

*Professor Isebill "Ronnie" V. Gruhn:*

*Recollections of UCSC, 1969-2013*

Interviewed and Edited by

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Santa Cruz

University of California, Santa Cruz

University Library

2013

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## **Interview History**

Professor Isebill "Ronnie" Gruhn arrived at UC Santa Cruz in 1969 as a member of the politics department and an affiliate of Stevenson College. Before coming to UC Santa Cruz she had been teaching at Oberlin College.

Born in Leipzig, Germany, Gruhn is the daughter of a partially Jewish (mixed heritage and religion) mother; her non-Jewish father joined the resistance and helped Jews escape from Germany. He spent much of World War II imprisoned in Nazi labor camps. Gruhn's early life was one of upheaval and dislocation; a background uncannily congruent with the interviewer's own family heritage.

Gruhn immigrated to New York City with her parents when she was nearly twelve years old. Her experiences during the war led to an interest in "knowing how the world worked." She attended Dickinson College for her BA in politics; earned her MA in international studies from Johns Hopkins University, and her PhD in political science from UC Berkeley. Gruhn became an expert and widely published scholar in international politics and international law, who has focused on Africa, international and transnational institutions, and relations between rich and poor states.

One of very few tenured women during UCSC's early days and one of the first to serve as a high-level administrator, Gruhn was the first female dean of social sciences (1981-1983) and the first female academic vice chancellor (acting) from 1987-1989. This was during the period when UCSC was, as Gruhn calls it,

"an essentially male institution." She never affiliated with UCSC's women's studies (feminist studies) department, yet she consciously chose positions of leadership at UCSC because she wanted to show that women could excel in administration.

Gruhn served in diverse capacities at UC Santa Cruz over the past four decades. She twice chaired the politics department (1973-1975 and 1980-1981) and was an active member of Stevenson College, including founding and teaching in Stevenson's prestigious and interdisciplinary Modern Society and Social Thought major. In the 1990s (1994-1998), Gruhn directed the UCDC Program for UC Santa Cruz, a program that supervises and supports students who pursue internships and academic study in the nation's capital. Most recently, she chaired the Academic Senate Committee on Emeriti Relations and has continued to teach courses for the politics department and lecture for the UCSC Lifelong Learners Program. These varieties of experience on and off campus provided her with a wide-angle lens through which to observe and consider UCSC's trajectory from its early years as an innovative experiment in public higher education to its more recent configuration as a somewhat more conventional research university. Gruhn's opinions on the political, cultural, and structural changes at UC Santa Cruz over more than four decades are sometimes salty but it is clear that she is critical because she cares deeply about the Santa Cruz campus as a dynamic institution.

This oral history was conducted in McHenry Library on the UC Santa Cruz campus in October of 2013, in two sessions of approximately two hours

each. It is part of a series of oral history interviews the Regional Oral History Office is conducting with early UCSC women faculty. Gruhn carefully reviewed the transcript of the audio recordings, making corrections and clarifications and I want to thank her for the work she put into this project.

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

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*December 3, 2013*

### **Early Life**

**Reti:** Today is Tuesday, October 15, 2013, and this is Irene Reti with the Regional History Project here with Ronnie Gruhn for our first interview. So, Ronnie, let's start by talking about your family. Where were you born and when? Your early life.

**Gruhn:** Well, let's start with the fact that my real name is Isebill Gruhn. Ronnie is a nickname. My early life was both unusual and interesting. We could do a whole oral history on it. But since we want to talk about the campus rather than me, let me just encapsulate it.

**Reti:** Sure.

**Gruhn:** I was born in 1938 in entirely the wrong place, namely Germany, to a family with—both parents German, though both families are more international. My mother's family had Jewish members peppered throughout the family. All of these people had converted to Lutheranism in the nineteenth century or before, so there were no practicing Jews in the family. But, of course, Hitler decided who was Jewish and who wasn't. My father came from an "Aryan" family. He got involved in getting Jewish people out of the country, through the underground to Holland, and was caught and sent to hard labor camps. Not being Jewish, he was not sent immediately to a concentration camp, but to hard labor camps.

So we sat there during the war with my father in hard labor camps. My father escaped one time, which was sometimes possible in these labor camps that did

mining and so forth. He used the time before they captured him again to figure out what to do with his family, and to bury gallons of cod liver oil and whatnot, so we wouldn't starve to death. But towards the end of the war people of mixed origins, like my mother, also would be captured. And through the underground, my father learned when that might be, or whether they were ready to capture such people. He managed to escape again. We spent the last year, more or less, of the war, living underground, moving from safe house to safe house, because there was an underground.

The end of the war came. We were in Leipzig, Germany, which was an American zone and then at Potsdam it became a Russian zone. People who had been anti-Nazi were favored by the communists and the Russians wanted my father to go into government to take up some post. He was not a communist, so he didn't. So the Russians were after him as well. We spent three miserable years, into the middle of 1948, living in the Russian sector and being hounded by the Russians, and my father jumping out of a window as they came in through the front door, etcetera, etcetera.

Conditions in postwar Germany were worse in many ways than they were during the war because there was less food than there was during the war, because the Germans had plundered the food everywhere. So it took us until the middle of 1948 to escape from the east zone to the west zone. That was all very complicated. It's a horror tale that's too boring for this purpose. The British intelligence that my father had been working with during the war helped us get



out from East Berlin to West Berlin. We went to Holland, where we were on a temporary visa awaiting an American visa. My parents wanted to go to the USA because it was the future and my mother's two brothers had left Germany before the war and were American soldiers during the Second World War.

But the visa for the U.S. was complicated to get and so we were in Holland for almost a year. Then we arrived in New York City. My father's mental and physical health had been destroyed in these camps. My mother, who had grown up as a fairly elite woman who had no skills in particular, now became the family earner, along with me. Actually, I was an immigrant child laborer.

And I started school, because I had not gone to school at all in Germany. They didn't send me to school during Nazism and after the war there were no schools for a better part of a year. In the Russian zone, when the schools came on, they were horrible. They were propaganda schools. A family friend doctored my lung X-rays to say that I had TB, a low-level TB. So I never went to school. When we were in Holland, I was not allowed to go to school because we were there on a temporary visa. So I essentially started school in the U.S. My total education is an American education. I started school in the U.S. at eleven, close to twelve.

**Reti:** In New York?

**Gruhn:** In New York City. At which point, there were no accommodations for non-English speakers. They just dumped me into the third grade. I had a difficult time learning how to read and write. The assumption was it was because I didn't speak English. But actually, in 1980-whatever, when dyslexia became a known

entity, it was discovered that I had dyslexia. I had difficulty all through school. I was declared a slow learner. I was put into slow learner classes. I couldn't learn how to read. It also was a puzzle that I didn't learn how to read as a small child because, after all, five-year-olds who get read to a lot, which I did, pick up reading on their own.

**Reti:** Yes.

**Gruhn:** So for some reason, probably because of political and economic pressure, my parents just decided I was perfectly all right, and that the fact that I couldn't read or write was of no moment.

So I go through the New York City school system. It's a very iffy proposition. I am fluent in English but I still can't read or write very well. However, I do well in school. So I graduated from Forest Hills High School with a 91 average or something in academic subjects, but I still tested, and I've always tested, at sort of feeble-minded levels. My SAT scores were minus scores. They weren't even regular scores.

I could have gone to Queens College in New York, because they automatically admitted people without test scores in those days, who had good grades. But I wanted to get out of my family, out of New York. So I applied to a lot of small liberal arts colleges, which had strong politics departments that did international stuff, because I knew that's what I wanted to do ever since I was a child.

**Reti:** Why?

**Gruhn:** Well, because I grew up in wartime and so forth and I wanted to know how the world worked.

### **Dickinson College**

So I applied to a lot of these schools. They all turned me down because I had such low SAT scores. I convinced my father to drive me to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where a place named Dickinson College resided, because they looked like they had the best program for what I was interested in. They had international law and all of those kinds of things. I talked the dean there into accepting me. So I went to Dickinson College. I had no money, but in those days if you worked thirty hours a week at a job you could pay for your own way.

They were sorry they admitted me because I more or less flunked out my freshman year, because I couldn't read well enough and write well enough to really do the work. So they told me not to come back. I decided I was coming back. Since I flunked out, I talked them into allowing me to take senior seminars, a lot of art history, things I could do. So I managed to get lots of A's the second year and that then averaged out into an appropriate sophomore average. Eventually I did well. I majored in politics, had a second major in art history, a minor in sociology. I decided I would probably want to go into the foreign service, or work for the UN or something.

### **Johns Hopkins School of International Studies**

With that in mind, I applied to the Johns Hopkins School of International Studies. I got accepted. I went there. In those days there were 120 graduate students for

the combined two-year program. It's much bigger now. I was one of three women, or something like that there. I really profited a lot from going there. But then, it became obvious that I couldn't really become a foreign service officer, or didn't want to, because having been born in what then was East Germany in the 1950s, they said it would take three or four years to do the security check.

**Reti:** So you were born in Leipzig?

**Gruhn:** Yes, I was born in Leipzig. My father is from Berlin and my mother is from Hamburg.

And then, women in those days only were at cultural desks and stuff and I wanted to do real politics. The UN was not a very good option because they were filled up with Americans and all these newly independent countries had to get their quotas of employees. So it was a fat chance to get a UN job at that particular moment.

I received my MA in international relations at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, after which I applied to various PhD programs. I applied to the best PhD programs in political science at the time, which were Harvard, Yale, and Berkeley. And I applied to the best African studies programs—because I'd gotten interested in and focused on Africa—which were Boston University and Northwestern. Boston University and Northwestern turned me down within a month because, again, I had low Graduate Record Exam scores.

**Reti:** Why were you interested in Africa?

**Gruhn:** Ah. That goes back to—that's a historical artifact. I was involved in civil rights stuff, and then took some courses in college that had to do with the history of slavery. I got interested in where people came from; who were African Americans? And second of all, it was the time in the late fifties when African countries were becoming independent and I was interested in development issues. I wanted to get away from Europe, the Cold War, and all of that. Had I gone to school a decade later, I might have done Latin America or Asia. So it was a function of the time period in which I went to school. So I focused on Africa.

### **UC Berkeley**

I got accepted at Harvard, Berkeley, and Yale. I decided to go to Berkeley, for a variety of reasons we don't need to detail. I was there during the Free Speech Movement, had a good time. I did well. I was one of very few women, again. I mean, two or three strewn around in those days. I sort of made it to the top of the barrel there in graduate school and my major professor, with whom I worked on my thesis, whose name was Ernest Haas, a major person in international relations, said, "Well, you better now apply for fellowships to do your research in Africa."

I applied for what was then—it doesn't exist anymore—a very prestigious fellowship, the Ford Foundation Foreign Area fellowship. They did some sorting out and they invited the top candidates to New York to be interviewed by major scholars. I was interviewed by some very major scholars, who essentially said to

me, "Look, we've sent a few women to Africa but they were anthropologists who went to a village or something and studied. You're making a proposal to go to fifteen or twenty countries to study international stuff. How do you think you're going to do that?"

**Reti:** Fifteen or twenty countries. Say more about that.

**Gruhn:** Yes, I'll tell you in a minute. So I said, "Well, I think I can do this." I persuaded them I could do it. I got the fellowship. I spent a year in Africa. I was studying the relations of African countries with each other in the postcolonial phase. I decided to focus on science and technology because that didn't sound political, and presidents and high muckety-mucks in those countries were happy to talk to me because I was a woman and therefore not taken seriously, and because the subject didn't seem central to anything. I tested various theories that had to do with integration, which was fashionable in those days, studying Europe. Ernest Haas was actually a scholar of Europe.

So I did a study of how this worked itself out in the postcolonial era. I moved all over the place in Africa, had a really interesting year, was in the middle of some coups and whatnot. The Ford Foundation was so freaked out about something happening to me that they essentially said, "Just be safe. If you need more money you can have more money."

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** And so every now and then I would say, "I've just run out of money

because I needed to do X or Y, or change my airline reservations," and they just kept sending money. "Just do anything. Be safe."

**Reti:** About what year are we talking about?

**Gruhn:** We're talking about 1965-1966.

So in '66, I went back to Berkeley. I was writing up my thesis in the academic year '66-'67. My supervisor essentially said, "You do a chapter a month and get out of here." And I did that.

And then he said, "Well, now what do you want to do with the rest of your life? I think you should become an academic." Because by that point I had gotten one of the two acting lecturer positions. You taught a course on your own, but under the supervision of a professor who reviewed your syllabus. So as I was writing my thesis, I was actually teaching two hundred students international politics. I seemed to be pretty good at it and I was enjoying it. So he said, "Why don't you at least start as an academic? So what kind of school would you like to teach in?" I said, "I want to get away from Berkeley and big UC campuses. I'd like to go to a nice liberal arts school." So he recommended me—in those days you didn't apply for jobs. Schools called the professors and said, "Do you have somebody to recommend?" These were not affirmative action days.

### **Oberlin College**

So he recommended me to Oberlin, which was the kind of place I wanted to go to. But he said, "I will recommend you to some bigger places as well. Go for

interviews and see how you like them." So I interviewed at UCLA, and York [University] in Toronto, and a few other places. One funny sort of aside was Cornell inquired if he had somebody to recommend, and he recommended me, and they told him on the phone, "You've got to be kidding. We're not having a woman here."

**Reti:** I was wondering about that.

**Gruhn:** Anyway, long story short, I got multiple job offers. I took the one at Oberlin. I went to Oberlin to teach. I loved Oberlin, a really nice place. I loved the faculty, the students. I was the only woman in the social sciences; I was one of three female, tenure-track faculty in the entire college; the only woman in my department. But it was a nice place. I was treated well. What I hated about it was this was a town of 8000. The highway hadn't as yet been built to Cleveland. I am essentially a big town girl. I like the opera and the symphony. But even more so, I hate the cold. The winter was just horrible. Ten below zero.

And a well-known political theorist, who taught here for a while, who was in those days still teaching at Berkeley, Sheldon Wolin, came to give a talk at Oberlin. I had taken courses from him as a graduate student. He was actually a graduate of Oberlin. He said, "So how do you like it here?" I said I loved it but I hated the cold. And some faculty here at Santa Cruz asked him whether there was somebody he could recommend for a vacancy here. He said, "Try Gruhn because she hates the cold." So I was approached by Santa Cruz about whether I would like to come for an interview here. I remember coming down here when



I was a graduate student at Berkeley and I loved the place. I decided to come for an interview.

### **Coming to UC Santa Cruz**

**Reti:** You were approached by who [at UCSC]? Do you remember?

**Gruhn:** This chairman of the politics department [board] here, who at the time was Ray Nichols, I think, who was a theorist. It was a department decision but he contacted me.

So I came here for an interview, and in those days you were interviewed by the college and the department. And the college that had a vacancy for somebody to do international and comparative—I did both, actually—was Merrill. I came for an interview at Merrill and I really didn't like it. I didn't like the then-provost, Mr. Bell, who was an economist. I didn't like the ambiance of sitting around sort of Quaker style. They were talking about the core course and it seemed to me like a superficial around the world in eighty days course. I liked the whole ambiance at Oberlin better, and I said no thank you.

Then two or three months later, somebody in Stevenson [College] who was a politics person didn't get tenure. He was an Americanist, I think. So they re-contacted me and said, "There's another vacancy in a different college. Would you like to come back to interview?" So I came back to interview. I liked Stevenson a lot better. I told Oberlin I was leaving. They said, "You've got to be stark raving mad. You don't switch jobs before you have tenure (in those days). This is not a good move." I said, "Well, who am I to say that there's going to be

a vacancy in my field after I get tenure?" So Oberlin essentially offered me tenure in two years, raised the salary—because—not because of my many virtues—but because it was a time for women to move up and they imagined me as the next chair of their department. So the dean and everybody said, "Look, stay. We'll do this, that. You can have a year off, blah-blah-blah." And I just decided, I'm going to Santa Cruz. So that's how I wound up here.

Now, a sideshow to all of this was my dyslexia, which I commented on earlier, which actually was a personal problem but not a professional problem. Because for most of my career you had secretaries who could easily retype something you typed. You had dictating machines and tape recorders in which you can dictate things. I can speak in whole sentences. I grew up in an oral environment because I couldn't read. And so my dyslexia problems were well hidden. Nobody around here, other than personal friends, knew anything about it and I had no problems whatsoever. I managed to be a social science dean, a vice chancellor. I would just dictate things, and they would be reproduced, and everything was fine.

