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# Oakes College: An Oral History

with:

**J. Herman Blake**

**Roberto Crespi**

**James Gill**

**Don Rothman**

**Ray Charland**

**Gwen Lacy**

**Kathy Cowan**



Photo by Alison Manning

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Edited by Randall Jarrell and Irene Reti

University Library, Regional History Project  
UC Santa Cruz  
2011

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## Introduction

One of the reasons why the University of California, Santa Cruz is unique among most public institutions of higher education is that it is organized as a series of themed colleges. UC Santa Cruz's seventh college, eventually named Oakes, opened in 1972. Plans for the college began in 1966. The original theme of the college was to emphasize urban issues. In 1968, the Santa Cruz Black Liberation Front asked the UCSC administration to make College VII a Black college, with Black students, faculty, and administrators. They wanted the buildings to be designed by a Black architect, and for the college to offer graduate work in Black Studies. In those years, the UCSC campus's staff, faculty, and student body was mostly white.

Assistant Professor of Sociology J. Herman Blake was the only Black faculty member when he arrived at UCSC in 1966 and became a member of Cowell College. Blake was a graduate of UC Berkeley, a Black activist, and the recent co-author of *Revolutionary Suicide* a book on Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party. In 1969, Blake met with the Black Liberation Front. He proposed that the new college focus on ethnic studies rather than urban problems, and go beyond Black Studies to include the studies of other historically marginalized groups in California: Asian-Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans and European immigrants. The student activists agreed to Blake's proposal. On February 2, 1969, the Academic Senate unanimously approved the development of this ethnic studies theme for the new college. Then-Chancellor Dean McHenry appointed an Ethnic Studies Committee co-chaired by Herman Blake and Professor of Politics and Community Studies Ralph Guzman, who was from Merrill College. Planning for the college began.

By 1971, Herman Blake and Ralph Guzman declared their opposition to the idea of

“building a college on the south side of the campus where the minorities would go,” a “minority college” They felt that diversity should be a campus-wide goal, not simply the responsibility of College Seven. According to Professor Bill Doyle, who also helped plan Oakes College and was faculty at Oakes, “Rather than an ethnic studies college, they [Blake and Guzman] shared the vision that the college theme and academic programs should emphasize the understanding of the racial and ethnic experience in America as a springboard to a wide variety of career options in all fields, including the natural sciences.”<sup>1</sup> However, in practice, Oakes did end up with more students of color than most of the other UCSC colleges. College Seven was originally to be named Malcolm X College but major funding for the new college came from the San Francisco Foundation and in 1975 the new college was named Oakes College in memory of the Oakes family whose money made the grant possible.

College Seven opened in 1972 with the vision of creating a multicultural community dedicated to the goals of equality and freedom from oppression. Student-faculty interaction was encouraged, as well as a strong counseling component, to address personal issues. Quotas were rejected in favor of recruiting a diverse student and faculty body, and the core curriculum focused on cultural pluralism. Much of the core curriculum focused on teaching writing and science skills, both of which were neglected in the education of historically marginalized students. The idea was that students would take these acquired skills back to their home communities.

These oral history interviews were conducted in 1982, ten years after Oakes College opened, by Roseanne Shensa, a UCSC student under the mentorship of then-

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<sup>1</sup> See Professor Bill Doyle’s excellent chapter on Oakes College in his 2011 book *UC Santa Cruz: 1960-1991: Campus Origin, and Early Program and Facility Development in the Sciences, with a Special Emphasis on Marine Sciences*.

<sup>2</sup> Please see Carlos Noreña’s excellent account of this reorganization in his book *The Rise and Demise of the UCSC Colleges*. [Berkeley]: Berkeley Public Policy Press, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of

Regional History Project director Randall Jarrell. Shensa transcribed the interviews and Jarrell and I edited the transcripts. It is important to note that these interviews were conducted during the period in which Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer was implementing his controversial reorganization of UCSC's college system. From UC Santa Cruz's opening in 1965 until 1979 faculty hiring was done jointly by the colleges and the boards of studies (now called departments) and faculty promotion was partially based on college service and teaching. Each college, including Oakes, offered an extensive list of courses. After 1979, most of these college courses were discontinued, with the exception of college core courses.<sup>2</sup> Many of the narrators in this volume refer to this reorganization and the implications of this loss of Oakes College's ability to offer college courses.

Due to Regional History's workload and staffing limitations, these interviews remained unprocessed until the year 2011, when they resurfaced in our files as we began to survey resources available to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UC Santa Cruz's founding. In re-reading these transcripts, I realized they were a valuable historical resource that should and could be made available. We were able to contact J. Herman Blake, now Professor of Health Professions and Dental Medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina and receive his permission to publish the interview included here. (All of the other narrators had signed release forms in 1983.) Blake was a major figure at UCSC for eighteen years. In 1978 the American Council of Education named him one of the top emerging leaders in higher education. After leaving UC Santa

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<sup>2</sup> Please see Carlos Noreña's excellent account of this reorganization in his book *The Rise and Demise of the UCSC Colleges*. [Berkeley]: Berkeley Public Policy Press, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2004. See also Randall Jarrell, ed. Robert L. Sinsheimer: The University of California, Santa Cruz During a Critical Decade, 1977-1987 (UCSC Library Regional History Project, 1996) available in full text [Robert L. Sinsheimer: The University of California, Santa Cruz During a Critical Decade, 1977-1987](#).

Cruz in 1984, he has continued a distinguished career which has included serving as the President of Tougaloo College, Mississippi; Vice Chancellor at Indiana University; and Director of African American Studies at Iowa State University. Blake's scholarship has focused on the Gullah culture of the Sea Islands, where his father was born. He has also studied the experience of minority students in higher education.

This collection includes interviews with three other well-known UCSC professors. Don Rothman, Senior Lecturer Emeritus in Writing, came to Oakes in 1973 to teach writing and coordinate the writing tutoring program. Both of these programs quickly became models for the rest of the campus, which developed an excellent writing program that continues to this day. In 1977, Rothman founded a literacy education think-tank for K-university teachers, The Central California Writing Project (CCWP), which he directed for twenty-seven years. Rothman retired from UCSC in 2007, after thirty-four years of teaching. Jim Gill is a geochemist who came to UCSC in 1972 and is still Professor of Earth Sciences at UCSC at the date of this publication. Roberto Crespi was a professor of Latin American literature at UCSC and died in 1992. Crespi was a beloved mentor for many UCSC students, particularly students of color. One student, Leslie Ann Lopez wrote in 1997:

I would like to (virtually), publicly acknowledge my undying gratitude to the late, great, Roberto Crespi, who institutionalized all kinds of ways to open up literary and cultural studies at UC Santa Cruz. In his "Resistance Testimonios" class (in the department of World Literature), his attention to reggae and rap lyrics as texts, his use of Stephen Biko's court testimonies as well as interpretations of Latin American indigenous women's voices, made theory relevant to a generation of student activists, and demonstrated the integrity of amplifying other people's (not necessarily Other, just other than one's self) voices in forums to which one is allowed privileged access.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.drifline.org/cgi-bin/archive/archive\\_msg.cgi?file=spoon-archives/postcolonial.archive/postcolonial\\_1997/97-04-26.231&msgnum=25&start=1120](http://www.drifline.org/cgi-bin/archive/archive_msg.cgi?file=spoon-archives/postcolonial.archive/postcolonial_1997/97-04-26.231&msgnum=25&start=1120) Accessed April 28, 2011.

When UCSC alum Hector Tobar won the Pulitzer Prize in 2005 he acknowledged Crespi as one of his major mentors.

This volume also includes oral histories with staff members Gwen Lacy, then an administrative assistant at Oakes College; Ray Charland, Oakes College counseling staff member; and Kathy Cowan, who was then in charge of a project interviewing Oakes College students. UCSC staff members are an integral (and sometimes invisible) part of shaping the campus's history and we are glad these interviews were included.

Copies of this volume are on deposit in Special Collections and in the circulating stacks at McHenry Library at the University of California, Santa Cruz, as well as in PDF format on the Library's Website. Regional History is supported administratively by Christine Bunting, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Virginia Steel.

—Irene Reti

Director, Regional History Project

McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz

May 2011



**J. Herman Blake, Founding Provost, Oakes College****May 10, 1982**

Blake: In August 1968 a group of Black citizens in Santa Cruz made a demand on the University that there be a Black college, designed by a Black architect, Black faculty and Black students and Black staff, offering a course in Black studies. I met with them and said that I thought the college should be one of ethnic studies and they agreed to that. After some study of that issue by the chancellor, the chancellor formed a special committee in the fall of 1968. That committee reported to the Academic Senate, and in February of 1969 recommended that this be an ethnic studies college. The Academic Senate agreed to this and decided that the curriculum of the then-College Seven should be devoted to the study of ethnic issues, and I was made chair of the planning committee. I chaired the planning committee since the college was opened and became provost. In the course of working with Ralph Guzman, co-chair of the planning committee, we felt that this was still too narrow a focus and changed it from ethnic studies to cultural pluralism and also developed a second emphasis on the sciences. We began to recruit some initial faculty, and two of those who joined us initially were Bill Doyle and Roberto Crespi. Bill Doyle said that it had always been a problem that they could never teach sciences in the colleges themselves. So we went out and found a way to get some money to allow the teaching of sciences in the colleges. The whole science center and special facilities came from that. So that's how it started.

Shensa: Would you comment on the role of the events of the Sixties in the establishment of Oakes?

Blake: The Sixties had led to a series of changes in the colleges and universities throughout the country and they attempted to increase their minority enrollment, and they developed Black study programs and Chicano programs—programs of this type—that they thought would increase their enrollment. And in that context, the demand by the community here was in the same general vein, and the campus response was in that vein, so that—well, we were in the Sixties!

Shensa: How did you go about recruiting that first group?

Blake: We had the opportunity, you see, because the original [idea from] the Black community was to have a Black architect design the college, and it turned out that the college had already appointed the executive architect for the college, McCue Boone Tomsick, from San Francisco. They asked us if we would work with them. We sensed the necessity of working right away in dealing with the architects, so we asked the different ethnic groups on campus to appoint students to a planning [committee] which was primarily dealing with architectural issues. We asked Black students to appoint two people; Native American students, Asian students and Chicano students to each appoint two people. That gave us eight. There were five colleges already in existence, so we asked each college to appoint one person who was not a member of these, which gave us a total of thirteen. This gave us eight minorities and five Anglos who helped us in the planning. At the same time there was a fellow—a graduate student—and his wife, Karen, who was one of our first staff persons—they played key leadership roles to that—the year before we opened—that is to say, from 1971-72.<sup>4</sup> We recruited something

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<sup>4</sup> Blake added the following note during the editing of this oral history in 2011: “Karen Alschuler [was] hired as an executive assistant or something like that on a part time basis. Her husband, William (Bill) Alschuler was a graduate student in Astronomy (I believe). Both of them became deeply involved in the planning process and made an outstanding contribution.”

like thirty-five students into a planning group. At that time it was possible to have students in a class, planning the college. We pretty much took anyone who wanted to come, who wanted to be in the initial group of Oakes College students. They did join the college. Of course, the college as a corporate entity was not formed until July 1, 1972. So from '71 to '72 these students were in the general planning class, about thirty to thirty-five of them, taught by Ralph Guzman himself. And they got involved in all these issues as well as the architectural issues, academic and administrative issues. They were the ones who made the decisions about apartments—that we should have apartments rather than the traditional dormitories, and such decisions as the layouts of the general facilities. They were the ones who decided not to have pets in the colleges. We were the first organized agency on campus to decide on no pets. That first year was very critical. We also decided that we would not have any quotas among the ethnic groups.

Shensa: Are you satisfied with the architectural results that came out of this?

Blake: By and large. I'm dissatisfied that we lost a building because of delays in construction—because of the delay of initial approval before we were able to begin. There was incredible inflation; we had the same amount of money but by the time we finally got located, it bought less space. We lost four apartments—a special four-plex for faculty—and we lost a student activity building.

Shensa: In talking to students about the apartments I have heard such comments as: "The apartments are not planned so as to encourage a community feeling; each group seems to stay in their own unit; there is not central meeting place; there is no library; it doesn't accomplish the goal that it intended—"

Blake: That's precisely the proof that it does, and that the people aren't familiar with the goals. The lack of a library is because we use that space for science and because the libraries in the other colleges are really used and they're really and truly libraries. And we wanted to build a science lab. But the reason why the department designed this facility was because the other students working on the development of the college had been in the other colleges. In the other colleges, indeed, you had this huge mass. We looked at several designs which included a central gathering place, a large dining hall— We thought about having apartments without kitchens—all of this business. As a matter of fact, the final design was that one-third of the apartments would not have a kitchen, and there would be a small dining hall as a way of getting some cost savings. But the students felt they had lived in the colleges where they had these huge dormitories, and there was no sense of community there. Therefore, they wanted to have smaller units where people would get to know one another within those units. So the apartments are really designed so that the people would get to know thirty to thirty-five people and that they would become a small community—that's what happened. But it is true that now we've solved that problem, the problem in the smaller units want to know everybody else, and it is not designed for that.

Shensa: I read your paper "Undergraduate Education." You discuss teaching. I'd like to hear your definition of good teaching.

Blake: Oh, my goodness. I think good teaching would imply classes of a size that the teacher could get to know the students individually and the students would get to feel that they knew the teacher; secondly, that the material would be presented in a manner that was engaging; thirdly, that the students would be engaged with the material and

instructor and each other; and fourthly, that the standards were extremely high and that the students met those standards.

Shensa: What was your “dream” for Oakes and how do you feel about that now?

Blake: If you’ve read my papers, I think you have the essence of what my ideas were—they are still there. In terms of my feelings about it, I think it’s been by-and-large, enormously successful. Given all the developments that took place at the colleges at the start, it did not appear likely that the institution would have survived—that we would have been able to create a sense of community among students with such diverse backgrounds. And in that sense I think we have been successful. I think that where the real problem lies is this business of creating even the minimal community for people of such a wide range of diverse backgrounds. It is such an extraordinary difficult task, it is frightening. So we have not reached Nirvana, and we never will. I think we have been reasonably successful. Where I am less happy is in terms of what has happened to the faculty. The faculty’s diversity was greater at the start.

Shensa: One of the big issues now concerns the faculty. Many have left; others have been denied tenure, and junior faculty do not apply. Is it true that you will be leaving in one year?

Blake: Yes it is. I will be resigning as provost. We will be recruiting a new provost. A lot of what will happen will depend on the provost. The college can take off in new directions.

Shensa: Your name has always been synonymous with Oakes College.

Blake: That's unfortunate. I've been a key figure, but it's unfortunate that I and the college are seen as synonymous.

Shensa: How do you foresee Oakes if it is not an academic unit? Will the philosophy continue?

Blake: I doubt it. I don't think the institution is prepared to pick up the philosophy of Oakes.

Shensa: Over and over I have heard of the dedication of the Oakes faculty. Does this exist elsewhere?

Blake: I'm sure that you will find elsewhere, but in terms of the California system (inaudible) . . .

Shensa: Would you have changed anything if you had it to do over again?

Blake: Yes. I would have made the faculty all-Oakes, and not partly Oakes and partly another college so they could have devoted more time to making the institution what I felt it ought to be, and would not be threatened with loss of education.

Shensa: In the beginning, did you receive the cooperation of the administration in ideas like giving faculty released time for research without their having to worry about publishing?

Blake: Yes, we had extraordinary support from the administration. The faculty voted in 1969 that the college should be one of ethnic studies. The chancellor decided then and there that it would be the best.

Shensa: I have heard that there is racism among the different groups in the college itself. Is this so? Also, that there are few Blacks.

Blake: Yes, there is, considerable. On the small number of Blacks, that's a campus-wide problem; it's a country-wide problem. Interestingly enough, it's a problem in the Black colleges of the South. We do lack a critical mass of students in a minority background, it is true. But there is a tremendous amount of ill will that people bring you, and we recognize it in the start of a college—sometimes on a one-to-one basis and sometimes in group terms—that ill will is expressed. The thing is that it's always done without the knowledge (inaudible)—

Shensa: I know that Oakes attempts to develop a political awareness and a sense of responsibility. Yet many have said that Oakes students do not, on the whole, return to their communities.

Blake: That is too early to judge. We've only had three or four graduating classes which have a substantial number of students from these dispossessed communities. Also, on a close analysis of what we mean by community—do they return to a specific community or do we mean a general community? I would argue that returning to a specific community is not possible because the skills and talents that they have developed cannot be effectively utilized in this community. For example, it could well be that one may become a lawyer or a doctor, but going into a particular block or a particular neighborhood would not be the best thing, but going into a particular area— Secondly, we haven't had a chance yet for the students to finish up; and thirdly, we have to access what that means in terms of the larger picture. The students that I worked with who have finished are, in fact, returning to their general areas. And there are others that you

see from time to time, particularly attorneys and others—and some of them move into national places. Let me give you an example; I didn't move into my community. But I'm in doubt that once could say that the work hasn't had some impact. I think there is a greater political awareness among students—less now.

