

# UC Santa Cruz

## Institutional History of UCSC

### Title

Jim Pepper and the Evolution of Environmental Studies at UC Santa Cruz: An Oral History

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1ph610j1>

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### Publication Date

2007-09-24

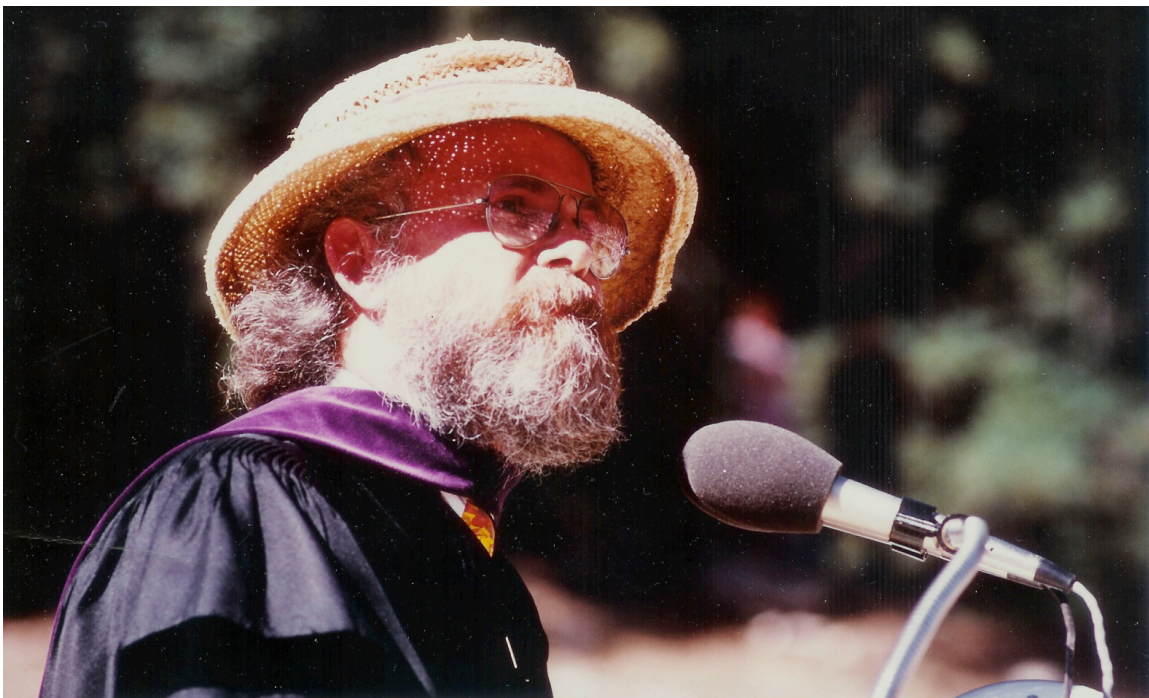
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*Jim Pepper &  
The Evolution of Environmental Studies  
at UC Santa Cruz*

An Oral History



Interviewed by Randall Jarrell and Irene Reti  
Edited by Irene Reti

Santa Cruz  
2007

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## Introduction

From 1991 through 1994, the University of California initiated three early retirement options for faculty and staff, known as VERIP (Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program), as a salary savings measure during a period of unprecedented budget cuts. The thinking was that many senior faculty with high salaries would retire and be replaced by young faculty at the lower end of the salary scale. At UC Santa Cruz, a number of pioneering senior faculty opted for early retirement. Since many of these faculty might leave the area, the Regional History Project initiated interviews with a group of them to document their recollections of early campus history and their participation in the development of various boards of studies (at that time UCSC's designation for departments) which over the years has led to national academic distinction in a number of disciplines.

This oral history with Professor of Environmental Studies James [Jim] Pepper was conducted in two parts: Randall Jarrell, the former director of the Regional History Project, conducted the first interview at Jim Pepper's house in Santa Cruz on August 16, 1994; Irene Reti, current director of Regional History, conducted a second interview with Jim via telephone at his home in Arizona on

April 20, 2007. While we regret the time and funding constraints that resulted in this delay, the “long pause” between Pepper’s two reflections on his role in the development of the field of environmental studies and of the environmental movement almost certainly fostered greater depth in this oral history.

Jim Pepper earned his B.A. in Architecture from Montana State University at Bozeman, and both a Master’s of Landscape Architecture and a Master’s of City Planning from the University of California, Berkeley. He was active in the early ecology movement, particularly as one of the organizers of Earth Day at UC Berkeley in 1970.

Recruited by the visionary geographer Richard [Dick] Cooley to join the new environmental studies program at UCSC, Pepper arrived in Santa Cruz in 1972. Jim Pepper describes UCSC’s environmental studies program as one that “had both a theoretical dimension to it and an applied dimension, a program . . . that integrated theory and practice.” Pepper brought to this nascent department his practical experience and background as a professional landscape architect and planner, as well as his probing interest in the philosophical and ethical questions at the heart of environmental issues.

While several universities began offering courses in environmental studies in the late 1960s and 1970s, environmental studies at UCSC was and still is one of the few large programs with full-time, tenured faculty whose appointments are completely devoted to the environmental studies department, rather than being split between that department and others on campus. Between 1972 and his retirement in 1994, Jim Pepper helped to build what he characterizes as a flagship program in environmental studies at UCSC. In 1994, UCSC became the first UC campus to offer a doctoral program in environmental studies. Pepper

discusses key colleagues such as Richard [Dick] Cooley, Raymond Dasmann, and Kenneth Norris, all of whom became giants in this emerging field. He also outlines the institutional challenges environmental studies faced as an interdisciplinary program within the discipline-focused structure of the university, and the struggles of various faculty within the tenure system. In the 2007 interview he describes the trajectories of the careers of several of his former students, assesses the state of both the field of environmental studies and of the environmental movement, and discusses some of his current activities and interests.

Between 1972 and his retirement in 1994, Pepper taught a wide variety of courses for the board [department.] They included *The Idea of Planning*, *Environmental Resource Analysis*, *Environmental Impact Assessment*, *Introduction to Environmental Design*, *Resource Conserving Architecture*, *Culture and Environment*, *Coastal Zone Planning and Management*, and *Land Use and Ecology*. As an environmental studies student in the Planning and Public Policy pathway from 1978 to 1982, I took *The Idea of Planning* and several other courses from Jim Pepper. Of course I brought this knowledge of Jim Pepper to the interview we did together in April 2007. I well remember his thought-provoking, inspiring lecture style, as well as his respect for the minds of young undergraduates like myself. In 1996 the parents of one of Pepper's former students, Erik Giberson, recognized Jim Pepper's inspirational teaching by establishing the Pepper-Giberson Endowed Chair in Environmental Studies at UC Santa Cruz.

Outside of academia, Jim Pepper has had a 45-year distinguished career in environmental planning, site planning, and urban design. He is a senior associate with the urban and regional planning consulting firm Mintier & Associates. Over

the years his projects have included a sixty-acre, mixed-use Coastal Marine Research Center in Santa Cruz; a two hundred-acre Town Center for the community of Big Sky, Montana; a key role in the formulation of an earthquake recovery plan for downtown Santa Cruz; a regional-scale plan for the Lake Tahoe Basin, and an environmental assessment for the translocation of the California Sea Otter.

Jim Pepper carefully reviewed the edited transcript of this interview, made extensive corrections, and provided us with the two photographs published in the volume. Copies of this oral history are available in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley; and in Special Collections and the circulating stacks of the McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz. The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Christine Bunting, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian Virginia Steel.

—Irene Reti, Director, Regional History Project

September 24, 2007

University of California, Santa Cruz

## Early Background

**Jarrell:** This is Randall Jarrell. I'm at Jim Pepper's house. It's August 16, 1994. We're sitting out in the backyard with his two beagles. Jim, I was reading in the catalog about your degrees and where you'd gone to school—Montana State for your undergraduate work, and then an MLA and an MCP from UC Berkeley. What are those degrees?

**Pepper:** The MLA is a Masters in Landscape Architecture, and the MCP is a Masters of City and Regional Planning.

**Jarrell:** So you don't have a doctorate and you're a professor?

**Pepper:** I have no doctorate.

**Jarrell:** That's unusual, and I would like to hear about that.

**Pepper:** Well, I suppose, Randall, that the reason I'm here is primarily because of Dick Cooley and his vision in setting up an environmental studies program that had both a theoretical dimension to it and an applied dimension, a program, if you will, that integrated theory and practice. There was real interest in having someone who had professional knowledge and skills and understandings as part of that original complement of faculty. And I had the great good fortune of being at UC Berkeley during the first Earth Day. That was the seventies.

**Jarrell:** I was going to ask you about Earth Day, because I know how important that is.



**Pepper:** I was the organizer for the Berkeley campus. In fact, I had organized a big conference that didn't happen, because the ROTC building or something else got blown up by the New Left the day of Earth Day, and the program didn't happen. But I was at Berkeley when the National Environmental Policy Act was passed and the environmental decade of the seventies began.

**Jarrell:** So you were at the cutting edge of all of these things . . .

**Pepper:** Well, one might say so. I was lucky. I was fortunate to be at a place at the right time, or at, you know, an opportune time. And with a degree in architecture. My work in landscape architecture wasn't the kind of "space, form, line, color, texture" that you associate with gardens or parks, but rather ecological issues in landscape, and landscape being the larger landscape; regional landscapes, forests, prairies—essentially native plants. So, addressing issues of the larger ecological or environmental matrix. That's what my graduate work in landscape architecture involved. In city and regional planning, I was focusing primarily on land use issues and some of the political and legal dimensions thereof. So I was really, I think, probably a very reasonable choice for the UCSC environmental studies program in those years. I don't know if I've been hampered by not having a Ph.D. Probably so, on the writing side, because my gift is more in diagrams and symbols and conceptual level work, rather than written words, although I am finally a pretty good wordsmith. I get ideaphoria and have a hard time staying on a scholarly track of one idea at a time and marching it through to all of its precision and completion.

### **The Evolution of the Field of Environmental Studies**

**Jarrell:** Right. I didn't mean to make a big deal of it. But it's unusual. There are a few people on the campus but it's the UC system, so that really caught my eye. I knew a little bit about your background at Berkeley. What I'd like to know is, tell me about environmental studies as a field of study, as a discipline. How did it emerge?

**Pepper:** Well, I could tell you a little bit about how it's emerged and emerging nationally in general, and specifically at Santa Cruz. Nationally, the interest in environmental matters has found its way into the academic world in three fundamental forms.

