whole question about, when God creates the human being, "You shall rule over them" and what that means in terms of the Hebrew text and in terms of stewardship and—

Reti: Ruling over nature?

Baumgarten: Right, an environmental rereading of that whole section, as a philosopher. So all kinds of people wrote for it, and it made it more lively. When I took it over, it was a journal that a lot of rabbis were sending their sermons to, to get published. And they were sermons, which have a place. They're very

important. I think sermons have now changed over the course of time. So they were old-fashioned sermons, if you will.

So I worked hard at it, and I enjoyed part of it and suffered and struggled, and my wife was very supportive. Then I got this friend, Joanna Harris, to write this article about Jewish women and dance, modern dance and how important that was. People still write me and ask me for a copy of that.

Reti: Yes, that's not a topic there's much published about.

Baumgarten: Right. And then at one point the American Jewish Congress was going through major changes. I basically thought that if they had somebody near them—it's a New York operation—they also wanted to move to Washington to be near policy, influential place—it might do better. So eventually I was tired of it, so after twelve years I passed it over.

And the person who took it over—I gave him materials for the next issue or so, and that was all that got published. They basically stopped doing the work at that point. There were thoughts about turning into a web-based publication, but nothing has ever happened.

The way it worked was libraries all over the world got copies. They subscribed because it was a major journal. And if you belonged to the American Jewish Congress, you got this journal. Stephen [S.] Wise was the founder of the

American Jewish Congress, and he was part of the Eastern European Jewish cultural movement in New York. The American Jewish Committee was founded by German Jews, and that's continued to be a very different— We were talking about Israel Zangwill. He was very important with Stephen Wise and so on. So I did that.

I kept teaching, and doing all those other things.

Reti: Okay. I was just thinking about all the things you do, and it inspired me to ask you: How do you find the energy to be involved in so many different projects?

Baumgarten: Well, some of them are just, one follows, tumbles out of another—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: —partly, and partly I have these interests—and I think I mentioned that I was concerned that I would have two intellectual careers.

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: And I tried to work in both, and tried to keep them going. But then I also had the sense at a certain point that I shouldn't run the Dickens Project any more, and John [O.] Jordan was very happy to take it over, and he's carried it to

new heights and achievement, and it was just right. But I've also had the thought that one needs people right away that you can pass things on to.

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: So I'm so pleased that Nathaniel is here.

But I've been very happy with all of those kinds of possibilities. And just as the Dickens Project didn't grow out of just Murray, so Jewish studies had participants and colleagues, including Margaret Brose, whose father did this wonderful menorah that hangs in Temple Beth El. And that was our logo for a while in the Jewish studies newsletter. Her father was a sculptor who did these kinds of things, and he donated his art books to the Morris Brose Jewish Art Fund [in the library].

So, again, I would think about this and say, well, we're getting to be a regular, mature university because we have these kinds of things. And I'd been in Columbia, and I'd been at Berkeley, and I remember going to look something up at Northwestern [University] and asking something about—it was a nineteenth-century book, and they said, "Yes, we've been around a long time. We have nineteenth-century books."

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: That's great. I didn't expect that UC Santa Cruz would buy nineteenth-century books. But then, on the other hand, we were given a [Thomas] Carlyle collection when I was here, right for my work, with my work. And so I saw that there were opportunities here. That was good. And I thought, you know, opportunities—one shouldn't let them all slip away.

Venice Center for International Jewish Studies

Reti: Right. So let's talk about your work with the Venice Center for International Jewish Studies.

Baumgarten: Well, that's a nonprofit which we founded in Venice and in the United States. There're actually two of them. One is an Italian *fondazione*, which has the same name in Italian, and then there's the American one. And one of the ironies, you see, is that if you give money to an Italian foundation from the United States, the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] says, "That's very nice, but we're not giving you credit for it." But if you give money to the Venice Center, it's a tax deduction. So that's part of it.

But it grew out of Margaret Brose's work. She was the director of the Education Abroad program in Italy, and she told me that we should get Shaul Bassi, whom she had hired in Venice, to come and teach here, in Jewish studies. So we brought him over. He came, and it's hardly a lot of money that we had to offer him, so in part he stayed with me, in our house, and then Margaret was on

sabbatical when his wife came and they both moved into Margaret's house. And he taught a couple of courses. And at that point, we were doing that with visitors as much as we could.

Shaul wrote, then, for the journal this article about the Venice ghetto, which was very important. And I said to him one day that he should do a National Endowment for the Humanities institute on the Venice ghetto. He said, "I'll do it if you do it with me." So twice we did the institutes on "Venice, the Jews and Italian Culture," for twenty-four American professors, to bring that into their curriculum, into their syllabus.

Reti: So twenty-four American professors went to Venice to teach—

Baumgarten: Yes. Over two years, forty-eight, to study for their curriculum over two different years.

Reti: And then they would bring that curriculum back to their universities.

Baumgarten: Right.

Reti: So this was a summer enrichment study opportunity.

Baumgarten: We did it twice, and every one of the forty-eight did bring it into their curriculum. And we've stayed in touch. We had follow-up gatherings, and

it became clear there was real interest in this because for every one person who applied, there were two people who said, "Can I come for a week?"

So we thought about this, and that led to the notion that we should do more things, and it led to the notion of the Venice Center, and it led to the question: How important is the history of the Venice ghetto—which is the first ghetto (the word is Venetian)—to our understanding of modern Jewish life? It's clear that it's a central moment in the European treatment of the Jews, and it's been immediately elided into German-Jewish experience. Some people say, "Yes, there was a ghetto in Frankfurt," But it wasn't a ghetto, it was a neighborhood.