Shensa: If you were speaking to the next provost of Oakes and he asked you for recommendations, what might you tell him?

Blake: I would probably tell him to spend a lot more time with the faculty and a lot more time with the students in getting to know them better and getting them to effectively articulate their needs. Secondly, to be very diligent in his resistance to the ideas that come from the administration, campus-wide (inaudible) because there are many people who do not understand what it takes to put this thing together, who have ideas which either implement or destroy. And it's not that they are pernicious or evil; they are by no means this. But one must be careful, since we have this goal; we can act as if the goal exists and therefore we know of some of the crucial issues.

Shensa: But at the same time, you have the support of the administration.

Blake: There is no reason why we can't have their support. But we must, in getting their support, always articulate what our principles are, what our goals are. For example, looking retrospectively, I don't think we should have gone along, at all, with the personnel developments that came out of the organization. I think, at that point, we should have objected—not because of the academic—but because of the personnel procedures. Then more of our faculty—



Shensa: How does one ever bridge the gap between the old and the new and changes in the administration?

Blake: It's not a question of the old and the new; it's a question of the sensitivity and understanding and the mechanistic and inhuman, in my judgment. That's what the issue is. But I don't think it's the old and the new—there are many of the “old guard” who are much more sensitive and understanding. Others, who are just as new as fresh paint, don't have that understanding. And that's really what the issue is. We have many young people on this campus who are faculty, who could no more teach at Oakes than the man in the moon. There are quite a few older faculty, who, even though they aren't our peers, are struggling to overcome the sensibilities on this issue.

Shensa: What I really meant was old and new ideas—old and new paradigms.

Blake: I think that what has to happen in terms of establishment of paradigms is that you have to have fiscal and institutional kinds of arrangements that make it possible for that paradigm to exist even though there might be some resistance to it originally.

Shensa: What do you think of the support system at Oakes—as you envisioned it, how was it practiced, and how it could be improved?

Blake: As I envisioned it, I think the support system has developed exactly the way I had in mind—competent, sensitive people who were not tied to bureaucratic limits, who were relaxed and free-loving in their relationships—I did not have any specific formula in mind, just a general perspective. And I think that the supportive network has developed extremely well. If I had my druthers, I would probably want two or

three more people as counselors and advisors, about one to every seventy-five to one hundred students.

Shensa: Do you think the peer counseling and tutoring has been effective?

Blake: Very effective, yes. It works well for the person who does the teaching and the one who receives it. And it's based around the idea that each student ought to be able to articulate the ideas that he's been taught, and the students do a lot more teaching of each other. I think it's an excellent building of cooperation.

Shensa: I understand that in the beginning Oakes had many retreats.

Blake: In the beginning we didn't have any facilities. What happened was that we had to find a place to have our new student orientations in the fall. Since we didn't have our own facilities and we were borrowing the space from College Five, we held our new student organizations as retreats, so we took them all off the campus for three days. These were the initial retreats. We really did not have retreats in the sense of college-wide retreats, for new students in the fall. And after the first few years when we opened in these facilities, we thought in the kind of community-building that we wanted to continue. We found that once we had our own facilities, it did not have the same attraction.

Shensa: I understand that these retreats were tremendously effective.

Blake: They were, strongly. That was also when we had the smallest proportion of minority students. We need to have those kind of things, but it's hard and it's extremely expensive. I think we should have them once a quarter.

Shensa: If Oakes is discontinued as an academic unit, do you think that the other colleges will make any exceptions for Oakes students attending their colleges, for the so-called adjustment period?

Blake: I think they will make an effort to respond to it, yes. I think there's going to be, as I call it, a bureaucratic mechanism that recognizes that there can be no fixed period for different students; some will need me; some won't need any. I think the other colleges and the central administration will make every effort to accommodate the students. The problem is—not that they are not committed to them—I think there is a real gap between commitment and understanding. I'm sure a lot of things have happened to them too, and they're devastating and dynamic. A lot of people say that we should retreat from them and shouldn't do this. We've done just the reverse and said make them more frequent.

Shensa: I have heard high praise of Oakes' science program and the innovative program.

Blake: Yes, it's a model. I think it's evidence of what happens when you build an institution that supports, in terms of personnel and in terms of facilities and you let the faculty have the time to really plan.

Shensa: Do you think it will be able to continue as it is?

Blake: No, but there are other dynamics going—limited resources, limited space and those who have other goals.

Shensa: That would be quite a loss.

Blake: It will be quite a loss; it won't be dramatic or sudden.

Shensa: Everyone I've spoken to has expressed satisfaction that they were a part of Oakes. But many have expressed disappointment that it can't continue.

Blake: I am one of those who is disappointed. I am not disappointed with what has been accomplished. They did an excellent job considering the enormity of the task. That will not just collapse or fade out. Those five years will be remembered.

Shensa: The effects and philosophy still continue . . .

Blake: They may spring up in other places. There are a lot of seeds that have been planted.

Shensa: One person has referred to Oakes as a gadfly.

Blake: I would say, not as much a gadfly as a vanguard.

Shensa: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Blake: I think change is in the wind, regardless of what the nature of the change is and what the forces of change are. I am resigning as provost. I think that probably I've been provost two years longer than I should have been. When I took the position I thought that I should stay a minimum of seven years and a maximum of nine. By the time I step down from this position it will be more like eleven. But you don't know when it's the right time until you pass the peak.

Shensa: Would you care to mention your plans?

Blake: My ideal would be to become a full-time member of the Oakes faculty, working on the academic program and work on developing the social sciences and humanities—that would be my plan—that is to teach at Oakes, but I'd like the programs to be available to others.

**Jim Gill, May 4, 1982**

Gill: I'm Jim Gill and I'm a geochemist, a cross between a geologist and a chemist. I am interested in how the earth got here, the way in which the surface of the earth on which we live, arose. I learned of Oakes in 1972 when I was living in Australia. I was a graduate student and I had written to Santa Cruz about the possibility of coming here to work, to teach, and I heard by return mail that Oakes was just about to enter its first year as an academic entity. It interested me, halfway around the world, as a place with the diversity of people that I very much missed by going to Australia, where things are more homogenous, as a place where that diversity of people could be retained or regained at a research-oriented major university. I was looking for a place where I could continue with the research that I loved, and at the same time remain engaged with the social problems that I thought important. I don't know if I would have come to Santa Cruz in the first place if Oakes had not been here. I was not here in the fall quarter when Oakes actually began its courses, because during that time I worked in Czechoslovakia as a government geologist. But I came here at the beginning of winter quarter of '73 which was the second quarter of the course-offering entity, and I've been part of Oakes ever since. I've done almost everything around here except wash dishes.

Shensa: What was it like that first year for you?

Gill: I arrived in Santa Cruz two days before winter quarter began. It was the first time I had ever taught at university level. So that whole year I ran scared and I was as afraid of Oakes as students are of the university. For me, my first year was a terrifying experience. Oakes was just part of what terrified me about being responsible to be a teacher. I felt very keenly my limitations. For the first time I felt that what I didn't know

mattered to someone beyond me, because my own limitations were being transferred to my students.

Shensa: Was this your first experience teaching?

Gill: I had taught secondary school students previously but only while I was in college. For five years I had done nothing but research. But gradually, even during that first couple of quarters, Oakes faculty—I think only faculty, not students, retreated once or twice. And during that first year and ever since then Oakes figured more prominently than anything else in engaging me in questions about teaching *per se*—with pedagogy as an act, what it meant to teach quite independently of the special clientele—not of who I was teaching, but how to teach—and so, much more so than any other of my social contacts, it was important in asking me questions about how and why I taught. And so, it then, and ever since, has been for me the pivot point at introspectively looking at what I'm doing, how well I'm doing it and why I'm doing it. It may well be that other colleges have served that function for other people, I can't judge that, but Oakes has served it for me.

Shensa: Do you believe that because of the uniqueness of Oakes there were special things involved?

Gill: At the level of asking me how well I taught, I don't know. I know that there are other people outside of Oakes who are similarly interested and concerned about how to teach. Oakes is not unique in raising the question, but it certainly did raise them. Oakes clearly, in addition to asking general questions about teaching, asked them about how to teach students who are not the traditional students in the university. For the first several years we were, of course, vagabonds living in someone else's house (College V).

It wasn't for several years until we moved here. I think that made us feel all the more outside the university. If I had to do it again I would certainly have placed Oakes, physically, more centrally in the university. It made sense when there were going to be twenty colleges to have some college here. It made less sense when there were only going to be eight. I think Oakes would have fared better if it had been sited, say, in back of Kresge, somewhere closer to the physical center of the campus. I think the fact that we had to occupy the unused wings of dormitories elsewhere contributed to our sense of not belonging.

There were as many faculty, though fewer students than now. The faculty started off with what it's come back to now. We doubled in size and then we halved in size. And we'll probably be still fewer next year than we are now. From my perspective, sustained contact has been more with faculty than with students. I remain in contact with some people who were students back in those first couple of years, but more of my sustained contact has been with faculty. And so, it's there that I feel more poignantly the loss of friends who have left the college by choice or by someone telling them to go. The friendships made and lost color my memory.

Shensa: What subjects did you teach those first years?

Gill: I've taught three different courses in Oakes, but I've not taught at all in Oakes for the last three years. Most of my early teaching at Oakes was an attempt to teach introductory geology in a nontraditional way. I taught an Oakes discussion section of the board introductory course. Then I designed two introductory geology courses that covered half to two-thirds of the same ground as the board's course, but covered them in a different way. One of those I only taught once and then dropped. It was called



“Volcanoes and Earthquakes.” It was an unabashedly geology course—nothing but geology—but it focused on those two phenomena which, of course, are quite common in California. I taught it as a small class but out of that class of fifteen or so, three students ultimately became geology majors and two are now two of the very small number of Chicano people in graduate school in California in geology. But it didn’t have a large clientele. I realized early on that I couldn’t teach two introductory college courses, so I dropped one. The one I kept going for three or four years was a course in mineral resources—gold, diamonds, iron, copper. That course was half an introductory course in geology and half a political geography/economics course. In theory one could take that course and go to the course 2 in geology and bypass the department’s introduction. But in all cases, when I introduced a topic, say volcanoes, I would introduce those aspects of the topic that dealt with the formations of mineral deposits. So I’d say volcanoes are very important in forming deposits of gold and talk about the way in which that process occurred. Then the other half of the course dealt with the political consequences of those processes having occurred where and when they did, so that the vast majority of the world’s gold is in South Africa and the Soviet Union. So what are the political consequences of that being the case? Usually mineral resources are an upper-division subject and it would be rare for there to be much discussion of the political climate in which the resources form or to which they contribute.

Shensa: What made you decide to teach it in just that way?

Gill: I thought it would be a way of servicing non-science Oakes students who were looking for a way of taking a science course that would inform or apply their interests, say, in the social sciences. I envisioned it as a relevant science distribution requirement. Second, I hoped that the student clientele in Oakes would be motivated to study

geology by seeing the social consequences of that study. And so it would be a means of attracting students to my discipline who would not otherwise be attracted by the traditional introductory course.

Shensa: Were you pleased with the results?

Gill: No, and that's why I stopped teaching the course. The course never drew large numbers of Oakes students. And it never, for any students, achieved that second goal of motivating them to study this discipline. Consequently, I've taken the format of the course and turned it into an advanced course in my board. I have more students in the course; they are people who are already motivated to study geology. I guess the third reason why I set the course up in the first place is that, imbued by the spirit of discussion at Oakes, we in the physical sciences have always tried to incorporate into our courses an assessment of the political consequences of the material. So the course was an explicit attempt to apply that principle to geology. And similarly I have made that same application now in my board. It's one of a small number of courses taught by my discipline that incorporates the political context of the subject matter.

Shensa: Besides the political aspects, did you design the course in other ways to fit the nontraditional student?

Gill: The principal difference was nontraditional in the sense of preparation, so I tried to tailor the course each time it was taught to the particular people taking it that year. So I think my method of presenting material, especially in the area of mathematics was more variable. Because the class was smaller, I could accommodate greater diversity. But with respect to changing it to accommodate differences in cognitive style—the

personal background of the students in the course, I never learned enough to be able to take advantage of those aspects of the diversity of students in the course.

Shensa: I have heard a lot about the uniqueness of Oakes' science programs and the lab setups. Does that involve you?

Gill: It doesn't involve me now, but I was instrumental in setting it up. At the inception of the college, even before I came, Ralph Guzman, whose background is in engineering, and Bill Doyle, who is a biologist, together with Herman, decided to try to include a healthy component of natural science at the college for a variety of reasons. For example, ostensibly science is more culturally free. One's race and one's background make it difficult to work in some disciplines. For instance, if you work in sociology you are in an environment that has defined aspects of nontraditional culture as abnormal. So it's a more charged environment and not everyone succeeds. To work in mathematics, geology or physics is more neutral. And that was part of the aspiration of the college. It was to make sure that that avenue was open—

Shensa: Wasn't another reason that of encouraging more minorities to go into the sciences, which they hadn't done before because of lack of background, and fear of failure?

Gill: Yes there may not be a lot of jobs for Black sociologists or Chicano historians but there are millions of jobs in the sciences because there have been so few minority people. In my profession I think I could count on two hands the number of Ph.D. Black and Hispanic practitioners in the U.S. So many places feel the need, if at no other level than the affirmative action office of their corporation. But by virtue of their being so few people in those fields, it also meant that those fields were not benefiting from diversity

of viewpoint. I think those of us who have taught in the science program at Oakes would be disappointed if all we did was increase the number of Black and Chicano doctors or engineers. That isn't enough just to have more people passing courses in physics or whatever it is. However, by virtue of doing that one could change those disciplines on the one hand, and be more effective in bringing those disciplines to bear on minority communities.

SHENSA: You mentioned political responsibility.

Gill: And social. Obviously, there's a dearth of doctors in an inner city. We didn't just want doctors, but doctors who would feel a sense of social responsibility.

I think there is a general and not terribly well-informed impression that the Oakes Science Program has been successful. But we don't know. It's very hard to know what measure of success to use. It's anecdotal. There are particular people who have been successful. Would they have been successful otherwise? It's conjecture. We have no good means of tracking students. We assumed that the students taking Oakes courses might be higher risk students so that if they perform as well as the campus average that's a measure of Oakes' success. I think that for most of us success has been measured in terms of personal interaction with specific people, and those have been successful.

Shensa: I was asking about success in terms of the goals that Oakes had set up, not the judgments from outside.

Gill: For me personally it's hard to answer that.

Shensa: One person has indicated that most of these students do not return to their communities, and he considers this a failure.

Gill: I don't know if that's true, and if it is, it is a failure. By the same token, remember that even the earliest graduating class has only been out of here for eight or nine years. If they've been to graduate school, many just now getting out of graduate school. It may be premature. On a cultural level, education *per se* distances people from their roots. This affects everyone, but especially people who, in one generation, represent a large change in cultural values. It asks more of them and more of Oakes.

Shensa: I understand that in the beginning Oakes had a lot of retreats and orientation meetings. People were brought together quite a bit and there was a very close support system. Could you tell me a little bit of what this was like for you?

Gill: I may be atypical in this respect. I think the greatest contribution Oakes has made to my sense of mission as a young academic, has happened through informal conversations, talking with one or two people. During the middle years we used to have what we called a pedagogy committee. That's probably where I got to know Don Rothman, Ron Saufley and Bob Crespi best. The exchange of ideas in this committee and amongst the scientists was most prominent in sharpening my understanding of what I believed in and how I could implement those beliefs. Oakes has represented for me a place of rekindling spirit, reasserting mission, sharpening ideals.

Shensa: And things now haven't lessened your enthusiasm?

Gill: It hasn't changed the role of Oakes in raising those questions, in juxtaposing choices. For example, I spent last week in Texas at a scientific meeting presenting my

research programs. However, the day before I left I was here sorting out the educational policy committee's critique of Oakes. The first thing I did upon coming back to campus was to join with the other people planning next year's core course, talking about ways of presenting material so that it will build on the strengths but challenge the assumptions of nontraditional students. Throughout my history at Santa Cruz, there has been the juxtaposition of my research interests on the one hand, and a sense of social responsibility posed by questions raised in Oakes. For me, this has been more important than retreats. If anything, I think I didn't like the retreats very much because I thought that they were not a wise use of time.

Shensa: Would you say that this kind of involvement is not typical of the other colleges on campus?

Gill: I have a hard time judging. People who I teach with have had an analogous relationship with other colleges. I think that's atypical—to have half of my department colleagues feeling some sense of collegiate mission and responsibility is unusual. So I think Oakes may have had a higher percentage of people who are committed to it than other colleges have, but I don't think other colleges had none.

