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Helene Moglen and the Vicissitudes of a Feminist Administrator

Interviewed and Edited by

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Santa Cruz

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Introduction

Helene Moglen was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1936 into a secular Jewish, initially working-class family. Her father was a self-educated man who left school at age twelve and ultimately became a successful life insurance agent. Her mother was a traditional homemaker. Helene's father held strong intellectual and professional aspirations for his daughter, whom he treated much like a son, while still expecting that she should marry and have children. This double and sometimes contradictory message was to shape Moglen's life, which spans decades of tremendous transformation in gender roles and possibilities for women's lives.

Moglen studied literature and philosophy at Bryn Mawr College and graduated in 1957. She had met her future husband, Sig Moglen, when they were both thirteen. They married when Moglen graduated from college, just before she entered graduate school in English literature at Yale University. They had three sons while Moglen was in graduate school; she managed to mother three small children and complete her coursework and dissertation, graduating in 1965.

After graduation, Moglen's first teaching job was at New York University, where she taught from 1966 to 1971. There she served as an ombudsman, elected by the students to negotiate between students and the administration, a rather vulnerable position for an untenured faculty member. During this period, Moglen also became active in the Civil Rights Movement, joining a chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Harlem and the Mississippi Freedom

Democratic Party. For political reasons, she did not receive tenure at NYU, which was devastating for her at the time. But she moved on to teach English literature at the new and experimental campus of the State University of New York at Purchase, a campus somewhat inspired by the innovative college system at UC Santa Cruz.

At SUNY Purchase, Moglen became president of the faculty and joined a dynamic group of women faculty who met each week to spend two hours doing feminist consciousness-raising in the style of the day and one hour planning the new university. Her colleagues in that group included feminist luminaries Suzanne Kessler, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Esther Newton. Together they developed feminist courses, although there was not yet a formal women's studies program. "It was really a coming together of friendship and feminism and teaching in a way that never happened again for me, and that I knew could never happen again," Moglen recalled.

While at SUNY Purchase, Moglen also became acting dean of humanities for a semester and developed an interest in university administration. She and Sig decided it was time to leave New York, for career and personal reasons. She applied and was hired for the position of dean of humanities and professor of literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Moglen arrived at UC Santa Cruz in the fall of 1978. She became the first female dean in the University of California system and believes she may have also been the first high-level female administrator. This was at a time when male administrators expected all women to serve them coffee.

A natural leader with confidence and stamina, Moglen immediately dedicated herself to multiple arenas of institution building at UC Santa Cruz. She served as provost of Kresge College from 1978 to 1983, transforming and revitalizing that college into a vibrant intellectual community, which became a home for several notable academic departments, including the dynamic and expanding American studies program and the prestigious history of consciousness program. She led the division of humanities during a period of reorganization and several controversial tenure battles, and reorganized and built what was then a fledgling student-run women's studies program into what is now a thriving and nationally prominent feminist studies department, serving as chair from 1984 to 1989.

During her career, she also founded and directed two centers for feminist research, the Feminist Research Focused Research Activity (1984-1989) and the Institute for Advanced Feminist Research (2003-2006). In 1985, Moglen lobbied then-Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer to be able to use the beautiful and historic Cardiff House for a brand-new UCSC Women's Center, which she founded and helped build into a visionary institution that bridged the campus and downtown communities.¹ Alongside these administrative accomplishments, Moglen became

¹ In 2004, I interviewed Moglen for an oral history project specifically focused on the UCSC Women's Center on its twentieth anniversary. See Irene Reti, Editor and Interviewer, "Crossing Borders: The UCSC Women's Center, 1985-2005" (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2005). See <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9nq3v181>

a well-known feminist literary scholar and authored two frequently cited articles on women and power, both of which she discusses in this narrative.

I conducted this oral history with Moglen in three sessions during February 2013. It joins a series of oral histories with early women faculty and staff leaders at UC Santa Cruz. Now in her late seventies, Moglen is still teaching literature courses on campus and is deeply engaged in a campus-community project she describes in this volume. She approached this oral history project in a spirit of collaboration and enthusiasm, interrupting her narrative at several points to laugh and tell me what a good time she was having remembering it all.

Moglen also did not shy away from exploring some of the more painful and difficult parts of her career, candidly and analytically discussing her early experience as dean of humanities, when she had to make a series of controversial decisions and was sharply criticized by both students and faculty, women and men. "I think as a woman, there is no way, there is no way that I was not treated more harshly, more unforgivingly. I encountered all kinds of misogyny; the anger about me, which in many cases, as dean which would just have been irritation, was often very deep," she said.

Sometimes the harshest criticism came from other women, when as a dean she felt it necessary to vote against granting tenure to a woman scholar, or when she reorganized the student-run women's studies program into an institutionalized academic program. "I was trying to build feminist studies at the graduate level and at the undergraduate level. I really did have a vision for it. It

was clear to me what was going to be necessary. And no, I wasn't seen as a feminist. I was sort of seen as a monster," Moglen confided.

Moglen also reflects on her shifts in management style over the years. In 1997, Moglen was asked to chair the UCSC Academic Senate, a task she saw as, "an opportunity for me to demonstrate and also enact what I felt had been very crucial personal changes and also changes in my style as an administrator. I really look back on my days as a dean—I was a shooter from the hip. I really wanted to do things myself. I had a sense of my power to do this and that and blah-blah-blah— I think over the years, and this was in part as a feminist, and it was in part just getting older, I really wanted to work much more collaboratively with people. I understood the ways in which the divisions between the administration and the faculty senate were structural much more than personal. I personalized a lot more when I was younger, and I took on fights that really did have for me a kind of personal cast."

One of the most historically significant portions of this oral history is the section where Moglen recalls her term in the late 1970s and early 1980s as chair of the very first sexual harassment committee at UC Santa Cruz and the activism by both students and faculty at UCSC who advocated the development of regulations and policy on a campus shaped by the permissive and rather boundaryless culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Moglen is critical of some of the abuse of women students and young women faculty that took place at Kresge College in its early, experimental incarnation. "There were a number of men, and some very distinguished scholars on campus, who just saw it as their prerogative

to have sex with students,” Moglen recalled. These are important perspectives on the early history of UCSC that have not been previously recorded in the archive of the Regional History Project.

I would like to make a few personal remarks here as the interviewer and editor of this oral history. I arrived at UCSC as a young undergraduate student in the fall of 1978, the same year Helene Moglen began her tenure as dean of humanities. I took courses in women’s studies during that period and recall some of the heated student opposition to the dismantling of women’s studies as a student-run program. Ten years later, I worked briefly as a secretary for the women’s studies program at Kresge College in 1988, during the time Moglen was chair. By that time the Feminist Studies Focused Research Activity was sparking heady feminist research across campus, the UCSC Women’s Center was flourishing, and women’s studies was thriving. Much of this expansion can be credited to Helene Moglen’s leadership. Through conducting this interview, I became even more aware of how, far beyond feminist studies, Helene Moglen shaped UC Santa Cruz. Some of its most remarkable programs and institutions bear her imprint. It has been my pleasure and honor to work with her on this oral history.

The interviews took place in a room at McHenry Library and were recorded digitally. I then transcribed the recordings. Moglen carefully reviewed the transcript for accuracy, and made a few editorial corrections which are reflected here. 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 Regional History Project is supported administratively by Elisabeth Remak-Honnef, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Virginia Steel.

—*Irene Reti*
Director, Regional History Project, University Library
University of California, Santa Cruz, June 2013

Early Life

Reti: Today is Monday, February 4, 2013 and this is Irene Reti. I'm here for my first oral history interview with Helene Moglen. So, Helene, let's start with when and where were you born?

Moglen: I was born in 1936 in Brooklyn, New York.

Reti: And tell me about your family.

Moglen: I grew up in Brooklyn in a Jewish, initially working-class family. It always surprises me to remember that I was, in fact, the first person, the first generation, to go to college. It's not a strong part of my identity, as it is for many people.

Reti: It's *not* part of your identity.

Moglen: It's not. I think that was because my father, who had left home and left school when he was twelve, but was very much a self-educated man, and a real intellectual, desperately wanted me to go to college. And so I remember always, as a child and as an adolescent, my father talking to me about going to college. I remember particularly his taking Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* off the shelf and saying to me, "I can't really understand this but someday you will." Of course, I was a philosophy major in college. (laughs) So I just assumed I would go to college.

I had a sister, with whom I was not close. I had a mother, who was very much a domestic person, and looking back I would say probably a hysteric. She inhabited very much that female role of her generation. I remember coming home from school and her sitting on her chaise lounge reading *The Ladies Home Companion* (laughs) and later in her life she developed all kinds of complaints, and was eventually diagnosed as being allergic to her own secretions, which seemed to me a marvelous metaphor. (laughs) I have no idea what the medical basis of that was.

So I grew up with this very feminine, very restricted mother, who had a high school education. She was not really in any way an intellectual. She was really very fearful. She was always afraid of being found out, of being found wanting. And this wonderful father, who was my good mother, who was very strong, very aggressive, very competitive. He had no formal education beyond the eighth grade, had left home with his brother when he was twelve or thirteen. His father had died when he was six or seven and his mother married her husband's brother. And his mother died when he was twelve. After that he and his brother left home. His stepfather had married a woman who really didn't want them to be around. So he'd had a very independent, autonomous adolescence, young boyhood, manhood. He became a life insurance agent and ultimately ran his own life insurance agency. But he always wished that he had been a lawyer. And he always wished that he had been educated. He made quite a lot of money. I remember him always carrying a large wad of bills in his pocket, which I think was not uncommon among people who had gone through the Depression and

had nothing. He really loved to put his hand in his pocket and feel his money.
(laughs)

My sister, who was older, had a rather troubled girlhood. So I was sort of my father's son, in the sense that he saw me as the person who would have the life that he wanted to have, at the same time that he saw me as a woman, as a girl who would be a woman. It was unthinkable for him that I would not marry and have children. So there was this double vision. He always said, "You can be anything you want to be. You can do anything you want to do." I believed that. But I also believed that I was going to have to marry and have children. So there was that very strong message that felt contradictory, even as I was growing up and could not have exactly articulated it.

I'm giving an emeriti lecture here in the fall—and I've been thinking about reading and my lifelong passion for narrative, for literary form, my interest in how literary forms structure the way we think about ourselves and our world. I remember being obsessed both with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. No matter what I read, and I read very widely from the time I was a child and was reading Dostoevsky at twelve and Eugene O'Neill (I was a very melancholy adolescent), I always returned to those two novels. I think both of the protagonists were proto-feminists and I was always reading, reading to understand (How weird, right, to look for yourself in early and mid-nineteenth century novels), but I was always looking for the model of how to be a woman, how to be a strong woman.

So my feminism, I think, began both in my identification with my father, my disidentification from my mother, and my sense of the special difficulties, therefore, of being a woman who wanted to have a life that was not lying on a chaise lounge and waiting for my children to come home, that was really an active life. I wasn't sure how to do that, because in fact I didn't know any women who did that. We lived in a very middle-class, a very bourgeois world.

Reti: In Brooklyn.

Moglen: In Brooklyn. All the women who we knew, whom my parents were friendly with, my teachers, were all—it's interesting to think of my teachers that way—but they all just seemed like bourgeois women. There was one Catholic woman I remember studying English with in high school, who seemed quite exotic (laughs) and who really seemed to have some other vision of possibility, but I didn't really know what that consisted of.

Reti: Was your parents' social circle primarily Jewish?

Moglen: They were all Jewish. Everybody in my world was Jewish.

Reti: Okay, so that's why the Catholic woman seemed really exotic.

Moglen: Right. And in fact I sort of assumed—I kind of felt sorry for people who weren't Jewish because, and this was true when I went to college, and I went to Bryn Mawr, which was hardly a bastion of Jewishness. But it always seemed to me that: well, you know, Jews were intellectuals. Jews were thinkers. And they were funny. They were edgy. (laughs) I kind of felt bad for people who weren't

Jews. For me, Jewishness was completely identified with New York. When I was thirteen or fourteen, I would take the subway every Saturday from Brooklyn to New York and I would go to the Museum of Modern Art and I would walk around. Then I would sit in the garden and I would read T.S. Eliot, or other things and I would feel utterly part of the New York scene. But in my mind that was also Jewish. (laughs) It's kind of wonderful, isn't it, to think about that?

Reti: Yes. Now, were they religiously Jewish, your family?

Moglen: No. My parents were not—my father, I would say, was probably an atheist. I don't think that he ever used that word. My father and I used to take walks together Sunday afternoons and he would talk to me about his life and his beliefs. He had a kind of pantheism but I think he was an atheist. He and my mother went to Temple on the High Holy Days—well, really only on Yom Kippur. It all seemed incredibly hypocritical to me, because there was no other religion in our lives.

My father responded to the Holocaust with a kind of rage. And it was because of the Holocaust that my father strongly identified as a Jew and gave me a sense of myself as a Jew. But it had nothing, nothing to do with religion. It had to do with a sense that one could be oppressed, killed (not to put too fine a point on it), by virtue of the fact that one was a Jew. And therefore one really had to be a Jew. So I had a very strong Jewish identity, but a very antireligious, strongly secular, but not just secular, I'd say strongly antireligious identity. That has remained true of me. I continue to have both of those things.

Reti: And how recently had your family immigrated to the U.S.?

Moglen: Both of my parents were born in the U.S., but both of their families had been immigrants—from Russia, Austria, etcetera.

Reti: Okay. So then when you were going to high school, were you already thinking of going to college, because your father had encouraged you?

Moglen: Oh, there was never a doubt that I would go to college. I knew I would go to college. I thought I would be a writer. I wrote poetry and I wrote stories. Then my father would bring my poems into his office (laughs) and show them to these life insurance salesmen. God knows what they made of them. (laughs) He was just an incredibly supportive parent and there was nothing I did that he didn't think was really wonderful. So I believed I could be a writer. I sort of thought that I would do that. But I knew I would go to college.

Bryn Mawr

Reti: And how did you decide on Bryn Mawr?

Moglen: I graduated from college in '57, so I started in '53—at that time you either went to a women's college, if you wanted to go a first-rate college you went to a women's college or there were very few coeducational institutions that one thought of as desirable. None of the "first-rate" schools now—Harvard, Yale, etcetera—took women at that time. So all the schools that I applied to were major women's colleges. I loved Bryn Mawr when I visited. It's very small. It had about five hundred students in all and had a very beautiful campus. I could not have

said this but I think I intuited it, that it was a place that really valued intelligence and intellectual activity. That poet in me was very moved by the beauty of it. I hated Brooklyn. I hated that sort of gritty urban thing. And I loved the possibility of living in a place that was so beautiful. Now I see how suburban it was. But to me then it was the country. (laughs)

I got into all the women's colleges—Wellesley, Holyoke—but it was very clear to me that Bryn Mawr was where I wanted to go. My father had known a woman who was a doctor, who had gone to Bryn Mawr. He had a sense that you could really be someone if you went to Bryn Mawr.

I loved Bryn Mawr. Those were enormously happy years for me. It was indeed a place that took women very seriously and there was a very strong teaching faculty. I worked incredibly hard but it was all for myself. I couldn't believe that I was actually being invited and enabled to read all the time and to write papers and to think and to argue about ideas. It was just extraordinary to me to have that opportunity. And Bryn Mawr women (laughs) were not known for their beauty, the way Vassar women were known. Bryn Mawr was a weird place, because its first president had been a very well-known feminist named M. Carey Thomas. And Bryn Mawr had been founded in that spirit of first wave feminism.

Reti: I had no idea.

Moglen: Yes, and the women, the old women who used to come back—they were probably forty—(laughs) No—

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: They were women in their sixties, seventies, who would come back for their reunions in the late spring. They were so feisty and they were so strong and they were just—well behaved, but tough. There was that tradition at Bryn Mawr. There was a very, very strong—that version of feminism: Bryn Mawr women had worked, had careers. I had teachers at Bryn Mawr who had been Bryn Mawr graduates who were intellectuals, certainly, and scholars. It had a very strong classics department—these women who had had extraordinary lives.

On the other hand, there was also this odd strain. You had to wear skirts to dinner. Now, most of us put skirts on over our trousers or over our gym suits. (laughs) It was that moment in the fifties, when the gender division of labor was still very strong and you were expected to be a lady, but you were also—it was very much my father's brand of feminism, now that I think about it—it was very much like my father. You can do anything you want but you have to wear a skirt to dinner. Bryn Mawr had a strong connection to Haverford. There were no sororities; there were no fraternities. So it was a very liberated place for its time.

Reti: And was the expectation—again, like your father's feminism—that you were going to get married?

Moglen: Well, it was very weird in that way. The majority of women in my graduating class did go on to graduate school. A very large proportion of them married at graduation, which is what I did. And here's another part of that paradox—I did a double major in literature and philosophy and when I was

graduating and my teachers heard that I was getting married, several faculty members called me in to talk to me about being sure that I was going to go on to graduate school and going to have a profession. So it was so weird how that double message kept being communicated, without any real sense of how this was going to be possible, or any acknowledgement of the difficulties.

Reti: Interesting mentoring there.

Marriage and Family

Moglen: But it was the time. I think it really was the moment. And I married. I met my husband when we were thirteen, in high school. We had a very close and very intense relationship for all those years. But I think I also understood—I often thought about why it was that I did not marry a man like my father. My husband came from a really working-class family and was incredibly sweet. And we were children together. We had been children together. And I think I understood that it would be possible for me to have the life I wanted with him, that we had grown up together, that he knew who I was and what I wanted to be. Again, I think I intuited more than I knew. This would settle the problem. Because it was also true that for my parents it would have been unthinkable for me to live independently. Of course, if I was going to graduate school, then I would live there and that would be fine. But the idea of my actually living alone—that was unthinkable.

So, there was a certain way in which getting married when I graduated from college settled that problem. Okay, I would get married and now I could just

concentrate on getting on with my life. I did my Ph.D. at Yale and had three children while I was in graduate school, all of them accidental. (laughs) You can see how smart I was. I had three children by the time I finished my dissertation.

Reti: Wow!

Moglen: And again, I look back—I've seen my young colleagues over the years. and I see—only one of my sons has children—but I see how difficult it is to manage everything. And I think, how did I do that? How did I do that?

Reti: That's what I was going to ask you: how did you do that?

Moglen: (laughs) Well, yeah—when my first child was born, I just had one class left. My husband by that time was working. He was a television writer and producer. We were living midway between New York, where he worked, and New Haven, where I was going to school. I remember my sister took care of my son, Eben, one day a week so I could go to my class.

Much to my surprise, I *adored* being a mother. I loved being a mother. I had never held a baby before he was born. I had never taken care of a baby. I had no idea what a baby was like. I didn't know anything about babies. But it was an intense pleasure having this baby. I remember studying for my orals with him and reading him Keats and Shelley. He was, as you can imagine, a very articulate baby, very early on. (laughs) I just saw him as a little person who kept me company all the time. I was astonishingly unambivalent when it actually happened. I was totally ambivalent [earlier]. I remember driving to the hospital

when I started going into labor, and I was saying to my husband, “Well, I think I’d rather not. Let’s just go home.” (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: But there was also this feeling—my father had never had a son and it was amazing that all three of my children were boys. I was very glad, with the first two, that they would not have to deal with the kind of ambivalence and ambiguity and problem that I saw my life as having, although I can’t say that I’d lived it as a problem.

Reti: So you were already thinking in those terms.

Moglen: I was very aware, yes. How can I do this? How will it be possible to do this? You know. But there was never any question for me of *whether* I would do it. Of course I would do it. So— Putting children in their cribs to take a nap and then just immediately working. They had very strict schedules so that I knew that I could work. I just never stopped. It took me a little longer but I finished my dissertation. I was very fortunate when I applied for jobs, that was in 1964, it was clear to me in April that I was going to actually finish my dissertation. I had been doing it all from New York and mailing chapters to my advisor, whom I didn’t see for years. He would send back perfectly anodyne kinds of responses.

I finished it and I applied for jobs. I had three job offers in New York that summer, for the fall. It was still possible. There were still jobs. Things changed quite rapidly after that. But I was very lucky in that the universities were hiring

and women were beginning to be something of a novelty that was desirable. And I had degrees from Bryn Mawr and Yale. I was very qualified.

Graduate Study at Yale University

Reti: And in your program at Yale, what was the percentage of women?

