

# UC Santa Cruz

## Institutional History of UCSC

### Title

"An Intergenerational Community of Friends": An Oral History of the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society/Smith Renaissance Society with Bill Dickinson and Gary Miles

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**“An Intergenerational Community of Friends”:  
An Oral History of the  
Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society/Smith Renaissance Society**

**with  
Bill Dickinson and Gary Miles**

Interviewed and Edited by  
Sarah Rabkin

Santa Cruz  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
University Library  
2021

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Bill Dickinson. Photo by Jim MacKenzie



Gary Miles

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## Introduction

This oral history documents the Page and Eloise Smith Society, which offers support, advocacy, and fellowship to UC Santa Cruz undergraduates who come to the university with little or no family backing: former foster children; orphans; former juvenile delinquents; homeless and runaways. The society is the brainchild of alumnus Bill Dickinson, a member of the pioneer class who transferred to the campus in 1965 after having lived on his own since the age of sixteen. At a class reunion in 1999, Dickinson appealed to fellow pioneer alumni to help him build a scholarship fund for former foster children. Out of that initiative grew a volunteer-driven organization—the first of its kind in the US—that has, in the ensuing two decades, served hundreds of students, setting them up with mentoring, financial help, and a collegial community that many have come to think of as a surrogate family.

Dickinson and his Smith Society associates learned early on, by scanning financial-aid applications, that the campus hosts a surprising number of students who fit the society's membership criteria. The organization soon began making a marked difference in the lives of these undergraduates. Smith-affiliated students—also called “Collegiate Fellows” or “Smithies”—not only boast excellent retention rates; they are more likely to finish college than those in UCSC's general student population.<sup>1</sup> Whereas fewer than two percent of former foster youth nationwide graduate from college before the age of twenty-five, nearly all Smith fellows complete their bachelor's degrees.<sup>2</sup> Stories about Smith alumni published in the society's annual newsletter testify to its impact on

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<sup>1</sup> *Smith Renaissance Society News*, Summer 2016:  
<https://news.ucsc.edu/2016/05/smith-society-storycruz.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://news.ucsc.edu/2019/04/smithanniversary.html>

individual lives, describing careers of distinguished service, scholarship, and professional accomplishment.

As a result of the Smith Society's successes, the California Homeless Youth Project gave UCSC the highest rating of any UC campus for its services to homeless and foster students.<sup>3</sup>In 2012, Dickinson's "distinguished and sustained service" on behalf of these students earned him the Fiat Lux award, presented by the UC Santa Cruz Foundation "to alumni and friends who have demonstrated outstanding achievement, dedication and service in support of the University's programs and goals."<sup>4</sup>

In founding the society, Dickinson aimed to carry on the spirit of its namesakes, Page and Eloise (Pickard) Smith, who cultivated a vibrant community at Cowell College, where Page was founding provost. That community provided Dickinson with a cultural and intellectual home when he was a young man, he says, and launched him into happy adulthood. He cites Page Smith, a historian with an interest in educational philosophy, as an important mentor. He continues to espouse the pedagogical ideals he shared with Smith, who insisted that loving students is central to the art of teaching them well, and that a small, intimate community of students and teachers provides the best college education. "True learning is clearly incompatible with immensity," Smith wrote in a passage that Dickinson has been known to quote. "Formalism, lifeless routines, bureaucratic obtuseness, coldness of heart, impoverishment of spirit are the inevitable consequences of excessive size."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Smith Renaissance Society News*, Summer 2017:

<https://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docs/pdf/collegesupportsreportpdf4-27-17.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://foundation.ucsc.edu/awards/flat-lux-award.html>

<sup>5</sup> Page Smith, *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America*, 1989.



Over the years, in Dickinson's efforts to sustain a spirit of collegial intimacy at a growing campus with an increasingly complex bureaucracy, he has raised a few hackles. He has little regard for institutional power hierarchies, preferring to go straight to the top when he wants something done—a strategy he learned early in a childhood overseen by judges and public agencies. He disdains the tangles of red tape that have proliferated at UCSC over the years, preferring to circumvent rules in order to serve students as he sees fit. As a result, he freely admits, some of the campus staff and administrators he worked with over the years came to see him as “obstreperous” and “a pain in the ass.”

As Dickinson relates in the oral history, the embattled outlook he brought to those encounters stems in part from his sadness and frustration at the dismantling of the UCSC college system as the founders originally envisioned it—a system that gave him a sense of belonging, dignity, and agency during his three years as a member of the pioneer class—and in part from the mistrust of institutional authority that his childhood experiences engendered in him. In retrospect, he expresses regret for having antagonized some campus employees who, he came to realize, were merely doing their jobs. Yet while he can be blunt and outspoken, Dickinson is also—as his longtime friend and Smith Society colleague Gary Miles observes in the oral history—“this wonderful, welcoming, engaging, charismatic person,” whose warm enthusiasm, effective fundraising, and tremendous devotion to the wellbeing of UCSC undergraduates are clearly responsible for a great deal of the Smith Society's success.

In 2016, Bill Dickinson handed over responsibility for the Smith Society to its board of directors; he has since moved on to other initiatives, though he continues to support the society financially and through ongoing volunteer efforts. When Regional History

Project director Irene Reti suggested creating this oral history, Dickinson expressed a strong desire that it include not only his own perspective, but also those of fellow Smith Society volunteers. Because budgetary constraints prevented RHP from conducting a more comprehensive slate of Smith-related interviews, he offered to solicit written commentaries from several colleagues; these are provided, along with other supporting documents, in an appendix.

Happily, for the third and final interview that I conducted for this oral history, we were able to bring in one of Bill Dickinson's core colleagues, Gary Miles—an emeritus professor of history and classics who created and ran the Smith Society's mentoring program, beginning shortly after he retired from his faculty position. A beloved teacher, Miles shares Dickinson's enthusiasm for undergraduates; his decision to retire arose partly, as he notes in the oral history, from disaffection with UCSC's growing class sizes, which had begun to impede his ability to interact meaningfully with individual students. Working with literature professor John Jordan, Miles built a highly successful program in which every one of Smith's Collegiate Fellows who requested an adult mentor has been matched with one. At the Smith Society's tenth-anniversary celebration, Miles—along with Cheryl Perazzo, a Financial Aid staff employee who has served Smith students from the society's inception—received a Founder's Award in recognition of his service to the organization and the campus. The award was presented to Miles by Scott Page, his own first Smith mentee, whom his family has come to see as a "second son." Page flew out to California for the event from Massachusetts, where he was finishing up his studies for an electrical engineering PhD at MIT.

Like Dickinson, Miles emphasizes the close mentor-student relationships that have been at the center of the Smith Society's extraordinary success. He describes the thoughtfully

designed program he developed in order to cultivate such relationships, sharing stories of his interactions with mentors and students. His narrative and reflections convey both his loving engagement with this work and the philosophical perspective he has brought to it as a historian.

Miles also acknowledges a juncture in the society's history when proliferating bureaucratic protocols at UCSC—no matter how well intentioned some of them may have been—began to impede the highly personalized, organically evolving student-mentor interactions that generated mutual trust, kept mentors engaged, and enabled Smith students to thrive. In 2018, when various newly restrictive policies threatened, he says, to undermine the society's spirit and mission to an unacceptable degree, the society partially severed its affiliation with STARS (Services to Transfer and Re-entry Students), which had long served as its administrative home. With the enthusiastic encouragement of Cowell College provost Alan Christy, the mentoring program and other Smith components found a new home under Cowell's aegis, with STARS retaining some important Smith functions.

While this arrangement seems to be working well at present, both narrators express uncertainty about the society's future, given that they and others who have long been central to its success are aging out of their roles. In the final portion of the interview, Dickinson and Miles speculate about whether and how the Smith Society might evolve in years to come, and about how its cost-effective, volunteer-driven model might inspire other efforts to serve the needs of UCSC undergraduates—particularly the growing cohort of students who are the first in their families to attend college.

This oral history was conducted in three sessions over the course of one week:

November 2, 2020; November 4, 2020; and November 6, 2020. Due to the unprecedented constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, these interviews were recorded remotely using the Zoom platform over the Internet. They were transcribed by Sarah Rabkin and audit-edited by Irene Reti. Copies of this volume are on deposit in Special Collections and in the circulating stacks at the UCSC Library, as well as on the library's website. The Regional History Project is supported administratively by Teresa Mora, Head of Special Collections and Archives, and University Librarian, Elizabeth Cowell.

—*Sarah Rabkin*

*Regional History Project, University Library, UC Santa Cruz*

*January 2021*

## Bill Dickinson: Early Years

**Rabkin:** This is Monday, November 2, 2020, the day before a very significant national election. I'm Sarah Rabkin, and I'm here in my study in Soquel, California, and I'm about to interview Bill Dickinson for the first segment of our oral history about UC Santa Cruz's Smith Society.

So, Bill, let's start by having you say your full name, and also when and where you were born.

**Dickinson:** I am Bill Dickinson. I was born on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945, at 5:27 a.m., in Ithaca, New York, low below Cayuga's waters.<sup>6</sup>

**Rabkin:** (laughs) Thank you. And, Bill, given that your early life had a great deal to do with your ultimately deciding to create what became the Smith Society at UCSC, I'd like to ask you to tell me about some of the relevant challenges that you faced during your own youth, before you ended up getting yourself to junior college.

**Dickinson:** I'll give you both that plus opportunities.

**Rabkin:** Great.

**Dickinson:** My mother had four kids. I was the third of four and was her favorite, named for her father. She had her first schizophrenic break in the act of giving birth to my younger brother. What I only recently realized is I had been mis-framing her for most of my life by saying she was a schizophrenic, as opposed to she was a woman who

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<sup>6</sup> "Far Above Cayuga's Waters" is Cornell University's school anthem—Editor.

had schizophrenia. And also, she would have bouts where she'd be in mental hospitals, but then she'd be out of mental hospitals.

My grandfather, William Chillson, died when I was five, and we moved from Pennsylvania up to Oswego, New York, on Lake Ontario. My mother was grieving, my father took off and left her with four kids, and it was a troubled year. I could tell she was in great pain and distress. And not only was I her favorite, but she was my favorite, so I felt some responsibility to do something about her pain.

**Rabkin:** You were how old at this point, Bill?

**Dickinson:** Six. Well, five and then turned six. And I knew things were seriously wrong when she started throwing things through the picture window in this rented house we lived in, and then she smashed a bunch of china and put it in bags, and she and I walked what must have been at least two miles over to the courthouse to leave them for the judge. The next thing I knew, the cops came and were dragging her, screaming, away. I stood in the doorway watching. My older sister, who was fifteen, is the source of my information about what happened next. She found my older brother, who was nine, hiding in a closet, and she found me in our mother's bed, wrapped up in her housecoat and crying, and my younger brother, who was three, was just kind of running around.

We were taken to the local children's home, and then from there dispersed to various foster homes—my younger brother and I to one, and my sister and brother to another. And then, within a couple of years, we subdivided further, and I spent most of my boyhood wishing to be with my family—and if not with my family, then at least with my mother. So that's shorthand for the biggest challenges, until I was just shy of sixteen.

The biggest opportunity is I happened to go to a lab school on the local college campus for first, fourth, fifth, and seventh grade, at a time when John Dewey's educational philosophy was in the saddle. And from that, I was set up to love learning for its own sake. I was set up to think there's no one right way to do most things, and experimenting is lots of fun. We'll return to that later on, because at UCSC I discovered that Byron Stookey was very much in the same spirit of things.

I've seen a summary of records kept on me as a kid, and I realize a couple of things. One, I can remember every single incident that's recorded there, and what's totally missing is my point of view about that incident. And the other thing is it was very clear from early on that my social workers were intent on solving two problems they perceived me having. One was that I had an unhealthy attachment to my mother. (Other people would call it "I loved my mother and she loved me.") And they were very concerned I was going to be gay—and in the 1950s, that was a really bad idea. They were right. But this was the 1950s, and the reason for the cause of the problem in their understanding was my father was a weak figure, and what I needed was a strong male figure. I find it somewhat ironic that, if that was the solution, they never managed to cough up one. (laughs) But it wasn't the solution to anything, anyway.

Two other things they recorded in there are germane to the Smith Society: One was, when I was ten or eleven, a social worker recorded of me, "William is Incurable," with a capital "I." And for a very long time I thought if I were going to have a tombstone, I'd like that on my tombstone.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** And I forget what the second thing was. Oh: “William didn’t respond well to placement.” And that, too, is germane to the Smith Society and UCSC, because the story of UCSC has been the story of us looking for the right placement.

### **Moving to California**

When I was fifteen, I finally figured out that going to my social worker really never got me anything, and so I just went to Don Stacey, the judge, because he seemed to be the guy who decided everything. His son was in my class. I didn’t know anything about making appointments or court hearings or the rest of it, so I just went over to the courthouse and walked into his office and sat down and said I wanted to go to California to live with my mother. The next thing I knew, I was moving to California to live with my mother.

Unfortunately, my vision of what moving to California was going to be about, and my vision of what living with my mother was going to be about, collided head on with my turning sixteen a month after I arrived. It was all about me and my fantasies, and I’d only seen my mother about once a year. The mother who greeted my plane bore not a great resemblance to what I had in mind as to what she was going to be. And I went into total shock about California; it just wasn’t— You know, I’d just decided to become Episcopalian. I’d decided I was meant to be Methodist when I was ten. I’d decided now that it was time for something more grown up, and I looked around Oswego, my town, and I saw, well, there are bankers and lawyers and doctors and college professors. And I think, of those, college professor is the direction I’d like to head in. Most of them seem to drive Oldsmobiles and either be Presbyterian or Episcopalian. Since the Presbyterian



church was catty-corner to the Methodist church and the guy wore the same robe, I felt, let's do Episcopalian.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** I was halfway through junior Latin when I got to California. And this was down near San Diego. They didn't offer Latin, and suggested I take typing. And at the local Episcopal church, people wore bathing suits to church, and they didn't even have a pipe organ, and I thought, what happened?! (laughs) What happened to civilization?

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** And I wrote a letter back to Ralph Faust, the kind of high-Victorian Oswego High School principal, saying I made a mistake, I want to come back. The last line of his response was, "My advice to you, young man, is settle down and stop all this twaddle."

**Rabkin:** Hm!

**Dickinson:** The only time I've ever heard the word "twaddle" in my entire life. Anyway, that stay with my mother and her husband lasted for about three months, and then, for reasons I can't construct, I was driving to Santa Rosa with my older sister, who I didn't much like, and her Army drill-sergeant twenty-one-year-old husband and five kids.

**Rabkin:** Literally an Army drill-sergeant?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. I think so. He was so innocent. I mean, I was sixteen; he was twenty-one; she was twenty-five. Most of these kids were not his kids. My sister and I tended to fight quite a bit. One day he came in and told me to "get out"—probably meaning for

an hour or so, but it was what I had been looking for. I had met a conservative Republican businessman in Santa Rosa who found me my first job and a place to live, and let me come over to his house whenever I wanted to. And I was ready.

I will tell you, because it is kind of amusing, that the final fight I was having with my sister was on the matter of whether or not Mamie Eisenhower was beautiful.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** (laughs) I was on the “of course she is” and she was on the “you’ve gotta be kidding” side of the argument. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** That was the argument you were having when your brother-in-law told you to get out?

**Dickinson:** Yeah.

**Rabkin:** So you ended up moving to Santa Rosa?

**Dickinson:** Well, we were living outside Santa Rosa. This definitely was not what I had in mind about California, living in this crappy little house with three little bedrooms and five kids. *Mph*. I was ready for so much more, and “so much more” in my case was having a job as a busboy in a delicatessen, which seemed really cool. Lee and Goldie Evans, this millionaire businessman and his wife, were from Oklahoma, and during the Depression they got married. Goldie was a schoolteacher; they figured they could live on Goldie’s salary, and Lee would sell lumber off a truck in the front yard. By the time I met them they were millionaires. So if you’re sixteen trying to figure out how does life work, and you have a choice between a social worker and a self-made millionaire...

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** Anyway, their housekeeper was off on Sundays, so every Sunday night they'd go over to Roger Pigsley's Saddle and Sirloin and have dinner. Sometimes they took me with them. At the end they would sign the check, and it would go away, just like in the movies. I found out that's called a charge account. So they got me a charge account, and I'd take my buddies out to dinner and sign the check, and it would go away. Then I'd pay the bill later. It just felt so cool.

**Rabkin:** And were you still in high school at this point?

**Dickinson:** Technically, yes. I graduated from high school when I was seventeen. I had discovered Bishop Pike and Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in there somewhere. In fact, I'd discovered any number of things that were vastly more interesting than high school. So I must have gone to high school, because I did graduate, but I don't know how it went, because I was down at Mac's Delicatessen by lunchtime to do the busboy thing. I had a checking account, and—oh, it was just so thrilling. I sometimes wore a fedora hat and black overcoat. I showed up for the Senior prom wearing my black overcoat and my hat and the chaperone just burst out laughing at me.

**Rabkin:** At some point, you got yourself to Santa Rosa Junior College. Tell me about how you made that transition.

**Dickinson:** As I say, I graduated from high school when I was seventeen. My older brother, John, had driven out from Oswego with his buddy Dave, and was living with my mother and her husband down in Apple Valley. So I went down for the summer to be with them. It seemed kind of cool to have my older brother around. And then, as

summer wore on, I wrote a note to Lee Evans, my millionaire friend, and asked could you send me some money? So he sent me a hundred dollars, and I said, okay, I'll go to LA, and if I get a job, fine, and if not I'll join the Army. I got a job working as a library clerk at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, which was and remains one of the leading law firms in the country. Back then, we had something like forty-five lawyers, and now they have thousands. Some of the lawyers who were there are players whose names people would recognize if they tracked the Reagan administration.

That was kind of fun. I bought a sharkskin suit because that sounded impressive. They had these paneled offices. It felt very grown up. The LA Philharmonic used to play in the old Paramount Theater, so I'd go to the symphony, a new experience, using tickets they gave to staff if they weren't taking clients. I talked my boss, who was kind of a wimpy librarian, on Thanksgiving, into driving up to Trousdale Estates and parking outside Nixon's house. And I was totally convinced Nixon would come driving out in his powder-blue 1962 Oldsmobile 98, discover me, and decide that of course I should marry Tricia.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** After a while, my boss said, "You know, we need to get to Bertha's (a secretary at the firm who had invited us for Thanksgiving)." (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** By spring, I thought, you know, I kind of miss school. So I took a couple of night classes at East Los Angeles Junior College.

**Rabkin:** Were you living on your own in Los Angeles at that point?

## **“These Are My People”: Transferring to UCSC**

**Dickinson:** I had roommates. So I moved back up to Santa Rosa, and I got a job working nights at the Exchange Bank, and went to the Santa Rosa Junior College, with not a whole lot in mind, other than that I liked school. It was probably the fall of my second year, I took an American history class, and I got enthralled with the Progressive Era. One of the main historians of the Progressive Era who we studied was George Mowry, who ended up being one of John Dizikes’s mentors at UCLA. I got particularly into Woodrow Wilson especially liked his educational philosophy. 1964 is when they finished and consecrated Grace Cathedral. Woodrow Wilson’s grandson, Francis Sayre, who was, and as far as I know still is, the only baby ever born in the White House, was the dean of Washington Cathedral. He came out and preached at the consecration. I thought he looked like his grandfather.

Spring of my second year at Santa Rosa, I was trying to figure out where to go, and there was this article in the [San Francisco] *Chronicle* about this new campus opening in Santa Cruz. It sounded a lot like Woodrow Wilson’s Princeton. There was a picture of Page Smith, and you don’t have to be too imaginative to think that Page looked like Woodrow Wilson. So off I went.

The intellectual life at Grace Cathedral was thrilling to me in those days, because Bishop Pike was such an iconoclast. You know, you’re seventeen years old, and you’re sitting in the pew, and the bishop gets in the pulpit, and says of the Nicene Creed, “It’s a good thing we *sing* that, because if we ever thought about what we were saying, we’d all choke.” (laughs) And, you know, when a bishop can say that, that leaves the teenager with a lot of room for exploring. In 1962, there was a book written by the Bishop of a

working class diocese in London. It was called *Honest to God*, and was based on Paul Tillich's theology. So somewhere between '63 and '64, Pike had Bishop Robinson come for a Saturday morning symposium on the ideas in the book. In addition to Robinson, the panel include an atheist playwright from UC Berkeley, a scientist, a conservative Presbyterian theologian, and Archbishop Iakovos, the head of the Greek Orthodox church in the U.S. It was one of those things where it wasn't like, okay, now when we're done talking, "who was right?" It was more like there's this range of really interesting perspectives. And so I was primed for Santa Cruz. I mean, in a way, my whole life had primed me for Santa Cruz.

**Rabkin:** What was your application process like, and the process of being admitted to Santa Cruz?

**Dickinson:** I don't remember it being particularly complicated. What *was* complicated was, when I got my admission letter, and I was just—I had never been so happy—I was going to Woodrow Wilson's Princeton West. Then I get a letter from the registrar saying because I'm a minor and my mother lives in Nevada, I have to pay out-of-state tuition. And I write a letter to the chancellor—because once I did my visit to the judge, from then until now, I have tended to go to the top person, which has sometimes made me very unpopular with people who aren't the top person. (And that figures into the story of the Smith Society and me.) So I wrote a letter to the chancellor saying "This isn't fair: I'm a California taxpayer—I can show you my tax returns—I've been on my own since I was sixteen, and I've never been to Nevada, where my mother lives in a mental hospital. I can't come to your university if I have to pay out-of-state tuition." And that is how I came to meet Byron, because he wrote the response.

**Rabkin:** Byron Stookey.

**Dickinson:** Byron Stookey, the chancellor's assistant and director of academic planning. So I went down—everything was in the Cook House in those days—and he was, and is, one of the most soft-spoken men I've ever met. My recollection is some of the first words out of his mouth were "So the bureaucracy's hassling you." He solved the problem. I realize, in retrospect, at that moment he began to provide the answer to the big question, existentially, with which I was semi-consciously wrestling: what kind of man do I want to be? Through that gesture, I've become very, very sensitive to the fact that a lot of us have power that other people don't have and exercising our power on behalf of the people who don't can open up possibilities for them. I was almost going to name the scholarship for Byron, but then I thought, well, not that many people knew Byron, so why don't I name it for Page and Eloise Smith.

My older brother was slipping into schizophrenia during that year before I got to UCSC, and I was pretty worried about it. He was driving me over to Santa Cruz and talking to me about the bloodbath that was going to happen in the world. I thought (laughs), this isn't good, John, but I'm really happy right now, and leave me alone about this bloodbath business. So he did. And he did end up, sadly, sinking into schizophrenia and never getting back out of it.

So I got there a month early, and was working in what is now the Hahn building. Everything was in the Hahn building. The bookstore and library were on the first floor, and all of the administrative offices were on the upper floor, and I took the opportunity to just go around and meet everybody. Because, you know, these are my people, and I'm here, and I'm happy! I continued my practice that I had with Judge Stacey. They

didn't have shades on the windows, and so I went around, and even if Dean McHenry was sitting in there and didn't look obviously busy, I'd just walk in and sit down and start talking to him. You could get away with it in those days.

**Rabkin:** This was a month before the campus opened to the first class of students.

**Dickinson:** Yeah. Yeah, there are pictures of me: I was wearing my sport jacket and tie to work.

**Rabkin:** And where were you working?

**Dickinson:** I was working in the— It must have been in the registrar's office, because there's a picture of me that they took with Gil Null, who was an incoming junior, standing on one side of the counter, with his scruffy beard, and me with my sport jacket and tie and being very earnest and explaining something or another to him. It turned out Gil and Zoe Kramer and I—there were no seniors and no sophomores, and we three were the only philosophy majors in the junior class, with two philosophy professors. I didn't know it at the time, but I came to think, you know, the Prince of Wales wouldn't get that kind of faculty-student ratio.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** (laughs) And there was no tuition!

**Rabkin:** So tell me about your experience at Cowell College and at UCSC, and how it sent you on your life path.

**Dickinson:** Page proved to be very much on my wavelength. I was just reading that thing again that I sent to you [see appendix] that Bill Cane had written about Page's



commitment to the spirit.<sup>7</sup> I was set up to be that kind of person from a very young age. I took church seriously—although taking church seriously as a kid in my case (laughs) meant it was a nice place to daydream. But I loved the music. I loved, when I was ten, hearing, “of all the rules, the Golden Rule is the most important.” And you’ve got to hang your life on something, and that’s a pretty good one to hang your life on—before you learn that there’s no bearded guy up in the sky who ever said that. So there was that. And Page—he said, somewhat understatedly, that he was a lousy administrator. I would say that he was no kind of administrator at all. Stuff just piled up on his desk. But he spent scads and scads of time with students, including me.

But Byron was my main person. The first year, Byron invited me to co-lead a discussion section of the freshman core course. In those days, it was a two-year World Civilization course. I’ve heard that David Riesman, who had been Byron’s mentor, was supposed to come out, but canceled at the last minute, so Byron took it. He was more important to me than Page was. And still is. Any time I’m going to give a speech, I send him the text to ask what he thinks before I deliver the speech. I’ll talk to him on Wednesday (the day after the 2020 election) about how the election goes. If I were going to sum up Byron, it would be: he looks at things without having conventional assumptions about how things are supposed to be. An example: after he left UCSC, he was setting up a high school in Spanish Harlem, Central Park East. As I recall, he checked with the State of New York: what did it require of a high school? And it never had occurred to the State of New York to say, well, it has to be in a *building*. So they started it. I think John Carl Warnecke, who designed McHenry Library, was going to design the building, but, you

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<sup>7</sup> *Passing on the Spirit* (2002) by Bill Cane, Chapter Seven. See appendix and: <http://www.integrities.org/founder.html>

know, buildings take a couple of years, so they started in church basements and empty storefronts so they could get started sooner. Just as UCSC got started even though the buildings weren't ready.

As an aside, another important detail in my life, I guess, is: second and third grade, I went to a one-room schoolhouse, with a pot-bellied stove and an outhouse, and the entire school, K through Eight, could fit into Betty Carroll's living room to watch Queen Elizabeth be crowned. So my lived experience is, there are all kinds of ways to get an education, if you're open to being educated. Plus, there are all kinds of ways of doing *anything*, if you're open to trying to do things. So the Smith Society, which in some ways I'd say is quite a miracle, is a demonstration of how you can produce remarkable retention and graduation rates with very little money.

**Rabkin:** M-hmm. Yeah. Do you want to say anything else about your time as an undergraduate at Santa Cruz?

**Dickinson:** Well, I can say that I collected *so* many friendships with older people. There was this cliché in those days of "don't trust anyone over thirty," and I kept thinking, why wouldn't you trust people over thirty? They're the ones who know what it is you want to learn! And it wasn't in the classroom; most of what was valuable about my education took place in conversations outside the classroom, which was what Woodrow Wilson said about undergraduate students at Princeton, when he was trying to argue against putting the graduate school off to one side.

So that's one very important thing. I was known well enough that when, after Santa Cruz, I got a master's at San Francisco State, we got to use the Berkeley career center, because Santa Cruz didn't have one, and they asked us to put together a portfolio that

would include three letters of recommendation—and I gave them twelve. Nine of them were from UCSC people who knew me with enough specificity that when I saw the letters, I thought, yeah, that’s me.

My senior year, I lived with Bill and Barbara Shipley. Barbara was the university psychiatrist and Bill was a Stevenson Fellow and chairman of the linguistics department. He thought philosophy was bullshit, and I couldn’t figure out why anybody took linguistics seriously—so that left everything else under the sun for us to talk about.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** They had cultivated people in for dinner, and I became very accustomed to being included in conversations with cultivated people. Then 1968 rolled around. Byron was leaving the university at the same time I was graduating; Bill and Barbara were going on sabbatical to Yugoslavia, and this warm three-year experience was coming to an abrupt end. I was suddenly feeling pretty bereft that I was going to leave it.