When I stopped being academic vice chancellor in 1989-1990, it was just when computers were becoming something everybody used. It was when staff were cut back. And it all of a sudden became obvious that I was no longer operational. Because you can tell when I email on the computer that I make all kinds of errors. And you think, oh, they are typos or whatever. But it's also the case that you can't send a letter of recommendation or make a professional communication writing that way. So I said, "Look. I need help here. I need

somebody to translate my work." And UCSC said, "Well, you have to get tested." So at the age of fifty-something I got tested for the first time. I got tested here. And lo and behold, my reading is very good. I read very fast, with very good comprehension, because I learned how to do that over the years. But my writing is in the, I don't know, the 15th percentile for educated people, or something like that. So then I was declared disabled. So I became disabled in my fifties, when I should have been declared disabled earlier on to help me through school. (laughs)

Most people at this university did not know I was not born here, because even though I have an accent—are you from the East? Are you from somewhere else? I could just say, "I'm from New York." I was of the generation where immigrants morphed into the mainstream. People changed their names. I didn't, but other members of my family did.

**Reti:** Yes.

**Gruhn:** So I was of that generation. And unlike some of my colleagues with similar backgrounds, I didn't make a profession out of my background. So you now know more than most people know on the faculty, although in recent years I've been willing to talk about it.

**Reti:** Okay.

**Gruhn:** So both my "disability" as well as my background did not feature in my professional life at all. Full stop.

**Reti:** I see. I will say, just because an interview is an interaction, that my mother was also a German Jewish refugee.

**Gruhn:** Yeah, I know that.

**Reti:** You knew that?

**Gruhn:** Right.<sup>1</sup>

I had the disadvantage of not being Jewish. And not wanting to play that, that is to say, being very partially Jewish, maybe a quarter or something, coming from nobody who practiced that religion at all, from a totally secular family, and insofar as they weren't secular, they were nominal Lutherans. I thought it was unethical of me to play that card. And that was a huge disadvantage. Because here I am blond and blue-eyed, and insofar as anybody looks at the record, born in Germany, and lived there during the war. And this was not funny. I had real problems in the New York schools. I was beaten up in my elementary school.

**Reti:** (sighs)

**Gruhn:** Because I was this German-speaking kid. And many a time along the way, people would say to me, "Just tell them you're Jewish." And I said, "I won't

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<sup>1</sup> Gruhn attended a January 2011 panel at Stevenson College on multigenerational trauma and war at which the interviewer, Irene Reti, spoke about her family's history as refugees from the European Jewish Holocaust.

do that. Not because I would mind being Jewish, but because it's not right." So I never played the Jewish card. And that's why, also, I don't have much in common with my colleagues who have European Jewish refugee backgrounds in the sense—I mean, they may be personal friends—but I don't have very much in common with how I presented myself. I just never thought it was ethical to do that.

I had one encounter at UC Berkeley, which was very dramatic. You have to pass languages for a PhD; I had to pass a written French exam. The professor who gave it was Jewish, and had seen that I was born in Germany, on my academic records. And he asked somebody, did they think I was Jewish? They said, "No, I don't actually think so." And he failed me, repeatedly. And when confronted with why was I failing—I mean, I don't know a lot of French but enough to have passed that written exam—he said, "I'm not going to pass that little Nazi."

**Reti:** Oh, my God.

**Gruhn:** So I had to go to the authorities in the political science department and say, "Listen, I'm never going to get a PhD as long as this guy is the examiner. Both Sheldon Wolin and Ernst Haas lobbied for me to get a different examiner. Then I passed it right away. But that was the closest I ever came— And they said, "Just tell them you're Jewish. Tell them your father spent the war in concentration camps. Tell them your grandparents perished in concentration camps. Tell them that." And I said, "I won't. Because it's unfair. Even if my

parents had been Nazis, I was born in '38. I was a child when the war ended. I should be treated properly."

So that's always been a principle of mine. It's not that I'm unwilling to say members of my family were Jewish. It's just that I don't think I should play that card. It's unfair. It's just simply not appropriate or ethical. It's an ethical thing with me.

Anyway, so. Let's put that behind us (laughs) because it doesn't have a lot to do with UCSC. It just has to do with a different saga. Onward.

**Reti:** Okay. So you came to UCSC in 1967, at the beginning of the third year of the campus. And you were in politics and at Stevenson. So what was the campus like when you got here? What were your general impressions?

### **The Early Years at UC Santa Cruz**

**Gruhn:** The campus was beautiful. The campus had good values. The chancellor was a little nuts in some ways. This was [Dean] McHenry, who was, as a matter of fact, a member of my department. He was a political scientist. He ran this place like a little fiefdom. He didn't develop a proper administrative structure. He made all the decisions. He ran this crazy place, but was socially conservative. He heard people were getting divorced; he would go to their house and lecture them that this was a bad thing to do. He was homophobic, and yet he hired gay faculty right and left, but he didn't want to know that that was the case. Stevenson was full of gay faculty and somehow that didn't feature in his brain.

There were many contradictions.<sup>2</sup>

The students were great. They wanted to be in the liberal arts. Their parents were mostly professionals who wanted their kids to be in the liberal arts, at a good liberal arts place, who, for whatever reason thought a public university is just as good as Stanford or anywhere else.

But it had many problems. And the problems were discernable early on. The problems were that this was a growing place and you needed to set up some kind of structure. It had a problem, in that McHenry hired some major names, big names, mainly in the sciences, and then he hired armies of assistant professors, with no in between. So he had armies of professors running around who had no clue of how to do anything administratively—how you set up, customary behavior, or anything of that sort. I was literally one of the few people who had taught somewhere else, who was still an assistant professor. People came straight out of graduate school, assistant professors, greenie beanies. The big gurus on top minded their own business, were happy to be liberated from, often their wives, their administrative chores. So this army of assistant professors flailed around doing the best they could do, and there was no rhyme or reason to how this place was administered or governed.

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<sup>2</sup> See the Elizabeth Calciano and Randall Jarrell, eds. *Dean E. McHenry: Founding Chancellor of the University of California, Santa Cruz* (three volumes) (Regional History Project, UCSC Library). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/mchenry>

**Reti:** So when you say there was a lack of structure, is that what you're referring to?

**Gruhn:** Yes. I mean, nobody knew how you set up a graduation ceremony. How do you run a department meeting? What should a department chair be doing? How do you set up a committee structure that actually works? I mean, there is a UC structure. But beyond that, a local thing, how do you run this place so it's not chaotic, that it's fair, that it functions well, that it has enough administrators but not too many. That you get faculty to do things they should be doing but get out of things they shouldn't be doing. It was just total chaos in some ways. But nobody noticed it was chaos because everybody was happy—

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** And you know, occasionally somebody would scratch their head and say, "Well, how do you do this or how do you do that?" So, for example, in my department, you could major in political theory. Well, that's a nice idea. We had a bunch of political theorists. Political theory is a nice subject. But how are you preparing these people to have a sellable politics major that they can take to graduate school and say, "And we also know some American politics and so on"?

The day after I got tenure, I think I became chair of politics. I said, "We need to work out a proper curriculum here." There are sort of four categories in politics—American politics; political theory; comparative; international—you could add some and subtract some. Students might emphasize one, but they



need to learn about the others. They feed into each other. The great political philosophers of their time knew a whole lot about their societies. They didn't sit around in the redwood trees and philosophize. So how are we going to get people to learn things about which they can then philosophize? Anyway, I had a battle on my hands that was unbelievable. The politics faculty were screaming and hollering in objection and there were meetings of hundreds of students to oppose my rigidification of the curriculum. I used to go home and think to myself, if I told this to a colleague at a different institution, they would say, "This is bonkers. This is totally bonkers!" A department has to have some kind of curriculum. You can't just major in one subarea of a discipline.

Then, it was, of course, a very homogeneous campus. Most of the students were white. They were upper middle class in terms of income. That's educationally a problem. It's no longer a problem, but it was a problem then.

### **An Essentially Male Institution**

Then, of course, it was an essentially male institution. There were very few women strewn around the faculty. Some were more senior, like Jean Langenheim. They lived up there in their own universe of being more advanced. And then there were a few stray assistant professor women strewn about. Some of them were told they weren't going to get tenure and they left, and they probably wouldn't have gotten tenure. Some of them left. A few of us stayed. I think the first two contemporaries who made it all through the ranks here were Adrienne Zihlman and myself. We are the ones that started as assistant professors and made it through the ranks. Now, admittedly, a year or two later

other people came. Sandra Faber, came in 1971 or something like that, also as an assistant professor, and skyrocketed to the top. But Adrienne and I were the first upwardly mobile people who got tenure and stayed on. The rest of them were slightly more senior.

**Reti:** Tilly Shaw had already gotten tenure—<sup>3</sup>

**Gruhn:** Yes, there was a layer of women—Or people who started at the beginning but were older, like Audrey Stanley.<sup>4</sup> She also came as an assistant professor but she had so much experience in her field she was in slightly different category.

So that was an issue. But one of the things that people started recognizing in the seventies was you got to do something about women. So eventually more women got hired. Eventually some ethnic minority women got hired.

**Reti:** But going back to the earlier period, was it difficult to be taken seriously as a female professor?

**Gruhn:** You know, it's very hard to know what your colleagues think of you, that they didn't say. I mean, I was never—when the boys in Stevenson played

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<sup>3</sup> See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Professor Priscilla "Tilly" Shaw: Poet, Teacher, Administrator* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013) Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/shaw>

<sup>4</sup> An oral history with Audrey Stanley is forthcoming from the Regional History Project in 2014—Editor.

poker on Tuesday night they certainly didn't invite me, but then I don't play poker anyway. (laughs) So they were all the sort of boys, chaps getting together. Sometimes at parties, some fairly eminent people and people in administration would have a few drinks. I remember one person, whose name I will not mention, but who was an administrator, who said to somebody at a party, and I overheard it—he said, "Well, I know we have to have these women, but in any event they're all lesbians." Now, there's nothing wrong with somebody being a lesbian but it just simply wasn't true. For example, Adrienne and I weren't. It was just one of these prejudicial statements. It was not meant as just an observation. And it wasn't accurate, in any event. So sometimes you got things like that.

Increasingly, people would put women faculty on committees. Somebody like me was on every Senate committee, major committee, minor committee, because everybody felt they had to have a woman on the committee. So unlike today, where untenured faculty aren't usually given these labors, I never spent a year without being on one or two committees.

**Reti:** How did that affect your progress towards tenure?

**Gruhn:** Well, you know, I probably didn't have as much time to do scholarship as other people. I did well enough to get promoted. Had I done less, would have I been more eminent in my field? Maybe. It's all conjectural.

**"A Funny Kind of Feminist"**

But I'm a funny kind—you may want to get to this later—but I'm a funny kind of feminist, I should say. Some feminists on this campus, especially people who came in the seventies and eighties, considered me hostile to the feminist movement. Helene Moglen, for years wouldn't even greet me.<sup>5</sup> They all sort of felt that, unlike them, I was not a feminist. They were right in certain respects. My field was not women or women's studies, so I didn't teach any courses [on women]. My scholarship had nothing to do with women, nor did I move into that field. I was never an ideological feminist, that is to say, I would not go to meetings and scream and holler.

But the kind of feminist I was, in my own mind, never mind what they thought, was a person who, if push came to shove, did whatever I was called on to do, or was able to do, to demonstrate that women could do it. While they were screaming around, I was doing administration, not because I wanted to become an administrator. I always was clear in my mind I didn't want to become—I had opportunities to become a college president—I was constantly being recruited for these things nationally. On this campus [I served as] as social science dean and academic vice chancellor. I would never have said yes to those jobs if it hadn't

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<sup>5</sup> See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Helene Moglen and the Vicissitudes of a Feminist Administrator* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/helene-moglen>

been for the fact that I was the first woman in both of those jobs. I wanted to demonstrate that women could do it. I made it clear that I only would do it for two years and not offer myself as a candidate for the permanent job. You could never convince Helene Moglen of that. She always thought I was ambitious and that's why I was doing these things. I said, "Helene, don't worry. My contract with whoever the boss was to only do it for two years. Don't worry. You're not going to see me in your future as an administrator."

I considered myself as having throughout my career broken ceilings, walls, whatever, day in and day out. And probably, I paid some price in terms of my scholarship, and other ways maybe. I was the first [female] academic vice chancellor in the UC system and at UCSC. The year after that, UC Davis got one. I was asked to chair this committee, or be the Santa Cruz representative on the statewide committee to find the president of the university or a chancellor—I can't begin to tell you how many of those I served on. And those were just awful things, flying around the state, sitting at airport hotels on these committees. I did it to prove— I invariably was the only woman there and the only woman representative from any campus. And people began to say, oh, well Santa Cruz always sends women. (laughs) Few of the other campuses did.

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** And there are funny stories there. I can't remember what systemwide office it was, but there was a meeting at LAX airport and I got to the right hotel, I'm walking down the hall and it's Room 23. I walk into Room 23 and I'm, I

don't know, forty-one or forty-two years old. And there's a roomful of white-haired gentlemen and they say to me, "Ah. Your meeting is next door." I said thank you. I went next door and there was a roomful of women and they were, I don't know, counselors, advisors, or something from around the system. So I had to walk back in and say, "No, actually. This is the right room." (laughs) And they scratched their heads. "You know, Santa Cruz." Then I had to prove that I was as competent as they were on the committee. Eventually they made me the chair.

I gave a lot of my time and my energy to feminist causes but feminist studies faculty would say, "Now, there was an early faculty who was not a feminist and who was against [feminism]." But I don't care what they think. I feel I did the right thing. And that actually took more away from my scholarship than anything else.

**Reti:** Oh, I would imagine so.

**Gruhn:** Because whole years went away. And when you have one of those eighty-hours-a-week jobs, you can't exactly go home and start writing an article. So I think that made a difference. I'm not sorry about it, by the way. I have absolutely no regrets. But it did make a difference, I think. It's conjectural.

**Reti:** It takes a huge amount of effort. Well, thank you. It's really important to clarify that and to hear your perspective.

**Gruhn:** Yes, and oddly enough, there were male faculty who appreciated it and who came to my defense in crushed moments—and there was a crush moment

because there was a Gruhngate here—

**Reti:** Right, we'll get to that later.

**Gruhn:** —were people like Angus Taylor<sup>6</sup>, who wrote lovely notes to me and said, "Just hang in there. You're the best in the system on any of this. Many of us appreciate it at systemwide. Don't let them get to you." So really older generations, who you would have thought would have no appreciation of it whatsoever, were much more appreciative than more contemporaries, which is interesting.

**Reti:** And were there other women faculty that you felt connection with? I've heard that some of the women faculty would sometimes get together. Maybe that was later.

**Gruhn:** No, I didn't get together with groups of female faculty. I had friendships and connections. In spite of totally different fields, totally different personalities, Adrienne and I have always been friends. Audrey and I were friends. I respected Tilly and I think she has some modicum of respect for me. So it's not that I didn't have women friends on the faculty. But I never got together in meetings. But that is not just a question of feminist taste. It's also, I'm not a kind of joiner, member

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<sup>6</sup> See Randall Jarrell, Interviewer and Editor, *Angus E. Taylor: UCSC Chancellorship, 1976-1977* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 1998) <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/taylor>

kind of person. So I think it says as much about that. I mean, I don't belong to book clubs either.

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** (laughs)

### **Earlier Political Activism**

**Reti:** Going back to something you said much earlier in our conversation, you mentioned being active in the civil rights movement. So at that point you were being overtly politically active. Tell me about that.

**Gruhn:** Yeah, I've always been politically active, but in strange ways, in non-mainstream ways. This morning I gave the second part of a two-hour each part talk, which I've done every year, a discussion about international affairs to sixty, eighty lifelong learners. I think that's political. I might not go to a rally because I hate large gatherings. That has to do with my origins.

**Reti:** I understand that.

**Gruhn:** Lots of people meeting in the town square scare me. It's psychological. But I think I've always been political and have always put shoulder to the wheel in something political.

**Reti:** So the civil rights activism—what was that?

**Gruhn:** I always had African American friends, going all the way back to New York schools, or Asian friends, and so forth. I only lived in New York for six



years, but where I lived in New York was adjacent to where the United Nations put up a housing development because so many people of various non-European origins found it difficult to find housing in the 1950s in New York City. So there was something known as Parkway Village, which was a complex of two-story houses with meadows in between. It was near Parkway Highway and Union Turnpike in New York. I went to school with a lot of those kids. I got sensitized to racial issues in those days. At Forest Hills High School, which as I said was very dominated by people of Jewish origin who had honorary societies and so forth, which wouldn't admit the Japanese math genius. And furthermore, if you wanted to do sports, because there were no sports fields, you had to join the region's park, the Jewish center up there in Forest Hills or near Forest Hills. And so people of color, and/or people who were not Jewish were discriminated against. It's ironic. Ralph Bunch's children were in that school, and Ralph Bunch and his role as an African American diplomat came to my early attention. His kids were in the same situation that some of the rest of us were, so I got interested in all of that kind of stuff while I was in New York. I was integrated with these international multiracial groups of kids.