Shensa: Since the future of Oakes as an academic unit is so much in question right now, what is there that you could say that might "sell" the administration on continuing Oakes?

Gill: I don't know what it will mean for Oakes not to continue. It looks now, 1981-82, as though the period when we taught a variety of courses having in common a commitment of the instructor to an ideal, is over. The Oakes that we spent ten years building is ending. In the course of meetings to defend that program it's become more

clear to me that Oakes' success is in some significant way is independent of those classes. The average enrollment of Oakes students in Oakes classes is under ten, outside the sciences. Most Oakes students do not take Oakes courses. Most of our students take one non-science course at Oakes in their first or second year, other than the core course. Our community has grown in some significant way, independent of those courses. People don't need to be in those courses to have the community. It may be a bit like our proximity to the ocean; probably not many people here go and swim in it, but it's important to know it's there if you want to swim in it.

However, taking something away that used to be there is a political act that has consequences independent of reality. So I think that more people are upset that Oakes courses disappear, than who take them. I'm not sure what it means for Oakes not to offer the courses that it has offered. It could well be that the reason that more people didn't take those courses is that they are not the courses that students need and that what they need more are courses which clearly and identifiably prepare them for a given discipline. Perhaps it makes more sense for Oakes faculty to invest themselves in teaching courses that are preparatory to a given discipline. Perhaps we can continue a lot of what has made Oakes special even without courses called Oakes courses. We could teach the same courses we now teach; we can teach them at Oakes, and they would be called, say, Sociology 20, instead of Oakes 20 and Oakes students could have preferential enrollment.

Shensa: What I'm trying to find out is especially what you feel is so unique about Oakes college, why it was established, how much has it accomplished and why it couldn't be accomplished elsewhere?

Gill: I think the most important thing is that Oakes has had a faculty with personal commitments to non-traditional students. That commitment is expressed in the way they teach whatever they teach, in the precepting that they do, in the advising they do, in their availability, in the opportunity for students to interact with a faculty who take their background seriously and who value it, and if possible, who use it to an end. The campus may very well have many such people outside of Oakes, but they're less visible just because they're less collected. It's important for this campus to have a reservoir of such people. In practice it acquired its reservoir because Oakes existed and therefore exerted influence at the level of who to hire and who to keep. And if Oakes ceases to have an academic program one problem for the campus is how to attract such people and keep them. The university needs to have a faculty personally committed to having nontraditional students here.

The second thing that's most important is to have on the campus, and clearly visible on the campus, a curriculum that addresses the backgrounds and cognitive styles of non-traditional students. For instance, in the social sciences, this has meant separate courses, intensive tutoring, availability of people to help with problem solving and to create a network that gives people encouragement. The issue now under discussion is should the Natural Sciences division do that on a campuswide basis? The campus has to accept that responsibility and implement it some way. They can choose to implement it through the Natural Sciences division; they can implement it through Oakes; they can implement it with the Natural Sciences division at Oakes. But the crunch is that there be some implementation. The mechanics are, I think, negotiable, but significant. I also think that it's very important that there be a very active recruiting policy to try to attain the greatest diversity of students possible.



Shensa: I understand that there are only about one hundred Black students on campus.

Gill: That will change. Next year the Educational Opportunity Program [EOP] office has been more effective in at least getting applicants. If those four hundred minority students come here, God help us, God help them, because they're coming at a time when this campus is, if anything, cutting back on its commitment to them. On the one hand, if the campus wants to align itself with a state that's going to have to have a Black governor, with a state where the non-traditional students are becoming a majority of those of university age—if the university wants to enter that world, then it has to do something like what Oakes is trying to do.

Shensa: In retrospect, where do you think Oakes went wrong or circumstances created—

Gill: Well, I think that the university was schizophrenic. I think the administration, if not all of the faculty, wanted what Oakes represented, but it wasn't willing to pay the price for it either at the dollar or procedural level. Whether Oakes exists or not, the university has to be willing to reward people for meeting those needs instead of other ones. I think recruitment of students is important.

Shensa: And Herman [Blake] is leaving in one year. What kind of provost would you want to see—

Gill: I think that the single most important thing is the ability to relate to the students in a wise way, to be firm, to be able to ride through hard things. I think it's very hard to be a college provost, because a student's reaction at Oakes often is a strong reaction. The provost has to be a role model and an effective contributor to the life of the students.

[interruption]

Shensa: We were talking about why the faculty would want to continue at the college, and you were saying that one of the reasons would be that they might want to continue the goals of the college whether or not they taught courses here.

Gill: There's precedent for that in what the Natural Sciences faculty have done. Some people might want to be affiliated here because their principal sponsoring unit on campus might be here anyway, such as education or American Studies. The hardest choice would be for people whose principal agency, whose board, is somewhere else. The rewards to them personally would be greatest if they were with everybody else in the board, namely somewhere else. And then what would their relation in the college be if they're not teaching a college course and they're not housed here? It would leave Oakes with potentially a very small number of faculty in residence who were sympathetic. We might wind up with boards of studies being here who weren't very sympathetic, and the sympathetic people would end up just being affiliated like I am now, in almost a visiting capacity.

Shensa: There's one point we haven't touched on. How do you think students have reacted? Have they, the ones you've kept in touch with, ever expressed how they felt about Oakes and what it did for them?

Gill: For most of the students who I know through Oakes the college has had a profound effect. There's a fellow coming back to graduate school at Santa Cruz next fall who was in that "Volcanoes" class I taught the very first time, who went to graduate school elsewhere, dropped out—he grew up in the Central Valley—he was a labor organizer in the fields—he kept the battle over his time, which is the same unresolved

problem that I've had for twenty years—what to do with your life, so to speak. But he's coming back to Santa Cruz next year, in large part, because of Oakes. He's going to do graduate work in geology here, but he's doing it in Santa Cruz instead of somewhere else because this is where he feels at home. I think there are lots of examples like that. I hope students will feel strongly, and perhaps respond in an organized political way to decisions to disallow further courses in the college. That's what I was saying before; I imagine there will be more students who are angry about it than would take the classes. One of the real dangers that we run right now is that faculty who are tired and resentful, and students who would be angered in a year in which Nancy Shaw is denied tenure, etc. would respond in a political way without having any shared idea of what is important—what does it take for the system to do something. Even though Oakes has been successful at many personal levels, I don't think what we have done is the best that can be done. In one respect we were acting as a gadfly, getting the university as a system to do something which it hadn't done without the existence of Oakes. If it was ever going to serve a lot of people, it would have to do it on a broader scale than Oakes had done anyway. I always hoped that the Natural Sciences program might be given over to the university when the university had demonstrated that it was able to do it. The danger now is that the university is taking it over without any will or mechanism to do it even as well as Oakes had done it, much less better; without much knowledge of what it's getting in for, much less what's worked; without any particular interest in the experience that Oakes has acquired over the last ten years. One of the dangers is that there would be a kind of an angry reaction from Oakes faculty and nontraditional students, which would make it harder to develop a program that would be viable in the long term. The real crux now is what the university is prepared to do for non-traditional students if it's not going to respond to them as Oakes has. It's one thing to say that what

Oakes has done hasn't been worth the price it would cost for the university to continue. It's another thing to have an alternative.

Shensa: Are you optimistic?

Gill: No. And what they have to understand is that whatever problems they've had with Oakes, those problems will remain, no matter what. And if anything, the problems will be worse if they don't have a unit which is primarily responsible for them as Oakes has been.

**Roberto Crespi April 30, 1982**

Shensa: You said that Oakes fit your philosophy for a while. Would you care to comment on that?

Crespi: My idea of Oakes College was that we were not only going to make up for the lousy education our students were subjected to in the high schools in this state, but that we would give a critique of American society which explains why their education had been so bad. I didn't know that part of my function here was going to be teaching people how to read and write at levels that I naively assumed they ought to have reached before they came here. Nor did I know that Oakes would dedicate itself to overcome barriers to science careers and stuff that by and large had been difficult for the working class students of this country, Mexican students and Black students, with whom I'd be working, to overcome. I saw Oakes College, more and more, not from the beginning, but for the last three or four years, certainly more poignantly, really concerned about whether we were going to produce doctors and lawyers as we overcame those basic skills problems. I had believed that Oakes College was more interested in—that even with those skills, there was a responsibility—the kind of society in which those skills were needed. And Oakes played down the importance of that society question and played up the organic chemistry bit—and I think our students caught the bug.

If I could be crude—I suppose this could be quoted—I think that Oakes now could be accused of, good intentions aside, in practice, it could be accused by an outsider as being a place where students are encouraged to “make it” and not feel “guilty” about it. Maybe the word, “guilty,” is wrong. But Oakes is ignoring an important component of

the education of these future professionals, the component that understands why there are only a few Chicano and Black lawyers and doctors in the future in this state. Oakes College should try to make possible the future practice of these professional people in socially responsible arenas. They don't return to their own communities. I've been here ten years; they don't return. They say they'll return so they can get our letters of recommendation to graduate and professional schools; they say they'll return so they won't feel guilty. They say they'll return because they refuse to believe that they're the lucky and the chosen. Even returning is frustrating for most of them because they don't know how to work politically when they do. They're limited to performing a decent professional job in a clinic and are really providing band-aid help for urgent social problems which they are incompetent to address. I don't tell people not to be doctors; I don't tell people not to be lawyers. I mean, I'm a professor; how could I tell someone not to be a professional? But I know that most of our students will be very happy with the lifestyle that it gives them. Most of them will be happy to jump from the class they belong to, to a new class of shiny cars and beautiful homes. And I'm very critical of that. In the last ten years I've seen Oakes students enter the professions and become indistinguishable from the other people in those professions except for the color of their skin. I feel no longer a part of that Oakes College.

I'm resigning from Oakes College, not because I think Kresge College is any better, but I've been here for ten years now at Oakes and feel that what I've got to say about Oakes is that Oakes is no longer a place where students want to hear what I'm saying. People at Kresge don't want to hear it either, but, how can I say it, my blood's on the walls of those buildings. I've been here a long time. And it hurts me more being *here* and seeing what I have to say is neither important nor relevant to the future doctors or dentists of

America; it hurts more here. It won't be better at Kresge for me. I'll be dealing with the cynical youth of the bourgeoisie there. But, in one way, it'll be less painful to me. I feel the same way with respect to the faculty at Oakes. I feel the faculty at Oakes have, for the most part, given up the original reason we all came here. I don't dislike them, and I really get along with them, but I think that somehow, they're tired and demoralized and therefore incapable of resurrecting what I thought to be our original commitment.

Shensa: Where do you think they went wrong?

Crespi: Probably from the very beginning—all the errors and bad decisions that we made from the beginning didn't all come together to change Oakes until maybe four or five years ago. Probably about five years ago. When were those decisions made? Probably at the inception of the college.

Shensa: What do you think it would take to create the kind of atmosphere that you've indicated would be desirable?

Crespi: To overcome the errors we've made? At the beginning we were given a lot of money for hiring new people. Since we only generated four from the campus, the administration gave us a bunch of positions. There were new positions opening up on the campus, and the candidates for those positions were going to be, as it turned out, "*condemned*" to work at Oakes College, because that's where the slots were going. We spent the first three or four years here interviewing, I think, every day. You know we hired about fifteen people the first three or four years. I think that it was there that we made big mistakes. We were more interested in the ethnicity of the candidate and not with the worldview of the candidate. I know the whole affirmative action argument. Hell, I'm Puerto Rican; I know how it's affected getting doors slammed in my face—

Shensa: Couldn't it have been both?

Crespi: It ought to have been both. But somehow, whenever there was a disparity, and there often was, we went with ethnic origin. We hired careerists and people only marginally interested in changing America. This caused, in part, what has happened to Oakes College. There was a professionalism among many of the appointments that was not threatening to students who were seeking a professional, comfortable existence after Oakes College. We lost those appointment battles. I fought those battles, you know—not just me, there were others too. We were outnumbered. We were outnumbered, and the provost had a very heavy hand, and he pretty much controlled who got hired at this college. For that, he shares in the blame. Oakes has been his creation, and its failures are due in part to his limited vision and apparent unconcern for what went on in our classrooms.

Shensa: What about the successes?

Crespi: I don't know what the successes at Oakes are except that we help some people to lead professional lives in America, a certain percentage of non-traditional peoples. Certainly that is not why I want to be an educator.

Shensa: You seem pretty cynical about this.

Crespi: I think it was because this professional policy attracted a lot of grant money. Carnegie and the big foundations in this country who do not want this country to change drastically or dramatically, who would like this country to continue being what it is, but with token representation in professional positions, thought Oakes was a dream. We got money from the most outrageous, horrible corporations in this country,



corporations who murdered people in Africa, and they gladly gave us thousands of dollars to do our college. The contradiction has been too much for me. But those monies were there, and I don't blame, in a way, Oakes for taking that money and hiring all of us and creating this soft money pot where we could have counselors and tutors. We need them. Even with my worldview, we need them. I want people to understand organic chemistry. I want my students to understand differential equations. But what I want also is for my students to understand that they're not special, that they're lucky, that any Mexican or Black can do well here and that the problem is that they're *not* all here. I understand that only a few will come. But I certainly want them to graduate, knowing that any of their brothers, sisters, cousins or neighbors, could have made it here. I have a feeling that Oakes College gives a message to students who work hard here from very poor backgrounds: that it's their work and their dedication that will determine whether they make it. I've been told during my ten years here that I'm very different from most Puerto Ricans. And I say, "Why? I don't dance? What kind of a racist comment is that? Do you have an image of a Puerto Rican that I don't fit?" And they say, "Well, you went to Harvard. And you got a Ph.D.; you talk; you're articulate; you're very intellectually aggressive." Somehow, I'm supposed to be a timid, scared academic thinking that I came in through the back door of this university. Or I'm supposed to think that I'm so special and different. I don't. I'm here because I was lucky. I succeeded mostly because I was lucky. I found a teacher in a high school who told me I was bright and he worked with me. I think all my students are bright. I think people on the street shooting heroin are bright and could get "A's" in Organic. I want the people who graduate from here, who become the surgeons and the doctors, to understand one important thing: that they made it because they were lucky. Yes, they

worked hard, of course, but they were lucky. Anyone in the barrio, in the community, could have come and they could have made it.

Shensa: Do I hear you imply that they have a responsibility for—And therefore, you were chosen; you were a lucky, chosen person from this group, and don't you ever forget it. That's what's been forgotten.

Crespi: Social responsibility is hard to impose on anybody. But we want, at this college, to certainly be seen as socially responsible. If you ask people on campus what Oakes is, or to articulate the perception we give to the world, we hear that Oakes is "the ethnic college," which it's not. We don't even teach ethnic studies. Or, that Oakes is, "the college that teaches science to Third World students." But nowhere do I hear that Oakes wrestles with important questions like racism, poverty, unemployment, imperialism and war.

Shensa: How do you account for some of the literature I've read that states that Oakes is well known throughout the country and is lauded as one of the best minority colleges there is?

Crespi: Bluntly, I attribute it to good P.R. Anyone who comes here will see the hollowness of that propaganda. Our students walk around in packs. Black students and Chicanos hardly talk to one another. The racism is in the dorms. We don't even address it in our classes. We have not created an ethnic community here. That's a myth. We've got dorms where Black students and Chicano students and white students somehow co-exist. Oakes has done very little to chip away at the distrust among our students. How could it? Oakes' philosophy on the ethnic question is that everyone who comes here comes from a tradition that is, in balance, equally valid. And so, we have courses on the

Black experience, and the next week, the Asian one, and the next week the Puerto Rican one, and the Jewish immigrant one and this one and that one. And there's a barrage of data coming to people who are not of that group—the Chicano student reads the book about Black culture. But somehow, there's no interchange; there's no, "Hey, why do you do that?" or, "I don't think you should do that," or, "Why do women in Mexico have to be in the house?" It is, "Don't criticize. Don't come that close. You're not of my culture; you cannot comment on it; all you can do is hear what *I* have to say about it.

Shensa: Did you go to any of the retreats?

Crespi: In the beginning there was lots of money, and we went on retreats nearly every week and stayed at lodges.

Shensa: What was it like?