Moglen: I would say a quarter of us were women. But what was really astonishing about Yale—I mean, I really did not enjoy Yale—all three of my sons went to Yale (laughs), so I must have had some fondness for it. But you would think they had never seen a woman before. The undergraduate college was still all male. When I first got to Yale and I had a fellowship, I went to see my advisor, who was a Chaucerian—this was my first contact with Yale—and he was shocked that I was married. And he said, “Well, what are we going to do about your fellowship?” I said, “I don’t understand. What do you mean?” He said, “Well, now that you’re married, what are you going to do to keep our men happy?” He literally said that, slapping his knee and laughing, but he literally said that. People could say that then. Men could say things of that sort. I remember, I just went home and wept. But it was a joke. And there were no consequences.

But then when I got pregnant, several of the faculty said they were really sorry I was leaving. In later years, fifteen or twenty years later, there was a survey of women at Yale, women who had gone through Ph.D. programs. And it turned out that of my cohort, the largest group that finished the Ph.D., were married women with children.

Reti: Oh, my God!

Moglen: The second largest were married women. So the reality (laughs) was one thing. These guys had seen and were seeing—I had two colleagues in my class who were pregnant at the same time I was—they saw it all the time, more than I understood then that they had seen it. But they so resisted that reality. So they said they were sorry I was leaving and when I didn't leave that was fine. I mean, it was not as though—I couldn't say that I was ever treated with discrimination. I never felt I was graded unfairly. My fellowship continued. I never taught the whole time I was at Yale. I was always supported by them. My letters of recommendation were obviously very good. I had no problem getting a job.

So it was a double message, again. I was rewarded for what I did. I felt appreciated for what I did. But I also always also felt that there were these weird expectations, that at every point it was as though I was creating a new world, which was not, in fact, the case at all. It was a very interesting example, I think, of the way in which cultural assumptions can continue in the face of a reality that contradicts them, and the parallel but opposing nature of actions and assumptions. It was really very interesting.

Reti: Do you think it was because it was a rather transitional period, historically?

Moglen: Well, yes, I think it was. I think it was transitional and there was actually a kind of divided reality at Yale, where all the undergraduates were men, and the Yale faculty were only allowed to teach one graduate course every

year. It was a terrific undergraduate institution. So their experience was with a male culture and they participated in the continuing reproduction of that culture. And in the graduate school, which was on some level less significant in their pedagogical lives, but it was also where their legacies were located, women were there. So there was that double reality. The college, which they took enormous pride in, which, of course, was still male. The graduate students, with the occasional woman graduate student with whom a faculty member could connect and whose work seemed to him to be important—they just accepted that. So I think they themselves were living double lives.

What was interesting was that there was very little sexual harassment, as far as I was aware, when I was a graduate student. When they co-educate, and women were in the undergraduate college, the sexual harassment was tremendous—or so I heard. So that was also interesting. That was also a very odd part of the transition.

Reti: And that was after you left.

Moglen: Yes.

Reti: And the graduate programs had been coed for how long at that point?

Moglen: I don't remember how long. But my sense was that the Yale program in literature, it was identified at that time as probably the best in the country. It was the center of the New Criticism, so called, which was all about close textual reading. But it was a very small program. I think they took thirty students and

got rid of fifteen by the second year. So it was a highly selective program and it was very small. But even on my oral exams—we took oral exams before we wrote our dissertations—the four guys questioning me were making jokes about my being married, about women. So it was very, very, very odd. And it certainly maintained my sense of having to work harder, of having to be better, of having to publicly fold in some ways my personal life into my professional life.

As I tell the story to you, I can hear the doubleness that continues. I haven't thought about that, really, before: my father's doubleness, Bryn Mawr's doubleness, Yale's doubleness. Maybe this was always true for women in some way, that there was always some doubleness. But I think in my generation, which was, as you say, a transitional generation, particularly in the sixties, that doubleness became much more acute, much more accentuated. So you still felt the ways in which you were being discriminated against. But you also felt, to some extent, that you were being given what you deserved.

And then there was a time when I came to feel privileged. I believe I got the job I got here because I was a woman. I was good but—it was attractive to some people that a woman would be hired. I think that was truly a transitional period.

Reti: Okay. So when you were an undergrad you were studying philosophy and literature. And then you were a graduate student in literature.

Moglen: I decided to go on— This is also interesting. My life is so interesting! (laughs) I decided not to go on in philosophy. I loved philosophy but I realized I would never be a philosopher, you know. So it seemed weird to do something

that you were always going to be doing in that mediated a way. And then I thought I would go to law school. And of course that was being my father's son. And I did apply to law schools and I got into several. But I realized that if I was going to get married and have children, it was just going to be a lot easier to have an academic life. (laughs)

Reti: Than to be a lawyer.

Moglen: Than to be a lawyer. I didn't feel that I couldn't be a lawyer but I had absolutely no idea how you could be a lawyer and a woman. Whereas in the academic world—by that time I understood something about it—I could see that you had time and that you could work sometimes at home, that in some way the university was somewhere between the domestic and the professional, whereas being a lawyer, it felt as if you really had to be a professional. I was totally puzzled about how to do that.

Reti: Very interesting.

Moglen: So then I went into literature thinking, well, I still then had the possibility of writing, as we say, creatively (laughs), as opposed to uncreative writing. I could be a critic. So it felt as though I could do what I loved. And I could read, which was the greatest pleasure in my life, really. But then when I was in graduate school, two-thirds of the way through graduate school I thought very seriously of leaving to become a child analyst. I became very interested in psychoanalysis.

Reti: I was wondering about that. Because I know your future work combined psychoanalytic theory and literature.

Moglen: I was very interested in psychoanalysis. I had not been psychoanalyzed, and actually it was not until my husband was dying that I ever saw a psychoanalyst. I was in my sixties then. But I became extremely interested in Freud. I'd also done some reading in Anna Freud and some British analysts whose work with children really fascinated me. I think that may have been the only time in my life that I actually felt that I couldn't do something I wanted to do because I was married, because it would just be too wrenching, because I really couldn't figure out how I could do it. What I wanted to do was to go to England and to work at Anna Freud's clinic; that was really what I wanted to do.

So it's very interesting that after my husband died I formed a relationship with a psychoanalyst. (laughs) And, as you say, my work has been very psychoanalytic. So I carried that interest with me. I read much of Freud when I was in graduate school, on my own. Then when I was in New York I thought on and off of being trained as an analyst, but my life was just too demanding. But that was when that interest began to emerge. In fact, I would have been a terrible analyst because I always want to solve everybody's problems. (laughs) So I think I was probably very lucky that I didn't do that.

Reti: (laughs) Okay, so then you were at the point of graduation and searching for jobs. And your husband was supportive of all of this?

Sig Moglen

Moglen: My husband was amazing.

Reti: What was your husband's name?

Moglen: Sig. He was very smart. He had a much more difficult relation to his life. He was a working-class boy who went to Harvard on a full scholarship and always felt out of place, always felt that he didn't fit. So his relation to college was very different from mine. He was always either flunking out or getting A's. To earn extra money he lived with Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and worked sort of as a helper in the house. So he also had access to this highly intellectual and developed world. He very quickly became very successful as a television writer, and then a television producer, and ultimately wound up in publishing. But he always wanted to be a writer. He wanted to write fiction and never really was able to do that. I think he was not internally able to clear the space. But he was extraordinarily good as a father and, for those days, remarkably, saw parenting as our jobs equally.

Reti: That's what I was wondering: what was the division of labor around the house?

Moglen: Because we'd known each other since we were kids, you know, we would fight a lot about who was going to do what (laughs)—but it was all out there. He loved taking care of the children and he never thought it was my job and not his job. So we were very much joint parents. He totally supported my

going on in graduate school, my getting a job. My parents helped some too. When I was writing my dissertation my father provided some money, so that I was able to hire somebody who came and stayed with the children three hours in the afternoon. I would leave the house. I went to this little library, which had a room you could subscribe to, and I would go, I'd sit down, and I would write. (laughs)

Reti: You had to learn be pretty focused.

Moglen: I was utterly focused. And then I would go home again. But that made it possible for me to do the writing. But Sig was totally supportive. His attitude always was, "Don't worry about it. We'll work it out." When I started teaching, my whole salary, it seems to me (that's probably not quite right) went to having someone full time at home.

Teaching at New York University

I was always shocked to be given a salary. Every time I got a paycheck I was amazed that they were paying me to do something I loved so much. From the time I started teaching—my first job was at New York University—and I had never been in a classroom before—

Reti: Oh, because you didn't TA.

Moglen: Because I had been funded completely at Yale. (laughs) The first day I was at NYU, I went into the office of this guy who was in charge of freshman English. And I said, "What do you do when you get in there?"

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: (laughs) He was really incredulous. He couldn't believe that I had never, actually never been in a classroom before, on that side of the desk, and that nobody had asked me that when they hired me. They hired me on the basis of my graduate work, my dissertation, etcetera, and I think because women were starting to be desirable. I was beginning to catch the wave.

Reti: It was 1966 when you started at NYU [New York University].

Moglen: Yes. So teaching was a revelation to me. It was the most fun I had ever had and I couldn't believe that they were letting me do it. It was just such fun. And it was so exciting sharing my passion for literature and for ideas with young people. It's been very interesting for me over the years to see how different my relationship to students is. Now I feel like their grandparent. I'm been teaching this quarter and I think, Gosh, what do they think of me? I'm teaching up here. I'm like their grandmother. What do they think? I'm talking about sex— (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: How do they deal with that, this old lady? (laughs) But then I really felt, you know, these were my colleagues. They were like my younger siblings, I guess. We used to have them over all the time. We had bought this collapsing place in the Berkshires and we had these big parties for my students in the summer. They became part of my life in a wonderful way. My children can still name many of my students from those days. They were so integrated into our

lives and I was so interested in who they were and who they became and all of that.

So teaching was a joy. I was being paid for it. And it got me out of the house. I have to say, I was delighted to get out of the house! (laughs) I loved being a mother but I could not have stood—I mean, that was perfectly clear, I could *not* have not had a career, a life of my own. The two things were—and this was even true in graduate school—the two things were just remarkably balancing. I didn't have all the craziness that a lot of my graduate student friends had because I didn't have time to be crazy. I had to be tremendously organized. My children grounded me. My children always made me remember that this was real life, this was life and this was literature. I didn't get confused about that.

I became very politically engaged, beginning then. I became very active in civil rights—

Reti: Okay, let's back up just a little bit. So had your father or mother had any history of being political?

Moglen: No. My father talked a very good case. He gave a lot of money, once he had money, to the ACLU. He always talked to me about equality and was very intense about that. But my father never had a black friend. The black world was totally other, alien to him.

But I did become—you know, that was all part of the sixties. Oh, it's so much fun to remember. The beginning of feminism and the beginning of civil rights, for

me, happened to some extent at the same time. We were all quite radicalized at NYU. There was this radical wing of the Modern Language Association, which was part of a national movement called the New University Conference, and it was young people who were—we were making the revolution in critical studies. (laughs)

That was the beginning of looking at the canon as problematic. I had been at NYU for three or four years (They had hired a group of young people together, half women and half men, there were six of us, I think) and one of the women who was in my cohort, she said, “I’m going to teach a course on women writers.” I was utterly shocked. I said, “Why would you want to do that? Who are you going to teach?” (laughs)

Reti: Even though you’d been reading Austen?

Moglen: I did my dissertation on Lawrence Sterne, an eighteenth century male writer. I had also wanted to work on Faulkner. And Melville was my third choice. The women we read in graduate school, the women we read—we read Jane Austen; we read Charlotte Brontë; we read George Eliot. But I would have felt very weird in graduate school working on a woman writer, nor did I want to.

Reti: Why?

Moglen: Well, it would have felt very *déclassé*, very not cutting edge. You read Jane Austen in some large Brit Lit class, or on your own but you didn’t really take her seriously professionally. And the same was true with Charlotte Brontë.

People took George Eliot seriously because she had so much heavyocity. *Men* could study women—that was odd and eccentric and interesting. But for a woman to study women—that was like being home in the kitchen. Isn't that interesting? (laughs)

Reti: Yes. Very much so.

Moglen: Right. So I remember when this colleague of mine said that and I was just—I was kind of staggered. But gradually in that period we really did come to be thinking about the canon, to be thinking about what we were and should be teaching.

I became part of a CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) group in Harlem that I went to regularly. I did some stuff with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, although I couldn't go to Mississippi. I did stuff with them in New York, went to marches. My kids made me signs to go on various marches. And I had a black housekeeper and I remember her making me signs for a march. It was so screwed up.

Reti: Complicated.

Moglen: But those two things were very strong for me. I was very involved. There was this position at NYU of Ombudsman, which was the person who was to negotiate between students and the administration, a faculty position. And the students elected me. I didn't have tenure. They elected me. So I was in this position to be negotiating with the administration on their behalf. That was a

very weird experience, which I loved. I was totally fearless in terms of my job because I thought of myself as being a good scholar, my book had been accepted. The dissertation, which I had rewritten, had been accepted for publication. I knew I was a very good teacher. How could I be fired?

Well, as it turned out we were all fired. That whole group of us who had been hired—we all got radicalized together in that period, in those years. We came up for tenure. We arrived together. We came up for tenure. We were all fired. And in those days, there was no accountability at private institutions. At public universities there was more of a process. But at a private university the faculty met and it was up or down. You didn't see anything in writing. Nobody was accountable. *And* we had tried to get rid of the department chair, who we thought was very conservative on curricular and social issues.

I remember winding up in the provost's office after I was fired, crying. I said to him, "How could they do this to me? I don't deserve this." He said, "Helene, what did you *possibly* think would happen to you? How could you have thought that you would get tenure?"

Reti: No questions of academic freedom?

Moglen: No. There was nothing. There were no guidelines. You just assumed—I remember the person who was responsible for writing the critique of my manuscript had never published anything. There were some very interesting parallels when I came to Santa Cruz. A large number of the tenured faculty were these white men who were gentlemen, who had promoted one another. They

hadn't published anything. Maybe they'd published an essay or two. So their view of the profession was totally—it was a men's club. I think that for whatever reasons, by the time I was hired at UCSC they thought that they were going to open it to women and open it to men who were more marginal. But when it came right down to it, we *didn't* belong. They were right. We didn't belong. We *were* going to change the university and we *did* change the university, as it turned out. So they *were* right, by their standards.

Reti: Right. So there you were.

Moglen: Right, and that was scary. That was really scary. Because the doors were beginning to close now. It was in the early seventies and jobs were beginning to dry up. My husband was working in New York so I didn't have the kind of possibilities that some of my colleagues did, who could apply for jobs around the country. I had to find a job in New York. There were two of us in that group who were very popular with the students who were leading the revolution. Students were inhabiting buildings on our behalf and you can imagine how much that helped the cause. (laughs)

But I had two job offers. Both were at schools that were emerging in the sixties. One was Livingston College, which was a branch of Rutgers, which was devoted to more marginal students. Do you know Nikki Giovanni?

Reti: Sure.

Moglen: She was a fiery young woman. She was already—

Reti: She was already there.

Moglen: She was there. It was sort of like City College at that time. They were taking students in a more open admissions way. It was very interesting.

Teaching at State University of New York [SUNY], Purchase

And then there was a new college opening, SUNY, the State University of New York, at Purchase. It was also a very interesting project. It was really Rockefeller's baby. It was a campus on which the arts and the liberal arts were to be equally treated and related to one another. The first building they completed was an art museum, actually.

There were two of us hired in the humanities—both in literature—for the first year. I was hired to do all of English literature. And my colleague, Harry Henderson, was hired to do all of U.S. literature. The buildings were still being built. We met in the old house on the estate. The first students that they accepted were junior transfers from various places. It was a small group. Harry and I divided the curriculum up and we planned the college. We were part of the founding faculty. It was an amazing job.

That money dried up pretty fast, so in fact the ambitions of the administration were never fully realized. But it was very good for me, because the first faculty they hired—the year after Harry and I came they hired a larger group—we were pretty much all at the same level. We were advanced assistant professors or beginning associate professors. I got tenure there imperceptibly. One day the

dean came in and said, “Oh, Helene I want you to know that you have tenure rights.”

Reti: By the way.

Moglen: It was also a kind of club, but of a different sort. I was the first head of the faculty, the president of the faculty. And we had a consciousness-raising group of eight women. We met every week and we would spend two hours doing consciousness raising and one hour planning the university.

Reti: All in the same session.

Moglen: Well, because I was the chair of the faculty for two years. These were women from different departments, some of them quite well known, ultimately: There was Suzanne Kessler, a psychologist; Marcia Cavell, a philosopher; Evelyn Keller was a scientist; Esther Newton was an anthropologist. We were very political and we wanted to make sure that the campus went in the direction that we wanted it to go. So we were kind of running it and we were running it from our consciousness-raising group.

Reti: But I guess what that brings to mind for me—my distant memories of consciousness-raising groups are from being a teenager, when my mother was having them in our living room (laughs)—

Moglen: Right.

Reti: So I was around for that but I was pretty young. They were highly personal. They talked about sex and—

Moglen: Absolutely.

Reti: And these were people that you worked with.

Moglen: Right. It was an amazing moment, an amazing moment! We were incredibly close friends. And it was interesting, when we started there was one lesbian in the group—that was Esther, quite a notorious lesbian. And by the time we finished there were only two of us who were still straight. (laughs) That's another sign of the time.

So we were just totally in each other's lives. We knew all about one another. And we were also doing political work together. It was amazing. And we used to visit one another's classes. In literature, one of my colleagues, Myra Jehlen, and I used to stop in on one another's classes. It was a very lively place. We all taught with the doors open and we would come in and out of one another's classes or eavesdrop at the doors to kind of see what the pedagogy was. We talked all the time about pedagogy—how you did it, what you did. It was something.

Purchase was in charge of a small campus in Mt. Vernon, New York, which was mostly working class. This little school was mostly black. The students were just about all black. Anyone who wanted to come was admitted. It didn't matter what their educational background was. After six months, the faculty would decide whether it would make sense for them to continue as students. Purchase

guaranteed admission as juniors to anyone who the faculty at Mt. Vernon said was ready to attend. That could take a year; that could take five years. But when they said they were ready there was no question. They came.

So several of us also started teaching at Mt. Vernon. One of the most wonderful courses I've ever taught was there. The students were very tired of all these people coming in and teaching black writers to them. They wanted me to teach what I did. They wanted to know what I did and they wanted me to teach that. So we did a class in nineteenth century literature. It was amazing. I remember that we read Wordsworth and I remember one woman saying, "This is like being in church." We made a map of Mt. Vernon and we had a map of London in the nineteenth century. We looked at how ghettos are formed. And we analyzed the ways in which diverse populations related. We read Mayhew's *London Labor and the London Poor*. It was just extraordinary. It was an astonishing class. It was just seat of the pants, trying to figure out how to do this. But also, you couldn't really make mistakes. They were people who really wanted to learn. They wanted to feel as if they were learning something that wasn't just about their culture.

So I loved my teaching there. We would just do that back and forth, between Purchase and Mt. Vernon. So the Purchase experience was really quite extraordinary. It was quite an extraordinary experience.

And, oh—the most interesting thing! Purchase was modeled on UCSC.

Reti: That's amazing!

Moglen: There was a small administration there before they hired any faculty. The dean was a historian from Sarah Lawrence. It was a kind of progressive group of guys. And they were looking around for a model. They came to Santa Cruz and they were totally into what was going on at Cowell and Stevenson. But at Purchase—they still were building the dormitories. It was not a residential campus for the first years. Only very gradually did it become so. So they presented us with the UCSC thing, with the college thing, which of course by that time had already pretty much disintegrated at UCSC itself. But that was their project. And they left it to us to figure out how to do it.

And what we did was so much better than anything that was being done at UCSC by the time I got here and it was also very interesting. We had a core course. That was the only thing that the students took in their first year. They took one core course—one cluster—each semester. They were problem-oriented courses taught by three faculty: one in humanities, one in social sciences, and one in natural sciences. We did a mixture of lectures, seminars, and tutorials. So it was the only thing the faculty did also in the semester that they taught the class. It was a very expensive program in that way. We were supposed to do it once every two or three years. So for that semester, that was all we did.

So I did one on women. I did one on creativity. The year my father died, I did one on death and dying. It was just another incredibly intense experience. Because the semester before we taught it, three of us would meet all the time to plan it. We planned it as an integrated course. We sat in on one another's lectures

for a whole semester. We met the students in seminars and they rotated and we met them all in tutorials. We had outings. We did all kinds of stuff with them. We were trying to create the college system in an intellectual way. It was extraordinary. It was really extraordinary. And it was so intense and it was so consistent. I'm sure sometimes it wasn't very good, but I think usually it was very good. The faculty were utterly committed to it. And we got to know one another. Some of us wrote together. Evelyn and I wrote an essay together on Lewis Carroll as a result of this course on creativity that we did. There was a lot of excitement and it made the college a very dynamic and lively place.