**Rabkin:** You spent three years as an undergrad at Santa Cruz after transferring?

**Dickinson:** Yes. I think I probably arranged it deliberately, but I’m not sure. Fall of 1966 I took a class from David Blumenfeld, the younger of those two philosophy professors at the start. He was from Berkeley and in the Analytic tradition. I was so full of such cockiness, at that point it was ridiculous. On the first day of the class, *Ancient Philosophy*—as a philosophy major you had to take the history of philosophy—I said (laughs), “Why are we only spending a week on the pre-Socratics, when they were the last real philosophers?” And he didn’t do what I was sure he should have done, which

is to say, “Oh, you know, that was obviously a mistake on my part. Let me change the syllabus.”

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** And then, on the final, he didn’t ask what I considered the right questions—so I threw the thing in the wastebasket and walked out. So I got an F. I was so proud of my F, because I’d taken a stand for the truth, as filtered through Nietzsche. (laughs) So that obliged me to stay another year, because *Ancient Philosophy* was a requirement, and it’s only offered once a year. But I was in no hurry to go anywhere else anyway; I mean I loved being there.

I was so basically naïve. In those days, you had graduation in your college, and then there was a larger graduation in the Quarry. I skipped the one in Cowell because they didn’t give me College honors, and I thought, “How can you not give me honors, when I loved you so much?” I wasn’t tracking that that’s not the basis for honors.

Plus my mother came— Well, it was just something. You know, Martin Luther King had been killed in April; Bobby Kennedy was killed Tuesday of commencement week. My mother—who wasn’t in a mental hospital at that point, but she still was obviously troubled—the Shipleys invited her to come and stay with them. And I forced her to watch Bobby Kennedy’s train trip from Penn Station to D.C., including—I think they hit somebody in New Jersey, and the train just sat there for a spell. Every time she tried to speak, I told her to be quiet, that she had to be respectful. I was just having this low-grade anger with her that I much regret at this point. And I realize what it was about was I blamed her for my father not being there. It was my father I wished had been there. Byron and Lee had us over for breakfast on Commencement morning, and later

my mother just kept picking away at him. The more she did that, the madder I got at her. We sat in the audience for the thing over in the Quarry. Byron was getting an award because he was leaving. As he was getting the award, my mother muttered, "He looks like your father." I thought, "Well, that's kind of interesting." (laughs) Yeah.

### **"Five or Six Careers": After Santa Cruz**

**Rabkin:** So jumping ahead to 1999: I know that at that point, at the pioneer class reunion, is when things got started with what became the Smith Society.

**Dickinson:** Yeah.

**Rabkin:** We should probably move into that fairly soon. But I also know that in between your graduating from Santa Cruz and that momentous occasion in '99, you had some experiences that also played directly into your experience with and motivations for Smith. I wonder if there are some of those in particular that you'd like to touch on.

**Dickinson:** Well, one of the ideas Byron expressed when we were together at Santa Cruz was he thought an intelligent person in this day and age, which would have been the mid-1960s, should plan to have five or six careers. Since he became the stand-in for my father, his opinion mattered to me more than most people's opinions. It still does. So I had permission from my "dad" to just have different careers, as Byron himself did. So that's one thing.

My first career out of grad school was a tenured job teaching job at Cabrillo for six years. One of the most interesting careers I had—kind of an improbable one -- was working for Productivity, Inc. a Connecticut-based small company that was promoting

Japanese manufacturing practices. Most of the people in the Cambridge office, which is where I worked, belonged to an ashram. The Toyota production system and the practices of Kashmir Shaivism lend themselves to a harmonious relationship, because they're both all about flow.

**Rabkin:** Hm!

**Dickinson:** A key teaching of Kashmir Shaivism is not dissimilar to John Dewey's: anything that comes at you in life—look at it as an opportunity to learn something. And so, after I got over the shock of how in the hell did I get from Harvard Divinity School to this business promoting Japanese manufacturing, I really got into it. And, as with Lee and Goldie Evans, I learned from Norman Bodek, the guy who started this company, it isn't that hard to start a business, if you want to. So when I was 50, I had had it with working for anybody. (I was never meant to work for anybody, but it took me that long to figure it out.) So I started my own business. And I realized in 1995 that I could do my business from anyplace. I could log onto the internet. So I became one of these people who uses "summer" as a verb: I had a summer place on an island off the Maine coast, and then in the winter I would come to the mainland, where I had another place.

As we were heading up to the 1999 reunion, I thought, well, life's been pretty good to me; why don't I create a little scholarship for a gay foster kid in Cowell College? (At that point, I didn't realize the colleges had quit being what they were years earlier.) But I thought, well, you know, that's kind of nice, but it's very low impact. Why don't you name it for somebody, and then you could probably mobilize your classmates to join you in it." So I settled on Page and Eloise Smith. When I told Judy Einzig, from the first four-year class, who was helping plan the reunion, what I was planning to do, she said,

“Well, if this is going to be a proper memorial to Page Smith, it’s not enough to give money; you have to show up and *be* Page Smith.” Which at first I thought was awfully inflated—but I immediately flashed back to the Easter sermon that John Coburn, the Episcopal bishop in Massachusetts, gave in 1984, in which the most memorable line, to me, was “We’re all the flesh and blood Jesus has anymore.” And so, I thought, right: if you know what it was like to be treated the way Page Smith treated you, you could do that for other people.

You asked me about Harvard Divinity School. I learned—I kind of already knew it, I think, but I learned it in some depth at Harvard Divinity School the power of myth and mythic figures, and how to work with that. So that speech I gave when I stood on the stage at the pioneer class reunion was mythic—not in the sense that it was all made up; it was all true. [See the Appendix for the text of this speech.] But it was truths that had great illustrative power.

The one that I sometimes regret is the story of my being allowed to stay at the provost’s house that Thanksgiving. It gets told as if I was a pathetic waif. I was fully capable of taking care of myself at that point in my life. Technically, when the dorms were closed, I was homeless—technically, because everything I owned was in my dorm room. But I had plenty of friends, and I was always being invited to their homes for Hanukkah, or various other holidays. But I was reading Herbert Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization*, and I really wanted to be left alone to read that. So it wasn’t the story of a pathetic waif; it was the story of this odd duck who could really get into a book, and once he got in, he wanted to be left alone to stay in the book. Also, Page and Eloise had weekend guests, George Leonard and his wife. George Leonard was at that point the West Coast editor for *Look* Magazine, co-founder of the Esalen Institute, and had just written a book called

*Education and Ecstasy*. It was a big deal book back then about young people and education. So when they came back from their house in Bonny Doon on Sunday afternoon to the Provost's House with the Leonards in tow, I thought I should make myself scarce, and Page said no. He just included me in the conversation.

So I became somebody who became very accustomed to being included in conversations with people of some consequence. Whenever Page would bring somebody to the campus who, in any way, might have something to do with religion, he'd make sure I'd spend time with that person. I wasn't much of a scholar; I wasn't meant to be a scholar. But I was a thinker. And it lent itself to thinking. You know, getting an F in *Ancient Philosophy* is no big deal to me. You had a point to make and you made your point. (laughs)

By the end of my junior year, my second junior year, I realized, this is kind of interesting: the only philosophers who really are interesting to me are the ones who never knew their fathers, or lost their fathers early: Nietzsche, Camus, Sartre. And it was just kind of fascinating. Many of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Romantic novelists and poets who speak to me: same story. I was going to do a senior thesis about it, but I couldn't think of anything to say, and I thought it was my job to figure it out; it wasn't my advisor's job to help me figure it out.

So then, when I went off to San Francisco State, I wrote a novel and tied it to a story Byron had told me. In the 50s, when he was at Harvard, some guy used to fire a gun at the Saint Paul's church clock tower, over at the intersection of Bow and Arrow Street, at midnight to make it strike thirteen. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)



**Dickinson:** So I invented this character, Peter Null, who every night would shoot at the clock tower. He was a composite of all of these philosophers and poets and novelists I had been so enthralled with. I wrote a truly bad novel, but it was very interesting and fun. I ended up with seven hundred and thirty pages of drivel.

**Rabkin:** And at what point did you write that novel? Was it once you were at [San Francisco] State?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. Yeah, it was my thesis. And that was an accident. You know, Tom Cuthbertson, who graduated a year before me—

**Rabkin:** Tom Cuthbertson of [*Anybody's*] *Bike Book*?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. His dad was vice president of Stanford and his uncle was John Chancellor, the anchor of the NBC Evening News. So Tom came from a very different background from mine. He had gone off to this creative writing program at San Francisco State. It was fall of my last year, and I was thinking, well, I'm not really interested in philosophy; I just like thinking big thoughts. And Tillich was still alive, so I thought, maybe I'll go to Harvard Divinity School, because Tillich thinks big thoughts. Martin Marty was at Chicago at the Divinity School, and he thought pretty interesting thoughts. And I briefly flirted with going to Johns Hopkins and getting a doctorate in philosophy, because there was a Marxist there, and I was amusing myself by thinking I was a Marxist. But Tom comes back to Cowell and sits at the lunch table telling me about this writing program, and I said, "Well, that sounds pretty good; I'll do that." And he said, "But you're not a writer." (laughs)

**Rabkin:** Details!

**Dickinson:** So I sent off for the application, and they said send in a body of poems, or a collection of short stories, or thirty-five pages of a longer work. And I thought, well, I'm a longer-work kind of guy. So I sat down and wrote thirty-five pages of the start of the story of Peter Null, and they let me in. I chose Ray West, the chairman of the department as my advisor, because it all goes back to "go to the judge; he's got the power." And I'd go in to Ray from time to time and say, "I just don't know what a novel is supposed to be"—and he said a novel is anything you can get away with. So that was what my novel was: a really bad version of getting away with stuff.

### **"A Healthy Cross-generational Community":**

#### **Launching the Smith Society**

**Rabkin:** Shall we now jump into the pioneer class reunion and your speech, and the response to that speech?

**Dickinson:** Yes. So you saw the thing that Mary Male wrote. [see Appendix] She and her husband, David Brick—it was a second marriage for both of them, and they'd been looking around for a project. So I said to the gathered audience that they'd be hearing from me in a couple of weeks, and I hoped some of them would join me. I wrote a letter and University Relations sent it out. And a bunch of people, including Mary and David, donated, and between what they gave and what I gave, we had enough money for three full-tuition scholarships. I also offered to be a mentor.

The first three students represented more or less the kinds of students who are part of the Smith Society. One student was a Cuban American former foster kid who I thought was invested in seeing herself as a victim. I'm the wrong person to do that with. One

was this African American guy who didn't show for the reception at the Cowell Provost's House to honor them. Adrienne Harrell, who was a wonderful African American development person assigned to work with me, read him the riot act, and insisted that he had to meet with me. So Sam and I met down at Bookshop Santa Cruz, and I could tell this is the only time Sam and I are ever going to talk. But I'm pretty good at getting people to tell me their stories, and his story was very compelling. His mother had told him about Martin Luther King when he was ten, so he was holding that. But he'd been part of a gang in South Central LA, and he was about to start his spring quarter of his last year, and he wasn't sure what he was going to do, because he couldn't go back to LA because of the gang. He studied journalism.<sup>8</sup> And he told me if had he not gotten the \$4,000 Smith scholarship, he would have had to have left without his degree, one quarter shy of getting his degree. So that's another type.

And then there was Maribel Valencia Castillo, who was a Mexican orphan who'd come to this country on her own when she was fifteen. An unscrupulous woman from Chicago had convinced her, "Come with me to the United States, and I'll get you legal, and you'll be my housekeeper." And she left Maribel in Brownsville, Texas. By the time I met Maribel, she was twenty-six; she was a senior in cultural anthropology, and she took me up on my offer to be a mentor. I learned you can do this from an island off the Maine coast. She sent me an email saying she was trying to figure out what to do when she graduated. She wanted to know if I'd gone straight to graduate school, because she

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<sup>8</sup> UC Santa Cruz had a minor in journalism for twenty years. It was cut in 2005. "Over the span of 20 years, Conn Hallinan, Paul Skenazy and Roz Spafford founded a journalism minor grounded in UCSC's writing program. From 1991-2005, the program awarded 223 minors. Prior to 1991, over 75 students graduated with independent majors in journalism. It took two rounds of budget cuts, one dean of humanities influencing central administration and less than three years for the entire program to crumble." May 14, 2016, *City on a Hill Press*. See:

<https://www.cityonahillpress.com/2016/05/14/defunded-suspended-and-cut/>

was trying to decide whether to go to graduate school or go into the Peace Corps to help people who were less fortunate! I sent her a note back saying, “You know, *anything* you do—getting a job and living for a while, *anything*—will be fine, Maribel.” In there somewhere I mentioned that I’d gone to Harvard Divinity School. So maybe a month later I get a note from her saying “you said you went to Harvard Divinity School, and one of my anthropology professors said Harvard Divinity School asked her if she would recommend somebody, and she wanted to recommend me”—what did I think? So I talked her through that. I drove down to Harvard Divinity School to be sure I wasn’t giving Maribel dated information. There was a Pakistani woman, Lisette, behind the counter and I said, “I’m helping an applicant whose written English isn’t always that good; does it matter on her application?” Lisette said, “Well, the faculty likes to think that they don’t care, but they really do.” So I helped her with her essay.

Then, at the start of her last quarter at UCSC—she’s been admitted to Harvard—I get an email saying the motel that she and other students were living in just got sold and they’re all being evicted. The only place she can find that she can afford is out past Cabrillo. So she was thinking of getting a used car; what did I think? I said, “You know, the first thing Harvard will tell you is do not bring a car to Boston. But let me see what I can do.” So I put the word out to my electronic universe, and Judy Einzig—of “you’ve got to show up and *be* Page Smith”—said, “Well, let me check in with Jane Jordan, because I think they spend half their week in Santa Cruz and half the week in San Francisco. I think they have a guest room they might rent.”

**Rabkin:** This is John Jordan and Jane Jordan. John taught in Literature and Jane, his wife, was a therapist, I think. Is that right?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. If I had to bet, I would bet Maribel never paid a penny of rent. They fell in love with her. So then, by the time she was heading to Cambridge, I went to my friend Ada, who had a house about a seven-minute walk to the Divinity School, and asked if she'd be willing to rent to Maribel. John and Jane flew over with Maribel to see that she got set up, and I think Jane would talk to her every two weeks to be sure she was doing all right. And so it went. On her breaks, she'd come out and stay with John and Jane, and they're still devoted to one another.

**Rabkin:** Hah. What a wonderful story. Bill, I think this might be a good place to break. Would that be okay with you, just to take a five-minute break?

**Dickinson:** Yeah.

**Rabkin:** [returning after break] Okay, good. So thank you for the detailed stories about your three initial scholarship recipients. I just wanted to clarify: were those full scholarships for a full year?

**Dickinson:** All I know is they were what tuition for the year was.

**Rabkin:** For the year. M-hm. Yeah. Okay, good. And how were they administered? Was it through Cowell College, or through the development office—

**Dickinson:** No, actually. This was interesting. The history of Smith— It's done more than we had in mind. Cheryl Perazzo—now Cheryl Jones—was a part-time person in Financial Aid. They scanned the FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] forms to see who fit the eligible categories, and they found that there were something like sixty eligible students. Nobody at UCSC had ever had any occasion to ask

themselves how many orphans, foster kids, and former delinquents go to school here. Sixty turned out to be a non-trivial number.

And then also, because this was so small, nobody at the university was paying a whole lot of attention. So Cheryl, as a part-time person, poured herself into it. Adrienne Harrell, who was that point a very young person in Development, very junior—she was enjoying it because, under Proposition 209<sup>9</sup>, I think it was, if I'd wanted to do a scholarship for a Black or Latino student, the university couldn't accept it. But this gave her an opportunity to do a work-around since all three of the first students were people of color. And she and I loved that. So then Cheryl and I just became like partners in this, and we remain very much partners.

Esperanza Nee, who was the director of Financial Aid back then, like Byron, is a model of somebody who used her power to enable the bureaucracy to serve people. So Cheryl was allowed to, as time moved along, be the sole Smith person in Financial Aid. When you'd go into Cheryl's office, her walls were covered floor to ceiling with Smith pictures. Her office was right where Dean McHenry's office had been in the beginning. In fact, I used to joke with her: there was a big fire in Central [later Hahn] Services in 1971, and everybody assumed, given the times, that a radical had set fire to it. But it turned out McHenry, who was cheap, when Clark Kerr got fired, went up to University Hall and got some of Clark Kerr's furniture and put it in his office.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

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<sup>9</sup> Proposition 209 banned the use of affirmative action involving race-based or sex-based preferences in California. It passed in 1996.

**Dickinson:** And it was a frayed cord from one of Clark Kerr's lamps that set fire to the building. So I told Cheryl, "That lamp was right where your computer is."

The second year, I said to Cheryl, "You know what, let's make the scholarship \$1,000, and that way we can serve more people." So we'd have a thing in the provost's living room once a year, where some nice people would show up, and some nice students would show up and say nice things and go away. I thought, well, that's everything that's wrong with this country right now: it's all transactional. So let's go back to the drawing board, and let's say we're going to be a scholastic society, one benefit of which is you get a scholarship.

So we just kept growing. A lot of this stems from that experience I had working for the company doing Japanese manufacturing. Because what I learned from Norman, and what I learned from John Dewey's influence, is: just keep experimenting.

At the very beginning, I wanted to get the Smith kids on board.<sup>10</sup> Because I had heard that one reason Adlai Stevenson College never got the private money that the model presupposed was, when Adlai Stevenson died in June of '65, [then California governor Edmund G.] Pat Brown said, "Well, let's name that college for Adlai Stevenson, to honor him." But his kids got pissed off when the development people were trying to raise money using their father's name. They said, "If any public university is going to capitalize on our father's name, it should be the University of Illinois." So I thought, well, let's get the Smith kids on board early—at least Anne Easley and her sister Ellen Davidson. And Anne would have brainstorming meetings at her house that never

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<sup>10</sup> Page Smith and Eloise Pickard Smith died within one day of each other, in August 1995, and were survived by their four children: Ellen Davidson, Anne Easley, Eliot Smith, and Carter Smith.

resulted in anything concrete. Gary Miles will tell you more about this, but the meetings were driving him crazy. So then somewhere in there, and I don't remember the exact chronology, Mary Male and David Brick started having the meetings at their house, sitting around a dining-room table. I'd call in from Maine. David would lead the meetings and I learned early on: if you really want to be sure something gets said, do not do it at the fifty-ninth minute, because when sixty minutes are up, David will end the meeting, no matter what.

So we just experimented. I mean we *knew*: don't bother to ask anybody at the university if it would be okay with them if we took some middle-school foster kids into the Porter caves, because you know what the answer is going to be. Fortunately, there were a number of people inside the university who were every bit as happy to play around with the system as we were. That's another big learning for me: people can use bureaucracies to justify using power the way they want to use it, or they can use it to justify not putting the institution at any risk, or they can use it to free the spirit to serve the students.

**Rabkin:** Mm. Yeah.

**Dickinson:** So that was the way it was going. I'd come out a few times a year. We were pretty loosey-goosey. On a Saturday three times a year we'd have a business meeting in the morning in the Cowell Conference Room and invite donors, alumni, and anybody who cared enough to show up on a Saturday. I said, "You get to say what you think, and vote." That's where we made most of our big decisions. Then in the afternoon we'd have a more ceremonial kind of thing in the Cowell Fireside Lounge. In those days, I



just decided a lot of stuff by myself. So I decided we would have Senior Fellows and Collegiate Fellows, because this is kind of the Woodrow Wilson spirit at play.

**Rabkin:** And what did those distinctions mean, Senior Fellows and Collegiate Fellows?

**Dickinson:** A Collegiate Fellow was a student, and everybody else was a Senior Fellow. And it was my Methodist upbringing also, because in the Methodist Church I attended as a kid, below the sanctuary was something called the Fellowship Hall. And there was always food. So it's the double play on: it's about fellowship in the dignified academic sense; and it's about breaking bread together. The word "companionship" means to break bread with somebody.

**Rabkin:** Oh!

**Dickinson:** And Mediterranean cultures all have— bread-breaking is central to their spiritual practices.

**Rabkin:** Do you know that that never occurred to me, that etymology—"com"-  
"pan"ionship?

**Dickinson:** You should have taken high-school Latin.

**Rabkin:** I did! I *did* take high-school Latin, and it *still* didn't occur to me. Terrible.

**Dickinson:** (laughs)

**Rabkin:** Anyway. I have a little question about the decision to change the scholarships to \$1,000 apiece. I just wondered whether you had any concern about lowering the

amount of scholarship—that it might actually make it not possible for some of the students who might have needed a full scholarship to be able to continue.

**Dickinson:** A concept I carry over from business is the thing called a “loss leader.” I saw the scholarship already as the loss leader; that it’s the *relationship* that has the value. I didn’t yet have it down that the *community* is. But I had it that money, in and of itself, isn’t very interesting. If you haven’t got it, it can be a big deal. But I would rather be raising money to give people who may not have had the experience of a healthy cross-generational community in their families, an experience of what that can be like. And also, I wasn’t thinking that much about it. I’ve never thought much about it. In that regard, the university and I are often at odds, because they think through everything, so that it often takes two years to do anything.

**Rabkin:** So in those early years, were you conferring the scholarship money on students who were already part of the university? And were you doing outreach to prospective students as well?

**Dickinson:** The money goes to the UCSC Foundation, so it’s the university’s money, so it only goes to current students. In those early years, I was so ridiculously naïve that my early fantasy was, I want every foster kid in California to have the option of going to the university. Then I met some foster kids and realized, oh, this is really not a very realistic fantasy. So in the fullness of time, what I got around to is where we are now: I can truthfully say to a current foster kid for whom the University of California is an appropriate destination: “If you go to UC Santa Cruz and join the Smith Society, the odds of you staying in school and graduating are quite high. That’s not the case at other campuses.”

**Rabkin:** And the data support that promise.

**Dickinson:** Yeah. Yeah. And you almost don't need the data. Model A, which is the Smith model: You want a grown-up to be your person? You can have it. The Guardian Scholars model is to have a paid staff person or persons, and however many of you there are, you're going to get whatever you get from that paid staff person, who may or may not be all that profound in their understanding of existence.<sup>11</sup>

**Rabkin:** You have said that this was the first effort to support former foster youths in the entire UC system.

**Dickinson:** Yes. It was more than foster youths from the beginning, because of an error on my part. I don't like paying for lawyers, and I'd always heard that lawyers name the target every possible way they can, and that way there's no confusion. So in the original Letter of Gift, it was for "foster kids, orphans, and wards of the court." I think, "There: I've said "foster kid" every possible way you can say it." I wasn't tracking that, actually, relatively few orphans entered the foster care system, and that, unlike other states, California has two juvenile court categories: foster kids are "dependents of the court," and "wards of the court" are more commonly juvenile delinquents. So I said to Anne and Ellen, "What do you think I should do? To the extent this is meant to keep your parents' spirit alive—your mom did that prison arts program—" And they said, "You should do whatever you want to do."

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<sup>11</sup> The Guardian Scholars Program, founded in 1998 at California State University, Fullerton, supports former foster youths in their quest to complete a college education. The program has since been established at dozens of colleges and universities in California and is emulated nationally—Editor.

So I thought, “Oh, we’ll just leave it that way.” So we did, for quite a while. And then, at one of those business meetings I told you about, Stu and Deb Oppenheim, who were Pioneers, came. Stu at that time was director of family and children’s services in San Mateo County, and Deb worked for HHS, deciding what agencies in the western states that are dealing with homeless and runaways get federal grants. I said, “Well, would they [homeless kids and runaways] be covered by the categories “foster kids, orphans, and wards of the court”?” And Deb said no. So I said, “Okay, people, what do you think—should we include homeless and runaways?” Everybody said yes. We just kept adding. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs) Uh-huh.

**Dickinson:** We didn’t think anything through very well.

**Rabkin:** And yet it all worked out.

**Dickinson:** It *has* all worked out. And, you know, it was so reassuring to read *Seeds of Something Different*.<sup>12</sup> I’d read a lot of the oral histories, and I knew a number of these people over the years, and stayed friends with them. But I’d never seen it year by year by year, laid out the way you did it in the book, and I realized, wow: eight years on, the faculty was already mobilizing against the Kerr-McHenry vision for undergraduate education. Then there was this “happy” coincidence, or this coincidence, of enrollment falling off, and the SAT scores nose-diving, and mass murders in Santa Cruz, and Mark Christensen being such a flop as a chancellor. And [Chancellor Robert] Sinsheimer

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<sup>12</sup> Irene Reti, Cameron Vanderscoff, and Sarah Rabkin, *Seeds of Something Different: An Oral History of the University of California, Santa Cruz* (Regional History Project, UCSC, 2020). See: <https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/speccoll/seeds-s-lg-box-wrapper-27252278>

comes in from Caltech, where they don't even have an academic senate. So, in 1979, there's this happy marriage of a chancellor who sees administrative redundancy when he looks at the colleges and a hefty percentage of the Academic Senate that doesn't like the idea of the colleges.

A thing that, as best I can tell, faculty's never been called on is that it used to have a full-time load of five classes a year, one of which was in the college. Somehow or another, when they decided not to be in the colleges anymore, they also decided, "and therefore, there's no need to teach that fifth class."

Well, don't get me going on what I see as the occasional bad faith of UCSC faculty. But I have observed over the years that they're very practiced at saying "The problem with this place is this mushrooming group of highly paid administrators." I've never once heard anybody say, "Our only teaching four classes here makes it harder for students to get through here in four years." I said to one of my classmates, who's a professor at Kentucky, "At the University of Maine, a full-time teaching load is *eight fifteen-week* classes a year." And he said, "Yeah, the University of Maine's a Class-C, or—there's some category of research institutions, and UCSC belongs to a higher category than the University of Maine. All that means to me is that the University of Maine does a better job of serving its students.

I'm taking us off-topic.

**Rabkin:** Yeah, so just to come back to those early years: one of the people who was, I think, involved at that point that we haven't talked about yet is Hal Hyde. I'm wondering about his role.

**Dickinson:** I was just thinking of Hal.

**Rabkin:** Of course, he died not very long ago.<sup>13</sup>

**Dickinson:** Yeah. He had a good long life. And today's the birthday of Jerry Davis, who—to go back to my undergraduate years, Bill Shipley introduced me to Jerry, who was an abstract expressionist painter in Berkeley, and Jerry ended up becoming one of my spiritual fathers. And I accompanied him to the end of his life.<sup>14</sup>

Hal. So Hal was one of those first people I met. McHenry was over in this quadrant, and Hal was over in *that* quadrant, and Admissions and Registrar and Financial Aid was in this quadrant, and I never figured out what was in *that* fourth quadrant—but these were my people. And when I got the job teaching at Cabrillo right after San Francisco State, Hal was president of the Cabrillo board and showed up to congratulate me in that role.

**Rabkin:** And tell me, just briefly, what the job was at Cabrillo.

**Dickinson:** I was an English instructor. A few years in, I went into Jungian analysis, and we figured out I'd become an English instructor because I had a lifelong fear of English instructors and wanted to save the world from them. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** So that's when I thought there must be something better to do with your life than that. I can't remember how Hal showed up on the scene early about the Smith

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<sup>13</sup> See: <https://news.ucsc.edu/2020/10/hal-hyde-in-memorial.html>

<sup>14</sup> See: [https://merrill.ucsc.edu/academics/student\\_opportunities/davis-art-makers/index.html](https://merrill.ucsc.edu/academics/student_opportunities/davis-art-makers/index.html)

Society, but because he had been in my life since I was twenty, and was part of that early UCSC culture, where I had relationships with people—friendships—he became my trusted advisor. He was the one who told me, when I was trying to scope out options, “The UCSC Foundation can do anything they want.” I had assumed the UCSC Foundation wouldn’t say that to me; they’d tell me all about their constraints.

What else? Hal was also a Methodist, so we had these values in common. We were driving over to Monterey one day, and he was commenting on the landscape as we drove, and I said, “Hal, there’s a story I’ve told so often that I’m not sure if I made it up or if it’s true, and that was that Dean McHenry wouldn’t allow a redwood beyond a certain diameter to be cut down without him coming to the spot and being convinced it couldn’t be saved.” And Hal said not only was that true, but when Dean got too busy, he deputized Hal. One or the other of their initials had to be on any tree before it could be cut down. And I thought, you know, a person who has that relationship with the land has a deeper understanding of things than somebody who doesn’t have that relationship with the land.