Crespi: We were a new college, new friends—"Hey, what's your name?" "What do you do weekends?" "Do you play racquetball?" It was social; it was more interpersonal; we tried some of those group therapy things. I personally don't like to do that. But I recognize their use for people meeting each other for the first time. But we didn't address any social questions. We addressed how we were all going to work together; how we were all going to learn to like one another and respect one another. I just think Oakes College existed as a desert, or as an oasis—whichever English works—in a world of increasing social problems. *And Oakes didn't address them!* We don't have a course at Oakes, and never did, on the International Community. Our students don't know where the Falkland Islands are. Our students don't know what the hell is going on in Tehran. Our students don't know what just happened in France. Oakes College has

been so inner-oriented that somehow being Black or Puerto Rican became the central issue

For me, I'm a member of the species and it exists on every country of this planet. And the starving kids in Bangladesh are as important to me as the starving kids in Watts. I don't play down the starving kids in Watts. The troubles are near to us and we should mobilize immediately. Oakes doesn't even talk about Watts. But not to know that they're starving in Pakistan? Not to know that in Uganda there are babies dying at the rate of one a minute? I don't understand why this college closed their doors. And it did. I remember when the freshman seminar program began three years ago. I'd been teaching the National Question each time because I wanted to talk about Vietnam and Algeria. The lectures and the other sections dealt with the parochial: you know, who runs the university and "is it fair this" and "is it fair that" and "what is racism" and that's important stuff. But in the context of the world we live in, I don't know how solutions are going to be found when the questions are so narrowly posed.

Shensa: As an educator and a humanist, how do you think this sort of thing could be accomplished?

Crespi: I'm a socialist. I don't think that we're going to create a socialist college in the middle of a society that will not continue to pay us if we become one. The funds would go; we'd all be looking for jobs. I'm not that Utopic. I don't think that Oakes should be what I want—about fifteen Communist teachers working with five hundred working class students to try to explain to them *why* their parents have led such miserable lives, and *why* they want their children to become doctors. You know *why* their parents

worked eight hours and day and saved nothing, *why* they broke their backs picking lettuce and nearly died in those sweat shops. Obviously, that is what I'd want.

Shensa: But aren't there also some intermediate steps? Can you jump right in?

Crespi: Of course. Obviously what I want is not even possible, because if this college went Communist we'd all be out of work. I know that. But also, there is some kind of integrity that I see missing now in our faculty. I'm resigning. After ten years it's a very big thing that I'm resigning. I've been active in this college. I've been on all the committees. I've been here since the very beginning. I feel like it's a divorce, almost. When you get a divorce, nine-tenths of you wants it, but there's still ten percent of you that still either loves, cares or remembers. There's something in you—you never know when someone's one hundred percent divorced. You always take with you, "Did I make the right decision?" "Could we have had a second try?" Or, "Was it her, or was it me?" And I've got those—I'm not that self-righteous. I sound it, but I'm not. There are things I did wrong. There are things I'm not willing to tolerate; a stronger person might be able to. Maybe I just don't have the energy to make the marriage work and a stronger person could. So my leaving is mixed.

I think that the faculty at Oakes is demoralized and tired. I think what happened is that Oakes made a very crucial error in thinking that this administration was going to let us do what we had originally, I thought, set out to do. And for the first five years it was easy. None of us was coming up for tenure. We were all junior faculty. There were no negative tenure decisions. We weren't coming up for tenure for five or six years. We were building this college—no one had slapped us in the face yet. No one had fired us. We didn't even think the threat existed, because we thought the administration was

supportive of what we were doing. Four years ago the writing on the wall began to be read. Pat Bourne, now we have Peter Meyer, Nancy Shaw—my tenure fight took a whole two years. I won, but it took two years. In 1976 they said no to me. Two or three faculty quit and went to other colleges because they thought they'd have a better chance of tenure. Junior faculty didn't want to come here because it's been proven that junior faculty here are "suicidal." But we didn't know that for the first five or six years when we were building this place. And so, as soon as the realization that Oakes College really was being attacked—people just started being bumped off, one by one, and the demoralization happened very quickly. I was the first test case for tenure. I'm in the literature department. And when the literature department voted against my tenure in 1976, Oakes went crazy. Blake, Doyle, the senior faculty—there was talk of resignations. People went into the chancellor's office and said, "Oakes is going—if you don't give—" Blake did this. He said, "Listen, if you don't give Crespi tenure, for what he's done here, then Oakes College, get another provost," or something like that.

Shensa: Are people putting themselves on the line that way now?

Crespi: No, that was the last time they did it. It just cost so much to win that one. It wasn't just my case. There were other battles behind the scenes. We stopped being a militant college to defend our own about five years ago. We just accepted blow after blow. And our faculty was so demoralized that when one was bumped off, like when the Nazis came for the Communists, the Jews said, "Well, the Communists . . ." and when they came for the labor leaders, the Jews said, "Well, the labor leaders." And when they finally went for the Jews, well the faculty developed that consciousness of, Well, they got Allen but maybe they won't get me." And instead of jeopardizing themselves in a fight for Allen they said, "Maybe Oakes should not get nasty because

we have other people coming up now. And so what happened was that they got bumped off, one by one. The only reason why the Nancy Shaw thing hit the fan is that everyone expected her to *get* tenure. Everyone else at Oakes, campuswide, is perceived as basically an Oakes person. Nancy Shaw came to Oakes after having been with Community Studies for a few years. She was not college affiliated. So she had a good rapport with the board; they were very supportive of her. She worked with Sociology for a while. She *chose* to come to Oakes college about four years ago after she saw that it was a place where she'd like to be. Well, in the process she developed a constituency outside of Oakes, so when she came up for tenure and was denied tenure by the upper administration, everyone knew that everyone who had fed into the process had recommended, "yes." That's the only reason that Nancy might win. The reason she might win is because of that broader constituency. But most of those people who worked at Oakes those five or six founding years, ninety percent of our energy was here. Our boards hated us! We could only go to half of their meetings because the other half of the time we had meetings here. We could only be on half of their committees because we were on ten committees here. We couldn't be on their search committees because we were already searching for fifteen people here. And the boards perceived us as preferring to be Oakes people, and waited for tenure time to get back at us for it. We all thought that the time and energy that we were putting into Oakes would be recognized by the administration, and the administration would come into the foray during the inevitable board and college battles. We thought the contract was, you know, that these people built the college. Lay off of them. On the contrary, the administration came out and went with the boards.

Shensa: One of the people I interviewed said that one of the biggest mistakes Oakes made was not involving the rest of the campus in Oakes' affairs.

Crespi: Well, that's partly the provost's error and partly the result of a meek and frightened faculty.

Shensa: Do you think that what Oakes does could be done at the other colleges? Does Oakes have a purpose? Should it exist?

Crespi: What I like about Oakes College, and I'm going to defend Oakes College from Kresge or from wherever I go, is that it cares about the few minority students on this campus. I think that Santa Cruz has the highest percentage of Anglo students in the entire system. We have one hundred Black students out of 6,500 on this campus. One hundred Black students! I support Oakes College. I don't want three Black students at Stevenson and five Black students at Cowell. The usefulness of Oakes as an academic unit is to get this small number of students on this campus some decent professional training. Now, how can I be against that? If it's important to create Black doctors and lawyers, then Oakes College is important.

My criticism is that that's not all that's important. I'm not that happy with that as our success story. I don't want to destroy it. I think it is important that the health professions be open to underrepresented people in those professions. But I'm not an affirmative action fool to think that that changes the world we live in. So affirmative action is certainly not long-range objective of mine. I think Oakes performs that short range function, but I think the biggest function Oakes performs is a *social one*. Our students feel safer here, in the dorms and walking around, and for that alone, I support Oakes College. If we had no academic program at all, I would support Oakes College.



Some people point to it and say it's a sort of ghetto. We have no right to tell our one hundred Black students to spread out among the eight colleges. They will quit in a week. Even at Oakes, they have a rough time. But it's better here than putting five Black students at Stevenson. As long as there aren't 2,000 Black students on campus, and there should be—they're twenty percent of the population of this state, as long as there's not twenty percent of the students on this campus, Oakes has a function of socially supporting students who would be victimized by a nonsupportive atmosphere at other colleges. So obviously in a transitional period like this—I hope it's transitional, I hope the university opens to more students, but obviously that's not going to happen without a fight and I don't believe Oakes is participating in that fight, so there we go. I support Oakes *de facto* function right now of providing at least a *social* setting where students can feel supported.

Shensa: What did Oakes do that the other colleges could not do, besides the residential factor?

Crespi: I think that Oakes College told some students from lousy high schools that they were smart and convinced them. The best thing that Oakes did was let these students know that they were thinking, intelligent and bright. I support Oakes for having done that. It still does that—less and less, but it still does that. And my criticism is that that's not enough, that you have to say, "And so are all your other brothers and sisters who they won't let come here and with whom you are going to have to deal with when you leave here."

**Don Rothman, 4/14/82**

Shensa: You're the first person I've come to and I'd like to ask you, Don, how did you come to Oakes?

Rothman: Well, in 1972 I first heard about Oakes College. That was the first year that Oakes opened and I heard from Dilip Basu who teaches Chinese and Indian history and who was a friend of mine at Berkeley Graduate School. He got a job teaching at UCSC and got me interested in teaching at Oakes College. And he knew that since I was teaching writing at Merritt College working mostly with Black students, working class people that I'd be interested in Oakes, so it was first through Dilip that I learned about the college.

Shensa: Did he tell you about its philosophy and what it stood for? What was its greatest appeal?

Rothman: For me, I was looking for a job, first of all. I was teaching part time at Merritt College, which was a junior college, and I was teaching at Berkeley as an associate while I was a graduate student. I needed a full-time job. I was committed at that time to working with non-traditional students at the university. I was finding myself more and more interested in working with those people whose success was not guaranteed, for whom teaching made a difference, people who were not at all sure what was expected of them at the university, what would be expected and who would really value the efforts that I was willing to put into helping them how to write.

Shensa: Had you met Herman Blake or read anything that he had written?

Rothman: No, I had never heard of Herman Blake although I did write Herman a letter after Dilip told me about the college, saying that I was interested. Herman wrote back a supportive and welcome letter from my point of view, saying that while they didn't know anything about funding, if they had a job he certainly was interested in getting to meet me. A year went by and nothing happened. Evidently, that first year there was no funding. And it wasn't until the following year that I once again I heard that they actually got some funding, and I applied for the job. I came down and got an interview; it was in the summer of '73, and then finally did get hired to begin in the fall of '73. So I've been here nine years.

Shensa: What were some of your reactions in the beginning and what was your first year like?

Rothman: My reactions in the beginning—I was a little scared because I was coming to a college that was new, and I was new. I also had the feeling that we were pioneers and I was joining a team that was building the college. And that I was coming on board a year late, but I still felt that I was part of something new. I also felt that I was coming into a situation where a good deal of trust was being placed on the faculty at Oakes to do what they should be done. And there was very little guidance from other people, because there were very few people who had ever tried to do anything like this. I had the feeling right from the start that I was going to play a very important role in something that was new. And I knew right from the start that we might fail. And that we were going to learn—regardless of whether we ended up failing or succeeding—the whole process of trying this was going to be exciting and new. I think right from the start I had the feeling that this was an important place to be, and that in some way the

potential for changing higher education, to meet the needs of people whose needs were not being met and who weren't even visible on campus was very exciting to me.

Shensa: Was anything spelled out to you about what was expected of you?

Rothman: Well, I knew that I was going to be asked to be incredibly available to students, not just as a teacher in the class but as an advisor and person and to somehow be present as part of the college and the life of the college and to be available in my students' lives. I could see that, and that was perfectly consistent with what was temperamentally my own commitment to education was what I was looking for. The first year I was here actually the first there was an effort to integrate what was called "co-counseling," re-evaluation counseling with what went on at the college. And so it was clear that I would be part of groups that were to meet in the evenings to talk about intercultural communication, cultural differences, on an affective as well as an intellectual level. Those first few years at the college, I think involved almost everyone who was here completely. The distinction between my professional and private life was virtually nonexistent at that time.

Shensa: What did your wife feel?

Rothman: I wasn't married the first year I was here. So the first year I had a lot more time to give to the college at night and in a variety of ways. I'm actually glad that that was true. I think I needed that time to find out if I wanted to stay here. It was a difficult first year, since I came with a whole variety of expectations of what I thought I should be doing to teach writing. I was just reminded yesterday at another meeting of something that I tried to do the first year I was teaching here—I haven't thought of them for many years.

I assumed that one of the things a writing class could be was a forum for some of the very complex and problematic types of issues that were plaguing our students' lives in the relationship to the university and to each other in the dorms. We were living in the dorms of College V then.

I thought that a writing class would be a good place for people to evaluate what was happening to them in the new environment and confront some of the real shaky problems that were influencing how they were doing as students and as people. And what I discovered was that the kind of intensity that those issues generated in a class and the kinds of intensity that they clearly had generated in the dorms for some students proved to be too much. And that what they wanted was a chance in the writing class to get away from some of the problems that they couldn't deal with. They weren't just personal. They were social. They were problems that, in fact, come with racism in a society and come with living in a dormitory situation with people from different class backgrounds and ethnic backgrounds were all together. So they could be interpreted as personal or they could be interpreted as political. Nonetheless, a lot of my students needed some respite from that, so I needed to pick up on that and pull back a little from the emphasis on dealing with the here and now all the time. And all the value, in fact, in introducing literature, books that would in some way allow us to raise some of the same issues.

Shensa: How did you handle that?

Rothman: I handled it by listening to criticism and trying to sort out how much of the criticism I should respond to by changing what I was doing as a teacher, and how much was inevitable because of trying to do something that was difficult. And I suppose by

coming to some compromise in a way and realizing that if I didn't deal with the expectations of my students, I was in fact not helping them. And I needed to acknowledge that they came to a writing class with a variety of expectations that I couldn't just ignore. I might want to change them, and I did. That I couldn't ignore. I learned a lot that first year; it was a tremendously important year for me in terms of my own teaching. I think I learned more the first year of teaching at Oakes College than I had learned as a teacher before. And a good deal of that growth, I feel, has just continued in my relationship with this class.

Shensa: In what way did you change it in your second year? Do you recall what theme or emphasis you used?

Rothman: I saw the importance of establishing in my writing classes an intellectual theme that allowed us, when we thought it was appropriate, to reflect on a personal and socialized "here," but also allowed us to look at more abstract and, in some ways, to look analytically at the ideas that were, in fact, informing our daily lives without always looking directly at our everyday lives. I took more seriously the importance of having a theme in the writing class other than just communication among ourselves.

I began to look at the importance of having, for instance, the depiction of silence, of speechlessness in literature as a theme that we could look at which would take us back to the question of why we should be writing in life—the act of writing is so important. But which we didn't feel we constantly had to look at everything that was happening to us—everything in our daily lives. I think I learned the importance of helping my students integrate what they were doing in my class with what they were doing in their other classes.

Shensa: Were those also Oakes classes?

Rothman: Some were classes elsewhere. A writing class in some ways needed to have a true intellectual center and not be separated as either “remedial” or skills-oriented, but to be seen as, in fact, another place—another environment in which serious ideas could be analyzed and communicated.

Shensa: On the subject of writing, how much would you differentiate what you were doing in writing at Oakes and writing at the other colleges?

Rothman: When I first got here the only writing classes offered on campus were through extension. The students had to pay a \$45.00 fee for a non-credit course. So when I got here I realized that this was absolutely intolerable; we need to offer writing classes for full credit, and they should be offered as part of the regular academic program without any extra fee being assessed. And we simply started on our own offering Oakes 15 and Oakes 16 as writing classes for credit. And within about a year the rest of the campus was doing the same. And we at that point decided to offer courses for credit.

Shensa: From what you know of the writing at other colleges, what would you say are the greatest differences at Oakes?

Rothman: Well, I’m pleased to say that over the last six years or so that we have pulled together what I consider to be an excellent writing program on the campus. I think what the teachers teaching on the other colleges are fine. One of the differences that I think is directly related just to the entire ethos of Oakes College is that I have always been accepted at Oakes College as a regular faculty member, not an adjunct, and not seen as

somehow of less importance. I've been on all the important committees; I've taken leadership in the college. Probably, the biggest difference has been my role in the college compared to the role that the other writing teachers have been allowed to play in their colleges. I think that there's more of a traditional hierarchy that exists in the other colleges. At Oakes, those people who want to bring energy into the college and who want to work are accepted as equals. And I've always been accepted as an equal despite the fact that I'm a lecturer in writing and that I don't have a board of studies. I think that that has made a tremendous difference in my own professional development. I think that the fact that I have for nine years been accepted as a colleague among biologists, chemists, anthropologists in the true collegial sense at Oakes has given me the confidence and the support to go on and see myself as a colleague of people outside. And that I am a university professor and that I have been encouraged to write about what I do—articles about what I do and to publish articles about what I do. I am tremendously grateful for the opportunity to do that. I don't think that I would have survived in a position where I was always seen as a glorified tutor.

Shensa: I think this must be true because I have heard you referred to as the best writing tutor on campus. But the question I'll come back to again because I'm trying to concentrate on Oakes, is what is so unique about Oakes, including the writing program, that could not be obtained by these same students elsewhere?