I went to college. There were some African American students but they were all male. There were no women. I made a mistake, by the college standards, of inviting an African American friend who was going to another Pennsylvania college, who needed to use the Dickinson law library. The law school is separate from the college but it's geographically there. The way you had a friend stay overnight in the dorms was to ask somebody who was going home for the

weekend to sign over their room to that person. I found somebody who was willing to sign their room over to my friend. The friend arrived. The house mother noticed she was African American. She called me down and said, "You know she can't stay there." And that led to a big brouhaha. Eventually it was resolved for the weekend. I had a single and she stayed in my room and I stayed in the other girls' room. But I got the NAACP involved.

Carlisle, Pennsylvania was fairly African American. One of my jobs was to run a forklift in the Masland Rug Company, which was heavily black. And the other thing was that if you went to Dickinson College, you were meant to go to church on Sunday. But there were eighteen churches in this town of 18,000, so you could go to any church. And half the churches were African American churches. So I decided to go to the African American churches, just to be rebellious. And long story made short, I got all interested in civil rights. Martin Luther King came to give a talk at Dickinson and I had myself recruited into his movement, went to some sit-ins in the South, got arrested here and there. I mean, not anything very heroic on my part. After all, I was white. But in any event, I got drawn into that and I was very active.

I was the Dickinson representative for something called the National Student Association. Eventually it became known that the CIA was infusing that organization. But at the local level we didn't know that. And this was for international meetings. I was the college representative statewide, so I would travel to Penn State, the University of Pennsylvania, and so forth for all the

meetings and that was all very activist. So at some funny level, I've always been an activist.

I was in Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement. I was a funny kind of activist, again. Bettina Aptheker was haranguing people on the steps of Sproul Hall. Not me. She was an undergraduate. I was a graduate student. I was the head TA in the political science department, and therefore organized the schedules for the teaching assistants, of which there were seventy or eighty. As a job. Just as a job. And during the Free Speech Movement, one of the things that was demanded by the university, because it was demanded by the state legislature, was that a list be kept of all the teaching assistants who were on strike and didn't go to their classes. I refused to keep a list. And that got me very intertwined, not at all where Bettina lived, but at the level of decision-making, the state legislature, and all the rest. I've always been an activist. But it's in funny ways and it's not always apparent to people who are activists.

**Reti:** Like being out there marching, with your face in the paper.

**Gruhn:** Yeah, or whatever. It's always been engagement, but engagement either kind of behind the scenes, or in some quirky way. I think that's how to describe it.

### **Stevenson College**

**Reti:** So going back to Stevenson, when you arrived here at Santa Cruz there was this whole notion of a college system. Was that something that you found

compelling?

**Gruhn:** Yes, it was very compelling. I liked the idea of some of the kids' education being at the college level. I was never part of the core course. I lectured some in it but I was not a core course teacher. But I was very much a part of a Stevenson major which was called Modern Society and Social Thought. I helped organize it. I taught in it until its dying days, because even having a slightly off-center major which allowed students who didn't easily fit into majors seemed like a good idea. I loved the idea of College Nights and speakers. I loved the idea of the faculty after College Nights getting together, or before College Nights, in the faculty commons, and afterwards having a speaker from amongst us, different people who came back from different trips, or were doing new research. There was a kind of an intellectual life. You didn't have to do it, but if you wanted to be drawn in, you could be drawn in. That appealed to me a lot, even the sort of pompous side of it. Stevenson used to have a high table. The high table was the provost, some faculty who would be asked to come sit at the high table, and then some students. It was a separate table, raised slightly—

**Reti:** It really was a high table. (laughs)

**Gruhn:** (laughs) It really was a high table, which was after the English, Oxford model. They have high tables.

**Reti:** This was under Glenn Willson as provost.<sup>7</sup>

**Gruhn:** Yes, this was under Glenn Willson, right. But it also meant that you could have visiting speakers and they could interact at dinner with faculty and students. Students were always part of this. It was good. It was pompous in some ways but it was also good.

And, of course, there was the idea that Stevenson, unlike Merrill and Kresge, was this male bastion, that it was the worst college in the system. It was this male-dominated bastion. Well, yes and no. There was Glenn Willson, who was very staid. But part of it, of course, had to do with the time frame when people were hired. It was a lot easier later, with the newer colleges, to hire fifty-fifty faculty [in terms of gender]. Stevenson would have had to get rid of half of its faculty to become fifty-fifty. So it wasn't that the male faculty in Stevenson, in my view, were any more sexist than the male faculty in Kresge.

And the other thing that was nice about the colleges, but the campus in general in the early days, was that the staff was part of everything. The staff was wonderfully dedicated to making this place work. They cared about the place. They were friends with us and we were friends with them. Now the staff is underpaid, underappreciated, hates the place. Most people want to retire as soon

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<sup>7</sup> See Randall Jarrell, Interviewer and Editor, *F.M. Glenn Willson: Early UCSC History and the Founding of Stevenson College* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 1989). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/willson>

as possible. It's a real transformation. And so, if you're asking me about the early days, what was nice was the fact it wasn't just faculty, it was faculty and staff. We were all in it together, trying to make this place work. That also had a lot of appeal.

I didn't experience the first provost of Stevenson, who was gone after a year or two. When I came, Glenn Willson was already provost. Glenn Willson was English and he seemed conservative. He was actually not politically conservative. He was socially conservative. In those days there was a swimming pool in front of Stevenson.

**Reti:** Oh, I remember that.

**Gruhn:** So when too many nude students were swimming around the swimming pool, he would drain it.

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** So they couldn't go swimming in it.

**Reti:** *That's* why that pool was always being drained. (laughs)

**Gruhn:** Yeah, right. Odd things like that. On the other hand, he did bring a modicum of administrative order to that college, at least, because he knew how to run places. He had been an administrator in Southern Rhodesia at the time, and in Canada before he came. He had perfectly good values, in terms of education and so forth. So while a lot of people thought he was the wrong kind,

he didn't wear jeans and all the rest of it, he did actually have many good values, I think, and was, in some ways, underrated.

And wasn't even as staid English as people made out to be. I'll tell you a funny story. When he became principal of London University, the principal has a really fancy house, a multistory house on one of these squares. I spent a lot of time in England, and one time when I was visiting I was invited to their house for dinner. I tried to dress appropriately—God knows, he's the principal; they meet with the Queen. I got there and they said, "Would you mind if, instead of eating in the dining room, we ate downstairs in the dining room in which *we* eat? But we'll show you the house." And they walked me through all the floors and they said, "Isn't it dreadful? We can hardly stand it. I mean, it's beautiful but it's not comfortable, and we only use the dining room for formal purposes." I went downstairs and the basement had been furnished in exactly what one would consider to be a comfortable California house (laughs)—

**Reti:** (laughs) This was after he left here. He missed California.

**Gruhn:** (laughs) He replicated California. They said, "This is where we're comfortable." So even there, they were not as stuffy as some people had them be. But he did bring some kind of order and decorum to the place. And order and decorum—it's a little bit like how you raise children. You know, children like some order. They actually do better if there are limits. Part of Santa Cruz felt like people had gotten away from limits and they wanted no new limits. And that's why the place was so messy. Some of the messiness was good, because

messiness can often lead to creativity. But some of it just wasted people's time, if you ask me.

### **Modern Society and Social Thought**

**Reti:** Mm, hmm. So tell me more about the major in Modern Society and Social Thought.

**Gruhn:** Well, it was the idea that there were many aspects to the second half of the twentieth century. New things were happening politically, economically, socially—independence, development, integration of populations—all kinds of things. And that instead of that being segmented into different disciplines, maybe if people would study some history and some economics and some literature and so forth, some of these subjects would be illuminated. And so, different faculty with different backgrounds in the social sciences, humanities, even sciences taught different courses as a way of exposure to students. And then students were meant to find a topic of research interest to them that benefitted from these courses and maybe took the work a little further.

Aligned with our earlier discussion, just for example, there was a woman whose father was an official in the U.N.'s International Labor Organization in Geneva and her mother, I think was English. I don't know exactly what her father's origin was—he might have been European-born, I'm not sure. And she had partly grown up in Geneva but was raised in England and went to English-speaking schools. So she was fluent in French and English. Anyway, she wound up being a student here. What interested her was how people integrate different



cultures and exposure into their own being, both in literature and the social sciences. Well, that wasn't easily accommodated in a normal course of study. So she did Modern Society and Social Thought as a background and then developed a thesis topic, went to Switzerland and interviewed guest workers and their children who worked at Migros, which is a Swiss cooperative store—these people had come from Turkey and every imaginable place—in order to ask them questions of how they were coping as Turks in Switzerland and how their children were coping. So she did something like that and wrote a wonderful thesis, and eventually became a documentary filmmaker, and worked for the UN, had a very successful career, just moved back to San Francisco.

There were other people who combined literature and some other things, economic issues. Some very good students wrote very creative theses as undergraduates in that program. It was small, maybe fifteen people at a time, maybe twenty. For a long time, it was a very functioning, nice major. Eventually faculty couldn't get the approval from their departments to do college teaching, because we became professionalized. And they didn't want to do it as a fifth and sixth course. Eventually the students were looking for disciplines to mobilize themselves into careers. So towards the end it fizzled somewhat, and then stopped as a program.

**Reti:** So you were instrumental in founding the program?

**Gruhn:** I was not the founder, but I was one of the first group of faculty to

participate and help set it up, and to teach courses in it, and to supervise a fair number of theses, actually.

**Reti:** I certainly remember it. I know it was a very prestigious program.

**Gruhn:** Yeah, every Tom, Dick, and Harry didn't get admitted. You had to be a good student. It seemed to me the best of what Santa Cruz could offer. Now, of course, we're light years away from that. Those were also the days when students could set up their own major, an individual studies major, which I never thought was a good idea, because it put the burden on students to run around faculty and capture their attention, and it was much too big a burden. Many of those students fizzled. They couldn't get the faculty time and attention. So a small major like this, with a lot of freedom in it, struck me then and strikes me now, as a better alternative for people who don't easily fit into something.

**Reti:** But the challenge was that there were no tenured faculty whose department or board was Modern Society and Social Thought. It was all people from various departments who were teaching for Modern Society and Social Thought—

**Gruhn:** Yes, that's right. That's right.

**Reti:** —and then that left the program vulnerable, in certain sense?

**Gruhn:** Yes, sure. Colleges were not hiring their own faculty. It was faculty who were in the college, as fellows of the college, who were in departments, and the departments increasingly demanded their attention.

### **Changing Ideas of Faculty Workload**

It's also that work got redefined here. People in the sixties and early seventies didn't think it was unusual to spend eighty hours a week working on something job-related—your research, a committee, and so forth. Nowadays, people are not willing to do that, by and large. I mean, they may do it on their own research or something, but not to absorb burdens of the college. And, in fact, younger faculty—I got an email the other day which said that the department lost its undergraduate advisor; the staff person went somewhere else on campus. And the chair said, "I have no idea what we're going to do about advising." I said, "Well, you could go back to an old-fashioned concept, namely that faculty does the advising." There was some discussion about it, that they should be more available. But no faculty was willing to take a chunk of the students or a chunk of their time for full-time advising.

But then I got an email from a person, who is maybe an associate professor, who lectured me in email on the fact that, "You need to understand that nowadays faculty need to do teaching, research, and service, and have families." I was saying, "Hello? What did you think the earlier generation did? They didn't have families?" I mean, really. So they somehow imagine nowadays that they are so busy and they can't possibly do committee service, and they can't possibly be in their office, and they can't possibly do that, because they have so many burdens put on them. Now, it's true that in the sixties and seventies, if people had nonprofessional wives they would look after the children. But, in fact, lots of

people had professional wives. Then people say, "Well, women, in particular, tended to be single." Well, some were single, but everybody.

**Reti:** Were you married during that early period?

**Gruhn:** No, I got married later. I've been married thirty years but I wasn't married at the time. And neither was Adrienne [Zihlman], as a matter of fact. She also got married late. She got married about the same time I did. So fair enough, we didn't have children or families. But other people did have children or families. And nowadays there are still some people who don't have families or children. So, garbage, just absolute garbage.

It's just that people have reconfigured the job and their obligations. For many people, it's a job rather than a love affair. And I think for many early faculty, it was a love affair, rather than just a job. I don't mean to overstate this, but there was a feeling that, we're all in this together, and you kind of looked down on a colleague who was always too busy to do anything and always said, "I don't have time to do this." Those people were not held in high repute. Nowadays, those people are admired and respected, because obviously they're doing something important. I don't believe it.

**Reti:** Well, my sense is in those early years of the campus there was a sense of a mission, a passion for the place.

**Gruhn:** Yes, exactly!

**Reti:** I certainly remember earlier years at UCSC, having been here for thirty-five years, between being a student and a staff person—

**Gruhn:** Yes.

**Reti:** I think there are still some people around who feel this way, but there was this dedication to UC Santa Cruz.

**Gruhn:** And there has been a redefinition of what it means to be a faculty. When I teach nowadays, I usually ask the students at some point during the quarter, "How many of you have talked to a faculty advisor about your program?" They're all juniors and seniors, so they're majors. And invariably, the majority of students have never, ever had a conversation with a faculty. You have a conversation with your TA, if you have one, but not with a faculty. In those days, there were hardly any TA's. We were *it*. If you wanted to talk to someone, you talked to a faculty. So it's a very different conception of what it means to teach. It's a very different conception of how you relate to the institution. And it's not all the faculty's fault. I mean, the institution is horrid nowadays, if you're asking me for my opinion. So it goes both ways. The institution is out to lunch, and the faculty are out to lunch, and they aggravate each other.

**Reti:** Well, we'll get to the more contemporary campus later.

**Gruhn:** Right, but I'm just saying it's a very different dynamic. I'm going back to the early days.

**Reti:** Right. Comparing.

### **The Board of Studies in Politics**

So, the politics board. Tell me about what that was like in the early years?

**Gruhn:** Well, the politics department was comprised of people who essentially wanted to go against the mainstream of political science that emerged in the sixties. In the sixties, it became fashionable to move into something that was called behaviorialism, where you did statistical analysis of voting behavior, and this and that and the other thing, and where the science part of political science was emphasized. What this department was intending to do, was to not do that. In fact, it was as if those people had cancer; it refused to hire anybody who even had the capacity to do that, which was not an advantage to our students, by the way, but anyway— So everybody was doing sort of fairly old-fashioned, not necessarily old-fashioned subjects, but did it in an old-fashioned way. More historical, more theoretical. Everybody sort of had that in common.

The other thing that was sort of odd about the politics department was that it— well, it started out with two theorists, Peter Euben and Ray Nichols. Ray Nichols was educated at Princeton and was a very first-rate, mainstream political theorist. Peter Euben was a student of folks at Berkeley who were doing a kind of anti-Straussian subschool of political theory. They were doing a totally different political theory. There was a main school of political theory; they were called Straussians. Mr. Strauss taught at the University of Chicago and he was very influential. And these were anti-Straussians. The lynchpin of political thought

that they attached themselves to were two Berkeley faculty—one was Sheldon Wolin and the other was Jack Schaar. Both of those people played a guru role in Berkeley. I studied with both of them. They were very different theorists and very different teachers but they developed a single school of political thought, of which Peter Euben was a derivative. And then Peter Euben was influential in bringing Schaar and Wolin to UCSC, which coincided with that UCB department being hostile to that subschool of political theory, so those guys wanted to get out of there. So they came here.

**Reti:** UC Berkeley was being hostile—

**Gruhn:** Yes. They were kind of a corner of the political science department [at UC Berkeley]. They looked down on everybody else. Everybody else looked down on them. It was warfare. And so they were happy to escape, to come to UCSC.

Schaar stayed and Wolin left to go to Princeton eventually. Ray Nichols couldn't stand it and his Australian wife wanted to go back to Australia, so he left. So now we had three political theorists, all from the same school of political thought, who were not in any way going to hire anybody who had any different ideas, and who themselves looked down on the rest of us who were not doing political theory. They then engineered this business where students could earn a degree by taking only courses with them. They didn't have to take courses from any of the rest of us. And, of course, the attitude was that the rest of us were up to no good, not because we were behaviorialists—there was not a

behaviorialist amongst us—but we were not operating at the elevated political theory plane that they were. Peter Euben once said to me, “You know, you’re a smart woman. It really would be good if you interested yourself in something interesting.” I was just dealing with development in Africa. But that was uninteresting. I turned to him and said, “Peter, some of us don’t think little piddly points about ancient Greece are that interesting.” (laughs)

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** The warfare was not as bad because it was a smaller department and we were more collegial, but [the conflict] they had at Berkeley got somewhat replicated here. It got replicated because these guys were ideologues, that is to say, you were either for them or against them, and they did less teaching than preaching, so that their students developed a hostile attitude towards everybody else and everybody’s subject. Not a good thing for students. You were either a Euben devotee and a Schaar devotee and you looked down on everybody else, or you didn’t take their courses—whatever. It was a mess. Just absolutely horrible. So this was not ideal for the development of a department. Some people didn’t get tenure. Some people got tenure. New people came. The new people who came had to pass their litmus test. Wolin, of course, left.