There’s a CAP program at Cabrillo that’s aimed at first-generation students, to get them ready for—

**Rabkin:** A what program?

**Dickinson:** It’s called the CAP, and I can’t remember what it’s short for, but Hal introduced me to that.<sup>15</sup> And he also introduced me to— When he left the university

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<sup>15</sup>The Cabrillo Advancement Program (<https://www.cabrillo.edu/services/cap/>), jointly sponsored by Cabrillo College and the Cabrillo College Foundation, provides scholarships and enrichment aimed at preventing school dropout and increasing the academic success of low-income students at the middle-school and secondary level.

because he and Christensen didn't see eye to eye, he went back to his family's Ford Department Store in Watsonville, and he and some other businesspeople and ranchers said, "You know, farmworkers' kids should have the option to go to good universities the way we did." So they used their power to make that happen. I already had kind of that model in mind of what a mentor can be, because that's what my mentors were. But it became explicit with Hal.

As an example: he was mentoring a student at Berkeley before AB 540 passed<sup>16</sup> and Berkeley found out she was an undocumented student, so they were going to charge out-of-state tuition. I said, "Well, what did you do?" and he said, "I arranged for her to make a presentation to the regents, and they changed the policy." I'm thinking, okay, so we don't all have that kind of power, but on a really bad day, we all have more power than these students do. Byron's embarrassed that I tell that story about his solving for me the out-of-state tuition thing, but I'd say to him, "Byron, you had the power to solve the problem and I didn't, and if you hadn't solved the problem, I couldn't have gone to UCSC."

Keeping the spirit going, I introduced Hal to Deutron Kebebew, who was our first student leader, and Hal took Deutron under his wing professionally after Deutron had graduated and was project manager for PAPAS, a dynamic program to teach men, many from Watsonville, how to be better fathers. He got him into the Rotary Club in Watsonville, and showed him how to comport himself in that context. And so it goes.

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<sup>16</sup> "AB 540, signed into law on October 12, 2001, authorizes any student, including undocumented students who meet specific criteria to pay in-state tuition at California's public colleges and universities (e.g. California Community Colleges, California State University, University of California)." See: <https://www.elac.edu/Student-Services/Student-Resources/AB-540-Student-Information/What-is-AB-540>



**Rabkin:** I watched a video of Deutron recently. It was made when he won, or his organization, PAPÁS, won the Nextie award in Santa Cruz some years ago—and it's clear he knew how to comport himself.

**Dickinson:** Uh-huh.

Oh, so, getting back to the narrative: I came out from Maine January of 2002, because I couldn't come out for the fall because of 9/11 and planes weren't flying. At this point we were big enough that we met up in the Cowell Senior Common Room. I invited Bill Shipley and Gary Miles. I'd just met Gary, who is very, very earnest, but he was also a surfer. Deutron led the meeting, or facilitated it. Gary was just being so *earnest*, so earnest, and I thought, you know, these students haven't got a clue what a cool guy he is. He was saying, "You can come to my office any time you want; it doesn't have to be during office hours." I still didn't know that the colleges weren't really much anything anymore, so I thought of Gary as a faculty member in Cowell.

Bill's sitting next to me, and Deutron's doing his thing, for which he is quite charismatic. He's majoring in electrical engineering, and Bill turns to me and says, "You've got to save him from engineering; he's just too good at this." At the start of the meeting I spotted a new student, our first Cowell student. He smiled a sweet smile that I find endearing. Then at the end, he comes up to me and says, "I guess there must be something to all this, because my mother used to live in the Page Smith homeless shelter." That activated my mythic doings. So I brought Gary over and said, "Gary, you're a teacher in Cowell; this is a Smith student in Cowell. He's unlikely to take you up on your offer to come to your office. Why don't you guys just talk?" Gary says, "Do you surf?" And the student said, "No, but I've always wanted to." And Gary said,

“Well, I’d be happy to teach you.” So that was the seed that, several months later, led to Gary to taking responsibility for creating, systematizing it, and coordinating our mentor program.

**Rabkin:** Ah. Wonderful. Bill, I’m thinking this might be a good place for us to stop today.

**Dickinson:** Okay.

### **The Guardian Scholars Program**

**Rabkin:** [This is Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and I’m in my study in Soquel, California, once again, to interview Bill Dickinson via Zoom.]<sup>17</sup>

I want to start with a few brief follow-up questions from our first interview, just to tie up a few loose ends.

**Dickinson:** Okay.

**Rabkin:** That interview took us through roughly the first couple of years of the Smith program. I hope we can touch on these topics pretty quickly, so we can move on to the development of the Smith Society over the ensuing couple of decades.

First: you alluded to the Cal State Fullerton Guardians program, which was launched in the same year as your program—but you said it took a significantly different approach; it’s really a different model. I wonder if you could characterize the difference between the two programs, and maybe talk about the different philosophies that they represent.

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<sup>17</sup> This information was not recorded but was added to the transcript for the record after the fact.

**Dickinson:** Okay. I'm going to try to do it concisely. And I'll start with the word "program": they're a program and we're not. They got the Stuart Foundation to fund a startup, and that the program at Fullerton was the first startup. So almost everything the Stuart Foundation subsequently funded at other colleges and universities was called the Guardian Scholars. The students at Cal State Pomona didn't like the term "Guardian Scholars," as any healthy foster kid wouldn't, so they, the students, chose Renaissance Scholars for their name.

**Rabkin:** What did they object to about the term "Guardian Scholars"? Was the implication that they were being—

**Dickinson:** It drags you back into being a foster kid.

**Rabkin:** I see.

**Dickinson:** Let me just do a couple of quick differences. One is, we've never just been about foster kids. Two, we're about keeping alive the spirit of Page and Eloise Smith on behalf of our students. So when we look at a student, we don't see an at-risk youth; we see a young university student with promise.

Laura Caldwell, who was a freshman that first year, at one of our board meetings, once said she never realized I'd been a foster kid; she just thought of me as this smart older student she looked up to. I said, "That's the whole point." Because we know, psychologically, if you look at a person as someone who's been traumatized, you'll get traumatized behavior. And if you look at somebody who has a good deal of ego strength (or they wouldn't have made it to the university), and they came with a dream,

and you say, “My mission is to help you move forward with your dream”—that’s a very different relationship.

But the big one is, our model requires a whole lot less overhead. Their model is staff driven, so the staff has to be paid. In the case of San Francisco State, I think they have three full-time staff, plus a faculty member working with them. The last time I heard, they had to raise a million bucks a year just to cover their overhead. We made do with five hundred bucks a year for several years for our overhead. It’s why I persist in thinking that we are a model of something that UCSC could use to serve its undergraduates better, which is caring, competent, committed volunteers willing to show up and be there as a friend for a student, and be willing to provide an intergenerational community for students.

The Guardian Scholars programs are fine, if you like that kind of thing. The people I’ve met who are involved with them are all really good people. They tend to have social-worker consciousness, and social workers are really nice people—but, as I said the other day, if you’re a sixteen-year-old and you have a choice between a self-made millionaire and a social worker for your guide (laughs), I think it’s a no-brainer which one you should choose.

**Rabkin:** And in the Smith model, you have mentors in that position that a social worker otherwise might be in. So these are volunteer mentors.

**Dickinson:** These are volunteer mentors who are *not* in the role a social worker would be in. We assume that we’re there to serve the students in the way that students wish to be served: that it’s their life, and their decisions—which, legally it is. But *existentially*—that’s the thing.

Some of the strong feelings I have about it stem from my own sense of the lack of dignity and power that you have when you're a foster kid.

**Rabkin:** Thank you. That's a very helpful and important distinction between that social-worker role and what Smith is doing. I wonder if you want to say anything else about the spirit of Page and Eloise Smith that the society is keeping alive. How would you characterize that spirit?

### **Keeping the Spirit Alive**

**Dickinson:** In some ways, it would be that chapter I sent you.<sup>18</sup> The spirit of keeping them alive is the spirit, particularly, of Page, who believed very much—and, as he says in there, from his mentor Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy—that history is the passing on of the spirit.

In the early 70s, some researchers went around the country interviewing people who were, at that point, considered leading lights in undergraduate education. Page was one of them and they said he was the only one who said one of the purposes of undergraduate education is to love the students. If you were a student in his college, you know he wasn't just making pretty noise; he really—he could cry like no man I've ever met. But it went deeper. Just that thing I mentioned in my speech: already in November 1965, with all of the enormity that was on his plate, when I was figuring out what to do with my draft notice, he had taken the time to know that I was interested in contemporary theological ideas, and so tried talking me out of a position I was taking based on Reinhold Niebuhr's Just War theory of history.

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<sup>18</sup>*Passing on the Spirit* (2002) by Bill Cane, Chapter Seven. See: <http://www.integrities.org/founder.html>].

John Dikizes tells a comparable story of when he was Page's student at UCLA, and Page said, "You should apply to Harvard for a PhD." John, who was a child of working-class Greek immigrants, didn't see that as very probable. He applied and was turned down. Page asked him about it, and he said, "Well, they turned me down." Whatever Page did next, Harvard changed its mind—and gave the world a man who ended up being a very cultivated, caring—a competent researcher—but somebody who really cared about students as human beings.

**Rabkin:** Thank you. Thank you. Another follow-up question I'd like to put to you has to do with three people you described as key players early on in the organization. You mentioned Cheryl Perazzo, who later became Cheryl Jones, and her role in supporting Smith students from within the financial aid office. And you also talked about Hal Hyde, who was of course UCSC's first vice chancellor for business and finance, starting in 1964. And then the third key player you mentioned briefly is Adrienne Harrell, and I wonder if you wanted to say anything more about her.

**Dickinson:** Yeah. So this is just at the very beginning. It wasn't very long before there were more key players. But Adrienne was a young African American low-level person in Development. She's now, I think, the assistant dean or something in Engineering—which, you know, happens if you stay around long enough.<sup>19</sup> But back then, what I was proposing to do was so small in the eyes of the university that Cheryl was a part-time financial aid person and Adrienne didn't have much power. But she's a stupendously nice human being, and she particularly liked it, as an African American, that this enabled her to do something that could kind of maneuver around Prop 209.

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<sup>19</sup> The UCSC directory as of December 2020 states Adrienne Harrell's title as Learning and Talent Development Manager for Staff Human Resources.

She didn't stay very long, because she was moving on to another job. She handed me off to Matt Henry, who ran the Annual Fund—not because, functionally, that made sense, but because he and I were both gay, so she thought we would work well together. Which we did, except every year Matt would complain that the Annual Fund was bearing all the expense of this, and that it didn't seem fair. I was busy thinking, “Hey, from where I sit: you're just the university, and I'm raising money for you for free. Why do I have to hear about all of the subsets of University Relations?”

Adrienne and I still see each other from time to time, and I will forever feel gratitude for that first year. But she didn't linger. If you take the two years I was out of the picture (2005-2006), Cheryl is the only person who has been involved with this from the get-go. It wasn't very far into it before Deutron, our student leader dubbed her “Mama-Bear.” Matilda Stubbs, another of our early student leaders, who went on to get her PhD at Northwestern, once said to me she hated going to the Hahn Student Services building when Cheryl wasn't there. Many years later—when we were in the process, in 2018, of updating the Smith Letter of Gift, to say more specifically what I meant by keeping alive Page and Eloise's spirit—Cheryl asked if I would sometime tell her about Page Smith, because she never knew him. I said, “I would be happy to do that, Cheryl, but it really isn't necessary, because you embody the spirit magnificently.” It's that mythic thing, Page and Eloise are just shorthand for a way of being in a loving, empowering relationship with young people.

**Rabkin:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Dickinson:** Which was the way that Kerr and McHenry envisioned treating undergraduates, in the context of small, intergenerational communities.

**Rabkin:** Yeah.

I'm glad you mentioned Deutron Kebebew, who was an engineering major, who emerged as an early student leader in the program. I just wanted to clarify whether he himself was a scholarship recipient.

**Dickinson:** I'm going to correct you one more time: we're not a program; we're a community of friends.

**Rabkin:** (laughs) Yes. Thank you.

**Dickinson:** Every time I hear people call us a "program," even after I've explained it, I think, that's a statement of just how far gone our social contract is, that the idea of a community of friends is so hard for people to grasp.

**Rabkin:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Dickinson:** When, you know, it used to be key to the American social contract.

So Deutron, I think maybe the second year, showed up at one of those gatherings at the provost's house where we honored that year's recipients. I tried to convince him to join us, because he had been in foster care. But he was a Pister Scholar, and that gave him a lot of money, and he thought it wasn't appropriate for him to take even more money. He finally did join and get the scholarship and we developed a kind of a father-son relationship that we still have.

**Rabkin:** One other individual whose name I think you mentioned last time was Leslie Felton. Do you want to talk about her?



**Dickinson:** Yeah, Leslie. Well, she's not a major player, but she has said a couple of very memorable things, one of which Gary will probably talk about, and that was, when asked why she didn't want a mentor, she said, "Who needs one more grownup to take care of?" That goes back to the fundamental difference in my vision of who our students are, and people who see our students as bruised fruit. No. Like, people think it's a sad story that I went on my own when I was sixteen—and I'm thinking, *you've got to be kidding*. I was so ready: "Get these grownups out of my life and let me start being the decider!" So, that's one. And the other is—I just totally love it because it just came off her lips just like that—she said, "When I was a little girl, my mother said I could be anything I wanted to be, so I decided I'd be a horse."

**Rabkin:** (laughs) Thank you.

**Dickinson:** You don't forget a line like that.

**Rabkin:** Really. All right. Well, you have already brought up the subject of your fundraising collaboration with Matt Henry and the Annual Fund. Could you say a bit about what, exactly, the Annual Fund was, or is, and talk a bit more about that relationship?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. So the Annual Fund is kind of at the bottom of the totem pole of fundraising. I don't know if they do it anymore, but back then, they had a call center, and they would call small donors every year. I loved getting those calls, because it was always a student, and they'd let me yammer on about how wonderful the university was for me and ask them how it was for them. After a while they'd say, "I see you gave a hundred dollars last year; would you be willing to give two-fifty this time?" And after talking with this student, how could I not do that?

So I think that's what the Annual Fund basically does. In terms of its function in our life at this point, it's the primary re-stocker of our donor pool. From a business standpoint, the way it works is: We have remarkable donor loyalty. So, a small donor comes in usually, but not always, through an Annual Fund effort. All donors always hear the truth from us. We're real with them, and we invest in the relationship. Some become mentors. Over time, many small donors become bigger donors as they come to believe in what we are doing. Sometimes, small donors even become major donors. I'm thinking right now of one of my classmates, who was senior partner of her own law firm in San Francisco. She started out small and eventually became a major donor. After she retired, she started giving less every year, but still a substantial amount, and she also brought donors to us who gave us quite a bit.

So, back to the Matt thing: He and I did get along very well in the way that you can get along with somebody because you're both gay. Back then it was still not so easy. What we did is, in the beginning, I sent out a letter to all of the people who had attended the reunion. Then, each year, I would add to that group of people: all of the pioneers who weren't at the reunion. Then all of the people who were in Cowell and Stevenson who graduated in 1972. I just kept going until we had run out of people who would have known Page and Eloise, or known the colleges as they were originally envisioned, which is why I keep saying it is a Pioneer Class initiative, because basically, for quite a long time, our main donor base consisted of people who were in Cowell or Stevenson in the early years. As you probably know, half of Stevenson's first sophomore class had been half of Cowell's original freshman class, so they would have known Page Smith. In fact, some of them moved to Stevenson to get *away* from Page Smith, because he was too paternalistic, and this was the sixties. (laughs)

It all kept going along. But there was the issue of the cost of the postage; there was cost to sending out newsletters. And I thought, I don't know why *I* have to think about it; I'm writing the letters; I've created the thing that's generating all of this income, and it's generating a lot more income than the cost of the mailings—so leave me alone.

Eventually, we felt a need for a brochure. Liz Sandoval, who is a good friend of Anne Easley's and was the development person for the Humanities Division, took the lead in putting together our first brochure. I thought, Liz knows what she's doing; she works in development. She didn't talk to Matt until it was ready to go to the printer. Matt said, "Well, who's going to pay for it?" And that's when reality struck. I was so tired of hearing the fuss about it that I said, "Damn it all, I'll pay for it." But then there was the question of where would I put my money so that it could be used to pay for it? So we needed to have an operating account—or, as I came to later realize, we needed an administrative home base. So Lynn Zachreson said she'd take care of all of that.

**Rabkin:** And what was Lynn Zachreson's position?

**Dickinson:** Something in the Alumni Association. "The person in the Alumni Association I enjoyed the most," was her position.<sup>20</sup> But she kept fussing about how cumbersome it was to do this. And I'm thinking, "We write three checks a year. How cumbersome can that be?" So I happened to be at STARS one day with Corinne Miller. I can't remember why I was, but I was telling her this story.

**Rabkin:** STARS is Services to Transfer and Re-entry Students, and Corinne was the director.

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<sup>20</sup> Lynn Zachreson served as Associate Director of Alumni Relations at UCSC.

**Dickinson:** And a really good woman. So I was telling her how frustrating this was to me. I said, “You know, I wrote the check, and weeks later they’re still complaining that they can’t pay the bill—and I’m thinking, how long does it take them to deposit a check?!” I was so innocent about UC Santa Cruz. You know, I sometimes think it takes at least three meetings to deposit a check.

**Rabkin:** UC Santa Cruz—and bureaucracies in general?

**Dickinson:** Probably. But UC Santa Cruz is the one I harbor a great deal of annoyance with, because it’s a love affair gone bad. Berkeley never pretended it was going to be better than it is about undergraduates.

So Corinne said, “Well, if it had been me, and I realized the check had entered the system, I would have just covered it from one of my other accounts.” I said, “Great! Will *you* hold our money for us?” I didn’t realize what I was saying to her, in her mind, is “Will you become our administrative home base, with you being the chief decision-maker.” I just thought, we need somebody to hold this pot of money for the occasional expenses we have.

So then Matt, a little after that, said, “You know, it isn’t fair that the Annual Fund is paying for all of this. It’s a Student Affairs expense.” And I’m still in the “Why do I have to know that?” Then Ronaldo Ramirez, who was the Student Affairs development officer, said his entire annual budget was only twelve thousand dollars, and I thought, “You’ve got to be bullshitting me.” But it turned out it was true! I’m thinking, how do you make *anything* happen with twelve thousand dollars for an entire student body?

Anyway, that was Matt. I think that relationship went on for four years, and then he went somewhere else.

**Rabkin:** And then did you move under the aegis of STARS at that point?

**Dickinson:** Ah, I didn't *realize* that we did. (laughs) I just thought about STARS the way you think about your bank: "They're holding our money."

**Rabkin:** Yeah. So tell me about how that relationship ended up developing with STARS.

**Dickinson:** So now we can get to the tricky stuff. Ronaldo called me, back in Maine, and said, "Have you ever thought about what you'd do with \$500,000?" I said no. Then he called me a couple of weeks later and said, "Well, have you thought about it?" I said no. And he got a little annoyed with me, because he was proposing that we come inside the university and have a center. So I flew out from Maine, because I thought, we've got so many different pockets of activity going on. We were doing admission outreach with [assistant director of admissions] Alex Delgadillo; we had a thing going with Kevin Brown, who was the executive director of admissions; we had a relationship with University Relations; we had the relationship with the Alumni Association, and the relationship with Financial Aid. I thought, well, you know, it's a good idea for all of us to get in one room at one time, so that we can have a shared picture of what's going on.

Ronaldo sat at one end of the table and a few of the volunteers were there, as I recall, Anne Easley, and Mary Male and I. So Ronaldo started out proposing, "Come inside the university and have a center," and I said, "I don't want to." Kevin Brown turned to Cheryl and said, "Well, how many students do you have?" We would have had

probably about thirty at that point. He said, “Well, that’s twice as much as the Native Americans, and *they* have a center.” I said, “I don’t want to have a center! When you have a center, the first thing you do is you hire staff, and then the next thing you do is they’ll want to hire an assistant to do the part of their job that they don’t feel like doing. And then after a while you’re dealing with their having morale issues, because they don’t see a future. And you quit being a group of friends with a mission and become an organization.”

**Rabkin:** What, Bill, is the function of a “center” at the university? What does that designation mean?

**Dickinson:** I don’t exactly know, but I know that all of the ethnic groups have a center, and I know that the Cantú Center is the center for the gay, lesbian—

**Rabkin:** —et cetera—

**Dickinson:** —all those initials.

It was an odd accident that we would be based in STARS, because all of the stuff STARS does at the start of the school year is aimed at transfer students, and we always have a bunch of freshmen. But it almost immediately set in motion the things I most feared. It happened with a speed that made my head spin.

**Rabkin:** So you did become a center.

**Dickinson:** Yes. I came out for a year, and Ronaldo and I worked on applying for \$450,000 from the Stuart Foundation. And it was an interesting exercise in (laughs) him asserting how things were with the university. Like, at one point he said, “You know,

the university has an army of lawyers in Berkeley that could crush you.” (laughs) But it was like two brothers sort of struggling. He’s a really good man and I especially liked hearing his own rather heroic story about things like what it was like to grow up the son of a migrant worker or to be a Latino staff member seated along the wall at a UCSC Foundation meeting.

He kept asking me, “What else can we add to get this up to \$150,000 a year?” My heart wasn’t in it, because it’s just not my values. At some point I said—because my idea was the main person who would get hired would be my counterpart and learn from me what it was we were doing, as opposed to what she ended up being, which was somebody who just pursued her own agenda. So I said, “You know, there’s quite a bit of clerical stuff that I do, so we could probably use somebody to do that.” So the term “program assistant” showed up in the next draft. Then, after a while, Amy Hamel’s name showed up in that spot. I’d never heard of Amy, so I went over to introduce myself. And she’d never heard of the Smith Society.

**Rabkin:** What position was Amy in at the time?

**Dickinson:** At the time, I think she was funded by soft money, and was a STARS student adviser.

**Rabkin:** I see.

**Dickinson:** But you know how it is with soft-funded positions. The university seems to be always on the lookout for, “How can we get private funding and use it for what we want to use it for, and say it’s for something else?” It’s not totally that cynical, but it’s pretty close. It didn’t occur to me to ask Amy how she felt about clerical work; I

assumed that Corinne knew that was what we had in mind about that function. Instead, she was tasked with being our student adviser.

The big, big misunderstanding was the grant proposal assumed dual governance, so those of us leading the Smith Society and university people would have equal power in deciding things. To this day, I think somebody at the University who signed off on that grant proposal had to have realized it wouldn't possibly work. I didn't realize it because I was naive, so I felt very betrayed when it became clear almost immediately that it wasn't going to work.

I had a prior relationship with Terry Kook, who was the Stuart Foundation program officer assigned to us. I'd been asked to give a talk about what we were doing, up in the Bay Area, for people interested in these kinds of things and she was there. So when everything turned really bad really fast in the first year of the grant, I overreacted. I was still operating in a very naïve way. I drove with the woman we had hired [as my counterpoint], up to meet with Terry, and I told her, "This isn't going to work. We should unhook the two things, let the university keep the money, and call their thing something else. We'll just keep being the Smith Society" I had imagined this would be the start of a process. Given the university's devotion to process, I was quite taken aback that there was no process. They became Renaissance Scholars and that was that.

**Rabkin:** How long did the relationship last before you split?

**Dickinson:** I don't recall. A year, give or take. Soon after we got word that we had the grant, I had to go back to Maine. Corinne had told me they could post what was to be the [Smith Program Coordinator] position as soon as they knew the grant was going to come through; well, that was in March. But there was a wave of layoffs coming, so she



had to wait to post the position until the layoffs came—I think in part because people being laid off had priority.

**Rabkin:** This was the position that Amy was looking at?

**Dickinson:** No, this was the position that I was pushing for a specific candidate who worked in the Educational Partnership Center to get. Corinne proposed someone else, a lovely Latina who was already working on her staff. In retrospect I wish I had listened to her.

**Rabkin:** I see.

I was back in Maine before the position got posted and there were interviews, so I wasn't even part of that process, although the person for whom I had been advocating got the job. And that's where the serious trouble began because she, Corinne, and I had incompatible notions about what the position entailed. In drafting the Stuart proposal, what I had in mind was someone who would take on my role after a year in which I would coach her as to all that this entailed. Corinne decided that the coordinator would handle all the stuff external to the University, with Amy doing the interface with the students. Whatever the coordinator had in mind did not seem to entail taking any direction from me or any obligation to adhere to what by then were our established Smith protocols.

I had had this fantasy of having little Smith outposts to connect with current foster kids. We'd started with San Mateo County, where we would meet once a month in Mary Cospers's living room—she was one of our most loyal donors—and invite local foster kids. Matilda Stubbs, one of our Collegiate Fellows who I mentioned earlier, sometimes came. Around the time the Stuart Grant came through, the gatherings had gotten so big

that we couldn't fit into Mary's living room anymore. Also, we realized that it was imposing an extra burden on the kids' social workers to bring them to an evening event. So Mary, the Smith coordinator, Colleen Tate, another of our biggest San Mateo supporters, and I sat around Mary's table figuring out what to do. Colleen offered to rent a van, take a room at Chili's, feed the kids, and pay for all the expenses. Our coordinator declared that because Smith was now part of the University this could no longer be a Smith function because of the risk. She was right, I suppose, but that seriously undercut what had been a very important part of our mission.

**Rabkin:** Put the university at risk in terms of liability?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. Yeah, so that's the thing. Page wrote a book in 1990 called *Killing the Spirit*. The subtitle is *Higher Education in America*.<sup>21</sup> In my opinion, an institution can't really be primarily about its students, if it's about protecting itself in the first instance. A faculty that wants to teach four classes a year instead of five isn't making that decision because it's better for undergraduates; it's making that decision because it's better for the faculty. Faculty members who hang onto their jobs long after they reach retirement age, and justify their existence by having graduate students who can't get tenure-track positions when they're done—it seems to me that's about the faculty and the university, not the students.

Well, now I took us off track with that editorializing, so I should stop.

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<sup>21</sup> Viking Books, 1990.

## Splitting from the Renaissance Scholars

**Rabkin:** So let's go back to the Stuart Foundation grant, and what happened when the decision was made to rescind the grant, or to shift it over to the university, and for the Smith Society to separate from the grant.

**Dickinson:** It was the university's money in the first place. All of the money we every have raised has been the university's money. My buddy Jim Mosher, who was a freshman pioneer—his dad was a political scientist at Berkeley, and Jim was a Saul Alinsky kind of guy, who has a pretty jaundiced view of the university—told me, "Until serious money gets involved, you can fly below the radar." So that's what we had been doing. The grant became serious money, it was their money, and this meant we couldn't fly below the radar anymore.

So I came back to our people and said, "Let them keep the money, and they're going to be the Renaissance Scholars." I was so upset by what had happened, I went back to Maine, and if I hadn't left my car in Santa Cruz, I would never have come back—but I had to come back because my car was there. So I spent the better part of a year back in Santa Cruz, still working on stuff, but I got so worked up about stuff our coordinator was doing and I kept firing off angry emails. Corinne finally told David [Brick], who's a lawyer and was at that point on the Alumni Council, that I was not allowed to be alone with a staff person without David being present. I was feeling more and more powerless, humiliated, and angry.

Looking back, I think what happened is that Corinne, who was just doing her job, took charge of the thing in a way that triggered stuff I had never dealt with about how it felt

to have the cops come and take my mother away, with strangers taking over my family and deciding everything. Because that's how I experienced what she did. In the first [Smith group] picture, she wanted the STARS banner behind the students—and I'm thinking, "You're not slapping your brand on us. We've been laboring away at this for a few years, and you haven't even taken the time to understand who we are and what we are doing." What she was doing was integrating us into STARS. But as I said earlier, one of my social workers said of me as a kid that I didn't respond well to placement. That kid was still alive and operational inside me.

Looking back, I wish I hadn't reacted the way I did because I came to realize in time that Corinne is a really fine woman who was just doing her job. But we all have an unconscious, and stuff triggers us.