Rothman: I think one part of the importance of having the writing program at Oakes is the kind of contact that I feel I have as a writing teacher with my students. I think that it's possible for someone else in another college, I suppose, to have that kind of contact with his or her students. On the other hand, the fact that my students are all living together—many of them right here at the college—means that we have contact in a



variety of ways outside of the classroom. And that turns out to be important—especially important, I think, for first year students who are just developing the confidence that they can make it here—that it’s possible for them to stop by my house. It’s possible for us to meet and have lunch. It’s possible for us to just to talk as human beings about other things other than writing. Ultimately that makes it more possible for me to help them with their writing. And so that’s an extremely important thing. It could be, I think, recreated at the other colleges. Perhaps the thing that hasn’t been created at the other colleges has to do with the ethnic diversity at Oakes, and the reason that that kind of diversity is particularly valuable in a writing class I think—to a great extent in writing you confront the difficulty of finding out what you think and then the difficulty of communicating it to people who may not think like you. And where diversity is an issue which we have all given ourselves permission to discuss at Oakes we then bring that discussion into the writing class and talk about where are the differences that keep us from communicating; where are the areas that despite the differences we feel we can communicate. So, to the extent that diversity itself is the theme of the college, and diversity is a useful subject to discuss in a writing class, it is a perfect environment to be talking about writing. Students expect to talk about their own identities in relationship to other people. They expect to talk about the private and the public at Oakes College because that’s an issue that’s simply part of the college. And those are just the issues of a writing class that should emerge. So, I would say that Oakes, to the extent that it encourages dialogue in a culturally diverse environment, is a perfect situation to be talking about writing and to be looking in a very practical way at the problems that are apparent in any form of communication where people are different. I’ve always felt that the writing classes at Oakes are in some ways a wonderful model for what should happen in a culturally diverse society. People discover what they really think and what

they really want to say to the world and then, despite the differences between them as individuals and other people, they work on strategies to communicate. Because ultimately, the ability to affect other people is so important that it's worth that struggle. And that says, in a sense, what I think Oakes represents.

Shensa: What comes to my mind and maybe it isn't appropriate is would you say this has helped the students who are here when they branch out and are taking the courses in the other colleges? You have evidence then that they are able to communicate better or that they have gained confidence?

Rothman: I don't want to say that people who leave Oakes have things easy or are guaranteed success. But there are enough successes, or there are enough people who have simply gotten to the point of being confident as writers. I feel we've done enough to succeed.

Shensa: One of the questions you and I discussed before for interviewing faculty was "What keeps you here?"

Rothman: Oh, what keeps me here? That's a real good question. I think in part my history keeps me here (laughter)—the fact that I've been here. I still believe that we're doing something very important at Oakes, and I believe that I'm doing something that has some small—I'm making some small contribution in that whole endeavor. And so I'm here for that reason. I have a family now; I live in Santa Cruz. I not only have a role at Oakes College but since I've become the director of the Central California Writing Project I have a wider role in the community and that's a community that extends to Monterey County and San Benito County as well as Santa Cruz. So I've created, I suppose, in the last nine years, an identity for myself both as a father and a husband

and as a teacher there. Also as a professional educator in my community. And so, that's part of the reason I stay here. I like Oakes College and I like Oakes students for the most part. I might find that I like other students in other colleges as well, so if I were teaching in Cowell I might like them the same way, I don't know. But I feel a closeness with my students here. I feel a willingness on their part as well as on the part of the staff and the faculty here to relate to each other as human beings, not just as scholars, not just as professionals, but as people in the same world. And that turns out to be extremely important for my mental health, for my health as a person. I'm a better person, I'm a better teacher for being around other people who are interested in me as a person and not just in a very narrow way.

Shensa: And wouldn't this be possible at the other colleges?

Rothman: I don't know because I haven't been at the other colleges, but I suspect that it wouldn't be at some of the others. I feel like I share certain values with my colleagues at Oakes that keep me here and that's very important.

Shensa: Would you tell me more about them?

Rothman: I think that for the most part the people I'm friendly with and feel close to at Oakes are committed very seriously to political and social change in the world, and they don't see themselves as just scholars working on an abstract and theoretical level with important problems, but ultimately they have accepted the responsibility for being in the world to try to improve it. And to use our research skills, our writing skills, our intellects, our academic skills, our writing skills, our intellects, our academic skills to have some effect on the world we live in, not just to increase our own prestige. Those are the people I'm closest to, and there are people outside of Oakes who are committed

to the same ideals. And those are the people that I've tried to get to know, also. I think there are significant numbers of those kinds of people here at the college. The important thing for me is that they're all committed to education, and they're not only committed to the political work that they're doing, but they are also committed to integrating that work of what they're doing to working with undergraduates at the university. I respect that a great deal. I know that there are a lot of people who are politically aware and politically active, who have less of a commitment to integrating that kind of political awareness into their courses and into the way they relate to students and into teaching, than many of the people I know here.

Shensa: Would you say this is one of the important factors that adds to the uniqueness of Oakes?

Rothman: I think so, yes. I think Oakes also is a place where people have accepted struggle and there's never been in the nine years I've been here, any complacency. And I find that while that's difficult and we often feel beleaguered all the time, the fact that we're struggling opens us up, sensitizes us in some ways to the very real struggles of other people in the world, and to many of our students as well. And I think that's very healthy. I think the issues that we have rallied around at Oakes which often look like our very survival, issues on which our survival depends, are real issues and they are issues which are being confronted in a variety of ways by other people in society. We are now struggling to justify having our own academic program at the college.

We are dealing with the possibility that Oakes students could get just as much out of taking courses from us that we offer through our boards. And we're arguing that there's an existence to a college, an identity that gets defined by a label in some ways and by

what's behind that label, which is an academic program that in some ways changes through time but is continually being evaluated against a set of principles that we all seem to have agreed upon at the college.

Shensa: Would you care to talk specifically about what that label would be right now?

Rothman: I think it's a serious commitment to looking at the ways in which cultural differences can be explored in a multicultural environment—not just with the intention of making people either happy or unhappy or helping them coexist or not coexist, but ultimately is the door through which we think we can understand what's happening in the world outside the university. The issues which we confront in this environment are precisely the issues of racism and classism and elitism and the positive side of collaboration and cooperation—that, in fact, the people outside the university should be confronting seriously and which our students and the faculty and staff here have to confront, regardless of their commitment to education. I think we see a commitment to challenging some of the assumptions that get made in higher education about what is “relevant” and what is “suitable” for academic analysis. I think in some ways we're renewing a vision of the active, involved citizen in this country that I think in various times in American history existed in a more lively way than it does now. And we're saying that the responsibility of the university for educating its citizenry for the society is an essential responsibility and can't just be overlooked. And that higher education can not be just an opportunity to just create technicians, but that we've got to make a commitment to creating people who will critically interact with the issues of their time, have some sense of history, have some sense of the importance of negotiating and compromising and working with each other through difficult problems. I know of no other institutions in society that are attempting to do this. So we have to do it. And for

those who argue that higher education has another mission and that the colleges and universities shouldn't be taking on this, I have no answer. Except, that if we don't do it, and try to do it in the context of education, who else is going to do it?

I think most of us at Oakes are convinced that if people don't learn something about negotiating through their differences and communicating despite them and analyzing what's happening in the world despite the fact that there's a tremendous effort to obscure what's happening—if we don't do that, then it's very likely that it isn't going to be done and we're going to increasingly become a nation of sheep, I hope, not being herded to our own slaughter, but sometimes that's what it appears to be. There's a very kind of optimistic and maybe at times at its worst, a missionary zeal about it. I'd like to think of it as just a kind of humanitarian commitment, which is not at all inconsistent with what higher education has been at different times, but which it clearly isn't, now. So, we are committed to struggling because I think most of us don't want to be part of an institution that is perpetuated on a kind of anti-human technical attitude towards education and a kind of passivity in terms of being a citizen. I think you could say we're doomed to fail because our aspirations are so high. At the same time, I think we've all accepted that the struggle to do it is where the rewards are, not only in the end product. There are enough successes of students going out and taking responsible positions to bring about change—people, for example, who are going to medical school but who have made a commitment to working in community clinics.

To a great extent, it's a liberal vision, and at other times it's a more radical vision.

Shensa: How would you equate all this with the possibility of Oakes being discontinued?

Rothman: I think if Oakes is discontinued entirely, there are a group of us who are going to continue. (laughs) And we're going to continue because we're committed to education and we're committed to the things I was just talking about and we're not dependent on Oakes. The philosophy is alive with or without the institution. I think there are going to be tremendous losses if Oakes isn't continued, but I think that there are those of us who are still going to struggle to educate our students and try to meet the needs of students whose needs are more difficult to meet, perhaps than students going to the other colleges. The problem is that the institution is going to find it increasingly difficult to attract those students in the first place, if Oakes doesn't exist as a recognizable and visible unit on campus. Students need to open the catalog and see that Oakes College, in fact, is a presence on campus and has an intellectual mission. If that disappears the question is going to be: how do we attract these students; how do we attract minority students to the university do that those faculty who are committed to working with them can meet them? If not, it may be eventually that some of us will decide to leave UCSC because working at a lily white institution is not in our plans. (laughs) And I include myself in that. I doubt very much that I would stay very long here if we couldn't come up with some structure if Oakes folds—for attracting the students who I want to work with. And who, incidentally, I feel I'm most effective working with. That's the other thing.

Shensa: I think that's obvious. Do you feel, at the present time, if circumstances permitted you to continue in any way you saw fit, that Oakes has failed in any ways—that it could correct?

Rothman: There's no doubt that we've made a lot of mistakes. I think probably our biggest mistake over the years has been our failure to involve faculty and

administrators on this campus in what we're doing. By "involve" I mean not necessarily get them to teach here, but in some way to make an investment in our success. And I think that we could have done a better job at making sure that the success of Oakes College was, in fact, seen by the administration and other faculty as a success of the campus, and not of just a small group of pioneers struggling with soft money from foundations to succeed. On the one hand, I understand why we isolated ourselves that much and how we felt that the only way we could succeed was to create a fairly tight group whose allegiance was to one another and who didn't tell tales about the college. Because we felt, in fact, that we were always in danger and vulnerable. On the other hand, I think the reality is that no matter what we think of ourselves, we're part of UCSC. And the fact is, we should be part of UCSC. Our academic program is devoted to helping students make it at UCSC. And yet, to a great extent, we didn't do what we should have done to have gotten other faculty and administrators on this campus.

Shensa: Would you say you isolated yourselves?

Rothman: We isolated ourselves and we accepted isolation that was being imposed upon us. I think we were too passive about the isolation, because, in fact, we were being protected by it. And we also, I think isolated ourselves because it was a way of summoning all our energies, concentrating them almost into a ball, and that ball is a safe structure for only so long.

Shensa: Would you say, Don, that that might also help account for the way in which Oakes is understood by people outside.

Rothman: It's complicated. Oakes is misunderstood in part because we, perhaps, haven't been as forthcoming about what we're doing on this campus as we have been



with people hundreds of miles away who want to know what we do. And we're willing to talk to them. I also think we've been misunderstood because the people on this campus have not really sought to understand us. I think that I can't place all the blame on us. It's clear that there have been plenty of opportunities for people on this campus who are concerned with what we're doing to find out about it, and they simply haven't.

There is a lot of finger pointing and name-calling that goes on here. In some ways, I suspect it happens because there's a real lack of administrative leadership, of guidance on the campus as a whole. What winds up happening is that people begin squabbling among themselves because those who should, in some way, be setting the tone of the campus, are not doing their job, and are not being courageous enough to speak out for a vision of education that would, in fact, allow us to address common issues. There's a lot of internal fighting because of this lack of leadership.

Shensa: Would you say that in some way Oakes is a threat to other people on campus?

Rothman: I think we're often perceived as bringing into the university a host of problems that other people can't deal with. And to the extent that we are invaluable because we can deal with them, we're resented, because I think that others feel that they can't. And I think that it's a strange kind of contradiction—I think there are a lot of people on campus who are really afraid of working with minority students. They feel that they don't know how to begin. They don't know what's expected. They feel it's a losing proposition. And they know that there are no rewards for them for trying.

Shensa: And they're afraid of new ideas.

Rothman: But even those whom I think are committed to new ideas, committed to education have realized that there's simply no rewards for this than to do this. Oakes faculty, on the other hand, have sort of plunged ahead, recklessly, making a commitment to working with these students and have discovered that many of the institutional rewards that they thought existed in fact, don't, and that the rewards are mostly what you see happening to your students, but not in terms of your own career, and they've felt betrayed, they've gotten fired, and they've lost their jobs. I think they felt in some ways that the other faculty on campus who played it safe, may be laughing in some ways at our naiveté and saying, "Well, of course we didn't do this. We knew damn well that publishing was going to count." But we're also wondering about the conscience of the campus. I am. I think that in talking about Oakes and the role we've played on campus, almost every time I confront the whole issue of the conscience of the campus. Can the campus as a whole look at what's happened to Oakes faculty—people who are not getting tenure, who aren't getting merit increases, whose promotions are being delayed indefinitely it appears—can the rest of the campus look upon all of this without taking some of the responsibility, because we have, in many ways, served the campus by putting ourselves in an area that very few people know anything about. We've taken the risks; we've put the time in to work with nontraditional students; and we're getting picked off, one by one for it. And we're living at a time, it appears, when to even talk about the conscience of the campus seems almost anachronistic. And yet, I don't know any other way to think about it. What will this campus do with its responsibility to working with nontraditional students. Will it ignore it? Will it pretend it doesn't exist? I don't know.

Shensa: There are already, would you say, signs of indifference.

Rothman: There's indifference, fear. In a lot of ways it's just fear of the unknown. I've going to be asked to do something that I don't think I'll be very good at, and I don't think I'm going to be rewarded for doing it. Anyone would respond: no, I won't do it if I don't have to. The problem is a lack of leadership. If it hadn't been for the Supreme Court, there wouldn't be a whole lot of civil rights legislation. In some ways, if you're going to actually change the educational system, you're going to have to do it, to some extent, democratically. But you're also going to have to get people who are willing to put their jobs on the line because of what they believe in.

Shensa: Well, you've had that at Oakes.

Rothman: We've had that at Oakes, but we haven't had it at UCSC. Until the administration at this campus speaks out and makes a strong commitment to the educational support of nontraditional students, the faculty are not going to do it in great enough numbers because there's too much at risk. So they will follow the lead, and they take it as sanction of their position. Yes, I think we need a kind of moral courage exhibited here. I see the very opposite. I don't see that at all.

**Gwen Lacy**

Shensa: How did you happen to come to Oakes?

Lacy: When Herman Blake and Ralph Guzman were co-chairs planning College 7, the position of administrative assistant became available. I applied, was hired and began May 1, 1972. At that time College 7 occupied three small offices and one large office in the Communications building.

Shensa: What do you remember about that first year?

Lacy: I remember the planning class the spring of 1972. There were about 25 students in the class which met regularly with Herman and sometimes with the architects. They worked with a huge model of the college which was mounted on a board. The model was topographic, showing where the buildings would be in relation to the hills and trees. The apartments were nearest the ocean as requested by the students so that they would have ocean views from their living quarters. The academic administration building was further back against the trees and separated from the apartments by a small hilly mound called the Marcellus Barrier after the student who suggested it. It was to provide at least a symbolic separation of the residences from the administration.

Herman did a lot of traveling during this period and began fundraising. That summer we hired two more staff members, Mary Joan Rodriguez, who became student records assistant, and Julie Chang, who was our first financial assistant and also did student activities and housing. Our first students, who entered that fall, were housed four to an apartment in married student housing and on the fourth and fifth floors of dorm b, College V, above our temporary offices on the second and third floors. Both staff and

faculty had offices on these floors with the steno pool at the end of the hall, and one preceptor apartment on the 2nd floor. Pat Bourne lived there as preceptor and put on some nice get-togethers for faculty and staff. The celebration when the college received the million dollar grant from the San Francisco Foundation and its name, Oakes, was held in Pat's apartment.

Shensa: When you first began it must have been very different from the usual college job of your type of position.

Lacy: It was. There was a lot more variety, and there weren't enough staff so we found ourselves doing many different projects which we generally had to figure out for ourselves. Herman did not have a secretary for the first few months and I did a lot of his secretarial work. In the fall quarter 1972 we hired a trainee through a special personnel program. She went to night school to learn shorthand and was soon appointed as Herman's secretary, a position she remained in for a couple of years until she decided to work part time and go back to college. She became an Oakes student.

Shensa: I've become aware of the sort of mystique about Oakes, including the office staff. They seem to be more informal. Has this had effects? I think we've become very close over the years. We work well together. One of the best things Herman did to achieve this was to have retreats for the staff. Everybody would go off together for a day, usually to a woodsy or camp type setting. Our first retreats were coordinated by a counselor or a lecturer in peer counseling who was on the faculty then. We participated in group communication exercises and peer counseling techniques. Most of the staff was not used to that sort of thing and there were times when it created some sense of discomfort or worry, but I think it was basically a good idea. It did help us to learn to

work together and to care about one another, somewhat as in a family relationship. We became closer in understanding and developed better communication.