One is a group of faculty from various disciplines volunteer time to support some sort of informal program. That is they teach a course on geology that has a kind of environmental bent. Whatever that means. We'll get to that in a minute, whatever "environmental" means. But you may get geologists and physicists and biologists and an occasional sociologist or political scientist—a group of those faculty who will get a kind of program together, but on borrowed time, really. So those programs, of which there were a number in the early seventies, almost all disappeared, because when the clarion rang for publications and service and all sorts of things that the university tends to reward one for, everybody scurried back to their disciplines. So that set of programs . . . the volunteer programs, went by the by.

Then there was another group of programs like the program at UC Berkeley, where one or two faculty ran a large formal program, and then they got two

percent time from thirty other faculty, or eight percent time from nine faculty, or something of that order. And you can imagine what those programs are like. The two people that run the program are burned out quickly, because there is tremendous student demand in every one of these programs. And they can't get adequately staffed in terms of faculty. What happened, essentially, at Berkeley is that these folks that were doing staffing, not that they burned out, but they couldn't get any research done; they had to run heavy teaching programs. And the rest of the faculty again found it difficult to have two masters, kind of like the old college-board split at Santa Cruz, with the inevitable tensions between the two masters.

Santa Cruz falls into a third and unfortunately the smallest set of these three types of programs, essentially a hybrid program with full-time faculty from a variety of disciplines that have no other obligation to a mainline program like biology or geology or sociology. So that's sort of, structurally, the three options that seem to be available to the academic world. Santa Cruz, fortunately, had a full-blown program. And it was really Dick Cooley's vision, along with Dean McHenry's, that got a program started. It was Dean's vision, with strong support from Grant McConnell and Stanley Cain that brought Dick here and turned him loose with his vision that got the Santa Cruz program off the ground.

I think in many ways we've now finished the first generation. It's sort of like *Star Trek*. We now have a new faculty, and I call them "the next generation." And essentially what this initial program did was pioneer, through a lot of very difficult times, I might add, a program that I think now is going to be, if it isn't now, will soon be not second to none nationally. We have a flagship program

here at the undergraduate level already. It's acknowledged, when you go to major conferences that deal with environmental issues, people look with envy at Santa Cruz because we have this large . . . probably I think we have the largest single faculty in the U.S. in environmental studies.

**Jarrell:** Really?

**Pepper:** There are other programs. York University in Canada has a very large faculty.

**Jarrell:** Do they call it environmental studies?

**Pepper:** Yes.

**Jarrell:** What are some other places in the United States where they have a program that's related?

**Pepper:** Well, Yale has an environmental studies program. But again, it's a lot of split appointments. There's been a very good program for many years at UC Santa Barbara. But it also has a lot of split appointments. Under a kind of smaller flag, Dartmouth has been a flagship program on the East Coast, but it's been really quite small, relatively speaking. The University of Wisconsin at Green Bay has had a very active environmental studies program, again, as is my understanding, with mostly split appointments. So, there aren't that many. The University of Montana has a program that's rather widely known and respected.

**Jarrell:** And when you talk about conferences, what are the names of some of these conferences, and what are some of the journals in that field?

**Pepper:** Well if you were to go to the American Planning Association's national conference, for example, there'll be an environmental planning section within that, and the *Journal of the American Planning Association* would be a journal that every now and again you'd find a . . . I mean, there's always something about environment, but in that case that's the one that I'm closest to, you'd have to wait several issues before you'd find something that may be a direct hit interest. Another major journal is the *Journal of Environmental Management*. And that draws on . . . there isn't a kind of environmental management association that draws on people. There's an environmental professionals association now. You have to really search your way through the literature because there isn't a kind of environmental studies journal that any of us find very helpful. There's a *Journal of Environmental Education*, but it's not particularly concerned with the university and local programs. It's environmental education at large, and mainly primary and secondary school education that they're concerned with.

**Jarrell:** What is environmental studies, in your mind?

**Pepper:** Well, we don't know precisely. We struggle with that. We struggle valiantly with it. In my mind, environmental studies is more than just a group of disciplines working on things called "environmental." It should at its core have some very important historical and philosophical pieces that deal with basic questions about self and other, that is self and earth, that raise philosophical questions, that raise moral questions, that raise historical questions and anthropological questions and it should . . . this is an idealized version of it, but it should have this very rich and probably central relationship with the UCSC History of Consciousness program, quite frankly.

It should have to do with the place of humans in the nature of things, and in particularly the nature of nature, and how nature is constructed as an artifact, and how it's created as an understanding scientifically. Because when you get right down to it, most of us understand nature in multiple ways and our relationships thereto also in multiple layers. I think the most common is we have a kind of scientific understanding of the world, that's a taxonomic understanding of critters, and we stand on some taxonomic ladder or pyramid or network, whatever your form may be. So there's that sort of scientific piece to it. And then, of course, there's a profoundly cultural dimension to environmental studies that has to do with how any particular culture positions itself in the so-called "natural world." We have a lot of trouble about where that so-called "natural" line is and isn't.

Environmental studies, at root, should have this deep kind of philosophical, cultural matrix with which it examines questions. And then it naturally has a side to it, that's, if you will, scientific, that's driven by a certain kind of investigative paradigm, a scientific paradigm. But that doesn't give you a big picture very often. It gives you a clear picture of a small piece of something larger. So we have a cosmology, too, that has to be part of environmental studies.

And then there's . . . the cultural component is one that hasn't been well understood, I think, for quite some time. Because I think we thought the environment was Yosemite National Park, or the environment was Monterey Bay, or the environment was: name your favorite place you want to save. When in fact, that environment is also an environment of the literature of those kinds of places—how did we come to know and understand Yosemite? Why are we

attracted to Yosemite? Why do we want to protect Yosemite and not Fresno? There is some kind of sense that only certain places are environment and others aren't.

**Jarrell:** Right. I mean, poor Fresno.

**Pepper:** In fact, I argue with students often, and say, "Show me, environmentally, why it's better off to not locate something in Santa Cruz and instead locate it in Fresno. Can you demonstrate the differential environmental effect between putting it here and in Fresno?" And almost invariably the answer is, "Well, because Santa Cruz is a more environmentally something, something." And trying to pin down, Can we prove Santa Cruz is more ecologically important to the health of the planet than Fresno? I think not. So it's driven by a lot of . . .

**Jarrell:** Aesthetics.

**Pepper:** . . . of aesthetics. Exactly. And that's another dimension to environmental studies that I think gets short shrift. We don't do a great job with it here. I do try in classes to raise questions about what is it that attracts us to want to take care of certain places and not others. Mudflats until recently have not been the focus of a lot of attention because they usually attract old tires and car carcasses and . . . you know, a few exotic birds, but most people would rather go to Yosemite than the mudflats.

**Jarrell:** The mudflats out by Berkeley, right. Where all the sculptures are . . .

**Pepper:** That's right. But the mudflats in Berkeley may be more ecologically important than Yosemite. So that's been . . . that's a very hard . . . what do the Brits call it? That's a "sticky wicket." It's a tough one for folks to deal with. So environmental studies has this great aesthetic dimension as well, which I will put under the rubric as cultural, that has an aesthetic dimension of culture. And our students here at Santa Cruz are often very intrigued with the sort of spirituality aspects of environment. Not that they try to become native peoples per se, but I think they do generally try to understand another kind of connection that's beyond aesthetic, some sense of being at one with the universe, being at peace with whatever one's conceptualization of god may be. And they often find that in wilderness settings or in settings that are not characterized by the built environment.

**Jarrell:** I must admit. I'm very confused or questioning about what environmental studies is. I was a TA with Pete Steen in a class.

**Pepper:** In a history class, I'll bet.

**Jarrell:** In a history class. And we were studying the land use history of the West in the nineteenth century, okay. That was one window into it. I've worked with a number of students over the last twenty years, who've done oral histories, who've been students in environmental studies, studying Big Sur land use history, studying all kinds of things. I've talked to several students who've gotten degrees from UC Santa Cruz in environmental studies. And they don't have a very . . . after they're out and they're in their thirties, they're saying, "Gee, I don't have much of a scientific background." And then I've gotten involved



with people concerned with the ancient forests up in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest, people who were kind of Earth Firster people also, who were very involved in ecological environments, and they are trying to study those scientifically. Do we do things like that at Santa Cruz?

**Pepper:** We do. And I'd like to respond to your note about students who after they've been out a few years aren't sure what they . . .

**Jarrell:** What they've gotten.

**Pepper:** . . . what the core is. I think the issue is that there isn't yet a core. And I think the reason there isn't a core is that it is a field that is still emerging. It's like history of consciousness. What is the core of Histcon? Well, it's some kind of understanding of human consciousness. And environmental studies is trying to seek an understanding of human thought and knowledge and understanding of our place in the nature of things. Someone put it so beautifully. "The two most important programs at Santa Cruz," they said, "are history of consciousness and environmental studies; one believes in the environment and the other one doesn't."

**Jarrell:** (laughter) That's great.

**Pepper:** And I think, that's why I think the two programs ultimately should marry. Now that doesn't mean they should have . . . I think ultimately what will happen, if . . . and I think this has a good chance of happening. Someone like Gary Lease is really at this nexus. He knows us well. He was board chair for us for a while. And the kinds of questions that Gary Lease is asking I think will

become the core of environmental studies someday. But it will take us awhile to get there, because we're staffed primarily with believers, and belief systems and knowledge systems are two different systems. The university has a very difficult time in many instances separating those. We know everybody has a belief system of some sort. And we allegedly have knowledge systems of some sort. Dick Cooley, and I think wisely, didn't get a bunch of theoreticians to come to Santa Cruz and write theoretical treatises about things. He brought people who were pragmatic, people who were, I guess I'd call them soldier types. The environment was war, and by God you had to do battle with the special interests in Washington that would do in the rangelands of the West, that would do in the forests of the Northwest, that were ready to drain the swamps of the Southeast—the metaphor was war, really. And you see it in the press all the time, still in the popular press, there're these wars between the environmentalists and somebody else.

**Jarrell:** Now it's started up again with Bruce Babbitt and the grazing fees, and the ancient forests and the spotted owl.

**Pepper:** Yes, exactly. And I think the early faculty here represented, by and large, metaphorically, a kind of political struggle in getting environment recognized as a legitimate social concern. So we have no shame in looking back at that history. We took a lot of flack in the early years here as being thought of recyclers and tree huggers, and having no intellectual core and no intellectual merit.

**Jarrell:** Critiques from what direction?

**Pepper:** Oh, other faculty from the established disciplines. By and large I think we were considered to be a passing fancy.