The ghetto as required living space for the Jews became the laboratory for Jewish modernity, and it has a long history. And at one point it was the center for Jewish publishing. A third of all Hebrew books published in the sixteenth century, after [Johannes] Gutenberg, were published in Venice, including the first Talmud and the first *Biblia Rabbinica*. And it's the *Biblia Rabbinica* that was what the Christian Humanists used. They studied Hebrew with rabbis in Venice, and then they studied the Bible in Hebrew, and that was part of bringing Jewish culture back into the orbit of Western culture. This was when the Greeks were being rediscovered, and this is, again, a moment when Christian Humanists and when the Jews are saying, "We're as important as the Greeks."

Reti: So is this what you mean by "a laboratory for modernity"?

Baumgarten: That was part of it—but it was also that Jews came from many different parts of Europe and had to learn to live together.

Reti: In the ghetto.

Baumgarten: Yes.

Reti: Because Venice was a center for trade?

Baumgarten: And it was a place where you could be Jewish. So in 1492, you get thrown out of Spain. Now, in 1516, you can be Jewish in Italy, but within strict boundaries, right? But it was better than not. The other place was Turkey. You could go to Turkey. So there were all these connections. I knew about the ghetto a little bit. I wanted to expand the notion of what it meant that this happened in Italy, which is a very different place than Germany, historically, or France, or Spain, and a country that ironically, though it's so associated with the Vatican, does not have the same history of anti-Judaism, even though the Pope had these Jews, whom he had to show as negative examples. He made sure they were miserable so he could say, "Look, if you're not a Christian…" So the Venice ghetto is very interesting, in addition to which it's a big deal for Shakespeare. The most famous Jew in the world is Shylock, from *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare also writes *Othello*, so you've got Jews and blacks, right? And Moors. [Laughs.] Venice—that was a place where these things could go on. And then it becomes very important for Dickens, who rewrites Shylock as Fagin, and

then invents a benevolent Jew, Riah, in *Our Mutual Friend*. So my other life as an English literature scholar also had Venetian connections.

Reti: So it all came together in Venice.

Baumgarten: More or less. And now this summer with the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, I've organized a summer workshop on Modern Jewish spaces in light of the Venice Ghetto.

[In the 1950s] Heschel, [Rabbi and theologian] Abraham [Joshua] Heschel said that Jews live in time: the Sabbath and everything else.

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: Well, [Israel prime minister] Golda Meir kept saying, "Jews need an address."

Reti: [Chuckles.] Great.

Baumgarten: So there's now what's called "The Spatial Turn" in Jewish studies. And so studying how are Jewish spaces constituted, what makes a Jewish space,

and it's not just a synagogue. What makes Jewish spaces Jewish? And so that book that we've edited, called *The Jewish Street*—[14]

Reti: Yes. I wanted to ask you about that.

Baumgarten: That's the same notion. So I've organized, with the Van Leer people—I'll bring you a copy of the call for proposals; they're due on March 7th—for young researchers—post-docs, graduate students to do a proposal for a paper on what is a Jewish space in the light of the Venice ghetto, as a paradigm for what is a Jewish space, the first such in the modern world. And to do this in Israel is very interesting because that's what Israel is: a Jewish space. And that's also one of the things they're arguing about all the time in Israel, so maybe that's what a Jewish space is, something you argue about—

Reti: A place to argue. [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: Well, contestation, where there are no resolutions that are easy but the contestation continues. So that is something that I think of as the next step, and this grows out of the conference we had in Venice on the history of the Jewish book. Some of the people from Van Leer came to that. We're hoping that it'll turn into a gathering of senior and younger people that eventually writes a book about these questions and publishes it, and then that will lead to a

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[14]Murray Baumgarten and Lee David Jaffe, Eds. *The Jewish Street: The City and Modern Jewish*

conference in 2016 in Venice and in Jerusalem, because 2016 is the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Venice ghetto. So that's sort of a little plan. I don't know if it'll all work, but one step at a time. But there is that idea. And Sheila has been delighted to be part of this. She's been studying Italian. She knows much more Italian grammar than I do, but I can read it because of my Spanish and because of other things. I keep thinking I should really work harder at learning to speak it and push the Spanish aside, but that's neither here nor there.

I've always worked on people like Primo Levi, and I was very pleased that the Van Leer Institute, in a new journal they published, they translated—I participated in that—an essay of mine on Primo Levi, which is just out in Hebrew. And I sent it around to people who might read it, as my first Hebrew publication. [Chuckles.]

Reti: So you write in Hebrew as well.

Baumgarten: Well, you know, this was translated with my participation, you know, but sure.

Reti: Yeah.

Writing: An Anthology. (Santa Cruz, CA: 2013).

Baumgarten: Well, the Nobel [Prize] laureate [Shmuel Yosef] Agnon, the Israeli, is famous for saying to [award-winning writer] Saul Bellow, "Have you been translated into Hebrew?" And Saul Bellow says, "No," and Agnon says, "See to it because only Hebrew lasts."

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: So those are the things that are there, and I'm hoping to do more with the Venice—as I indicated. And the reason we have the Venice Center is that in this set of NEH events, the National Endowment for Humanities, that were sponsored in Venice, a friend came by and said could she come and sit in in the back and be a fly on the wall. I said, "Sure," which is not something NEH likes. It says, "Only for these people." So she listened. She's a retired securities lawyer from New York, who spends about half her year in Venice, and she helped develop the 501(c)(3) for the Venice Center, including struggling with the IRS. So there's all of that kind of stuff.