**Reti:** Why?

**Gruhn:** Wolin was a phenomenally good graduate teacher at Berkeley. I mean, you were crazy not to take his courses. His basic political theory course was a requirement for all graduate students in the PhD. Somebody like me sat



through three or four years of his graduate courses, because each year was slightly different. They were profoundly important and they were profoundly important in my education.

Schaar was a very successful undergraduate teacher. Graduate students, on the whole, did not gravitate to him at Berkeley, for a variety of reasons. His lectures didn't succeed very well with graduate students. So when they packed up and came here, Schaar was immediately a big hit and had multitudes of thousands hang on every word. And Wolin had teeny little courses, because his way of lecturing was not easily accessible to undergraduates.

**Reti:** There was no graduate program in politics at UCSC at that point.

**Gruhn:** That's right. Wolin was not very accessible to undergraduates. He was an undemonstrative lecturer. He looked up at the ceiling rather than at people. His lectures were super-organized but somewhat dry, so if you weren't interested in the subject— So Wolin saw himself here as not being successful, not really having students. Then Princeton came and made him an offer and he, of course, was a big hit again at Princeton, because he was wonderful there.

Schaar was extremely successful in creating mini-Schaars around the world. He was actually not that successful a scholar. He wrote a book or two and his followers read those, but he made no impact on the field, while Wolin was a major scholar.

Caught in this morass was Hannah Pitkin. She and I actually overlapped as

graduate students at Berkeley, but that's because she came back to graduate studies later on. She had gotten married and then came back. She is a very shy person, but an enormously powerful intellect, wrote very important books, sort of in the Wolin mode, actually. This is interesting, to backtrack—the political science department [at UC Berkeley], who were fifty, sixty people, didn't want to hire a woman. And so when she was finished, the theorists, Wolin and Schaar, wanted to keep her there. They were looking for another theorist. And the department said no way. She was shipped off to the University of Wisconsin. And then a few years later, when hiring women was a must, they brought her back. She then became the senior important theorist in the Berkeley political science department, from which she retired. But in the interim, she married Jack Schaar.

So Wolin left. It left Peter and it left Jack. They had a really difficult time conceiving of hiring somebody else. One of the people, junior people, who got hired eventually, was a Pitkin student who was not hostile to their ways of doing things, but is actually quite different. He's not an ideologue. He's very good. And then the department hired another political theorist, from Cornell. She comes from a totally different background. And then by the time she was hired, they were no longer a big influence. And then, Peter left and spent five years at Duke and I think he's back around here. Peter Euben and I, by the way, went to elementary school, junior high school, high school, graduate school in Berkeley, and then here. So I've known Peter since the sixth grade.

**Reti:** Oh, when you started to go to school in New York.

**Gruhn:** Yeah. So Peter all along. And we *never* were friends. But anyway—

So the early political science department, politics department here—it was called “politics” consciously, because obviously people study more than government and they definitely wanted to leave the word “science” off, because it was anti-behavioralist, right? “Politics” was a designation of the department at Princeton, so it was felt that that was suitable and sounded okay. So it was a politics department.

It was small, basically, I think, and had very good students. Courses were, by and large, well taught. Some faculty were very quirky. Some people couldn’t teach at all, had very small classes. Other people had large classes because they could teach. But that’s perfectly normal in a department.

**Reti:** And your focus was international relations and international politics?

**Gruhn:** And comparative. See, one of the reasons they wanted me was in those days people either did comparative or international, and it was unfashionable to do both. I did both. So in the early days I taught all the core courses in comparative as well as all the core courses in international politics. And eventually, I phased more and more out of comparative, except for the African side. I no longer taught the comparative core courses. Other people taught those.

I did more and more international because of something fairly odd. I was probably the only person, really, nationwide of my generation in political

science who was fully trained and could teach international law. That was not what happened in the fifties and sixties. International law was taught at law schools and if it was taught at colleges and universities, it was typically law professors who came to teach a course in the department. But from undergraduate days on, through all of graduate school, I studied international law, both in law school, out of law school. I took one of my exams in international law.

It wasn't taught here or as a part of anybody's undergraduate major. And in the 1970s, I put my little toe in the water and decided to teach a seminar on it, and figure out how, in the contemporary context, you can teach international law to undergraduates. Eventually, I morphed it into a lecture course. It had maybe twenty or thirty students. Eventually it had 80 or 120 students. Eventually it became a major course in politics, and eventually it became a required course for the legal studies major. So I spent so much time on that and there were more people who could do comparative, that towards the end of my full-time teaching I wound up doing mostly international politics and international law.

Now I don't do international law at all anymore because there is a person who got hired who does it. So insofar as I've kept teaching in the ten years since I retired, I've on the whole, taught things that weren't being taught until somebody got hired to teach it—of the things I could teach—and then stopped teaching it.

So, for example, in the last few years I've been teaching a course on the international politics of migration, which is a really hot issue. But now somebody has just been hired who did her thesis, not actually on immigration in general in international politics, but on forced migration. I want to get out of her way. That's why I teach African politics again, because nobody is teaching that. My feeling is I shouldn't interfere in any of the junior faculty's development or teaching. Nobody is telling me that. It's my own idea of how to proceed. So yes, I started out for twenty years doing both international comparative and then eventually did more and more international, except for the African.

**Reti:** I think of this being a rather semi-rural, somewhat off-the-beaten path environment for an international focus. What was the level of UCSC students' general awareness of international issues?

**Gruhn:** Oh, it was then and it is now the fact that Californians in general, and students at UCSC in particular, know almost nothing about the world, as compared to, let's say, Oberlin students, who grew up reading the *New York Times* and so forth. On the other hand, Santa Cruz students from the very beginning have had an interest in working in something international. The Peace Corps in the seventies and eighties. The Peace Corps, then no longer was that popular. Nowadays, working for NGOs internationally.

So they start out with absolutely nothing but have career ambitions to learn something for their own professional development. And you can capture them. This leaps to mind because I've just had an email interaction with her—I had

this student in two of my courses in the last few years who took both the politics of migration and the African politics courses because her father is a lawyer and he told her maybe she should be one too. But she explained to me that her real passion was food and cooking and she wanted to become a pastry chef.

She got sufficiently hooked on the subject. I said, "Look, if you don't want to become a pastry chef, there are things you can do with food internationally. You could start studying food and become an expert in food, which is a major international issue, as well as a domestic issue. So think about that." And she more and more started thinking about it. About a year ago she emailed me. She had stopped school and she emailed me and said, "I now want to apply to the food program at Cornell and at Berkeley." So she's just arrived at Cornell, and simultaneously got admitted to the Peace Corps, and the Peace Corps is allowing her to get an education first but they're sending her to Togo next summer for a year, and they're sending her to India in January. She's knee deep in getting field experience and is in this very fancy Cornell program. And she says, "Never mind pastries. You got me going in this."

**Reti:** Fabulous!

**Gruhn:** So sometimes you can get students who start one way and just take an interest to morph their careers. And since this generation of students is actually less interested in learning for its own sake, but in search of careers, if you can hook them you can get them to learn something. You can't always hook some of them. There are other students who, at the end of the quarter, even though I

test them repeatedly on the map of Africa, still can't locate Nigeria and think it's where South Africa is. Some of them are unteachable and they're really not interested. You say, "Why are you here?" And they say, "It fit into my schedule." But the point is you're right, students know very little about the world. But they have professional aspirations very often, or volunteer aspirations. In the 1970s, how many students were here—four thousand, six thousand, the upper-division international politics course had a hundred-plus people in it. It doesn't have that many more now.

**Reti:** Even though the campus is three times as big.

**Gruhn:** Yes. And when I retired, there were four full-time faculty doing international politics. For the past ten years, there've been one and a half. And there're still only two. In fact, somebody has just been appointed by the chancellor, Dr. Anuradha Luther Maitra. She was an economics professor here for a while and then became a Silicon Valley money person and is now one of the trustees [on the University Foundation]. The chancellor just appointed her to shore up international connections and education on this campus. I know her from faculty days. I was social sciences dean when she got appointed. So I emailed her and I said, "You know, this is really good. But I think what the chancellor has in mind is making exchanges for scientists smooth. I don't think what he has in mind is making the curriculum more international, which is what we should be doing. And I really hope you're going to look at this." And she nicely wrote back and said, "As soon as I get my bearing, let's meet and talk

about it." Her inclination is on the right side of that because she knows how little the students know and how bad they are in foreign languages.

But God knows, if you want to do more international stuff, shouldn't the social science majors have faculty who can teach this stuff? Many have gone away. Faculty retire or leave. They don't get replaced. So you have a shrinkage. Politics teaches European politics and Latin American politics and Chinese politics and most of these people teach other things so there's very little on offer. In the 1970s and 1980s you could do India. You could do Japan and China. You could do Africa. There were two Latin Americanists. So things used to be a lot better here than they are now.

**Reti:** So we've, if anything, gotten more provincial.

**Gruhn:** Yes. We've gotten more provincial.

**Reti:** And did you continue to be involved with African issues as your career progressed?

**Gruhn:** Yes. I've always stayed involved in African issues, but not in, say, the domestic politics of Nigeria, though I teach that and keep up on it, but rather, policies towards Africa, the role of international institutions in Africa, the role of inter-African institutions. I've always done the international side of things. I've changed, developed new issues that I was interested in, but I've always use the empirical base for my research and evidence on Africa, almost always.



**Reti:** Empirical base, meaning—

**Gruhn:** For example, I've written some articles and done some work on land mines. Well, I mention that there are lots of them in Cambodia but I looked at most of the material in Mozambique and Angola. So I interest myself in different issues and then I say, how are they relevant to Africa, or what is the African evidence? So in that sense I've always stayed in touch with Africa.

**Reti:** Fascinating. Okay, so let's stop for today.

### **Dean of Social Sciences**

**Reti:** So today is October 22, 2013, and this is Irene Reti. I'm here for my second interview with Isebill Gruhn. Today we're going to start by talking about your time as dean of social sciences, from 1981 to 1983, approximately, under Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer. So tell me how you ended up becoming dean, what some of the challenges and rewards of that time were—

**Gruhn:** Could I backtrack a bit and say something more general and generic?

**Reti:** Sure.

**Gruhn:** And this is, first, I've always been interested in educational policy, even as a young faculty member, even as a graduate student. Second, I maybe chose my field because of the kind of brain I had. And then, of course, once you choose your field—I mean, within the field of politics—then you choose your field and then your brain becomes even more so. And the kind of stuff that I studied and did in international politics was the kind of stuff that required you to be like a

vacuum cleaner, to absorb a lot of information and organize it. I would describe myself as someone who has a really organized brain, can absorb lots of information; and somebody who doesn't mind making decisions, finds it easy to make decisions. A lot of people find it difficult, but I find it easy. So those are two points.

The third point is that my development through assistant professor into full professor came at a particular historic moment in the time of women in academia. There were very few women on campus, and because there were very few I had opportunities that women before me didn't have, and wouldn't necessarily have now, because there are so many women that it's not obvious who would be asked to do what. But since I was one of very few women—I served on a lot of committees; I made what I suppose people thought were somewhat coherent comments on the Academic Senate floor and so forth—it was not surprising that my name came to the attention of people when they were looking for a temporary social science dean while the recruitment was going on. I was always clear in my mind that I didn't want to become an administrator, for reasons I'll mention later, but I always thought it would be an interesting challenge.

I think the reason I got appointed as social science dean was: because I seemed like the sort of person who could do that sort of thing; I was a woman and that seemed like a good idea at the time; and enough people knew that I had no

administrative aspirations and that I would not be unhappy doing it temporarily.

There were some serious things that needed to be done, because there were budget cuts and reorganization. So the idea was I would do this for a year, make some major waves in the social science division in general, but be clear in advance that I would not be a candidate for the permanent deanship. I asked that that be made clear because I thought that would give me more leverage to do the things that needed to be done in a hurry, rather than having people believe that this was the first step of my aspirations to become a social science dean. The reason I wound up doing it for two years was because the first year's search was a failure and I agreed to stay on for a second year. Originally I had only agreed to do it for one year.

The other thing I just want to say was that while I was doing it, it became clear to me that I found doing administrative work at that level absolutely fascinating the first year. The second year I could already see that I was getting bored with it all, doing similar things the second year in a row. So I think my own take that I didn't want to do that sort of thing permanently was verified by my experience in the social science dean office.

Now, why did they pick me? I think the Academic Senate leadership suggested me. John Marcum was a colleague. I'm not sure whether he was particularly keen on my doing it or not. I don't think he opposed it in any way. He was vice chancellor after the second year or third year of Chancellor Sinsheimer.

Sinsheimer—I'd talked to him once or twice; we didn't have anything particularly in common, but he did do what Sinsheimer often did—he was a scientist but he was also a very intelligent person—get people to talk about their own field. So he got me to talk about the secretary of defense and this and that at various occasions. So I think he thought, well, this woman is reasonably coherent.

**Reti:** And this was in private conversation or in a more public context?

**Gruhn:** This was in a private conversation. I accompanied him to a couple of conferences in Monterey. He asked me to come with him because at one point the secretary of defense was coming to speak down there. He was invited as a chancellor. He said, "Why don't you go with me? These people are going to be political people." So, in general, I became reasonably visible to him, not very, but reasonably.

In any event, I became social science dean at a time when the campus was reorganizing, also at a time when there was a 10 percent budget cut, I believe it was, where things had to be cut back, not as seriously as in recent years, but still fairly seriously. People weren't used to it.

**Reti:** What was driving that budget cut?

**Gruhn:** I think the state made a budget cut and the campus had to make some cuts. I had the idea—this may be jumping ahead—I had the idea then and I've had the idea ever since, that the campus had been poorly structured in terms of

faculty and fields at the beginning. I mentioned before too many assistant professors, too few associate professors, a few full professors. But also, McHenry's idea had been to hire interesting people, no matter what they wound up doing, that came to his attention or the campus's attention, with the idea that you could fill in later. So by the time I became social science dean, there were all kinds of anomalies, like three or four people doing rather similar things, teaching identical courses, and whole huge gaps, like no one to teach Latin America or no one to teach something else.

So I took a careful look at the social science division and decided that the recruiting that was going to go on had to begin to fill some gaps. People, of course, could make their own selections and interesting people should be hired. But you couldn't just keep hiring randomly, because it wasn't putting the campus in a position to have a responsible curriculum in different fields.

**Reti:** There was no comprehensive academic planning.

**Gruhn:** There was no comprehensive academic planning. The previous dean had not bothered dealing with this issue. The upper administration wasn't dealing with this issue. And I looked at it and said, "We don't need seven courses on Marxism. Surely two of the people in your department can teach something else. One course on Marxist sociology is great. We don't need three in sociology and two in politics, and so forth. People need to diversify what they're teaching based on what they're able to teach, but also the recruitments have to start filling some kind of gaps here." So that immediately, of course, rocked boats.

The second major issue I had to confront was that the central administration—I seem to recall some Senate committees—decided that given budget cuts, maybe what should be gotten rid of were interdisciplinary majors. The thing that was on the chopping block was community studies. It became my task to get rid of community studies. One of the things that had happened to community studies was again, they had one or two senior people, Bill Friedland<sup>8</sup>, and a few others, but they also had lots of junior people. And these junior people had been trained in a discipline before they came here. All of a sudden they were meant to teach totally interdisciplinary stuff in community studies, and then they were going to be reviewed by their disciplines for tenure. So the assistant professors were falling by the wayside. One after the other, they weren't getting tenure. So all of a sudden you had people who hadn't gotten tenure, as well as people who weren't going to get their tenure, and community studies faculty was rapidly shrinking. So it was good to have it on a hit list, to in fact, get rid of it, because there would only be three people left. I'm making up the numbers.

**Reti:** And was this something that Sinsheimer supported?

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the history of community studies at UCSC, see Sarah Rabkin, Interviewer and Editor, *Mike Rotkin and the Rise and Fall of Community Studies at UCSC, 1969-2010* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013) <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/rotkin>; and Irene Reti and Sarah Rabkin, Editors, *Community Studies and Research for Change: An Oral History with William Friedland* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013) <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/friedland>

**Gruhn:** Yes. He had seen some personnel cases that he thought were appallingly weak work. My explanation, that there was a reason people were doing such weak work, because there was a dichotomy between their training and what they're now being asked to do, didn't appeal to him because that's not how the sciences work. Sinsheimer read personnel files himself. So he was reading what he considered to be garbage. And a fair amount of it *was* garbage.

But I decided that community studies should not be gotten rid of, that part of what was interesting about this campus was some interdisciplinary studies. What needed to happen was that new positions needed to be given to community studies and they had to be given at a higher level than assistant professor, because people *become* interdisciplinary; they're not trained to be interdisciplinary. So they should be hiring people who had already become interdisciplinary. And I managed, with much fighting and much objection, to prevail on that. So I rescued community studies.