It's not the way it is here now. You go into the Humanities Building—there's never anybody there. There's no interaction. There's no anything. Where *are* people? You don't have a sense of people—people hang out socially but there's no—

Reti: There's no café.

Moglen: It's terrible. Yes.

So it was an extraordinary place. And when the dean took a leave, I was asked to be an acting dean for a semester. That was one of the things that made me start to think about administration. Another was that my husband was really burnt out. He had moved from television to publishing. He very much wanted to write. We were both forty. He was seeing his life disappearing and he wanted out. We didn't see any way that we could make that happen in New York. It was too expensive living there. There was also a way in which our careers, our identities

were too set—with our families, with our friends, with everybody. For Sig to have dropped out, even if we could have afforded it, which we couldn't—there would have been, I think, something quite humiliating about his leaving work. Because he had been extremely successful. He'd won a lot of Emmy's—

So it felt as though we really had to leave. I was asked to apply for the position of provost at Sarah Lawrence, which I did. And I didn't get it. So it was starting to feel to me as though—well, maybe administration.

Coming to UC Santa Cruz as Dean of Humanities

So I saw this job announcement for the deanship at UCSC and I just applied. It was, well, maybe we'll do this. We could afford it. I would be making more money and Sig thought, well, he would continue doing publishing from a distance but it would be different. UCSC really interested me because it was the model for this project that I had been very much involved with at Purchase.

Reti: So that was how you knew about UCSC. And Purchase—you said something about they ran out of money?

Moglen: Well, that was not—I would not have left for that reason. But they had imagined—they had four theaters; they had imagined a kind of major SUNY campus. Instead, they really had to shrink their vision. But I was very happy there. It was really a coming together for me of friendship and feminism and teaching in a way that never happened again for me, and that I knew could never

happen again. I have to say, it didn't last over the years there either. But it was an extraordinary moment. We were building a campus.

Reti: And building a movement while you were doing it.

Moglen: And building a movement. Right.

Reti: And you said you were doing political work.

Moglen: I was doing this work at this black college, which felt like significant work. I was very active as a feminist. It felt as though my life was very integrated.

So it was clear that in leaving New York—there would be losses. But it was also a major start. And as I wrote in that little piece: I thought, well, I'll have power and I'll make a difference (laughs)—I really believed this, that I could *make* it happen, whatever it was I could make it happen. Because I was very fortunate, I always felt effective. I always felt that I could make things happen. And I had been fortunate in having had the kind of work in which that felt true. In a little fish tank I had managed to be a big fish. (laughs)

Reti: Having a certain confidence.

· See Helene Moglen, "Power and Empowerment," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 6. No. 2 pp. 131-134, 1983.

Moglen: Yes, I had a *lot* of confidence. I had a lot of confidence when I came here.

Reti: Now, was there any kind of women's studies at Purchase? Was that something that was starting to develop?

Moglen: No, there was no women's studies. What there was, though, was a very strong group of feminists. All of us were teaching feminist classes and this cluster—we called the freshman classes "clusters"—on women was taught every semester. Different ones of us did it every semester. So there was a sense of there really being a core of feminist thinking among the students and among the faculty. And because we had this consciousness-raising group that continued to meet—right until the time I left we were still meeting—there was a tremendous feminist presence on the campus—politically, intellectually. We just were running the place.

Reti: And how were the students?

Moglen: Oh, the students were terrific. They were mostly New Yorkers. A lot of them were a bit artsy. They were terrific. They were wonderful. It was a sixties faculty. It was a young faculty. We never did hire a senior faculty. These associate professors just got older and older. That was where the money running out made the difference, in that they had planned to hire a very distinguished senior cohort. They had various people in mind. But it took longer. It was easier to bring young people in fast. We all wanted jobs, we came, and it was exciting. It was much harder to move senior people—by the time they might have been

able to get senior faculty, the money was drying up. They never did hire a group of distinguished senior faculty. It was really this younger faculty, and many of us over the years left and went elsewhere.

Reti: Today is February 11, 2013, and this is Irene Reti. I'm back with Helene Moglen for interview two of our oral history. So, Helene, we're going to start today by talking about your tenure as dean of humanities. First of all, backing up just a little bit, what were your impressions of the campus when you got here, on the whole?

Moglen: Well, first of all, I thought it was the most beautiful place I'd ever seen. I couldn't believe I was actually going to work here. It was extraordinarily—it was so beautiful. I routinely got lost walking to meetings. I had two assistants, Bob Jorgensen and Keith Muscutt, who were always going out to look for me in the woods when I'd be late for a meeting. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: So the beauty of the campus was extraordinary and it actually made me quite patriotic, which is not one of my major feelings. But I had worked at a state university. I had worked at SUNY. It was not very beautiful. It did seem to me that it was extraordinary for there to be a state university that was so beautiful and that had such an interesting and theorized approach to education. And the college system seemed to me very promising, as did many of the faculty. So I was enormously excited by how beautiful it was. So that was the first thing.

But there was a lot to learn about. I came a year later than Bob Sinsheimer did, and he reorganized the campus in my first year. That was a major change for faculty who had been here for many years. So, it was not only that I needed to learn about what *had* been, but I also needed to plan what was going to be. Because the campus changed very dramatically as a result of Sinsheimer's reorganization. I don't know if you want me to talk about that—

Reorganization of the UCSC Campus

Reti: Yes, why don't you just briefly talk about what that reorganization meant.

Moglen: Well, as we all know, the original vision of the campus centered the colleges as the sites of general education for the first two years, and really as the homes of students, but not just of students, also of faculty. The colleges were meant to be the places with which faculty, as well as students, identified. And they did, and particularly, of course, in the older colleges, in Cowell and Stevenson, Merrill—Crown was always a little different because it housed the science faculty and their labs were home in some way, and so they were a little bit more divided. Actually, I think it was because of the way in which the natural sciences were never fully integrated into the college system that the college system never fully worked. It was interesting, looking at it from my perspective, not as a founding faculty member or even as a second generation faculty member, but as a not yet post-college kind of faculty member, to sort of see what the hopes had been, what the vision had been, but also to see what the failure

had been. And to see the ways in which the failure had been built in from the beginning. That was fascinating to me.

So my impressions of the campus were that it had been wonderfully theorized, wonderfully architected, and that the vision was very inadequate, and that it wasn't surprising that it was undone. There was significant tension between the vision of the colleges as centers of experimental education and the importance—however secondary—of the academic divisions, where traditional forms of institutional power resided. I think the tension marked the administration's failure of courage to fully commit to innovation and that failure of courage was also related to UCSC's intention to be a graduate as well as an undergraduate institution. How you build a graduate institution without strong departments was a major question. So that there needed to be something that looked like departments, even if they weren't called departments, in order to support graduate education if it was going to be worth anything in the outside world.

So I think that was where the conflict was right from the beginning. I faced it in my very first summer. I arrived at the beginning of July and I spent the summer reading personnel files. Maybe we should wait to talk about this until we get to personnel issues. But anyway, so that was my impression of the campus.

Reti: How did you go about filling yourself in on the history of what had been and the issues that were facing the campus?

Moglen: Well, there were different ways. Maybe I *should* talk about how I spent my summer. (laughs)

Reti: Sure.

Moglen: I spent my summer reading personnel files of everyone in the division and meeting everyone in the division. I wanted to know who the faculty were, and I wanted to know how they felt about who they were at UCSC. So I read everybody's personnel file and I met everybody that summer. It was an extremely interesting experience and it did give me a sense of what the history of the campus had been.

I also had this extraordinary insight as I read the personnel files, and I came to realize that the faculty at UCSC, uniquely in the country, had the ability to vote two ways, which utterly fulfilled their sometimes contradictory desires and needs as professional academics and as people. They could vote in their colleges for a colleague whom they loved and admired and respected. They could vote against that same person in their department, if they happened to be in their department, on the basis of their inadequate scholarship. This was done again and again and again. So many of the personnel decisions on this campus had been kicked up to the administration because the faculty had the ability to undermine their own votes. Where people were clearly first-rate scholars and first-rate teachers, there was no problem. But where there were problematic cases, the faculty were able, actually, to split their votes. Then it was up to the dean and then it was up to the higher administration to make decisions.

So, in a way, it was a very moving system because all of us who are faculty know what it means to really, really care about colleagues and want to support them,

and want to support them as teachers and as human beings, but to believe also that they're not first-rate scholars and that they're going, if anything, to be weaker scholars later than they are when they come up for tenure. So to see how enthusiastically people could write letters of such contradictory sorts was really an education.

Reti: I bet.

Moglen: So I did inform myself about the faculty. I got to know the other deans, the dean of social sciences and the dean of the natural sciences, who were really good-guy buddies, and who were sort of charmed that this young woman had arrived as a dean. They were nice to me some of the time and they were really trying (laughs) to do me out of resources whenever they could, and testing the degree of my naiveté. But I learned a lot from them.

Then Bob Sinsheimer reorganized the campus. That was just an enormous jolt. At that point I really had to think about what the structure of the division was going to be and what a future looked like here, which was going to be quite different from what I had thought it was going to be when I came.

Reti: So when you came you weren't aware that this reorganization was coming.

Moglen: I don't think many people were aware of it. Sinsheimer came one year before I did and he decided halfway into my first year, as I recall it was in November. Of course, I'm sure he had many advisors on this matter—but he saw that there was an incoherence in the structure of the campus. It was a very

inefficient way of delivering education to students, because everyone taught one course in their colleges and their other courses in their boards of study, and people were teaching all kinds of courses in their colleges that they didn't necessarily have any training for. Sometimes they were teaching courses in their colleges that reproduced courses they were teaching in their disciplines. It was a very interesting, but incoherent setup. Many faculty were doing service for their colleges, and didn't do service for the campus. There was that split everywhere. There was also a lot of doubling. Every college had its own complicated administration, which also shadowed the central administration.

There was a crunch and I think Bob saw, with his advisors, that this was the way to go. So no, it was not generally anticipated, and certainly no one I knew thought it was happening. Then it happened and it was very distressing to many faculty who loved their colleges.

And it was very clear that what was happening was that the colleges were being absorbed by the divisions. That was why Bob asked me to go over to Kresge as the provost, to sort of clean up Kresge, which was perceived as the heart of darkness, and to reorganize and integrate it into the larger campus—along with Porter and Cowell. Most of the faculty at Cowell were already in the humanities division, which was not the case at Kresge, but the Cowell administration now had to report to the humanities, since the humanities division was in charge of space and policy of various sorts.

Provost of Kresge College

Reti: Okay, so shall we talk about Kresge College at this point, since we've touched on this?

Moglen: Yes. Kresge was genuinely perceived as the heart of darkness. The campus bus did not stop at Kresge. The buses did not stop at the front of Kresge. They stopped at the back of Kresge where you could see the woods but not the college from the road.

Kresge had been started by Bob Edgar and Michael Kahn. Bob Edgar was the first provost. They were into Rogerian psychology. So Kresge was started on Rogerian psychology principles, even though several of the founding faculty were scientists, and quite distinguished scientists. Henry Hilgard was also very closely connected to them. So the college was organized into kin groups, which included staff, faculty, and students, and all decisions were made collaboratively. So every decision, including how much money to spend on stamps, was made by everybody together meeting all the time.

Reti: That sounds very seventies or very sixties. (laughs)

Moglen: It was very—out there. And there were very few boundaries respected, one might say. There was a lot of what would later be called sexual harassment but certainly was not called sexual harassment then. Some of the stories, which I later heard from students who came back about what had happened were truly disturbing. It was very disturbing. Some of these guys really—they were really

leaders of a cult. It was unfortunate. And the whole plan of the college—Kresge was really built with this kinship structure in mind. The sextets, those walls were moveable, so students could move the walls to suit their relational structures. There were kitchens in every apartment. So every apartment had a kind of familial feel.

It was a very interesting and very strange setup. And it took all the faculty's time. There were some younger faculty who arrived at UCSC and were part of Kresge College who were very, very freaked out about it. There is an extremely interesting chapter in a book called *The Perpetual Dream* by David Riesman and Gerald Grant, who have written about a series of colleges which grew up in the sixties and seventies as alternative institutions.³ And they have a chapter on Cowell and a chapter on Kresge. They're really quite fascinating to read.

So in addition to the Reisman and Grant book, which I found quite educative, there were also some papers at Kresge about its history. They presented a fairly tame version of what was going on but you do get a pretty good picture of it nevertheless. There was one room with a punching bag, which was where people could get mad. There were lots of classrooms that had no chairs. Everybody was supposed to sit on the floor. The "library," so-called, had mattresses on the floor,

³ Gerald Grant and David Riesman, *The Perpetual Dream: Reform and Experiment in the American College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

and that was where a lot of people crashed when they were sort of traveling around California, and a lot of kids would crash there. It was very undisciplined. I was told that Gregory Bateson used to teach one of his classes in the sauna, there was a sauna there. It was a scandal. It was a very interesting scandal.

I chose to affiliate with Kresge when I came because women's studies was there, and I really wanted to make a statement when I came that I was supporting women's studies. Bob Sinsheimer tried to talk me out of it. He suggested I affiliate with various other colleges. But I was very clear that I wanted to be at Kresge. But I had no idea at that point of what was happening there.

I think that was also part of the reason that Bob thought that I should go over to Kresge as provost. So when he asked me to be the provost there, as well as the dean of humanities and arts, and I said, "Well, it's really out of control. There are no classrooms and there's a room with a punching bag," he said, "Well, draw up a budget." I asked for more than 100,000 dollars to actually redo public space at Kresge so that we could have classrooms, seminar rooms, so that we could have a library. I insisted that the bus stop at the front entrance. Literally, the campus bus had to be rerouted so it stopped at the front entrance of Kresge. It had not stopped there before.

Reti: And you think that's because they didn't want people going there?

Moglen: Well, that's complicated.

So Bob got it. He understood it. Everybody knew it was a scandal and nobody had really done anything to open it up and to name it—I mean, it really was a kind of heart of darkness. Nobody’s talked to you about this?

Reti: Dave Kliger, in his oral history, did talk about how many faculty members—because he was part of Kresge—their marriages fell apart and the extreme number of hours that faculty spent.⁴

Moglen: Yes, it was a scene. All of that was certainly true. But I think perhaps what people didn’t talk very much about was how abusive it was of students.

Reti: I think that doesn’t come out. What you get is this kind of romanticized version of Kresge. And certainly as a student who was at Kresge in 1981, I think it had been cleaned up by then, but there was this romanticization of the earlier period, as this kind of free period that we had lost.

Moglen: Yes, right.

Reti: So that’s the version I’ve heard. You don’t hear about what was going on for women students, the abuse of students.

⁴ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, “Campus Provost/Executive Vice Chancellor David Kliger” (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2011). Available at <http://library.ucsc.edu/register/ucsc/campus-provostexecutive-vice-chancellor-david-kliger>

Moglen: Right. And there were young women faculty—there were a couple of guys over there, one of whom ceased to be connected to Kresge by the time I got there, who had very seductive personalities and really controlled, not just students, but also younger faculty. There was a lot that was quite distressing. It was also a place where some faculty kind of hung out and pulled back from the campus. Of course, there was a sense all over the campus, particularly in the humanities and perhaps in part of the social sciences and the arts, that if you were really strong in your college you would get tenure. That had happened for some people. So there were very high stakes in doing the college work but it was also a way of escaping certain kinds of commitments.

So Bob gave me this budget. It was amazing what I took on. We redecorated rooms. We took down the walls in what became Kresge 159, which became that big seminar room. We took down the punching bag. (laughs)

Reti: That's where the punching bag was?

Moglen: That's where the punching bag was.

Reti: I think I remember the punching bag.

Moglen: Was it still there when you were there?

Reti: It was in some room, somewhere.

Moglen: So we did various things and cleaned out spaces, put in tables and chairs, got a little bit of a library going, but certainly got a space that was a study space. There was never really a good library there.

And what I did, which I do think was a stroke of genius, I brought the O'mei there. The O'mei was a little restaurant downtown where my husband and kids and I used to eat all of the time. It was just a little hole in the wall and it was a great restaurant that Roger [Grigsby] ran. April, his wife, waited on tables. The food was terrific. The only restaurant that there was at Kresge at that time was the co-op. You never knew when it was going to be open and what it was going to be serving. So I invited Roger to come up to run the restaurant there. And that transformed the college because it was by far the best restaurant on campus. People used to line up at lunchtime. Our agreement was that there would be a special meal at lunch and dinner for students, at a reduced rate. So there were always reduced-rate meals for students. It became a buzzing restaurant. All the money went for student affairs, to do programs for students at Kresge. So it was wonderful. That changed things a lot.

Then what I also did was to bring most of the heavy-hitting departments over to Kresge. I brought history of consciousness over. I brought American studies. We were building women's studies. So the interdisciplinary programs were there. And I brought literature, which was the largest program in the division. And when cultural studies started—Hayden [White] started it but Jim [Clifford] was the founding director—Hayden got the money but wanted Jim to do it—cultural

studies was there.⁵ So that meant that the heaviest hitters in the division were at Kresge. Graduate students were at Kresge, with histcon and literature. We had talks at Kresge. We had events. I had the budgets of both the dean and the provost. So I did a lot of entertaining and a lot of parties and bringing people together. Kresge did become a very hopping place. By the time I left— four years later, I was dean for five years, provost for four—there was a long waiting list of faculty who wanted to move over to Kresge. Kresge had really become *the* cool college.

Reti: That's quite an accomplishment.

Moglen: It was an accomplishment. But it also took Bob Sinsheimer's recognizing that, if he wanted Kresge to be brought into the campus, it was going to take money and he was going to have to give me some flexibility to do it.

Reti: Did you encounter resistance from the boards?

Moglen: (laughs) Well, I remember walking over there with Hayden [White], because I took faculty on tours to get their idea of what we should do and—And

⁵ See Cameron Vanderscoff, Interviewer and Editor, "Hayden White: Frontiers of Consciousness at UCSC," (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013). Available at: <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/20b91099> An oral history with James Clifford is forthcoming in late 2013.

Hayden was saying, “Look, Helene, I struggled for years to get out of Detroit. Now you want me to go back to the slums?”

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: (laughs) And Nobby [Norman O. Brown] was totally ironic about it.

Reti: They didn’t like the architecture.

Moglen: It was terribly run down. And there were no facilities. It was very weird. There had been this sauna that was apparently going night and day. People were stopping in from across the country. The sauna had been closed by the time I came over. But literally, there were no chairs in the classrooms. This library *did* have mattresses on the floor. I’m really not exaggerating. So when the faculty came over to look in that first year, for the following year—you know, they were very adventurous and it was clear that I had ambitions. So they were willing to come but they were pretty ironic.

The newer faculty, the histcon faculty, and some of the literature [faculty], they were up for changing things. But the history faculty were much more resistant. They had a strong tradition over at Merrill, where many of them stayed, and at Stevenson. They hated that the campus was being changed. For many of these guys, they were really committed to specific forms of diversity. Merrill was the Third World college. And a lot of these guys—there were a few women, but mostly guys—had poured their life’s blood into those colleges. They weren’t asked to leave; they were left there, as people were left in Cowell and Stevenson,

as much as we could. But just the idea of the reorganization was very off-putting, and people really resisted what we were doing. So yeah, it was a lot of *sturm und drang* and drama.

Reti: I certainly remember reorganization when I was a student in the late 1970s. I didn't understand the complexities at all then.

Moglen: No. Of course.

Reti: Did you have more to say about Kresge?

Moglen: The thing I will say is that I loved being provost and I loved the students. I did two things which I would really like memorialized, which very few people know about, and which were very wicked, and which I take great pride in having done.

I always thought the students were by the far the easiest people on campus to get along with. They were always up for making compromises. There was one point—and this was not one of my great things that I did, but it was a nice thing to happen—the students who lived on Upper Street used to hang their laundry. They would hang it in the mid-morning and they would leave it up so that it crossed from one side of the street to the other. So in order to get to the O'mei, people were walking through people's laundry lines. I called in the kids from Upper Street. I said, "Look, I think it's really great that you're hanging your laundry out. I think that's wonderful. Could you take it down everyday from 12:00 to 2:00?" No problem. So it was that sort of thing. The students were just

always willing to work with you if you showed them why it made sense: people just really don't want to look at your laundry when they go out for lunch. They were perfectly accommodating.

But then one day a group of kids came and they wanted more grass at the college. So we saw there was this place that was on Lower Street, up near the top, and it looked like we could put more grass in. So I called Campus Facilities and the prices I got to do this were out of sight. So I said to these kids—there was a small group, as I recall, all women—I said, “Look, if you were to rent a jackhammer and come in on a weekend—”

Reti: (laughs) Oh, my God!