Shensa: In recent years you haven't had retreats?

Lacy: We've had staff picnics and potlucks and special lunches or dinners together with Herman and Maria.

Shensa: Are there, or have there been problems where people expect things to be done in the office in a more formal way?

Lacy: Yes. One woman on the staff never did become really comfortable here. She disapproved of the lack of "structure." Eventually she found another job but she became after she left Oakes, an increasingly strong supporter of the college, seeing and understanding the mission and goals of the college better by observing it from another unit. I think she got a better overall picture. While she was at Oakes, the minor irritation of things not being done the way she thought they should be prevented her from being objective and seeing what the college was doing overall.

Shensa: What about faculty?

Lacy: Oakes faculty have carefully considered the needs of the college while participating in recruitments and selection of faculty. They work together to develop goals, meet and listen to one another. There is social and academic interaction among the faculty.

Shensa: What were some of the main problems during those first few years?

Lacy: The administrative staff never had time to settle down and develop and initiate procedures. Time pressures were heavy and there was much to accomplish in little time with not enough staff. Many of us worked extra hours a good deal of the time, but it was a very exciting time. Problems came up we had no easy solution for. That has changed very little over the years due to the constant changes in university organization, policy, procedures and increasing financial limitations. Also, we used to be able to find shortcuts, and by exceptions to policy, avoid time-consuming and cumbersome procedures. That is seldom possible now.

Shensa: Isn't that rather discouraging? Now, more than ever, you have need of autonomy.

Lacy: It is, but the administrative work of the college is easier to organize and follow up on when done according to accepted university procedures.

Shensa: You always appear to be such a relaxed person. How do you do it?

Lacy: We have a marvelous staff here; they're all so good at their jobs. Things are running smoothly within the administrative office and I find it easier to plan, and to be sure important things are getting done.

Shensa: Aren't you rather discouraged at recent events and the prospects for the future of Oakes?

Lacy: I still have hopes that the central administration will support Oakes as a result of understanding gained through the meetings of the Academic Program Committee, the chancellor, the chair of the budget committee, Committee on Educational Policy, and others from the central administration. Even if the worst happens we will still have the

students in residence here and can work toward our goals in the context of residential life.

Shensa: And Herman plans to leave in one year.

Lacy: He has been provost longer than any other provost on campus. Originally he planned to leave sooner. We have been fortunate to have him here as provost for such a length of time. He has been successful in building a community and creating an environment where the ideals we have been working for could develop.

Shensa: I wonder what it will be like for people who have been here as long as you to work with another provost?

Lacy: We all know Oakes will never be the same. It can't survive in its present form without Herman, but then, it doesn't look like it would be entirely the same, with the changes brought about by the present administration, even if he stayed.

Shensa: What are the things about Oakes College that you think make it different from the other colleges?

Lacy: Faculty, student and staff participation in common goals for the college—loyalty of the great majority of the people here to the college.

Shensa: It seems as though Oakes and the faculty have always been more innovative.

Lacy: From the early years forward, the faculty have held many workshops, some involving one or two-day retreats to develop teaching methods and discuss ideas and strategies for teaching. They put many of these ideas into practice and then held further discussion to determine what had worked and why, and how to take their ideas further.



Shensa: Have you any ideas about what might happen to minority students if Oakes ceases to be an academic unit?

Lacy: The university wants to provide campuswide the environment and support that Oakes has provided. That they don't know how to go about it is evident. Minority students at other colleges often transfer to Oakes.

Shensa: It's been said that it isn't out of meanness, but rather a lack of understanding by the other colleges . . .

Lacy: Many of our students don't feel comfortable on campus away from Oakes. A safe and accepting environment has not been provided at other places on campus. There have been hostile looks and cold treatment by both students and staff at other colleges and administrative units, though attempts are being made to change that, at least by some units.

At Oakes staff attitudes have been formed by discussion at staff meetings and retreats. Herman has given us the opportunity to participate in Oakes classes, particularly the core course, and given us all the opportunity to go to extension classes or training sessions given by outside consultants. I attended a semester-long management program at another university. Other staff have taken courses for credit. These opportunities, discussion and informal exchanges have helped us all to develop understanding of ways we might support our minority and non-traditional students. Staff in other units have for the most part not had these opportunities.

Herman seems interested in and helpful to everyone, including staff. He's been very understanding of personal problems, and when people need to be on leave or away for

a time he had understood. When he saw need for it he has personally provided help and support in whatever way seemed called for.

Shensa: No wonder there seems to be such a strong sense of loyalty to Herman and what he represents. Does that reflect on the students?

Lacy: Some of them are unconscious of why things are different here but most of them recognize there is something very special about the college. This feeling centers around Herman. An enormous number of students come to him for advice or help, academic or personal. He has been instrumental in many of them staying at school when pressures made them feel they should drop out. He sees all the students who need to see him and provides assistance, advice, counseling.

Shensa: If you could change the past, what might you have done differently?

Lacy: I would have taken out more time to attend Oakes classes.

Shensa: What does Herman direct his efforts toward in the college that differs from what administrators in the other colleges want?

Lacy: Students and their needs are of highest priority. Motivating them to continue school and to go on to graduate school is important to him. To do this he works toward providing them with the academic skills to do so and the advising that will help them find the ways.

Shensa: What's your feeling about things now? I've heard expressions like burn-out, frustration—do you feel that way?

Lacy: No. I felt that way awhile back. There was a lot of pressure. The present situation is depressing if one stops to think about it, but there is a lot of work to do and I keep myself occupied with it. I am generally optimistic and hope for good things to develop.

Shensa: I've heard that junior faculty aren't even applying because there's no future for them at Oakes.

Lacy: There are no current openings for them to apply for. Most of our own junior faculty on joining Oakes did not have their Ph.D's. They then had their research and writing to do, as well as teaching, university and college commitments, etc. They usually assumed the responsibilities of role models for their own minority groups, also, and found themselves overwhelmed with responsibilities and time-consuming duties. This made it difficult for them to accomplish the research and writing the university expected of them.

**Kathy Cowan, May 25, 1982**

Shensa: You stated that interviewing Oakes students was one of the best jobs you ever had.

Cowan: It was interesting for many reasons. First of all, it gave me an opportunity to get to know the students very well. Once they trusted me, they confided in me the deepest secrets. That was a wonderful experience in that I felt there was a give and take involved. I was getting from them because of research, but they were giving to me, in terms of—I think, loving me, and I felt this.

Shensa: How did you get them to trust you?

Cowan: I was new to Santa Cruz. I came to Santa Cruz for that position, and I told the students how I was feeling. They were new too. Most of them were freshmen when I started interviewing. I could confide in them my anxieties about living in a new place, feeling afraid, not having any friends. And also, fortunately, I came from a background that was not what I would call great in the academic background in that no one told me I should go to the big schools. I went to a little Catholic school—and had I known, had I any direction—I could have gone somewhere with a name. And even to graduate school—I'm not saying this with any amount of despair—had I known that St. Louis University wasn't the greatest in the world, I could have gone somewhere else, to a big name school. The students were just like that. They didn't know; they were just following their noses. And that's how I did it. When I ran into a student who was distant and obviously distrustful—and I realized that I was the stereotype, the blue-eyed blonde—why should they trust me? I relied on my past experience and I tried to

talk to them, not real directly, but rather subtly about my work in the past, which had always been with minority students. I worked in St. Louis and Memphis in community colleges that were predominately Black. And that's why Herman hired me to do this, because he knew that I had had a lot of experience with minorities. And it was a lot of intuitive response that I went with and got. And I never had anybody in all that time who didn't come through, which I think is really wonderful.

Shensa: It must have been a very rewarding experience.

Cowan: I considered it a real break that I was given the ability to love them, and it helped me; that's a higher power—I came in 1977 but started this in '78 for two years.

Shensa: Where did you do your interviewing?

Cowan: I did all my interviewing in my office, Oakes 303. I didn't quite know how to handle the tape recorder business. I started out with it, but that was not a very happy solution, mainly because I didn't have the time to transcribe it from tapes. We didn't have the money to pay anyone. So what I did was—I reached into my brain and found that I had taken shorthand in high school—and that I still had enough memory and I could work it out. I took all my interviews in shorthand and transcribed it and typed it all myself.

Shensa: Did you make all the appointments yourself?

Cowan: At the beginning of each quarter I had a social gathering of my group, which was about sixty students. I think we always had it at Herman's house. I brought big calendars along and the students could sign up, and they took the same time every

week—I think they came twice a quarter. On my larger files I sometimes had twelve interviews (for six quarters).

Shensa: Did you ever have anyone refuse?

Cowan: I had one person who was largely upset about the whole place, and left. But I didn't think it was because of me.

Shensa: What were some of your impressions of the different minority groups?

Cowan: The Asians are more secure. They have something to look back on. They have a tradition of education—at least thirty or forty years of it—in California. I found the Chicanas very naive, very hesitant about their goals, as if they were not sure that they should be there. And of course, this had actually happened in their families. No women had ever been educated. I found a lot of uncertainty too, among the Chicanos. They, too, didn't seem to have a sense of direction, a strong sense of goal orientation. The Blacks were more sophisticated, and most of them—I think because many of them come from urban areas. The Blacks, too, were from Oakland and Los Angeles so they were rather urbane. Many of them were very frightened about walking around, as well they should be. And they weren't used to the noises of the forests, even if they were with other people, and this became a barrier. I mean, how do you go to the library without going through the woods.

Shensa: In the course of your interviews did students ever ask you for advice?

Cowan: I would say that I became a therapist for about half of them, maybe over half.

Shensa: What a profound experience. They couldn't talk to you in this intimate way without, in some way, also changing.

Cowan: I think that's true. I think what's been most rewarding for me has been their thank you's, their gratitude. I had a whole bunch of this group graduate last year, and I had the most thrilling day of my life at their graduation. I felt totally filled up with joy because they had made it, and a lot of the reason they had made it was because they shared; and they told me that. And then, a couple of weeks ago, Maria Louisa came by to tell me that she'd been accepted at medical school at Boston University. And then I got another call from Raul (inaudible) who got accepted at Harvard. I taught them last year at Cowell. I was teaching a writing class. I wanted just minority students. It was humanities writing classes on term papers, research. I did that after I left Oakes because my heart is really with those students. And those two students have been in my studies, so they knew me and took the course after they had been in my studies . . . But to have them come and tell me how much I had played a part in their day . . . And I do keep in touch with some of them.

Shensa: What is your present contact with Oakes?

Cowan: Unfortunately, it's been very little. I've been very glad when Kathy Fagin has thought to invite me to things, because I always go, and I'll certainly be at graduation. But I don't go over there too much. It's a wonderful treat for me when I do get over there, though, a real turn-on, as students say.

Shensa: What do you think makes Oakes unique?

Cowan: I think that the energy that Herman has put into it, and the love that he gives so freely is undoubtedly the basis for all of Oakes. Herman gave me a marvelous example when I watched him deal with students. He never, never turned them away with a sharp word or rebuke even to the point of—I mean, even when they were intruding. He was very loving and calm and understanding. I think that Herman never forgets that for this student, this university is an alien environment. Now, I'm not saying that Herman doesn't get on students' cases where they're not following through on their work, etc. He's very severe, but lovingly so. And I know a couple of students who assuredly would have flunked out if he hadn't taken them to task. And he says, "Look, what are you doing here? Do you expect to be given—" That's the one thing he does not want, he says to the faculty, "Don't give the students grades. Don't make concessions. That's only hurting them."

Shensa: What about your other contacts at Oakes in those years. Do you remember any special people or events, like retreats?

Cowan: We did have some retreats. At the first one that I attended, I was brand-new, and I was scared to death. I thought everyone else belonged and I didn't. The second one was very healthy and there was a lot of exchange. But you know at Oakes there's always this air of tension because they don't know what's going to happen next. So many of the faculty were just junior faculty who were biding their time, trying to get as much done as they could—they were trying to stop the tenure clock on some of those people. And with all that uncertainty, it's really hard to work your way through these problems. That I saw as a negative. There were a lot of meaningful experiences that the students had that I was privileged to attend like potluck dinners and discussions and films. But I was always appalled at the lack of attendance on the part of the faculty. I



think they're really dedicated, but on the academic level. And you see, I think the students need some social interaction with the faculty. They're very afraid of the faculty.

Shensa: What are some of the qualities present in Oakes' faculty that might not be present in faculty in the other colleges?

Cowan: I'm going to have to think a bit about who I want to . . . I think of Don Rothman, Diane Lewis, Nancy Shaw and Adrienne Zihlman, Ed Clemens. Well, what I saw in those people was a great deal of devotion and a very deep understanding of the students that never wavered. Don Rothman has more patience than anyone I've ever seen. Being a writing teacher, too, I can understand his plight and he has really tackled some toughies; he's wonderful. Patience, generosity, letting students know you care—those are the qualities that I'm aware of.

Shensa: The science program seems to be a good example of providing innovative ways of teaching.

Cowan: The students really appreciated that, too. I think that's indicated by the large turn-out in the science section. There was a teacher here—I'm sure he's gone now—a Black man, and he'd do things like looking up students who weren't showing up. He'd go over and get them out of their apartments, saying, why aren't you in class? Do you see how you're hurting yourself? And see, this is the kind of thing that a lot of the students need, because they have a tremendous sense of insecurity and sometimes that backfires—I mean, the insecurity is so great that it prevents them from succeeding because they have this feeling that they really shouldn't be there anyway. That's at the basis of the whole thing; how can one ever hope to succeed, so why bother? And it's

really hard to work with those students; it's so deeply rooted in their psyches. And they need other minority faculty; they don't need me to tell them that, even though I did on some occasions. But why do they want to, believe me? They can believe someone who is of the same color and same background. I think they very much appreciated what Oakes was. Very few of them ever left.

Shensa: I know you don't get over to Oakes too often. But have you observed any changes?

Cowan: I've heard that students are much different from my friends there, that they're much more conservative, but I don't know that from my own seeing it.

Shensa: What do you think of Oakes' present dilemma?

Cowan: I think it's terrible. My heart aches to think of what's happening. I think that the university is refusing a commitment that will cost the ultimate lives of others. And it will be a terrible tragedy. I actually talked to Herman last week about the possibility of doing some teaching there next year, because I'm so eager to remain involved with the students who—I know they need me, but I need them too. And I decided that I would arrange my schedule so that I could teach some class—it might have to be late in the day, or it might have to be at noon. But I want to teach, and I want to teach those students.

Shensa: And do you think you will?

Cowan: Oh, I think if Herman and I can work something out—

Shensa: What would you like to teach?

Cowan: I'd like to teach writing and I'd like to do something in the area of what my dissertation's on, which is Black Literature, and I know enough to be able to teach Chicano Literature now.

Shensa: All indications point to the possibility of Oakes ceasing to exist as an academic unit in another year. And Herman is leaving. What do you think might happen to minority students if this occurs?

Cowan: I'm afraid many of them will be lost. I think they'll come in and leave because they'll be too quickly urged into the mainstream. It's a gradual process, and they need support services programs. And if all that disappears, I just don't see how most of them will make it. We'll be back to the tiny number of students who are extremely well prepared, who just happen to have been educated in white schools—which means that they're probably not your typical minority—they're probably wealthy. It's terrible.

Shensa: I've asked others the question, what makes you stay at Oakes? What would you say to that?

Cowan: Of course I was there on a different kind of program. My program was for two and one half years, funded by Carnegie. But let me tell you if there were any way that I could stay, I'd be there now.

Shensa: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Cowan: I found people at Oakes to be very supportive of my work. Peggy Hurley typed my large manuscript. The counselors were really good to me. Because you see what happened was that I would get students who were troubled and I couldn't do much with them, but I could refer them, and sometimes, because I would refer them, they

would go over. I had the freedom of going down the hall and knocking at Tina's door or Ray or Josie's door, and saying "So-and-so is in really bad trouble, and I think you'd better go see them now." That kind of cooperation makes for a real community spirit. And I appreciated the counselors very, very much because I guess, ultimately, my job was really very much like theirs. I felt very involved because I lived on campus for the first nine months. And while it wasn't the most ideal situation, I was there, and I could see everything intimately. So I was privy to the problems of the housing as well as to the academic. And I also taught the first quarter I came in. Don Rothman was doing another project, and so I took his classes that first quarter. So I came on as a regular teacher and sort of got in and got to know a bunch of students. And then I went forward. I think that was an excellent idea because by then I was at least known around campus. By then it wasn't like walking in blind, and asking the students, "Will you let me interview you?" At least I knew some, and from those students I got names and got them to bring their roommates, and got them to let me come by and see them in their apartments, and things like that. Those were the kinds of things that made them feel special, which they are.

Shensa: How did you come here?