**Reti:** Fighting and objection from higher administration.

**Gruhn:** Yes, I think there was some willingness from higher administration, both on Marcum's part and Sinsheimer's part to get rid of it and there certainly was a desire on the part of some of the disciplines, like economics—why are these weak sisters being hired here, rather than more serious kinds of programs?

So I immediately ran into difficulties. I even ran into difficulties with community studies because they felt under siege and were ill-tempered about the whole thing. I can tell you a funny story about how this went down. Bill Friedland

came into my office one day, just yelling at the top of his lungs, "Who do you think you are?" And I asked the administrative assistant—her desk was right in front of my office door—I went out and I said, "Ellen, would you kindly usher Professor Friedland out of my office and make an appointment for him for when we can have a civilized discussion." And ever since then I've been friends with Bill Friedland. (laughs)

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** He got the message. So there was some of that, "Who is this forty-whatever year old woman telling us we should hire associate professors, or this or that—" So I had to deal with that. I had to deal with some very difficult personnel cases, some personnel cases I had not handled myself, but they were coming back on appeal. And then I had to deal with appeals. One of them led to years of lawsuits. And so that was very difficult—

**Reti:** We don't want to get into the details of personnel cases, but the very public case of Nancy Shaw's [now Stoller] denial of tenure was happening at that moment.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> 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 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](http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/oir.exhibit/nancy_stoller)



**Gruhn:** Yes, Nancy Stoller. But Nancy Stoller's case came back when I was dean as an appeal case. It was just the additional material and I wrote additional letters.

The other thing that happened, just while I'm talking about personnel, I'll backtrack then, was, you know, deans write personnel letters. And I had become somewhat famous at CAP and upper administration when I was department chair, for writing the most appreciated, lucid personnel letters. When I became dean, CAP fell all over themselves saying, "We've never gotten such good dean letters. Thank you, thank you. They're lucid. They're clear. They're engaged."

I, in fact, personally read everything in everybody's personnel case. I read everything they wrote, with the exception of quantitative economists. I'm pretty trained in economics but not in quantitative stuff. So that I couldn't do. I would start those letters by saying, "I'm not able to make independent judgment. Here's my sense of the file." But in every other case I said, "Here is my sense of the file and this is my reading of the particular case," because I was literate enough in the rest of the fields to be able to address it.

That took a lot of time and was sort of a breakthrough. But it also meant that people on CAP would say to their colleagues, "You're not going to believe it, but Gruhn is reading everybody's stuff." (laughs) And that didn't sit well with people. I mean, who does she think she is? She's a political scientist. Why is she reading sociology articles?" And my defense is a) I'm a dean; b) I'm literate in those fields; and c) This is my job. But that also raised some hackles.

Fourth, fifth, or whatever, was the reorganization question, about which deans were not asked, particularly. I had been a pretty active faculty in Stevenson and still was and I opposed a lot of it. A lot of faculty believed reorganization was a good idea. You should put departments together. You should stop doing the wishy-washy things the colleges were doing. While I agreed that the colleges should get out of the businesses of independently hiring and promotion cases, I really did think the colleges should stay in the business of offering lower-division course work and remedial work and things like that. That was obviously a losing battle, but it was also the case that there were people in the social science division who were saying, "Why does this acting dean speak up on these issues? It's none of her business. We're happy with reorganization."

The other thing that I learned in that job was how to interview people, for which I had no experience prior to department experience. Deans interviewed all the candidates in those days, assistant professors and so forth. I had had a role model in how to interview candidates outside your own field, and that was Brewster Smith, who was social science dean when I was department chair. I would go to these meetings and I thought he was a master of doing that. So I tried to emulate that, because he just knew enough about everybody's field, not to lecture them, but to ask leading questions which would force some kind of discussion. And one time I had a discussion with him about his incredible ways of handling people who were coming in and he said, "Well, the one thing I don't know how to do is to ask questions of people whose fields I simply cannot read,"

again, these sort of very quantitative economists.

So I scratched my head as social science dean, in following his good model in every other respect, and saying, how do you go about this? One day I was swimming and I hit upon it. And that was, you ask them to explain what they're doing in a way that you can understand it, because that way it gives you an insight into whether a person can teach and how they can teach.

**Reti:** Absolutely.

**Gruhn:** And if a person can't explain what they're doing in simple language—I mean, the most complicated physics can be explained to a person who knows no physics. So it fell upon me to interview a whole bunch of economists that they were hiring at the time. They were doing crazy research, like measuring the shape of tree poles in order to determine how many years they would last when they became PG&E poles, just crazy stuff like that!

**Reti:** (laughs)

**Gruhn:** Just unbelievable, crazy stuff. But I figured out a way to interview them and that helped me in good stead when I was vice chancellor, as well.

**Reti:** Very interesting.

**Gruhn:** Anyway, I enjoyed the policy part. I enjoyed the personnel stuff. And the other thing I learned in that job was that I was actually good at managing staff, because I don't find it difficult to delegate. So I was popular with the social

science staff. And that was replicated when I was vice chancellor. Because my attitude essentially was, you know your job. Get it done. I don't care how it's done. I'm not going to run interference until something isn't done in a timely fashion or it's not adequate. People really appreciated that. The other thing was, most people on the staff, both in the social science division and in the central administration were women, and I think they very much appreciated having a kind of woman who isn't as boss-oriented and has more easy interactions with them.

So I honed some skills in my first year. I found it easy to manage staff. They all liked working there. We all had a good time. I thought, this is all great fun. Maybe I don't mind administration as much as I thought I did.

And then came the second year and I could already tell. Dealing with budgets and the personnel cases and so forth. I thought, no, I like my field. I really don't like this. (laughs)

**Reti:** (laughs)

### **Reaggregation and Reorganization**

**Gruhn:** Anyway, what you wanted to talk about more was reorganization. I think some reorganization was necessary. But I think they went too far. I think what they did was to undermine the possibility of the architectural structure of this campus allowing for more direct contact between students and faculty. Because we had the colleges, and they were meant for a purpose, and they were not going to work like Cambridge and Oxford, and they weren't even going to

work the way McHenry thought they should work. But they could be made to work for *something*. They threw out the baby with the bathwater, I think. That was my criticism.

I was not one of these extreme people who said, “Let’s not have any change here.” But I thought that things could be rescued. And no one was even willing to discuss it. It was either, we keep the colleges they way they are, or we get rid of [them] and reaggregate. And as soon as you started having faculty reaggregating all over the place, you lost the interdisciplinary nature of the departments, you lost the benefit of inputs across divisions.

Some colleges continued to have some kind of core course, but those core courses, increasingly, became not faculty taught but hired hands lecturers taught. Because there was nothing to be gained for faculty putting in any time into anything in the college. I think that was a huge mistake. I still think it’s a mistake. I think they should go backwards, given the current student cohort. But, as I said, I found myself in the middle position—yes, colleges need to change; no, we shouldn’t do what we’re doing. [John] Marcum—he’s about to have his memorial service<sup>10</sup>—[Vice Chancellor] Marcum was a very popular person, but he was not given to make decisions that would make him unpopular with

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<sup>10</sup> John Marcum, UCSC professor emeritus of politics, served as UCSC academic vice chancellor from 1979 to 1984. He passed away in September 2013 and a memorial was held for him at Merrill College on November 2, 2013. See <http://news.ucsc.edu/2013/09/marcum.html>

anybody. So if Sinsheimer, or the scientists, or somebody came along and said, "Let's do that," they met with very little resistance from him. I think that he could have played a leadership role on the reaggregation and he didn't, even though he had been provost of a college. So I think that that's a sad chapter in Santa Cruz history and a chapter that needs to be revisited in the future.

**Reti:** I think some of these insights could be hopefully helpful in that process.

**Gruhn:** You would think.

**Reti:** (laughs) And how did you see that playing out at Stevenson over the years. I know that Stevenson retained a core course, but it changed.

**Gruhn:** Stevenson retained a core course. Faculty were out of it. It had a person who started out as the administrator for the provost. Her name was Sheila Hough. She died prematurely and unfortunately. She was a graduate student at Berkeley, I believe, was an ABD, and was a very smart woman. She was essentially treated like a lower secretary worm in the core course, until the faculty decided they didn't want anything to do with it anymore, and then they put her in charge. She tried valiantly to maintain some kind of standards in that program. But essentially it was handed over to lecturers. I'm not saying it's bad. I don't even have an informed opinion about it right now.

Modern Society and Social Thought went away. The scientists, essentially, went away. They always had their labs but they used to participate in things in Stevenson, and very actively so. At least ten scientists were always very active in

Stevenson. They served on committees. They came to College Nights.

**Reti:** Very interesting.

**Gruhn:** They did all kinds of things and it was very useful input. It's true that Cowell perceived itself as, not only the first college, but the headquarters for all people of high intellect, and thought of Stevenson as sort of lower-form social scientists—but it's also the case that there were humanities faculty, and of course the history department was largely there [at Stevenson].

But faculty eventually just removed themselves and the degree to which faculty would do anything had something to do with a particular provost, and whether he or she had social occasions. One of the provosts that was most active in Stevenson was Ellen Suckiel, who, if one wants to develop an ideal model provost, she was it, I think, both in Kresge and eventually in Stevenson. She actually tried to bring some intellectual life into it. She invited some of us to run evening seminars for students on different topics, for example, conflict in the Middle East. I did several of them. She invited students to her house to talk with professors on the substance of their fields. She tried really, really valiantly to bring some intellectual life into the lives of students, based in the college. That's all gone away again. It didn't exist before. It has gone away again.

So an individual provost can sometimes make a difference, even today. But basically, I think the colleges, the idea of the colleges being an intellectual home for faculty and students was eventually, not overnight, done in by reaggregation

and reorganization.

### **Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer**

What was it like for you working as an administrator with Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer? What was that relationship like?<sup>11</sup>

**Gruhn:** Well, I didn't have a lot of relationship with him. He contacted me whenever he had a question or a thought. So, I might get a phone call from him at 8:00 o'clock in the morning at home and he'd say, "I got up two hours ago and I was reading this personnel file and I think this guy's stuff is utter junk? Is that your opinion too? Let's discuss it." (laughs) "How can this possibly be a serious piece of work?" I would typically agree with him. I'd say, "This is not a serious piece of work." He'd say, "It's not even logical, what this person is doing." I'd say, "Yeah, yeah. You're right."

Or, he would occasionally ask for a piece of advice. I didn't socialize with him. It was strictly professional contact. Sometimes it took on a hilarious—I went with him, I think it was again going to Monterey, maybe the Naval Postgraduate School. And he was driving. We both had Mustangs, I think. He said I should drive mine up to his house and then we would drive his. We got appropriately dressed for a civilian event. He was wearing a sort of navy faux suede jacket. By

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<sup>11</sup> See Randall Jarrell, Interviewer and Editor, *Robert Sinsheimer, The University of California, Santa Cruz During a Critical Decade, 1977-1997* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 1996). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/sinsheimer>



the time we got Monterey it started raining, just a little bit. And he completely freaked out because his wife would be angry at him for making this jacket wet and it would make spots, and wouldn't it be awful? "And God, is there an umbrella somewhere? And could you run in and borrow an umbrella from someone?" I kept on reassuring him that these faux things you can actually put in the Laundromat. (laughs) They're not going to make spots. And he said, "No, no, no! I'm sure it makes spots." And I said, "Take my word for it. You can throw them in the washing machine." And he said, "Well, I guess it's good to have a woman along." (laughs) So sometimes there was that kind of stuff.

He was also a very shy man. I remember sitting at a large table with him with policymakers and fundraisers, where he needed to make an impression with fundraisers for UCSC. He essentially sat there and ate his salad and said nothing. I said, "I'd like to introduce Chancellor Sinsheimer," and said something about him and then introduced the person who was next to me. I had to get the thing going for him. So sometimes I played that role. But I had no particularly close relationship with him. But I found working with him, on the whole, working with a highly intelligent, very professional person. I didn't always agree with him, but—

I don't know if you want to hear other funny stories, but sometimes there are funny stories. One of these economists that I interviewed as a dean was Nirvikar Singh. He came for an interview with a gorgeous maroon turban with a kerchief in his pocket that echoed the maroon turban. The previous candidate or two, I

had given some feedback to economics, saying that I was not impressed. The then-chair of economics called me to ask what my first take was, was I going to support him? I said, "Well, obviously, I'm in favor of Nirvikar Singh. I mean, he is the best dressed of the people that you interviewed." There was dead silence and he hung up. And lo and behold, three or four members of the economics board went to the vice chancellor and chancellor. It was all a *joke*, obviously.

**Reti:** They didn't understand your humor at all.

**Gruhn:** They didn't understand my humor. So eventually that had to be explained by people who know my sense of humor.

**Reti:** I can tell you have a dry sense of humor.

**Gruhn:** Yeah. But—

### **Serving on the Search Committee for the Next UCSC Chancellor**

**Reti:** Okay. So the next topic is the search for a chancellor after Robert Sinsheimer left, that resulted in the hiring of Chancellor Robert Stevens. You were on the search committee.

**Gruhn:** Yes, I was the campus representative. How did I get there? The Senate Advisory Committee recommended me. That's how it went. It went to the chancellor, or whatever, and I was the designated Santa Cruz faculty.

**Reti:** Any idea why?

**Gruhn:** Well, semi-competent woman.

**Reti:** Okay.

**Gruhn:** Has been here for a long time. Knows the campus. Also, I think UCOP was probably happy with the appointment because I had been on the [President David] Gardner search committee systemwide, for the president. So I had a mini-reputation, both with them and the Regents.

Anyway, yes, I was on the search committee and interviewed a number of candidates. We split up as a committee then, calling the various campuses about the various candidates. I was not the only woman. I think there was a San Diego representative, who was a woman scientist, maybe a chemist or biologist. And of course there is an Alumni Council person, a graduate student—

I had a favorite candidate of the candidates who were interviewed. It's a long process to get it down to—I don't want to bore you with that—but anyway, I had a favorite candidate. It was not Robert Stevens. But I was persuadable, I suppose, by the committee.

But then it fell to me and this other woman to make inquiries at Haverford about him. And after making inquiries at Haverford, she discovered something that I actually didn't discover about him and his reputation there, from her scientist friends. And then I discovered other things which made me even less keen about him. So, when it came to the discussion and the vote, I started saying that I preferred another candidate; there was one candidate that I thought was

unsuitable; and then there was Robert Stevens, who I felt on the one hand and on the other—but given her research and my research—I felt less on the one hand and on the other, and so I was going to continue to support this other person. Which I did. At the end, she then either abstained or voted, I can't remember. But anyway, I took a fairly, as is my want, a fairly strong stand on the other candidate.

Okay. So Robert Stevens was selected. The majority of the committee was very taken with him. He was very affable, and quite funny and quite warm and fuzzy. And he did something that was really smart. He asked that his wife be brought for half an hour. And she talked about how she imagined the role. Everybody was taken by her. Here was this guy who was bringing his very young, I might say, wife, obviously an intelligent and attractive woman. So that also swung people.<sup>12</sup>

### **Recruited as Acting Academic Vice Chancellor**

All right. And then I went off to Oberlin, Ohio, where my husband lived. I think I had a quarter sabbatical. I was not here in the spring quarter, at which point, maybe late winter or early spring he was selected. And lo and behold, one morning my telephone rings and it's Robert Stevens and he says, "I've decided I

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<sup>12</sup> See Randall Jarrell, Interviewer and Editor, *Robert B. Stevens: UCSC Chancellorship, 1987-1991* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 1999). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/stevens>

don't want a permanent academic vice chancellor—" what by today's standards is executive vice chancellor; there was no such thing then—"because I want to have a feel for the campus before I recruit and appoint someone. So I want a temporary person for a couple of years and I went to the Academic Senate Advisory Committee and they recommended you and one other person. The other person was a scientist, a very competent scientist who had administrative aspirations. And I'd like to talk to you, if I could, for a half an hour about this job."

I said, "Well, actually, I'm not suitable for this job because I have a husband in Oberlin. I need to commute. This is not something I can take on. Thank you very much. I'm flattered." And he said, "Well, thank you, but I might get back to you." I guess he maybe interviewed the other person and then he called and he said, "Look, what would it take for you to be willing to do this for two years?" I said, "Well, I can't do this commuting. What it would take would be for my husband to come while I'm vice chancellor, as a visitor." And he said, "Oh, well, if that's all you need there's no problem whatsoever. It would be really easy to make an arrangement for that. I'll contact—what's his field—send me his vitae. I will contact the literature department. No problem whatsoever. I'll get this all set up."

So I said to my husband, "Do you think you can get two years leave here at Oberlin? He was just thinking about stepping down as chair of East Asian studies. He was, of course, needed as a teacher. He said, "I'll have to commute

back then for my kids but if you want to do this, I'm willing to do this."

So anyway, eventually I told Stevens that I would be willing to do this, provided this arrangement for my husband to come as a visitor was made. He said, "No problem." I said, "Well, have you contacted the literature board?" He said, "Don't worry your pretty little head. It's all arranged."