Moglen: “And pick up the pavement,” I said, “I would have to come in Monday morning and I would see that this had been done. I would call Campus Facilities and they would have to put in some lawn.” And lo and behold, that happened. So next time you go over to Kresge you should take a look. There's that very nicely cut little lawn space right near the wall. You know, when you go up and around, there's a kind of turnaround to get to the classrooms up there? Well, there's a very nice place and I go over there now and I see people sunning themselves and lying and reading. I feel it should be named for me but I'd probably be in prison— (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) The Helene Moglen Lawn.

Moglen: And then that was so successful, by all of our standards— They just came over and carted away the cement and they planted lawn. Nothing. No problem. And it was great. You look a little shocked.

Reti: I just finished interviewing Lou Fackler.⁶

Moglen: (laughs)

Reti: I'm picturing his face reading this.

Moglen: This is quite little-known, actually.

So the students were quite heady. There was a room for commuters with a shower. And there was a wall right in the middle of this room that wasn't very pleasant. So they asked me how it would be to take down that wall. So we did some research and it was not a weight-bearing wall and they did take it down. We enlarged that room very nicely and that was our last project. But I think those were very good projects.

Reti: "We" meaning the students got in there with tools and did it.

Moglen: They did. They used the same principle. (laughs)

⁶ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, "Louis F. Fackler: Founding Campus Engineer, UC Santa Cruz," (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013). Available at: <http://escholarship.ucop.edu/uc/item/6sq7h3w0>

I loved being provost. It really was a way of working with young people very creatively (laughs) and kind of around the edges of what was possible, and trying to resolve problems in informal ways that made a lot of sense. And at that time it *was* possible. The colleges had budgets. We had staff. Staff were always wonderful. The staff were willing to do whatever. And the kids were great.

I brought over this wonderful group of faculty. I asked all the humanities faculty to teach in the core courses. It was one fifth (ultimately one fourth), but at that time it was one fifth of their course loads. Everybody had to teach every other year.

Reti: In the Kresge Core Course.

Moglen: And also Cowell— That was a result of the shift of faculty from the colleges to the division. And when people came up for personnel actions, if they hadn't taught in the core course that was noted. And again, these guys were great—mostly guys—Hayden and Nobby [Norman O. Brown] and Jim [Clifford]. People just—they got a kick out of it. I don't know how long they would have gotten a kick out of it, but they were very up for it initially. We used to meet together to plan the course. We would have faculty lectures for the whole class. I remember Dick Wasserstrom—we were teaching Jane Austen—and Dick would scratch his head and he'd say, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to do this?" But everybody was up for it. It was great. So now I'm finished with Kresge.

The Women's Studies Program

Reti: So related to that, women's studies had been a program, a student-run program at Kresge when you arrived.

Moglen: It had been a student-run program. And it was a mess. One of the reasons it was a mess was that everybody met all the time, which meant that the students wanted the faculty to be endlessly available. Most of the faculty were lecturers without security of employment, but some were regular faculty. The faculty in the program were dropping like flies because it was a student-run program where students made all the decisions about credit, about courses. Then they would recruit faculty to teach in the program. And then they would want faculty to go to all these meetings to confer, to consult about matters that they—the students—would make the decisions about. Well, there was not a lot of support among the faculty for this. So Bob asked me to take over Kresge, and to figure out which programs would remain but would be in the division and which would simply be closed.

So I wanted to make women's studies a divisional program. And the students were furious. The students really hated me. I asked Barbara Epstein to chair the department. Barbara at that time was in history. She said, "Well, I'll do it if you'll let me be the good cop and you be the bad cop." I said that was fine.

That's how we played it. Barbara always did what the students wanted and I always said no. I remember one confrontation with the students when they were arguing. I said, "Look, you're giving everybody five credits for peeing. That's

just going to stop.” But it was harsh. It was hard. The students were very angry. They marched outside the provost’s house. It was very painful for me. I thought of myself—I *was* a feminist.” But it was clear to me, it was clear to me that if women’s studies was going to last, it had to be not only brought into the campus, but it had to be a strong, excellent program, and that wasn’t going to happen if it was student-run, or if the students were hiring faculty every quarter to teach in it. That just wasn’t going to work.

So we did make it a regular divisional program: a board. Barbara Epstein chaired it initially. Then when I stopped being dean, I was asked to chair women’s studies. That’s another whole story. But through the time that I was dean I supported Barbara pulling it together. We hired Bettina [Aptheker]. We regularized Bettina’s appointment. She didn’t have a regular FTE yet but she was teaching in the program. We tried to begin to give the program some structure and to earn recognition on the campus.

Reti: I certainly well remember that time period. I think what wasn’t evident [to students] at the time was that you really were a strong feminist coming from a grassroots feminist perspective. I can see in retrospect that what got built was one of the foremost women’s studies programs in the country. It never would have happened had you not come in at that moment and institutionalized the program.

Moglen: Right. And at the same time that was happening, I gave Hayden two FTE in feminist theory, two FTE that could be used only for feminist theory.

Hayden had come to build histcon, which was also a student-run program. And I offered him two FTE if he'd make the appointments in feminist theory. Hayden had never thought that he was going to have two appointments in feminist theory but he said, "Yeah. Fine." I was actually on those search committees and I can't quite figure out how we made that decision. But there were very few feminists. There were very few *women* on the campus. I had the first meeting of tenured women at UCSC. There were twenty of us.

Reti: Oh, my God.

Moglen: I had them to the provost house at Kresge. And that means associate and full professors. It was the first time they had ever been in a room together and had ever identified themselves as the tenured women at UCSC.

So when I keep saying "the guys" it's not just my paranoia. There really were very few women.

So I was trying to build feminist studies at the graduate level and at the undergraduate level. I really did have a vision for it. It was clear to me what was going to be necessary. And no, I wasn't seen as a feminist. I was sort of seen as a monster. (laughs)

Reti: Was that hard?

Moglen: It *was* hard. But I also got it. For me there was no point in doing this job if I couldn't help to make things happen. I've never named myself much politically—you know, routinely—except for feminism: a feminist has always

been and remains the thing that I am. That is the thing that is most dear to my heart. There was a lot of sexism at UCSC. There was a lot of progressive language and all the rest of it. But there was also a lot of sexism. It was a guys' place. It was clear to me that it was not going to be easy to do this and you could only do it institutionally. I know I was right. Feminist studies now has a graduate program and a strong reputation.

Reti: Yes, certainly by the time I was a secretary in women's studies in 1988, it was an entirely different program. You were chair at that point. We'll get to that later.

Moglen: Okay.

Reti: But seeing just how much happened in that ten years for the program. So your vision included, at that point, feminist theory as a critical component.

Moglen: The vision included feminist theory. I was much less interested in the identity parts of the program, which seemed to me to be a stage of women's studies which was going to play itself out. But feminist theory more broadly was fascinating to me. It mattered. Feminist theory *mattered*. I thought that feminist theory was at the heart, not just of changing academic culture, but I would have said then, of changing society. So it felt to me really important to have that

graduate component. And Hayden and Jim, once it was clear that we were doing that, they were utterly behind it. Of course, we hired Donna [Haraway] in our first position.⁷ Donna transformed everything. She made an incredible difference.

Then we hired Teresa [de Lauretis] in the second position for histcon. So while we were building women's studies we were also building feminist theory at the graduate level. Feminist theory in histcon has always had a very close relation to women's studies (later called feminist studies). The histcon graduate students always TA'd for women's studies classes and there was always a very close relationship between the two programs. Donna was a very active member of women's studies. Donna was on the executive committee for women's studies for years.

The UCSC Women's Center

Reti: Yes. And then part of your vision for women's studies also included the Women's Center.

Moglen: Right. So when I finished being dean—

⁷ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, "Edges and Ecotones: Donna Haraway's Worlds at UCSC," (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2007). Available at: <http://escholarship.ucop.edu/uc/item/9h09r84h?query=donna%20haraway>

Reti: I know we did a whole interview about that that people can refer to. We did that about ten years ago now.⁸ But I thought we should include a little bit about that here.

Moglen: Right.

Reti: But I thought we should include a little bit about that.

Moglen: Right. When I decided not to be considered for another term as dean and I decided to accept the offer to chair women's studies, I also decided that we wanted to have an active research group and also that we should have a connection with women in the community. So in my first year chairing women's studies we all went to Big Sur for three days, and we had a retreat and all the faculty who defined themselves as feminists and who were working in different departments planned how this could happen. I got Bob to give me the Cardiff House for the Women's Center (laughs), which was really great. We got a little money to start the Feminist Studies Focused Research Activity. So in those five years we were building those three different things at the undergraduate, graduate, and community levels.

⁸ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, "Crossing Borders: the UCSC Women's Center, 1985-2005," (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2005). Available at <http://digitalcollections.ucsc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p265101coll13/id/3465>

Mardi Wormhoudt and I co-directed the Women's Center as a way of trying to make it a university-community activity.

Reti: How did you and Mardi connect?

Moglen: I just knew Mardi from downtown; we weren't friends. She wasn't the mayor yet but like so many people downtown, she was a UCSC graduate. Most of the UCSC graduates who remained in the community and who were active in various ways totally loved the institution, although they didn't always agree with the administration's policies. I asked Mardi if she would be interested in doing it and she immediately said yes. She was totally committed. She came to every meeting. She did whatever she could. We worked together. There were hard times, all kinds of politics. Mardi was great. She was really great.⁹

Reti: Yes.

Literature

Well, let's move on to some of the other departments we haven't talked about yet. What about literature, which was your home department?

⁹ Mardi Wormhoudt was a progressive politician who served for twenty-one years on the Santa Cruz City Council and the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors.

Moglen: Yes, literature was my home department. Literature was a pretty strong department. It was also quite rare among literature departments in that it had all the non-English languages together with English, and all the literatures were taught together. It would have described itself probably as a comp lit department. It wasn't exactly a comp lit department. It was a strange department in that we were all in one department but everybody was doing his or her thing. So the Italianists were teaching Italian in Italian, the French similarly. At that time there was, I think, one person in Latin America and three in Peninsula Spanish. Latin America was seen as minor at that time. Classics was very strong. But also the Classicists were just working as Classicists. There were no courses in translation, as I recall, and few courses that crossed national boundaries. So although there was an English faculty, the English faculty were just teaching English literature. So we had English and American literature but we didn't have any courses in translation.

As dean, I urged—because we were really trying to build the division; we were trying to get more money; we were trying to get more resources—and it seemed to me that unless we were willing to open the department up and teach foreign language literatures in English, that wasn't going to happen. So the department did do that and over the years the department changed very much.

Literature was a big, strong department but it didn't have any particular vision. Its vision was getting all these people together, and not separating people who

[taught] different language literatures. But the department hadn't found a way to exploit those differences and similarities yet.

There were some wonderful faculty. Harry Berger—Harry had brought a lot of people from Yale. That was a strong part but also a weak part of the way Santa Cruz was built. Harry was the first person in literature to be hired. He brought all of these young people whom he had known at Yale. Then there was a certain kind of buddy system. It was hard to break that up.

Reti: I've been struck by that recently, of how many of the faculty that I'm interviewing went to Yale.

Moglen: In literature. The literature department at Yale was generally acknowledged to be the best in the country then. It was a very strong department. But this was really like a little Yale department. I think that probably was one of the reasons they were up for hiring me was because I also had gone to Yale. So the department had been built in a rather odd way, without a vision for what such a department would be.

Impressions of Other Departments

During the Period Moglen was Dean of Humanities

I think that history was a pretty conventional department. They wouldn't give Hayden White and Jim Clifford joint appointments in history, for example, because they weren't seen as doing conventional history. The thing I would say that distinguished history at that time was that so many of the people in the

history department had really been committed to the building of Merrill College, particularly, and Stevenson. So they were very much in the colleges and much less devoted to having a vision for the history department.

Then there was philosophy. The philosophers had not met for several years when I came. Maurice Natanson and [Albert] Hofstadter had been the two towering figures in philosophy, both from Yale. But they had broken with each other and the department had completely divided, and people weren't on speaking terms with one another. (laughs) So philosophy was in an unbelievable mess. So that first year, Hayden and I—I asked Hayden to go with me—we went to the American Philosophical Association meetings to hire somebody to chair philosophy who could pull the group together and make it a department. We encouraged people to apply for our position and we ultimately hired Dick Wasserstrom, who was teaching at the UCLA law school. His two older children were at UCSC. He loved UCSC. He had a real sort of sixties, seventies outlook. He was ready to leave law school teaching. He was a very distinguished teacher and practitioner of law and he had defended the Black Panthers in LA. Dick had been very active politically. And he was really ready to come. He was wonderful. The philosophy department has been through many incarnations but Dick did pull the faculty together as a department. People trusted him. He was honest. They trusted him and they began to meet. They began to work together. So Dick was terrific. He was a very good choice.

Linguistics was also—it was finished. There was a real scandal in linguistics. They hadn't given tenure to somebody for reasons that appeared to be personal. It was a mess. The administration was about to disestablish linguistics. When I arrived, students came to see me to tell me how wonderful linguistics was. So again, I asked Hayden—and this time I asked Hayden and Dick—to do a little review in order to recommend what we should do about linguistics, what kind of program should we have? Should we keep it or should we let it go? They did this review, and they were quite surprised to find that faculty in linguistics said they didn't belong in the humanities. Linguistics should be in the natural sciences. But Dick and Hayden thought it was important for humanities to keep the department.

So again, we did a national search and Jorge Hankamer turned up as our strongest candidate. We hired Jorge. He came from Harvard and he built an absolutely first-rate semantics department, really one of the best in the country. He hired Geoff Pullum and then they hired Judith Aissen, who had been married to Jorge in the past, and Bill Ladusaw, Sandy Chung—they put together a terrific department. So that department also went from being pretty much kaput to ultimately becoming first rate—and I think Jorge Hankamer deserves tremendous credit—he had the energy—he had a vision and it turned out to be a very effective vision.

Then I really tried to build the interdisciplinary programs. Along with women's studies, we really tried to develop American studies and support it and it also blossomed in that period.

What's very sad to see, is how in these last few years, all of the interdisciplinary programs pretty much across campus, not just in the humanities, but across campus, programs that had a certain kind of social commitment, are being eliminated along with their field studies portions. It's what happens but it is very sad to see.

Reti: Why do you think that's happening?

Moglen: Each program has its own story, and histcon (which was unique in the U.S.) certainly has its own story. I would say that because histcon depended completely for its definition on the particular interests and intellectual commitments of its faculty, histcon's story is different from that of other programs. It's also true that most cross-disciplinary programs were less strongly embedded institutionally than histcon—in many cases, because they began as poorly funded college programs. But it's also true that the university has become far more conservative. There is no vision. I would say, from my perspective, there's absolutely no innovative vision for the campus. And, to the extent that there is a plan it is that the strongest departments should be better supported than the less strong departments. So what is seen as "good" and what is reinforced turn out to be the fairly conventional, disciplinary departments that have been better supported from the beginning. Because of their histories, they

have larger faculties and have therefore been better situated to survive the loss of resources. Probably, it looks a little different in the sciences, where interdisciplinarity is more common and is both institutionalized and conventional. So I think what's happening at Santa Cruz with interdisciplinary programs that came out of the sixties and seventies is not unique; it's happened across the country. Ethnic studies, American studies, women's studies—most of these programs have one faculty member who is appointed to that program and then the program relies on the participation of faculty from other departments. And of course, when resources begin to dry up, those faculty go back into their departments where they are needed to sustain the curriculum.

I built women's studies with other feminist faculty in a very different way. I said to the administration "We can only do this if we have four full-time FTE's. And our first appointment has to be Bettina, who has given her blood for this program." Women's studies programs around the country had people like Bettina, who were wonderful teachers and who were not kept. Once programs were made into departments, they would do national searches and these women who had built their programs just didn't look as good as these sexy theoreticians who they would then hire. It was the story again and again, and we were very aware of it at the time. Our first effort was to appoint Bettina, and when they said, "No, you have to do a search," we did the search but we were always clear that she would be our first appointment. And she was. But then we got from the administration three other full-time FTE's. I think that made us different from virtually any women's studies department in the country at that time

Reti: And was women's studies looked at as a model by other programs wanting to—

Moglen: Well, I don't know. I don't think so. I think that for whatever reasons it was the feminist faculty on this campus that made it happen—I mean, we had so many meetings with the administration. And the administration was very scared of us, to some extent because it was such a male administration. We had meetings with the administration and these women faculty would plan to come and the administration would ask us who was coming and we would give them a list of the faculty. Then they would keep adding more and more male administrators to these meetings. But we really pulled together—and I think this is what we did that was quite different from what was often done on other campuses and in other programs on our campus—we pulled the feminist faculty from every department on the campus together. We had retreats every fall. We had quarterly conferences at which graduate students and faculty gave papers. And we had dinners. It was quite controversial how much of my budget I put into dinners. But people came. At the end of the day they'll come to a dinner when they won't come to a meeting. People came. Then when you asked people to come to a meeting to fight for an FTE, they showed up. You had to be strategic. You had to ask them to come not too often. But they would show up. They shared a vision of having such a program. And that was rare. It was rare. So there were lots of things, I think, that came together to make the department happen. But it's still one of the very few women's studies departments in the country that isn't built with just one full-time person and a lot of other faculty

from other departments who teach a course and who rotate through the chair. And that's just not a structure that lasts.

Reti: Yes, I can certainly understand what a burnout that would be, without the support.

So language studies—

Moglen: Language studies was an effort to make linguistics open to more students.

Reti: Oh, I see. I never understood what language studies was.

Moglen: It was linguistics' effort to bring together students who would have a core of linguistics classes and then would do literature and history and other courses in culture. It was a pretty successful program in that it did bring more people into linguistics and it did make linguistics more present for more people. But I don't think the faculty in linguistics were ever all that happy about it. It seemed to be a compromise.

Reti: And then the Campus Writing Program.

Moglen: The Campus Writing Program—when I came, both the writing faculty and the language faculty, except for a few faculty in Cowell, Stevenson, and Oakes, were sitting in little, dark offices in basements in buildings around the campus. They had no college affiliation and they had no status. And very few of them, of course, had security of employment. When I came, I met with Don

Rothman and Carol Freeman—who were already very important to their colleges: Oakes and Cowell.¹⁰ It was clear that this was an incredible writing department and that they had a vision for writing that was well beyond remedial writing.

I was always very interested in the teaching of writing. I love to teach writing. Among other things, it's literacy education in far-reaching ways. So when the reorganization happened, I insisted that there be a writing person in every college who would be centrally involved with the core course and who would work with the provost and would be available to work with other faculty in the core course. That person was given some release time for doing that work. They were fellows of the colleges and all of the writing faculty had college affiliations.

The program blossomed. Don was just magical. But most of his writing activities were at Oakes. Don was utterly central in the building of Oakes, the core course, the faculty. Don was acting provost twice. Don is as identified with Oakes as Herman Blake is, I would say. Carol Freeman really built the rest of the program.¹¹ I think she was a genius at getting done what needed to be done. She

¹⁰ An oral history with Carol Freeman is forthcoming from the Regional History Project in fall 2013—Editor.

¹¹ An oral history with J. Herman Blake is forthcoming from the Regional History Project in 2014—Editor.

hired Roz Spafford, who was wonderful and who started the reentry women's writing program, which was vital to that population. And they hired a group of writing faculty who were totally committed to writing. They met all the time. They were interested in pedagogy. They had established theories and practices which they could represent to people when they hired them. They were able to give more and more of their faculty release time to do administrative work for the program. Some of them were very important to the campuswide senate as well. Don sat on the Committee on Planning and Budget, I think for three terms. Carol, as you know, chaired the UCSC Committee on Educational Policy, and then she chaired the university-wide CEP, which had never been done before by a lecturer with security of employment.

The reviews of the Writing Program, if you go back and read those reviews, they were extraordinary. It was certainly one of the most distinguished writing programs in the country. The commitment to writing was extraordinary. The faculty's commitment to writing was not just about freshman writing and was certainly not just remedial.

But unfortunately, the program has been chipped away at and chipped away at. And it was very sad. Wlad Godzich, when he came in as dean, he didn't really see why the Writing Program was so important and why it should be supported by the humanities division rather than the campus. And it was a problem with writing—should it be a campuswide program? It was always supported through the humanities with extra monies from the campus. But when the campus funds

were cut back, the money for writing was also cut back. You had to be a very strong advocate for the program with the central administration. I think Wlad probably was the first humanities dean who didn't believe in the Writing Program in that way—and didn't advocate for it. And it started to be chipped away at. It's still, I'm sure, a very good program. But it lost its scope.