**Jarrell:** Flaky or something.

**Pepper:** Yes, oh absolutely. Flaky.

**Jarrell:** Really?

**Pepper:** Oh sure. Because we had no intellectual tradition, so what the hell could we draw on?

**Jarrell:** What about the whole tradition of American natural history writing?

**Pepper:** Well, good point. Natural history writing was essentially driven out of the university as a kind of romantic gentlemen's journalism. I mean, it was journalism.

When Dudley Burton, who was a young faculty member here, was not granted tenure, there was a major flap. And we got in a big critique of this whole thing with then-Chancellor Sinsheimer. To this day I think that Sinsheimer felt that environmental studies couldn't possibly have meritorious kinds of intellectual integrity. I really believe that. Dudley just happened to be the tenure case that landed on his desk at that time. Burton was looking at general systems theory, which is, I think, a deep and abiding part of environmental studies, that is, theoretical constructs of systematic structures, be they in physics or philosophy, or the world of the electronic media, or social systems. Burton was also concerned with questions of democratic planning, because we know we could

protect wild areas and environments if we had benevolent environmental autocrats at this, someone who said, "You can't fish in those waters. You can't graze those places. You must protect those species." But that's not our culture or society and I don't frankly want that. So the question is, how do you have a democratic . . .

**Jarrell:** What mechanisms do you develop?

**Pepper:** In this kind of society? If you do democratic planning, particularly democratic planning that's trying at the same time to meet so-called social goals and environmental goals that are often antithetical. So that's the sort of intellectual work Dudley was doing. And somehow it was lost on Sinsheimer that it had merit, that it belonged in environmental studies. Why wasn't he in sociology, or someplace else? Dudley's a good case in point, because that tenure case manifested in so many important ways our struggle. A sociologist read Dudley's . . .

**Jarrell:** He was emblematic of the whole . . .

**Pepper:** Yes, exactly. A very eminent sociologist read Dudley's work and said "Well, it's not great sociology." See? And someone else read his work and said, "Well, this is very interesting but it's not general systems theory." Someone else read his work and said "Well . . ." So we're really in a . . . For a long time I think we were faced with a problem of having no agreed upon place to call home, intellectually. And I can't tell you today that we feel safe with the way we define ourselves. I can surely add that, back to this question of environment, it surely now encompasses wildlands, managed lands like forests and agricultural lands,

and urban lands, like cities. And one of my tasks now that I'm retired is to try to become a writer. Because my promotions up here were primarily on teaching and service and acknowledgment on the part of people who did my reviews that I had a fine mind and should write more. But I've spent a long time trying to bring together a conceptual frame that included cities, wildlands, and agricultural lands under the same rubric. Because you don't . . . you study city planning and that doesn't have to do with . . .

**Jarrell:** Everything is so fractured and so fragmented.

**Pepper:** Exactly.

**Jarrell:** I know history of consciousness and environmental studies are two of the unique developments in UC Santa Cruz's history. But I'd never connected them in any way.

**Pepper:** Oh, I think they're profoundly connected.

**Jarrell:** And you just put a connection in my brain.

**Pepper:** I think they're profoundly connected. Jim Clifford and the Center for Cultural Studies, for example. Well, culture has everything to do with how one places oneself in the world. So it has to do with beliefs in all of the stuff out there, what brings us water . . . study Native American cultures, Loki [Triloki N.] Pandey would be a classic example of someone like this. When someone's coming here to give a seminar in environmental studies, he can come and ask very intelligent questions about . . . Suppose they're talking on water in the West. He can come and contribute in a seminar, or question potential applicants for

jobs about a variety of questions . . . their knowledge of what was being done on pre-water rights Western society, water in the West, and what some of those struggles are about. And he's connected into Histcon as well. We've had some recent hires where Loki served on our search committees and was an excellent member in the sense that he has a sense of what we are trying to do. He was never really a critic of ours, to my knowledge, either, but someone whose broader view that you get out of anthropology, probably, kind of fit something. It was something resonant about what we were doing.

**Jarrell:** Would you say that the old way of organizing knowledge, in terms of we have sociology over here, and we have architecture . . . I mean . . . a mix of the social sciences and the humanities, and we have urban planning over here, and we have landscape architecture over here. And that environmental studies is a way to kind of integrate all of these things together, in order to address these larger questions about human beings' relationship to the planet?

**Pepper:** I would argue that, yes. I don't have a degree in a discipline, so I can't tell you what a discipline is. I go to the dictionary when I give a lecture on what is environmental studies, I always read a bunch of things out of *Webster* or unabridged *Oxford*, on what the word discipline means, some of which is really quite humorous. It has to do with punishment and military bearing and all this kind of stuff that . . . Metaphorically you can argue that the disciplines have fought these intellectual wars and built these walls in many instances, turfs, and part of the task in environmental studies is to question those boundaries.

**Jarrell:** Those walls.

**Pepper:** Yeah, to question those walls. And it's always been natural for me to think that if you were going to do something that was inventive and creative, which is where I think my gift lies, and I probably wasted a piece of it up here because I didn't really take advantage of that. In architecture we studied a little economics because you had to make a building work in somebody's pocketbook. We'd study structural engineering so it didn't fall down. We studied history and art so we knew something about its origins and aesthetic. We studied something about sociology so that a family group might sit around a table, or a board room might function better. We studied a little bit about psychology, but it was pretty damn marginal, about group process. And we know a little bit more now about interaction distances and things like that. But the architect's job wasn't to become one of those [professionals]. The architect's job was to create places that made people comfortable, that were economical, that stood up, and in recent years, were ecologically sound. That is, buildings that were sustainable, which is now another important word in the environmental matrix. That you didn't burn up the fossil fuel resources of the world trying to heat our cities or drive our cars around, whatever it is.

So I've always had a mind that was more synthetic, if you will. I've just thought that's the way all minds work. I've had a very hard time at the university sometimes in trying to place myself in one of these dimensions, or along a single line in the matrix, partly because my curiosity has a hard time staying on task if it's just one little piece of that. I guess what I've tried to do for the program, and surely for my students, is to help remind us that the search is for some kind of core understanding that was much deeper and more profound than we had.

When I say profound I mean something that was deeper and more central if you will, in organizing the way we live our lives. Now, that means daily life and energy use in social relations, in all manner of ways of conducting our activities, building our buildings, farming our farms, caring for the forests and the seas. But it's hard to teach that when you don't know what it is. It begins to have this belief system quality instead of this knowledge system quality. I think that we use knowledge to inform beliefs and to shape beliefs, and I know that we use beliefs to construct ways we go about creating knowledge.

So it's that kind of struggle in which I have been engaged. They've been good years, but we get accused from time of being too action-oriented. Well, hell, if you can't take informed action in the world, if the university isn't in some way about informed action, what the hell is it about? Vegetating minds? I mean, I can't imagine that that's what it's about. Or I mean . . . maybe it is. Maybe some people think that way. But I think you've got to act to be a human being. The university has a responsibility to inform action. Anyway, that's another piece of this environmental question: how do you bring knowledge to action? How do you not get stuck in any particular academic paradigm, any one single academic and intellectual tradition? How can you move outside of that? Maybe in retirement I'll do enough careful thinking about that and have few enough responsibilities to try to make sense out of that. I realize this is a bit fragmented. But that's . . .



### **Environmental Studies Faculty**

**Jarrell:** No, but it's great. Because you came of age during this emerging discipline, or field, or whatever you want to call it. Tell me about some of the people. Tell me about Dick Cooley. Tell me about some of the people in your board and their contributions to the way we're thinking about what environmental studies is.

**Pepper:** Well, let me go through a handful of people.

**Jarrell:** You came here in 1972.

**Pepper:** 1972, that's right. And there was a Committee on Environmental Studies here at the time.

**Jarrell:** Before it was a board.

**Pepper:** Before it was a board, right. And we realized quickly that resources went to boards not to committees, and for pragmatic reasons we became a board of studies. Initially, we all had split appointments, and I was in the art board, for heaven's sake.

**Jarrell:** You were?

**Pepper:** Yes, they appointed me to the art board, and the Committee on Environmental Studies. I'd never interviewed anybody on the art board. I remember sitting there the first day in a board meeting with Jasper Rose who wanted to know what I was going to bring to the art board. I hadn't a clue what I was going to bring to the art board.

**Jarrell:** What was your recruitment process like? I mean, who got you here? How'd you get here?

**Pepper:** Well, I got here in part because my major advisor at Berkeley was Bob [Robert H.] Twiss who'd been a student of Stanley Cain's at the University of Michigan. Stanley Cain was one of the most respected plant ecologists in this country. He founded the natural resources school at Michigan. He then became an advisor to Dean McHenry. He suggested Cooley coming here, in fact. And so Stanley was here as a faculty emeritus, and one of the . . . He'd been an undersecretary of the interior, in fact, in the LBJ administration. And then he came out here after his retirement from that work in Michigan, advised McHenry on environmental matters to do with the campus, advised him to bring Cooley here. When Cooley got here he called upon Stanley to say, "Where would you find people to recruit?" They called Bob Twiss at Berkeley, who'd been through the School of Natural Resources at Michigan, and said, "I've got the guy for you."

And down here I came. I gave a seminar and then I went to England for seven months and got a job offer and came here. So I don't know what the process was other than that I had a grand time. I was interviewed by Leo Laporte, Grant McConnell, and Stanley Cain. Those were the three members of the College Eight committee. I was being recruited to College Eight and Dick Cooley represented environmental studies. I gave a seminar and had a lovely meal at the Cooleys' house that evening.

### Dick Cooley

And if the truth be known, I played the piano, and Dick Cooley's son played his string bass, and Bob Twiss had come down and played his banjo, and Stanley Cain danced a jig in the middle of the floor, and I thought to myself, "This is some recruitment process!" I drank martinis on the wharf with Stanley and Grant McConnell at lunch, talked about what I was up to and what I thought about. And bear in mind, they were two, Grant, of course, was a giant, an intellectual giant in American political science. But he was also probably one of the most influential early faculty here. And he was a strident environmentalist. He had written a considerable amount about the Northwest in particular, protecting forests. So he was a warrior in that sense. I used the war metaphor earlier. He was a real warrior and so was Stanley. Whereas Leo was more of a scientist's scientist, but a very catholic intellect and a very fine mind. I think they were looking for people who were committed to helping get environment on the national agenda. Cooley's metaphorically a warrior also. He had been at the University of Washington where they had made it difficult for him, in the sense that he hadn't had his own faculty. It had been one of these "borrow from other places" environmental studies programs. Dick had been deeply involved in conservation issues for many, many years, decades, I dare say. He worked for the Conservation Foundation in Washington. And in fact Dick Cooley was instrumental in getting the money to Rachel Carson to finish writing *Silent Spring* before she died. **Jarrell:** My goodness.