So I agreed to do it. But then when I said, "Well, my husband can't tell Oberlin he can't come [unless he has a visiting position at UCSC] he said, "It's not arrangible for the fall but after that I think—"

So that could be worked out with Oberlin. I came. I arrived as the vice chancellor. I went to my office. I went to Stevens and I said, "So what about my husband?" And he said, "Yes, yes, yes. I'll take care of it."

### **"Gruhngate"**

And a few months later the whole place blew up. It was said that I had known Robert Stevens before he became chancellor, that he and I had made a deal that if I would support him as chancellor he would make me vice chancellor. He was the man that I didn't vote for, but I couldn't say that I hadn't voted for him.

Almost everything I did for the first six months of being vice chancellor was said to be a conflict of interest of one kind or another. For example, I did the same thing as vice chancellor that I had done as dean, namely, study where there were holes in the place, and I set up an external review of art history and of two or three other departments—education—should we have a master's in education or

do a graduate program, and so forth—in order to examine what we should have. And by the time these people were through examining us, they said art history needed a Latin American and an Asianist. They said that literature needed to do something about Latin American literature, because they were only doing Spanish literature, and that certainly they needed to address Japanese and Chinese literature.

Okay? So rumor has it I'm creating jobs for my husband. Mind you, the rank of these jobs was not clear and most of them were not in my husband's field. For example, he was not an art historian. But that's not what the *Sentinel* said. That's not what all kinds of people on campus said. There were a group of male faculty, who otherwise were perfectly liberal, who had PhD wives, who said, "How come she's getting a job for her husband when my wife is not?" Then you had other people with grievances, like Bob Meister, who I said couldn't have a new FTE or additional FTE for the legal studies department, because they only had twenty-three majors at the time, and I said I couldn't justify a new position for legal studies. Legal studies had a fit about that. Meister went to the local district attorney and charged me with conflict of interest. He went to the state legislature. He went to the Office of the President [UCOP].

It led to the University having to establish at University Hall a commission to study whether I had had a conflict of interest. They examined every letter I had dictated on legal studies, and every utterance I had made when I appeared as vice chancellor at the academic planning committee. For example, I went to the

academic planning committee, where Michael Cowan<sup>13</sup>, I think was then—I don’t know what he was, chair of literature or dean [of humanities] or whatever—to discuss whether or not they wanted to hire a Latin Americanist or an Asianist. And I said at the time, “It might be perceived that I have a conflict of interest. It’s for Michael Cowan to decide which to do first. Eventually they’ll have to do both.” Somebody on that committee said, “Well, if there were a position suitable for your husband, might he be interested in a permanent position?” And I said, “I can’t speak for my husband. It’s perfectly possible if UCSC advertised the position for a full professor in Chinese literature—” That was morphed into I had told the committee to hire a Chinese literature professor.

Anyway, there was something called Gruhngate. It was a nightmare. Everybody who had a grievance, whether it was for the Asian food debacle in Crown<sup>14</sup>; whether it was having to do with some of these review committees; whether it had to do—The *Sentinel* carried an article saying that I had created a position for

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<sup>13</sup> See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, “*It Became My Case Study*”: *Professor Michael Cowan’s Four Decades at UC Santa Cruz* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/it-became-my-case-study-professor-michael-cowans-four-decades-at-uc-santa-cruz>

<sup>14</sup> In 1988 Merrill College, which shared a dining hall with Crown College, proposed that its College Night on December 7 feature Filipino food as a part of a celebration of ethnic diversity. Crown College administrators objected because of their concern that serving “Asian” food on that date, the anniversary of Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor, would be insensitive. The episode generated a heated conflict between Crown and Merrill administrators and faculty and escalated into a campus-wide affair that included various student groups’ charges of racism against Crown, counter-charges against Merrill by Crown faculty, and the attempted mediation by Chancellor Robert Stevens. One version of the affair, among several, can be found in *Robert B. Stevens, UCSC Chancellor, 1987-1991*, the oral history cited above.



my husband in art history, in Asian art! He's not even art historian. So the factual accuracy—I mean, I have files six miles high because Meister sued the university on a lot of things, including this, and eventually Meister's various suits went to court and on to appeal. And almost everywhere, every time, he asked for every letter and everything that I had written as vice chancellor to be examined, in case there was a smoking gun. It was all examined, never a smoking gun was found, of any prejudice of any kind. And as a consequence, I never appeared in his trials.

But I did spend a lot of time with university lawyers. And, of course, once you're found guilty in the public realm, there are faculty who were here at the time, who will never believe that I had honorably asked for a visiting appointment, that nothing else happened, and that Robert Stevens completely mishandled it. Because he didn't go to the literature department and say, "I think I want to appoint her. Could you look at her husband's stuff? Could he come as a visitor?" He went to them after I was already vice chancellor and he needed me and said, "You have to take him."

**Reti:** Robert Stevens was coming from Haverford, which perhaps had a very different process.

**Gruhn:** Yes, where the president made those decisions. He had no idea what he was running into. But for me, it created an absolute nightmare, especially in my second year as vice chancellor.

**Reti:** And did he defend you at all in this process?

**Gruhn:** Not really. I'll give you a totally different case of how he operated and why I was in such hard straits because of him. Women's studies got an FTE. And the FTE, in negotiation, between me as vice chancellor, and Budget and Planning and women's studies, was designated as somebody who did empirical social science. Because [women's studies was] all humanities theory people, and the argument was that if people were going to go into the field of women's activities, they need to be able to read the economic literature, for example, that indicates why women are so disadvantaged. And also, students need to be trained to be literate in the social sciences. They can't just have humanists and do theory.

Okay? They had agreed to that and there was a search with an advertisement that said that: "A faculty whose own work and teaching *includes* empirical social science work," I think is how it was worded. And I noticed that when the people were being brought for interviews—by now Helene Moglen was in charge of women's studies—they brought somebody who was a Santa Cruz graduate, a PhD from Princeton, and was now teaching at Williams, who was a political theorist. She had been a student of Peter Euben's; she was strictly a theory person. I called Helene and said, "She does not fit the advertisement." And in those days, with affirmative action—you had to make good on the advertisement. You could not advertise one thing and then— I said, "It would have to be a theory advertisement for her to qualify." She said, "Well, you must be against theory." I said, "I'm not. In fact, I like this person. I think she's

excellent. She just doesn't fit the job description."

So Helene Moglen organized thirty people, fifty people, I don't know, to march into Robert Stevens' office and say, unless you really want trouble and a rally against you, you better give in. And he gave in. [The candidate] was hired. She was hired but later left for Berkeley, but she was hired.

And the odd thing about it was, I said to her after she was hired, I said, "Look, I didn't oppose you because I didn't think you were any good. You just didn't fit the advertisement." And she said, "I know I didn't fit the advertisement and I'm not even angry at you."

So Stevens always—all you had to do was scream and he pulled back. The thing got so heated that everybody got caught up. To give you another illustration—I mean, in some senses it's of no interest to the campus, but it's of interest to the campus that if you don't have a strong chancellor, none of this works. Even my good friend Julia Armstrong—I had a conversation with her one day, in the second year [of Gruhn's vice chancellorship], when my husband's mess was still ongoing—he'd come by that point, but it was a disaster because nobody in literature wanted anything to do with him, and it was just horrible. And they made him out to be unqualified. The man was a full professor in Chinese literature at Oberlin. Of course the lit department here was interested in more modern stuff and theory. But you still can't do research in the field without going to his books. He 's a far more distinguished scholar than I am, for example, but they didn't recognize that. But it didn't matter. I was the objection. Stevens'

mishandling caused the problem. But I said to Julia in the second year, "You know, UC Davis just hired a woman academic vice chancellor, and her husband is an engineer of some kind, and they made the argument that she was an affirmative action hire and therefore they should hire him." I said, "Theoretically Stevens could have done that." Julia, to this day, will swear that I said my *husband* should be an affirmative action hire.

**Reti:** But you meant that *you* should have been an affirmative action hire because you're a woman.

**Gruhn:** Yeah. I mean, things were so heated that even people who were hospitable to me would sort of say, oh, you handled this badly or something. Anyway, it was a nightmare and, of course, what many people thought they were doing was making it impossible for me to become the permanent academic vice chancellor. What they didn't appreciate was the fact that I had never said I would do it for more than two years, and I was determined not to do it for more than two years. (laughs) I had already registered the courses I was going to teach when I came back to the department.

But it was a "power-hungry woman" making decisions here right and left that people don't like. And in many cases, almost every major decision I made, I went to the chancellor and I said, "I'm thinking about putting out this memo or saying this. What is your wish here?" He'd say, "Oh, that's a good idea. Do it." As soon as people started screaming, he pulled back. So he had absolutely no backbone re any controversy. It was quite horrendous.

**Reti:** How did you get through that time?

**Gruhn:** By going home and forgetting about it. I'm perfectly able to do that. And just decide, the hell with it. The only time that it became time-consuming was when had to go read through all those legal documents on the weekend because I couldn't do that during the workday. That took a lot of time. And that took a lot of time for three years after I ceased being EVC, because these legal cases continued.

**Reti:** They go on for years.

**Gruhn:** It didn't go away. And, you know, as I did in the social science division, only now it struck the sciences and the humanities as well, I made some fairly stern decisions, which, if they'd been carried out, would have changed what people were doing. Mostly, they weren't carried out because of Stevens' backing off. Or, they were reversed the year after, and I can give you three of those examples.

### **Serving as Academic Vice Chancellor**

The faculty decided that it was going to cut their normal teaching load from five to four, because the scientists were teaching less— And I said, "If we do that we're going to have 20 percent fewer courses, which means courses are going to get very large; it's going to change the education here. This is not just some minor little faculty convenience here. We need to think this through carefully." And I made a proposal that was not that everybody teach five courses every year, but that on rotation every three years somebody would. And that senior

faculty, who had self-identified as no longer doing research, would be asked to do five. Because there are lots of senior faculty around, who, in their last five years say, "I'm not doing any more research," for one reason or another. Or, "I haven't been productive. I'm not going to do anything." So I developed categories of people who might be asked. And the faculty had a fit, in the humanities and social sciences. Stevens didn't support it. And it never came to be. Everybody cut back to four courses.

**Reti:** And this was a time in which the campus was really growing, too, so there was a real concern about how students were going to get their courses.

**Gruhn:** Right. I thought it was a huge policy mistake. I still think it is. So that's one of these kinds of things where I tried to do something, where it was pulled out from under me.

There were other things which I kind of decreed and it worked, but stopped right after I ceased being AVC. The central administration holds a chunk of FTEs that never get filled. It's their money to do things with. Most of the faculty don't appreciate that. And I decided that some of that money should go into making the following policy: all students who wish are entitled to take a foreign language, and all students who need it and wish are entitled to take calculus to qualify for more advanced courses, and we cannot have the excuse that we don't have the resources to teach another Spanish class, or another this or that. That became policy, and, in fact, it led to a slight expansion. [Michael] Tanner immediately reversed that after me. So immediately those funds were cut, and

the languages shrunk again. Now, of course, calculus is not an issue because calculus can be online. But in those days that was an issue. So I managed to accomplish that, but it only lasted while I was academic vice chancellor.

So, on the one hand, there were things that I couldn't get past because the chancellor backed off, and there were other things that I accomplished, but they disintegrated later.

What I did do, which also stopped, I think—but I'm not 100 percent sure of that—is that sometimes I was willing to be flexible. I mean, there was a department, it shall be nameless, where there was one spouse who was a much appreciated faculty here and the other spouse was teaching at a different university. And both of them had been recruited to a distinguished third university. And the chair came to me and said, "Unless we can quickly generate a position for the spouse, we're going to lose the first one." And the second one would be a person we would hire because he/she is the best in the country in their field. I said, "No problem. You have an FTE designated two years down the road. I'll use one of the central FTE's, just give it to you now and then you won't get it later. Go recruit."

Then the chair said, "Well, the next problem is they only have a month to tell the other university." And I said, "Well, so we'll get this done in a month." They said, "How do you do this in a month?" I said, "I'll show you how you do this in a month. Get the materials together by next Monday." I went to CAP and I said, "Not only do we have to appoint an ad hoc, the ad hoc has to meet next week;

the ad hoc decision has to go to you that same week; there needs to be a decision by the following Monday, and it gives us a leeway of one week before these people will go elsewhere." And they said, "Well, we don't do this." I said, "Yes, you're going to do this because we don't want to lose this person." And indeed this person was hired and they're still here.

So I sometimes just did things like that, where people said, "This is not the way it's done," and I said, "There's no way we can't do it, as long as university procedures are followed, like you have the proper ad hoc and so forth and so on."

**Reti:** This was pre-Internet.

**Gruhn:** Yes. In any event, these things were do-able. So occasionally, I sort of felt slightly empowered to cut through the morass. You could do things differently. It had been customary for the vice chancellor in charge of budget, who was a powerful figure, and powerful in the life of Robert Stevens, to come to meetings of the top leadership and say, "Here's the budget and this is how the library will get cut." We were in a cuts phase then too. I would say, "I'd like to see the budget and study it." And he would say, "Well, don't worry your pretty little head about it. This is my department." And I'd say, "Well, yes, but your department impinges on my department, which is academic stuff. So I would like to take a look at it over the weekend and have another meeting about it."

I can read a budget. I went home. I studied it all and I said, "The library budget is being cut too much. This is unjustifiable. It's going to hamper students and



research here. I'd like to take some money from here and leave it in the library." And he said, "Well, this is my department." I said, "I'm sorry. The library is under the academic vice chancellor and I make decisions about that and you're not cutting the budget." So we had this big brouhaha. Robert Stevens was turning pink and saying, "Well, maybe we should let—I mean, he, after all, is the budget—" And I said, "No, the library, after all, is an academic function. I'm sorry. This is not going to happen."

So, in some senses you have the power to do things. But at the end of the day, when you're in the middle of a political attack from everybody and their uncle on campus, on the one hand, and you don't have a chancellor backing you up, and you can't go out there and constantly give interviews to the *Sentinel* saying, "This is misinformation," you start sounding defensive. So I just decided not to say anything anymore, at some particular point. I told the lawyers I would be willing to write memorandums and so forth, but I can't just spend seven days a week dealing with all of these people. It's just absolutely crazy.

Unfortunately, lots of people who were not on the warpath against Stevens and the administration and me also swallowed this crap. So when I ceased being vice chancellor, I was essentially *persona non grata*. The Committee on Committees wouldn't have appointed me to a committee as dog catcher, which is really weird, considering my administrative experience. You would think somebody would have recruited me to a committee. I was, like, poison on this campus.

**Reti:** If you had been a man, do you think this would have happened?

**Gruhn:** No. I think most fair observers agree with that. I got some lovely letters from some very distinguished male faculty at the time. I remember Hayden White actually coming into the vice chancellor's office and saying, "I hope you're not spending sleepless nights. This would have *never* happened if you were a man." He said, "They're coming after you because they can't stand you bossing them around and telling them. They're not used to that. Maybe in ten or twenty years it will be all right, but it's not all right right now."<sup>15</sup> And I had some lovely letters from university-wide administrators and former chancellors, who all said, "You've got to understand. We think you're the best person we've had in this job." And indeed, University Hall, which is nowadays not very favored, but which has different opinions, there were high-up muckety-mucks who said to me, "We'd like you to know that we consider you the best academic vice chancellor in the system right now." Because, of course, I had to go to vice chancellor meetings, and so forth. "So we hope you're not depressed because we recognize what you're doing, and it's great."

I'm not saying this to be pompous. I'm just saying there was another side to it. And so, I stepped out, went back to my little faculty role, (laughs) and [the next academic vice chancellor] Tanner, I think, contributed to some extent to making

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<sup>15</sup> See Cameron Vanderscoff, Interviewer and Editor, *Hayden White: Frontiers of Consciousness at UC Santa Cruz* (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2013) Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/register/hayden-white-frontiers-of-consciousness-at-ucsc>

things bad for me because he too treated me like the plague. And instead of what normally happens when you do a little consulting with the former AVC, or you know that that person has certain experience, you ask them to do certain things for you, or things like that; Tanner barely said hello to me, barely said hello. And he, again, was quite popular. Somebody like Julia [Armstrong-Zwart]<sup>16</sup> said, oh, he was nice. She really liked him, I think, in many ways, as a person. But I think he was a sexist, actually. And there are payoffs for being on a friendly basis with some women and not other women, and there was no payoff being even vaguely friendly to me, anymore. Because he might pay a small cost for it. And he was unwilling.

So that set a pattern for me on this campus, that I essentially was—for a senior faculty, I spent from 1989 to 2003, when I retired, I was essentially useless for the campus. Nobody was willing to touch me with a ten-foot pole.