They were teaching all kinds of writing and they were very active in all the colleges. Several of the writing instructors became provosts. Roz was the provost at Merrill with John [Isbister], and later at College Eight. Carol was a provost at Cowell College. On this campus the writing faculty had real status. They had a place. They had the room to be entrepreneurial in the development of their program. They were well respected. That was not true on many campuses across the country. I was on several reviews of writing programs across the country and the treatment of writing faculty is disgusting at many places. At Rutgers, for example, they pulled people off the street to teach writing. They were paid nothing. There was no program. People come in; they taught; they went home. But nobody knew anybody. This was a very special program at UCSC. I think it's unfortunate that the university has not supported it better in recent years.

Reti: I couldn't agree with you more.

Moglen: And the languages were also—I insisted that everybody who taught language classes be given a college affiliation. The language teachers didn't have college affiliations. There were all these faculty who had sort of fallen through

the cracks. If they weren't regular faculty, or they weren't buddies of people who were, they had no identity on the campus.

Reti: So in some ways what you were doing was strengthening the college system.

Moglen: Well, yes. Look, I was probably one of the last people who *wanted* to strengthen the college system. I didn't want to keep it as it was, but I loved the early vision of Santa Cruz. When I came here, I loved the vision of Santa Cruz. I did come to see the ways in which it wasn't working. And the same way, I think, that I was often seen by feminists as not-feminist, I was also seen by people who were advocates for the colleges as not being pro-college. That also wasn't true. But this was a very interesting campus, in the way you had to be all or nothing for all kinds of things. There were very few people who were up for compromises. There were very few people who supported Bob's reorganization but were also up for supporting the colleges in a different incarnation.

Reti: Interesting.

Difficult Tenure Decisions

Okay, so now the question of having to make difficult tenure decisions. I think we touched on that a little bit earlier.

Moglen: That's a very interesting problem. I did see Michael [Cowan's] statements about that [in his oral history]² and I was very interested in that. It did make me think back a lot. I made some very hard decisions and it's not by accident that I never sat on CAP [Committee on Academic Personnel] after I was finished being dean.

When I saw those personnel files in later years, they made me want to vomit. I spent so much time agonizing about personnel cases. I think some of this was about my own history. I was denied tenure at NYU in a way that had felt to me totally unfair and inattentive to my work, and to a group of my colleagues—all of us were terminated (so to speak) at the same time. And then at Purchase I was in this extremely interesting situation, where we had been hired at that mid-level as assistant professors, but were made associate professors very rapidly. And then *we* were making all the personnel decisions. And we were making them about one another. It was very hard to sort out the ethics of that. It was very hard to sort out the ethics of that, and very, very painful.

² See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, "It Became My Case Study: Michael Cowan's Four Decades at UC Santa Cruz," (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013). Available at: <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/3j5438d7>

I have to say, things got resolved in different ways. There was a woman in anthropology, Esther Newton, who was a lesbian whose work was—do you mind if I talk about this? It's is a way of explaining how I wound up where I was.

Reti: Sure.

Moglen: I told you at our last meeting that I was part of a consciousness-raising group, this group of women.

Reti: Yes.

Moglen: And Esther was in our group, very central in our group. She came up for tenure. And her first book as an anthropologist was a study of camp culture in New York. It was seen by many people as not an anthropological topic. Of course, she was really groundbreaking in the sense that anthropologists more and more began to look at our own culture and subcultures as objects of study. But Esther was quite new in developing that territory. She was also a pretty controversial figure. And we, the consciousness raising group, were ready to go full tilt for her tenure. She was denied tenure. Her book was sent out and some people had real reservations about it. Esther said to us at that time, she said, "Do what you think best. But don't think that I will be any different as a result of being given tenure. I'm not going to be a different kind of citizen. I'm not going to be a different kind of teacher." But we all literally put our jobs on the line. We all said we would give up our tenure if she was not given tenure. And she was finally given tenure.

Reti: Is that actually possible? People can give up their tenure for someone else?

Moglen: Well, we just could have left, I guess. We didn't think it would come to that but we actually did it. We wrote a formal letter indicating that if she was not given tenure—and we argued the case for it—that we would not keep our positions. So that was one whole set of agonies.

And then someone else with whom I was very close, who came just the year after I did, and we worked together very, very well—it turned out that he had plagiarized large sections of his first book. I was the head of his personnel committee and we recommended that he be turned down for tenure. We had to make the plagiarism explicit. He was a guy who was pretty distinguished. He was a guy who was going to really sail through. So that was another thing that I went through with the tenure process.

So tenure for me was a major thing. It was a major thing because I had been denied it and I had gone through all the angst of that situation. It was a [major] thing because as a feminist I had been willing to act with political solidarity and then with another colleague, I had made this difficult decision on ethical grounds. For me, tenure was not something you gave lightly or withheld lightly. It was sure as hell something you thought seriously about.

So when I got here and I was faced with these tenure cases, I took them probably too seriously, or I took them, in any event, more seriously than I think many deans do. I read those tenure cases backwards and forwards. I really, really tried

to sort out what the departments had claimed, what external reviewers had claimed, and really what seemed to be appropriate.

There were several faculty—Michael's right—there was a legacy at UCSC already of people in the humanities who had been given tenure with one article—several faculty who had been given tenure who had written only one article, most of whom spent their assistant professorships, and some also their associate professorships not publishing anything, not writing anything, and therefore being extremely limited in what they were able to do with graduate students, and even in what they were able to do in their fields. It would have been one thing if they were at some rural college in Texas. But this was a UC campus and it had certain kinds of standards. It had graduate students.

So there were people who had been hired and they came up for tenure and they didn't have much to offer in a scholarly context. Often what I was looking at in a file was a lot of divided opinions. There were some people in the department who had voted against a person; there were some people in the department, mostly the majority, who voted for him or her. There were mixed recommendations from external reviewers. And there were several people whom I recommended be turned down for tenure. Now, it was not my decision to make; it was my recommendation to make. But most of the people I recommended not be given tenure were not given tenure, perhaps because I wrote extremely strong, detailed letters. I read their work. I took personnel so seriously it was really shattering. I was also very open with people, which was

also a mistake, I suppose, in that I was always willing to tell faculty how I had voted, because they get a redacted summary, but it wasn't clear who had said what, and—if they asked—I explained my recommendation. That was also part of the ethic I took away from my situation at NYU, where nobody told me anything, and which I thought was totally unacceptable, and of the situation at Purchase, where we really were totally responsible ethically for the decisions we made, and were ready to stand behind them in the most uncomfortable of ways.

I brought all of that here. So most of the people (not all) against whose tenure I voted were women because so many women had been hired in that period. There were several women who came up for tenure at roughly the same time. Of course, that was seen as proof of my not being a feminist. There was one very good female faculty member who hadn't handed in narrative evaluations for years and I told her if she didn't get them in I would vote against her, and I did, and she didn't get tenure. People thought I was a bitch. Here was this excellent teacher, excellent writer, which she was. After that, they instituted a regulation that people could not go forward for tenure unless their evaluations were totally up to date. But this was someone who—that was before we had grades. People were not—

Reti: I remember that, sure. This is a contract with students [for narrative evaluations] and we have a responsibility to fulfill that.

Moglen: Right. So personnel was very hard for me. Michael's also right—I think Michael sees a piece of it and is not wrong about that piece—I was ambitious and

I wanted to build the campus. There's no way that I would ever vote against anybody's tenure [if] I did not think there was a good reason for voting against it. I was professional in these ways. I really believed that if people hadn't been able to get it together to be able to write something substantial by the time they were up for tenure, they were probably not going to write something substantial. That has remained true. You look at the records of people who were given tenure and hadn't published, and, usually, they continued not to publish. And that's a problem. It's a problem in lots of ways. It's a problem for them too. There were people who retired very early here, when it became possible, because they were tired of having been looked down upon by their colleagues all of those years. It's a certain kind of setup, giving people tenure who don't meet explicit standards—it's a setup in many different ways.

But Michael's right that when I later became Senate chair, I was very aware of the ways in which I had been seen as a hard guy, and as ruthless, and all the rest of it, and I really wanted to do that job as a way of establishing a different kind of record with my colleagues.

Reti: That was later. So let's make sure that we talk about that.

Power Dynamics and Competition Among Women: Reflecting on Two Articles

So, related to the whole question of having to make these kinds of difficult decisions, and some of them being negative tenure decisions about women, let's talk about power and women. You have published two articles that I think have

been cited quite a bit. I found them both in JSTOR, “Power and Empowerment” and “Competition Among Women.”

Moglen: “Competition Among Women” has remained significant—there’s still very little [written] about women and competition, which is also interesting.¹³

Reti: You wrote that in 1987.

Moglen: At the time that Evelyn Keller and I wrote it, there was a book on competition and women [being edited] and they really wanted [an article] on academic women. Nobody would write it. The editors had asked several people to do it. Evelyn and I said yes. And then we had a terrible time. If you read it you can see that in the preface. It was a nightmare writing it, as it turned out. We were very, very old friends. All kinds of things came up in writing it about our relationship, which we had never talked about. Some of it was professional; some of it was personal. It was a very agonizing time. We rented a little house on Cape Cod to write it. So there we were, kind of [makes agonized sound]. (laughs) At one time I called one of my sons who was in Boston and I said, “I think I’m going to have to ask you to come get me. I don’t think—” But we got through it

¹³ Evelyn Fox Keller and Helene Moglen, “Competition and Feminism: Conflicts for Academic Women,” *Signs*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (Spring, 1987), pp. 493-511. Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174334). Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174334>.

and we did finish the paper. We wrote that little introduction to honor the difficulty of the experience.

But power was very interesting to me. I just read the piece again before we started meeting [for the oral history]. I hadn't read it for years. And I didn't much like it. I didn't much like the tone of it. I felt as though the tone—I like very much the preface.

Reti: Now, which piece are we talking about now?

Moglen: Well, I don't like either one of them, actually. But I was talking about the one that Evelyn and I wrote together about competition among academic women. The tone feels to me aggrieved. I think Evelyn and I *were* both aggrieved. I think that I felt very aggrieved for these reasons as a dean and what my experience had been here. I think Evelyn, who is a very accomplished physicist, with a graduate degree in theoretical physics, had never been recognized by physicists. Her recognition had come from feminists, her work on women in science, a book on Barbara McClintock. She ultimately got a MacArthur. Evelyn has gotten plenty of recognition, but never recognition from physicists, never recognition from the hard scientists. She continued to feel aggrieved through her whole professional life. So I have the feeling now when I read that piece that we were both writing from an aggrieved position. Maybe there was no way (laughs)—the fact that there has been so little writing since—there was a piece by a psychoanalyst, Muriel Dimin, about competition, which relied a lot on our piece, but her piece also sounds rather aggrieved to me. (laughs)

I think it's very hard because I think what we say in that piece is really true. Competition among women is so hard for women to handle, so much harder, I do believe, than men. Men deal with competition in sports. They deal with competition throughout their lives, their younger lives. This is truer for young women now. I would be very curious to know whether the fact that more women participate in sports, and more women have experiences of competition throughout their lives, whether they deal better with it in the academy. I don't feel it. I have a number of young friends here, and boy, I have a sense of their guardedness with one another, all sorts of *sturm und drang* going on. It's hard for women. It's hard for women.

I think our model, because both of us were very savvy about psychoanalysis and interested in psychoanalysis, was the mother-daughter and sister-sister model. I do think we were on to something. I tried to think when I read the piece again, okay, I don't like this piece very much. So how would I write it now?

Reti: I was going to ask you that. (laughs)

Moglen: I can't think of how I would—I would be mellower; the tone would be different. Of course, this is both of our tones. Evelyn is a very good writer but we write differently. I wrote the preface, which I continue to (laughs) really like. Yeah, I can imagine a lighter tone, but I think that the structure—the mother-daughter thing; the sister-sister thing, is not a bad model. I don't know where else to go for a model because the family is really where responses to competition

are rooted. Unless young women are able to talk about competition differently now as a result of their sports experience, etcetera.

So it's hard. I think it's a bitter thing. And I think as a woman, there is no way, there is no way that I was not treated more harshly, more unforgivingly, I encountered all kinds of misogyny, the anger about me, which in many cases, as dean which would just have been irritation, was often very deep. And this was true of men as well as women.

Reti: It was directed at you by men as well.

Moglen: Yes.

Reti: And you were the first female dean in the UC system.

Moglen: I was the first female dean in the UC system and I think I may have been the first female administrator in the UC system.

Reti: Wow.

Moglen: So there was very little experience dealing with women. When I used to go to the all-University meetings, people would ask me to get them coffee.
(laughs)

Reti: How would you respond?

Moglen: Oh, you know. I would make jokes. But it got to you. It was very much of a men's club.

Reti: How did you get support during that period for your own resilience?

Moglen: Well, I think one of the things that I came to feel very strongly about is that it was a big mistake to take an administrative job at a place where one had not been before and didn't have a support structure. I think that was also very different when I was senate chair. I had an enormous support structure by then. But to come in cold—I think it's a very hard thing for anybody to do, for anybody, but I think it was a particularly hard thing for me to do as a woman. I had no support structure. I didn't know anybody. There was no women's studies program.

As I say, the few women who were tenured here were scattered all over the campus. My support structure was largely the senior men whom I hired. Hayden, who came at the same time as I did, became a very close friend. Norman O. Brown, who of course was here, became a friend. Dick Wasserstrom, with whom I became very friendly. Those guys also saw me as a woman to protect. They were also very aware of how hard it was for me as a woman. They really showed up as friends and colleagues. And Jim Clifford, but Jim was younger. Of course, when Donna [Haraway] came, she was a marvelous

colleague.¹⁴ But it was slow, slow as women came. Gradually, I did have more and more of a support system, but not at the beginning.

Reti: It also strikes me, in terms of your article, that that was a particular historic period in which this kind of romantic notion of sisterhood was being disrupted. We had thought, there can't possibly be abuse between women. "We don't even want to talk about that. You're crazy. That never happens."

Moglen: Right. Absolutely. There was a kind of ideal, a kind of pastoral story about feminists. There was no way to sustain it. There was no way. And people were being hurt; feminists were suffering everywhere. It was in the early eighties, I guess, that the Barnard conference took place between the S&M and anti-S&M folks—that just shook the community.¹⁵ Again and again, the movement away from simplistic identity politics shook the community, changed the perspective of theorists. There were so many truths that women had to face—and of course the fact that what we had built, my generation, was a white, middle-class—not just heterosexual—but a white, middle-class cohort. And we called it feminism. Then of course, of course, appropriately, it was challenged by

¹⁴ See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Edges and Ecotones: The Worlds of Donna Haraway at UCSC* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2007). Available at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/haraway>

¹⁵ In April of 1982, a conference on sexuality was held at Barnard College. Tensions erupted over issues of feminist perspectives on pornography and sadomasochism.

everybody else. And we all had to learn, and are still learning—there was no end to learning about that. And it's not over.

Reti: Right. So it strikes me that if you were going to write this article now, you would be writing it in a completely different historic context.

Moglen: Yeah, but it would be even more confusing.

Reti: True.

Moglen: And as soon as you find any way of providing a coherent structure of analysis, you would have already betrayed in some way the complexity. How do we talk about feminism now? How do we talk about it as a movement? Where is it, even? Even on this campus it's very hard to say where it is. And yet, the place is full of feminists. It's crawling with feminists. But people have agreed to disagree, in many ways. People don't talk about feminism, at least faculty don't. We used to get together and argue. We used to get together and put together programs. We used to—these were incredibly important issues. Now I think there is a tendency to take for granted that we feminists agree. There are some feminists you don't like, and you don't work with them, and whatever. But you sort of see that as largely personal. There are people you don't like and you don't respect. But we don't argue anymore about feminism. Do you argue about feminism?

Reti: Less than I used to. I got tired of the SM issue and going around and around on it.¹⁶ I think there is a certain amount of, okay, we're going to all live together and agree to disagree because we're burnt out.

Moglen: Right. And when there's an issue that matters, people will show up. Many people will show up. And there are shifting alliances. You know there are people you can count on who are progressive, they're feminists, they're this or that. But it's not as though their feminism is any longer the thing that really distinguishes them. There's a kind of progressivism or radicalism that may distinguish them. I think you sort of count on that more than you count on feminism. I think that's what I would say now.

There's no question that students who are trained now as feminists—I have a lot of them in my Gothic course this quarter—they're terrific. And they really do have a feminist consciousness. Feminism has blossomed, has flourished in the academic disciplines. It really has. But has it made a difference in the way people treat one another? Has it made a difference in these kinds of power differentials? I just watched pretty closely sort of a complicated tenure situation, hiring situation, and I see how hard it is for women to figure out where to put their allegiances. And the ethical thing is not necessarily sisterly. And how to maintain

¹⁶ Irene Reti is the editor of *Unleashing Feminism: Critiquing Lesbian Sodomasochism in the Gay Nineties* (HerBooks, 1993).

a friendship, how to maintain relationships if you are voting against someone, someone's hiring or someone's tenuring—nobody knows how to do that. There are people with extraordinary integrity who do really try to talk it through. But that's relatively unusual.

Reti: I agree.

Moglen: Yeah, it's a happy story and not such a happy story. But when I came I think I really did believe that feminism was powerful, that sisterhood was powerful, that we would do this together. And we did. We did a lot together! We did a *lot* together.

Reti: That's important to remember.

Moglen: It was extraordinary. People all over did a lot together. The accomplishments were tremendous and they remain there. You go to a bookstore and you see what feminism has made possible. Women presidents all over the country at universities. Yeah, one of the things that I learned was that sometimes you were much better off with a male progressive than you were with a feminist, whose politics, as it turned out, were dreadful. You couldn't count on anything, right? With anybody. (laughs)

But I still love to work with women. I still love to feel that we are working as feminists together. And I still have this kind of connection, I think, to women: to students, to colleagues, to staff people, to people in the community. Yeah, it's an

identity that's very powerful. But I'm no longer at all clear about how it works, or about how power works at all.

Institutions are so strong. One of the things I learned [is that] you could accomplish anything as dean and it would all be undone. I was very fortunate that Michael [Cowan] came after me, and that Michael and I shared many of our values. And nothing that I built as dean Michael wanted to take apart. On the contrary. Michael was a close colleague when I was dean.

But the only thing that a successor couldn't have done was fire people who had been hired with tenure. That's the only thing. So you realize how fragile all of this is. You come in and you think, I'm going to make big changes. Or you think, I have made big changes. It can all be undone so easily.

Reti: Right. Hence we see how much the campus has changed in the time that you and I have been here.

Moglen: Absolutely. And the hypocrisies and the—I mean, people are just harried by the economics. It's the economics that so motivates these decisions. There's so little vision anywhere, of any sort. So yeah, it *is* disheartening. On the other hand, whatever I did as an administrator I loved doing, and I did with a kind of energy and creativity and pleasure. It was always worth doing. And

when one thing failed, I always started another. Because that was what you did. Right? And I feel that with many of my colleagues. Don Rothman, who just died and is very much on my mind, is a wonderful example of that.¹⁷ They started to erase the writing program; Don opened some other writing program. He got writing going in this corner if it closed down in that corner. I really respect people who continue to want to build, to make things happen, and not the people who just want to keep it going as best you can, whatever, or people who are committed to taking it apart.

Sexual Harassment

Reti: Well, one thing I clearly remember you doing during that time [in the early 1980s] was taking on the issue of sexual harassment.

Moglen: Right.

Reti: I think that will be my final question for today.

¹⁷ Don Rothman taught for thirty-four years at Oakes College, was a founder and core faculty member in UCSC's Writing Program, and the founder of the Central California Writing Project. He died suddenly at the age of 67 on November 29, 2012 just before he was to have recorded an oral history with the Regional History Project. His obituary states: "At Oakes College and at CCWP, Don demonstrated that the teaching of writing is a personal, social and political activity, which is as central to the practice of democracy as it is to the construction of identity." See <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/santacruzsentinel/obituary.aspx?pid=161349230#fbLoggedOut>

Moglen: Well, yes. I was asked to chair the sexual harassment committee. It was so interesting—given that I was the only woman administrator, I was asked to take on thing, after thing, after thing. I can't remember what law was passed in California, but the university needed a sexual harassment committee.¹⁸ Sinsheimer asked me if I would chair and put together the committee, which I did. And we took it very seriously.

The extent of sexual harassment on the campus at that time was unbelievable. It was unbelievable. The worst of it was in the sciences. The most effective work that was done was not done by my committee. It was done by students. I think the fact that we existed and that students could come and talk to us was very important. We did work behind the scenes. We did talk to faculty and if it came to it we would force confrontations. There were faculty who were accused of sexual harassment and there were some faculty who were forced to take time off for some time. There were several people in that situation. But nothing like what should have been done—

¹⁸ In 1980, "the U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission issued guidelines declaring sexual harassment a violation of Section 703 of Title VII, establishing criteria for determining when unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment, defining the circumstances under which an employer may be held liable, and suggesting affirmative steps an employer should take to prevent sexual harassment."
<http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/currentissues.html> —Editor.