**Pepper:** Then Dick worked with the governments of the Arctic, including the U.S. and Canada and, I think, Greenland, maybe Iceland, and surely the Soviet

Union, to put together the first international conference on the protection of the polar bear. So we maybe can thank Dick for having polar bears left on the planet, seriously. Those are the kinds of things that he had done. He served on the Marine Mammal Commission during the Carter administration, and also during the Carter administration was appointed to the Alaska Land Use Planning Native Claims Settlement. He was involved in the parceling up of Alaska during the Alaska statehood work that was going on, and was a major voice for Native people in Alaska and for the flora and fauna of Alaska, that is for national parks and national wildlife refuges, and so on. So what Dick brought to the program, essentially, was a real spirit and a warrior type position.

**Jarrell:** And a real global perspective.

**Pepper:** Oh, and a global perspective. [He was] someone who had really learned the ways of Washington. He was an expert in national environmental policy, did his dissertation on the salmon fisheries in the Northwest. I think [he was] terribly maligned here as a faculty member, considered soft, considered . . . I mean, not by me surely, but considered soft by sort of academic standards. But Dick was interested in results. Dick wanted his students to know how to go to Washington, and to be effective lobbyists, effective staffers, to know that this was not just some intellectual exercise in trying to protect this planet. There was a lot at stake and you had to be a skilled lobbyist and political.

**Jarrell:** You had to know your stuff.

**Pepper:** You had to know enough history and you had to know enough biology to go out there and make your case. You didn't have to have a Ph.D. in biology to

go argue for conservation issues. But you had to know enough politics. And you had to know the economics of it. And you had to know a little sociology. Dick was a figurehead for us to emulate. I think he had the right stuff for that time, marvelously philosophical and reflective. He's a superb sculptor and has a marvelous innate sense of what this life's all about. He was a great appointment for McHenry to make.

**Jarrell:** Where is he now?

**Pepper:** He's here in Santa Cruz. He retired several years ago. He's doing wood sculpture, having a good life. He gets on the Internet everyday and connects with friends all over the world on environmental issues. It's really quite wonderful. Wouldn't touch a computer while he was an active faculty member, and now he's an accomplished internationalist on the Internet.<sup>1</sup>

### **Kenneth Norris**

Other important early figures here would surely have to include Ken Norris, who brought natural history back to Santa Cruz. He was here in biology originally and then brought his FTE partly to environmental studies. And then finally the whole nine yards. He got tired of biology and got more interested in larger-scale issues. Ken's contributions had to do, I think, primarily with being an absolutely superb field biologist and natural historian that brought us profound observation skills. He's probably as good a natural historian as there is around, and without bringing all the trappings of molecular biology along.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Cooley died shortly after this interview, in November 1994, at the age of 69—Editor.

Which I have no problem with. It's an integral part of the equation. But it's not the whole picture. Ken was able to bring to students a sense of the whole organism and the organism in its environment and helped us turn a faculty that was primarily social scientists in the early years, we were all social scientists, to bring some balance to that and get the natural science representation on the board.

**Jarrell:** Can't have one without the other.

**Pepper:** Oh you really can't. And I think what made us unique, in fact early on, was the fact that we were a social science based program. If there is a demise of the program here, it will be that it becomes environmental science, and I will rue the day that that happens. Bob Sinsheimer always referred to us as environmental science. He didn't even know the name of the program.

**Jarrell:** Studies.

**Pepper:** Studies. A lot of people tried to get us to go the science route. Bill [William T.] Doyle, as much as I admire him, always said to me . . . I always got along very well with Bill and he brought much to this campus in his many years on the biology faculty. But he always said to me, and to Gerry Bowden, who was an attorney colleague of mine that taught here for many years, "If environmental studies fails, we will bring you to the natural sciences division and we'll have some environmental science component. We'll have something over there for you." I always agonized about this with Bill. I shared it with him in gentle terms. I never had a confrontation with him. But there was a sort of sense that you did

science and then you brought in the policy guys and they policied up science. You policied it up.

**Jarrell:** What was Bill Doyle's . . . what axe was he grinding?

**Pepper:** There was no axe. It was a sense that the basic knowledge about the world was gained through science, and that environmental programs should therefore fundamentally be science based. My argument is that they have to be culture-based, and they have to be rooted in this philosophical understanding before you put science in, because science itself is a mode of inquiry, it's nothing more than a mode of inquiry and it has its own history and philosophy. And it's changed dramatically over the periods of time that we had something trying to explain the natural world. I mean, Earth, Air, Fire, and Water are still very fundamental components of life (laughter) and in spite of having chemistry and biology and physics and so on. What I am saying is there's another kind of cosmology that organized the world at one time. I'm not arguing a return to that kind of cosmology, necessarily. But as it became more and more fragmented, [into] more and more pieces and parts, science sort of stood at the top of the pyramid because it had the greatest analytic persuasion. It has taken on a kind of primacy in the minds of many in the academy that I think is very dangerous, in addition to being regrettable, and I think wrong-headed. (laughter) I think it's dangerous.

**Jarrell:** There's a lot of hubris.

**Pepper:** Oh God, there is. And when Norris came he helped start a kind of scientific dimension to environmental studies that really began with natural

history. It didn't start at the subatomic level. It started with the organism and its environment. It was very healthy that that happened. Ken also served on the Marine Mammal Commission, and he's been involved in so many other major issues—the tuna/porpoise controversy, where he brought fishermen together with porpoise defenders and figured out how to solve the problem. Once it was understood that the fishermen had to let their nets down a certain way, the dolphins popped out the back end of it and they were gone. Then some extraordinary high number of percentage of dolphins got out of the nets. It was just dolphin behavior. There was no controversy.

So Ken has been a major contributor and like Dick, a philosopher king, if I can use a sexist term for a moment. I mean, genuinely, marvelously catholic, and rich and well read, and in both cases people of great compassion, too. They were wonderful mentors for those of us that were younger.

### **Raymond Dasmann**

Ray Dasmann is another person who put an indelible stamp on the program here. I remember once talking to a dean of the social sciences about Ray, and the dean had never heard of him, when in fact he might have been the most important international figure in the division. He was the quietest, most unassuming . . . there wasn't an ounce of self-aggrandizement in Ray Dasmann. He would never tell you that he had been and continues to be a major international figure in wildlife conservation globally. Very few faculty on this campus ever get phone calls from kings and queens and prime ministers and heads of state and have worked on every continent. Ray has done that. Maybe he



hasn't worked on Antarctica but he's surely worked on every other continent. He was in Sri Lanka during the civil war working on conservation issues of the African elephant, and has worked throughout Africa. He's worked in the Arctic; he's worked in the Americas and Europe. He at one time was the principal ecologist for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and is one of the quiet movers and shakers in this whole world. And he is one of the fathers of the field of ecodevelopment, which is essentially the merging of ecology and development, and pioneered some very important insights. This brings us back to this cultural dimension again, that if you're going to conserve the African elephant you had to conserve the people that were part of the African elephant's heritage during its recent evolutionary times.

**Jarrell:** You couldn't ignore the people.

**Pepper:** You can't ignore the people. And so when Ray would begin . . . Ray was looking at these major game reserves and there's tremendous poaching going on . . . you know, these sorts of problems of graft and corruption and poaching and . . .

**Jarrell:** And there's murder and violence.

**Pepper:** Indeed. Just mayhem at large. And they said, "Well what's going on here?" Well, they discovered that elephant populations had been very stable until agricultural encroachment . . . I mean agriculture, not subsistence agriculture, but export agriculture began to encroach on habitat areas. Ray was among those that had this insight. We could call it profound now, although it seems like such common sense on another level, that the people who had lived

with these elephants during the major periods of the population stability, over long periods of time, depended on the elephant. They didn't slaughter it. Like the American Indian did not slaughter the buffalo. They managed, literally, major, major herds of buffalo, in the tens and hundreds of thousands, and took what they needed and knew how to take care of what they took, and make use of everything that they took. Husbanded them, really. I mean we could call them wild animals, but they were husbanded by . . .

**Jarrell:** They were semi-domesticated in a subtle way.

**Pepper:** In a perverse sort of way, right. (laughter) And the same thing was true with these African animals that Ray was working on. So now almost every major national game refuge or park has a Dasmann influence in the way it's structured and organized, and who maintains it, and the place of native peoples in part of that. Which then brought him to this ecodevelopment notion, which is—how do you do development that has an ecological face to it and a cultural face, so that you didn't destroy the culture at the same time you were trying to take care of the so-called ecology. And although he was very soft-spoken, and surely not a dynamo in the lecture hall, he was as wise as they came, and as knowledgeable as they came. Students benefited tremendously from him being here over the years. Ray could be dry, and he had a droll sense of humor, a wonderfully droll sense of humor. I used to remind students that this is one of the greatest living conservationists in the world, and to hearken up, and goddamn it, don't come to school just to get entertained. I mean, there's some of us like myself that could keep you awake for at least the hour and forty-five minutes, but that's not the problem, to keep you awake. The problem is to gain understanding and

knowledge. And there were none better than Ray. He has received a number of international medals from organizations. I think he's one of the great minds in the field.

Now who else would I include? That's sort of the triumvirate upon which we stand. Michael [E.] Soulé, of course, has come recently. He has brought conservation biology to a respectable level. "Biology with a purpose," is what he calls it. Mission-oriented biology. Another very distinguished senior faculty, although a recent member of the clan.

### **Paul Niebanck**

Paul [L.] Niebanck brought a dimension that I think was often not fully appreciated and in many ways undervalued, sometimes by the faculty. I think Paul, perhaps by lairing some of the things that he believed in and . . .

**Jarrell:** By lairing?

**Pepper:** Making it a little more inaccessible. That is, I think that Paul as a teacher wanted students to discover things. He wasn't a revealer kind of teacher. He was . . . a lead you into the wilderness and you find your way.

**Jarrell:** A trail guide.

**Pepper:** A trail guide. And I think it was unfortunate in some respects, although I honor him greatly as a teacher and intellect, that he wasn't forceful enough in reminding us that we had to make cities more livable, that environment, after all,

is a social issue. It's not a scientific issue; it's a social issue. And Paul kept reminding us in an understated way that . . .