**Reti:** As an administrator.

**Gruhn:** No. Even as a faculty on a committee. Never got appointed to a committee, never was asked to chair a committee, never was asked to do anything. I occasionally was asked by CAP to serve on or chair an Ad Hoc, something like that that was not visible. People would say, "Oh, we should get

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<sup>16</sup> An oral history with Julia Armstrong-Zwart is forthcoming is 2014 from the Regional History Project.

her on this Ad Hoc. We need economics. Put her on this Ad Hoc for an economist," or something like that. So, in that sense, I still had a kind of modest role. Which is both good and bad. It gave me lots of free time. But it was an odd way for a campus to treat somebody like me.

**Reti:** Yes.

**Gruhn:** The campus was not prepared to utilize me in any role. By that time, I had been involved in multiple statewide searches, had been on almost all faculty Senate committees; had four years of high-level administrative experience. You would have thought—

Now, what did happen was that I became visible nationally, primarily, I think, because of University Hall saying good things about me. I don't necessarily mean the president, but various people down a level, and also, oddly, chancellors and vice chancellors from other campuses. So my name was thrown to headhunters for various administrative positions. So headhunters approached me for—I'm just giving you two illustrations—presidency of Mills College and provost of Dartmouth—I mean, two totally disparate things. And in all the cases I just said I wasn't interested in any administrative job.

**Reti:** So you didn't want to leave.

**Gruhn:** Yes, I didn't want to leave, and I didn't follow through, and I didn't want to be an administrator. But it's clear that had I wanted to jump out of here, at least people were interested in looking at me. On the other hand, of course, had I,

let's say, made a short list, they would have called the campus and they could have reached any number of people who would have said, "Oh, my God! This woman, blah-blah-blah." So I don't know what the outcome would have been. But I was certainly approached by headhunters for about, I'd say, five years after I stepped down. But still, of my generation, I'd had more experience. I mean, now that's not an issue—so a lot of it has a time warp component to it.

**Reti:** I was rereading Robert Stevens' oral history, which was done right as he was leaving, and he described your style as "clear-headed, firm, and very direct."

**Gruhn:** That's fair.

**Reti:** That's a fair description of your leadership style?

**Gruhn:** That's totally fair. And I stayed on perfectly good terms with him.

Let me add one thing, when I was vice chancellor, I can't tell you exactly how many students were here—eight, ten thousand, something like that. So the campus was smaller. But there was a bare bones staff over there. I fired the administrative assistant to the previous vice chancellor when I came in I fired him before I stepped into the office. I just said, "This is not going to work. Find yourself another job." But I never replaced him.

There weren't millions of vice chancellors running around for everything imaginable over there and it worked perfectly well. I think that if I had stayed in that job I might have added a few people to be consistent with 16,000 and more

graduate programs and so forth. But I don't think all the administration that's over there is needed at all. I think they're totally top heavy and I would be really prepared to give chapter and verse on that. Because contrary to a lot of faculty, I understand how this thing works, having been in it. So a lot of faculty, just think, maybe they need all of those people.

Salaries are interesting here. I believe when Robert Sinsheimer left as chancellor, he was earning \$87,000, I believe, something like that. When I became vice chancellor, the first year I collected my step two full professor salary plus a stipend of \$10,000. The second year they raised my salary and I think I got a stipend maybe of \$20,000 or \$25,000. When Michael Tanner came into the position, his starting salary was, I think, double mine when I left. And now they all are over \$200,000. So I just want to call your attention to the fact that the idea, both when I was a dean and a vice chancellor was you got your regular faculty salary and a modest stipend.

Now, that's to some extent not quite accurate, because not only did I get a \$10,000 stipend, but there were two additional months added, because faculty is only working nine months and these jobs are eleven months. So the salary actually looks slightly higher than what I'm telling you, because of the eleven months. But still, it was a totally different ball game. You didn't do this because you were claiming that you were going to go to work for a corporation that would pay you twice as much. The highest paid faculty got far more money than you did as an administrator. Indeed, when I was dean, the administrative

assistant to the dean, who was Bill Robinson, got paid considerably more than I got paid as dean because he had a higher salary, having worked his way up. So it's not just my personal experience, but it's also a different historical time slot of how campuses were managed and the role of administration, totally different.

**Reti:** That's a very good point. I can't help but think of some parallels with your situation as AVC with the administrations of Chancellor MRC Greenwood and later Chancellor Denice Denton<sup>17</sup>, in terms of the controversy over them as female chancellors. I realize that there were very complicated issues going on that were very different than your situation. But I'm curious as to whether you have any analysis of any parallels to those situations?

**Gruhn:** Well, the easiest thing to start out by saying is, since they were in this ballpark during different historical times, it wasn't just the campus which had to deal with these issues. It was University Hall. I mean, Denton went to University Hall and said, "My partner needs a salary of whatever it was—\$190,000 and you

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<sup>17</sup> Denice Denton was the first openly gay chancellor at UCSC, and at 45, the youngest person to be appointed to be chancellor in the University of California system. Denton's recruitment package would eventually include a \$275,000 salary, \$68,750 as a moving allowance, improvements to the chancellor's on-campus residence which included a \$30,000 dog pen initially budgeted at \$7,000. Included in the deal was a tenured professorial appointment with a \$192,000 salary, and a housing assistance allowance of up to \$50,000 for her partner, Gretchen Kalonji. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denice\\_Denton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denice_Denton)

create a job for her even though there isn't one, otherwise I'm not doing this."<sup>18</sup>  
Nobody in the seventies or eighties could have possibly made those kinds of demands.<sup>19</sup>

**Reti:** True.

**Gruhn:** So the issue of, if you're going to hire a woman, you better accommodate them in some ways, if nothing else in terms of salaries, but creating jobs and all kinds of things. I mean, that was totally alien in earlier days. Look at the trouble about my husband coming as a visitor and it being suspect that I was creating jobs for him, as compared to a person who is a candidate saying, "I need this fancy, almost 200K job for my partner," right?

**Reti:** Right.

**Gruhn:** Different—very different times, different ballgames. In terms of attitudes of male faculty, which is an entirely separate thing, you get male faculty's sexism, gender, sexual preference issues and so forth. I think there the university is less out of sync today with the rest of the country. That is to say, there are

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<sup>18</sup> For one source on the controversy over MRC Greenwood see Todd Wallack and Tanya Schevitz, "No. 2 Official at UC Quits Suddenly. University Probes Possibility of Favoritism in Hiring of Friend and Son of Provost," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 5, 2005.

<sup>19</sup> Gruhn added the following footnote during the editing of this transcript: "Demands by male professors or administrators for their partners or wives had become somewhat customary, but demands by women faculty or administrators for their partners, male or female, struck people as odd or unusual."



people who think that's not even an issue, and who thought that on campus, and there are people who think that's an issue because they're phobic, or they're sexist. So I think both of those cases cut more or less the same way.

What I found interesting was that people of my generation who did administrative work tended to be—maybe I'm overstating it—a little mousey. That is we considered ourselves as role models, the first ever in most of my cases, right? And therefore, you better *not* make many demands for yourself. And you better *not* have the illusion that anybody thinks that you should make demands for yourself.

Well, both Denton and Greenwood came in slugging away, saying, "We are in a position; now we are in the driver's seat. We can make demands for ourselves." That's a very different kind of thing. The demands were jobs for partners, but also you've got to spend 100K on redoing the chancellor's house; you need to do this; you need to do that. I mean, all of a sudden the institution became defensive for having discriminated against women. And if anything, these people could ask for things that mortal men couldn't ask for, and didn't ask for. I think that was resented. It didn't jive with people, who to begin with, were slightly sexist in one way or another. So I think commenting on all of that requires one to comment on the time frames and the wider society and not just the university.

**Reti:** That makes sense.

**Gruhn:** So it's not a simple question. And I think some of the feminists on

campus got stuck in a time warp. They kept on battling for old wars instead of addressing the new problems that were arising in the new context.

**Reti:** Say more.

**Gruhn:** Well, for example, people who are ideological feminists and women's studies people and so forth—why didn't they speak up, or be amongst the first to speak up about these extraordinary salaries? They should have come out of their closets and said, "We on the faculty get paid very little. Why is it that administrators, whether they're men or women, now get these huge salaries?" That would have been very helpful because it would have, in a sense, shown that they too had moved on.

But in point of fact some of the rhetoric coming from the people in the seventies, eighties, nineties, and even in 20-whatever hasn't really changed. And that's too bad. That's why I think I'm a feminist but a very different kind of feminist. It is too bad because it could have furthered women's issues on campus. Every now and then somebody says, "Oh, yes. The poor downtrodden staff." But a lot of these women treated their staff and treat their staffs very poorly, instead of looking out for them and saying, "We don't have issues anymore"—meaning we got hired and so forth—"but they have issues. Let's fight for their issues." I have always been appalled and saddened, I think saddened is probably the right word—how little moving on in history and socialization people who are committed to the cause of women, and gender equality and sexual orientation discrimination and all those kinds of things—how little people actually

contributed to where it's at, rather than the rhetoric, which essentially was for themselves.

**Reti:** So you're talking partly about the intersection of class with gender.

**Gruhn:** Yes. Not really paying some attention to that. On the one hand, class, as in the lower worms who are losing their jobs and can't do their jobs, and a week before students have to register for their classes, you still don't have a course schedule. Oh, that's because there's not enough staff over there. Well, maybe there's not enough staff, or maybe they are inefficient, but this is no way to run a university. So where are people putting shoulder to the wheel there and saying, "Are these women really overworked over there?"

**Reti:** Are you talking about now or back then?

**Gruhn:** No, now! There's no course schedule available in a timely fashion, to tell students when their courses meet. How can they pick a course if they don't know when their courses meet? Yes, they have a week or whatever before they need to register. But this thing should have been promulgated a month ago. "Well, the Registrar's—so many cuts and they can't get their work done and so forth." I'm sure that's true, but why isn't somebody lobbying for that from the feminist side, and saying, "Hey, you guys, you're getting paid hundreds of thousands of dollars and these people can't get their work done."

I think the politics of this are all wrong and all out of kilter. I think Santa Cruz, because it was at the forefront of some feminist stuff, has actually, in an odd way,

fallen behind places who came to it later, because it got stuck in some funny historical period. People's brains have not moved on. So they're fighting old wars instead of having taken on new wars. Some places which were much more insensitive to hiring women for a long period of time and came to it at a later period when the dynamic was different—it seems to me some of them are now ahead of us.

**Reti:** Mm—hmm. Of course, there are broad barriers to more equity on this campus, some of which are the classification of the campus as a rural campus—

**Gruhn:** Oh, yeah. There are all kinds of things. But those things existed all along. So it's the same context and there are those other battles. I'm not saying that's the only variable. I'm just saying it is at least one small variable of—you know, you ask about the treatment of two women chancellors—well, on the one hand they were treated well, and on the other hand they had problems, and on the other hand they behaved badly.

**Reti:** And so you're saying, rather than looking at those particular cases, we should be looking at the situation for women staff at the line level, and that should be a feminist priority on this campus.

**Gruhn:** Yes, for example. I'm just giving an illustration. And, for example, both Chancellor Denton and Chancellor Greenwood were very high-handed in spending university money in ways that were odd. I mean, I remember going to the chancellor's office for the first time after Kerr Hall got redone. There are these Italian restaurant tables and chairs, and there is a front desk, and there is this,

that, and the other thing. And you say to yourself, give me a break. Do you have any idea how rundown classrooms and other things are?

I understand how the system works. It's a different budget and so forth. I'm not naïve. But it's bad symbolism. It's such bad symbolism. If you have all that money to spend over there it looks bad that you don't have any money to spend on the delivery system for undergraduate education. It's the symbolism of how these people behave that I found appalling. There are a lot of women presidents of colleges who don't behave that way. We'll see about the new president [Janet Napolitano].

#### UCDC

**Reti:** Yes, who was just here last week in the library.

**Reti:** Okay. All right. So we have about half an hour left. Should we move on to talk about UCDC [University of California Washington Center]?

**Gruhn:** Sure.

**Reti:** Okay, so this is 1994. Well, first of all, let's back up. When did you retire?

**Gruhn:** As a faculty, in 2003. When I was vice chancellor, there were the beginnings of discussion of UCDC at University Hall. And there was a committee set up, a systemwide committee, to look into it and to establish UCDC. And after I ceased being vice chancellor, I was this campus's representative to that committee.

**Reti:** So what is the UCDC program?

**Gruhn:** UCDC started out by some campuses, like UCLA, having a facility in Washington, D.C. for their public policy government students to spend a semester there. And smaller campuses jealously said, "We'd like to be able to send our students there as well." So the idea was that maybe something should be thought about for all the campuses.

So the UCDC committee set up a program that all campuses could participate in. They rented a floor in an office building, and the idea was that the campuses could have directors there, who would also teach, and that each campus could also and should also bring at least one faculty there who would teach, but that the courses taught would be available for all students.

**Reti:** So it wouldn't be just part of the politics department or another department, like economics. It would be all UC students.

**Gruhn:** It would be all UC faculty and all UC students and they could take courses from anybody, but there would be a curriculum and there would be a director chosen from one of the campuses to be in Washington permanently, and a staff and so forth. And that campuses could select how to participate in that.

Berkeley decided it wanted to send students but it wanted its students only to take courses from its faculty. The rest of the campuses were willing to have any of the UC faculty serve as faculty for students.

Anyway, there is a lot of complicated stuff around this, but at the end of the day, a floor was established, and each campus got to decide how it wanted to proceed. I decided, with consultation, obviously, that for Santa Cruz we wanted to have the opportunities open, not just to politics students, but to all students on campus, that there were very good internships for people in the humanities and the arts in museums, even in the theater, for theater arts. There were science policy opportunities in the various academies. And so, we would have a program that was open to everybody. That made us distinctive from the other campuses. And the statewide committee agreed to that; the campus authorities agreed to that.

Then the question was, how big should the program be? And actually not that year, but in a later year, I decided to put our numbers at twenty-five because whatever commitment you made, you had to fill the vacancies and wherever the housing was going to be. And I was afraid, with a relatively small campus, that we would begin to have vacancies and have to pay for it. Some of the other campuses asked for quotas of forty and so forth. I'm telling you this because it becomes interesting later.

So, then it was set up, and I became the campus director—Tanner was willing to go along with that—campus director for UCDC. So, for the first five years or something, I ran the Santa Cruz UCDC program. I also made the decision that, since we were a small program, our director didn't need to be in Washington. They could be here and you could have telephone meetings with the people who

were in Washington, because we needed meetings twice a month. And that our component was too small to have a full-time staff person, that I would hire somebody for Santa Cruz, but invited other campuses that had small programs like San Diego, to perhaps use that person as a staff person.

So with the help of the personnel people in social science, we recruited for the Santa Cruz staff person, a nonacademic staff person. We hired a woman who is still the staff person, who came from Howard University, an absolutely first-rate African American woman. She's been wonderful. There hasn't been a single director from UCSC who hasn't thought she was the best person in the building.

And then we had to do all the campus recruitments. I organized those. Kim Tyler from economics became the staff assistant to that program. It's now somebody else. We had a very tight operation and, in fact, we fully filled our quota and sometimes used up the beds of other people. Faculty were happy to go, so we always had at least one faculty there. They were teaching courses. Everything was hunky dory until about ten years ago, when a new director from Berkeley took over and fired most of the staff.

And before he was hired, I should say, the University Hall got sick of this rental office arrangement and students having to get farmed out across the bridge to a living facility. The Regents decided UC should have a building of its own, not for UCDC, I might hasten to add, but as a lobbying thing for Congress and so forth and so on. But UCDC was allowed to have a floor or two of this building. And so



this fat, new, expensive building was built right near Dupont Circle, a very good location, which houses UCDC.

Anyway, under the most recent director, the programs fizzled for one reason or another. Pretty soon, they couldn't fill the various spaces anymore. Some years ago they opened it up to students from other universities and colleges around the country who can live in the dorms. On the top floor, there had been some small faculty apartments, which were supposed to be used by UC researchers when they were in Washington, so they'd have a cheap, effective place to live. Those places are now rented out to almost everybody, so if you are faculty then they may all be rented out because somebody [else] has been rented to.

The whole thing is in total shambles. We are still sending students. It used to be very selective. The quality has gone down because there's no real leadership for the program here. A college office staff person is partly handling the UC staffing on this campus now. The politics department has largely washed its hands. And the programs from other campuses have frayed in one fashion or another. They are no longer sending faculty, because it's too costly to send faculty, because nobody wants to pay for the housing and transportation to send faculty, because you'd have to pay them the salary and a stipend for the housing, because they have their houses here. Nobody has the money to do that anymore. So now, increasingly, the courses are being taught by lecturers hired from around Washington, D.C. So the quality of the program has disintegrated. And it's a monumental mess. It's very sad, but it's like so many things in UC, they become

a mess.

So it still exists and it will limp on. The new director of UCDC in Washington, D.C. has just been named. She is Helen Shapiro, a woman economist who is a member of the sociology department at UCSC. She was a very excellent provost of College Nine and Ten, probably the best provost around in the last two or three years, after Ellen Suckiel retired. So who knows whether she can shape up the place? I have no idea. But it's been a mess.