**Rabkin:** Yeah.

**Dickinson:** I didn't understand what was going on with me and I split and went back to Maine and stayed away for a couple of years, occasionally firing off angry emails till Corinne insisted that I stop. A big part of what happened during that period is what didn't happen. One of my main motivations for going for the Stuart grant had been to have access to funds to pay for our fundraising activities because nobody in University Relations was going to cover those costs anymore as if we wanted to stay in business we needed a steady stream of new donors. But none of the Stuart funds got spent on that.

**Rabkin:** So at a certain point the Smith Society separated itself from the grant, and the University developed a program called the Renaissance Scholars Program. Tell me a little bit about what that program entailed.

**Dickinson:** I don't really know, other than that Amy became the student advisor, because I stayed away for two or so years. During that time, Gary, who has been friends with Amy and Gildas for a long time, would know more. I know they got priority enrollment and year-round housing guarantees for our students.

**Rabkin:** Gildas is Amy's husband, and a faculty member.<sup>22</sup>

**Dickinson:** Yeah. And Amy and Gildas had been resident preceptors in the Cowell dorms, when there used to be resident preceptors. They lived close to each other. So it was partly the personal-relationship thing, but by the time I came back, Gary was saying he couldn't possibly perform his function without Amy's function. Amy would be the one who would be likely to be the first person to know that a student needed a mentor. She'd contact Gary, and he'd come up with a mentor.

**Rabkin:** Gary's function at this point was heading up the mentoring element of the Smith Society.

**Dickinson:** Yeah. Gary has always been primarily interested in the mentoring program—all the way back to when he was going to these meetings at Anne Easley's. In 2002, he came back to Maine, where his sister lived, and had me up for dinner one night, and he said, "You know, nothing comes out of these meetings. So I'd like to just take one thing to make something happen, and that will be mentoring."

I said, "Okay—as long as you understand that what I have in mind about mentoring is that professors are not necessarily the best candidates." We had an interesting

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<sup>22</sup> Gildas Hamel is a senior lecturer emeritus in the history department whose research and teaching focus is languages and the ancient world. In 2009 he received the *Palme Académique*, for his lifelong work teaching France's language and culture, which is France's highest academic honor.

discussion about that at his sister's house. So—fast forward to 2018, when he asked [Cowell College Provost] Alan Christy if we could come back to Cowell, I think all he was really thinking about was the mentoring program, because he didn't really know about all the other stuff we did. I pointed out to Alan that the mentoring program is very central, but the Smith Society is a lot more than the mentoring program.

Then, Dane Hardin, who was one of the original juniors, became the board president for some period of time while I was gone. I mean, I just stayed gone, because it was too upsetting, and also, I wanted to see what would happen to the Smith Society if I got out of the picture. And what happened was the leadership group, a small number of really fine, dedicated people, didn't realize University Relations had been central to our development effort, so they put together a brochure that had no family resemblance to other brochures at the university. It had the name of the scholarship misspelled. I imagine, but don't know, that they paid all the costs of the one mailing they did during that two years. They sent a letter with the brochure to our existing donors, including me, explaining what the Smith Society is and does when many if not most of us already knew that. They were doing what people do when they don't really know what they're doing and don't ask the guy who'd know what and how we had done it up till this point. So our revenue fell off substantially during that two-year period.

**Rabkin:** What two years would this have been, Bill, roughly?

**Dickinson:** I want to say 2005-ish—the end of 2005 until, I think I came back in 2007. Because basically, when the grant ran out, the program coordinator function went away. Corinne's boss managed to save Amy's job by cobbling together money from

various other accounts, but it was still a year-by-year thing. Somewhere along the way, John Jordan became board president.

There's a common theme, and that is, people who've spent their careers at the university realized all the ways in which I was being a pain in the ass—although Gary has come around to the realization, after he went into a big problem with a subsequent STARS director, that he could now understand why I did many of the things I did. If I'd done them the university's way, we would never have existed. Even so, I wish I had behaved differently.

### **Development Philosophies**

**Rabkin:** So how did the Smith Society continue to support its financial needs, and continue to operate, once it had been split off from the Renaissance Scholars Society; once you no longer had access to that grant?

**Dickinson:** Well, we had the 500 bucks a year that you get for being an Alumni Association affinity group; most of the expense we had back then was for food at our events, and 500 bucks was enough to pay for that. And sometimes volunteers would just bring food. For a number of years, fellow Pioneers Lorraine Sintetos and Laura Caldwell hosted welcome dinners at their houses at the start of the year for new students and old-timers.

**Rabkin:** How did you cover expenses like postage, and printing brochures, and that sort of thing?

**Dickinson:** Postage got covered by University Relations. We've had several brochures. I think by the time we wanted a second brochure, we were raising enough money that we could cover it.

**Rabkin:** Okay.

**Dickinson:** If I were going to put my development philosophy into a few sentences: one, it would be, constantly expand the circle of people who say "we" when speaking of the Smith Society, and be sure you include your donors in that category. And always tell the truth, and don't pretend you're something you're not. I have spent an enormous amount of time visiting donors, and often we'd become friends. By the time I came back from that two-year break, there were three or four people where, if we needed more money, it was okay with them if I asked. Colleen Tate, for instance, one of our very biggest and most-loyal donors, and I go hiking at least once a year; then we have lunch, and at the end of lunch, she typically will say, "Do we have any business to discuss?" — by which she means, "Do you need any money?" And I love, more often than not, saying no (laughs) because part of my development philosophy stems from Japanese manufacturing: when you've got enough, stop asking. When you need some more, go ask for some more.

And that, obviously, doesn't dovetail too well with the university's development approach. It took me quite a while to realize that everybody in University Relations who works with us is just doing what they're measured by, evaluated by, once a year. I'd make one very huge exception: Kathy Rouhier, who's retired now, became our development saint; she enabled me to do my part as well as I did. I also want to acknowledge that quite a number of University Relations folks have been helpful over



the years, including Donna Murphy, when she was vice chancellor and especially the folks in communications. Like everyone else in the University who works with us, I had to learn that they're not adversaries; they're just doing what it is they are paid to do. And the fact that what they are paid to do sometimes collides with what you have in mind doesn't make them the enemy. It just makes them somebody you have to figure out how to work with or around.

**Rabkin:** Yeah. Speaking of what you were doing: you noted that the mentoring element was a really big, central part of what the Smith Society was all about, but that there were other activities you were engaged in as well. Could you talk about those?

**Dickinson:** Sure. So we did outreach, and early on Mary Male and Cheryl were the key players. Mary was the biggest player. And it would basically be to do things that would bring foster kids to the campus for a fun experience. Or, once we went up to Wilder Ranch with our students, some foster kids, and a few mentors to plant trees. Cheryl once, I recall, took a group of students over to speak to some foster kids in Santa Clara County. Then we hooked up with Alex Delgadillo, who was the admissions outreach director for the campus, and he helped. So we had busloads of foster kids come down to the campus and our students would host them.

One thing that happened—and it's where mentors can be very central—was, Cheryl suggested we have a speakers' bureau, and Gladys Macario, who was one of our students—who's in our official video—said she'd be happy to run with it.<sup>23</sup> Her mentor, Anita Harten-Kroeber, was a Stevenson pioneer who took us to task when a busload of

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<sup>23</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViQ7i3idn6w&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViQ7i3idn6w&feature=emb_logo)

foster kids showed up from San Francisco one Saturday, and some of the Smith students who'd told Gladys they'd show up and help didn't.

**Rabkin:** Uh-oh.

**Dickinson:** And Gladys was, you know, "Okay, I'm in charge here, but I don't know what to do." So Anita said to our leadership team, "You know, we're just being irresponsible. You don't have a twenty-one-year-old, by herself, take responsibility for a speakers' bureau." So that's when we adopted a policy and a practice that then went on for several years, and I wish would come back: for any important initiative, there was to be at least one Senior Fellow paired with at least one Collegiate Fellow in the lead, as equals.

**Rabkin:** A Collegiate Fellow is a student and a Senior Fellow is—

**Dickinson:** —anybody else.

**Rabkin:** Okay.

### **"Founder's Syndrome"**

**Dickinson:** Whatever happened during that two years I was away, the nature of Smith changed quite a bit. Also, during that time, the phrase "founder's syndrome" was introduced to my vocabulary. Anita Harten-Kroeber told me what I was doing and experiencing was called founder's syndrome.

**Rabkin:** Meaning—

**Dickinson:** “This was my vision, and I’m the one who decides stuff.” Very much Page Smith-like, you know. (laughs) I’m willing to ask you what you think, and if you don’t think what I want you to think, then I’ll make another kind of decision. Todd Newberry tells the story of when they were just setting up Cowell, and there was the question of College Night: how often should it be? There was a group of faculty invited to help with the decision, and most of them were saying once a month. Todd says one of them said once every three weeks. And Page said, “Right! It will be every week.” And it was.

And it was a grand experience—except for anybody for whom it wasn’t a grand experience. I certainly found it quite grand. And Todd did, too, because he was from Princeton, and he’d been at Stanford, and he came over to this rinky-dink beach town. College Night was his only weekly experience of civilization. (laughs) There were heavy hitters who came.

**Rabkin:** Yes. And one of the implications I’m inferring of this notion of founder’s syndrome is that, you know, in the earliest, formative years or moments of an organization, it’s expected that a founder will have a great deal of control and influence—and as more and more people get involved, it generates more potential conflict, as there are more people with different ideas from the founder’s ideas? That’s the syndrome that was being invoked?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. You wrote the book [*Seeds of Something Different: An Oral History of the University of California, Santa Cruz*], so you know. Dean [McHenry] was very oriented toward “I decide things.” Page—if you read his oral history, he’d threatened to quit four times before the campus ever opened, because Page also had founder’s syndrome, but he was founding Cowell College: “Butt out, Dean. This is *my* game.”

**Rabkin:** Yeah.

**Dickinson:** But there's another side to founder's syndrome that doesn't get talked about so much, and that is, what happens when people don't solve the problem that's created when the founder no longer solves it? More specifically, in our case, who's going to raise the money? We really haven't answered that question successfully. Well, we're in our twenty-second year and we're still here, so there's at least that.

**Rabkin:** So you have continued to fundraise successfully enough to continue to enlarge the program in terms of the number of students you brought in, for quite a number of years, until you hit a maximum point.

**Dickinson:** Well, it got way too big. When I came back, I was chastened, and Corinne and I became friends. She turned out to be one of those kinds of bureaucrats who, if you can bend a rule, she'd bend it. So we had a harmonious *modus operandi*.

**Rabkin:** And was STARS continuing to "hold the pot of money" for Smith?

**Dickinson:** Yeah—and I was getting it that it was our administrative home base, not just a holder of a pot of money. We were the deciders about how to spend the money, but Corinne was part of the decision-making group. Pablo Reguerin later became the head of EOP, and all of that collection of stuff of which STARS was a subset. When Corinne retired, Pablo named Sally Lester, who was Amy's counterpart, to that role and gave her a Coordinator title, so he didn't have to pay so much. And her only knowledge of us was sitting next to Amy over the years, so it was mostly about Renaissance Scholars. She had no knowledge of the heart of the Smith Society. And we had become a Friends group. So she and Pablo took to seeing us as just a Friends group. I kept saying,

“Well we’re unique among Friends groups in that we’re a friend of *ourselves*.” But nobody asked, “Well, what do you mean by that?”

**Rabkin:** Just to clarify, a Friends group is usually a group that forms officially, under the aegis of the university, to support some unit or some organization within the university—like the Friends of the Farm and Garden; the Friends of the—whatever?

**Dickinson:** Yeah.

**Rabkin:** Okay. So Smith had taken on that label—

**Dickinson:** For a very, very mundane reason. It has to do with the way I’ve lived my life. It used to be that Friends groups didn’t pay the administrative fee that would come out of every donation to the university. So I said, “Okay, then let’s be a Friends group.” And then, when the university said, “Now Friends groups also are subject to that fee,” I thought, “Well, let’s stop being a Friends group, then, because we don’t have any reason to do it anymore.” Corinne would say, “Well, you get to use rooms at the university”—and I’m thinking, “We’ve always used rooms at the university.” Everything that people said was a benefit melted away with the possible exception of insurance.

**Rabkin:** Did you remain a Friends group nevertheless?

**Dickinson:** Yeah, because everybody else was not as obstreperous as I am. But trouble started then, because when Amy retired, there was a question of, “Who will replace Amy?”

**Rabkin:** Amy had spent the remainder of her career in the position with the Renaissance Scholars program?

**Dickinson:** Soon after I returned the Smith Society and Renaissance Scholars merged and became the Smith Renaissance Society, with Amy continuing as student adviser, and, with Cheryl, resident saint. She held numerous jobs over the years—I think always funded with soft funding. When I came back one of the first things we did, with the help of Anne Easley’s friend Liz Sandoval, the development lead for the Humanities Division, was to form a relationship with the David B. Gold Foundation in San Francisco. And that, for two or three years, raised the bulk of Amy’s salary—which wasn’t much.

**Rabkin:** What was Amy’s role in the Smith Society at this point?

**Dickinson:** She was officially the student advisor, but she has a very giving nature, so she’d show up on weekends and evenings to help with things that were not in her job description.

Our board president at the time Amy retired saw herself as the boss, in a sort of command and control manner, and that had never been the role that even I had taken. I did have founder’s syndrome, in terms of “what’s the spirit [of what we’re doing],” or “where will we head next.” But she was micro-managing, and she applied for the student adviser job.

**Rabkin:** The job that Amy vacated [when she retired]?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. And Liz Moya, who was one of our graduates, also applied for it, and I think she was a favorite of Pablo’s. I think, but don’t know, that Pablo leaned on Sally

to hire Liz. Liz, at the time, was working on a master's in social work at San Jose State, was a single mother living in San Jose, and didn't bring a lot of life experience. If a student was in trouble at midnight when Amy was in that role, Amy was there. Liz isn't going to drop everything and find childcare in San Jose and drive over to Santa Cruz to deal with a student who's having a crisis at midnight.

Then Sally did something that guaranteed trouble. I doubt she intended to, but she thought we were a Friends group in the standard sense. So she rewrote the job description for the student adviser function, and added to it things that had been the province of our board. As a result, even if our board president weren't in a questionable relationship with Liz because they both applied for the same job, Liz would have unknowingly done things that would have been a problem for any board president.

For example, there was an opportunity for a [Santa Cruz] *Sentinel* article. We've had several over the years, and they've always been helpful. And this one, the timing was good, because there was going to be something called a Foster Youth Museum, which is an exhibition that was making its way around California; it was going to be at the [Santa Cruz] Museum of Art and History. So, strategically, it was a good time to get a *Sentinel* article. Liz said she would take care of it—and she sat on it. So our board president just took it and did it herself—which, from the point of view of the university, may have been a very bad thing for her to have done, but from the standpoint of a little group trying to make stuff happen, it was a major strategic opportunity that was going to get fumbled. And the university is sometimes really good at fumbling strategic opportunities, has been my observation over the years.

So where are we now? (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs) So Amy retired; Liz Moya came into that position.

**Dickinson:** Our board president was, I would say, creating what's called a hostile work environment for Liz and, by extension, Sally. And no matter how much I asked her to stop, she wouldn't.

**Rabkin:** So at this point, how far into the evolution of the Smith Society were you? How many students were you serving?

**Dickinson:** Well, in this narrative I've zipped back and forth through a bunch of years. I think Corinne retired in 2012, so we had seventy-two students.

Two other things happened in this period that were pretty bad. Some self-appointed students became a core team, and it was at a time when the student culture at UCSC seemed to be all about the student voice. So they just started deciding things. And this is where not having Senior Fellows and Collegiate Fellows paired up became a big problem. They also could be pretty arrogant. And, as best I could tell, they were doing what they were doing with Sally's blessing, so they were constantly in a state of uproar about things.

**Rabkin:** What kinds of decisions were they making?

**Dickinson:** They would decide things that were the board's province, for instance. I remember one in particular, a young woman who was very smart and very, very arrogant. When I objected to her team unilaterally changing things that went to the heart of our mission, like intergenerational community and joint decision making, she would give me patronizing lectures about realizing that change is difficult for old people, but change is necessary. And I'm thinking, "Then go raise your own money."



At the same time, our board president was busy deciding things that the person in that role might reasonably have done, but because she tended to be a micro-manager, so she did too much of it. (But I tend to be a micro-manager, so I did a lot of it, too.) And that put her at odds with the students.

**Rabkin:** Bill, could you clarify something for me that I'm still—I'm sorry; I'm still a little confused about this: about the evolving relationship between the Smith Society and the Renaissance Scholars Program, or whatever they called themselves.

**Dickinson:** We became one thing in 2007 or 2008, and we stopped being that one thing in 2018.

**Rabkin:** Okay.

**Dickinson:** And the merged thing worked till 2018.

**Rabkin:** So that is why— I'm sorry; I'm still a little confused about this. (laughs) So that is why Amy Hamel, although she was officially working for the Renaissance Scholars Program, was also of direct service to Smith Society students.

**Dickinson:** Gary started our Smith mentoring program before there was a Renaissance Scholars Program. He coordinated it till 2018, when he came down with Guillain-Barre Syndrome. Amy became student adviser for the Renaissance Scholars Program in 2005. Both served the same students at that point. There was no Renaissance Scholars mentoring program. As we got bigger, Gary said he couldn't do what he did without Amy's function. But it turned out what he meant was Amy. Her successor was not as cooperative.

Here's a little footnote: I'd met George Blumenthal at MIT in 2006 or 2007, and tried to get him interested in the Smith Society. He said his wife, [UC Hastings law professor] Kelly [Weisberg], would be the more logical person, given her concerns. He was interested in the AB 540 students, the undocumented. So I thought, okay, well, I'll go back and I'll do something with the undocumented students, and that will give me an occasion to have a relationship with George and stay out of the hair of the Smith Society. So that's how Dreamweavers came about.<sup>24</sup>

Anyway, there was a dinner at University House one night to discuss undocumented student needs, and Larry Trujillo, who was one layer above Corinne, said to me that he'd been able to cobble together money from various pockets that year to cover Amy, but he didn't see himself being able to do it after that year. And I saw this as two guys talking together about a problem that needed a solution and that I had some responsibility to help solve. So I went to Felicia McGinty, at that point not realizing she was running a reign of terror. She was the vice chancellor for student affairs, and I had met her at Adrienne Harrell's for dinner, so I just thought of her as a nice woman who had been badly treated by the Latinos when she first arrived. I said, "Here's what Larry told me. I'm here to talk about what our options are." And she went back and clobbered him: "You shouldn't share information like that with a major donor." I'm thinking, "One, I'm offended that you've got me pegged as a major donor. I'm so much more than a major donor. And, two, it offends me mightily that you treat a subordinate that badly."

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<sup>24</sup> UCSC Dreamweavers is a community of support for undocumented students at UCSC. See: <https://www.facebook.com/UCSCDreamweavers/about/>

Anyway, we pursued the Gold Grant, that solved much of the problem of funding Amy for two or three years, then Dean of Students Alma Sifuentes launched a process by which students agreed to fund it via student fees.

**Rabkin:** M-hmm. So would it make sense now to talk about the Fiat Lux award? Or are we skipping a little too far ahead?

**Dickinson:** Well, there's not a whole lot to say about the Fiat Lux award, other than Liz Sandoval had been advocating for us, and for me, for years, and her persistence paid off. Apparently, it was a bigger deal than I realized, because I was pals with [Cowell College Provost] Faye Crosby at that point. Every time I was down I would stay at the provost's house, and when I told her about it, she got exhilarated. I thought, well, I guess this is something! And then, whenever she'd introduce me to people, she'd introduce me as a guy who got the Fiat Lux Award. She had a dinner party the night of Cowell commencement. That would have been 2010, I think. I had given a commencement speech earlier, and then she hosted a dinner at her house in honor of my getting the award. To this day, I don't know whether it is or isn't a big deal.

**Rabkin:** What does the award entail?

**Dickinson:** There's a great big dinner somewhere. In this case, it was at the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose. They show a little video about you, and they invite you to come to the stage and say a few things, and then they hand you (fetches award) this big, heavy glass thing. I had friends and relatives come out from the East Coast. My kid brother astonished me by showing up. I was utterly unaware that I got a standing ovation when I walked up to the stage, because I was mostly preoccupied with having to give the

speech. I was also unaware of getting a standing ovation when I left the stage because I was preoccupied with not tripping. (laughs)

In the run up to that event, I had fun with the University Relations folks, because they kept trying to get a copy of my speech without coming right out and saying, “Can we see a copy of your speech?” So I thought, “Okay, I’ll just play with you guys.” So it started with, “Well, we’d be willing to type it for you. We do that for the chancellor.” And I said, “I type my own stuff.” And it kept going and going, and John Hopkins, who was at that point our development officer, asked me what I was going to talk about. I said, “Oh, Doris Day.” And apparently, John sat there for the entire speech wondering when I was going to say something about Doris Day. (laughs) Anyway, it’s just a detail. I’m sitting here having no idea whether it is or is not a big deal.

**Rabkin:** Is this a systemwide award?

**Dickinson:** No, it’s a UCSC award. They give it to people like Jack Baskin and [Rowland] “Reb” and Pat Rebele—people who are a lot more consequential than I am in terms of money raised, or money given.

**Rabkin:** So in your case, it was obviously also a recognition of your service to the Smith students and the university.

**Dickinson:** Yeah. And if they had paid me for the amount of fundraising I do, that would have represented quite a bit of money on their part.

**Rabkin:** Thank you.

## An Uncertain Future

**Dickinson:** My big concern about our future is that Gary, Cheryl, Amy, and I have given a vast amount of time and thought to this adventure and I think it's very unlikely other people are going to come along and do the same.

**Rabkin:** Do you have some younger participants coming up who might walk into those roles?

**Dickinson:** Yes and no. Deutron and Lisa Hickman, another Smith graduate, are taking a leading role with development, but it remains to be seen how successful they will be. They both have families and need to earn a living, so it's unrealistic to expect that they can give it the time I have.

**Rabkin:** So you have some concern about the future of the Smith Society going forward.

**Dickinson:** It's more than concern. When I was done reading *Seeds of Something Different* and closed it, I asked myself, "What do you think, realistically, are the odds the Smith Society, as you envisioned it, will be around after Amy and Cheryl are gone?" At the time I thought, "Close to zero." Dean McHenry and Clark Kerr's vision only lasted fourteen years—and they had the force of the university behind them. We're just this little thing that a group of volunteers created and have been carrying along for years. I have days when I feel hopeful, but I'm mostly pretty skeptical.

What happened with the Guardian Scholars Program at San Jose State, which started out trying to be sort of like the Smith Society, is that when the grant ran out, they just stuck it in EOP—so it becomes one more of those programs where too many students

need attention and there are too few people on the payroll to give them the attention they need.

**Rabkin:** Bill, would this be a good place to just briefly stop?

**Dickinson:** Sure.

**Rabkin:** Okay, we're recording again. And, as I mentioned when we took a break, Bill, it was occurring to me that you might want an opportunity to talk about some of the pleasures of having founded, and being part of, the Smith Society—the relationships with students; watching Smith Students go on to do what they've done; participating in events and other things. So maybe you'd like to do that for a bit.

### **Intergenerational Relationships: “Witnesses to Our Lives”**

**Dickinson:** Sure—although I'll preface it with: Equal among the joys has been hanging out with Gary, Cheryl and Amy, particularly. And I find our donors very enjoyable. But maybe a place to start with the students is something Amy said to me, years ago, that I needed to recognize that I was a father figure to these students. And I said, “You need to make them recognize that I didn't sign up for that.” (laughs) I've come to surrender to the reality that she was right.

Also, back to the “community of friends” thing: you know, if you're a member of a community of friends, it doesn't end just because you graduate. Quite a few of our students stay in relationship, and I stay in relationship with them. There is Scott Page, Gary's original mentee, who went on to get a doctorate in electrical engineering at MIT. He's just continued to hang around MIT, even though he got some very good job offers, but he didn't want to let down his research team. So I am in awe of the quality of his

character! Here's a youngish guy who doesn't pursue something just because more money is involved.

I'm equally moved and impressed by what wonderful *parents* our graduates are—what *careful* parents they are. Because, for the most part, they didn't have good role models. I had a minor heart attack a few weeks ago, and a couple of them who are parents got very concerned about that and wanted to come and bring me food. So I guess there's some benefit to being a father figure. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** Deutron has declared me to be the grandfather of his daughter.

**Rabkin:** *Aww.*

**Dickinson:** Yeah.

**Rabkin:** So there's a strong sense of familial relationships running through the members of the Smith Society— from Cheryl becoming "Mama-Bear" and you becoming the honorary grandfather of Deutron's child— It sounds as if there really is a sense of family devotion among you.

**Dickinson:** I've surrendered to that. For a very long time, when people would use that, I would say, "No, no, no, no, we're not a family." And then I finally thought, "You know what, everybody else is saying we're a family, so just surrender to it." Over the years in the newsletter, I've always profiled our graduates, or some of our current students. I ask what the Smith Society means to them. They're very eloquent. I'm thinking at the moment, particularly, of David Buros, another one of Gary's mentees,

who talks about the example Smith provided and that he tries to live his life according to what he learned by being part of Smith.

When he was still a student, David told me he wanted to be a lawyer. And I thought, “David, you just want to be a lawyer because when you were thirteen, the local Legal Aid group in Marin helped you out—but your Meyers-Briggs type says you should be a forester.” (laughs)

After he graduated, he went off and was a firefighter for the forestry service for a bit. But he stuck with the law-school thing, and he got admitted to Hastings, and had set up for himself a meeting with the dean. He stopped off to see Gary, and Gary gave him a history book, and said, “Sit with this in your lap so that it’s facing the dean while you’re talking to him.” When they were done talking, the dean walked David down the hall and introduced him to the faculty members who were in their offices. If David had led with his talking about his background, I suspect the dean might instead have walked him down to the law-school equivalent of the EOP office, and introduced him to people who could help him.

David kept seeking me out, or I him, while he was at Hastings. At one point he asked me if I’d be willing to read his letter of application for a summer associate position. I said, “I’d be glad to, but my friend Marty, who lives across the yard from me, hired summer associates for a major law firm for most of her career, and she’d be better.” So he came out and had lunch with us, and Marty went over his letter and resume with him and filled him in on what people hiring summer associates look for in a candidate.

*Then, fast-forward, he graduated from law school, and he called me to tell me that he’d been admitted to the Navy JAG [Judge Advocate General’s] corps. He was hesitant to*



tell me that. Marty happened to be standing in my vestibule at the moment, and I said, “Why are you hesitant to tell me?” And he said, “I always thought you were a pacifist.” And I said, “Well, I am, but I’ve lived long enough to be aware of the fact that our having a military is what enables me to have that luxury. And, in any case, I don’t think Navy lawyers kill many people. But here’s Marty.” And Marty was just *excited*. She said, “Getting into the JAG corps is huge. You can write your ticket after you do that.”

I think back to something Gary said at one of the chancellor’s receptions, because neither David nor I realized that what he had done was a big deal. Gary said, [reading from a paper] “Witnesses to our lives are the bedrock upon which we build our identities and our self-esteem; we all need and deserve such witnesses.” So David *got* that. I’ve thought about that in terms of my own life, because when I was done with graduate school, I applied for two teaching jobs—one at Santa Rosa JC; one at Cabrillo—and I wanted the one at Cabrillo. I was standing in the Shipleys’ kitchen when the call came from Cabrillo President Bob Swenson offering me the job. I knew there had been over a thousand applicants for four openings, so I had an inkling that I’d achieved something. But it was only when I hung up and told Barbara that I got the job and she started jumping up and down, and hugging me, and being excited, that I realized I achieved something kind of big. Had she not done that, I would have just thought, well, I got the job; that’s that.

We can go full cycle about Page Smith and the people who were around back then. I have an awful lot of enjoyable experiences with our current students and graduates because I know what it is that makes many of our students’ lives as students much better. It’s kind of prosaic to say, “Well, the retention and graduation rates are very high.” No. Coming out of it being a good parent; coming out of it stronger and having

more self-confidence to apply for things. Scott got admitted to both MIT and Stanford for PhD programs, and spent good time with Gary talking about how to pick the one that would be the best one for him. Conversations I imagine people have with their parents, if they have good parents.