And I'm a member of the Italian *fondazione* and of the Venice Center, and right now we are busy thinking about successors. Shaul is clearly the key figure, and he's done wonderful things. And one of the things he's done that's very important for the Venice Center—and we have a web site and so on—is to invite major writers to come and spend a month or so in Venice, to think about how does one reframe the ghetto for the twenty-first century. Because otherwise it's only a museum.

And our thought was that we would have, after 2016, an annual seminar. Last year we did a Jewish book conference and series, and this year we have a Jewish music series. And Shaul has decided that we need to have a real presence in the ghetto, a physical address, rather than just his apartment. He doesn't live in the ghetto, but he does live in Venice. The Rothschild Foundation of England agreed to sponsor those conferences, and now they've agreed to help lead the way in developing a space for us in the ghetto.

Reti: A space that would be a cultural center?

Baumgarten: Yes. It would be an office and a cultural center. And one of the things I tried to do, but it didn't work, was to get a UCSC class in Venice. We're the only UC campus that doesn't have its own students abroad program. Davis has a very extensive one, separate from EAP [Education Abroad Program].

Reti: That would be fantastic.

Baumgarten: Maybe it will be in the future. You know, various possibilities. I've talked about this with the new head of summer school. When I proposed it, it was a moment that they were offering this idea of classes abroad, and then various things changed, so it never got off the ground. I was not the only one who made a proposal.

Reti: Do you see Jewish studies here as a Jewish space?

Baumgarten: Well, there are moments in it when you have a Jewish space. But I guess my sense is that when I study things, I push for Jewish habits. So even in my other classes, I remind people that Jewish study does not involve sitting and reading by yourself, that it involves a study partner.

Reti: *Chevruta.*[15]

Baumgarten: Yeah. So that's part of my sense about student-centered learning.

Reti: Mmmm!

Baumgarten: Right?

Reti: Okay, I get it now.

Baumgarten: That's part of what's going on, I think, in what I do. I don't disguise that fact. I explain it at certain points. On the other hand, there are some students who don't want that—you know, whatever. That's fine.

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[15] In Jewish tradition, the word *Chevruta* refers to learning with a partner, a method of study often used in the study of Talmud, Torah, and other religious texts.

The Jewish Street: the City and Urban Jewish Writing

Reti: Yeah. Well, I think we have just enough time to talk about the Jewish street book [*The Jewish Street: the City and Urban Jewish Writing*].

Baumgarten: Well, I had talked with Lee Jaffe about needing a book that worked with urban Jewish culture, and that there wasn't very much out there, and that all the anthologies that had been available, like, Irving Howe's, either were very limited in where they went, or they had no women, or no Israelis, or no French writers— So we talked about it, and then he got interested, and we ended up putting that together. It's now a book that my students tell me their parents are reading, which is fine. There were several publishers immediately interested in it and then they said, "No, we can't do it because the permission costs will be too large." And we found out immediately that there are all these formulas. You have to pay a certain amount depending on how many copies are published and so on and which publisher— So we found out we could do it, if we published it ourselves, for much less. We got a little help with our research grants to pay for the permissions, and we've sold a couple of hundred copies. I've used them in my classes. But there were a whole bunch of other people who bought it. It's the kind of subject that people might be interested in. I don't know, I guess when I was a kid I got all these books called *The Treasury of*…

Reti: Oh, yes.

Baumgarten: You know? And they're not out there any more in the same way.

Reti: Right, so you can get one book, where you can get this rich experience of Jewish life.

Baumgarten: Lee and I talked about this book at a gathering in Los Altos, at one of the JCC's [Jewish Community Centers] A Jewish Day of Learning, and we kept asking people, "Did you grow up on a Jewish street? And what made it Jewish?" And this was an interesting question for people, and then we could talk about putting together the book. He's going to talk about this at a conference in Paris, of the European Association for Jewish Studies. I put together a little panel of different people to talk about Jewish spaces, and the anthology has a space. And a friend is going to talk about Shakespeare and Shylock and the space of Jewishness. And always thinking about it dialectically. So it's not separate; it's what are the connections; what are the relationships? So that's where it went. I'm pleased with it. It's a book that would change if we were doing it tomorrow because there is more stuff. And now we've done it, we would think about it differently. I did some version of that with the journal publication, and now this book. So we'll see. And I just got a very nice note from Marjorie Agosín. We have one of her pieces in it. She said, "I might use it in a course." And another friend said she might, as well. But who knows?

Reti: That's the advantage of anthologies, too. You have that collective pull.

Baumgarten: So I'm glad we could talk about that book.

Reflections on UC Santa Cruz

Reti: All right, so today is March 12th, 2014. This is Irene Reti, and I'm here with Professor Murray Baumgarten for our fourth interview in his oral history. We're at McHenry Library on the fourth floor. And so, Murray, I know that you are at this point, one of the longest-term faculty members on this campus, in terms of someone who is still teaching full time, and who was here close to the very beginning. UCSC is quite an experimental campus of the University of California, distinguished by things like narrative evaluations, the college system, an emphasis on undergraduate education and other aspects that we could talk about. I wanted to get your assessment of those innovations and how they've played out over the years.