I was sort of knee-deep involved for quite a few years, more than five years. And twice, once while I was director and once when I was no longer director, I actually spent a quarter going as UC faculty there, as director, in order to see how it operated, but I was teaching courses, so I didn't act as director, and then subsequently as well. I felt that it was a very good experience for faculty to go to Washington, D.C., and I still think it's a good thing for faculty to teach in the program.

And I have one asterisk to this tale, which is from the very beginning Dean of Natural Sciences David Kliger<sup>20</sup> said the sciences are not going to participate and declared that scientists are all going to take science courses, they are all going to be scientists and doing policy stuff is a waste of time. I argued high and low that

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<sup>20</sup> See Irene Reti, Interviewer and Editor, *Campus Provost, Executive Vice Chancellor David Kliger*, (Regional History Project, UCSC Library, 2011). Available in full text at <http://library.ucsc.edu/reg-hist/ucsc/campus-provostexecutive-vice-chancellor-david-kliger>

most of the students in the sciences will not become scientists; many of them will go into policy work, and it would behoove them to have some internships. And he said absolutely not. So the scientists refused to contribute to the funds that each division contributed to this operation. Eventually, I think, if you're a science student now you can ask to go. I don't know who provides the funding. They're very few. But I thought it was a crying shame to take this stance. I still do.

**Reti:** When you went to teach in D.C., was that international policy, international relations?

**Gruhn:** I think one time it had to do with courses on nongovernmental organizations, their role in policymaking, because so many students interned in them and that gave them an easy entree to have done some literature, to then do their essays and theses for their fieldwork. I can't remember what the other time was. It might have been something like that. But in both cases I geared it so that students could get background for their NGO work.

**Reti:** And during the period of time in which the program was flourishing, were there many students getting jobs from having had this opportunity?

**Gruhn:** Yes. Absolutely. Many students got jobs because they networked to get something after they graduated, because when they were going they were typically juniors and seniors, very many seniors. And the other thing is many of them decided what they wanted to do in their career. They decided they didn't want to do whatever they interned in, but something else. So it also was very important in them deciding what sort of things they wanted to do. Some of

them had decided they wanted to go law school and then decided not to. Others decided they didn't want to go to law school and then decided they did want to. So I thought it was very instrumental in career thinking and development, which is now, when so many students are lost, another stupid thing not to encourage.

**Reti:** That's exactly what I was thinking.

**Gruhn:** Yes.

### **Marriage to Professor Dale Johnson**

**Reti:** Okay, I think that's all the questions I have about UCDC. I wanted to backtrack quite a bit. We never talked about how you met your husband. He was at Oberlin.

**Gruhn:** Right, I started teaching at Oberlin in 1967 and he started teaching there in 1968. He started teaching there, along with a historian of Russia, and we all had offices in the same small building. I invited the Russian historian and my husband to join some of us in the political science department to go out to lunch. The three of us were three single faculty. We became friends. We would rotate cooking dinner for each other. We went and had a drink at the local bar and things like that.

Our relationship changed over time. It changed in the early 1980s, I guess. But I met him in Oberlin and have been in touch with him, have known his children since they were born, and so forth. So there's a lot of continuity. I mean, a lot of times when you marry somebody with children you all of a sudden arrive on the

scene. But I've always known his children.

**Reti:** And he's continued to teach here?

**Gruhn:** No, no. After his visiting here, of course nobody was going to touch him with a ten-foot pole. Then when Peter Rushton died, they had an emergency in teaching Chinese. And the language program asked whether he could step in to finish the next quarter and then teach the next year. So then he taught for the language program for another couple of years. But he certainly didn't apply for a job here any more and it was clear that he didn't want to. He was finishing a book that he had been working on for a long time and we decided we could live on my income. Actually, he didn't leave Oberlin until '93 or '94, because of his kids. He went back. He retired a little early.

#### **Chair of Academic Senate Committee on Emeriti Relations**

**Reti:** So let me ask you about your service as Chair of the Senate Committee on Emeriti Relations.

**Gruhn:** That's interesting because a lot of faculty thinks and administration thinks that if you're emeriti, you've retired and you've gone away. They don't recognize that emeriti are still members of the Academic Senate. I think most people in my department can't believe that I'm still a faculty here. I mean, you retire. You go away, right? And the other thing is that the administration started making decision which were, to put it mildly, not very good for emeriti. Most people who are emeriti, who go back to the sixties and seventies, came here and stayed here at very low salaries because they were promised good treatment.

I mean, they were promised that there were perks attached to it, like parking and use of the physical education facilities [OPERS], and all kinds of things. And then all of a sudden the university decided, no, you can't have those things. The parking guy decided that now you don't get A stickers anymore. You can buy yourself parking if you want to. And then they decided that you have to pay for OPERS, because free OPERS use is going away.

And I thought, now, wait a minute. So I contacted the Committee on Committees and said, "I haven't served on a committee in eons. I'd be interested in the Emeriti Committee." They said, "Well, would you like to chair it?" So I chaired it for two years and started making noise about those things. I mean, I made the parking people's lives miserable. It's an ongoing battle. And then they said, "Well, they're taking parking places." I said, "Do you realize how few emeriti actually come to campus? And the ones that come, are all doing free labor for the campus." So then they decided to a census—first they did a questionnaire—then they did a census. Now we all have special tags that say "retired" so they can do an enumeration of how often you are on campus. But so far, they have agreed not to drag us off. But we *are* paying half price for OPERS. That I couldn't change.

So I did that for a couple of years, with good committees. We did do a fair amount of screaming. I met with the current chancellor, who I had—do you want me to talk about the current chancellor?

**Reti:** Yes.

**Gruhn:** Essentially, you don't talk to the current chancellor. You talk to Ashish. I was part of a committee who went to the chancellor and said, "You don't read your emails. We can't have a meeting with you. We can't do anything." This was when he first became chancellor. Ashish reads his email. You can never get a response from the chancellor. Every chancellor before this chancellor, including Greenwood and Denton, if you were a full professor, they responded to your email. They could have had a staff respond to it, but it got responded to. Now you can write them and there is no response at all.

We met with the chancellor and said, "Why do you want people who you want to raise money from and whose houses you want [willed] to the university, why would you want to alienate them over the stupid fact that occasionally somebody parks up there for an hour? I mean, this is just alienating faculty who you need. It is shortsighted. You're going against your interests. You think this is all faculty just wanting to have the good life. This is stupid, from the central administration's perspective."

**Reti:** A few minutes ago you were talking about free labor in relation to the parking issue. Does that mean that Emeriti faculty teaching courses are not getting paid?

**Gruhn:** Oh, let's put the teaching of courses aside. Faculty serve on Ad Hocs. They meet with graduate students. They go to college meetings and help provosts. They do all kinds of things. That's number one. Then they teach. And when they teach, they get stipends. The stipends that I got teaching for the

first five years of teaching a full course to somewhere between a hundred and two hundred people was five thousand dollars.

**Reti:** That's like a graduate student's salary.

**Gruhn:** Yes, actually. Now in the sciences, they pay them a lot. But in the humanities and arts and social sciences now that's been raised to something like seven or nine thousand, or in the arts it may be six thousand. So, over ten years time, it's expanded slightly. But it's still a small stipend. It's not a fifth of your salary or a quarter of your salary. So even that, is to some extent, charitable work.

And furthermore, when we teach courses, we make ourselves available to students. I do letters [of recommendation] for students. Every faculty does. I do two or three hours of university work every day, because I've had huge numbers of students for huge numbers of years. They need recommendations; they need advice— Why do you mess with us when we could be leaving money to you, when we could be willing you our houses? Anyway, the chancellor doesn't get it. Finally, our parking person sort of got it for a while. He got sick and tired of us fighting with him. So for the moment, he hasn't done anything. But it's still up in the air. But in typical fashion, I made a lot of noise for two years. So that was kind of a fun committee.

### **Reflections on UC Santa Cruz**

**Reti:** Okay. So let's talk about the recent history of UCSC, and comments you might want to make about that, beyond what we've already talked about.



**Gruhn:** Well, I know it's the budget, stupid. But I firmly believe it is not only the budget, stupid. I believe that very bad decisions have been made and are made. I believe that the top administration, whatever their virtues, are not educational leaders. They push papers. They make budgetary decisions. But they are not at the forefront of thinking about—they're not Clark Kerrs or anything, thinking about how this campus could modernize education for students in the twenty-first century, which is exactly the wrong historical time for there not to be educational leaders on this campus. So that's my first complaint. The chancellor is a nice man. Some of these other people may also be good, competent people. But they're not giving this campus the kind of educational leadership that's needed.

**Reti:** Now, I can read into what you're saying, but for the person reading this or listening to this in the future, what do you mean by, "This is exactly the wrong time to not have the leadership—"

**Gruhn:** Because in the twenty-first century education is going to have to revolutionize for it to be meaningful. And I don't just mean putting some courses online, Coursera and all of that. I mean, how to educate undergraduates and how to use faculty effectively has to be fundamentally rethought. And very little serious rethinking has been happening and very little leadership.

What they've been good at is every time there's a problem, you hire another administrator to fix it. Most of those administrators have come from the sciences, so they know how to make the sciences better and more productive and grant

receiving. The few nonscience people up there have, generally speaking, come from the science side of their discipline. I mean, you get a physical anthropologist who's not on the cultural anthropology side and you say, well, that's a social scientist. You get a humanities dean who is on the sciency side of linguistics. I'm not saying all these people are bad. Some of them are perfectly good. But what I'm saying is they don't understand what to do about the humanities, social sciences, and arts. You have some effective deans. You have some absolutely disastrous deans.

The arts dean may be very effective but he is very effective in linking with the sciences in this huge enterprise that he's building.<sup>21</sup> The wisdom of that I think should have been examined more campuswide and given a lot of thought. But never mind, it's going ahead and that's where the resources are going.

Meantime, the undergraduates are falling by the wayside. The campus prides itself on the fact that we have such a large proportion of underrepresented students now. We have them. This is very nice. And we have them at the very time when all the services that they need to succeed have been cut. So there's inadequate support for these students. Some of these students graduate almost illiterate. They have very little background. They have not gained the analytic

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<sup>21</sup> Gruhn is referring to Dean of Humanities Yager's involvement in planning for the Institute of Arts and Sciences at UC Santa Cruz—Editor.

skills that they should have while they were here. I teach mainly only seniors, with some juniors nowadays. It is a disaster. It is an absolute disaster, how far these kids move in the system without getting a proper education. And you can't send them anywhere, because there's no place to send them.

**Reti:** Send them anywhere to improve their skills, you mean?

**Gruhn:** To improve their skills. That's right.

**Reti:** Like a writing tutor.

**Gruhn:** Yes. That's right. And they don't have adequate support in learning how to read. They've had very little background in reading. I don't mean necessarily even a book, whether it's online or anywhere else. They have no analytic skills. They leave without analytic skills. There was a nationwide study done recently to say that essentially after four years people don't have any more skills than when they came. This campus, I think, is at the forefront of this.

I'm absolutely glad that there are people who are getting fancy degrees in computer gaming and all of those things are working well. But for most of these kids, they are not getting a decent liberal arts education, which they could use. And it's not being really examined. When you challenge the administration, which I've done on the Senate floor about every two years, they basically smirk. The vice chancellor smirks and the chancellor says some salve thing like, "I don't believe that Ronnie's up to date. She doesn't realize that we are looking into this and studying this. And I've recently funded two Coursera courses."

So, I have a very angry, saddened view of what is not going on on campus right now. I feel it's the responsibility of the administration and the leadership to give some leadership. I don't think they are giving the right kind of leadership. I think it's an opportunity for this campus. This campus, instead of building up and becoming distinguished, the way [UC] San Diego, which is a newer campus than ours, managed to do, is often very mediocre.

**Reti:** How so?

**Gruhn:** Well, UCSD has a much better reputation. They have stronger graduate programs. They have more distinguished faculty outside the sciences—all kinds of things. This campus, I think, will become just one of the weak sisters in the UC system. It was unnecessary and it's too bad. The purpose of this campus, to provide something that the other campuses are not providing, and do it in a different way, has essentially been erased. The fact that it hasn't been erased is essentially only left in the rhetoric of this campus. I can hardly stand hearing the rhetoric from the administration: how we're unique, and what we're doing, and we're distinctive. "No matter how bad the budget situation goes," says the chancellor, "We're sticking to our values." Excuse me. Almost all the Santa Cruz "values" have eroded. It makes me just livid.

**Reti:** Just as a hypothetical exercise, if you were going to become chancellor tomorrow, more specifically what would you want to see happen to revitalize this campus?

**Gruhn:** Well, I certainly don't have all the answers. What I would start doing is putting together a group of creative faculty from around the campus to write a white paper and advise about how we start thinking about undergraduate education, and not precipitously move into this direction or that direction, but saying, "We want to be part of the forefront of thinking about this." Also, there are places around the country where people are doing that thinking. Why not get together with those presidents and their committee members and say, "We want to make a mark. We don't know how. We have no answers at this point. But let's spend the next five years really looking into this, and in the meantime tread water on some things so we don't sock ourselves in to a way that is irremediable."

So not do precipitous things, which don't allow you to then build on it, but tread a little water and take seriously that we have a challenge. And in the meantime, use some of the resources, which are being misused on, God knows, salaries and other things, and try to do something for the students we currently have. It's not as expensive as people imagine. It might be better to pocket one biology FTE and another, some other kind of FTE, and use those salaries as a way to make the education meaningful for students here. That could be done. There's enough fungibility within the budget, even a budget that's in decline, or that's at steady state now or whatever, to fudge a little bit to make this thing work. And they're not doing it. They're absolutely not doing it.

So that's what I would do. I would not say, "Oh, now I'm chancellor and I'll tell

you what to do." I have no idea of what to do about it. And second of all, my generation is not who should be thinking this thing through. You need younger people on these things.

**Reti:** Certainly at the beginning UCSC was all about, at least to some extent, coming up with an innovative educational vision, for that time. Now we need to engage that again.

**Gruhn:** Yes. We need to engage that again. And because of the intervention of technology, and because of the world we live in, of intersecting humans and information and so forth, younger generations who are comfortable in that milieu are the ones that need to think it through. We need investment in creative thought about the future of higher education.

But the faculty is as much to blame as the central administration. Let me quickly add, they're out to lunch; they're often only in it for themselves; they've given up. They're spending a minimal amount of time. They are unwilling to spend extra time, by and large, with students. They go home. They're not even here. I can understand they want to work at home. But they're barely in their offices for office hours. They can never be found. They're not there to advise. Eighty percent of the students have gone through this place without ever having academic inputs from a faculty member. Now, that can be reversed very quickly. In fact, that the chancellor can decree to be reversed. Nothing is happening. It's just absolutely idiotic.

If the administration wants to turn this place into a kind of Cal Tech, that is to say, it thinks its strong suit ought to be the sciences and engineering, that's fine. It's a choice. I'm not even against it. I just want to remind them that at Cal Tech and MIT they have excellent humanities and social science and arts programs because they believe that their people should be fully educated. So I'm not even opposed to a vision that might be different than some kind of non-science, liberal arts. I'm perfectly willing to buy the science vision if that's what they want to do, and the engineering vision. But not the way they're doing it. I've said my piece.

**Reti:** So let's just wrap up here by asking you—since you've retired you've continued to teach courses here on campus, and do research?

**Gruhn:** I do some research. I don't do a lot of research. I'm not doing fieldwork anymore. I write a little, but not a lot. I read a lot. I stay up in my field, at least the areas of my field that I'm actually interested in, as distinct from—I used to teach lots of things outside my central area to cover the curriculum. I don't read that stuff anymore. And I don't read some professional journals that I used to hate to read. I read the ones that I find interesting. So I've cut back on that.

I read a lot. I think about things a lot. I do a fair amount of public speaking. I usually teach a course for Lifelong Learners. I just finished a course on thinking about international affairs in the twenty-first century, two, two-hour sessions. They have a lot of attendance. People appreciate those. I do some media, when asked. I am willing to speak to groups and things like that. I have had a passionate interest all of my life in the performing arts. I go to operas,

concerts, ballets. Fortunately, my husband also likes going to them. We have that in common. Art museums. I love to travel. I travel a lot. I have a very nice life, thank you. And I don't have to aggravate myself with the day-to-day affairs of this campus.

However, anybody who is a friend of mine, or a spouse, will tell you I can't remove myself enough not to scream and holler when I read my email. (laughs)

**Reti:** Because you still care.

**Gruhn:** I still care. I think I will always care. I stayed in this occupation because I care. I could have done something else and gone into policy work. But I cared enough. I still care. I'm willing to hold forth to anybody who is willing to listen to me. But I'm also very sad about what's going on.

**Reti:** Well, I want to thank you for holding forth, and for your life story, and being here with me for the Regional History Project.

**Gruhn:** I appreciate your asking me. Thank you.

**Reti:** Thank you.