It's that marriage of, "Boy, wasn't I lucky to get what I got" and the knowledge of the good life that set me up for. I can do that for other people. They're the ones who do the work of having the good life. I probably said this already the other day, but I got from Hal Hyde my model of mentoring: that it's not just a friend, it's also an advocate and a broker.

More than once over the years, I have taken advantage of that. I was originally friends with M.R.C. Greenwood and Lynda Goff. Any time I was meeting with M.R.C., Lynda was there, I suppose because she was the dean of undergraduate education, and what we were doing would have been under her. So, for example, when one of our students was going to be put out of the university without his degree, I went to M.R.C. and Lynda and said, "Can you solve this problem?" And, like Byron did for me, Lynda solved it.

**Rabkin:** Was it a financial problem?

**Dickinson:** No. He was an electrical engineering major, and the engineering department's mandate was to produce a credible engineering school. And because of his grades this student was in trouble. So it was just purely academic performance. Part of Lynda's solution hurt the student's feelings, but it solved the problem, and that was: go to the Disability Resource Center and be checked out. Maybe you have a learning

disability. He did and he does. I don't know enough of the details of what that qualifies a student for, but it qualified him to stay and graduate.

**Rabkin:** So the relationships that you're describing happened in part, I infer, through the mentoring relationships, and in part through gatherings of members of the Smith Society. And also, in part, through the Senior Fellow / Collegiate Fellow pairings?

**Dickinson:** Well, that last has gone away. I think that's unfortunate—but, both with the Smith Society and with my life in general, I'm trying to be age-appropriate, so I surrender a lot.

I've never been a formal Smith mentor, but I've informally mentored quite a few. We have a holiday party around Christmastime at the Cowell Provost's House. I went in 2019 out of a sense of some kind of vague responsibility but I hate parties in general, and I hate holiday parties in particular. So after I'd been there what I considered an appropriate time, I was driving down the east peripheral road, and Amy calls and says, "Come back; there's a philosophy senior here I want you to meet." So he and I sat in the dining room, where we could have a conversation. I asked him what he was thinking of doing when he graduated, and he said, "getting a PhD in philosophy." I say, "Why?" He said, "Because I'd like to publish an article." And I said, "Well, you don't need to PhD to do that," and he said, "Yes, but it would be easier."

I replied, "Well, I'm going to talk to you from my side of seventy. I've got way too many friends who do not have enough to live comfortably in old age. Ask yourself, do you really want to spend five to seven of your best earning years going for a degree in which there don't begin to be enough tenure-track positions when you're done, and all

you will have accomplished is learning to speak a language that is of no interest to anybody but academic philosophers.”

**Rabkin:** (laughs) Not to put too fine a point on it.

**Dickinson:** Why waste time? Why waste time bullshitting? So we got into the conversation about how I’d discovered that all of the philosophers who interested me didn’t know their fathers, or had been abandoned by their fathers, as he had. And that got interesting to him. Somewhere in there, I said, “Okay, take a look at Hegel’s theory of history, and ask yourself if what’s feeling like chaos to us right now is simply history crying out for a new synthesis. And if you think that it is, then what role might you want to take in helping to bring about that new synthesis?”

So I go out and get in my car, and Susan Seaburg, one of our Senior Fellow leaders, comes running out and says, “L. said that was the most interesting conversation of his entire life.” I thought, “Well, okay, then I know where to come up with more of those.” He and I are still talking. And we’ve gone through the whole cycle of him getting really angry with me, me getting really angry with him; me having told him, “There’s going to come a point when you’ll get angry with me, and just know that it’s okay. I won’t abandon you.”

For several years, we [Smith] have had weekly lunches in the Cowell Dining Hall; we’re now [during the COVID-19 pandemic] having weekly lunches on Zoom that don’t involve food. At our fall kickoff: there were a couple of guys who spoke who are older and seemed really interesting to me. One of them wants to go to medical school, and he’s got a really compelling life story. I offered to introduce him to Jim Zehnder, a Stevenson alumnus [1979] who’s a senior member of the Stanford medical faculty. That

happened, and it was good. The other one, who's thirty-five years old, has mostly been wandering the country as a welder. He's now an anthropology major. He happened to mention that he had a nineteen-year-old son, which led me to say to Cheryl, "Are people really minding the store? Because we have an upper age limit of thirty-five, and unless he was a father as a kid—" And she said, "Well, he was. He became a father when he was fourteen."

**Rabkin:** *Whoa.*

**Dickinson:** Right after a lunch in which Cheryl asked me to talk about Eloise Smith, this guy crossed paths with the wife of one of Page and Eloise's grandsons and her son. They were eager to talk to somebody who knew Page and Eloise who wasn't in the family. So our student introduced us, and referred to me as his mentor. "You identified me as your mentor. Tell me about that, because I'd be happy to be one of your mentors." So that's my thing: I'm the accidental mentor at this point. Because I don't want to fill out the forms that Smith requires of mentors. I'm thinking I shouldn't have to fill out a form after all these years. I've never been one to fill out forms anyway.

There's been a lot that's been enjoyable. There've been parts that were not enjoyable. There've been students who were not enjoyable. One kind of student in particular catches me at—I don't know if I would call it a weakness of mine, but I have a visceral dislike of people who are attached to being victims, starting with my older sister. It's so intense. We've had students who were very invested in being victims. There's a whole UCSC culture now that seems to encourage it, and I think it's unhealthy. I think that that old philosophy of (laughs) "boys don't cry"—I believe there's a certain amount

that's right in that. The generation that fought World War II didn't come home crying; they came home and rolled up their sleeves and got on with life.

I guess it's okay to share this, though I'm not sure that I'm right. I know a woman who runs a volunteer program on the Cal campus to get foster kids on a path to college. She wanted us to have lunch with one who was going to be a UCSC freshman. He and I got to the restaurant before she did. I try to be real with people, so we developed a kind of bond as two guys who'd been in foster care. And then she shows up— This was summer of 2018; we were in the process of splitting from Renaissance Scholars. And she said, "What's that about?" and I started giving her the sanitized version that everybody wanted us to give, about, "Well, it's just reorganization." And then, I thought, "You know, I can't be false with this kid." So I just turned to him, and I said, "You're eligible to belong to both the Renaissance Scholars and the Smith Society, and I encourage you to join both, and take from each what's good for you. You join them if you want to lick your wounds, and you join us if you want help pursuing your dreams." That's not 100 percent true, but it's pretty true.

**Rabkin:** Thank you. So, Bill, we're coming up on a couple of hours. I'm wondering if there's anything else you would like to make sure we address before Friday's interview, when Gary Miles will be joining us.

### **"My Inner Eloise"**

**Dickinson:** Maybe I should say a little bit about Eloise's spirit.

**Rabkin:** Please.

**Dickinson:** My inner Eloise does not let things get in my way. And if it entails kicking somebody in the shins, that's what I'll do. She was pretty spunky. When she decided something was right, she went for it. Dean McHenry, for instance, had little interest in the arts so there was no studio space. Eloise just turned the Cowell Provost's garage into an art studio. She was hanging out with students out there, teaching them tie-dyeing. She scrounged up money to bring artists like Noah Purifoy, the guy who did the Watts Towers, up to teach students how to do junk sculpture.

One of our early Smith donors, a fellow Pioneer, told me that he had wanted to major in art, but his father wouldn't allow it. So he majored in history, because, he said, you had to major in something to justify being here. But he said he spent almost his entire four years hanging out in the provost's garage with Eloise. He later became a public defender, because it was one kind of law you could do and not have to wear a necktie.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** But he became a sculptor, and he was doing his art on the side.

But the shorthand of Eloise is: Page was the crying, loving type, and Eloise was the blunt, "I'm going to do what I want to do" type. A Smith [Society] example is, there was one year that Bill Ladusaw was going to be on leave, when he was provost of Cowell—so he said Margo Hendricks, who was provost of Stevenson at the time, would stand in for him. She came to our fall kickoff and said, "If you ever need a bulldozer, come to me."

Somewhere in mid-year—that was the year I had an office in the Smith library— Kenny Buckler, one of our student leaders, and Taranti Maolini, one of our students, came by

to talk with me. Because of her Irish heritage, one of our students had gone the University of Dublin as part of the University Abroad Program. Not realizing it was a commuter school, every weekend she was on her own in the dorms and was incredibly lonely. So they allowed her to switch to, I think, Sussex University. But Sussex wouldn't let her register for classes until Dublin had given her money back. And she was just freaking out and dropped out. The head of the UCSC Education Abroad Program told her she'd have to re-enroll and to do that she'd have to submit a letter from a psychiatrist saying she was okay to come back. And I'm thinking, "You do not say that to a daughter of a schizophrenic." You don't say that to any young person, but you *really* don't one of our Smith students. So I asked Kenny and Taranti, "What do you think we should do?" And they both said, without missing a beat, "Call the bulldozer." (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** (laughs) And the bulldozer told me how to solve the problem.

**Rabkin:** Mmm. Thank you. Well, maybe that's a good anecdote to end with today.

**Dickinson:** Okay.

**Rabkin:** Thank you very much, Bill.

**Dickinson:** Thank you.

### **Gary Miles**

**Rabkin:** This is Friday, November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and I am Sarah Rabkin, joining the Zoom meeting from my study in Soquel, California. This is the third and final interview for



the Smith Society oral history, and today I'm with Gary Miles and Bill Dickinson. I'll be interviewing Gary about his involvement with the Smith Society, and then during the final portion of the interview, both Gary and Bill will have a chance to talk about your visions for possible futures for the Smith Society, and also ways in which it might serve as a model for similar endeavors to support undergrads in a wider environment.

I just want to remind all of us that Bill also wanted to be sure that we address an important topic that get left out from our interviews previously, which is the research fellowships that the Smith Society has provided.

So the way this will work is that, primarily, this first portion of the interview, and the larger chunk of it, will be Gary's opportunity to talk about your experience, Gary, with the Smith Society—after which we'll open things up and have a conversation between the two of you, among the three of us.

So, Gary, let's start just by having you say your full name and where and when you were born.

**Miles:** My *real* full name is Gary Britten Miles, and I was born July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1940, in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada.

**Rabkin:** Thank you. And when did you arrive at UC Santa Cruz, and what were your college and board affiliations?

**Miles:** Well, this is going to sound a little strange: I've never been clear in my mind. It's either 1971 or 1972. I think it was '71, the summer. I was formally hired by the history department, but also with the formal understanding that I would divide my time teaching between history and literature, so that I could teach Greek and Latin

languages. Which was an absolute ideal setup for me, because it meant that I could keep my languages going; I could work very closely with texts when we were teaching the languages—and then, in the history courses, I could be expansive. One of my history classes was all of ancient history in one quarter. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** I could take a broad view, and I could do both of those things. It was wonderful.

**Rabkin:** Uh-huh.

My first college assignment was Kresge, and it was a terrible, terrible mismatch. At the end of that year, there were three faculty members at Kresge that were moved out—trying to save our lives—and we were moved to College Eight, the very first year of College Eight. So this was sort of a baptism by fire, because I got to be a first-year faculty member at two colleges in a row (laughs). It was a lot; it was pretty crazy. It was a lot of work. I stayed several years at College Eight, and then eventually I transferred to Cowell College, which was where I should have been all along. That was the kind of center of humanities, and interest in classics. My friend and colleague, John Lynch, was there; Harry Berger was there, and so forth.

**Rabkin:** And was Cowell where you stayed until you retired?

**Miles:** Absolutely. Yes.

**Rabkin:** Uh-huh. And you retired what year, Gary?

**Miles:** 2002.

## Becoming Involved with the Smith Society

**Rabkin:** Okay. Thank you. So tell me when and how you became involved with the Smith Society.

**Miles:** It had to do with my retirement. I was never kind of planning for retirement. I wasn't expecting to retire, or impatient about it. But things were changing, and one day I was preparing for classes, and it was like this *voice*—it was the closest I've ever come to actually hearing a voice—that said, "This is interrupting my life." I thought, "Whoa! *That's* unexpected." And I thought, "You're going go to class and have a really good time"—and I did. But the next day, I heard this voice again. So I thought, "Okay: time to retire." (laughs) But I didn't want to give up students.

A lot of things went into this [decision to retire]: classes were getting bigger and bigger, and the support for them was going down. It was clear that I wasn't going to be able to offer, in a good number of my classes, opportunities for writing. That seemed to me such a core, essential part of education. And the idea of substituting multiple-choice exams for that— I wasn't creative enough to think of other projects that you could manage on a mass scale that would do this. Anyway, a whole bunch of things like that. My son reminds me that I'd said, "When UCSC has fraternities and grades, I'm outta here." (laughs) It wasn't as simple as that. But a whole bunch of things went together.

So I was ready to leave, but I didn't want to give up students. And there was an article in the newspaper describing this new organization, the Smith Society—

**Rabkin:** In the Santa Cruz *Sentinel*, or the campus paper?

**Miles:** In the Santa Cruz *Sentinel*, yeah—that there were students looking for mentors. I thought, oh! That’s something I can do. It would be one on one, and personal, and I thought, yeah, I can do that. And that’s really as far as I thought about it at the time. So I went to a meeting that they announced in the *Sentinel* article, and Bill was there, and he was this wonderful, welcoming, engaging, charismatic person. He introduced me to a young man: he brought us together and said, “You’re both in Cowell.” He said to the young fellow, “You want to learn how to surf?” And [the young man] said, “Ah! Yes!” And he said, “Gary can teach you how to surf.” (laughs) So he said, “Okay!” This turned into an extraordinary relationship. He is a second son in our family. He absolutely is, and he will be forever. He’s a remarkable— Well, *all* these kids are remarkable kids, but he is *remarkable* remarkable. (laughs)

But the other thing that happened at this meeting is, it became clear to me, talking with other students, that there were a number of students who really wanted mentors and didn’t get one. Just who showed up, and how many potential mentors were there, and so forth. I went away feeling really bad about that—thinking that for people who, in some ways, had so little in their lives, this is another rejection, another failure. It wasn’t just that they didn’t have a mentor. I felt terrible about this. I thought, I could probably do something about this.

So I spoke with Bill, and then we had this fortuitous meeting. My sister lives in Maine, and Bill at that time was living on an island in Maine, and we had a dinner at my sister’s house. We talked about this; we talked about my ideas. Bill was hesitant and reluctant, because my ideas involve paperwork (which I’ll explain in a moment), and he wanted a much more personal kind of—you know, in person, like the way he matched me with my student.

So we continued that conversation. One of the things that I'm always grateful for was that Bill had— I mean, this was the centerpiece of his project, was mentors, and he was willing to entrust it to someone else. He had the generosity to do that, to trust. To me that was a remarkable thing. And I was glad to do it. So then I had Bill's okay, and we started.

**Rabkin:** So you had Bill's blessing to be the primary person responsible for the mentoring element of the Smith Society.

**Miles:** That's right. Yeah. So at this point, I could just describe how the process worked. It's complicated; hang on. (laughs)

Initially, because I was doing this part of the Smith Society, I was on a kind of loose organizing/steering committee. (I should say there were certain elements in place already. There were questionnaires made up that prospective mentors could fill out, and there were questionnaires that were sent out to prospective students. I'll say more about that in a moment.) So I was on this committee, but it turned out this committee had a wide range of interests. It was the sort of committee where discussions were discussions-by-association. You know: "We should have a welcoming party." "Yeah, hamburgers would be good." "Oh, but some people are vegetarians." "I know a good vegan recipe!" (laughs) "I shop at Shoppers' Corner!" Anyway, it kind of drove me a little bit crazy. I mean, they were wonderful people, and in fact they get a lot done. But this kind of meeting by association was hard for me. (laughs)

## **Making Connections:**

### **Matching Mentors and Smith Students**

I met there, though, John Jordan. At that time, John was still teaching. But we were of a like mind, so we kind of separated off from that committee, and said, “Look, we’re just going to focus on this one thing”—which turned out to be good, because it was kind of a full-time job.

So the way that whole process works is it started with Cheryl—then Perazzo, now Jones—who was in Financial Aid. She was able to identify, from people’s financial aid applications, likely Smith students. She would send out to them information about the Smith Society, and a request that they write a statement of application—a personal statement—and fill out a questionnaire, and then she would pass those on to us. I need to say a little bit more about her, too, because she was crucial in so many ways. For many students, she was the first university individual that they met. They came to campus; they needed financial aid; they met with her. She was so warm, and so welcoming, and such a safe person for them to be with, that a lot of people joined the Smith Society—not so much for the idea of it, but because of her.

So now we have a bunch of people who’ve sent us essays and questionnaires, and we have questionnaires from prospective mentors. In these early stages, these were almost all people that Bill had recruited from his early classmates at UCSC. Alumni were absolutely critical and central, and they were brought together by their friendship for Bill and their receptiveness to his message. Later on—I’ll say this now, because I don’t want to miss this—later on, I would say, probably the plurality of mentors in the Smith Society were staff people at UCSC. I ended up having a *huge* respect for UCSC staff. So

many of them—they worked at a distance from students; whatever they were doing didn't bring them into contact with students, but very clearly, in their minds, they were working *for* students. I mean, it was really quite stunning. So a lot of them really kind of jumped at the chance to do something where they actually got to interact with students. They became, in some ways, sort of the backbone, over time, of the mentor program. We also had faculty, emeriti faculty; eventually just members from the community as word spread.

**Rabkin:** Could I just interrupt for a moment, Gary? Just to clarify: So some of the mentors—staff people, faculty—had ongoing relationships directly with UC Santa Cruz, and were pretty intimate with the institution in its current form while they were mentoring, and others not so much. Is that right?

**Miles:** Yes. That's right. And those staff mentors were important because they kind of spread the word around campus, and also because they brought a lot of expertise; they knew how things worked on the inside, and that was useful.

So, once we collected all of this, what we would then do would be to interview, individually, each student who'd requested a mentor. It was usually about an hour. And each prospective mentor: that would be like an hour, an hour and a half. I'll talk later about what went on in those interviews, but those interviews provided a lot of obvious information that we would use in making matches.

A little bit more about John Jordan: For the most part, because I was retired and he was not, I carried the burden of the work. He always shared some of it with me. Over the years, what was especially important to me was his judgment and advice. We became friends, and his judgment and advice, which I respected tremendously—I never did

anything, made any important decision, without consulting him. (And not too many *unimportant* decisions, either!) (laughs)

This is another little digression: One of the things I did was teach Roman history. And the way Roman administration worked was that they gave Roman officials an extraordinary amount of discretionary power—*extraordinary*—but they expected them to consult with a panel of advisors. If you consulted with a panel of advisors and made a mistake, it's okay; you're off the hook, even if you didn't take their advice. If you acted on your own, even if you're successful, you're in trouble. Anyway, so this idea of having a council was an important one.

So after the interviews, John and I would get together, and we would compare notes, and we would write everything down, and we would pass it on to his wife, Jane Jordan. Jane had worked at some point in the past at Stanford, and one of her jobs was to match roommates (with incoming students). So she'd had experience in this. She's a psychotherapist. Anyway, she has good judgment. So we passed it on to her, and she used the information that we gave her to actually make the matches. I learned a lot from the kinds of decisions that she made and the reasons that she had for them.

That was in the fall. Students, later on, would dribble in, in winter and spring, and I usually just did those all by myself, because it was less a matter of juggling who was going to go best with whom, and so forth. There were very often obvious choices.

Once we had decided on pairs, then John and I would call prospective mentors and say, "We have a student for you, and this is what we know about the student; does this sound like a good match to you?" Usually it did. Occasionally, somebody would say, "Eh—this doesn't sound quite right for me," and we'd say, "Fine; good." Then, when



that was done, we would call the student and say, “We have a mentor for you, and this is who he—or she—is. Is that okay?” And they would say yes. Then we would call back—there’s a lot of telephoning going around here!—we would call back the mentor and say, “It’s okay to contact the student now.” And at that point we would give the mentor the student contact information; the student would have the mentor’s contact information.

Thereafter, we would try to kind of follow up on the mentor relationships, see how they were going. To a large extent, that evolved really on to listening. I didn’t systematically call everybody every month, or every two months. At some point, somebody encouraged me to send out an email saying, “How are things going?” But you *know* you never get a response, and the response you get is not useful. The most common kind of thing that would require intervention afterwards would be that a mentor would say, “I don’t know if I’m really doing anything for this student. We have lunch occasionally; it’s kind of *meh*, and we don’t talk about anything important. The last four times I’ve called, they haven’t called back.” And so I’d say, “Well, let me get in touch.” I was incredibly persistent: I’d just telephone, telephone, telephone, telephone, telephone. Eventually I’d get them. Because it’s so important to hear the pauses, the hesitations, the tone of enthusiasm—all that kind of stuff you’d have to read [in people’s voices].

There was a student I couldn’t reach. She’d changed her telephone number; I couldn’t get her. So I searched around, and finally I found the name of her former guardian, and I called the guardian and said, “Do you have a telephone number for this person? I’m with the Smith Society.” And she said, “Oh! The Smith Society! She *loves* the Smith Society! She has this incredible mentor!” (laughs)

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** So I called her, and I said, “How are things going?” And she said, “Oh, fine.” And, I said, “Have you been in touch with your mentor much recently?” “No, I’ve been doing this, and this, and this—” And I said, “I think this would probably be a good time to call your mentor, let her know you’re still on the face of the planet!” (laughs) — Right?

Occasionally what would happen is I *wouldn’t* be able to reach a student, and then I would call somebody to find out what’s up. These are rare, but in almost all these cases, it was somebody who had dropped out. They weren’t keeping up with their mentor because they weren’t keeping up with anything else, and they were just kind of gone.

**Rabkin:** Gary, could I ask you to back up for just a minute? I’m curious about, at the outset of these mentoring relationships, what expectations you had for both mentors and mentees. What did you say to the prospective mentors about what their job would be, and what did you say to the students about what the mentor would be doing with them?

**Miles:** Okay. What I told the students is that “this relationship is supposed to be for *you*. If it doesn’t work, you don’t have to continue in it; you can just drop it; we can maybe find you another mentor. Your one responsibility is to answer calls, emails.” They didn’t always *do* it. (But neither do children, right? Your own children.) So their one job was to answer. And the other thing is that it’s for *them*, and that they should feel free to take responsibility to direct it in the way that would best serve them. So, if they want a more personal relationship, and want to share things—do that. And if they

don't—deflect it: say, "I don't really feel comfortable talking about that now." Make it go the direction that *you* want and *you* need.

For the mentors, partly, it was a mirror image of that. It was saying, "Be attentive to the student; let the student give you the direction." But there are several other things that were important also. One specific thing was, *don't lend money*. You can buy presents when it seems appropriate, but don't lend money, because things get really complicated that way. More generally, what I tried to do, very hard, with the mentors, was to shape their expectations. I didn't want people going in thinking, "I'm going to change this person's life." They might—that might happen, and it did happen sometimes, but you can't go in with that expectation. Because that's really more about *you*, right? You want to have the satisfaction of having changed their life. And so the first is simply, you're there to help *them*, to be for them what they would like you to be, insofar as you can do that honestly with yourself.

Another was—and this will come up later—another was just to be yourself. These are kids who have, many of them, not had authentic relationships with adults, and it's important for them to have that experience—know what it's like. Another one was, *at base*, what are you doing? My sister came through with the phrase that ended up resonating for this: "Everybody needs a witness to their life." And that became a really central thing. I would say, "You know, it doesn't have to be big. It doesn't have to be dramatic. All you have to be is *there*, paying attention."

And it's interesting, because it would come up with students. One student, in her application, said, "I'm a theater arts major. What I want is somebody who will come to my plays." And Cheryl (Perazzo) Jones, in Financial Aid—I remember her saying, "You

know, the end of the quarter would come, and students would come and they would start talking to me, and they'd talk to me, and they'd tell me about their grades, and what they passed, and what they didn't, and I'm waiting for them to say what's their financial need—and they never did. And I realized that they weren't there to talk about their financial need; they were there because they needed— You know, think of all the kids who call home. These kids didn't have a home to call to. So it was providing *that*—which, in itself, is a really important affirmation. It's: *you exist*. And it's important for these people to know. Yeah: it is just so important for them to know, *I exist*.

**Rabkin:** Yes. Gary, this makes me think of the thank-you I just recently received from a Smith student—you know, because the Society has students write the thank-you notes for donations. And this particular student said, at the end, “Your donation directly supports me and all the other students who have the privilege of calling the Smith Society our family.”

**Miles:** Yeah. Now, that it's it exactly. For many, it is a family.

And then, more recently—and I think this was always in my mind, but I didn't articulate it the way I'm going to do now—I read a novel recently that was based on a real-life situation, which is during the Second World War, in Nice, France, they were a group a people who banded together—secretly, of course—to rescue the children of adult Jews who had been sent off to the camps. What they took upon themselves was to gather these children and spirit them out of the country. And they called themselves *passeurs*—“passers.” They *passed* these kids on. I didn't have that term at the time, but what I've tried to convey to people is that you, alone, are not going to stand against all the damage that these people have experienced up to now. You're not going to just

right that. And you alone are not going to guarantee them a smooth sailing. You know, all these kids who have, what are they called, “snowplow parents,” and “helicopter parents”—

**Rabkin:** I haven’t heard the term “snowplow parents.” What’s that metaphor about?

**Miles:** Oh—the parents come in and they plow away the snow for their kids. They smooth everything over for their kids—so the kids don’t ever learn how to do it for themselves, for one thing, right?

**Rabkin:** I see.

**Miles:** But what you’re doing is providing them a safe haven, now, and to get them safely from before to whatever the next step will be. So part of it was, in a sense, to lower expectations, because I thought that these kind of un-dramatic things were actually hugely important. And occasionally, some student will say, “Oh, I don’t have any big issue that I need help with, but it’s really reassuring just to get calls from my mentor, to know that somebody’s looking.”

So we’re talking about how I tried to guide the expectations of mentors. I guess I would say those are the chief things. So maybe I’ll say a little bit more about my conversations with students and mentors?

**Rabkin:** About the interviews that you took them through when you were pairing them? Certainly, sure, that’s great.

**Miles:** Okay, we’ll do that. First of all, some students were clear that they wanted academic guidance, or career guidance, very specifically, so we’d try to match them up

with someone who would do that. A lot of students—they might *say* that, but you kind of got the sense that that wasn't really what they wanted. Or they said, you know, "What I want is a friend," or whatever. And at heart, I think, at the end, *that's* what they all wanted, even if they said— So I paid a lot of attention to what kind of relationship the mentor thought they wanted, and what kind of relationship the student thought they wanted. Some students said—this is my way of thinking—some students really, clearly wanted a mom, or they wanted a dad. And there were some people who *were* moms, and dads, and I would just match them up with that.

These conversations were deliberately very free flowing, because things would just come up. I looked just for connections. I'd ask students, "What are your interests?"— blah, blah, blah, blah— "Are you interested in music?" "Oh, yeah, I love music." "Do you play an instrument?" "No, but I'd love to learn to play the guitar." And then, just like Bill ("Do you want to learn how to surf?"), I'd say, "Oh, I know somebody who knows how to play the guitar, and maybe they could teach you." I think those kinds of relationships are more important than formal academic guidance. You know, where you have some common thing that brings you together, and then things happen around that. That was the kind you're looking to make.

One of my favorite ones was some person—I asked her about cats, or something, you know, and she said, "I've always wanted to have a horse." And, by chance, one of the mentors had horses. So I put them together. And that's just a great way— And then things happen. This first student that Bill put me together with was in electrical engineering, which is just—not only is it out of my field; I have no competence whatsoever—I mean, *none!* (laughs) But the first thing we did when we got together is

we just hung out and talked a little bit. And then I was going to buy this game, “Set”—do you know the Set game?

**Rabkin:** Yes, I do.

**Miles:** So I was going to buy a copy of that to play with our kids. And I said, “Hey, I’m going to go down to Bookshop. Come on down, and I’ll get it.” So we sat on the curb in front of Bookshop Santa Cruz, and we did Set. That is the kind of way in which you make connections. There was another guy who was *intensely* shy, and I matched him with somebody, and they invited him to dinner. They said (laughs) it was one of the most painful dinners of their life. And they were about to say, “Oh, there’s no future in this.” But at the end, they said, “Would you like to play”—and I’ve forgotten what the game was: Scrabble, or something. And all of a sudden, they had a basis for communicating, and it turned out to be a good relationship.