But there was a group of women who worked with us, in the sciences and they would go around to people's labs and they would insist that somebody come out into the corridor, and then they would read him a statement about what the harassment consisted of. These were undergraduates. Graduate students were too dependent; they were too embroiled in the system.

Reti: Was this based on the Women against Rape model?⁹

Moglen: It was based on that. It was amazing. I would get calls from a faculty member: "Helene, these women are— You've got to get them out of here!" "Well, what are they doing?" Well— They would read what faculty members had done: "You took so-and-so out for dinner and you did this and that." Or, "This is what you wanted in exchange for this grade." That was what they were telling them. They were publicly reading their experiences and they were telling them what they meant, what it meant to women that they had done this. And it was scary for these guys.

It's another area. I felt quite despairing at times about the extent of harassment on the campus and how little we were really able to do. On the other hand, I do believe that there is relatively little harassment on the campus now. People know

⁹ The feminist group Santa Cruz Women Against Rape pioneered confrontations against rapists— Editor.

the score and there *is* a price to be paid. Consciousness *has* been raised. And there are people all over campus now, I guess every year they orient—

Reti: You have to take this test online. And if you don't take it—This is tracked.²⁰

Moglen: Right. So things—

Reti: And we have an officer and it's all very codified.

Moglen: So things do change. A lot of the men who just saw it as their prerogative—and they did—there were guys who when they were showing men around to whom they were planning to offer jobs, would sort of let them know, “Well, there are this sort of women here in this college—” It was awful! There were a number of men, and some very distinguished scholars on campus, who just saw it as their prerogative to have sex with students.

Reti: You were working with Wendy Mink.²¹

²⁰ All UCSC faculty, undergraduate and graduate students who work as teaching assistants, lab supervisors, tutors, and supervisors of student employees are now required to take an online sexual harassment prevention training as a condition of employment. See http://www2.ucsc.edu/title9-sh/training_ta.htm

²¹ Political science professor Gwendolyn Mink was a pioneering theorist in the area of sexual harassment policy and law and authored the book *Hostile Environment: The Political Betrayal of Sexually Harassed Women* (Cornell University Press, 2000).

Moglen: No. Wendy Mink succeeded me as the committee chair. This was the first committee. There were some high administrators I had to go and talk to about stuff that was going on, more among staff. There was a lot of stuff going on with staff women that people had no understanding of. I'd done a book for the Modern Language Association with three other women about gender and sexual harassment. Some of these situations were third party things—what happens when a boss gets involved with a member of the staff and other people feel themselves to be ill-treated as a result of that privileged relationship? So there was stuff like that, too, that we were dealing with. But the sexual stuff was just extraordinary.

Reti: I don't know if it's possible to answer this question but do you think UCSC stood out in this regard?

Moglen: I don't think so. I think it was—I remember when Yale went coeducational—when I was a graduate student there I never heard—there may have been, but I never heard of sexual harassment between faculty and students. But as soon as they were coeducational, the stories were all over. And they were outrageous. So I don't think UCSC was worse. I think there were pockets of it, like the old Kresge.

Reti: This lack of boundaries, a culture of lack of boundaries.

Moglen: Yes, the lack of boundaries that really encouraged it. Yes, and there was that culture of building these new colleges. I think these were substantial boundary issues in the early days. Faculty and students worked together and

staff and everybody got together. And stuff happened. There was not a sense—I think there were a certain number of faculty who wanted to act as though they didn't have power, that they could give their power to everyone else, so everyone was in it together. I think that was what often fueled these situations. And then the pain that there would be for students, and the incredulity. There were a number of students I saw over the years who dropped out because of sexual harassment, because it turned out that their advisor was harassing them and they just didn't know how to deal with it, and they didn't finish. Several women whom I met—and I think that was just the tip of the iceberg. So there were many really sad stories.

But I think it was endemic to the culture. I think as women came into the university there was very little sense of what it meant to treat them like equals. I was on an external review committee at MIT. And there the problems, which also happened here, they were much more about gender, often, where the faculty member who was overseeing his lab would take the guys out for a drink at the end of the day, but not the women. There were all of these informal structures that women were left out of, and they felt routinely deprived of access to the kinds of jobs, privileges, opportunities that men in their situation had by virtue of being men.

And here, this is what we saw in the sciences, that the same guy who was harassing a woman was her teacher, her mentor, the head of her lab. He had power over her at many different levels. And that was why graduate students

were just utterly stuck. The undergraduates could move, but the graduate student, by the time she was connected with a guy— There were some departments that were just infamous, infamous! And infamous among staff. Staff just had to put up with a kind of gender harassment that was horrible. I don't know to what extent that is gone in some of the science departments.

Reti: Well, I certainly remember the articles in *City on a Hill* at that time. It was so clear that this was a huge issue, and it was so vitally important, and it was something that UCSC was grappling with. I remember, even as a student it struck me.

Moglen: And it was hard to know this about some of one's colleagues and still treat them like colleagues. I had a lot of disdain for a lot of people who were very well regarded.

And then, it's also true, when women got power, there was sexual harassment by women. That was a shocker. The first time we saw sexual harassment by women who had harassed other women, or men, but it was particularly strong among women with women. We wanted to think it was just a guy thing. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) No. Unfortunately not. I remember how shocking that was.

Moglen: Yes, it was really—"What? No."

Reti: "Well, that's different. That's okay." "No, it's not."

Moglen: “Well, we don’t have any power.” That was one of the things that women faculty felt: well, we don’t have any power. In that way I think women’s relation to power—it was so complicated. Many of those stories in that paper that Evelyn and I wrote together were stories from here. And the way in which there were women faculty who were tenured, who—and this is not sexual harassment—but who felt utterly powerless to help their women students on any level because they felt so powerless in their departments. They felt ill-treated. They felt unrecognized. And they couldn’t accept that they *had* power, which is another really interesting part of the power stuff, this refusal to acknowledge that one has it and then to work for other women with the power one has.

Reti: Yes. I’m glad we’re talking about this.

Moglen: Yes.

Reti: So let’s stop for today.

More on UCSC Women’s Studies

Reti: So today is February 25, 2013 and this is Irene Reti. I’m here for my third interview with Helene Moglen for her oral history. So, Helene, when we stopped last time we had been talking about your paper on competition among feminists, and the story of women’s studies. You had more that you wanted to say about that.

Moglen: Right. So in a way, the end of my story, or the end of one part of my story about the institutionalization of women’s studies on the campus is a rather

sad part of the history, for me, but also, I think a very instructive and probably not atypical part of academic feminism in this period. And for me, it's also interestingly connected to the essay that Evelyn and I had written about competition among academic women. And there are two parts to the story.

As women's studies grew, we made a particular effort—we had only one woman of color in our department and we had a very strong desire to hire more women of color—

Reti: Now, would that have been Akasha Hull?

Moglen: Yes, Akasha was the woman. She was a terrific colleague and I think one of the few feminists who occupied such a position in a women's studies department in the country, who was able to do it with a kind of honesty and grace that both pushed the department into difficult places, difficult for all of the white women in the department in some ways, I mean really pushed, but pushed in a gracious way and enabled the friendships among all of us, we were an enormously close group of people on the women's studies executive committee, and she enabled that to continue.

So in that way we were, I think, quite unusual. In many places around the country, the breaks between women of color and white women had become very painful, and the splits in departments were very strong. So we did begin to really search for people who would be able to teach our women of color courses—we had a sequence about women of color in the women's studies program—but also

to form a program that looked less like the beginning of the Second Wave of feminism.

And the first woman we hired, a young African American woman, was really wonderful, I think, as we all experienced her that way. We were all mothers to this young woman and really got her through her years of assistant professorship and years of adjusting to the university. We all read her work and mentored her and visited her classes. It was very much of a team effort. This is a very happy story, still. This was Tina Campt.

Reti: Oh, of course.

Moglen: And then we hired a couple of additional women of color, and then a third. And that began an interesting, hard situation, in that Tina had become so much identified with the senior faculty, the white faculty, that for these new young women of color, who felt a lot of what was much more common on university campuses, who felt that difference, who felt that the curriculum was problematic, who wanted to make changes—

The first thing that happened (I am making a long story very short) was that Tina felt increasingly uncomfortable, and left. She was very much caught in a very difficult position. Then another one of the three women also became somewhat uncomfortable and found herself in a compromised and compromising situation. Ultimately, she also left. So the department became increasingly fragmented, really split, I would say, but split along the lines of color, as that was experienced, but also along generational lines.

At one point, the three women of color asked that we change the composition of the executive committee in a way that would exclude the three senior faculty, who had appointments in other departments and therefore were not members of the core faculty. This policy was meant to include me and two others who had been working very hard for years to keep the program going, had built the program and had kept it going. For us, women's studies was really about profound commitment. They asked that we effectively leave the department, which two of us immediately did. A third decided to stay and she ultimately wound up chairing the department. But two of us just left.

That was a very painful situation for me. I had—I think it would be fair to say that I had built the department, made it happen, had helped to sustain it for years, had really made an absolutely double commitment because I was a full-time, functioning member of the literature department, had really made a totally double commitment to women's studies. So it was painful. It was surprising, it was painful. But I could also see that there were ways in which this younger group of faculty needed now to define their department and that a moment had passed. I think that was true.

But the real act of betrayal, for me, occurred later, when I was given a presidential chair of literature. Although I was named as a chair of literature, the chair was awarded for a feminist project that I proposed, which came out of years of feminist work that I had done on campus to establish a center for advanced feminist research. And that chair—one had to apply for it. One had to

have a project. One had to be supported, not just by one's dean but by the campus administration. And only one person was recommended from each campus to a committee made up of all the UC academic vice chancellors. And they chose, I don't remember what it was, two or three people nominated from various campuses. So it was a selective process.

Well, I was later told by someone in a high administrative position that two of my colleagues—the women of color—had approached him to let him know that it was really inappropriate for me to run such a center, to have such a chair, that there should be a younger faculty member appointed to do this in my place, someone who was a woman of color, who identified with international women of color, etcetera.

Now, of course, the request made absolutely no sense, given the ways in which the selection process worked and the kinds of credentials that one needed to have such an appointment. It needed to be a senior person with substantial research and experience, etcetera. But this was reported to me. And I think for me it was kind of the last straw in thinking in a kindly way about the women's studies program at UCSC, which later became the feminist studies program. It felt to me like an act of betrayal of a very profound sort, and it also [made me] question feminism at a very deep level. And after that happened I very much distanced myself, not as a feminist in the world, but as any kind of an affiliate with the women's studies program here.

But for me it was also instructive. Both stories are about race but they are also about mothers and daughters and siblings. The first one is about siblings, in just the way that Evelyn and I had described it. I think that Tina Campt was a sibling of these women who came and resented (and disdained) her privileged relation to the white mothers, the fact that she was sort of the eldest daughter, much loved and much helped and much identified with the mothers. The second story emerges along color lines, but is also a story about the daughters with the mother, and the desire to both overthrow her and replace her. And so it's an interesting postscript, I think, to the article I wrote with Evelyn, and also an interesting entry in my story of women's studies on the campus.

Reti: Absolutely. It's quite instructive about why issues of age need to be on a feminist agenda.

Moglen: Yes, and interestingly I think it is also about the ways in which feminism is not unique as a political movement in needing always to be reinvented. A very sad aspect of my story, and if it were only my story I think it would be totally unimportant to anyone except me, but it is a story about the development of a movement and the relation among generations. And I think it is so true of progressive politics generally, that every generation seems to need to invent a movement again for itself and to erase the previous generation in order to do that, and it's very hard, especially in the U.S. The histories of such things in England seem to me, possibly, to have been a little bit different, the building of the left, for example, in a broader way. But the ways in which, particularly in the

U.S., history has so little place, and the urge is to erase the past, to blot out the past, always to forget the past as if one were starting from a new place. And the people that go along with that are incidental to some extent. But there's also often a deeper aspect of that which I experienced as a personal betrayal.

Reti: I can certainly understand that.

The Feminist Studies Focused Research Activity [FRA] and the Institute for Advanced Feminist Research

Is this a good place for us to talk about the Institute for Advanced Feminist Research?

Moglen: The Institute for Advanced Feminist Research came out of—when Wlad Godzich, the dean of humanities, arrived, he was very interested in the development of feminism. He was well read in feminist theory. And he saw, he understood, how strong academic feminism was on the UCSC campus in the humanities and social sciences. He got the lay of the land and he asked me if I would begin to think about putting together a center for advanced feminist research.

So from 2001 to 2003, I was reinventing something that I had done before, from 1984 to 1989, when I started the Feminist Studies Focused Research Activity, the FRA. So we can come back to that, but when I stopped being dean I had a year's leave and came back and was asked to chair women's studies. I really wanted to put everything I learned at the service of women's studies on the campus. I

chaired women's studies. I started a feminist studies research group and got funding and a house for the Women's Center.

For the Feminist Studies FRA, the dean gave us a little bit of money. The first thing I did was to get all the feminist faculty who were interested together, and it was a substantial group, and we went on a retreat in Big Sur. We went for a three-day, two-night retreat to talk about women's studies, but also to begin to plan the Feminist Studies Focused Research Activity. There was a lot of enthusiasm for that and we saw it immediately as an activity shared between faculty and graduate students, not undergraduates. We saw it as a way to bring together the feminist research that was being done on the campus. And we included feminists from the sciences and the arts as well. And we began to meet and talk about what we wanted to do. But it became very clear to me very quickly that the graduate students had to have an absolutely equal role because they have the most energy. What happens with faculty is they are very gung ho the first three weeks of any given quarter and then they disappear halfway in and then they reappear. But they're not in it in that way that I really thought was desirable.

So the faculty met and we decided that everything would be shared fifty-fifty. We had a programming committee and a grants committee. With the little bit of money we had we gave small grants. They were travel grants and grants in support of research. The committees were equally faculty and graduate students and the grants were given mostly to graduate students. The planning for the

activities was done absolutely equally. That was, I have to say, absolutely correct. It was an incredible time for feminist work on the campus because feminist academics still felt embattled.

Reti: This is the late 1980s we're talking about.

Moglen: Mid- to late 1980s. Feminists still felt—you know, they were the minority in their departments, obviously. Feminist work was really engaging with the dominant paradigms in every field. And, of course, there were some men and non-feminist women who were very interested in what feminists were doing. But also the dominant response was to blow it off, and to ignore it as long as possible, and to feel embattled, and often to feel angry. Of course, that often then extended to things like funding for research, support for research, personnel actions. Women in departments throughout the humanities and the social sciences, and very, very strongly in the sciences—we talked about sexual harassment last time and that's also a part of this picture—all of a sudden there was a community. By bringing feminists together, feminist scholars together, the graduate students, but also, it cannot be emphasized enough, the faculty also, and particularly the more junior faculty really felt they had a community. And that was really a wonderful thing. The way we kept that community going—we had talks, because we did have a little money and all you need is a little money. You just need a little money. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) That could be a motto.

Moglen: No, it's really true. People think you need a lot of money. But you don't need a lot of money. We had a wonderful assistant. Nicolette Czarrunchick started when I started women's studies, when I came as chair. She was absolutely my colleague in these years. She was such a deep feminist and she was so committed to what I was trying to do and to what many of us then together were trying to do, including Nicolette. She just worked—she did so much more than—as I think so many staff people do on the campus—she did so much more than just be a staff assistant, whatever that means. She was present for everything. And her enthusiasm and her warmth and her connection to people—I would have to say that everything I say should be a “we,” because I could not have done any of those three things without her—the chairing and the FRA, which Nicolette totally selflessly said, oh well, of course she would be the assistant to that as well, and she never said that something was not part of her job description. She also helped me get the Women's Center going. She just saw this as *our* project for those years.

So we had these little grants that we gave away every quarter for travel, transcription, for all sorts of research support. As I said, those went for the graduate students because faculty did have other sources of funding. And we planned. We had some money for talks and the committee would decide who the speakers would be, we had little conferences.

But the glue, the real glue of the FRA was a quarterly conference that we had at which graduate students and faculty gave papers to each other. It was on

Saturday and we would come together, like from 10:00 to 3:00, and I always—this was probably part of my Jewish mother thing—it always felt to me that it was crucial to have food at whatever events one had. So we always had a very pleasant lunch. So we'd have a morning session and an afternoon session and we'd have a lunch where we'd hang out and talk. We had it at the Women's Center and in nice weather **we** would sit outside for our lunches, and I'm sure you know how pleasant that is.

So those quarterly conferences were wonderful. We all gave work in progress, faculty and graduate students. The faculty showed up for their graduate students, for graduate students generally, but for their graduate students in particular. There was a terrific turnout. Donna Haraway, for example, was just always there. There were several faculty who were always there. But faculty showed up.

And for the graduate students it was wonderful. For many of them it was the first place in which they had ever given a public talk. So it was a way for them to have a sympathetic audience but also an audience that was committed to asking hard questions, to helping them to push their projects forward. That was our ethic, it was to have all of us, everybody, help to push a project forward. They were wonderful events. They were just wonderful events. We really made a community.

And it really did feel like a community. When there were personnel problems, senior faculty would do what they could to help junior faculty in various ways,

both public and private. This was also true for graduate students. It was a time when we made connections, many of the faculty, with graduate students, who we then really pulled through their graduate years here. I believe there were many graduate students who felt that it would have been rather hard for them to have finished their degrees without the FRA. It played a very crucial role at a moment in which it was possible.

After I finished chairing it, the money was cut back—you know, moments change. Wendy Brown chaired after I did and then after that Carla Freccero did. It got smaller and smaller. The money got less and less. And other things were happening on campus. It was also true that feminism became much more the story of departments here. This is a campus with a very strong academic [feminist] presence. I think it became less and less crucial, both to faculty and to graduate students.

So that was the first incarnation of the Center for Advanced Feminist Research. That had been done in the late eighties. And Wlad was very savvy and he informed himself about the history of the campus as it was relevant to the humanities. So when Wlad asked me if I would do this, he knew that I had already done it, and that I had already done it successfully for that time.

So I started to plan this larger group for a different moment. It was very interesting. I just couldn't reproduce what we had done before. It was more than ten years later.

Reti: More like fifteen years.

Moglen: Fifteen years later. So for two years I met with a range of feminist faculty to talk individually. Lulu Carpenter's [café] was sort of my office. I just met there all the time with people to talk about what kind of center they would like. There were so many models around the country. And it felt really important to me, still, that graduate students be a part of whatever it was that we were going to do. But it was a different moment.

And then in the second year of my planning, Wlad suggested that I apply for the presidential chair. Wlad would have liked me to have done something super large, super ambitious, super international. He wanted me to travel around the country, around the world looking at centers. But for me the UCSC campus was really a wonderful place. And it felt to me that what we wanted to do was a center for ourselves, not for other people, not for the world. But we wanted to do something to feed the feminist community of that particular moment. So I wrote a proposal for the chair, for this center, which Wlad wanted to call a Center for Advanced Feminist Research.

And I got the chair and then for the next three years we had this terrific, very active group. It had two wings. One was international feminism, which I think we called international feminisms. I had a steering committee of several people from the social sciences and the humanities and arts. We met once a month. Most of the time I cooked dinner for everybody, so we met at my house, which I think was also a very crucial part of it all. It wasn't just another meeting to go to. People came and we had dinner and we hung out and we planned and we

talked. So it was a mix of social and intellectual and a sort of planning thing. Anna Tsing was very central. Neferti Tadiar, Lisa Rofel, Carla Freccero, Jennifer Gonzales—I'm probably forgetting a couple of people.

Lisa, Anna, and Neferti had a lot of energy and they were interested in having events about and with women of color in an international context. We had a very exciting conference in the first year that Neferti put together on global feminism. We had money. The presidential chair gave us a substantial amount of money. Neferti did a terrific job of bringing a very impressive group of people, international feminists, together.

The way we opened the Institute for Advanced Feminist Research—we had Barbara Ehrenreich come, and she did a big lecture at Kresge in the town hall. That was our sort of kick off moment. And in those years we published two books with David Watson at The Literary Guillotine, who started a little publishing operation called New Pacific Press. And the first collection was a sort of keywords book that Anna Tsing edited with Jennifer Gonzales and two graduate students, Bregjie Van Eckelen and Bettina Stotzer, called *Shock and Awe: War on Words*. It was keywords related to feminism and global war. It's a great little book.