**Jarrell:** He wasn't polemical.

**Pepper:** No. It wasn't this sort of warrior, kind of Cooley approach. Paul was a Quaker and it was a Quaker approach. And there's a difference between a warrior and a Quaker. Paul pointed out to us in quiet ways, but increasingly emphatic ways, that the modern environmental movement had a disgusting elitist ring to it, and we weren't really facing up to broader ecological issues that had to do with hunger, that had to do with adequate shelter, that had to do with . . .

**Jarrell:** Minority populations.

**Pepper:** . . . minority populations, that had to do with protecting environments but at what cost?

**Jarrell:** And for whom?

**Pepper:** And for whom.

**Jarrell:** Whose environments?

**Pepper:** Exactly. Paul brought that to us big time, but as I've said, it was too gentle in a way. I don't think of myself solely as a popularizer, but when Paul got on that track it lighted off in neon marquees for me about how to get on environmental studies students, in particular, who didn't ask that question at all.

And it's this "not in my neighborhood" business that you see on every project in every organized city.

**Jarrell:** In every community.

**Pepper:** In every community that's got a community that's organized. They don't want anything in their community.

**Jarrell:** "Not in my backyard," right.

**Pepper:** No. And Paul really brought "not in my backyard" stuff to light in environmental studies in very, very important ways. Again, I think others of us helped give that voice. But he was surely the person that kindled that fire. So I'd surely have to include him in that . . .

### **Other Faculty**

Notably there have been no women's names mentioned. And we've only had two women faculty. Deborah Letourneau, who is an ecological entomologist tenured a few years ago. I predict that Deborah will make a name as much in the social justice side of environmental studies as she will in ecological entomology.

**Jarrell:** How so?

**Pepper:** She's done a lot of work in Latin America. She's done a lot of work in Africa. She's done work now in Southeast Asia. And she's very sensitive to this sort of collision course, or this confluence of ecological and social issues. Watching conservation programs disrupt the lives of people at the bottom of the socioeconomic spectrum. Seeing international trade and international

agricultural practices destroying native ways in Central America and making people more and more beholden to export crops and trading off subsistence agriculture. And that's in no way to demean or to lower her value as an ecologist and entomologist. But she's got a lot of passion, and she's got passion for her scientific research. I think she'll make some important contributions in that area.

Other people who will remain here on the faculty, that haven't retired . . . Steve Gliessman and his work on agroecology, which has been, I think, very important on the national and international scene, the work that he's done here and the raising the Farm and Garden Project up a notch in terms of their . . .

**Jarrell:** Yes, I was going to ask you the relationship between the agroecology program and people in environmental studies, because it seems a natural linkage.

**Pepper:** Well, it should be better than it is. I think, again, it's a problem of probably just getting seasoned and spending more time together. All these linkages aren't really explicit yet. There are people working on the social and cultural side of agriculture down in the agroecology program now.

**Jarrell:** Now, wasn't Bryan Farrell a part of the environmental studies board?

**Pepper:** He was. I suppose that I didn't mention Bryan because I don't think that he brought some central notion to the program.

**Jarrell:** Right. I was never clear what his contribution, or what his shtick was in terms of environmental studies.

**Pepper:** Well, he came here to . . .

**Jarrell:** Head the South Pacific Center.

**Pepper:** Head the South Pacific Studies, right, and sort of came to environmental studies when that folded. He was a geographer and Bryan's contribution to the program is best summarized by saying he was our constant reminder that there had to be an intellectual side to environmental studies, it wasn't just practice. He worried that it was ideologically driven. He worried a lot. But in all honesty I can't say that he took that to another, sort of to another level, to infuse the program somehow with a countervailing force. I think the structure of the academic world was probably a little difficult for Bryan to fuse into. Because I mean . . . Cooley's a street brawler. I'd like to be with Dick and Ray if you got in a street brawl, because they're tough. You know, they believed that we were in fact facing critical questions about sustaining natural environments in the world. They fought valiantly and successfully.

**Jarrell:** And they were impassioned about it.

**Pepper:** And they were impassioned about it. Yet, it wasn't that they were some hollow-headed true believer. I mean, they were very knowledgeable. That's why I say I think Dick was underappreciated here. I think he knew a hell of a lot about the cultures and the animals that his particular causes, that is, if he's working on the polar bear or the salmon fisheries, he was damned good at that science side of it. But he didn't have to become a fisheries biologist to work on a salmon issue. There was a big policy dimension to it that he contributed to

mightily. I think Bryan had a hard time kind of sorting that all out to see that you could have this mission side of your . . .

**Jarrell:** But not compromise your research.

**Pepper:** Yes. And you didn't always have to do all the basic research yourself. If the basic research was established on fisheries biology, then take that body of knowledge, move it into a policy arena, and do something with it. That's a worthwhile enterprise, as far as I'm concerned. Science in and of itself doesn't solve any problem. It uncovers certain kinds of relationships that we now call knowledge and understanding, and it takes something else to do something with that. I think Bryan was very timid about wanting to take a stand. He wanted that kind of scientific objectivity, so-called, so-called (laughter) scientific objectivity, to permeate environmental studies. I want to go back and say something about an earlier comment I made in this oral history. When you asked me about environmental studies, one of its distinguishing features is being mission-oriented and action-oriented.

**Jarrell:** Which flies right in the face of "scientific objectivity," which has been called into question by Thomas Kuhn and this whole sort of revolution in scientific philosophy.

**Pepper:** Precisely. And that's what Bryan had trouble with. Are students being motivated to take action without what Bryan thought was . . . I don't want to put words in his mouth. But he wanted more, kind of, irrefutable evidence. And I'm, by the way, a real believer in building the strongest argument you can build. But, my gosh, you've got a decision to make tomorrow at the National Marine



Fisheries about advising the president, or some commission that's going to advise the president on the scope of the salmon-take off the California coast. I mean, come on folks. We can't do ten more years of research on the fisheries. There's a decision that going to be made tomorrow. And it's going to be made not on volumes and volumes and volumes of material that the decision maker is going to read. It's going to be made on a thirty-five page white paper or position paper that's written by somebody that's distilling all this. Well, someone better damn know how to distill biology and economics . . .

**Jarrell:** To understand all the biological data.

**Pepper:** Exactly. And get all that stuff ready for the people who push the yes, no switches. I think that Bryan agonized that we weren't closer to the sort of basic research part of this, that we were farther up that ladder, if you will, in this sort of metaphor I'm using, toward the yes, no question, when there's this myriad of hundreds of thousands of other little questions down on the ground truth level that finally make it up to the yes, no. I think environmental studies, maybe this is a decent way to also describe it, was trying to find some sturdy ground that was further up that pyramid towards what directs human action, and particularly public action, although I'm talking like it's personal action as well. But I think we have a big emphasis on public action, actions taken on behalf of the tribe, or the group, or the clan, or the nation, or the state. And yes, sure it's more uncomfortable when you get up there. It's better to get at a distance and study what other people do than to go do the damn thing yourself, because then you're subject to criticism. Bryan provided that, and I suppose in a very positive way (laughter) helped remind us that we'd be subjected to that criticism as well.

Oh we've made a beautiful . . . we've made a wonderful hire this year! Can I tell you about a hire that we made this year?

**Jarrell:** Yes.

**Pepper:** Oh, and I should tell you about a couple of other faculty. David Goodman who came here as a senior faculty from England and does work primarily in the political economy of the food system, is going to be, I think, a terrific addition to the faculty. And he's begun to make himself really felt in the broader campus.

**Jarrell:** And what's his background?

**Pepper:** He's an economist out of Berkeley. I think we may have baffled him at first when he came here. But he's now heading this global transformations group up in the social sciences. It's a social sciences research cluster. We made one terrific hire. And we have another offer out. For two senior women faculty members. The one who's joined us is Margaret Fitzsimmons from UCLA, who is currently on sabbatical, but at the end of the fall quarter she'll finish a book called *American Agriculture in Crisis* that will be a blockbuster. All of her outside letters said, this is one of the most original minds. She's a geographer, by the way. But has been teaching in the urban and regional planning program at UCLA for the last decade.

**Jarrell:** Isn't it interesting that a critique of agriculture is coming out of that background instead of economics, agricultural economics.

**Pepper:** Well but she's got this marvelously catholic geographer's mind. She's a superb writer and a brilliant thinker. Truly a brilliant thinker. And David, in that case, will have a great colleague with Margaret. I have a sense that the two of them will somehow link up and do something that puts a whole new spin on agroecology at Santa Cruz. That's my guess. And he's needed a social science colleague that was deeply immersed in that.

**Jarrell:** So she's a geographer. He's an economist.

**Pepper:** An economist, yes. And I just have a feeling that they're going to be an unbeatable combo. That's a crystal ball venture on my part. Amy Glassmeier who's a planner from UC Berkeley but then taught at the University of Texas and is now at Penn State, we've made her an offer. She'd come here as a full professor. She's one of the brightest young minds in the area of economic geography and planning and she's looking at the effects of globalization on regional economies. And it's very important work because she's been looking at impacts, for example, on the Swiss watch industry of the global impact of going to all these quartz . . . You know who makes most of the watches in the world still? Switzerland.

**Jarrell:** I know.

**Pepper:** And by any measure, by any theoretical model, they should have been out of there because the labor's cheaper in the Orient and in Southeast Asia. So why is the Swiss watch industry still so strong, when competitively speaking they should have lost every edge? And that's the sort of question that Amy asks.

And she's looked at Appalachia in terms of what the effects have been of all this move to the South, you know, in the Sunbelt economy.

**Jarrell:** Right. Or we can just look at our own agricultural economy in South County.

**Pepper:** Exactly.

**Jarrell:** And the movement to Central America and over the border into the Third World of all of these processing and freezing companies . . . you know, like Green Giant moving out of the area.

**Pepper:** She'll bring that [global perspective], along with Margaret. Amy also made great waves in being one of the first scholars that looked at the Silicon Valley phenomenon and what that was all about.

**Jarrell:** I think that's where I've heard of her.

**Pepper:** And you know, we'll knock on wood that she'll accept our offer to come here. She'd like to. I know she'll come here if her husband can find a job in the region. He had a job interview on the 5th and I haven't heard the results of that.

I should mention, before I just comment briefly on that. Bob Curry's presence will also be greatly missed. He was another one in the Cooley warrior mold. He worked on water and watershed restoration issues and was a very influential teacher. And we'll try to replace Bob at least in some part next year, hiring a restoration ecologist. And he's a person who sort of moved into an area that was

a whole new field, watershed restoration, and made a real important splash. But he came . . .