Baumgarten: Well, thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond. As far as I know, I actually am the Last of the Mohicans. I didn't come the first year. There's no one left from [that first group at] Cowell [College still] teaching. And I am the last of the Stevenson [College] original group that came in '66. So I continue, as I say, the Last of the Mohicans. I came here, as did just about all my colleagues in Cowell and Stevenson and Crown [College] in the early years, because we wanted to do something different in university education, and we were excited by the opportunity that Santa Cruz offered. We all knew that we were part of a great research university but that this would be an effort to bring

the benefits of the college system, so prominent in England, to the University of California.

This was the second such experiment that I know of in the University of California. UC Riverside was the first, and it was also supposed to be—then it was called the liberal arts campus—and just as we started here, Riverside had gone through, just before, a big change where it became clear that the faculty wanted to be a research faculty and not just undergraduate-centered.

So I could see that there was always this tension—and it was in the original plan—between being a part of a research university and an undergraduate teaching- and learning-centered university. I thought that was an exciting possibility, and I didn't mind the thought that we would do both. I did have the feeling, however, that people didn't understand. Many of them who had come from small liberal arts colleges or from the liberal college tradition didn't understand that the University of California *is* part of the research arm of the state of California, and therefore of the nation and the world.

So I, having been a graduate student at the [University of California,] Berkeley and seen that firsthand, I could understand that. And part of my work when I was on the Graduate Council and eventually chair of it and then acting graduate dean was to remind people that research meant—especially in the social and natural sciences—graduate students. But I also, in the literature department, helped to draft, just a little bit, the graduate program and helped to move that

forward and, of course, helped to develop the curriculum because everything was new and we were trying to do something that didn't just copy other programs. We could just have taken somebody else's curriculum and plunked it down and said, "This is ours," but we were trying to do something different.

And that led, for example, to instead of English 1A, 1B, to Lit 1 as our literature basic required course. We never decided that we were a comparative program, comparative literature, but we never decided the other way, that we were an English department. And we weren't. So we always had these ambivalences and ambiguities. Sometimes they worked very well, and sometimes they just kept us from deciding what we really wanted to do.

But not any institution that I know of is perfect, and there are always these problems, so we managed with that. And the thing that was particularly exciting was the range of people who came here because of the possibility of doing something different. The narrative evaluations were part of the early college idea that was pushed, among others, by Page Smith in Cowell. Stevenson College had many people who were skeptical, and they were skeptical about many of these things. But, on the other hand, they also felt that they were about to embark on this different understanding of undergraduate education, how it could be run.

I was very pleased to work in the core course in the college and, for example, to serve as a section leader when my colleagues, Peter Kenez and Larry Veysey, gave lectures in their courses, and then to help found and work with Modern

Society and Social Thought as a college major. The colleges constantly made it possible for us to be experimental and to try things out that eventually got into the curriculum or were abandoned and other experiments were tried.

And that's, it seems to me, one of the places where we've fallen down. We don't have enough opportunity to do some of those things anymore. We don't have the room to fail in that sense or to almost succeed. And that's connected, also, with the fact that we no longer have the same teaching load; we've been brought to fewer courses. And none of the courses—except for the core courses within the college curriculum—are college courses. So it means that you can't quite try out as many things, for better or for worse.

Like many other faculty, I have said that I would just as soon teach the fifth course. When we came, we were originally supposed to do six courses a year, and we were told we get one off for serving on university committees and helping to run the university, so that was five. But somewhere along the way, it turned into four. The scientists were teaching two, and gradually, if you were anybody who's anybody, you teach three.

So it's a very difficult situation in terms of how you get time to do a course that may not be at the same resonance as a canonical departmental course. On the other hand, how do you renew the curriculum otherwise? The standard answer is you do it through bringing your research into the classroom, but that takes much longer, and it doesn't get at the real issue, which is: how do you develop

student-learning environments rather than teaching-centered environments? The research model simply says the teacher will speak about the latest research, which I think is very important, but it doesn't change the environment. It doesn't put the student at the center of the situation; it puts the teacher [at the center]. There was a real effort to do that when we started.

Reti: To put students at the center.

Baumgarten: Right. So those were the early years, and it was very exciting, and the students were very excited. And the students also had different stakes than they do now because it was also the time of the Vietnam War and the Cambodian incursion, and the draft meant students had to make a real choice—accept being drafted or stay in school. And why were they in school? For what are they studying? That coincided with a worldwide critique of industrial society and industrial education. Clark Kerr was president of the university, and his specialty was industrial economics, so there was an easy way to do a critique.[16] There were all kinds of things going on.

I think it also grows out of the increasing realization that the Holocaust had made us pause in our headlong rush into modernization and progress. The

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[16] See Clark Kerr, John T. Dunlop, Frederick H. Harbison, and Charles A. Myers, *Industrialism and Industrial Man: The Problem of Labor and Management in Economic Growth*. Harvard University Press, 1960 and Clark Kerr *The Uses of the University*, 5th edition. 1963; Harvard University Press, 2001.

Holocaust, after all, made us wonder if the benefit of modernization was simply that you could produce death on an industrial scale.

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: So many things came together, but then most of those things have been at least mitigated somewhat. People aren't quite as riveted by the Holocaust, although they still are, and people, what with the postmodern bit, have discovered they love computers and gadgets, all the results of increasing industrial spending, including many of these things developed by the military.

I remember a conversation with Chancellor [Robert L.] Sinsheimer, where he said, "You know, many of our colleagues are very upset about participating in, being part of this industrial participation in the military economy," he said, "but none of them are giving up their computers." Right? Or we should add now smart phones or any of those other things. Now that's all given way to globalization and a thought that we're much more intertwined than we have thought of before.