And then Nancy Chen and I did a conference called "Bodies in the Making," which was about bodily transformation of various sorts. It was an extremely interesting conference. And we published the papers from that conference, also in David's series. That has actually sold copies.

So there was this international feminism piece of the IAFR and then there was this U.S. cultural piece, which I was very involved in. That was where I started to try to do community-university projects. I was very, very interested in trying to figure out what kind of feminist projects it was possible to do in and for and with the community. We had a body project. There was a photographer who had this really extraordinary exhibition of women's bodies, which we showed up on campus, at Kresge, where there was a tremendous turnout, and then also downtown at the Veteran's Building. And we had various talks about women and bodies, and workshops. So we did that. We did something about aging, for example, and something on anger. I started to work on the military then with a group of people who were interested in women and the military and looking at war from a feminist perspective. We had programs of that sort.

So there were a lot of talks. There were these two major conferences, plus some smaller events. I think we were pretty successful in bringing faculty and graduate students together in the planning of these major events. Graduate student work was always included, along with faculty work. It didn't have the same electricity that the FRA had. It had far more money. We had many more resources. We brought more important people to the campus. It had a place but I don't think that feminists look back on it now as something that really changed their work, changed their lives. It was an opportunity to do more of what one was already doing.

Reti: Because it was a different historical moment.

Moglen: Yeah, I think the difference in the historical moment was very significant. And the ways in which feminists on the campus felt in their own departments and the greater difficulties, I think, of building a community across lines that had become more well defined over the years—I think all of that made a difference.

We did something on pedagogy. We had a very interesting conference on pedagogy. And I remember when we had that conference, which was in these years of the IAFR, I taught a feminist theory course for histcon. I remember starting it by saying—because by that time the divisions between women of color and white women, authority figures, non-authority figures—it had all become pretty heavy and it was very strong in histcon—I said, “Let’s see if we can make feminism work in this class.” And we wrote weekly—and I wrote a weekly paper too. We wrote three-page papers every week, which we sent around ahead of time, based on the texts that we all read. We worked together in a kind of workshop way. I remember that course was extraordinary and it was out of that course, which we all saw as a kind of feminist pedagogy, where I sort of gave up my authority; I wrote the papers with everybody else, we did the student evaluations at the end together. It was a real effort at a pretty sophisticated level, to do something like feminist pedagogy. And Megan Boler, who has now become a major figure in education, she really organized the conference, which came after the seminar—and the seminar continued to meet informally without me after the quarter ended. Megan was also doing her dissertation with me.

So you know, stuff happened. There was certainly stuff happening. I think that was true of Neferti's teaching and her work for the IAFR. And also for Lisa and Anna. It was an incubator. I think that's really what it was, an incubator. And various things—courses came out of it; books came out of it. But it was more professional. It was less exciting. It was more professional. And that was the IAFR.

Reti: Thank you. So that just lasted for the period of time of your chair?

Moglen: No, actually then there was a choice to be made of who would take it over. And Gina Dent took it over. And it hasn't functioned very much, I've been told by members of Gina's executive committee. The presidential chair was very important in providing the money. Gina would have had to have raised other money. I don't think she saw it in the same way, as a fundamentally internal project. I think she would have liked to make it something else—more external with an international focus—but she apparently didn't really have the funds to sustain it. At least that's my assumption. So it didn't exactly die but it didn't exactly live, either.

Reti: And then of course we ran into the recession right around then as well.

Circling Back: Separating Humanities and Arts

During the Period Moglen was Dean

Well, now I'm going to take you way back in time again, in our very nonlinear process, which is fine, back to the years when you were dean. There were just a

couple of threads I wanted to pick up from last time, which we didn't get to. One is your decision to separate the arts from the humanities.

Moglen: Right. Yes, that was very interesting. When I came, the arts and the humanities were together. But it was clear to me from my very earliest months as dean that the arts had a very different culture than the humanities. The exception was art history, which was located in the arts, and where there were always tremendous tensions between the art historians and the studio artists. And in addition to art history, there were the theater arts people and people who were doing music history. But in a general way the culture was different. Personnel actions were very different, the kinds of standards that were applied in the arts were different.

It was far more problematic when you looked at the arts and the humanities together. Because in the humanities, writing was so important, documents were so important, theory was so important, whereas in the arts doing was important. But how much to do, and what was originality, and who was to say what it was? It was also clear, I think, to many people in the arts and it became clear to me—I hadn't thought about these problems very much before—but it became clear that artists would do well not to be on campus all the time, that they would do much better to be off part of the year doing directing, doing singing, doing painting.

There was also a whole different aspect to the rhythm of the year for artists. I mean, to the extent that they were all academics, that was a problem. Because their artwork, whatever it was, suffered from the distractions that went along

with the demands of the university. But it was very hard for me to be the kind of advocate that I believed the arts needed for personnel actions, for hiring, for curricular matters, for sorting out some of the internal divisions. Even the discourses of the humanities and the arts were very different.

So it felt to me as if the arts would not thrive in the humanities division. They were not thriving here. There was some interesting stuff being done and there were some really first-rate people here. But the arts were sort of a minor part of the humanities. And given the choice of whether to hire people in the arts or in the humanities, to the extent that the humanities far outweighed the arts in size and funding already, the decisions were usually to reproduce the existing situation. So for me it was very difficult to think of myself, or really to be, an advocate for the arts against the humanities, when what I could really see was the extent to which the humanities needed funding.

So it felt to me as though it was really important to hire a dean of the arts. And I persuaded Bob Sinsheimer of that. He agreed and we did a search. That was halfway through my time as dean. And I guess by my fourth year as dean we hired Philip Nelson, who came and we had a separate arts unit. I think that was the right decision. I do think the arts have done much better. Obviously, they're thriving by way of their buildings and new programs. I think now they have a dean who is extremely energetic and enterprising and my sense is that **it** was the right decision.

Reti: Was there resistance to that decision at the time?

Moglen: No, there was really no resistance. I think the arts people—they were nervous about their funding, about how they would do. Initially I think there were some people who were anxious that this meant the end of the arts. But I think most people understood that this was really an effort to make the arts stronger and it was a real vote of confidence, in a way, in the arts on campus, because we hired the dean of music from Yale to have that position, and it seemed like a very major step on the part of the administration here.

I think the humanists by and large did not feel that it was better to have the arts and humanities in one division. There were a few people who saw that it was really very important to cross those borders and to do interdisciplinary work but they also saw how much struggle there was to do it and how much resistance there was to it as well.

The only difficulty was—again, it was history of art, which was a difficulty before and a difficulty after. The art historians really felt that they belonged in the humanities and they felt disrespected by the studio artists. The studio artists felt disrespected by the art historians. But there was a crucial group that felt that to separate those two was really to distort the field. So I think in an uneasy way they continued. We tried to deal with the question of whether to bring art history into the humanities and for a while we thought of putting art history into the history of consciousness [program] and there were a couple of people who came over from the arts to the history of consciousness at one point. It's never easy and it's never clean. But in a general way there was support from both groups.

Disestablishing Religious Studies in the late 1970s

Reti: Okay, great. Now, what about religious studies? I know that that program was cut in 1979?

Moglen: Right, when I came, though, in 1978—before I came, actually—Gary Lease got in touch with me to tell me what a mess religious studies was. And Gary was chair of religious studies. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs) Welcome to Santa Cruz.

Moglen: Right. (laughs) When I arrived Gary was—he was bent, he was really bent, I think, on blowing up the department. I think his feeling was that it was just not working as an academic program. It was a very strange department without an integrated curriculum. Donald Nicholl and Noel King were distinguished scholars who were well known as inspiring teachers. Michael Caspi taught Jewish history and Hebrew and was in the language program. It was a strange group of people who were very much part of the old [UC] Santa Cruz—Bill Everson, who taught at Kresge—he had that enormous course, *The Birth of the Poet*. That was taught as a Kresge College course but when the reorganization happened the course went over to religious studies. So it was a hodgepodge.

This was also generational. Gary was the son who was overthrowing the fathers, clearly. There was a whole lot of personal stuff going on there. But the fathers were all saintly and they weren't opposing Gary in a major way.

So I appointed a review panel. We had an external review to decide what the future of religious studies should be. And there were very distinguished people chosen. Gary recommended a large group and I also got recommendations from other people in other religious studies programs. As I recall, there were maybe two people from UC Santa Barbara and someone from Wesleyan. It was a serious group.

But that was also the problem. In that way it was—you could say it was sort of rigged because it was clearly a group that was not going to think that this was a great department. But who was going to think it was a great department when it was so incoherent? Nicholl, King, and Lease were historians of religion—that was what they shared. Gary had personal stakes. I think he wanted to be in history of consciousness. He was on the committee that hired Hayden [White]. So there were personal things going on, too.

But I felt as dean that it was impossible for me to make any judgment about this. So we needed to have an external review committee and these were certainly people recommended by many people. It was seen as a very good committee. And what they recommended was that we either hire four or five new people, or we disestablish the program, and members of the group, who were mostly very near retirement, be assigned to their appropriate departments, which was history in three cases, although Gary then went to history of consciousness.

This committee was effectively saying that we needed to reinvent religious studies and that we could do it around the faculty who were there, but not *with*

these faculty as central to the new program, that in effect the program had to be built using them.

The administration said that there was absolutely no way that they would give the kinds of resources that were recommended to rebuild religious studies; at most they were willing to give one FTE to the department. Based on the external review, it really was the case that it would have been extremely difficult to make the argument that this was a respectable academic department. Effectively, the review indicated that it wasn't. Students were very inspired. Faculty were very inspiring as teachers. It was a very good teaching department but it was very much of an undergraduate program, which in a way the university was trying to move away from. It was trying to think of its departments in more disciplinary ways but also just in more—

Reti: More of a research university.

Moglen: More of a research university, yes. Someone like Nathaniel Deutsch would have fit very well into what this committee recommended that we do with religious studies. Caspi, who was teaching Judaic studies, was in the language program and Nicholl and King were on the edge of retirement, and there was Gary, who was really quite negative about it and really wanted to go to histcon. There was not a base to build on.

Reti: And was there resistance to that decision?

Moglen: (laughs) Well, there was very strong undergraduate resistance. It was a very unpopular decision for the undergraduates. It was not a surprising decision to the faculty. I think in some ways Gary was the traitor. He gave a faculty lecture, an inaugural lecture, which people give around the time that they're promoted to full professor—Gary gave his inaugural lecture on the disestablishment of religious studies. It was very well attended.

Reti: (whistles)

Moglen: (laughs) Gary had a tremendously mischievous side. Gary never took it all very personally. He wasn't really stabbing people in the back. It was very clear what he thought. It was very clear to all of them. And it was a kind of oedipal situation that the fathers were very wise and tolerant about. But the undergraduates felt ill-used, and I think probably it was seen outside of the institution as unfortunate that we did not have a religious studies program.

Now, here I would have to say that my own irreligious, my strongly secular background probably made the decision easier for me. It was in no way a personal decision. But I can't say—if women's studies had been at issue I would have probably played a different role. I think this is always an issue for administrators, and if they say it isn't, I don't believe it. It was not a passion for me. But if the external review committee had said, "No, this is a very good program. All you need are two new people who will do *x* and *y*," I would have absolutely supported it, and I would have done something with Gary, who had a bomb in his pocket. (laughs)

Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer

Reti: Well, that relates to your relationship with Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer, who came a year before you.

Moglen: It was the academic vice chancellor, Eugene Cota-Robles, who really wanted to bring me. I think Gene, who was the first Chicano here, and perhaps the first Chicano in the UC administration across the campuses—I think Gene thought well of me and I think he just loved the idea of bringing a woman into the administration. So my sense is that Gene—that the impetus for hiring me was strong. There was a search committee that supported me but it was also divided, but I think Gene felt very strongly about [bringing me].

But when I came, Sinsheimer, who was in no way a feminist, in no way knowledgeable about feminism, he was a very fair man. He was a man, who from my perspective, was committed to social justice in the way that he understood it. You know, he was a scientist; he was a very distinguished scientist, and he had spent his life in laboratories. I think feminism was not an issue that he had ever come across, but he was very fair and very just. And I think he was also a very decent administrator. I had been hired in this position and he absolutely supported me. And he kind of got that it was not easy to be the first and only female administrator on the campus, and a feminist to boot. He understood that. He was a little taken aback when I wanted to go to Kresge—I had to pick my own college affiliation—and he sort of tried to talk me out of that initially. But he then utterly supported what I wanted to do with Kresge when he

reorganized the campus. And he was very supportive of what I wanted to do with feminist studies and for feminism campuswide. I can imagine having had a far more difficult time accomplishing what I wanted to do, with many female administrators, female chancellors, with many non-progressive male chancellors.

When I went to Bob to ask him for Cardiff House, that was an act of hubris. All *kinds* of people wanted Cardiff House, this beautiful little house, the original house at the base of the hill. And it seemed to me that it was the ideal place for the Women's Center, because it marked a meeting place of the university and the community. Symbolically, it stood for what I hoped the Women's Center would be. I went to Bob just alone. I had written a proposal. And I asked him for Cardiff House. He listened to me and at the end of the meeting he said, "Okay, Helene. It's yours."

Reti: Wow.

Moglen: Well, talk about unpopular decisions. (laughs) When people found out about it, there was so much anger and resentment from so many different groups that had their eye on Cardiff House, which Bob knew. Bob was not unaware of that.

Reti: Why do you think he gave it to the Women's Center?

Moglen: I think he thought I would do what I said I would do with it. It was part of a view of wanting to build better relations with the community. I think that he saw that it was really possible in that context. I think he was fair. I think he saw

that women's studies was getting built in a genuinely reputable way, which was very different from how he perceived its origins. And so I think for those reasons he did it. That he did it initially is one thing, but that he stuck to it, I have to say, was remarkable.

Reti: When all those people got upset about it.

Moglen: Right. Because I remember coming out of his office just being—I could not believe he had said yes, and that he had said yes, *there*—I couldn't believe it. But then when I started to become aware of how much resistance there was to it, I thought, well, he'll backtrack. He won't do it. He never, ever, ever said a word about that. He had given his word and he kept his word. In my judgment, that was a very remarkable thing he did.

It was the kind of thing that Bob did. There were many decisions Bob made that were unpopular. Many decisions. Not least of all the reorganization of the campus. He tried, I think, to think through the ethical and moral and intellectual implications of his decisions, and I certainly did not always agree with him. There were times when I was very overt in my disagreements with him, as in the Nancy Shaw tenure case.²²

²² Community studies professor and longtime activist (with SNCC, the Boston Women's Health Collective, etc.) Nancy Shaw (Stoller) was denied tenure at UCSC in 1982. She had previously

Reti: I was wondering about that.

Moglen: Yeah. But I respected the way in which he—he did make decisions trying to be true to his values. This was a remarkable thing he did.

Reti: Absolutely.

Moglen: I can't say that I worked closely with Bob. He was not easy socially, but I always respected Bob very, very much. I felt totally supported by him as an administrator, and was very grateful to him for the ways in which he supported difficult situations that I found myself in, because I was an activist administrator and I think there were many chancellors who could have felt—let me out of here. I don't want to line up behind this person who is clearly making waves. I never felt that with Bob.

Reti: Thank you. Okay.

So then after you were dean, you decided not to continue in that kind of administration.

been recommended for promotion by the Community Studies Board, Oakes College, outside reviewers, an ad hoc committee, and the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP). After a long legal battle, Stoller won tenure in 1987 and returned to teach at UCSC. For a 2002 oral history with Nancy Stoller see http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/oir.exhibit/nancy_stoller

A Path Not Taken

Moglen: Right, my last year as dean, with Nan Keohane, I was on the short list for the presidency of Wellesley. And that was a very important thing for me to have gone through. I had friends on the faculty at Wellesley, a couple of friends, who called me up and asked me to be considered, not because they wanted me, or thought I would have the *slightest* chance of getting it, but because they wanted to radicalize the search. (laughs)

Reti: Oh, my goodness. (laughs) That's very political.

Moglen: Well, my friends were both women; there was someone they saw as very conservative who was an internal candidate. They wanted to open the search out to include external candidates. Their hope was that they could bring a feminist to the presidency. Their sense was, of course, they will never hire you, for various reasons, I think one of which was probably the fact that I was Jewish. But it was also that I was such an activist. I was not part of the Wellesley culture. I did go to Bryn Mawr, but Bryn Mawr was a very different place—these sorts of small differences—a very different kind of place than Wellesley. Wellesley was a very genteel and very—there was a very different kind of tone at Wellesley.

But I said, yeah, I was glad to do that. Sending my CV felt like a very minor thing to do. But then I kept being asked for interviews and going through different stages. And I kept showing up, really sisterhood felt powerful, right? It felt great to be participating in this little coup at Wellesley. Next thing I knew, I was on the short list with Nan Keohane, who was at Stanford. And at no point did I really

think, wait a minute, do I want this job? Until then. That was a moment of truth for me. I really had to decide—because it must have been possible that I was going to get this job if they wanted me to—(laughs) And I really had to decide, well, did I really want to go this route, to be an administrator for the rest of my life? And it was a hard decision.

What actually decided me—I did make a decision before I didn't get the job. Two things decided me: my final interview at Wellesley, where I really felt very alien. I don't ordinarily feel Jewish. I don't ordinarily feel sort of New Yorky. I just feel like myself. In that scene, I felt all of that. I really felt out of place. It felt very WASP. It felt very proper. It felt really uptight. I felt as if I was just—[whistles through teeth] totally out of place. Even though Wellesley could be—it was feminist in its way; it was certainly pro-woman—my feminism was clearly extreme from their perspective. There were a small group of people who I think thought, God, wouldn't it be amazing if she came here? (laughs) But that was not the majority view. I could feel that in the interview.

But when they called me after the interview and they asked me what my requirements would be, I said, "Well, one of them would certainly be a tenured appointment in literature." And they said, "No, we don't hire presidents with tenured appointments." I said, "That was a deal breaker. I would never come." Because if you don't have a tenured appointment in a place, and things really get ugly for an administrator, you really have to know that that's where you're going to go. Plus, I had a very strong identity as a faculty member, as a teacher. I would

never have given that up. Nan did give it up. She was their first choice, without question. She was a wonderful president. She went on to become the president of Duke University. She was absolutely the right choice for them. But she took the job without a tenured appointment in politics, which was her field. I think for Nan it was clear. She wanted that route. She wanted to be an administrator. She didn't want to go back. So she was ready to do that. She'd also gone to Wellesley. (laughs)

But going through that was very important for me. Because it was a moment when people wanted women administrators, and women presidents were thinkable, particularly for women's colleges, but also for small liberal arts colleges. I was really among a relatively small group of women administrators around the country who also published and so therefore had a little bit of a name.

So I could have gone on, probably, in administration, and I really had to think it through. It was clear to me that what I wanted to do was go back to teaching and writing, and I wanted to use the skills I had gotten as an administrator to put at the service of things that I believed in, in the university. I really believed that I knew how to deal with the administration, with administrators. I understood how to do things and I really wanted to use that knowledge, but I didn't want to use it as an administrator. I didn't want to sit in endless meetings. I didn't want to raise money. I didn't want to do all of those things that I would have had to do. I continued to teach. I taught a course a year while I was dean. But I felt very

alienated, separated. I had never gotten to know faculty here as a colleague. I came in as a dean and that made lots of distance. So I decided I wanted to do this other thing. And I never applied again for a presidency, despite the fact that I was invited to do so.

Reti: So would it be fair to say that you chose a kind of borderlands status between administration and the faculty, because you understood both worlds?

Moglen: Well, I think that was what I wanted to do in chairing women's studies. I think the rest of my career—there was always a piece of it that was about resistance. But I experienced it less as resistance than I did innovation. I experienced it as an opportunity to make some things happen, and increasingly I experienced it that way. You're probably right, that in the earliest times I was still fighting political battles much more. And increasingly, although I was still fighting them, I was doing it more as somebody who was trying to enable people and programs.

So once I went back to the faculty, then I started to serve on senate committees and build women's studies and feminist programs, generally. And that was the way I saw myself. I saw myself as somebody who participated in campus-wide program building, focusing on feminist projects and women's studies and I defined myself very much as a teacher.

I defined myself very little in terms of the literature department, although I did administrative work for literature and always tried to show up. It was never a

passion. It was never a cause. The kinds of splits that there were in the literature department didn't really interest me.

Reti: I wondered about that, because I know that there were quite a few.

Moglen: Oh, it was a terribly political place. I didn't really want to fight those battles. They felt pretty minor to me and I didn't have stakes in the issues the way my colleagues in literature did. So I was sort of a good citizen in literature. I taught both for literature and for history of consciousness, and for women's studies. So that was how I defined myself.