Cowan: Herman and I met in Indiana at a meeting about six or seven years ago. He had talked about Oakes and in general about teaching minority students. And I, who had been teaching for years at that kind of college, went up to him after the speech. I introduced myself and said, "I have taught Black students for ten years now, and I grow weary." From that remark came thirty minutes of very intense dialogue, and I came back to Memphis and I decided that I should leave. I was there for four years. I had set up the English department in a community college which became eighty-five percent

Black. And it was very dreary work because students were terribly ill-prepared. The Southern school system is deplorable. This has been known to happen, giving out dictionaries in the classes to white students and letting the Black students just sit there. At any rate, I decided that I was going to leave. I didn't know where I would go, how I would go, but I knew one thing—I'd better call my contacts all over. Herman was one of the contacts, and he invited me to come out that summer. When I came out we talked a couple of weekends. My final interview was a nine-mile jog at five o'clock in the morning. I really felt that I had passed the test then, because if I hadn't been able to do that I might not have gotten the job.

Shensa: How did you happen to jog together?

Cowan: I knew that we were both joggers, long distance ones. He just said, well he was very busy, which he is, and he said, why don't we just jog in the morning and we can talk. Well, it turned out we talked during the jog. It was wonderful. I'll never forget it. Sometimes when I'm jogging and I get tired I think of that day and how exhilarated I was because I knew I was coming here. I never dreamed, never in my wildest dreams, did I dream that I would come here to work and to have such a wonderful job that would really fulfill me. It would tax me but it would fulfill me. And it really was difficult for me to leave. It was kind of funny because it took me a long time to get my stuff out of the office over there. Now I know why. It was psychological. I hope that I can continue, in some way, working at Oakes as long as I'm here, because I think it's the best part of the whole university. I called over and got the list of the people graduating because I want to get them some little thing to give out. Last year I had this big bag—there were like twenty some—and I carried them around and gave them out. And the students invited me to their family gathering afterwards. Oh, I just loved it. Also, I have

become real good friends with one Chicano family in Union City. There of their children have already gone through. The father died last year, and the mother's my age but has five children. She doesn't speak very much English. On holidays I usually go visit and sharpen up my Spanish. It's really fun. I feel that those kids are my kids; they're real special. It's been the greatest grace of my life.

Shensa: I got the impression that the Black students are a little more reticent about sharing their feelings. Is this so?

Cowan: Yes, and again I think that's so because of their sophistication. They are not naive. They're street-wise and they know how people can get at you suddenly.

Shensa: Is it true that Chicana women and Black women have the most difficult adjustment?

Cowan: Particularly the Chicana women.

**Ray Charland, April 22, 1982**

Shensa: This project is the result that grew out of the oral history class I'm taking. I got very interested in the situation at Oakes and what's happening at it. I've already interviewed many students. The professor saw the oral history information as a wonderful opportunity for continuing it in a more professional way. He felt that Oakes is very much misunderstood and that this is a great chance to explain Oakes to not only students, but the rest of the campus as well as to examine some of the purposes and see what makes it tick and why the people associated with Oakes are so dedicated. So, he suggested a few people for me to interview as faculty and staff, and yours was among them.

Charland: Good. The reason I'm pulling these reports out . . . when I first got here, which was when the college began, Herman asked me to prepare a report every quarter, a written report of what I'd been doing all quarter. And I still have those reports. He probably does too. I used to hate it because I never knew what he wanted. What I was doing was mostly confidential counseling of students, and somehow he never got across to me clearly or in a way I understood. He many have been clear but it wasn't clear to me exactly what he wanted in my reports. We went 'round and 'round. He finally, after some years gave up (laughter) and quit asking for them because I had such a hard time coming up with anything. I just struggled with them. I could give him anecdotal information, change the names, etc. and tell him how I worked with this kind of student on this problem and that kind of student on that problem, and now I understand, when I look back what he wanted. I wish I'd known that at the time. It would have been so much easier. He never told me. I think what he wanted—he

recognized that we were going to be bringing in under-represented students—third world students to a white campus, a white institution, and he knew that they were going to have some tough times here. And he wanted to document that. Why didn't he tell me that? Because what came later—they got some money from . . . I think it was some more money from the Carnegie Foundation, a specific amount of money, and they hired a woman named Kathy Cowan. Kathy had been the head of the English Department at some state college in Tennessee. She's here on campus; now she's not at Oakes any more. She came out, and in addition to teaching some writing classes she spent literally hundreds and hundreds of hours interviewing students. In that report called "Through the Glass (Darkly . . ."

Shensa: I read that.

Charland: That was the result, largely, of her interviews.

Shensa: What is your impression of that document?

Charland: It was wonderful, stuff I run into all the time.

I guess I haven't identified myself for your tape yet. I'm Ray Charland, and I'm a counselor at Oakes College and I've been here since the college began, and I well remember my first interview. I was in graduate school at San Diego and working on my doctorate in clinical psychology. One night a good friend of mine, a woman from whom I had taken a class in peer counseling, called me up and she said, "Let me read something to you. I think you'll be real excited." She read the job description for this job. And she had gotten it in the mail from Bob Bosler who used to be the assistant to the provost, somewhat in the role that Ron Sauffley is in now. Their functions are



different but that's kind of the position he occupied. He worked with Herman [Blake] to really help set the program up. And Bob had met this teacher of mine—her name was Lucy McCamey. He had met her at a workshop they had both attended up in Washington State. And I guess he had been impressed with her; she and her husband were both psychologists. So probably, just as a routine thing in recruiting for this position, Bob sent a copy of the job announcement to her. Also, this workshop that they had attended is kind of an interesting story. It was with a man named Harvey Jackins who has developed a whole approach to self-help called co-counseling, or re-evaluation counseling which has spread all over the world. Bob Bosler is a brilliant person, absolutely brilliant. He has an MBA from Harvard and I don't remember where he did his undergraduate work—Stanford or somewhere—he was a young man, but just as bright as could be, and he, too, sensed some of the difficulties that some of our students would have. And he saw a lot of potential in this co-counseling, partly because co-counseling is so effective in helping people overcome the results of their past.

Shensa: Would you explain the exact meaning of co-counseling?

Charland: Yeah, it's just two people taking turns being counselors to each other. I'll listen to you for an hour while you talk about what's going on in your life, and you listen to me for an hour.

Shensa: Well, would this be a professional with a student or—

Charland: No, any two people.

Shensa: Is this the same as peer counseling?

Charland: Well, it's obviously a form of peer counseling. The difference is that it stresses a very egalitarian relationship. It's not that one person stays in the role of counselor all of the time. But each of them alternate being client and counselor. It maintains a sort of equality in their relationship. And it's developed a wonderful bunch of techniques to help facilitate the process—an excellent training program. More than any other approach to therapy that I know of it has addressed the issues of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression—ageism and all of them, in our country and has journals and publications dealing with all these. There's a Black journal, a Chicano one, I don't recall the name; there's an Asian one; there's one for people who are handicapped; there's one for seniors—it's called "The Elders Speak." People are using these techniques. Anyhow, Bob saw some of the potential at this conference out of Seattle, and he made a good connection with Lucy McCamey—sensed that if he could find a psychologist who also knew about this approach, that person could be very useful to the students at Oakes College. So the job description had actually called for someone who could do counseling half-time with students and who could teach peer counseling half-time. And it talked a bit about the philosophy of the college and that everybody is brilliant and could recover their ability to function, etc.

When she read that to me over the phone I got so excited I couldn't believe it, because it sounded like it was meant for me. I'd been waiting for years—a job counselor had asked me shortly after I got out of the army, "What would you like to be doing in five years?" I said, "I'd like to be doing counseling in a junior college or university in Northern California. So I put my resume together and applied for the job, and finally got called for an interview and met with—

Shensa: Had you finished your doctorate?

Charland: No, I hadn't finished it. I still had a year to go. I hadn't done my dissertation yet. But the job was just too good to pass up.

So I came up for two interviews. The first one—I guess they did an initial screening kind of review to narrow down some and I was so shocked when I learned that there were nineteen or twenty other people that they were interviewing. I don't know why. I was really naive (laughter) but I thought, "This is my job," you know, "don't all these people know that? Why are they interviewing them?" I was . . . it's funny, and it as it turned out I was not their first choice. They offered the job to a Chicana woman named Rita Salinas from Santa Barbara, a wonderful person. I ended up getting a chance to work with her here later. And Rita turned the job down. She had some commitments. She decided she wanted to finish up some work she was doing in Santa Barbara. And I was number two on the list. (laughs) I got the job. And a year later they hired Rita also; she was free then. And so she was here for a year or two. She was just a joy to work with. She and her husband. In fact their children came through UCSC. They both got into very good medical schools, her daughter and her son. I think they both went into medicine.

Shensa: Are you the only counselor doing this sort of thing?

Charland: Josie King was here from the beginning and she had a long association with Herman up at Berkeley. She knew him when he was at Berkeley. She was at Berkeley. She got active in student affairs and then in EOP [Educational Opportunity Program] and kind of got into counseling through the back door. She was a registered nurse, that's her training, and she started helping with EOP and EOP counseling and Herman—I don't know what their relationship was—I don't mean that they had an

intimate relationship, it was just that they had a good friendship and apparently knew each other well. Anyhow, he brought her here and she's been here right from the beginning, too. In fact, she was actually here some months before I was. At that time Oakes was using—let's see, I was hired the summer before the first year began and that summer Oakes was using space (it wasn't Oakes, it was College VII and we didn't have any students yet) we were using space in the Communications Building up above the Computer Center where Personnel is now. We were meeting several people there. Gwen Lacy was there and there was a Chicana who worked there for many years, I've forgotten her name, and Josie was there. But that fall when we did open, I think that was '71, I always have trouble remembering whether it was '71 or '72, I think it was the fall of '71, we were over at College V in B dorm and that was kind of interesting. Most of our students were in the dorm that year; we didn't have very many. And in the next year we were still there and some of our students were using space down at the Married Students Housing while their college was still being built. We stayed over there for three or four years, I guess, until this was built. I'll never forget our first graduation. We had 13 students. One of them was a grandmother, a young grandmother; she was about 38 or 39 or something like that—but, that was quite a class. Dr. Ralph Guzman, now the provost of Merrill College, gave the commencement address. It was such a small group. We met at Performing Arts in the little theater. And one of the things he stressed that stuck in my mind was—he was speaking of some of the Third World programs that had come out of the Sixties, and he said that a lot of them really did an injustice to the students because they did not stress academic excellence. He said that anybody that passes a third world student just because they are a third world student is a racist. I don't know if those were exactly his words but that's what he was saying. He said that third world students had the right to expect that they were going to have the

highest standards held up to them, too. And that nobody does anybody a favor by just passing them along. I resonated to that and appreciated his enunciating that clearly like that. I didn't know anything about the campus in those days, and it was kind of exciting to be associated with a college. I didn't realize the feeling on the rest of the campus towards this new venture. I was very naive and I was in a kind of an interesting role because I wore two hats in one sense. I was paid fifty percent out of student reg fee money and that fifty percent of my time was essentially owned by the Counseling Service. The other fifty percent was money Herman was raising from foundations, mainly the Carnegie Foundation. And so I had two bosses and kind of a dual allegiance. In actual practice it worked fairly smoothly most of the time.

Shensa: May I backtrack for a moment? You mentioned that you were rather naive and didn't recognize the attitude of the rest of the campus. Would you tell me a little more about what that attitude was?

Charland: I don't really know because I wasn't paying—my antennae weren't even attuned to things. I was just trying to learn my way around and all that. I didn't really know anybody anywhere else on campus.

Shensa: In retrospect.

Charland: From what I hear now, I can guess that there must have been a mixture of curiosity, of a little, maybe, distaste, like, "Do we really have to do that here?" "Does that really belong on this campus?" Particularly since the college at one time—they were considering naming it Malcolm X College, which I'm sure a lot of the other academics and professors on campus would have been aghast if anything like that

happened. I can imagine that there was also some measure of good will on the part of some—I'm sure that that was there, too.

Shensa: So it was mixed but you went merrily along—

Charland: Yes, I was just trying to survive (laughs) trying to. It took us quite awhile for Herman and I to get to know and trust each other. Since he didn't know me well at all, his approach to my job was to delineate down to the last half hour what he wanted me doing. So my early job description reflected that I was to spend three hours a week doing this, and to spend eleven and a half hours a week doing that.

Shensa: He was very explicit. What was your reaction to that?

Charland: Oh (laughs), I had mixed feelings. Partly, I appreciated having some guidelines, but it got so, you know, down to the little pickiyunish half hour.

Shensa: Did you feel inhibited?

Charland: Yes, I felt like, "Look, I've been trained to do this, now let me do it. Give me a sense of what you want, but then back off. Eventually, that did happen. Again now, I can see one of the concerns of mine for a long time, and his too, was that not many of the third world students were coming in to see me. I wanted to see more of them. And he said, "Well, read books, make yourself available." I don't know if either of us knew. I certainly didn't realize how long a process that could be to become someone who is really comfortable with Third World students in a way that they know that, they sense that I am someone who is easy to come in and talk with when something isn't going well.

Shensa: How did you accomplish that? Just time and sensitivity?

Charland: Well, now I know of some things that can help speed up the process. And I actually learned of them through this re-evaluation counseling program I was part of for years. I went to classes; I used to go to one that was held over in Palo Alto and we were specifically looking at racism at our own and dealing with it, coming up with memories about all our experiences with people different from ourselves and exploring our own cultural heritage and just different things like that—trying to get at it on a feeling level, not just on an intellectual level. It seems to me that the feelings are what's going to keep you stuck, particularly the ones that you are not even aware you have. So I think, had I known, had I been aware of that earlier, some of these things (pause) actually some of these tools evolved in Re-evaluation Counseling only as time went by, and more third world people started getting involved in that. So when I got into it in 1971 those weren't even available; they hadn't been thought about yet. Another thing I think was helpful was assisting in Herman's class, Oakes 67. They got to know me in another setting. I was visible and had a chance to introduce myself to the class and to talk to people. I always did that at our orientation retreats. We used to meet off campus and we'd go up to Camp Campbell or one of the other camps in the San Lorenzo Valley with our students. And it was really a nice time, a lot of fun. We'd spend two days, two and a half days up there.

Shensa: Don Rothman mentioned those.

Charland: Yes, in the early days I used to do something like—well, really they were like theater games, the kind of thing that Julio did with us at the retreat, that kind of thing,

just to get people mixing around and talking to each other. I'd lead the group in some of those kinds of things. And it was fun, I enjoyed it, and a lot of the people did.

Shensa: Would you like to see it resumed as a regular thing?

Charland: Yes, well we do it here now; we do it in fall orientation, but not going away. It's expensive, one of the problems of going away. When you're doing it it's different, too; now we'd be doing it, I guess we'd just be doing it with the new students so the numbers would stay about the same. I would enjoy it. I think it's a nice start. It also insures that you can have everybody there. You meet here; there's so many things to explore; they kind of drift in and out. One of the problems is that there's some testing that's done, like Subject A. Of course we used to do our own testing out at the retreat. Also, some language testing that isn't offered on campus that people need to take—advanced placement tests that people take to get into some advanced classes. I think it could be worked out, though. But those were nice times. We'd meet with faculty. We'd have student-faculty volleyball games and things like that. And it was a lot of fun. That would be the setting for the first faculty meeting of the year.

You know, when I think back to that, we had so many more faculty then. God, now it seems as though we've got half of what we had then. And they were fresher, involved and meeting together. They hadn't established their ties with their boards as strongly as now. They were new and Oakes was more of a focal point in their lives. And now they all have these professional responsibilities elsewhere on campus and it's a very different feeling from back then.

Shensa: What are the biggest changes you've observed in Oakes since then?



Charland: It's a big change. It's remarkable that we still have some like Don Rothman who are still as committed to Oakes as they are.

Shensa: Do you think Oakes has lost a lot of that?

Charland: Yes, a lot of faculty have. Of course, a lot of them are still here, but in the middle of very shaky tenure situations, and they may not be here much longer. The fact is that Herman's not going to be here much longer. One feeling I've heard expressed is that there is insufficient leadership currently, and that since Herman knows he's going to be leaving it's like having a lame duck administration. It doesn't feel as though they can do anything or have energy to do it. I don't know; there's just not as much energy. It's been a very discouraging time, I think, the last two or three years, losing people. It's ironic; certain things going real well; the science program is going well.

You talk about what are the changes. Well, it was a huge change having our own buildings. That took some getting used to. But now we take this physical plant for granted, of course. And (pause) there's a lot of good energy among the students. My own feeling right now is that Oakes is in a very shaky place; that it wouldn't take much to topple it. Maybe it needs some new leadership with fresh energy. I think one of the things that Oakes has suffered from along the years has been (laughs)—it's interesting because it's suffered from it yet it's also been a blessing—that is Herman's administrative style. In reality, we wouldn't exist without him. And we wouldn't be doing what we're doing and doing it the way we do as well as we do without Herman. He's a wonderful person and inspiring to work with. But when it comes to some of the day-to-day administration, I don't think we're good at that. But that's my impression; that may not be borne out at all.