**Jarrell:** But you see that sounds like it's such a technical, practical kind of field.

**Pepper:** Well, that part is. Bob would testify before the legislature, or he was forever being called as an expert witness, and was very active in the real world part of seeing these things happen.

**Jarrell:** So what kind of a course would a guy like that teach?

**Pepper:** Oh, he taught a course on energy resources. He taught a course that looked at energy policy, energy use, and energy sources and at stocks and flows in the energy economy, and sort of looked at the basic energy resources themselves, and what their status is, in terms of utilization and depletion and regeneration and so on.

Let me just say that we've got, in the second generation of environmental studies, some fabulous young people. I think that program is really destined to take off.

**Jarrell:** I would like to talk about the graduate program, also, because that's been a long haul also. Hasn't it?

**Pepper:** Yes, we've tried. This has been, I think, the fourth or fifth attempt.

**Jarrell:** To mount a Ph.D. program. And now it's finally approved. What it was two years ago, or one year ago?

**Pepper:** Oh, just this past year. Yes, it will kick in a year this fall, the first group of Ph.D. students.

**Jarrell:** Right. So that's a major (laughter) warrior victory.

**Pepper:** Oh, boy! It's a . . . I mean, It would have taken on different forms in earlier years, but I think it will be . . . There will be some rough times. I don't think it's going to be easy when it starts. Because for the same reasons that you could detect, I'm sure, in my partial and fragmented response to, what's environmental studies, that question is going to plague . . .

**Jarrell:** It's really going to come into the fore now.

**Pepper:** Yes. And I expect that there'll be over the years some really major contributions from this faculty and the graduate students here into this question of what's environmental studies, because the graduate students are going to ask that question. After they get sick and tired of the faculty for several . . . they'll be here for a few quarters and they'll say, "Well, what are we trying to . . . exactly what are we trying to do here? And then that question will get raised.

**Jarrell:** I haven't read the whole plan for the graduate program. I know you have a prospectus that you keep submitting many times. And I would imagine to some degree that question has to have been addressed.

**Pepper:** Well, I think that's right.

**Jarrell:** But it's going to be fine-tuned, and the graduate students you have are going to say what's going on here. Because look what happened in Histcon. I mean that's *suis generis*. It's the only program in the whole country like that.

**Pepper:** Well, I predict . . . My little crystal ball says this will happen. And it will force the faculty into another level of engagement about what it is that we're doing. What do we have in common?

**Jarrell:** They are going to have to be intellectually accountable to their graduate students.

**Pepper:** Of course. And it will be wonderful. I'll be glad that I don't have to sit through the committee meetings. But I assure you that I will keep contact with my colleagues about what the debate's about, and enter in it when it's not bureaucratic. I think I still have important things to say about it. Some of the things I've been thinking about may be more applicable to Ph.D. level investigation than an undergraduate-level study. But that remains to be seen, of course. I think the graduate program is a great step forward. It'll be wonderful to watch it in its infancy and then its maturation. It'll be a struggle, though, I'm quite sure. Because they are going to get some very bright students here who are going to insist on some greater clarity about what's this bridging all about. I predict that there'll be a new generation of intellectual greats that come out of this. Anyway . . . that's crystal ball stuff.

**Jarrell:** Yes. I think we should end for today, but what I'd like to talk about next time is talk about your work with undergraduate students and just to get a sense

of what kinds of students this program has turned out over the last several decades.

And also I would like to ask you about the larger context of the campus, in terms of what kind of a place you think UCSC has become, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and whatever kinds of campus politics you would like to address. I'll have some questions for you about that. Just in terms of the different chancellors . . . like you made some passing comments about Chancellor Sinsheimer's views on hard science and soft science. I would like some of your reflections on that as a faculty member at this experimental institution. So some of the larger issues outside of your board and outside of your discipline. And about the colleges and a lot about students, too.

**Pepper:** It's very important. Because this place, what this place has done and what it has become and what it's destined to become I think are very important in American higher education. I take it all very seriously. One's life work itself has many layers, and I think Santa Cruz is still being watched by places. We're no longer just a novelty, but we haven't become mainline. I think it's important, what happens here.

#### **Addendum April 20, 2007**

**Reti:** Today is April 20, 2007. This is Irene Reti with the Regional History Project and I'm doing a phone interview oral history with Jim Pepper. And you're in Sonoita, Arizona. This is an addendum to the oral history interview that you did with Randall Jarrell in 1994. So Jim, let's start today by talking about some of



your environmental studies students, what they were working on when they were your students, and then what they've gone on to do with their lives.

### **Environmental Studies Students**

**Pepper:** Well, that's a tall order, Irene, a tall order simply because there's a lot of them.

**Reti:** Just pick a few.

**Pepper:** Oh, I realize that. But it's even hard for me to do that, because as you know the senior thesis requirement at Santa Cruz, which I hope they have not jettisoned and never will, was a wonderful opportunity to get to know students far better than you ever would in a lecture or even seminar class. I did hundreds of senior theses in the twenty-five years that I was there on the campus. And I actually have a whole bookcase filled with UCSC senior theses. (laughter) And part of that is I wanted to make contact with former students at some point in my retirement to ask them the very kind of questions that you posed to me: what are they doing? How did environmental studies influence their lives? How did UCSC influence their lives? So that's a retirement project of mine that I intend to get to within the next twelve months. I've been doing some occasional writing, and there's a piece about my experience at Santa Cruz that I've been working on for some time. I wanted to augment it with this kind of contact, if you will, with former students.

So let me give you a handful of names of students who I've kept in close contact with. Well, I'm in contact with quite a number still, but in close contact, perhaps Peter Stein has one of the most illustrious trajectories post-undergraduate school. Peter graduated, I believe, in environmental planning, when we had that as a separate track in environmental studies. This would have been sometime in the seventies, as I recall. He then went on to become senior vice president of the Trust for Public Land. He started with TPL in San Francisco. I actually talked Huey Johnson, who was the head of TPL at the time, into taking Peter. He was reluctant because he thought Santa Cruz students were sort of hippie-dippie and flakey. I talked Huey, who subsequently became the secretary of resources for the state of California, into taking a chance with Peter, and Peter became senior vice president of the East Coast office at one time. And has then gone on to some major work in the field of conservation with the Lyme Timber Company, which is up in Hanover, New Hampshire, if I recall. It's right in the same vicinity as Dartmouth. And Peter and his colleagues have been buying up timberlands in the Northeast to protect them from second home development and from over-harvesting. So he's done a remarkable job in that capacity, and also helps major landowners in the country manage their land portfolios from an ecological point of view, which is what they're doing at Lyme Timber as well, I must add. So he is a real shining star out there.

Lisa Findlay, a former environmental studies student, became the first woman on the faculty of architecture at Arizona State University. She decided to leave that post and travel and then go on her own as an architect, but she's still very active in the Bay Area and is the head of one of the private schools in the Bay Area

dealing with architecture and design. She's carved a wonderful spot out in her profession as well.

Lisa Anderson, a former student about the same vintage as Peter Stein, was very active in Montana and remains active in Montana with the Nature Conservancy. She set up her own environmental consulting firm in Helena, Montana not long after she graduated, and then became very active in state conservation politics and worked with the rewriting of the Montana constitution to get environmental issues explicitly addressed in the constitution.

You probably remember Graham Bice, Irene?

**Reti:** Yes, I do.

**Pepper:** Well, Graham is another former student who I think has done really wonderful work for the University of California. He worked on the Santa Cruz campus for some time in their planning division, and has been working with the Fort Ord Re-Use Plan, and eventually with MBEST [University of California's Monterey Bay Education, Science, and Technology Center at the former Fort Ord military base], using his economics and planning background to further that project.

Then there is a group of students who have gone into the legal world. These first four are sort of architecture and planning folks. Laura Rice, who did her senior thesis on coastal zone policy and planning issues, took a real interest in coastal

zone legislation, went on to graduate school at Boalt Hall and is at UC Berkeley at the law school there, and had a very distinguished career in law, not in environmental law specifically, but in the legal world, and fortuitously accepted a position on the West Coast and moved out of the World Trade Center just a month before that tragedy. So she was spared through a career change. And Laura and I have stayed in touch for many, many years.

Lou Feldman, another environmental planning/environmental studies student from the seventies era, has become an extremely successful, lively, respected attorney in Los Angeles.

Alisa Garden-Heyer and Nancy Sachman are two other students that come to mind. Both of them were very shy and retiring students at UC Santa Cruz, but very bright. And their senior thesis projects launched them into very interesting graduate studies. I heard from Alisa not too long ago. She just had completed her Ph.D. at Harvard. And Nancy came to me one day on the Santa Cruz campus to tell me that she had applied to graduate schools and she came to me with a real dilemma. She had been accepted at Harvard, Yale, Penn, the University of North Carolina, the University of Washington, and UC Berkeley.

**Reti:** Oh, my God! We should all have such problems. (laughter)

**Pepper:** Yes, we should all have such problems. But this was a problem for Nancy, so she went on to school. I haven't followed her career for a number of years. But she was one of those students that you remember because they're very

quiet and yet highly active intellects. They kind of mislead because, what do they say, still waters run deep? She came out of that tradition.

One thing I could say about all of these students—they all went through school with a very high degree of integrity in how they approached their studies. They always were very disciplined. They all had lighthearted sides as well, of course. But they were very disciplined about their work. They took it very seriously and I think I can say that in all instances they had a calling to do good things in the world. And I believe that's maybe one of the hallmarks of what I consider to be our finest UCSC graduates, is they took their personal lives seriously. They didn't neglect the larger community interest when they went to graduate school and subsequently on to careers. And I might add that all of these folks I mentioned have some form of advanced degree. I think Santa Cruz served them very well. I've had student at virtually every one of the Ivy League schools, I think all the Pac-10 schools, and scattered around the country now. You surely begin to realize what an important factor education is in the trajectory of young lives. So I'm delighted to have had these students and hundreds more that I'm proud of.

**Reti:** How do you think that environmental studies helped to prepare them for these stellar careers?

**Pepper:** Well, there are two things, Irene, that I think were, and I trust still are hallmarks of environmental studies. There's a lot of . . . suspicion in the academic world about interdisciplinary studies. And I think it's seriously

misplaced. History of Consciousness, which is clearly interdisciplinary, never suffered from the same kind of academic status that environmental studies did. I'm not sure if it's because it came out of the humanities and we were sort of a social science/natural science field where the word 'science' shows up prominently. (laughter) But the fact of the matter is that these students learned how to cross disciplinary boundaries without sacrificing the rigor in their thinking. And I honestly believe that by crafting the curriculum in the way in which we did, where students took courses in the natural sciences and the social sciences and the humanities, and where they worked on projects with students with other disciplinary emphases, and where they took courses from faculty from two or more disciplines (I can remember team teaching with social scientist, a natural scientist and someone from the humanities), I think that is a hallmark of what provided them with an unusual skill set in this world. They weren't intellectually predisposed to not explore other areas because they felt comfortable moving beyond the narrow confines of a specific discipline, or even a specific interest. And that's how the world works. The world does not run by the academic departments. It's a much richer tapestry of ideas and ideologies and practices. I think that this program at Santa Cruz prepared them very well to sally forth into the real challenges of the real world.