So I looked for all those kinds of things in making connections. In the process, I got to meet some really wonderful people. (laughs) On both sides, these are very self-selecting bunches of people. The mentors—very rarely, there were a couple of people that I just had reservations for, and I just simply never found them a student. You know, it looked like it was going to be too much about *them*. But, really, there were only two, in the whole sixteen years we did this. In the last couple years I did it, we had forty-nine pairs of students and mentors.

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Miles:** So a lot of people did this. There were a couple of relationships that just fizzled; there were a couple where the student dropped out of the university. But the vast

majority of them worked at some level or another, and many of them were rather profound friendships.

One of the ways in which this was satisfying is that, for the most part, these mentors were as you would expect: they're kind, they're generous. Probably not surprising—and this didn't always come out at the beginning, but eventually you learned that a number of them had had very troubled childhoods. But not all.

### **Remarkable Students**

The students were quite remarkable. The one stereotype I had in my mind when I went into this was I thought, "These are kids who've been beaten down. They're going to be shy; they're going to be retiring." And they're not. (laughs) The one generalization that I would make about them is that, on the whole, they are very outgoing. I think that's part of what got them here. I mean, they come from a population that, like 2 percent of that population makes it to college.

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Miles:** So something special was going on there. Two things, along the way: In their personal essays, not frequently but occasionally, enough so it wasn't unique, people would say, "I realized that education was going to be my way of getting out of here, and not replicating the lives of my parents." That was one thing. Another is that some of these people, somewhere in their lives, had had somebody who was a mentor to them already. It might have been a schoolteacher; more often it was a parent of a friend, or an employer, who took an interest in them that went beyond their purely formal relationship. You know, you think about what these people have to accomplish to get



here. The admission process is not a simple one; the application process is not a simple one. And they had no one to help them. They had to figure out this stuff for themselves.

Oh, and so this is another thing that I would tell the mentors, is that these are students who have had to learn to be very self-sufficient, self-reliant. They've also learned, in many cases, to distrust adults. One student said, "I don't want a mentor; the last thing I need in my life is another adult to take care of." (laughs) So I said [to prospective mentors], "You know, this relationship isn't going to just happen. You're going to have to give it time. They're going to have to learn that this is okay." Another student said, "You know, for a long time I didn't want a mentor, because my social workers—if I had a problem with my family, they'd say, 'Well, we can give you drugs, or we can shift you to another family,' but they had nothing else to offer." And [the student] said, "Why would I do *that* again?!" So mentors had to be aware of that.

Sometimes it happened that relationships gelled very fast; sometimes they took time. There was one woman who was thinking that her relationship with her student was kind of tentative, and one day she made a batch of cookies to take to her up on campus, because the student, with some friends, had a study group. And she brought the cookies, and the student took her back to her room and just burst into tears, and said, "My family is imploding again; everything is going wrong," and so forth. From that point, they had a much more intimate relationship. But the mentor put in the time, and became trustworthy.

Let me think. Do you have a question, or should we shift to institutional things?

**Rabkin:** I guess I would just ask at this point if there are any other characteristics that you want to talk about, that struck you about either the Smith students as a group or the mentors as a group.

**Miles:** I think I've said the most important things. They were, on both sides, people I admire tremendously.

Maybe this is the place for me to say one more thing: When I got involved in this, when I started, I truly, really, *really* was not thinking about the relationship of my childhood to these students' childhoods. I was thinking I didn't want to be cut off from students; being a mentor to individual students sounded like something I could do. It just never occurred to me to think about it, but in fact, my mother was a paranoid schizophrenic who was given to really violent outbursts—mostly not physical, but, *oh*, humiliating, and demeaning, and, because she was not sane, totally unpredictable. It was impossible to live with her. My father left, so myself and my younger sister were stuck in this chaotic world. We didn't understand how chaotic it was. It was back in the day when there weren't the resources for help. I remember, at some point, when we were in our fifties, my sister talking to me on the phone, and just crying and sobbing, and saying, "Why didn't somebody help us back then?" In my town, my parents were the only parents who were divorced, and I didn't know anybody who was divorced. I didn't know anybody who *knew* anybody who was divorced! You didn't talk about these things.

So, in fact, I had an experience that overlapped a lot with the experience of a lot of these people. So there were a lot of things that I understood, I think, about how difficult it is to create a sense of yourself apart from that: how much of that lives on with you, even

when you think you've left it (laughs), you know? I have mentees ask me, "Do you think I'm going to go crazy, too?" I would have an answer for that. I would say, "At this point, no." (laughs) "You're here. I came from a similar situation; I'm here. You're going to be okay."

But there are other kinds of subtle things. One of the pleasures of [overseeing the mentoring program] was the people that I met and got to work with. Another was a sense that I could use my own troubled background: I could make it something positive and constructive. I could use it in a meaningful way, and make something good out of it. And then again, I wasn't looking for this, but at times I would come away feeling, "Oh, you know, I really do have something to offer." That was a wonderful gift. Those were the real pleasures of this. And they were profound. In an intellectual way, my being a classicist and studying ancient history has shaped my larger expectations about the course of history and our place in it. But, in other ways, I think the relationships I had in the Smith Society are probably the most important of my life.

**Rabkin:** Thank you! How are we doing here? Especially given that we may be moving soon into talking about the sort of intra-institutional relationships, I wonder if you'd like to take a short break before we move on?

**Miles:** I'm good, but whatever.

**Rabkin:** You're good? I'm good.

**Miles:** Okay.

**Rabkin:** All right. (laughs)

**Miles:** Okay. *So.* Institutional things! (Laughs)

**Dickinson:** (laughs)

### **Institutional Relationships**

**Miles:** This is a mixed bag. The Smith Society always had to have an institutional relationship, a formal relationship, in order to be able to contact students, and in order to get information from students to us. And at some point, that got filtered from Cheryl [Jones, in Financial Aid] to STARS—

**Rabkin:** —Services to Transfer and Re-entry Students.

**Miles:** Exactly. Right. That was the time when Corinne Miller was the head of STARS, and she was wonderful. She was welcoming; she was sane; she worked hard to accommodate our needs and interests, and be there. And so we got out of this things like: our students got priority enrollment rights, which is *huge*. It means they could be guaranteed to get into the courses that they wanted. They got priority on housing, which is essential for them, because they don't have other houses to go to. And in time—not immediately, but in time—they hired a half-time dedicated advisor just for Smith students. That was Amy Hamel. Amy was just incredible in that role. She, like Cheryl, was very warm, very welcoming, very reassuring. She was a relentless advocate for students.

There was a guy who just kept getting in trouble and getting in trouble. Amy fought for him so hard. She fought for all her students. I remember a student came and was in financial difficulty, because they had gotten their financial aid check but they couldn't cash it, because they didn't have a bank account. They didn't know how to *get* a bank

account. So Amy said, "Oh! Okay, let's just go get you a bank account." So she closed up shop, took them, went downtown, got them a bank account. She was terrific. She was also very helpful to the mentor program. She saw students a lot. When a mentor didn't know what was going on with their students, one of the first things I would do would be to call Amy and say, "What can you tell me about this student? Are they showing up to the Smith Society activities? Do you have any sense of what's going on with them?" So that was a really helpful thing.

Then, rather late in the day, things began to kind of drift off the rails. The first thing that happened was we stopped getting from STARS the personal essays that the students wrote. I would say, "Where are the essays?" And they'd say, "We don't have them now," or "We can't give them to you now," or something.

**Rabkin:** These are the essays that students had written in conjunction with their applications to be admitted to the university? And those used to be passed on to you?

**Miles:** Right. And they were helpful. There's a lot besides what they say, you know: *how* they say it, you get a sense of how confident they are as students; you get a sense of all kinds of things.

Another aside: I remember once talking with people, and there were some mentors who said, you know, "I really need somebody who's going to be a good student." I didn't have a problem with that, so I would find somebody that I was pretty sure was going to be a good student, and put them together. But some people would say, "Oh, that's terrible! You mean they're only going to take people who are good students?" I'm thinking, "That's what they have to offer, and that's what the students need. It's good enough for me." Anyway, where are we now?

**Rabkin:** So they stopped passing on the application essays to Smith.

**Miles:** You couldn't get these essays.

**Dickinson:** Can I just do one correction?

**Rabkin:** Sure.

**Dickinson:** The essays Gary's talking about were part of their application to belong to the Smith Society.

**Rabkin:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**Dickinson:** Yeah. So depriving the Smith Society of access to that information was kind of a big deal.

**Rabkin:** Thank you. That's an important clarification.

**Miles:** Yes. Long after the fact, I learned that what had happened was that they had added to the questions that they asked the students questions about their medical health, about their mental health, whether they were seeing or wanted to see a therapist—which were legitimately confidential questions. I mean, we didn't want that information; we didn't need it. But it became the basis for denying us access to this other stuff: "Oh, that's confidential."

**Rabkin:** Gary, I'm going to stop you for just a second so that I can stop and start the recording, just so we don't have one giant file. It will just take a second.

[after break]

**Dickinson:** Gary, you're a wonderful person.

**Miles:** (laughs) I'm in a whole universe of wonderful people.

**Dickinson:** Yeah, but, you know, hearing you talk now, I just think, boy, how lucky to have you in my life.

**Miles:** Oh, well. You know it's mutual, Bill. You know, absolutely.

Okay. At this point, there was a brand-new director of STARS, and we had a meeting to talk about this issue, and we came to a not-fully-satisfactory compromise, where we got something that wasn't really what we wanted or needed, but it was better than nothing. And in the course of this conversation, this person said, "We've been having problems with mentors." I said, "Oh! What problems?" And then they said, "Oh, they're not that important." And, "Oh, okay." But then they would tell *other* people they'd been having problems with mentors. It turned out it wasn't "problems with mentors," it was *a* problem with *a* mentor. This was a self-appointed mentor; this was not somebody I chose. They appointed themselves as a mentor, and then I registered them as a mentor because it was a way of keeping track of their relationships.

My view of this situation, in brief—this is somebody who could be abrasive, but you live with it, you know—she felt one of her students was not being fairly treated, and she became very aggressive in advocating for the student, which upset some of the staff in the office—legitimately. That's okay. But they wouldn't *tell* me this, right? Confidentiality becomes this huge thing.

Now I have to do a little interruption, because about this time I came down with Guillain-Barré Syndrome, which is like ALS or Multiple Sclerosis, except it happens very, very fast—and you get better. (laughs) So I spent a month in acute rehabilitation,

almost all of that time completely paralyzed from the shoulders down. I mean, I could not move a finger, I couldn't pee by myself; I couldn't do anything.

**Rabkin:** *Wow.*

**Miles:** And then when I came home, obviously, I was re-learning how to sit up, how to eat, how to—everything. It was a major thing. And so when I'm in the process of recovering, another problem arose.

Oh, and I should say, about this first issue, the people at STARS reacted in what seemed to me a kind of high-handed way: they blocked this person from the Smith Society Facebook page. This is a page that had been started not by STARS, not by the university. It was started independently by Smith students. But at this point they kind of felt they were in charge of the whole thing, and so they blocked this mentor.

**Rabkin:** Gary, is this after Corinne Miller had retired from STARS?

**Miles:** Yes, absolutely. Right. There had been Corinne Miller, somebody else after her, and then this new person.

Then a second problem arose. And I need to briefly say that there really have been only two serious problems, and these are they. The second problem that arose involved somebody who had been a very successful mentor for the Smith Society, and who had been importantly active there. And it involved a student who had had two previous mentors, and in both cases, he had simply decided it wasn't doing for him what he wanted, and ghosted them. When I found out what had happened, the first time, I got a second mentor for this person. And then the same thing happened again, and I thought, for a variety of reasons, I'm not going to get this person another mentor because it's not



fair to the mentors. Then these people go away feeling, "Why would I want to mentor for the Smith Society?" And our pool of mentors is depleted, and so forth.

But these two people met up, and they hit it off, and they felt it was a really good friendship, and reported it to me. I said, "Well, okay, I'll write you down as mentor and student." And then at some point something went wrong. I don't want to get into the details of this. It was absolutely nothing criminal; nothing illegal; nothing actionable. I think it was an example of poor judgment on the mentor's part and overreaction on the student's part. Eventually this student wrote their point of view, wrote it up in a long letter that went to somebody else and finally came to me. When it came to me, I thought, "I think it looks a little overblown. I understand this, but I should talk to the mentor before I do anything." So we talked with the mentor, and we agreed that this person wasn't going to be a mentor anymore. I reported it to STARS. I said simply, "This person isn't going to be a mentor in the future." I didn't go into any of the details.

But eventually, more word got around, and the student talked to somebody at STARS, who then emailed me and said, "*Oh!* I've just talked to the student, and I understand *everything* now!" I thought, "How can you understand 'everything'? You haven't talked to the mentor!" So I said, "I hope you appreciate that this is a potentially complicated situation." And I got back the email: "Well, I *hope* I can understand complexity!" Then they kind of went off on this, and their reaction to it was to declare an immediate moratorium on all mentor matches. Until we met certain requirements, they would not advance any materials from students to us, so that we wouldn't know who the students were who wanted mentors.

What they wanted us to do was to change our mentor orientation. Besides the one-and-a-half-hour interviews for mentors, we had a two-hour orientation, half of which was used up with students talking about their experiences being mentored, and answering questions. Some of it was previous mentors talking about their experiences in the mentoring process, and so forth. But they wanted a mentor orientation that specifically did three things. One, it should be “trauma-informed,” which is a phrase for a particular way of understanding and interacting. They wanted to deal with “micro-aggressions” and “trigger words.”

First of all, I was opposed to requiring all our mentors to come back for another orientation, because I knew a number of them wouldn't. We'd just lose them. I was also opposed because some students liked the idea of “trauma-informed” whatever; other students didn't. They really didn't want to be treated as damaged goods. I mean, the way they saw it, they'd worked so hard to be independent and adult and responsible, and they didn't want that. Another was that the “micro-aggressions” and “trigger words” goes back to what I had been saying before: one of the things I wanted the mentors to do was to be authentic, be themselves. And if they had to be constantly second-guessing themselves, it just wasn't going to work.

But they [STARS] didn't get this at all. They didn't understand. They insisted; they were unyielding. Then it was sort of this tug-of-war, and the more I resisted on my side, the more they upped the ante. So then they started saying, well, all the mentors will have to go through the legal process of being legally vetted, having their fingerprints taken, all that sort of stuff. I knew, once again, we're going to lose more mentors this way. And it wasn't necessary, because one of the things we've done is we've made a point of only

mentoring people who are eighteen years and older. Absolutely. I never would assign a mentor to somebody who was a minor. So this was adults and adults.

And *then* the demand was that it was not just all the *mentors* who had to [undergo background checks], but all Senior Fellows. Senior Fellows were all not-students: otherwise adults who were active as donors, as organizers, as volunteers in the Smith Society. And they wanted *all* of these to go through background checks. So it escalated.

Then there was another set of demands, and that is that I should make a checklist for when I interviewed people. I should have a checklist, and I should go through and ask everybody [the same set of questions]. And [STARS] would get to approve this checklist, whether they were good questions. And I would just go through the questions and check them off, and everybody would have the same thing. And that was just not the way I did it, and not the way I thought it would work.

So between what was happening there, and the fact that a person was being excluded from Facebook, and so forth, hostilities between STARS and the steering committee for Smith sort of escalated. And at that point, I was still extraordinarily weakened by Guillain-Barré. I had just gotten out of a wheelchair, and was re-learning how to walk, and I just didn't have the energy for this. Plus, I thought that it was a losing battle. They weren't going to give. And they had the power. They had the information that we needed to function. People were talking about dissolving the Smith Society, or turning it into something else, or whatever.

And then: fortunately, I'm really good friends with [Cowell College Provost] Alan Christy. Alan Christy is a colleague in the history department, and a remarkable person. He is very, very student oriented, and a real champion of students, and a gifted teacher.

We get together regularly. He brings cheese and I bring really good wine, and we have a good night. (laughs) One of these evenings, I said to Alan, “You have so many responsibilities. You have so much work. I don’t want to impose on you, and if you want to say no, I understand—but would you consider taking the Smith Society under the auspices of Cowell College?” He said, “Oh, no, that’s *wonderful!*” He said, “This so aligns with Cowell’s history and aligns with what we want Cowell to be. I’d be delighted.” So he agreed to do that.

There followed some very difficult negotiations, which I was not part of, between Cowell and STARS, and eventually a kind of division of responsibilities was worked out. What Bill and I probably think of as the essence of the Smith Society is now in Cowell, and seems to be working very well there. More formal institutional aspects, like priority enrollment, priority housing—stuff like that, and other things, too, are in STARS. As I understand from Alan, his provost assistant, Alice Folkins, has been wonderful, and has, now, a very good relationship with STARS. STARS does its thing, Cowell does its thing, and to the extent that they need to interact, that’s going okay. So the Smith Society lives on in Cowell. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** Wonderful. Thank you, Gary. I know that Bill wanted you to address something about a two-year period in there when Bill was pretty much out of the picture—he was away, and not directly involved with Smith, and you really knew more about what was going on than he did.

**Miles:** Yeah, okay. I’ll do my best here. It’s a little hard for me, because I don’t have a clear sense of the actual chronology.

**Rabkin:** That’s fine.

**Miles:** I'm eighty now, and my sense of chronology (laughs)— Time has collapsed. Something that happened five years ago, I think, "Five years ago? I thought that was *last week!*"

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** Or—"Last week?! I thought that was when I was a teenager!" Time has lost its meaning!

But I'm pretty sure this much is true: The first is: The Smith Society does lots of things, but I really focused on the mentor program. And, as you can see, there are times in a year when it was a full-time job. It was enough, certainly enough for me. So there's a lot that I don't know. So, first of all, the mentor part of the program just kept on trucking along. Fortunately, at this point, we were beyond depending upon the alumni that Bill had recruited. They continued to be important, and continued to recruit more people, but more and more, [mentors] were coming from staff. So that part just kept working: Amy Hamel was ensconced in STARS; Corinne Miller was head of STARS. That part was working well.

What was missing was one of the things that has been Bill's constant preoccupation. Bill has always been the person who raises money for us, and he's been extraordinarily successful for us. And it's really important, because money is the lure that we have to get people to make their first connection—you know, "We'll give you 500 dollars if you come to our community meeting." Then we get to sell who we are. (Plus, of course, the 500 dollars *helps*.) And then, as things grew, money supported operations—parties, or gatherings, or graduation.

Oh, that's something else I did, because I was kind of connected with the students and mentors that way. For a bunch of years I organized the graduation celebration for the Smith Society.

Ah: this is another thing. The way it worked out, you didn't have to have a mentor to be in the Smith Society, and there were students who did not have mentors and were in the Smith Society. Some of them just took their 500 bucks a quarter, or whatever it was, and went off. That's fine. Some of them were participants, some of them important participants. But I would say 90 percent of the Senior Fellows who were active in the Smith Society were mentors, and 90 percent of the *students* who were active in the Smith Society *had* mentors. So that was another way in which that program was core.

So one thing that was lost was this fundraising. We never got down to bare bones, but it was always a danger. It remains a danger, I think, in some ways. (When we talk about the future, we'll talk about that a little more.) Another thing was that, although things were kind of chugging along in my part of the world quite smoothly, still, we missed Bill as a catalyst. I mean, people would decide to have a mentor because of Bill; people would decide to join the Smith Society because of Bill. Truly, obviously, more than any other single individual: he didn't just found it, he was the heart of it, for always.

Another thing that was missing during that time was that Bill has been tireless—this is something which I think was very costly for him at times—but tireless in forging relationships between the Smith Society and the university administration. Those have been important ties that legitimized the program and allowed it to continue, and this is the background to this transition that took place from STARS to Cowell. That was really

important. So in a way we were kind of marking place during those two years, but there was enough there to keep it going.

I think it's always been a precarious operation. It operates with volunteers, and volunteers have other things in their lives. Volunteers get frustrated. They get disappointed. They have expectations that aren't met. Whatever. So it's always a precarious operation. There were years when the number of students and the number of prospective mentors I had were exactly equal. There was no leftover. If we had been down one more— One of my goals was that every student was going to get a mentor. That's what I started with.

**Rabkin:** So you never had a year when the number of prospective mentors dipped below the number of students who wanted mentors?

**Miles:** It came out even some years. (laughs)

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Miles:** So those were the things that kind of were lost. I think we could do without them for two years, from my point of view. I mean, it wasn't ideal; it wasn't as good as if we'd had them. We could not have done without them for a longer period of time. The kind of energy, the vision, that Bill brings has been essential to sustaining this. And I know it's emotionally costly. It's not something that just happens. Bill has given a lot, and that's why this program has flourished.

The future?

**Rabkin:** Yeah. I'm going to suggest that before we take that next step, we maybe take a little stretch break? About five minutes? And then afterward, I want to give Bill a chance to add anything that he might want to, to complement all the wonderful information you've just given us.

And actually, before we do that—before we take a break—there was one point of clarification that I needed. And this is something I've neglected to clarify until now: of course, when the Smith Society was being born, originally, it was primarily, or first-off a way of giving scholarships to students in the university who had come out of the foster care system or otherwise didn't have parental support. And, Gary, you mentioned the 500 dollars a quarter that students received if they joined the Smith Society. Is that now the primary financial transaction that takes place for Smith students, or is there also an ongoing scholarship program? I realize I'm a little confused about that. So either of you is welcome to jump in—

**Dickinson:** I can clarify the first one, and that was, from the get-go, the offer was: you can have a mentor. In the beginning— You know, I tend to have grandiose thoughts, so I thought, "I can just be a mentor to everybody." So from the very first— I'm thinking of Maribel Valencia Castillo, who Jane and John [Jordan] fell in love with: she was the first person who took me up on that. And from the get-go, my thought was pretty much what Gary said, that the scholarship is the loss leader to bring somebody into a relationship—

**Miles:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** —and we do a lot of things with the money now. When we get around to the research fellowships: a student gets a thousand dollars for that. Or—students



without a computer: we'll buy them a computer. Students want to go to Education Abroad and need more money, we'll give them more money.

But it goes back to—and I loved the way you told the story, Gary, because it just calmed me down a lot (laughter)—that it comes back to the community, and caring about the students. When you care about the students, and when you know the students, you can help with their problems—which, as luck would have it, was exactly what Dean McHenry and Clark Kerr had in mind in creating these colleges—

**Rabkin:** Hm. Thank you. Yes.

**Dickinson:** —that young people need to be known if they are to thrive. And as Gary and his sister put it, they need witnesses. You can't witness a young person in trouble and not help. And some of that help requires a lot of money.

**Rabkin:** Yeah. Great. Okay. We will talk about the research fellowships after we take a break. Why don't we do that now. Let's take five minutes.

**Miles:** And we can check the election—oh, no! (laughs)

**Rabkin:** Oh, no—don't! (laughs) I think I won't, anyway. Okay, see you in five.

[after break]

**Miles:** [There are some] moments that I always remember. One was a student who had a mentor, and they had an okay relationship. Then the student kind of dropped off the face of the earth, and it turned out that she had dropped out of college. Several months later, her former mentor had a telephone call from the student, who was now in San Diego, and pregnant, and needed help. I almost want to weep when I think about this.

She's calling this former mentor. Who else does she have to call? I mean, if she'd had somebody else to call, she would have called them. This is her connection. Or, there was another student, who was falsely accused of assault. He was eventually exonerated. But he's a foster kid; he doesn't have money for bail. The situation was ambiguous; we didn't bail him out. But he had a mentor. And for the two months that he was in jail, this mentor was his connection to the outside world, his support. He had a public defender who was overworked, and so forth.

Now, not all our students were that precarious, but in various ways, a lot of them were. It's extraordinary, *extraordinary*, the obstacles that they overcame to be here, and get here, and to be confident, and to be functional. It's amazing. This girl who got pregnant and called is another example of how the mentor is not going to solve her problem. But could *be* there, and offer some—so you're not just completely adrift in the world, kind of thing. And of course there were situations where the relationships between students and mentors were much more substantive and ongoing. As I said, [my wife] Peggy and I have been mentors to eight different students, and we're in touch with six of them still. One of them is another child in our [family]—well, except he's very much an adult.  
(laughs)

**Rabkin:** This is the one you taught to surf, back at the beginning?

**Miles:** (laughs) Yeah.

**Rabkin:** Yeah. It does make me wonder what proportion of these students would not have graduated had they not had the support of the Smith Society.

**Miles:** Well, we know statistically that 1 or 2 percent of students in this category who make it to college graduate at the other end. And there was a time when we did a study of the UCSC campus, and our students graduated in—I'm not sure if it was four years or five years—at 89 percent, which was better than the campus average.

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Miles:** So that's, if you needed it, proof that we're doing something.

**Rabkin:** Yes, and it speaks to this notion that the Smith Society might in fact be a fruitful model to be expanded to supporting undergraduates across the campus, in other ways.

**Dickinson:** Gary's mentioning that student who was accused of assault. I'm pretty sure it's somebody for whom I was the designated mentor. And on the application form, students were asked to rank-order what they most wanted out of a mentor: academic support, somebody to help with bureaucratic hassles, or a friend. This student was an astrophysics major who'd said what he most wanted was academic support. I'm thinking, "I don't even know what astrophysics *is!*"

**Rabkin:** (laughs) It's like Gary with electrical engineering.

**Dickinson:** I was trying to figure out, "Why did they match us?" All I could come up with was we both had schizophrenic mothers. But the first time we met—and this goes back to when I told you what I take from Hal Hyde about my function as a mentor—when we first met, he told me he was taking a class he was sure he was going to flunk from a physics professor, Dave Dorfan. He loved the class. I said, "Why do you love a class you think you're going to flunk?" And he said, "Well, because he says he knows

he's giving us too much to do, but he's going to get down in the mud and do it with us." So I thought, "Okay. My job is getting what it is he said he wanted, which is academic support." So I called Dave. Dave had never heard of the Smith Society, and he said, "Hell, *my* kids don't need me anymore; I'll be his foster father if he wants." So I continued to be in a relationship with this fellow as one mentor, and Dave became his more significant mentor.

### **Research Fellowships**

**Rabkin:** Hmm. Wonderful story. Thank you. Would this be a good time to talk a bit about those research fellowships?

**Dickinson:** Yeah. I think I'll be kind of brief about it, because Gary's got me in a whole different frame of mind—a better one.

**Rabkin:** Okay.

**Miles:** (laughs)

**Dickinson:** So in 2015, the [UC] Office of the President, or somebody, came up with a thing of: anybody who gives this amount of money to start a scholarship endowment, it will be matched. So Stephen Gaudio—a mechanical engineer who was a UC San Diego graduate, married to Maria Segarra, a UCSC alumna, who was friends with Faye Crosby, the Cowell provost—created a thing that he called the Leapfrog Fellowship to fund Smith STEM students to do research with faculty members. He credited his ability to do that at UC San Diego as a major boon to his career success. It had never occurred to us to do something like this, but we can do anything we want to with the scholarship account, and we can call it anything we want to. So it became a model for which we

adopted other research fellowships. We have a Jane Jordan fellowship to support psych majors or people going in to human services. We've got the George Blumenthal-Kelly Weisberg fellowship for students working with a faculty member about something that will improve the university. We almost had a history one, but Gary was unwilling to have his name attached to something, because he's a modest guy. And, as I told you, I'm operating from the power of myth, and attaching somebody's name to something then gives you a story to tell. The story can generate more possibility.

Grant Hartzog has been part of the research fellowship grant team. Grant, until recently, was the associate dean of PBSci [Physical and Biological Sciences] and is now head of his department [Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology]. It's become a very, very nifty way to have the scholarship come with a purpose, and not just be money. So it's good. That's about all that needs to be said about it.

### **“Change Happens”: The Future of the Smith Society**

**Rabkin:** Thank you. That's great. All right. So would you both like to address, now, this question of what happens going forward? Where do you see the Smith Society going in the future? And in particular, given how central both of you have been to various aspects of the functioning of the Smith Society, and that you won't be able to do that forever, as people who've been involved for such a long time eventually have to step back, how do you see the Smith Society carrying on?