Chair of the Academic Senate

But then I was asked if I would be vice chair of the senate, which was preliminary to being chair of the senate. (Being vice chair is a pretty meaningless appointment.) That was really an opportunity for me to demonstrate and also enact what I felt had been very crucial personal changes and also changes in my style as an administrator. I really look back on my days as a dean—I was a shooter from the hip. I really wanted to do things myself. I had a sense of my power to do this and that and blah-blah-blah—I think over the years, and this was in part as a feminist, and it was in part just getting older, I really wanted to work much more collaboratively with people. I understood the ways in which the divisions between the administration and the faculty senate were structural much more than personal. I personalized a lot more when I was younger, and I took on fights that really did have for me a kind of personal cast.

So when I decided to do the senate, I think it was an act of reparation for me. Even though I think many people would have said, and would say now, that I was A very good dean, and I think I was an *effective* dean. But I was not a well-loved dean. (laughs) I was forty-one when I came. I was so young.

Reti: Wow. (laughs)

Moglen: Yeah, I know. When my sons turned forty I thought, how is it possible that I did this job at their age? And they're mature guys. But I had a sense of how much I didn't know, how young I was, how inexperienced I was, and how much wisdom I lacked, really.

So I think when I decided to do the senate chair it was out of a desire to say, look, this is who I am. It's not that person who those of you who were here remember, or those of you who have heard about me think I am. I'm somebody different from that. I wanted both to be recognized, to be seen as different from that image, but I also wanted an opportunity to act in a larger job on the campus that would allow me to show how that difference looked, how it would matter.

I loved being senate chair. I absolutely loved it. Up until that time, the Senate Advisory Committee had existed as a group made up of the heads of the major senate committees but before I was chair, it met relatively little. It was a deliberative body that the administration could call together when it wanted to consult with the senate. But I made it *the* group that did the work of the senate collaboratively. So we met every other week in the years that I chaired the senate,

and every decision I made, I made collaboratively with the chairs of the senate committees, which meant *with* the senate committees themselves.

So I really was able to make a far more fully collaborative body of the senate by administering it in that way. And MRC Greenwood was the chancellor. As you know, MRC was really a feminist. It was fine to work with MRC. I enjoyed working with her and she was very supportive of everything that I wanted to do in that regard. But we also worked together very effectively, so that I never felt compromised but I also felt collegial. I think had there been a chancellor who was less progressive, with whom I differed more, it might have been harder. But it was a very good moment for me. In fact, I think I did manage to do what I had set out to accomplish.

Reti: I was wondering.

Moglen: Yes, I felt as though the ways in which I worked collaboratively, the ways I worked collaboratively with colleagues and also with the administration was really appreciated, and noticed. I think there were people who were quite surprised.

I also was very interested in sitting on the all-University council of senate chairs. That was a very interesting experience for me. Again, I was the only woman in that group. I was really on the very progressive edge, with a historian from Berkeley. But it was possible—that group doesn't do anything legislatively, but it accomplishes a lot through persuasion. Half of every meeting is conducted with the president of UC and the major people in the UC administration. So you're

sitting down for a couple of hours and then having lunch with the UC administration. When things came up that really felt important it was really possible to have their ear. And because of the shared governance, the administration took that very seriously. So I enjoyed it very much.

Modern Language Association

Reti: So now you were mentioning, getting back to your scholarship, that you were quite active in the Modern Language Association.

Moglen: Right. When I was looking at my CV, preparing for this oral history, I was reminded of how much work I did for the Modern Language Association. And I think I did write that on the notes I sent to you.

Reti: “Why was I working so hard for the Modern Language Association?”

Moglen: Yes! And I think the answer to why I did all of that—because I chaired several commissions: a Commission on the Status of Women; a commission on Writing and Literature; a Commission on the Future of Doctoral Programs in English; and I was a member of the Committee on Professional Ethics. And out of several of those committees came publications. So it was a lot of work. There were meetings every couple of months in New York.

In thinking about why I did that, I realized that I *was* very much a child of the sixties and it was as a result of my experience in the sixties that I did become active as a feminist, in civil rights, and as an academic. The university did change in the sixties. The university dramatically changed. I think of difference between

the Yale that I attended as a graduate student, for example, and the Yale that my sons attended—and, of course, Yale remains still a somewhat more conservative institution—but that was a time when everything changed—in terms of the faculty, in terms of the student bodies, and not least of all, in terms of curriculum.

I think the same influences on my decision to do administrative work and to do the things for feminism that I tried to do on this campus, were also part of what I wanted to do in my profession. I wanted to help change the institution of “English Literature” from a largely British canon protected by incredibly stodgy, conservative faculties who had conservative personnel policies and perspectives.

When I was a teacher at NYU, there *was* a revolution in the Modern Language Association. There was a real generational revolution. I remember a meeting that went on for hours, in which a group of radical—and it was part of my radicalization—a group of radical faculty objected to this NYU distinguished literary series on American literature, which was totally canonical, totally male-centered, totally white. There were faculty for the first time I had ever seen standing up and blocking the vote. It had been seen as an absolutely pro forma vote. The MLA had been one of the cosponsors of this NYU series on American authors. And one after another of these Young Turks stood up and opposed the editorial principles, the choices of texts. It was eye-opening for me. It was absolutely eye opening for me, as it was for many people. As I said, the meeting lasted hours because we blocked—and I became part of that consensus—we

blocked the passage of this pro forma vote, which blocked the continuing publication of this series with the kinds of editorial policies that it had. That was for me a very formative moment.

Many people in that group at the MLA were part of the New University Conference, which was a national group of radical academics. I was still at NYU when we formed our chapter of that group. We met to plan the transformation of curriculum and changes in academic personnel policies. That's also when I went to Purchase and I described that process [earlier in the oral history]. For me, coming here was a continuation of that process, although this was a far more conservative place than I was used to, which was very surprising, in a way. But participating as I did in the MLA was very much a part of that movement for me, and being able to chair these commissions. Who knows what we accomplished? But these reports and these publications and all the rest of it, legislation, I think we did have an effect. Certainly, the Modern Language Association was transformed over those years to the extent that the more conservative members formed another organization, the Organization of American Scholars, of which John Ellis, for example, who was a German scholar here, became a founding member. So there was that shift to the left within the MLA, and the organization itself came to be seen by more conservative faculty as the sort of biased organ of minority people, women, homosexuals, etcetera. So that was also part of the same movement.

UC Psychoanalytic Consortium

Reti: Okay. Let's talk about the UC Psychoanalytic Consortium.

Moglen: Yes, that was a very interesting group. I think it was and remains pretty unusual and at the time it started was quite unique in the psychoanalytic community and in the academic world. It brought together scholars and clinicians doing psychoanalytic work. So people like myself, who do psychoanalytic critique and theory within academic disciplines and clinicians from UC, which means people at hospitals and medical centers and at the psychoanalytic edge of psychology, etcetera, come together for a weekend every year at Lake Arrowhead. It's a very interesting conference. It doesn't have any presented papers. There's a programming committee, which I was on for many years, which sort of determines the foci of sessions. Sometimes we have some readings, usually we have readings that people discuss together, but nobody presents papers. We have readings and we break down into workshops and we have plenary sessions to discuss these issues. We always discuss a film. It was very exciting for me, and I think for many people. Again, I started there from the beginning. The founders of it were Nancy Chodorow—

Reti: Oh!

Moglen: And a couple of clinicians who were also academics. So the three founders were all academics *and* clinicians. Nancy also became a psychoanalyst. They started it. So I started going from the first year. It was a very exciting to have those groups come together. And certainly for academics it was very

moving and very powerful to have a sense of the clinical edge of what was for us a theoretical field. I think it did have a strong effect on my work and continues to have a strong effect on my work.

Reti: Because a lot of the scholarship you've done in literature—

Moglen: —has been psychoanalytic. And now, for example, I'm teaching a writing workshop for veterans downtown, which came out of a project that was presented at the psychoanalytic consortium, which was not a writing project, but it's a group of psychologists and psychoanalysts in Los Angeles who volunteer their time to work with returning veterans and their families. I found it enormously powerful to hear their presentations of what they were doing and also what the need is. I thought, well, it would be great to do that centered in writing.

And actually, I met my partner [Sheila Namir] at a Psychoanalytic Consortium meeting and she's a psychoanalyst and was in LA. So we met there and now she's teaching this writing class with me. We're just about to do a talk at UC Santa Barbara at their humanities research institute about our project. So we're also thinking about the project theoretically. The woman who is in charge of the UC Humanities Institute at Santa Barbara has also been part of the Psychoanalytic Consortium for years and is also doing a class, a writing workshop for veterans at UC Santa Barbara. So all of these things come together. You can sort of see the way they create a kind of chain.

Reti: So you're sort of officially retired after twenty-nine years—that was a little while ago.

Moglen: Yes, that was five years ago.

Reti: 2008. But it certainly hasn't been the end of your teaching and involvement.

Moglen: No, I've continued to teach a course a year, although this is probably my last year doing that at the university.

Santa Cruz Commons

But then I started this project called Santa Cruz Commons. When I retired, I chaired the Committee on Emerti Relations. I was very interested in trying to see whether emeriti faculty were interested in working in the community. My colleagues on the emerti relations committee, Nancy Chen and Mary Silver, because there's one active and one other retired faculty, were very supportive of and interested in this project. So we had several meetings with emerti faculty. But it didn't seem as if that was going to go anywhere.

And then Nancy and I saw an announcement from the UC Humanities Research Institute for grants they were giving on projects reconceptualizing work. I wrote a proposal for it. It was interesting; they would not allow me to be the principal investigator because I was retired. They wouldn't even allow me to be co-principal investigator. So Nancy was the principal investigator. But we wrote the grant proposal and we got the grant for 20,000 dollars. And last year we pulled the project together as co-directors.

Although we did submit a grant proposal, the real concept was to create a space in which people from the university and people from the community would come together to define what genuine collaborations would look like; a space that would make it possible for activist academics and community activists to do research and advocacy and create policy together. There was a terrific turnout of faculty, both retired and active, and the turnout of the community people has also been excellent, all together, seventy-five, eighty people. The heads of nonprofits were the target group and people from the university who were interested in such collaborations. It is amazing how people have continued to participate in our events. We have had several meetings, discussions. Mike Rotkin has joined us as a very active presence.²³ At the first two meetings, we talked about what it would mean to have a genuinely progressive Santa Cruz, not defining what progressive would mean, but just sort of seeing what came up.

Reti: What does *genuine* mean then?

Moglen: Well, whatever people wanted it to mean. In what ways is your vision of Santa Cruz and the role your group plays in Santa Cruz—in what ways is that thwarted? What would you need to push forward? We really tried to resist defining *progressive*, because that way clearly was madness.

²³ An oral history with Michael Rotkin is forthcoming from the Regional History Project in 2014—Editor.

Reti: (laughs)

Moglen: But it was very productive in the discussion. What became clear, which I hadn't expected— I didn't know what would emerge. That was part of the point. It's sort of my becoming collaborative in a really good way, I think, so that I genuinely wasn't worried about what would come out. I just wanted to see what would come out. One of the things that came out of these two discussions was that people in the community really feel an absence of knowledge about who on the campus is doing what research and who from the campus wants to work both as a researcher and also as an advocate with community organizations. And also how graduate students and undergraduates can function in a meaningful way, not just in a sort of a work study way that is often not well supervised and doesn't lead anywhere because there is no specific project into which they can fit.

So when this came out we recognized that we didn't have sufficient knowledge either. So we were able to designate some of our funds for a survey of faculty on campus which Gina Langhout in psychology oversaw with a graduate student. They effectively asked people: what research are you doing that would be of use to the community; who is interested in doing community-based research; who is interested in overseeing graduates and undergraduates in university-community collaborations? We had sixty responses, which is not bad, because almost everybody who responded was interested in participating. And it was a pretty lengthy survey—time-consuming to take.

So we're in the process of putting up our website and the results of our survey are certainly shaping the projects that we are beginning to identify. We're going to use the website as a kind of activist organizing tool so that it will be possible for people from the university and the community to be included in these wonderful little maps we're developing that will help create projects in specific areas: criminal justice, food, arts and democracy; education, etc. We have six or seven central areas. I'm putting together a steering committee and Nina Simon, who is the head of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History is on it, which means that we're going to be able to do some very interesting projects with the museum.

One of the things that people are very interested in is the relation of north and south counties. So I think we're going to do a big project on that. Who knows what it will be? The good thing is that it will be what people want it to be. And I'm hoping that we'll have something called Santa Cruz Summer, which will be organized by students from all levels for students, and will also be intergenerational, with the kind of alternative educational projects that young people want and that we're able to shape collaboratively.

So I think a lot of things could come from this. My veterans project is part of that. And we'll do other literacy projects and photography projects. Maybe you'll do a

photography project with people for us.²⁴ I think a lot of my energy will go into that now. I'm really excited at the possibilities and pleased that there are people willing to be on a small working committee who will begin to organize such projects, and that some faculty who would like to work with the community but don't know how to do that, will find ways to participate. I hope that it will now enlarge to include staff, and to include whoever, that it will become a way for university-community collaboration to take place in ways that are developed in and by the community.

Many of these projects exist around the country, but activities are usually initiated by the university. The university decides: "This is a good project, let's reach out to the community." But this works the other way. What is it the community is doing? What is it the community needs? Let's listen to them.

And one of our models, the model that came out of these first two meetings and provided the basis of our third meeting, on criminal justice, is a project called Smart on Crime, which Craig Haney and Craig Reinerman and various people in criminal justice from the community have worked very hard on. It's a collaboration that includes policy, advocacy, practice, and research. That's the

²⁴ Reti is an aspiring photographer and had discussed this with Moglen off-tape—Editor.

kind of model that people in the community want to use in addressing a range of local problems.

Reti: Well, it's interesting that we're doing this interview in a period in which we've had quite an increase in crime, particularly against women.²⁵

Moglen: Right.

Reti: And the community's response to that is some of these neighborhood watchdog kind of organizations but that doesn't really get at the core of what's going on here.

Moglen: Right, and who's to say what is at the core. But Smart on Crime, which also works with violence against women, women in prisons—it's a very interesting network of people, and, of course, people who are working with homelessness, which is always an issue. In the spring, a group cohered against the homeless, if you recall, when a woman was murdered downtown. The fact is that every time there's an incident of this kind, the response needs to be invented again. Who are the main players? What are the main problems? When the

²⁵ A series of violent crimes took place in Santa Cruz in the spring of 2013, including a UCSC student who was shot in the head (and survived) during a robbery near Natural Bridges State Park. Disturbingly, in February a woman also falsely reported that she was raped on the UCSC campus over President's Day weekend. At the time of this interview the woman had not yet confessed that this was a hoax.

question really is, what are the many intersecting influences that create this situation? And how do we work together to deal with it?

It's not that Santa Cruz Commons is going to solve this problem. But I do think that one way of beginning to approach the problem is through such collaborations—the university is usually very, very separate from the community. Groups are not working together. There's no integration. One of the amazing things that we discovered at the very first meeting of Santa Cruz Commons is that almost all of the representatives from community nonprofits were UCSC graduates.

Reti: Oh, my goodness.

Moglen: So that distinction between the university and the community is *so* false. It's disappointing to me that even though there's a lot of rhetoric on the part of the administration about how important the community is and how much we do for the community, it's really surprising how few concrete collaborative projects they encourage.

Impressions of UCSC in 2013

What's fascinating is that community studies—so many of these programs that were initiated to foster university-community collaboration have been destroyed. They've just been gotten rid of. What's also fascinating is the way community studies, for example, is now being relegated, with very little funding, to the colleges, in order to meet a service requirement for undergraduates that was

initiated by the faculty at the very time that community studies was being disestablished by the administration. So the administration is now looking to the colleges to provide ways for undergraduates to get these service credits but they're eliminating the institutionalized ways in which such work could coherently take place. It's just bizarre. This is something I'm feeling pretty strongly about—all of the interdisciplinary programs that came out of the sixties that were institutionalized are now being deinstitutionalized and relegated back to the colleges, which have no authority, no status, few resources, and most of them no faculty! Most of them no faculty. They simply provide office space.

Reti: That's a really good point.

Moglen: You go over to Kresge College. It is dead. That college that I enlivened, brought people over to—there isn't even a faculty services office, because there is nobody there to serve.

Reti: It's all been moved to the Humanities Building.

Moglen: Well, it's been moved to the Humanities Building and to the Social Sciences Buildings. So you've had the absolute abandonment of most colleges as significant academic entities. Cowell and Stevenson, I guess, may remain presences to some extent. They may still have some faculty presence. Otherwise it seems to me, as I understand it, the colleges are without a faculty presence, and they are certainly without a curricular presence, except for the core courses, which are mostly not taught by regular faculty.

So you can see the regression—the disappearance of programs that came out of a sixties consciousness—most of them are now dead. American studies: gone. Feminist studies yes, is one of the very few of those programs that is thriving. But community studies—really gone.

Reti: The Merrill Field Program.²⁶

Moglen: The Merrill Field Program, gone. So all of the rhetoric about the campus reaching out to the community is just that: it's empty rhetoric. When, where it really matters, the administration has terminated programs that were—on some level—concerned with social justice. They haven't fed them. And the community feels it.

Reti: (sighs) I'm very excited to see how this [Santa Cruz Commons] unfolds.

Moglen: Well, we'll see.

Reti: For our final question, along those lines, please say more about your impressions of where UCSC is now and where we're going.

²⁶ There is currently an effort on the part of Merrill College to revive the Merrill Field Program.

Moglen: Well, I have to say I am very demoralized. I'm glad I'm retired, when I see my junior colleagues, my younger colleagues struggling. And this latest thing about Coursera is—

Reti: This is online education.

Moglen: Online education. The university administration has signed a contract with Coursera without any consultation with the senate. I just saw the contract today. This is a whole other topic and I'm not informed enough to go into it but I would say this is a very dangerous situation for the senate. The one area in which the senate has plenary power in the institution is curriculum. What does it mean for the university administration to sign a contract with Coursera without senate consultation?

Online education is part of a larger picture of decline. I think there are wonderful faculty here. The faculty has only gotten better and better. But I think the education gets worse and worse. I'm teaching a large class now, 150 students, and I think the writing, the problems with writing are immense—and yet the Writing Program has been cut way back. These students—you can really talk about literacy problems. The gap between what students hear in lectures and what they need work in understanding and writing about—we've lost a lot of the soul of Santa Cruz—in the abandonment of later incarnations of the colleges, of interdisciplinary programs, of institutionalized opportunities for meaningful community work. When I came there was a little publication called *Teacher on the Hill*. People used to talk about pedagogy all the time. We have gifted teachers

here. But they are so overworked. And you have a situation in the social sciences where mostly what students are doing is taking short answer exams. That's what they do. They're not writing papers.

Reti: In the social sciences.

Moglen: In the social sciences, because—I don't know how many students are assigned to each TA, they can't read papers. They do these Scantron exams. This is UCSC! Scantron exams. There are a few programs, of course, in the humanities and a few in the humanistic social sciences where students are still writing.

So what is the great liberal arts education that we are offering students now? What is the great education we're offering students? The classes are larger. The TAs have been cut back. The numbers of students that teaching assistants serve have increased many times over. The writing faculty has been cut way back. So what *are* we talking about? Yes, the faculty have gotten better in certain ways. The publications have increased but many of those faculty are massively overworked, massively demoralized. In terms of graduate programs in the humanities—histcon gutted. Gutted.

So it's demoralizing. From my perspective, it's demoralizing. I see many of the things that I've worked very hard to enable disappearing. The future of education in online education, that's very dubious. That's very dubious. Yeah, it's very good that students around the world, people who want to take courses around the world, who can't afford it, who have no access—it's good. It looks like everybody wins but what happens to privacy? What happens to forms of

education that we have most valued? Everybody wins but a number of the major players lose.

So this is a discussion that is going to have to happen on this campus, as it will on campuses across the country. What I see is that faculty don't begin, the Senate does not begin to understand what it is losing and the way it would be contributing, not just to the increasing mediocrity of education, but much worse than that. Much worse than that.

So yeah, I'm not cheerful about it. I'm not optimistic. The rhetoric of the administration makes me crazy. I hear it as a kind of propaganda from which the university emerges as a kind of Potemkin's Village. And to mix my final metaphor, people aren't saying that the emperor is wearing no clothes. (laughs)

Reti: (laughs)

Reti: Okay. Well, I want to thank you so much for doing this oral history, Helene.

Moglen: It's really been fascinating. I've enjoyed it more than I can say and I really value and am grateful for the opportunity.

Reti: Thank you.

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.