**Reti:** You were saying there were two things. So one is the interdisciplinary nature of the program . . . And . . .

**Pepper:** Thank you for reminding me. The first is the interdisciplinary nature of the program. The second is that we had a real emphasis on problem solving. And

again, it was something that suffered some ridicule from other parts of the campus. But the fact of the matter is, the world poses problems to its inhabitants every day. And it's important, I believe, to learn how to frame problems so that you can engage them productively, and not frame them in a way that just leads to hand wringing. I truly believe that the students that I mentioned, and many, many more, in fact, I would say the vast majority of our students, upon graduation could step into the real world, use their intellects productively and toward laudable ends, and they succeeded in no small part because they knew how to grapple with complexity. They knew how to take ahold of a sea of confusion and sift and sort through to determine what the real construction of a problem might be, or who the parties to an issue might be. I think that has served them very well.

So this is really combining theory and practice. I think it's that practice side of the equation that the university tends to overlook or devalue. I think this idea of combining and blending theory and practice was essential to the education of these students.

### **Institutional Challenges for the Environmental Studies Program**

**Reti:** That makes complete sense to me. So you were alluding to some of the opposition that environmental studies faced from some other places on campus, and that at the time environmental studies had to . . . I remember you talking about this in the interview you did with Randall as well, that environmental studies had to establish itself and negotiate the politics of the social sciences

division and other administrative entities on campus. Do you want to talk some about that?

**Pepper:** Sure. It's a topic that . . . I don't want to say it still troubles me, but it was a pervasive presence during the entire time that I was on the faculty, which covered twenty-five years. There was a resistance that I think stemmed in part from a naive idea of what environmental studies was, or perhaps I should say naive or uninformed, because I have a feeling that many on the faculty identified environmental studies as simply a passing fancy that kind of emerged out of Earth Day. And since Earth Day itself had a lot of community activities such as recycling programs, and people getting interested in composting toilets, and some protestors would be up in the Humboldt National Forest camped in a giant Sequoia protesting some kind of timber harvest. I think what many faculty thought is that we were really just a group of activist, tree-hugger types, and didn't take the time to look at our curriculum, didn't take the time to examine the courses that we required our students to take. All of our students, for example, had to take Jack Schaar's *American Political Thought*. I never talked to a student that didn't think that was one of the finest courses they ever took at UCSC, period. Jack was in the politics board. They would take an environmental economics course from John Isbister, or Sue Holt. Or they would take an American history course from John Dizikes. Or they might take a biology course from Todd Newberry or Bill Doyle or Leo Ortiz, or a sociology course from Herman Blake. These students were all the way across the campus taking courses from distinguished academics and bringing that to bear in thinking more systematically and more carefully about the environmental problems that were



facing the country or the planet at the time that they were students. Tree huggers not.

But that was the popular image in the press, that the environmental movement was a kind of glorified tree hugger, as I said, a kind of glorified naturalists, not serious academics, not serious intellectuals. We fought that all the way through the history of the program when I was on the faculty. It was bad enough to be at Santa Cruz where we didn't have grades, and had narrative evaluations, pass/no pass. But my goodness, to be part of an academic program called environmental studies. I remember one of our deans used to poke fun of us, saying, "The next thing we'll have is Midwest Studies." But the fact of the matter is we have departments of environmental quality and departments of natural resources in every state of the nation. We have the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the Department of the Interior that manages the nation's lands, of which there are millions and millions of acres. These are all tasks that are specifically and directly and immediately related to environmental studies. Not that we were a vocational program, but I'm merely pointing out that people needed to be educated about the complexities of these land management and resource management issues because they have serious ramifications for current and future generations. Take, for example, our current national discussion or conversation about global warming. We were talking about global warming in environmental studies as far back as I can remember. When that issue first emerged, the discussions began. Obviously now we're at some kind of international crossroads where the citizens of the planet are going to demand of their leadership some form of action, or we are simply going to experience some

very significant dislocations of plant and animal species, not to mention humans and human settlement patterns. I have no crystal ball and I know of no one who has, but the evidence is very strong and it points in the direction that we have some very serious thinking to do about a very serious problem. We are going to have reach informed actions, and I'm pleased to say that I'm certain that the kind of education that was embodied in the environmental studies program at Santa Cruz is the kind of thinking that has to be brought to bear on this. I don't want to say that we're going to have the last laugh, because I don't think it will be a laugh. As Barry Commoner, an ecologist who was one of the principal early leaders in the academic environmental movement, as he was wont to say, "If ecology is a fad it will be the last one."

**Reti:** Yeah. (sigh)

**Pepper:** So not that we feel vindicated. We don't want to see global warming as evidence that our program had merit. (laughs) That's not what I'm suggesting. But I am suggesting that it was a very difficult task for us, particularly for those of us who were junior professors. Because we still had the tenure review to go through. When your program is almost publicly ridiculed by deans or chancellors, you realize that the opportunities for advancement may be limited. (laughs)

**Reti:** Well, that's a good segue into talking about some of the faculty that you worked with. Do you want to talk about some of your colleagues?

**Pepper:** Well, I'll surely talk about some colleagues who have not had the opportunity to talk with you or Randall about their careers, because in many ways these are some of the unsung heroes of UC Santa Cruz. They are stories that sadden me a bit when I talk about them because they are sort of the casualties of the tenure wars that I witnessed in my twenty-five years.

Perhaps the best place to start is with one of our very early faculty, an African American by the name of Bill Brown, who was a geographer who was recruited from Berkeley to environmental studies. Actually, he was recruited to the geography program, because geography preceded environmental studies at UCSC, and then was folded into environmental studies.

**Reti:** That was under Dick Cooley?

**Pepper:** Yes, that's correct. And Irene, I'm not sure if the geography program hadn't already been founded before Dick got there. But Dick Cooley was also a geographer, and I don't recall who else came at the same time as Dick. But when I was recruited to the program it was called the Committee on Environmental Studies. And Manny Schaffer was there, and he had a background in geography. And Bill Brown was there. And Claudia Carr was there. Claudia subsequently left, transferred her position to the University of California at Berkeley. But Bill was an example of the inordinate burden placed on junior faculty at the start up of UC Santa Cruz and the respective colleges and boards of study. But because of his minority status and the high visibility of an African American on the faculty, Bill became the sounding board for every African American student on the

campus, other than those that went to Herman Blake. I think he and Herman might have been the only African Americans. I'm not one hundred percent certain of that. But Bill was in Merrill College. You remember that Merrill was kind of a Third World college.

**Reti:** Yes.

**Pepper:** And because he was a person of color he was inundated with committee assignments because of minority representation. And by the way, Herman was a full professor, so he didn't need to get through the eye of the tenure needle like Bill did. But Bill was appointed to numerous academic senate committees, helping get Merrill College started, helping get environmental studies started, and at the same time expected to carry a full teaching load and publish. One of the real dilemmas for young faculty in environmental studies was that we were outside the traditional disciplines. And guess where the tenure research production lies? In the traditional disciplines. There were no journals of environmental x y and z for the first fifteen or twenty years of the existence of the campus.

**Reti:** I hadn't even thought of that! Of course.

**Pepper:** So Bill had to, at the same time he was trying to teach environmental studies he has to decide, is he really a geographer, or what is he? Because it's not a program in geography any more. The same thing was true of Gerry Bowden. Gerry wasn't publishing in law reviews, and when he was reviewed for tenure

one of the comments was, “Well, he’s not doing the kind of research that lawyers do at UCLA.” And it was pointed out: we don’t have a law library. It’s not a law program. We don’t have law students. This is environmental studies. I was a real mystery to them, because I did planning, and I did architecture, and I did landscape architecture. I worked on projects. I worked on bringing theory and practice to bear in the real world. But I didn’t have a journal outlet. And that became a real problem. And Bill Brown, regrettably, was a casualty of that. He eventually went on to a distinguished career at Evergreen College. But he didn’t receive tenure at Santa Cruz. I blame institutional misappropriation of time, that is the pressure placed on Bill and other junior people like him, for those early casualties. Because Bill clearly had the intellect to be a University of California faculty member. But the institution-building aspects of it in those early years, and the lack of a coherent outlet for research productivity and figuring out exactly what that looked like in those early, formative years, cost people dearly.

Another casualty was Dudley Burton. I thought Dudley was maybe one of the brightest stars on our faculty, clearly a brilliant young man. He had an undergraduate degree in philosophy, a master’s degree in physics, a Ph.D. in city and regional planning. And yet when Dudley was reviewed for tenure a very distinguished and eminent sociologist of national prominence said, “This is very interesting work. But it’s not sociology.” Same thing was said by one of our leading political theorists, not on our campus but nationally, looked at Dudley’s work and said, “Fascinating. The work of a very interesting mind. But this is not political theory.” Dudley’s work was on a constitutional theory of planning. That’s what his research was on. It just didn’t fit. And in a very regrettable tenure

case Dudley was denied tenure. I was acting board chair at the time and pressed this with the Academic Senate. The response I got from the Committee on Privilege and Tenure, after I filed a case and they looked at the case they said, "There were many mistakes made in this case but not enough to overturn it." That was my low point at Santa Cruz, when the appeal case . . . They said, "Lapses of judgment on the part of high-ranking administrators," but they couldn't find enough to say that they could recommend overturning it. And it just destroyed Dudley, of course, as it does to many people.

Kristina Hooper, in psychology, went through the same problem. She was working in cognitive psychology and environmental studies. And it was just far enough off the fringe that it didn't pass muster with somebody.