**Miles:** One of the things I feel is that change happens. You often feel—maybe other people don't, but—you often feel that “I'm doing it the right way.” (laughs) I'm pretty sure nobody is going to do the mentor thing in as labor-intensive a way as I did. One of

the things I did, actually, late in the day, was begin to shunt off responsibilities to other people. You know, “You’ll do the follow-up; you’ll keep the statistics,” and so forth. Not just so that I wasn’t doing it all, but so that it would be divided up when it came to passing it on to other people.

It’s clear it’s not going to go on the same way it was. But it doesn’t mean it’s going to be worse. It’s going to be different. And inevitably, because we liked it the way we did it (laughs), it’s going to sort of feel worse. But it’s not necessarily going to *be* worse.

The chief concern that I have is that the central players now are people who have been central players, for the most part, all along. This is basically Amy Hamel and Cheryl (Perazzo) Jones and Susan Seaburg. You wonder what happens when they bow out, because that will have to happen at some point.

**Rabkin:** What is Susan Seaburg’s role, Gary?

**Miles:** She has been a mentor in the past, a number of times. Whenever we have a steering committee, she’s usually on it. But she’s also somebody who takes the initiative, is active, is positive, and is organized. (laughs) Stuff gets done with her. So many people have contributed, but those three people—I’m not so sure what’s going on with Susan right now, but certainly Cheryl and Amy—Amy has begun, also, to shunt off responsibilities to other people. What Amy has said is that we’ll downgrade expectations about money. Her idea is that we’re going to stress human capital rather than financial capital. We’ll just see how that works out. There’s much to be said for it.

I think the Smith Society is smaller now than it was, and that’s probably a good thing, because it really works on intimate personal relationships and interactions, and when it

gets too big, it just is not— You know, some other campuses have tried to sort of emulate this. There's a Guardian Scholar Program at other UC campuses. It's absolutely not the same, because they're basically assigning people advisors, you know, like your academic advisor. It's not the same.

I think it would be very hard to replicate this program, because it started with this extraordinary community of early UCSC students and Bill's connections. Who else is going to be able to call on this cadre of idealistic alumni and get them engaged, and get them to start—? *Maybe* they will, but so far it seems to me that efforts to replicate this on other campuses have fallen short of what I would like it to be like. They don't have the intimate, personal connections.

I think, always, the Smith Society has been a precarious venture, and I think it will continue to be a precarious venture. Well, let's leave it at that. What do you think, Bill?

**Dickinson:** So, as I told you, Sarah, when I finished *Seeds of Something Different* (and if you haven't read that, Gary, you might want to take a look at it—it's taken from the oral histories, and it's a summary of the history of UCSC), I was quite depressed. Because I see the progression of people wanting to say things that sound nice but aren't really true, the further through UCSC history you go. And I thought, gee, I knew what had happened in 1979; I didn't realize much of the faculty was already mobilizing against the Kerr-McHenry vision for the colleges eight years in. And I thought, well, the Smith Society's managed to survive much longer than that. But what do I think the odds are that after Cheryl, Amy, Gary, and I are out of the picture, it will continue? Where I have a different perspective from you, Gary, is both the law and university policy say, if you take money from private donations, you are responsible to hew as closely to the

intentions of the lead donor as you can. And the Letter of Gift says the purpose of the Smith Scholarship is to keep alive Page and Eloise Smith's spirit on behalf of students.

**Miles:** Yeah.

**Dickinson:** We've been doing a really good job of that—but before very long, there won't be anybody who remembers Page and Eloise Smith, or remembers the spirit of the thing. I think the odds of people coming along who will give anything like the time that you and I and Cheryl and Amy have given are very slight. So, having watched what the university does when it's the controlling force, I think the odds are pretty good that it will end up being just another program of the university, probably housed in EOP, and subject to all of those limitations that came forth when the new director of STARS came along. And I realize you're right: it always has been precarious. Page left the university way back in 1974 to protest its loss of spirit.

Financially, we're probably in good shape, because if everybody who's made a long-term pledge to us honors it, we'll end up with a bigger endowment than seven of the ten colleges—

**Rabkin:** Wow.

**Dickinson:** —but, as Gary and I have both said, the money is kind of the loss leader. The real gift of Smith is in the love, the personal attention. For me personally, as I read more and more of those oral histories, it became my personal mission to keep alive that portion of Kerr and McHenry's vision that served me so well as an undergraduate.

**Miles:** I might interject something here, and that is that I may be a little more hopeful than I let on, in that I think Cowell is in fact a very good home for the Smith Society.



**Dickinson:** Yes.

**Miles:** It's not just that Alan is extraordinary. Alan is where he is—provost of Cowell College—because that's the kind of person that Cowell College wanted, and because he really does a lot of what Cowell is about. He has done extraordinary things in his teaching—organizing classes that are really communities, and that take on a life outside the classroom and the campus.

**Rabkin:** He's led the Okinawa project, for example, taking groups of students to Okinawa.<sup>25</sup>

**Miles:** Yeah. And that's something that's blossoming, and is turning, in a sense, into a kind of worldwide project, because there's the Okinawa diaspora, and then on top of that, there are other people who have analogous experiences. So it's a very fruitful project. But that's just exemplary of the kind of—

And, you know, so much of what UCSC was has gone, and yet you look and there are people like Alan, or Alice Yang, or other people who carry on the best of what we were. It's not all gloom and doom. I think there's enough of a concentration of that at Cowell that it won't be the same, but I don't think it's going to go away.

**Dickinson:** I don't think it will go away, but the difference between us, Gary, is, as written in the Letter of Gift the intention is to keep alive Page and Eloise Smith's spirit. I don't see that happening, or I think it's very unlikely to happen. Amy and Cheryl embody it; you embody it, but it involves an awful lot of showing up.

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<sup>25</sup> See: The Okinawa Memories Initiative: <https://okinawamemories.org/>

**Miles:** Mm-hmm.

**Dickinson:** It involves an awful lot of paying attention. And it involves an awful lot of being willing to stand against the mechanics of the institution to do something spirited. Also, Cowell's provosts are not always like that. From what I've been told, Ty [Tyurus Miller] and Deanna [Shemek], who were wonderful people, didn't have much at all to do with a great many individual students; they were more interested in other things to build Cowell's strength. So it's not a given.

I agree with your basic thing of, of all the possible places to be at UCSC, Cowell is the most likely. But it's a love affair; all of this work is a love affair. And I don't know that people are going to come along for whom it will be a big love affair. I just don't know. The reason it keeps being an issue for me is because I live frugally, and I reserve all this money I've saved to endow it—but I've also started a thing at Harvard Divinity School, and I ask myself, "Which institution do I trust more to do what it was I had in mind?" And from where I sit UCSC has proven itself to be not particularly trustworthy on that score.

My short-term vision is we're in very good shape, because we have gotten smaller. One of the problems with the way things were going at STARS is they were higgledy-piggledy adding students to the Smith Society who really didn't qualify—one of whom is the student who created this big mess with his mentor. They had us up to over 100 students. It is not sustainable, for the reason Gary said. You can't pay that much attention. But it's also not sustainable in the amount of money you have to raise. So we've right-sized. This year is the first year that we finally, through attrition, have gotten rid of many of those students who shouldn't have been included. And Amy is

putting together a team of people who are taking a lot of the work of the mentoring program.

Something will be there, and the something that will be there will be good. But my worry is, based on what I saw happen at San Jose State with their Guardian Scholars program, when the grant money ran out: they just stuck it in EOP, using an institutional kind of response of, “Well, that’s where it logically belongs.” But it went from being a thing that was trying to follow the Smith model of giving students individual mentors, to one in which I believe a staff person is all the students have access to. And by definition, no matter how wonderful that staff person is, they only have so much time.

**Miles:** Yeah. Also, this is something you may want to cut later on, but I have a sort of sense about institutional evolution. When I was an undergraduate, I was recruited into what was the super-nerd fraternity. It was a fraternity whose members very explicitly and consciously didn’t want to be in a fraternity—but it was at Colby College, and there were absolutely no facilities for social life if you didn’t have a fraternity. There were no rooms, etcetera—you just couldn’t do it. So they formed this group, and they particularly recruited the high-performing students. And there we were, and they really didn’t want to be a fraternity, so they didn’t do the ice sculptures, we didn’t have hazing—all of this sort of stuff. But one of the things we didn’t have was blackballing. And so there was a small cadre of students who joined, not for the reasons that I and other people joined, but because they really wanted to be in a fraternity, and they couldn’t get into any other fraternity—

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** —and they succeeded, in fairly short order, in turning this fraternity into a fraternity like every other. And pretty soon it was one thing and another, and then we joined the national institution instead of being a local one. And at that point I just quit. You know, you could see the writing on the wall. They were the majority, and that's not the way I wanted to spend my undergraduate education.

I remember once when I was on the university-wide Committee on Educational Policy, and I was stunned, because the staff person for it was somebody I thought was really neat, and at some point, she said, "When is UCSC going to join the program and become like all the other campuses?" This was the institutional aspiration for UCSC, right? The model for the University of California is that all the campuses are interchangeable; that's the ideal. So there's this huge institutional pressure to move in that direction. Plus, the professional culture of academics in these days—there are all these pressures that are moving away from this. Whether something like this can be sustained in the face of those pressures, I don't know.

**Dickinson:** I would appeal to the ancient historian in you to say whether you think I'm right that this is just the way things go in history.

**Miles:** I kind of do. "Doubletake"—do you know that poem by Seamus Heaney? The burden of this poem is that life is pretty terrible; there's no salvation this side of the grave, but every once in a while there's a moment when history and time rhyme, and there's thunder on the mountaintop, and for this moment, things work out. It's like Athens in the fifth century: during the leadership of Pericles, Athens could sustain itself; once he died—*psschhht!*—it was over. So there are these moments, and they will happen again.

I'm reading a book now called *The Great Leveler*.<sup>26</sup> Basically the argument is—and this is why I'm reading it, because I agree with it already—the argument is that throughout human history, from the beginning to now, the norm has always been, with very, very, very rare exceptions, that there is a huge gulf between the very rich elite and the very poor. The small number of rich and the great number of poor: that is the norm in history, and it takes really cataclysmic events to change it. It took the combination of World War I, the 1918 plague, and World War II to get us to the levelling of the fifties, when we had a real middle class. And then that's eroded now. And the Russian Revolution: now we have the Russian oligarchs and [before them] the Russian czars. And the Chinese Revolution: now we have the Chinese oligarchs. But there are these moments, right? So you wait for these moments, and are hopeful, and do what you can when they come.

**Rabkin:** Thank you.

Bill, you have alluded in some of our correspondence to what you see as the potential for the Smith Society to serve as a viable model, or an exportable model: as a way of supporting undergraduates more broadly, at UCSC and perhaps you're thinking even beyond. I wonder if you want to talk about that.

**Dickinson:** No, I only think about UCSC.

**Rabkin:** Okay.

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<sup>26</sup> Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-first Century*, (Princeton University Press, 2018).

**Dickinson:** We've learned so much in the twenty—now we're in our twenty-second year. And I've learned so much by reading the oral histories, and getting a pretty in-depth understanding of what did the founders have in mind about undergraduate education. Hal Hyde says McHenry hired a provost before he hired the division deans, because he knew the colleges would be smothered in their infancy if he did it in reverse. By definition, most if not all UCSC freshmen are in a college. Research has shown that first-generation students, and particularly those representing ethnic minorities, spend a lot of their freshman year wondering if they belong, and getting depressed, and not having anybody there to say, "It's normal, and it passes."

What remains of the colleges at UCSC is they are where most freshmen and sophomores do their existing. What's true of the colleges and the alumni is that prior to 1979, most alumni who care about UCSC probably feel an allegiance to their college. A couple of years ago, when we were trying to start a Cowell-Stevenson collaborative—we did a search, and there were several thousand Cowell and Stevenson alumni from the beginning through the Class of '79 living in Santa Cruz County. If you extended it into the three other counties that have the community colleges that are feeders to UCSC, they're probably up in the very large numbers. And then, as Gary said, staff people—current staff people—gravitate toward mentoring.

The problem is the university admits more and more first-generation students, and is very proud of having done it, but it doesn't begin to provide them with what they would need to thrive. They're living in the colleges. What we now know from our Smith experience is it takes an awful lot of work on somebody's part to make a mentoring program. It wouldn't cost that much money to hire somebody to coordinate a mentoring program and locate it in the colleges. But the politics of UCSC is they want

to locate everything in EOP—and EOP has the same problem that STARS has: it's staff-driven; it's got limited budgets. And they hire students to be peer mentors, which is fine as far as it goes, but you're not going to have a peer mentor do what an Amy Hamel does, or what anybody who's got plenty of life experience does.

So I don't think my idea is likely to go anywhere, because I have brought this to just about everybody I can think of, most recently [UCSC Chancellor] Cindy Larive, at a small gathering at her house. The alumni who were present at the lunch seemed very interested. But who inside the institution will run with this? This is central to the idea we had with the Cowell-Stevenson collaborative: there was always the [question of] well, who's going to coordinate the mentoring component? And I would say that the obvious people to be on the front end would be the academic advisers, because after the RAs, they're the first people likely to know that a student's in trouble. Well, I was told that they don't have the bandwidth to do it—and, in any case, from what I've observed, that job turns over so often that just about the time somebody knows what they're doing, they move on to something else.

So theoretically, it seems to me, based on what we have learned—including having Gary, who knows the institution from the inside—suggests to me that what we provide our students could theoretically be provided by alumni and others in the community, and staff and retired staff and emeriti. But it needs somebody inside the university to coordinate it, and at the moment, nobody inside the university is prepared to do it. When Alice Yang and Alan [Christy] said, "Well, the advisors don't have the bandwidth," I'm thinking, yeah, but this gets kind of circular, because if they had an army of volunteers mentoring, they'd have more bandwidth. Because their job could be to coordinate it, whereas right now if a student is in trouble, the student has to make an

appointment with the academic advisor and with any luck the academic advisor has a solution.

Gary, you said to me after I came back that you couldn't do what you did without Amy's function. If a group wanted to make this happen—if it was the right people, and they said, "Our mandate is to make this happen," I believe twenty-two years of Smith experience says you could make it happen, and at very low cost. Think about the incalculable cost of not having it to those students and their families who crash and burn and go away with debt, not even realizing Congress passed a law saying student debt is the only debt you can never walk away from.

Maybe I'll stop right there. I think we've established that you could play with this model to have it be effective campus-wide, located in the colleges because that's where the students are in their freshman year. And if you're going to boast about the fact that, for the first time, Latinos make up the largest cohort, and that you're almost at 50 percent of first-generation students, as an institution you really ought to solve that problem—not just take their money and give them better and better food because you can't offer them a better and better total student experience. I know that's harsh, but it's what I observe.

**Rabkin:** Gary, do you want to add anything to what Bill's saying about this notion of—

**Miles:** This is one of the things I've been thinking about, but I didn't want to end on a negative note. What finally did me in with my negotiations with STARS was when they started talking about "risk management."

**Dickinson:** Mmm.



**Miles:** At that point, I thought, It's all over. Now they're thinking about the welfare of the institution. I suppose that's their job; it's legitimate; why not. Right? I was aware, always, that there's risk involved. What if a mentor relationship goes terribly bad, and I'm the coordinator of the program? What if I pick some kid up and drive them home at night, and they say I did awful things? I mean, it's a risk! I was aware of it, and I was willing to take it. The institution is not. I understand that that's a real limitation, because once you start going down that road, then you have background checks and fingerprints and all this sort of stuff, and it does change the possibility and the spirit of the thing.

**Dickinson:** But think about what you said about Alan, Gary. Every provost I've met at any of the colleges is really focused on the undergraduates—

**Miles:** Yeah.

**Dickinson:** —because that's the reason the colleges are there. So I guess I'll ask Sarah's question in another way: What do you think of the idea *if* it was housed in the colleges?

**Miles:** You're asking me?

**Dickinson:** Yeah.

**Miles:** (laughs) Remember, you used to kind of tease me? "Gary says he's going to be interested in *one thing*; he's going to do this *one small thing* right."

**Dickinson:** No, this one *big* thing!

**Miles:** (laughs) I don't have this larger institutional, structural vision or ambition. I limited my engagement and my vision to what I thought I could do. So I would say

“More power to you.” I hope you’re right. I hope the university does this, but I just don’t know. It’s not the area that I think in.

**Rabkin:** Yeah. Thank you. Well, this might be a good time to ask both of you whether there’s anything you’d like to say about any aspect of your experience with the Smith Society that you haven’t had a chance to touch on yet.

**Dickinson:** I’d like to say one more thing about the student who was assigned to me who was the astrophysics major. A couple of years later I asked John Jordan, “Why did you match me?” And he said, “Because he said he wanted a man, and you were the last available man.”

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** (laughs) So that just shows, really, how what was essentially at the heart of this is willingness and good will; generosity. The other things are secondary.

**Rabkin:** Mm. Thank you.

**Dickinson:** We’ve gone for twenty-two years without a strategic plan.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** And, you know, except for those two glitches, there’s never been a serious problem in the mentor program. Never. So if you weigh the good against the harm—  
(laughs)

**Rabkin:** Well, I think this is a lovely note on which to draw the interview to a close, unless there’s anything pressing that either of you wants to add.

**Miles:** Thank you, Sarah.

**Dickinson:** I am just so happy, Gary, to have heard your version of the story, because all these years we've known each other, but here I get to hear the whole narrative. I'm so impressed by what you did, and what you've done.

**Rabkin:** Gary, are you still working with the mentoring?

**Miles:** No, I'm not. It's one of those things. The Guillain-Barré just sliced through life at that point. And at this point, our granddaughter from France has come to live with us, and so we now have a nineteen-year-old—and her puppy.

**Rabkin:** (laughs)

**Miles:** (laughs) And they are wonderful; they are a joy, a delight, and I take so much pleasure in her and have so much respect for her—but it's enough, when you're eighty.

**Rabkin:** Well, thank you both so much. This is going to be such a significant and important addition to the archives at UC Santa Cruz. The stories that you've told, and the overarching story of the Smith Society, are so essential in so many ways—in and of themselves, and also in the way they shed light on many aspects of the university, its function and its evolution, and its successes and failures. So I'm deeply grateful to both of you for all the time and thought that you've given to the interviews.

## Appendix

[These supplementary materials were all contributed by Bill Dickinson]

Chapter Seven of *Passing on the Spirit* (2002) by Bill Cane, who lives in Watsonville.  
See: <http://www.integrities.org/founder.html>

### VII PAGE SMITH -- PASSING ON THE SPIRIT

*History is life and life is history. And at the heart of it all is the passing on of the spirit.*  
— Page Smith

I never realized how much of a mentor and friend Page Smith was until his sudden death in 1995. I cried every day for two weeks. A friend said to me, “A part of you has died with Page, but a great part of Page still lives on in you.” I wept for the part of me that went with Page; I cling to the part of Page that remains with me.

When we met in 1975, Page had left the university he had helped found, and I had left official ministry in the church. We talked about what might have happened in the sixties and didn’t happen -- how the forces of retrogression moved in and took over major institutions in America.

We saw things in parallel ways. I always felt so much better about the world because Page was in it. Page lived in hope. When he began writing his *People’s History of the United States*, he felt that, like historian Edward Gibbon, he might be describing the rise and fall of an empire, but by volume IV he had cheered himself up considerably. What cheered him was the continual rising up in American history of reformers and popular movements that against all odds won important victories and brought possibility back to civic life. I had recently founded an organization called IF, which probed alternatives and ongoing possibility. So I found in Page both a mentor and a kindred spirit.

Page could be outrageous. Decked out in a Civil War uniform, he rode a horse to his history class at the University of California at Santa Cruz. More than once he fired an old musket out the classroom window. In one class he produced an apple and asked a student volunteer to place the apple appropriately, while he readied the musket. “Of course,” he quipped, “in the totally unlikely event that I miss, I will bestow upon you a posthumous ‘A’!”

Page never wore a belt, only red suspenders: “Western man,” he commented, “has had such difficulty getting his head and genitals together that I don’t want to wear anything to further separate them!”

His career began at the center of academic life in America --Dartmouth, Harvard, William and Mary, the University of California at Los Angeles. He then had an opportunity, with Dean McHenry, to help found the University of California at Santa Cruz. As founding provost of Cowell College, Page gathered extraordinary teachers with a wide breadth of opinions. The

university became an exciting place, a place of “learning in the company of friends.” At Page’s memorial service in Santa Cruz, a student from those days wrote in the register book: “There were many brilliant minds gathered together on the original faculty at Cowell College, but Page Smith was the only one who didn’t have even a touch of arrogance.”

Page ultimately stormed out of the university that he and Dean McHenry had founded because philosopher Paul Lee was refused tenure. “If there’s no room for Paul Lee here, there’s no room for me either,” he declared. The university argued that Paul Lee didn’t publish enough. “What do we want,” Page countered, “a plethora of third-rate books or a faculty of first-rate teachers?” His criticism of the educational system culminated years later in his book, *Killing the Spirit -- Higher Education in America*.

After he left UCSC, Page founded the Penny University, where on Monday afternoons he and some of his colleagues held forth at Cafe Pergolesi and then at the Episcopal church hall in downtown Santa Cruz. Page believed that education is “learning in the company of friends.” That was the atmosphere he created at the Penny.

Leaving the University gave Page more time to write. *A People’s History of the United States* totals eight volumes of close to 1,000 pages each. It includes stories that are usually left out of academic history -- tales of popular movements and their leaders, reformers and radicals, artists, novelists, ordinary citizens, scoundrels and even “pompous asses.” Criticized by some academic historians for writing popular history, Page countered, “These experts don’t like popular history, which brings us to the subject of *unpopular* history!”

Page believed that history is life and life is history. At the heart of history and the heart of life, he discerned the passing on of the spirit. His favorite story began with Abraham Lincoln. Jane Addams’ father was a good friend of Lincoln and was deeply influenced by him. As a little girl, Jane came home from school on day in 1865 to find her father weeping. “The greatest man in the world has been killed,” her father sobbed. Lincoln had been assassinated. Jane grew up and went to the best schools, but after finishing college she felt lost and depressed. On a tour of Europe, in the slums of London, her heart was touched by the sight of poor people fighting over rotten vegetables. She came home determined to devote her life to helping poor immigrants in the slums of the United States. She founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889, followed by a series of settlement houses in other major cities.

Thirty years later, in the 1920’s, Myles Horton was thinking of starting a center in Appalachia where the whites and blacks of the South could come together. He went to visit Jane Addams and was deeply influenced by what she was doing. In 1930, he founded Highlander Folk School in Tennessee. Another generation went by, and Horton phoned Martin Luther King, Sr. to ask if there might be a young person in his congregation in Atlanta who would benefit from a session at Highlander. King recommended a young woman named Rosa Parks, who went to Highlander and then, only weeks later, set off the Civil Rights movement by refusing to step to the back of the bus. In retrospect, she claimed that her time at Highlander was a crucial influence in her decision.

Page pointed out that the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the Civil Rights movement were separated by approximately 100 years. Yet we can trace a spirit that was passed on from person to person during the intervening years -- from Abraham Lincoln to Jane Addams to Myles Horton to Rosa Parks. This passing on of the spirit from person to person and from generation to generation, Page believed, is what life and history are all about.

In remembering my mentors now, I feel the full impact of what Page was talking about. We are born again through the passing on of the spirit, through receiving from others a new Breath of Life.

“It’s a good life, being a writer,” Page claimed, “because when you’re writing, you’re working, and when you’re reading an enjoyable book, you’re *preparing* for writing, and if you’re just sitting having a drink, you can claim you’re *thinking* about writing. So you can be pretty lazy and still make people believe you’re working most of the time!” “When my son Carter was little, he had a friend visiting our house, and the little boy passed my study, looked inside and saw books everywhere -- lining all the walls, piles on the floor, piles on the desk. The little boy’s eyes widened and he asked Carter, “What is all that?” “Oh,” said Carter, “that’s my daddy’s office. He writes books, and those are the books he *copies* out of when he writes *his* books.” Page claimed that in all his academic career he never encountered a better definition of scholarship! Page was a phenomenal scholar and had extraordinary recall.

In his later years his wife Eloise told him he didn’t have Alzheimer’s disease, he had Oldtimer’s disease -- he couldn’t forget anything! He was devoted to Eloise, an accomplished artist. He often confessed that he was utterly dependent on her. He used her as a foil in his articles on aging in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, but she wrote the last column and had the last word.

Page’s grandchildren delighted him when they called his bourbon “Grandpa’s medicine.” On occasion he described Eloise as the designated driver and himself as the designated drunk. He once had an exhibition of his own drawings (mainly of chickens, ducks and geese) at the art museum in Santa Cruz. Sporting a tuxedo, he beamed as a large number of people drank champagne and commented on his art. “It’s the bear on roller skates phenomenon,” he confided as he drew me aside. “The bear can’t skate all that well, but they’re amazed that he can skate at all!”

“If anyone ever has to do research on what influenced my career and my writing,” he once said, “they’ll have an easy job of it. There was only one influence -- Eugen Rosenstock Huessy. That’s it.” The statement sounded strange to me at the time, yet as I delved deep into Rosenstock-Huessy myself, I understood. Rosenstock said that we are all born into the topsoil of our own time, and our task is to grow in stature by stretching our roots down deep into other times and other epochs.

Page spread his roots deep and wide and nourished many of us. He loved. He cared. He served. He had what he called “the gift of tears.” When he was deeply touched, he started crying and couldn’t easily stop. Once when he was having dinner with us, Lucia, a young woman who lived and worked in a slum in Lima, Peru, came in and sat down. We translated her story and Page began to cry. His great heart embraced homeless people and convicts and children as well as

brilliant academics and artists and politicians. He said he enjoyed being with homeless people -- their stories were much more interesting than the conversation at cocktail parties. The homeless shelter in Santa Cruz is named after Page Smith. He wanted the university to be a place of many opinions and he wanted America to be a country with room for all sorts of people.

He died at a time when our universities and our politics have grown narrower. He died feeling himself at the margins of academic life. But he never questioned the regenerative power of the spirit. He had faith and hope in those who went before him and in those who would come after him.

His mentor, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, believed that timing is the essence of life, morality and history. "Lincoln," Eugen wrote, "freed the slaves not too early and not too late." Page was fascinated by the coincidence of the deaths of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. On July 3, 1826, they were the sole survivors among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. John Adams died on July 4<sup>th</sup>, and his last words were "At least Jefferson survives." Jefferson died that very same day -- fifty years to the day after the Declaration of Independence had been adopted.

Page kept vigil at the bedside of his wife Eloise day and night as she lay dying of cancer. Eloise died on Saturday. Page went into a coma on Sunday and died the next day -- forty hours after Eloise. He had been battling leukemia, but he seemed to have uncanny influence over the timing of his death. Their memorial service was held together, just as their lives had been woven together for over 50 years.

Page has become present to me in faith and in hope and in love -- similar to the way his beloved characters in history were present to him. "When you know of the trials and tribulations of people in American history, and when you see history as a tragic drama, as I do -- and against this backdrop, you still see the patience, the faith and persistence with which some people have pursued some higher vision -- when you see this over decades and generations, then I think hope is inevitable."

I smile with delight when I think of Page. At times I find myself enjoying some bizarre news story as I imagine laughing over it with him. When I am with younger people now I am very conscious of how much has been given to me by my spiritual ancestors. "Freely you have received, so also freely give," the Scripture says. The spirit, I have come to recognize, is not ours to grasp or comprehend but only to pass on as a gift -- in gratefulness and remembrance and love.

REMARKS BY BILL DICKINSON ON PAGE AND ELOISE PICKARD SMITH SCHOLARSHIP  
AT PIONEER CLASSES' REUNION – APRIL 18, 1999

I'd like to speak with you briefly about why I am making a \$100,000 lifetime commitment to create the Page and Eloise Pickard Smith Memorial Scholarship for UCSC students who've been foster kids, wards of the court, or orphans. And I'd like to invite you to help it grow. The first part can be summed up succinctly: Cowell's founding provost and his wife were awesome. Amidst the flow of unreliable memory, they abide as a vivid embodiment of the daring experiment that blossomed here – in Cowell, Stevenson, and Crown – during those wondrous pioneering years.