Now the university is seeking partners in the larger arena, and some of that is very good because one of the results of the outside engagement in the university has been things like the gender equality movement, women's studies. None of those things came from within the university; they came from without. But there were also, and there still are great numbers of efforts to put what we teach and

how we teach under a critical eye of people who disagree with us politically. So [at] various moments academic freedom has been threatened, but by and large it has held fast, and we've been able to continue to be independent.

On the other hand, it hasn't led to, as it did with the women's movement, enough countervailing views. So, where obviously the university in a generally progressive culture, it would have been wonderful to have had a young version of William [F.] Buckley [Jr.], as he did at Yale, but that's all passed, and now things have turned, and those labels don't mean as much, and people are all over the map in terms of what they're doing.

And, of course, they wouldn't have admitted it then, but in the early years, there were a whole bunch of people who said, "We should not grow any more. Pull up the drawbridge." I always thought of them as deep, dyed-in-the-wool conservatives because they were conserving their privilege of having gotten here, and had no sense of the responsibility of the state of California to educate Californians all over the state and even here in this beautiful location.

So I'm very pleased that we've grown, and I think we now are at the point where we can do really interesting things as a public university of 18,000 students, and maybe we'll grow even more in the next few years. You can't be a public university of less size than that and do the range of things that we want. Not everything, but the range of things. So that's been part of my sense of what we've been doing.

Narrative Evaluations

Now, narrative evaluations, you asked about.

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: It was a fine idea. It was hard to carry forward, and as time went by, the younger faculty had no interest in it because they felt the pressure for publication that came from where they had been trained, as much as what we were doing, because we always took teaching very seriously, and public service, and scholarship. But, yes, we are a great research university.

The other thing that happened was people misunderstood what narrative evaluations did, and we had, in the early years, a number of very amusing moments. For example, we had a number of people come from medical schools and thank us for our narrative evaluations because on those bases—on the basis of those narrative evaluations—they could predict who was going to be a good doctor much more clearly than they could with grades. And we had students who applied to many schools, who got into the elite schools, with their narrative evaluations, but were rejected at the second tier.

Reti: Very interesting.

Baumgarten: And one of the reasons was at that the second-tier schools—the registrar's office, or whoever was looking at their applications, were staff people, and they saw that students had gotten P's, for Pass. They said, "That equals a C."

Reti: Oh, dear.

Baumgarten: And so they didn't read the evaluations. But the elite schools—again, it's a matter of time and energy and resources—the elite schools—they read the evaluations, and they said, "This is a really interesting student," et cetera. So that was also a matter of being different and not having a full explanation of what the difference meant.

Ironically, of course, we could point to, and we still do, to the fact that in corporate life, people don't get A, B, C's only; they get evaluations in narrative form. Perhaps we should have said we're a corporate society, but maybe that wouldn't have worked, either.

Reti: I had one narrator I interviewed recently say that she thought they should have been called performance evaluations rather then narrative evaluations, and then parents and other schools would have known what they were.

Baumgarten: Sure. But the other problem also: It got more and more expensive to use them, and at certain point people said, "No." But then with computers it got cheaper. But by then there was so much back-and-forth that one of the

simplest things was just to stop them and to go to grades. So, like, many things, we reverted to the mean. You know, we kept doing things that were less and less different and unusual, while still having the reputation of being very unusual and very different. Whereas other places that had been founded as responses and as spinoffs from Santa Cruz continued to be very different.

I think that we may also be in a situation now where enough alumni have graduated, and they are putting pressure on the university to revive the role of the colleges and to expand it in terms of academic matters, not just social and living arrangements. We'll see how that plays out. I welcome that and think the future is hard to predict, full of surprises.

So those were the things that were particularly interesting. And I think one of the places where things stopped—[during the period after we established] College Five there was a great crisis in the university, in American universities. There were no more jobs. So when we went out to hire people for college—after College Five, [later named Porter College]—candidates said they were fascinated by our educational experiments, but really they would say many things to get a job. And, of course, they were very interested in getting a job here, and we were thought of as one of the great plum jobs. But they weren't as committed to doing these different things.

So things, again, reverted to the mean, and now we have grades and so on and so forth, and we have much more competition, and it's much more competition-

oriented than we were with the narrative evaluations, which also were much harder for students who did not come from an advantaged background. They didn't understand what it meant that we were thinking that they could do, as best they could—almost like the army motto: "Be All That You Can Be"—that the narrative evaluations were not competition against other students but against what they could achieve. Instead, they wanted grades to keep them oriented to their working habits that they had learned in high school and community college.

Many people have written about this and thought about it. This is just a personal view. And there were people who came who were very advantaged. At one point, I thought of them as privileged people who had chosen downward mobility. The children of very famous people became potters. Pottery is wonderful. It's a fabulous craft. It's a great art. But then they stopped even thinking about pottery as a great craft and art. They didn't want to be part of industrial society in the same way. They turned on, they tuned in, dropped out, or whatever it was, dropped out,

possibilities. And one of the spinoffs from the campus, founded by faculty members from the campus who left, was the Penny University, which is ongoing and goes all over the place. This is an inheritance of the sixties and its democratic, participatory view of things, and it's been very successful in what it wants to do. It's spun off some nonprofits that are full of well-meaning and good works. No complaints about that. So I've been very happy to be here.

I'm going to open the chocolate that *Irene* brought—

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: —this time. It's very good chocolate.