But I'm digressing a bit. I should come back to environmental studies and talk about a couple of other people. Gerry Bowden's resignation from the campus was the other low spot in my career. I consider Gerry to be one of the real stalwarts in intellectual, rigorous education while I was on the faculty at Santa Cruz. Although he taught courses dealing with law and policy, he taught them from the point of view of teaching people to think, and to think clearly, and to write clearly, and to understand the complex topics well enough to speak clearly about them and write about them. Gerry was a real anomaly as well, because as I mentioned previously, he wasn't at a law school, so he was an attorney in an environmental studies program. He did get tenure, but that was a struggle, I might add, simply because there were people who didn't think we should have an attorney on campus. And you can imagine when that's the mindset that you

are dealing with, as opposed to, is he a qualified attorney? We'd made the decision to have one. This reminds me of Hirishio Oyama's case, when I was the provost of College Eight, and Oyama was this fantastic violist. And during his review there were people saying we didn't need a violist in the music department. That's the kind of institutional nonsense that I'm referring to, Irene, when I make these comments. That decision was already made, and how someone could raise that question at a tenure review level just indicates to me a lack of intellectual rigor, a lack of ethical behavior, of propriety, of people who just don't have a clue how to make fair-minded judgments in institutional settings. Some people just want to throw all the rules away because they didn't want a violist.

But in Gerry's case, he just finally quit out of sheer exasperation with the review process that had dragged on four or five months past the time that he was informed that a decision would be presented to him. And one day he came to work and just said, "I've had it," and submitted his resignation. That was really a great loss in our program. Again, I think that it was one of these situations where the institution had a high degree of neglect for our program during intermittent time periods. That's what happened in Gerry's case, and that harkened back to the earlier question about institutional resistance. That affected some people's careers seriously.

**Reti:** Yes.

**Pepper:** Well, that's probably enough on that topic, because I have so many upbeat parts to my experience at Santa Cruz. We don't want to dwell any longer on those kind of low points.

### **The Pepper-Giberson Endowed Chair in Environmental Studies**

**Reti:** Sure. Well, let's talk about the endowed chair in your name.

**Pepper:** Well. Gosh. What can I say? I guess I can really say that was a high point. At the time that Giberson Emily approached the campus and subsequently endowed the Pepper-Giberson Chair in Environmental Studies, that was the only endowed chair in the entire University of California system that had been created and named for excellence in teaching as opposed to research.

**Reti:** Oh!

**Pepper:** I was really quite dumbfounded by that because there are so many worthy teachers in the University of California system who may not be the superstars of the research world, but who touch the students that pass through their doors in ways that are incalculable and far more pervasive than much of the research that's produced by University faculty. So it was an extraordinary honor to me. And it sort of took my breath away in the sense that to realize that a family would feel so compelled as to endow a chair in my name because of the effect I had on their son. I mean, it really blew me away.



**Reti:** That's wonderful.

**Pepper:** And it was very interesting, also, to receive that recognition, because it wasn't something that I ever would have expected, and it wasn't something that was treated with much (with some notable exceptions, I might add) it wasn't received as something of much note by some colleagues. And that's always troubled me because I think one of the saddest parts of the university community is that its collegiality is a mile wide and an inch deep. I felt a real separation from colleagues as a result of that, because I don't believe that our individual achievements are widely appreciated within our colleague's circle because we are basically pitted against each other. I want to just chat a little about this too, because there was a great deal to do about team teaching in environmental studies, and how to count teaching with another person. And there were people in the administration who wanted a team-taught course to only count fifty percent. And there were also people who said, from some departments, co-authored papers should only count fifty percent, and if there are three of you, you should only get a third of a point in tenure review, if three people jointly authored a paper. That is antithetical to collaboration. It was that kind of institutional resistance to collaboration that I think was my biggest disappointment in my years on the faculty. I thought the world turns on successful collaboration and falls on failures in collaboration. And here we are building an internal resistance in our institutions of higher education. Probably one of the most important qualities that we could ever get. If we could bottle it and sell it, we'd make a fortune. And if we could at least exemplify it and

embody it in our own institution, it would probably be a lot of easier for our students and charges to do that.

But I was, back to the endowed chair, several people greeted me with open arms and great enthusiasm. But I think there was some envy, and some, not hurt feelings, but some reluctance to think that that was really much to crow about. So it affected me in kind of an odd way, both of feeling very honored and feeling a little saddened by some of the institutional aspects of the fallout of that. But I wouldn't trade it in, I tell you. It was the highlight of my career.

**Reti:** Tell me about the student whose family created the chair. What was he working on with you.

**Pepper:** Well, this is one of those really interesting tales, where you have a student who reminded me a good deal of, I mentioned Nancy Sachman earlier, and Alisa Garden-Heyer. Quiet, thoughtful, very interested in the world, but tentative about the world. I believe what I ignited in Eric was a sense that he could carry his own weight in the world, and what he thought mattered, and what he brought to discussions was important. It maybe was nothing more than helping him with a sense of confidence and a sense of personal achievement and self worth, and recognizing him as such. Because he just literally blossomed in one of my seminar courses, and went through really quite a wonderful transformation. I'm certain that it touched his family very much.

I've seen a lot of students at UCSC who . . . In this case, Eric was not the first one in his family to go to college. Both his parents were well-educated people. But there were students with whom I was familiar and with whom I schmoozed at graduation when they introduced their families to me, where the graduate was the first in the family to even attend college, and there was, you could tell, both a family that was very proud and a family that was very worried, because they realized that this child was now a citizen of the world and they were probably going to leave their hometown and go off and do wonderful things someplace. And although Eric wasn't in that particular kind of situation, I had a feeling that this one kind of a pivotal seminar launched him into the next threshold in his academic career. I did follow his career for a short while, and then I left California and it was mostly the students with whom I'd had longstanding associations that kept in touch with me, and vice versa.

### **Retirement Activities**

**Reti:** So what are you working on now that you're retired, Jim?

**Pepper:** Well, what am I working on? Some writing, some autobiographical work. One piece that's concerned with my experiences at Santa Cruz, tentatively titled "Lessons at the Lectern." This is really a set of essays about my years of teaching at Santa Cruz. It focuses on some of the interesting aspects of the undergraduate program writ large at Santa Cruz during my years on campus. For example, I have an essay titled "In Praise of Failure." And this deals with the Pass/No Record system, and the fact that if you took a course that was way

outside of your league and failed that you didn't get penalized and therefore rejected from graduate school because you had a failure mark on your undergraduate record. And we know that in the Olympics everybody thinks they're a failure if they don't win a gold medal. Of course this is a terrible misconception of achievement. The person who wins the Silver Medal is the third best in the world! But there is a stigma attached to it that it wasn't gold. And I think we really have some serious problems in this regard, to realize that there are different degrees of achievement, and that even failure is an important component in learning. Some people would tell you it's a critical component in learning. The analogy of the child who is told not to touch the hot stove—I think all of us had to touch it once to understand that. And one could argue that that was a failure and a very strong negative feedback loop that taught us something. But that's one of the pieces. I also have one dealing with collaboration.

I'm also, I mentioned I have a bookcase full of senior theses. When these essays get a little more fully developed, one of my intentions which I hope I can keep and follow through to closure, is to write these former students and find out more systematically what UCSC in general and environmental studies in particular, contributed to their understanding of the world and the trajectory of their careers, and the role that their senior thesis might have played in their undergraduate academic development. So that's one project.

I might also add that a former environmental studies student (this is kind of along the same line of thought), a student who was a joint major in environmental studies and community studies lives in Bozeman, Montana where

I resided the past twelve years since retiring and leaving the Santa Cruz area, and Bozeman is my hometown. This young lady moved to Bozeman maybe fifteen years after she was out of school. She'd written an amazing senior thesis. It had to have been an inch and a half thick, or two inches thick. The title of the thesis was *Crow and Coal*. She had been on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana, and the coal exploration in that south central part of Montana was a big controversy at that time. and she'd written that piece. Virginia Weir is her name. And Virginia eventually married a Native American and has a daughter, and she lives in Bozeman. And lo and behold, after a couple of runs at retail careers and parenting, she's become a writer. She gives writing workshops and has taken this craft to a level where she now earns her living as a writer and as a person who teaches writing. I always hearken back to that senior thesis that she did. I remember when she showed up with this great tome, wondering what place this might have in her life. Because no student had ever produced anything even closely resembling it. But she's one of those people who mastered the craft and has returned to it.

**Reti:** Montana sure is a great place for writers.

**Pepper:** It truly is. It truly is. And in fact, this little town that I'm in south of Tuscon, Sonoita, also has a number of writers here, which is interesting. We live sort of at the end of a road and it's kind of quiet, a quiet place with not a lot of trappings of civilization so maybe people find this amenable to clearing their minds and being able to get deep inside.

**Reti:** Sure. And have you also been doing some environmental consulting in retirement?

**Pepper:** I have. I continued to work in the field of city and regional planning. I worked on a number of projects in Montana. I must say that it's been a disappointment, in part because Montana is way behind the curve in terms of being prepared to deal with the adverse effects of rapid growth and the tools that are present in California. In spite of all the problems that California is having dealing with growth, you can imagine working in places that have no planning and no zoning. It's kind of like the Old West, almost. Except it's the New West and it's being rapidly transformed in many instances in a manner that's less than desirable. But I soldier on and I've learned that that's just part of what happens. You have to learn to accept what you can accomplish and be proud of it and not just cave in and throw in the towel. So I've actively worked on helping people in the field of agriculture get over their paranoia about zoning. Because many farmers are going to end up being better served by finding mechanisms for protecting their land than they are for subdividing it in the hopes that thousands of immigrants from Florida will move to the chilly climes of Montana and resettle it. It's just not going to happen. Well, I shouldn't put it that way. With global warming that may be what happens. (laughter) But it is very interesting that Montana as a state has a real strong, as you can imagine, a kind of private property, minimum government . . . Remember, the Freemen holed up in Montana at one time, and the Unibomber. So it's not surprising that those folks showed up in Montana, because it does have a kind of Old West . . .

But I wake up everyday feeling blessed and ready for the challenges the day brings. So in spite of some things that get me down, they don't affect my good nature, and I just, as I said, soldier on.

**Reti:** Well, that certainly seems key to working in this field, being able to be aware of all of these realities and challenges, and maintain your optimism and just keep working day by day.

**Pepper:** Well, I think you have to do that. And I must say I stay . . . I still read actively and that gives me great strength because there are so many fine writers in so many diverse fields that constantly remind me of the great power of the human intellect and the great promise it holds, and the importance of harnessing it to good work.

**Reti:** Well, that seems like a good place to stop, unless you have anything you want to add, Jim.

**Pepper:** Well, Irene, I want to thank you. I'm similarly touched that somebody has taken on this very important task of the oral histories of the campus. The people who become part of the UCSC community in the future are inheriting the good work of people like you, and I trust, myself. This is very important history that doesn't reveal itself by reading the *General Catalog*.

**Reti:** That's true. Absolutely. I'm very honored to be doing this work.