Shensa: What is some of the day-to-day administration you're referring to?

Charland: Well, it's the way the office's run and the way decisions get handled. I don't know. I think it's not as neat and tidy as it could be. It's not a tightly run ship. I think there's a lot of slippage. That's my impression. I don't work down in that office.

Shensa: But you feel some of the effects?

Charland: Well, yes. I think there's inadequate supervision. One of my feelings for years has been there's not adequate accountability. I see that as an issue that hasn't been dealt with adequately. I think that overall the function of the college suffers as a result.

Shensa: Do you think that this is partially responsible for the dilemma that Oakes finds itself in now?

Charland: My first thought is that no, that there is no connection at all—I don't think so.

Shensa: Do you think it might affect the outside image?

Charland: I don't know to what extent that affects us. I've heard at times that people feel we are not administered as well as some of the other colleges on campus. I don't think that's ever been a criticism—well, I don't know. I've never heard that directed at Herman, but at other people in the office. I couldn't even guess.

Shensa: Perhaps if we look at some of the misunderstandings of Oakes, at the criticism, etc., we could answer the question. Would you care to comment on these?

Charland: Well, what I've run into a lot over the years—people always ask me, "Well, how is Oakes doing?" And I kind of get the feeling that they're expecting imminent

collapse—kind of someone asking about an ailing child, you know, “Well, how’s she doing?” (laughs) and I always say, “We’re doing great.” I don’t feel that way this year. Mainly I tell people that we’re suffering a lot from loss of faculty and not knowing what’s going to happen to our whole program. And the indecision of our chancellor. We have not had good press on campus. I think part of it is that some of the people who are in—not Herman, now—but some of the other people who are in important positions, whether it be in Housing or someone who is the role of bursar, people like that who have been in administrative positions have not been seen as good by others on campus. At times in the past there have been some personnel decisions that seemed strange to me. Our Oakes office is not organized the way other college offices are. Most colleges don’t have somebody in Ron’s place. And you know, Ron’s done some great things for the college in terms of writing grants and all that. And now he does a lot of academic precepting and counseling, but I doubt that his job is really a full-time job at this point. But that money that goes to pay him—I mean he’s the one who’s earned his money, no doubt, in the grants that he has helped get in the past. At the same time, I’m not sure that his position can be justified in other areas currently. There have also been times when we didn’t have someone filling a key position.

Shensa: What would you say are some of the most needed types of abilities that are necessary to hold Oakes together besides getting cooperation from the main university and getting the staff to . . .

Charland: Well, you know, if I were just waving a magic wand and designing a kind of ideal Oakes College from the top down for 1982-84—well, since Herman’s leaving in another year, we know there’s got to be another provost—so hopefully, I’d want to see a provost with a demonstrated commitment and ability to work with third world

students and faculty and staff. I'd want to see a proven track record there, not just good words. And I think it would be great if it could be a third world person in that role. It makes a powerful statement in having a third world person in that role. And then, it would encourage that person to do a big reorganization of the office and the way it's run, and it might mean hiring and firing. It's a hard question to answer. We don't know yet how the programmatic issue is going to be resolved. Will Oakes be able to offer Oakes classes or not? If Oakes is able to have what we would consider an Oakes program—that means we need support for Oakes staff, and we need to get some of those empty slots filled—so we'd get some new faculty with some new enthusiasm and commitment, and we'd rejuvenate some of the old faculty and help restore some of their enthusiasm and commitment.

You know, I don't know—it might end up just looking like Oakes looked five years ago where there were more people, more energy—maybe we'd be doing the same thing—I wonder.

Shensa: Has the student population changed? Would it still be suitable?

Charland: It seems like in a lot of ways it has. Out of our successes have come some new challenges. We've done such a good job in establishing the science program that the third world students come here wanting to focus only in the sciences, so I think we'd have to develop the humanities and social sciences as viable options to them, too. That's kind of a hard question; I don't know how to answer about the future.

Shensa: Would you agree that there's always change; no program remains static.

Charland: I think we do all get in a rut. It's hard for us to see where the changes are going and in what direction they need to go. There's a kind of inertia. I think it would be good, for example, for some of us counselors and others to rotate around a little bit.

This year for the first time at the counseling center we've got four third world counselors. Before this we had two, and this year we've got four, and one of those new people could spend half their time here, and I could spend half my time somewhere else. I think it would be good for Oakes to have some new people who haven't been doing it the same way all along.

Shensa: At the same time you would be an emissary to other colleges. And help them understand Oakes.

Charland: Yes.

Shensa: It seems like an interesting proposition. One of my questions is, what is your job as counselor here that makes it different from counseling on other parts of the campus?

Charland: That's a good question; it's an interesting one, too, because in the early days of Oakes, it differed considerably. A lot of the other counselors defined their job very narrowly, and Herman always insisted on a very broad definition of counseling. He said counseling should include whatever support a person needs, whatever that is, whether it's academic, whether it's helping to sort out their financial aid, whether it's helping to work through housing. What's interesting to me is that that's totally in line with the view of counseling espoused now by lots of people in the profession. I think that that view is coming to be more and more widely held in counseling at the

university level, professionally. And certainly in our own counseling staff—we've discussed this for years—and our focus has really shifted to a much broader definition of counseling—much more in line with what Herman was enunciating. I do think that probably we're more open to that here than anywhere else. I know that a lot of other counselors do deal with a wide variety of issues.

In terms of one of the things that makes Oakes different, it's that we've always had extra counseling support available, Josie *and* I, and then later Tina was hired—before him, I mentioned that Rita Salinas was here for several years. We had a counseling intern, a woman named Carolyn Brown. She was a paraplegic. She was here a year or two. We've always had extra counseling support.

When I was hired, at the same time a man named Joe Nadler was hired. He was hired to teach. I was hired to teach peer counseling half-time, but he was hired as a full-time instructor to teach it for credit. He did that for the first three years that we were operating. And I occasionally taught a section of it. That had a big impact on helping create a supportive environment. The dream didn't quite materialize, certainly through no fault of Joe's. I don't think it was anybody's fault. It just was more of a challenge than we realized. The dream was that people would learn these skills and then would help each other continually deal with the frustrations they encountered here. I think a lot of that happened. Part of the dream included dealing with racism, dealing with—yes, dealing with racism. That part of it was more tough, the multicultural aspect. I think it was—in the beginning—well, I don't know on a percentage basis, but we certainly had fewer third world students than we do now. And that, along with the fact that everybody was new—it was tough. I know, Joe taught one class where he was really focusing on relationships between people. He had recruited a lot of Third World

people into the class. It was real touchy. And partly—it was like the state of the art hadn't evolved yet quite enough—like the tools that were available then in Re-evaluation Counseling, they've evolved now because of thousands of hours of experience. If he were teaching that same class now I think it would be very different; it would be much more successful. At the time, it was really frustrating. People were exploring their ethnicity, exploring their feelings, and it was threatening; it was scary. I think it was a painful class for some people. I think some of them felt it was a failure; it was a mistake. I think it was a worthwhile experience.

Shensa: Would you like to see a class like this offered again?

Charland: I think it would be great now, though I don't know if it should be offered for credit. I think it would be a great thing to have in conjunction with something like Oakes 67, with a lot of content on an historical basis, class oppression and . . . Incidentally, Joe Nadler and his wife, Marilyn, would be interesting people for you to interview. Nobody else will mention them for they have been forgotten pretty much since they left. Marilyn used to have a lot of contact with Herman and she was very supportive of him. They moved up here from Santa Barbara when Joe got this job. They had both been teaching Re-evaluation Counseling down in Santa Barbara, training peer counselors, etc. In fact, Marilyn and Joe Nadler, and Bob Bosler and I used to meet together as a support group the very first year of the college—support for each other, because it was a scary and challenging undertaking. I was about to mention that part of the Oakes approach to supportive services was to be aware that a lot of support was needed in various areas and we tried to coordinate that in different ways. Joe was one of the earlier coordinators of that. For a while we called it "The Bridge Program." And we just kept coming up with different names for it. We would meet regularly to discuss

the supportive services work. There were times, for example, when Don Rothman and Joe Nadler and I and Herman and Bob Bosler and also Al Stewart, kind of a science tutor and graduate student at the time, and did some teaching too in math—we'd all meet together with Herman. It was all lumped together as part of the support program. And later the writing program took on a life of its own. The science program burst into full bloom and had its own life.

Shensa: Everything seemed connected in the early days?

Charland: Yes, they were all supportive to the main academic mission. One of the things that was tough, I was intimidated by the faculty, I think partly because I'd come up here without finishing my Ph.D. (laughs) and I think partly too, the fact that they're out teaching—I think they developed certain skills, ease in talking before groups and stuff like that that I didn't feel like I had . . .

Shensa: I thought you might mean the attitude they had toward counselors.

Charland: Well, that was part of it. I'm sure I was picking that up. But Herman used to want me to explain my work to the faculty. Oh, I was petrified at times. But I would come to the faculty meetings and try to talk about it and it didn't always go very well. I remember once at the retreat, Herman asked me to talk about my work and somehow our scheduling got off and I ended up with only about five minutes. I don't know what I said but Herman really roasted me for it later. He said he thought it was very inadequate. I remember feeling so frustrated, feeling unfairly judged, since I didn't have my allotted time to present my ideas in detail. He wanted them to know what I was doing so that they would refer students to me, and they'd feel okay about that. And that's very appropriate and I did try to convey the kinds of issues students were dealing



with and how I thought about counseling. I think now that if I had presented more of my philosophic approach to it that would have been, that's more the way they think. I think that would have been real helpful.

Shensa: You had to allow yourself a chance to evolve.

Charland: Yes, there were some painful times. One time, it may have been toward the end of the first year or, maybe it was at the end of my second year here, Herman called me into his office and said, he handed me an envelope and said, "I'd like you to read this. Have a seat." I sat down and it said that I was not going to have a job any more. At the end of that year, that was going to be the end of my job.

I was stunned, to say the least. I didn't have any—I didn't feel I had any warning of that notice at all.

Shensa: What did you do? You're here. What happened?

Charland: He changed his mind. I wrote him kind of a scathing letter saying that I thought it would be grossly irresponsible for him to terminate my position. I pointed out the numbers of students I was seeing. In those days I was seeing very few third world students. But the fact was that seventy-five percent of our students were Anglo students.

Shensa: I didn't know that.

Charland: Oh, yeah. I think sixty percent of them are now.

Shensa: But the purpose of this college was to draw ethnic minorities.

Charland: It took awhile to build up the numbers. I'm guessing, but it was certainly true that the majority, maybe seventy percent were Anglo. I pointed out that I was certainly meeting the needs of a hell of a lot of those students.

Shensa: You must have been convincing because you've been here since.

Charland: Yes.

Shensa: Aren't you kind of proud of standing up to something so devastating as that?

Charland: Yes, I am. It was one of the worst shocks I've ever gone through. I probably have the letter somewhere and my response. I was really ready to fight. There wasn't much else I could do, you know.

Shensa: Oh, yes. You could have just sort of faded away.

Charland: Oh no, that's not my style.

Shensa: I'm glad you stayed. I'm sure he is too.

Charland: Yes, we've both grown a lot. One of the struggles in those early days was that I felt intimidated by Herman. We used to have some wonderful staff retreats. We'd go off campus for them at least once a quarter and at one of those retreats, Joe Nadler or I would usually facilitate them, we'd get everybody sharing on how things were going and what they were liking about their job; what was going well in their job, and what difficulties they were having. Somehow in one of them, maybe it was one that was facilitated by a friend of Herman's, a well-known psychiatrist up in the Bay Area, a Black man, I think it was—he and some of his staff came down and did a kind of workshop with our staff. I think it was at that time that a lot of people on the staff were

intimidated, were afraid of Herman. And Herman was amazed. I don't know why he should have been amazed but he was. He comes on strong. He is a big man. He is very charismatic, a very strong presence. And believe me, it's toned down now from when he—(chuckles) Ha, I really sense that he's mellowed a lot. He used to wear dark glasses. You couldn't see his eyes. He could see you but you couldn't see him. That was one of the things that was brought up in this feedback that he got that people were intimidated. Poor Herman. You know, he's such a sweet man. He said, "Good Lord, I can't believe this." One of the people of the staff who was facilitating, it was a psychiatrist, pointed out that it's natural for people to see an authority figure in a parent role and to transfer a lot of feelings they have towards parents to this person. Herman changed his glasses, you know. He wears very slightly tinted glasses now. You can see his eyes and it makes a big difference. Part of that came out of that retreat. That was quite a day. I'll never forget. Herman just sat there saying, "My word. I can't believe this. I had not idea. Why didn't you people tell me?" And we said, "Well Herman, it's because we were afraid of you."

Shensa: Did that sort of break the ice from then on?

Charland: Well, it helped. One of the things that he used to experiment with, too—he would sometimes facilitate the staff meetings. What we noticed and let him know was . . . you know, he'd start off the meeting and say, "Well, let me bring you up to date on what's happening." He was always gone a lot traveling and, "Well, I've been back to North Carolina where I met with such and such a foundation; we had a good meeting with the heir to the DuPont fortune, and things look interesting there, and people from the Carnegie Foundation and we were talking about \$300,000 there. Then I spent time in New York, had a nice dinner with Alex Haley and we're setting up a foundation, etc.

“Well by the time that he got through, you know, who was going to tell him that one of the typewriters isn’t working well or you now, we’ve got a problem in Apt. B23. It seemed so insignificant! You know, everybody was just speechless. So we suggested that maybe he go last and then let other people report first.

Shensa: One question I wanted to ask you is what keeps you at Oakes especially right now with all these things going on? Have you been tempted to leave?

Charland: Well, there have been times when I’d like—and even for next year or the year following, I’d like to spend a year somewhere else, just so I would experience some different horizons, challenges, and come back refreshed. What keeps me here? Well, I feel real lucky in a lot of ways. I think that’s what a lot of Oakes staff people feel, feel lucky to be working in a job that allows them to address issues of importance to them. One of my commitments to myself in this world is to make this world a safer and better place for all people to live in. I feel that what I’m doing here at Oakes is a step in that direction, that I make a contribution to the planet. That may sound grandiose, but I really feel that. And that’s one of the exciting things about working for someone like Herman who enunciates a clear vision like that.

As I think about it, some years ago I did the EST training, and Warner Erhart who put that together, has been widely criticized by a lot of people and been praised by a lot of people. He’s a very charismatic person. It occurs to me that one of the things he’s done in addressing—once EST got off its kind of naval contemplation, a self-indulgent kind of thing, which it did in a few years, he started addressing broader issues like world hunger and things like that. It really gave people a sense of being able to do something of service. I think people are hungry for that. Most of EST is run by volunteers and this

is a huge money-making corporation, largely staffed by unpaid volunteers. And they do it because they feel it's of service. And I don't think we've ever realized the need. It reminds me of my professors in graduate school, Victor Frankl—his big thing is that what really motivates us, like he used to say, Freud thought it was sex, Adler thought it was power; but it's not either one of those. Those in themselves are not sufficient to explain our behavior. People can have all kinds of money, power and sex in their lives and still commit suicide if there is no meaning. Meaning is what it the ultimate motivator. That's what we search for. And what Herman has done—he has given meaning to a lot of people's lives. And I think that if we could be more conscious of that . . . I'm straying now from Oakes, at how hungry people are to do just anything that feels meaningful. To me, that explains a lot of why people join certain groups; you know, they become Moonies or something like that, because somebody at the top enunciates a vision that has some sense to people. So much of what people do seems meaningless, even at the university, anywhere. And you look at most staff positions—my job I wouldn't include, I mean someone who has to spend their day typing and filing and spend their life doing what seems like unbelievable drudgery, but when you have somebody coming by once or twice a month, talking about the vision of the college and making people feel that they're a part of that even if all they're doing is filing student records—that is magical. They're all working for a relatively low pay doing “shit” work because they feel it contributes—and whoever comes in to replace Herman, Oakes to continue to be what it can be—they'll need to enunciate that kind of a goal, that kind of a vision . . .

Shensa: But even if you have to leave or decide to leave, won't your own visions go with you?

Charland: Oh yes, I have felt in the past few years that I'd really like a change in career, and I can imagine doing things totally different. I love nature a lot. I'd love working outdoors in nature in some kind of way—if I had the training in biology or zoology I'd love to be a naturalist. I've tried to imagine what I might be doing. I'd enjoy working at a research center. I like science a lot, but my training in all that is so rusty now. But on some level, in some way, I certainly would carry my commitment with me. I'd be teaching counseling classes, communication skills, or doing workshops or something like that. I'd still be making some kind of contribution.