Reti: Very good chocolate.

Baumgarten: I just can't resist. Chocolate is one of the five basic food groups, as you know.

Reti: [Chuckles.]

Baumgarten: [offering Irene chocolate].

Reti: That's okay, you go first.

Key Colleagues

Baumgarten: So I want also to think about and to mention publicly, some of the people who helped me, who are not university people in the same way, although I do want to thank Harry Berger [Jr.] for bringing me, and for his impish sense of always coming up with new ideas and new things and new ways of imagining what literature was and how one could work with it.

I also want to thank people at other campuses. Because I knew something about the University of California, I early made use of the intercampus connections, so I would go down to UCLA and consult with Arnold Band about courses in Jewish studies or with [William] "Ze'ev" Brinner in Berkeley. And I was part of a research group that we established between Santa Cruz and Irvine. Once a month we'd all fly down there and once a month they'd fly up here, and we'd talk about various issues that we really liked. My sense is this could still go on.

Reti: What kind of research group?

Baumgarten: It was about modern literature and philosophy, and it was a very interesting interdisciplinary one, and I made a lot of friends and colleagues who helped with my thinking. So these were all within the university.

I should also mention that outside the university, I had good friends in the Jewish community, including Marshall Sachs, who did many things for the Jewish community of Santa Cruz, including helping it build its larger synagogue in Aptos. He and I would talk about things, and we read books together. I remember we read Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table*, and I saw him. I said, "How's the reading going, Marshall?" He says, "I can only read one page at a time." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "It's too wonderful to read more."

Reti: Ohh.

Baumgarten: We had wonderful times talking about literature and the Holocaust, and it seemed to me that it was as good a situation for teaching and for learning for me. So I really enjoyed that and learned a great deal. And it kept reminding me that I needed to fulfill the obligation that as a Jewish scholar you learn from all your students.

Reti: Mmm.

Baumgarten: So I'm going to take a bite of chocolate and stop for a moment and then come back to listing more people.

Reti: [Chuckles.] Now the transcriber will know what's going on.

Baumgarten: [Eats chocolate.]

Besides Harry on the campus, I had the great good fortune of helping interview John [O.] Jordan for his position, and then working with him later on to establish the Dickens Project, which has gone on to do really wonderful things. One of the things that's been interesting about Dickens is that we conceived it—I kept insisting, as a humanities program that was really a scientific laboratory—and that made a big difference. It was, however, something that took place in the summer and in the winter at other campuses, and for a long time, and still even now, much of the campus does not know about the Dickens Project. So it was

like many centers on the campus that people don't know about but still continue to do the work—

Reti: Yes.

Baumgarten: —a really important one. And it was also something that facilitated my work on [Thomas] Carlyle at different times, where I had tried originally to engage people in that. But there wasn't as much interest. It didn't have the reach that Dickens does.

Within the campus, then, besides John Jordan, I hung out for a while with [H. Marsh Leicester [Jr.] and with a couple of other folks: Michael Warren. We were close. And these were the early years. Tom Vogler. And then we finally got a group of wonderful young women scholars, and that has helped us change and do many different things.

One of the people that I also spent time with and I helped to bring was an Israeli named Mishael Caspi], whose brother-in-law is [Abraham B.] "Aleph Bet" Yehoshua, the novelist. And Mishael came and taught Hebrew. It was an initiative of the students. They wanted Hebrew. And I helped with that. We organized a kibbutz program where students would go for the summer and the fall, and that led to many interesting things, including Gildas Hamel meeting Amy, a student, and getting married and then teaching for us. Mishael went on and did a PhD at Berkeley. And then helped Gildas Hamel get his PhD here, and

then went on to Bates when he retired, from here to Bates College, where he had a wonderful second career.

Reti: Let me just stop you for a second. The kibbutz program. Do you happen to remember the name of the kibbutz program?

Baumgarten: Mm-hm. The kibbutz program took place with the help of Israeli institutions, for a number of years, at Kibbutz Ein-Hashofet. And Ein-Hashofet is named after [U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis D.] Brandeis, so that seemed appropriate. It was a relatively secular kibbutz. And what happened was when students came back, they wanted more, and it led to eventually the founding of the first version of Jewish studies, within religious studies.

Reti: Ahh, very interesting. So that was advocated for by students.

Baumgarten: Yes, student interest, and since we were admitting more and more students, we also wanted to listen to them. I thought that was a very healthy thing: listening to students. Eventually that program in religious studies was closed, although it had some great successes in many ways, sending many students to seminaries. We now have, I think, somewhere upwards of fifty UCSC graduates who are rabbis. And in recent years, now with the new Jewish studies that we've done since 1999, which is not connected to religious studies, which was closed, we've had many students go off and teach in day schools as well. So

it's been a career track that's been very interesting. And Mishael was wonderful about that.

More on Jewish Studies at UCSC

Now, the newer Jewish studies program comes out of a program in San Francisco, something called the Academic Consortium for Bay Area Jewish Studies, which I was invited to join. It was about faculty members working in Jewish studies all over the Bay Area. And we would meet every couple of months and talk about problems and issues and possibilities. It had funding from the Jewish Community Endowment Fund in the San Francisco Federation, of all kinds, that was mostly to help Berkeley and Stanford [University] programs. And, in fact, Stanford's program took off with the help of that endowment fund and then significant fundraising efforts, and so did Berkeley's.

The person who was key in that, who helped to found and develop that academic consortium was Phyllis Cook, and she then was the broker who brought the Dillers to endow the chair, the program in Santa Cruz, the Helen and Sanford Diller Family Endowment for Jewish Studies. They've been very helpful and wonderful supporters of our program and have pledged a significant amount further towards the chair, the Murray Baumgarten Chair, which will also help in other ways. I'm in touch with them intermittently, in all kinds of ways, and had the pleasure of spending a little time with both Sanford and Helen, his wife, at different times.

But Phyllis Cook continues to help the campus in different ways, and I hope that this will continue. She's the grande dame of people running Jewish institutions in the Bay Area. And right from the beginning, by the way, Mishael got significant help from the San Francisco Federation and the endowment fund. So we had Jewish studies within religious studies, but then we had, every year for a number of years, a man named [Walter J.] Fischel, who was an emeritus professor at Berkeley. He'd retired, but he came down and he taught for us. And then we also had a couple of other people who came and taught for us when we didn't have regular faculty to do that.

The disappointing thing for me has always been the slow pace at which Jewish studies has gotten—what I should say—investment from the campus in its programs. But then Dickens hasn't been invested in, either, et cetera. It's often been a matter of just doing what we can with very limited resources. My colleagues at Berkeley had much more in the way of resources, but even there it wasn't at the level of some of the outstanding programs in other areas.

On the other hand, the programs in Jewish studies and in Dickens, I want to say, have been excellent in quality and in standing and can stand up to any programs that are comparable. And Dickens as a center has been a center of excellence, but also a center that brought Dickens to the general public in a very important way. And Jewish studies, as far as I can tell, is at a very high level.

So I've been very pleased to be able to do that and to carry that forward in what I think of is the highest and best traditions of the University of California: research of an excellent kind, teaching that is excellent, and public service. And so, too, the Coursera course that I did on the Holocaust with Peter reached a huge number of people and did not talk down to them. I take as my motto Dickens's comment in one of his letters that you can tell the people and inform them about anything as long as you are clear and complete. So in that sense, I'm a democrat with a small "d."

Reti: So you see that as part of the democratization of education, higher education being at a public university.

Baumgarten: Yes. And this makes it different. And I, throughout my years in California, continue to meet people who are so grateful for having gone to a great public university, who went to Cal, or to UCLA, or to Santa Cruz now, or other campuses and then went to professional schools there, and it's made a huge difference in their ability to take a major leadership role in the society.

That's the other thing that I think people tended not to understand in the early years. Just as they had looked, when they lived in the East, to major Ivy League universities for leadership roles in the society, the University of California has done that for California. It has changed. At one point, most of the legislature had gone to a campus of the University of California. Now, with greater democratization, it's mostly the state universities of California, but there are

plenty of us who have gone to the University of California—law schools, medical schools, et cetera, applied programs and are taking major roles in leadership in the society. So I am glad that I participated in this and that the state of California has continued to invest in its population, in its young people, from whom I continue to learn when I teach them.

Kresge College

Reti: Yes. Well, let's backtrack a little bit, just a little bit of a cycling back and forth, but Kresge College—getting back to the college system—during reorganization—you relocated there in 1981.

Baumgarten: Mm-hm.

Reti: What was your sense of Kresge at the time?

Baumgarten: We tried to do interesting things. There was a real push to do more things with women's studies, and that was fine, but there was also a reach, push to do things about modern society. And it was my good fortune that John Jordan and I relocated—well, we sort of planned it—to the same college, and we had offices across the hall. That's how the Dickens Project could get cooked up, so to speak. That plus an initiative put forward by the president of the university for intercampus activities, which I've talked about.

Reti: We've talked about that, yes.

Baumgarten: But Kresge, again, made possibilities available to me and to us, and it was a very lively college. And because Dean [Helene] Moglen was also provost of Kresge College, there was a sense of power there in terms of the university, that the college was not just an afterthought and not just a social club, that it was intended to do something that was intellectually challenging and stimulating and with significant results.[17] Dean Moglen participated in all kinds of ways and brought in, for example, [Carl Schorske] to do a seminar for the faculty, which he conducted with Norman O. Brown, who was a member of the college, and that was very exciting and very welcoming.

So there was a sense that we were, in Kresge—this echoed why we had been in Stevenson— as intellectuals, thinking about these kinds of questions, not just as teachers who were transmitting knowledge that was already gained to the student, but that we were generating new knowledge and we wanted the students to be part of that environment, that ambiance.

The Literature Department

Reti: And you've been part of the literature board, literature department, and you chaired the department first as interim chair in in 1984 and then again in 1990.

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[17]See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Helene Moglen and the Vicissitudes of a Feminist Administrator* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013) for more about this period of Kresge College's history. http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/helene-moglen

Baumgarten: Right.

Reti: So I wasn't quite following what you said earlier about the difference between an English department and a literature department. Can you say a little bit more about that?

Baumgarten: Well, the literature department was where we had all these literatures together, and we were talking to each other. So, for example, when I taught Lit 1 years and years ago, I had different national groupings and different languages of literatures in the course. So we read some French poetry, and some of it was read in English translation, and some of it was read in French. We read Spanish poetry, we read German poetry—we did a few things of that sort.

English departments didn't do that kind of thing. They were much more Anglo-centered or American-centered, and they were much more about what was English culture about. And that was partly historically a matter of getting people to acculturate to an Anglo-American tradition. That made a lot of sense. But now much of that has gone on in the high schools, and the greater scope of a literature curriculum meant that students could see the larger world of literary study, and that also coincided with great changes in what literary study was about, both for English and for other departments.

Reti: Do you mean a more diverse, multicultural—

Baumgarten: More diverse, more multicultural, but also that literary study was not about national traditions and a kind of literary nationalism, which had been part of their experience.

Reti: It had been part of whose experience?

Baumgarten: Each of those departments. I mean, when I taught at Williams, there was a sequence of three years of English literature. English literature is one of the great literary traditions. There's everything to be said for that. But students never, therefore, got to see the greatness of Spanish literature.

Reti: I see. Do you know where this notion of a much more diverse, less nationalistic literature department at UCSC came from? Was it Harry Berger's idea?

Baumgarten: I'm not sure. One of the people who brought it in was Sig Puknat, I think, and he and Harry had something to do with it.[18] They both thought this was a way of saying that California was multicultural. I'm not sure who cooked it up, but that sense that the literatures had much in common but that they should stop being outposts of nationalism was very important.

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[18] See the forthcoming oral histories with Sig Puknat and Harry Berger from the Regional History Project.

I think that this is all something that came out of the experience of so many people in World War II. They had been exposed to so many different cultures and traditions and they were very interested in continuing that conversation and that dialogue. It was also about displacement and all kinds of mixing up of things, and also about a kind of disillusionment with nationalism, that it was thought was producing bad situations in many ways.

Reti: That makes sense to me, yes.

Baumgarten: So this is where we ended up with this. And it was a really interesting thing to do. And I'm only sorry that we didn't quite make up our minds, but we've done more and less, and maybe it'll be different later. Maybe we'll decide we'll be more of one kind of thing or another, or we'll just decide that we have many groupings that do different kinds of things. In some ways, it's not a completely coherent curriculum because we have so many different tracks. In another sense, why does the curriculum have to be coherent in a logical way? Perhaps a nonlinear way is better.

Our students do very well and get very interesting results, even when they go on to graduate school in literary studies, but just as well when they go on to become lawyers and doctors and all those other things that they engage in when they graduate, including filmmakers.

The notion that we should stay within one culture and articulate it is no longer at the top of the country's agenda, so people very much enjoy the cross-cultural conversations that literature generates because of its diversity. Again, I have no idea where it's going to go. It would be fun to watch it. And I've had something to do with it. You know, my e-mail is dickens@ucsc.edu because of the Dickens project, but at one point I also had an e-mail called judaism@ucsc.edu when I was editing that journal.

And it continues. And, of course, I've been engaged in developing parallel kinds of institutions and participated in—and I'm a member of something called the Venice Center for International Jewish Studies. So I keep trying to articulate possible environments for learning that are multicultural and multidimensional.

Final Thoughts

I don't know that I need to say much more. I just probably should call it quits and go and run off to do some more of this work that I'm still doing.

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: I don't know where I'm going to go with it. I'm hoping that the Venice Center—we had a program in the history of the Jewish book. A third of all Hebrew books in the sixteenth century that were published were published in Venice. This is shortly after moveable type. This year, we have a series on

Venetian and Italian Jewish music, culminating in a conference, and we're aiming for 2016, the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Venice Ghetto, for a major conference. But then we're hoping it will also launch an ongoing series of seminars and lectures, in which we can ask over and over again whether Venice and the "ghetto"—the word is itself Venetian, and, of course, it was a crucial idea for European culture and the way Jews were treated—whether the ghetto is just a historical museum or whether there is a way to reframe and repurpose and rethink that history to something else.

Reti: It's going to be fascinating to see where that goes. So we have the 500th anniversary of the Venetian ghetto, we have the 50th anniversary of UCSC next year. Where do you see this campus going? Do you have dreams for this campus?

Baumgarten: Dreams? [laughs]

Reti: [Laughs.]

Baumgarten: It's going to get a little bigger. I think bioinformatics and astronomy and the health sciences are signs of great achievement and health, intellectual health. And I'm hoping that the humanities will reclaim a larger role in new ways. I was always sorry when the arts split off from the humanities because I thought they were crucially engaging and encouraging each other. Perhaps they'll come back together or do more together in the future.

I'm also hoping that the campus will do more internationally, like the Venice Center. One of the things I plan to do this summer is I've helped to develop a program for postdocs and what's called "young researchers." And we're going to be working with fourteen or fifteen of them in Jerusalem at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. The subject is: What Is a Jewish Space?/Take the Venice Ghetto as a Paradigm. I'm looking forward to the applications, which we're going to select from. That is another way in which I hope the campus will reach out and continue to become more and more of a global location.

The computing department has several Israeli computing scientists, and there are people coming back and forth. I always think of a major university as one where there are Indians (from India), and Israelis, and all kinds of Europeans meeting with Americans from all over. I think some of that is happening already. Maybe there'll be more of that, and that would be, again, interesting and produce an interesting mix. But I have to wait and see.

Reti: Okay.

Baumgarten: Thank you, Irene, for good questions and for leading me in this way. I hope somebody wants to do something with this, and I'll be glad to add or subtract as appropriate. So thanks very much.

Reti: Thank you, Murray, for your time and thoughtfulness. I've really enjoyed doing this with you.

Baumgarten: My pleasure, and thank you for the chocolate.

About the Interviewer and Editor:

Irene Reti directs the Regional History Project at the UC Santa Cruz Library, where she has worked as an editor and oral historian since 1989. She holds a BA in environmental studies (with a concentration in women's studies), and a master's in history from UCSC, and is also a small press publisher, writer, and photographer.