What we remember lives.

It's hard to believe that the last time I was on this stage, twenty-three years ago, Page was younger than most of us are now. It was College Night. He sat over there. The radical Harvard theologian, Harvey Cox, with whom I would study liberation theology two decades later, sat next to him. And I sat next to Harvey, whose *Secular City* was then a best seller and whose beard had yet to even hint at gray. Page asked me to sit next to Harvey because he knew of my interest in contemporary theological ideas and respected me enough to seat me next to an emerging seminal thinker.

This may not strike you as all that special. After all, like so many mentors then resident in our three colleges, Page and Eloise knew and respected many of us with an uncommon and blessed specificity. Which goes to the heart of why I did find Page's inviting me to sit up here truly special: growing up, as I did, in foster homes and an orphanage, I was unaccustomed to receiving that sort of respectful attention. And it was through countless respectful moments like this that I learned, in the easy intimacy of my college, that my life mattered.

What we remember lives.

In December 1965, mere months after arriving here, I got my notice to appear for my military physical. I was preparing to go to jail rather than go in the Army. In lieu of the father I never had, Page sat with me for a long while trying to talk me out of it. We talked about Reinhold Niebuhr's just war theory of history, about Page's mentor, Rosenstock-Huessy, and the fact that if I went to jail I would miss the feisty German moralist's lectures on the bionomics of speech!

Page spoke movingly and convincingly about why it mattered to him that I was at Cowell, about what might be possible in my life if I did not take the step that I contemplated. He lured me back from the brink. Not through the power of his ideas: I didn't agree with his position on Vietnam at the time. No, it wasn't the ideas that did the trick; it was the power of his concern, the way he showed up for me, the fact that he bothered to take the time. Nobody had ever taken me that seriously!



And then there's Eloise, the spunky, scrappy soul mate who gave Page so much of his reason for living. Knowing that I had nowhere to go for Thanksgiving one year, they turned the Provost's house over to me while they went up to their place on Pine Flat Road. Eloise told me to make myself at home, inviting me to help myself to her well-stocked fridge. Nobody whom I respected had ever entrusted me with a fine home in this way. The walls of books in Page's study awed me. The colorful abundance of Eloise's paintings fed my imagination and delighted my heart. The lacquered bread sculptures with which she had decked out the dining room during her "Found Art" phase bemused me. So little, and yet so much: vivid snapshots of what the good life can look like.

My post-UCSC life has been good, in no small measure because I got to pass this way. It's payback time. I'd like to help others who've been forced to embark on their life journeys with one hand tied behind their back find their way to the realization that their lives matter, help them discover their own snapshots of the good life. The vast majority of foster kids never see such snapshots, never even graduate from high school. Ready or not, they are dumped out of the system at age eighteen.

There are more than 40 UCSC students who currently fit the eligible categories for the Smith Scholarship. They have strong survival skills or they wouldn't have gotten this far. What was true for me – and for many in this room tonight – is true for them as well: there's a very good chance that they will discover here the gifts that lie dormant within all human beings.

Our classmate Joe Goldberg once wrote of Page and Eloise that "they taught class to a whole generation." I think Joe was talking about those noble virtues with which they seemed so at ease. I'd put it a bit differently. No matter who you were, no matter what your background, they behaved as though you had nobility in you. And they made it abundantly clear that they and the college community stood ready to draw it out.

And so it seems to me, after all these years, that Ansel Adams was not all that wide of the mark when he dubbed this place in its infancy "The Athens of the West."

What we remember lives.

I will write to you soon to ask you to contribute to the Smith Scholarship, or to volunteer to mentor one of these students. And whether you went to Cowell, Stevenson, or Crown, I hope you'll consider giving to something that salutes far more than one wonderful man and his equally wonderful wife. In the end, it memorializes a vulnerable yet awesome vision of what a college can be.

Thank you for listening.

Bill Dickinson Remarks  
Founders Day Lunch  
October 18, 2013

Charles Merrill, Merrill College's chief benefactor, has given much of his family's considerable fortune to endeavors that lift people up through education. He sums up the philanthropist's role as "good citizen and damned nuisance". I am not wealthy, but I take citizenship seriously, and some UCSC folks would agree that I am a damned nuisance.

I am entrusting the bulk of my estate to UCSC to endow the Smith Renaissance Society, an organization that supports UCSC students who, like me, come without the parental support enjoyed by most of their peers. I live frugally to maximize the odds that funds will be there when I'm gone. In the meanwhile, I keep showing up around here. I have been asked to say why I am doing this.

The answer is simple: having started this venture, I want to make sure that it thrives and has a secure future. Starting with three students, currently up to eighty-three, we have served hundreds. What we do works: our Smithies routinely graduate at a much better rate than many of their more fortunate peers.

But what led me to start it in the first place?

Over the years I have answered that in a variety of ways. Today I would say that it's a matter of legacy -- my own, and that of UCSC's founders, for whom I feel deep respect.

When I was a student at Santa Rosa Junior College I got excited by the Progressive Era of American history. I was especially enthralled with Woodrow Wilson, whose idealism spoke to me. Reading his views on undergraduate education, I developed a huge wish to have been able to go to Princeton during his tenure there.

In spring of 1965, preparing to transfer, I read an article in *The San Francisco Chronicle* about an innovative new UC campus opening in Santa Cruz that sounded akin to Woodrow Wilson's Princeton. I even fancied that its first provost, Page Smith, bore a family resemblance to our country's 28<sup>th</sup> president.

I applied and received an admission letter. Still on Cloud 9, I got a second letter saying that, as a minor whose mother lived in Nevada, I would have to pay out-of-state tuition. I protested that I had gone on my own when I was sixteen, was a California taxpayer, and never had set foot in Nevada, where my mother was in a mental institution.

Byron Stookey, Chancellor McHenry's right-hand man, and the quiet genius behind many of the most daring ideas in UCSC's springtime, solved the problem for me. In that gracious gesture, even before the campus had opened, he started teaching me to become the man I became. And that's what being here proved to be about for me: figuring out what kind of man I wanted to become, together with learning deeply inquisitive habits of thought that enabled me to have a diversity of interesting careers.

I was blessed with spectacular role models. As often as not, they taught me in random conversations outside the classroom:

I learned from Byron, who became a lifetime friend, to question the tedious authority of conventional assumptions – not for the sake of mere questioning, but in order to come up with fresh solutions to important problems. I learned from Page Smith, whose spirit the Smith Society aspires to keep alive, that loving students is central to good undergraduate education. I learned from Page’s mentor, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, that becoming a complete human being entails recognizing that one is part of human history and taking responsibility for that fact: the good citizen thing.

The odds of a former foster kid gaining access to such greatness were – and remain – depressingly slim. How could I not be deeply grateful? How could I not want to enable others to enjoy the blessings that my classmates and I were so fortunate to enjoy?

The people who envisioned this campus, with President Clark Kerr, Chancellor Dean McHenry, and Provost Page Smith in the lead, had an incredibly noble dream. Over the years I have read the oral histories of the founders the way others read sacred scripture, discovering the threads they knitted together to make real the fabric of that dream. To me, as one of its beneficiaries, the heart of it comes down to this: seeing to it that young people who entrust this place with *their* dreams have access to small, cross-generational communities comprised of caring, competent people truly committed to their success.

In his memoir, *The Gold and the Blue*, Clark Kerr reflects on the heartening time he spent with my classmates and me at the 1999 Pioneer Class reunion, declaring that the dream of those heady early years lives on in our lives. At the same reunion, verifying his claim, a goodly number of my fellow Pioneers heeded my call to help launch what became the Smith Society. Later, UCSC staff, faculty members, and emeriti joined in, mentoring, cutting through bureaucratic thickets, as Byron did for me, and cheering on our students. A band of loyal donors – many of whom are here today – complete the community of decent people who keep this thing going and fill my heart with gratitude.

Clark Kerr, Dean McHenry, and Page Smith are gone. As the years roll on, as proud as I am of the Smith Society, I keep finding new outlets for my mission to help keep their student-centered vision alive. When it’s my turn to go, I should like to be remembered as having been an effective damned nuisance in these pursuits. Meanwhile, in the period ahead, I would dearly love to see an army of my fellow alumni pitch in and find – or create – uplifting ventures around here about which they might do the same with passion.

As I see it, the founders deserve it. So do the hopeful young people who still entrust UCSC with their dreams.

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**AMENDMENT TO  
PAGE AND ELOISE SMITH SCHOLASTIC SOCIETY  
SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

**(Fund Functioning as Endowment)**

at Cowell College

for the Division of Undergraduate Education University of California, Santa Cruz

The Donors wish to amend and clarify the purpose of the fund, which was set up to support the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society students. Subsequently, the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society changed names with its incorporation of the Renaissance Scholars. This group was known as the Smith Renaissance Society for some time, however, the two programs have decided to focus on their individual philosophies for assisting students. The Renaissance Scholars will remain in the Division of Student Success while the Smith Society will provide support to Cowell College, in the Division of Undergraduate education.

The University of California, Santa Cruz Foundation (the Foundation) and Bill Dickinson along with the Page & Eloise Smith Society Leadership (the Donor/s) hereby agree to revise the terms established in the original Letter of Gift, dated September 4, 2007, for the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society Scholarship Fund (gl487,FI032FFEF) for the support of the Division of Student Affairs, University of California, Santa Cruz. This addendum supersedes the original gift agreement (attached).

This document and any future amendments should also act as the guiding principles for the current use Page & Eloise Smith Scholarship account (FI011F/FI011R).

**AMENDED NAME**

The Donors wish to rename the fund

**Page and Eloise Smith Society Scholarship Fund**

**AMENDED PURPOSE**


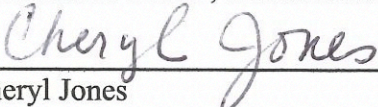
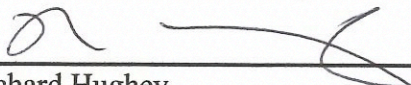
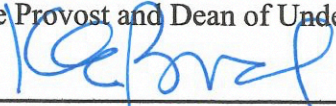
The Page & Eloise Smith Society remains dedicated to keeping alive the spirit of Page & Eloise Smith by supporting the personal and academic success of students who have endured major adverse circumstances before reaching age 18. Partnering with Cowell College-where Page Smith was founding provost- the Smith Society provides an

addition of the distribution to the principal, the Donor(s) understand that under the current Foundation policy, the total return earned by the endowment includes an annual endowment administration fee.

If in the unlikely event, and in the judgment of the trustees of the UC Santa Cruz Foundation, it becomes impossible or impractical to accomplish the purposes of this gift, the Fund distributions may be used for a purpose as closely related to the original intention of the Donors as possible, as determined by the trustees of the UC Santa Cruz Foundation, upon recommendation of the Chancellor after consultation with the Vice Provost/Dean of Undergraduate Education, the Provost of Cowell College, and the Smith Society Board, or equivalent, if possible.

This document may be amended by the Donor and/or the Smith Society Board or equivalent in the future.

Signed:

	8/16/18
Bill Dickinson	Date
Donor and Founder, Smith Society	
	8/16/18
Cheryl Jones	Date
Lead Fellow, Smith Society Administration and Oversight Team	
	8/20/18
Richard Hughey	Date
Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education, UC Santa Cruz	
	21 AUG 2018
Keith E. Brant	Date
Vice Chancellor, University Relations	

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Gift Administration

## Stuart Proposal

### *Summary of Project*

The Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society (PESSS) at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) provides high-quality support to UCSC students who are current or former dependents or wards of the court, orphans, and homeless or runaways youths. PESSS supports these students by providing financial and emotional support, helping them resolve "bureaucratic hassles" and get the resources they need, and matching them with mentor advocates to ensure a smooth transition into, and a successful transit through UCSC. PESSS' mission and work clearly fit within the Stuart Foundation's Strengthening the Child Welfare System program guidelines: preparing foster children and youth for transitions and supporting those transitions after they leave foster care.

### *Problem Statement*

Higher education is not presently a realistic option for the vast majority of foster youths. Most foster youths are forced to grow up without anyone making their education a top priority; they tend to move constantly throughout their childhood and youth; and they age out of the system at eighteen without support. Even when foster youths do get into college and have sufficient financial support, many leave without obtaining their degree because they lack an appropriate support structure.

According to the Community College Foundation, educational opportunities for California's foster youth are dismal. In California, there are more than 90,000 children in foster care and every year 4,000 youth leave foster care upon reaching the age of 18 years. While more than one-half of high school graduates go on to enroll in college, less than 25 percent of foster youth in California enroll in college. Of the foster youth that do enroll in college, only seven percent enroll in a four-year university. While the foster youth college enrollment rate is extremely low, the college dropout rate of foster youth is extremely high.

The statistics below are grim reminders of the importance the work PESSS is doing and all the work that still needs to be accomplished. Dr. Barbara Needell, Center for Social Service Research, University of California, Berkeley, who conducts research and compiles data on California's foster care, reports the following:

- California houses one-fifth of the nation's children in foster care.
- Emancipators from foster care have difficulty finding employment, have high rates of homelessness and have high rates of public assistance after leaving care, much less enter the higher educational system.
- The average outcomes for children who age out of the foster care system are dismal, including high rates of incarceration and victimization.

- *Although policies, approaches, and programs vary over time, the transition from high school to college is still a major hurdle for many foster youth.*

A 1995 study done by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Web of Failure: The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness" yielded the following results:

1. A disproportionate number of homeless people had a foster care history.
2. Homeless people with a foster care history were more likely than other homeless people to have their own children in foster care.
3. Those people with a foster care history tend to become homeless at an earlier age than those who do not have a foster care history.
4. The foster care system often fails to help children deal with problems that result from circumstances which caused them to be removed from their homes – similarly, foster care often fails in helping these children to address problems which arise in foster care placements.
5. Children, who are moved from home to home over an extended period of time, learn how to deal with problems by leaving them behind.
6. Extensive foster care often leads participants to become accustomed to institutionalized living, instead of independent living.
7. Substance abuse and mental illness play a significant role in the relationship between foster care and homelessness.

Despite increased government mandates and significantly increased funding for youths in transition in recent years, there is no nexus to connect the disparate dependency court, social service, educational, and volunteer communities in a meaningful way that makes the educational promise of foster youth job **number one**.

What is often lacking is a caring individual willing to take the time to help individual foster youths figure out how to go to college. What is also needed is a viable way to spark foster youths' interest in college at an early age, tell them about the options, and offer them the appropriate combination of guidance, goading, handholding, and advocacy that any caring parent would provide for his or her own kids.

Because postsecondary education is seen as a primary route to increased income and career opportunity, Stuart Foundation grant support will allow PESSS to continue its work with emancipated foster youth, and others "on their own," and support their educational pursuits and dreams at UCSC. It will also move PESSS towards sustainability by incorporating its volunteer-driven activities into the regular UCSC student services.

### Capacity of Organization

The Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society was created in 1999 by Bill Dickinson, a successful educator, speechwriter, businessman, and professional writer, a veteran of the foster care system, and one of UCSC's first graduates, to honor the founding provost of Cowell College and his wife. With the help of fellow alumni, UCSC faculty and staff, and interested others, PESSS has been working entirely with a modest pool of donations and a devoted corps of outstanding geographically dispersed volunteers. The majority of our volunteers are seasoned professionals, many of whom stand at the intersection of the educational and social welfare systems.

PESSS is a creative experiment that is defining itself as it grows and develops, but what has always been constant, and is at the heart of our work, are our mentors—Collegiate Fellows and Senior Fellows. Our concept of mentor goes beyond the traditional definition to include brokering. For example, if a student runs into problems that are beyond their ability to solve, PESSS will step forward to advocate for them. PESSS supports these students by providing financial and emotional support, and matches them with mentors who serve as their advocates to ensure a smooth transition into and through UCSC. As of last year, every UCSC student who indicated a wish for one had a mentor as of the beginning of the school year. Of this year's 36 Collegiate Fellows, 23 have mentors.

As students become part of the PESSS community, Collegiate Fellows, they, in turn, help PESSS reach out to precollege youths to encourage them to see higher education as an option, become junior fellows, and apply for admission to UCSC. They do this by hosting fun events and leading campus tours, and by going out to speak to youths at functions like Independent Living Program (ILP) classes. So far this year, 45 people attended a campus caving expedition; 30 people attended a Shakespeare Santa Cruz performance, and our Collegiate Fellows have hosted nearly 70 foster youths from the Bay Area for campus tours and have spoken to more than 30 ILP youths off campus.

Senior Fellows are faculty members, staff, alumni, or others from the community. The core of our Senior Fellows are early UCSC alumni, including mission-relevant types. Some of our mentors include: a juvenile court judge pro-tem; a Superior court judge; the head of Family and Children's Services for San Mateo County; the Health and Human Services grant officer for agencies in the western states dealing with homeless and runaway youths; a professor of special education; numerous social workers and teachers; and, many high-functioning professionals who bring competence, resources, and commitment to the table.

We are in the early stages of offering mentors to high school and community college students who would like to go to UCSC directly or to go first to a community college. We offer these precollege and transfer-eligible students the option of becoming members of PESSS and put them in touch with a local mentor to help them figure out how to get admitted to UCSC, how to pay for it, and any other issues in their educational quest.

PESSS already has developed the makings of a viable conceptual model that addresses the problems facing our students in a meaningful way. This includes: providing scholarship and financial aid support; creating PESSS related work-study positions that give leadership



experience; securing on-campus housing for our students, conducting outreach and recruitment activities; and working with the UCSC administrative structure, specifically within the Student Affairs Division, to accomplish our goals.

PESSS is in the process of formalizing its administrative structure to work within Student Affairs, which is one of the major divisions of the UC Santa Cruz campus. Student Affairs has oversight of all issues and resources related to student life. Student Affairs is a cluster of units designed and devoted to serve all students, and to make sure that the learning and living environment on campus is conducive to attaining students' academic goals. This means the basics like getting financial aid, housing, health services, and possibly a job from the career center. But it also includes efforts to make every student feel important within the campus community. Student Affairs offers many support services for students, including specialized support for re-entry and transfer students, and students with disabilities. Additionally, Student Affairs has student outreach programs in schools from the elementary school level to the community college level which help increase the pool of underrepresented and low-income students who are academically qualified to attend UC.

As mentioned above, PESSS has officially aligned itself with the Student Affairs Division, specifically Services for Transfer and Re-Entry Students (STARS). The reason for this is because many of our PESSS students are community college transfers or re-entry students, and because the primary beneficiaries of our proposed new outreach work in the next year are likely to be community college students seeking to transfer. STARS is an active participant in the Regional Community College Consortium, which includes transfer center directors, UCSC Transfer Partnerships, and the UC Office of the President. The thirteen regional community colleges within our service area include: Cabrillo College, Cañada College, College Of San Mateo, De Anza College, Evergreen Valley College, Foothill College, Gavilan College, Hartnell College, Mission College, Monterey Peninsula College, San José City College, Skyline College, and West Valley College. It is our hope that PESSS will have an opportunity to effect policy and develop relationships that enhance the transition process for our students in myriad ways.

STARS works in collaboration with other campus programs, and is an active member of the Coalition for Student Academic Success, which offers a quarterly Academic Success Workshop Series designed to assist students with study skill development. These sessions encourage students to explore new strategies that could turn difficulties into success. Two STARS resource centers housed in different locations on campus provide programs and services. Both STARS centers are comfortable places for students to study, use computer workstations, relax, and meet friends. These centers are a warm and inviting place and serve as a *home away from home* for many students during their stay on campus. An open door policy allows students, and prospective students, to drop in and ask professional staff for assistance on admissions, academic and personal issues.

Another important linkage for PESSS is the Academic Resources Collaborative (ARCollaborative), which seeks to support student academic success. This coalition actively collaborates with other academic and administrative departments. ARCollaborative's fundamental objective is to provide students access to academic and related resources,

which will enable them to make a successful transition into the UCSC learning community and to achieve their personal and academic goals.

The strength of PESSS' work lies in our solid relationships with regional partners, including many UCSC student service units, and in collaborations across the educational agencies in our service region whose goal is to increase the numbers of students who attend college from our area. We are clearly qualified to do this work based on our track record to date. Below are some of our significant accomplishments (1999-present):

1. All the donated funds that we have collected to date have gone to support PESSS students with scholarships, ranging from \$1,000 - \$4,000, awarded to date:
  - 3 in 1999
  - 8 in 2000
  - 11 in 2001
  - 22 in 2002
  - 36 in 2003
2. In 2003 PESSS formally established a link with the Services for Transfer and Re-Entry Students, which has taken on the responsibility to provide an administrative home base.
3. PESSS recently received official campus recognition as a "Friends Group" by University Relations.
4. Created PESSS related student work-study positions for our Collegiate Fellows.
5. PESSS is in the process of coordinating its outreach and recruitment efforts for foster youth with existing Student Affairs outreach programs, such as the Community College Dual Admissions Program. This program offers first year students enrolled at one of the participating community colleges **guaranteed** admission if they complete a set of requirements. The Dual Admissions Program provides academic advising and activities designed to orient the student to UCSC.
6. Last year three of our student fellows, who are film majors, produced a wonderful short video introduction to the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society using their wits and less than \$150 in materials.
7. Because PESSS is still young it has not had many graduates. But among the successes are Maribel Valencia-Castillo, who went on to get an advanced degree from Harvard Divinity School and is currently applying to Ph.D. programs; Michel Santos who is working in Admissions at the University of Southern California; and Amber Leahey who is employed as a research scientist at a biotech firm in south San Francisco. To date, only one Collegiate Fellow has left UCSC without obtaining a degree.
8. Outreach and Recruitment: Starting in 2001 PESSS began to reach out to precollege youths, mostly bringing them to the campus for interesting events. To date, our Collegiate

Fellows have spoken to nearly 400 foster youths from as far away as Los Angeles. We now have a speakers bureau, and our Collegiate Fellows have spoken to youths from three different agencies, ILP, the Silicon Valley Children's Fund, and the Community College Foundation.

9. We have worked closely with local Court Appointed Special Advocates (Santa Clara and San Mateo counties is one of the largest CASA organizations in the country and it has a 17-year track record), and Independent Living Program organizations during our startup phase.
10. Newer strategic relationships have started with the Silicon Valley Children's Fund; A Home Within (a group of mental health professionals who devote intensive pro bono time to work with foster youths); ILP programs in Alameda, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara, and Monterey counties.
11. In January 2004, the presiding Dependency Court Judge in San Clara County, Honorable Len Edwards, a well-known expert in child dependency issues, will host a lunch bringing together 40 Santa Clara foster youth who have college potential with PESSS and others who want to help them achieve higher education.

Perhaps our greatest strength is the PESSS community itself. This growing group of more than 200 committed, caring, competent UCSC alumni, faculty and staff have joined forces with existing resources at UCSC to provide students with a solid support system within which to pursue their dreams.

#### *Current Request*

The Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society seeks to serve any youth who is substantially on his or her own: foster youths are at the heart of our mission. PESSS seeks to ensure a smooth transition into and a successful transit through UCSC. PESSS seeks to serve three constituencies: UCSC students; students in community colleges, especially those seeking to transfer to UCSC; and precollege students.

We are requesting \$450,000 in funding, over three years, from the Stuart Foundation to formally integrate PESSS into UCSC's Student Affairs operations. Our goal is to serve annually approximately 35-40 UCSC Collegiate Fellows; 40-45 community college students (especially those seeking to transfer to UCSC); and 200-300 precollege students. The universe of youths we seek to serve can expand continuously, but the mission will not change.

Often the missing ingredient is not the need for another government mandate, or additional public funding. What's missing are appropriate and unequivocal institutional commitments combined with capable adults willing to say to individual kids: "We will help you figure this out and you can rely on us to hang in with you till you have reached the point where you don't need us anymore." (*At which point PESSS will ask you to turn around and help us pull other kids up the ladder!*)

We aim to create a low-overhead model of access to higher education for foster youths that will prove simple, reliable, affordable, and durable on its own. Because a small band of volunteers can only go so far, and because PESSS presently relies far too heavily on the commitment of its entrepreneurial founder, a three-year Stuart grant could provide needed help in three areas:

1. To render the model simple and clear enough that it can be understood easily by prospective participants: present and future leaders, youths, mentors, donors, funders, governmental, non-profit and educational agents, and others seeking to create similar programs at other colleges and universities.
2. To render the model sustainable and replicable and especially to find ways and means to knit our work together with existing programs at UCSC, community colleges, state universities, other UC's, and Independent Living Skills and Court Appointed Special Advocates programs in the Greater Bay Area Counties.
3. To continue to broadcast our work to the right audiences and recruit the right contributors in Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties (and others, as appropriate), so that at the end of three years we have a solid corps of committed adults ready, willing, and able to carry our mission forward.

A Stuart Foundation grant will allow PESSS to accomplish its vision of creating a model that is sustainable and replicable, specifically this funding will help us achieve the following goals:

Create a lean, flat, team-based organizational structure that does not depend on the vision of a single leader to keep itself fired up and growing in strength and competence.

Develop a seminar or group independent study (for academic credit) on leadership for PESSS students taught by Professor Paul Ortiz, Community Studies, and Bill Dickinson, with a specific practical focus on Smith Society leadership. This way we begin to build a competent leadership corps.

Put together a sustainable and replicable organizational structure for something that aims to become part of the regular University structure.

Pioneer a structured admissions outreach component with UCSC alums to work with us on local outreach to precollege youths.

Continue to recruit early alums into the donor prospect pool that will help with precollege admissions.

Conduct personal fundraising via phone and personal visit.

Over the past five years we have learned from our successes as well as from our failures. PESSS continues to refine its delivery approach. As we are successful in the implementation of this new approach to reaching current and former foster youths, we are confident it will be replicated widely in the region and be of interest to various audiences. What differentiates PESSS from other organizations is the quality of one-on-one relationships we establish with our students and the creative and moral strength of the community we build. The scholarships really are secondary.

Despite many similarities, there are several ways in which PESSS is different from the CSU Fullerton Guardian Scholars Program and the CSU Pomona Renaissance Scholars Program. PESSS is UCSC alumni-driven and has a very dedicated core group of volunteers representing a very rich mix of competencies:

First, we are driven by the remarkable and quite profound spirit that prevailed at UCSC in the early years; it is in our blood, so to speak.

Second, we aim to reach individual younger kids to increase the odds of their being ready for college.

Third, we are dovetailing with UCSC's Dual Admissions program, which gives us greater strategic leverage by offering students a clear contract by which they first can attend community college with guaranteed transfer if they fulfill their end.

Fourth, we are building leadership competencies among our Collegiate Fellows in anticipation that they will one day take over.

Fifth, our mentoring program is led by senior UCSC faculty members and features increased faculty involvement.

And finally, we are not limited to foster youths; indeed, in the spirit of Page and Eloise Smith, we are ever expanding to new groups of under-served youths, for example, reaching out to children of prisoners may come next.

### *Objectives*

We have three major strategic objectives. Our first objective is to settle on a simple, elegant model that offers foster youths, and other kids on their own, a realistic shot at a successful UCSC education. Our second objective is to settle on a realistic structure that leverages existing resources in a way that allows us to serve over time, without relying on an endless infusion of massive new funds. Our third objective is to develop and implement a viable long-term plan for securing permanent resources to sustain our work.

*Our specific objectives include:*

1. Partnering with the appropriate offices at UC Santa Cruz and put in place the necessary infrastructure to help UCSC Smith Society collegiate fellows complete their university education successfully; to secure the necessary agreements with UC Santa Cruz to make this an abiding service provided to its students.
2. Partnering with the appropriate community colleges, to put into place the necessary infrastructure to enable Smith-Society-eligible students to complete their community college education in a way that leads to successful transfer to UC Santa Cruz.
3. Partnering with the appropriate social service agencies and local school systems, to put into place the necessary infrastructure to enable Smith Society-eligible youths who are currently in care to make their way successfully into UC Santa Cruz, or into a community college with a clear path forward toward eventual transfer to UC Santa Cruz.
4. To continue to build a community of competent, caring adults (with UCSC alumni, faculty, and staff at the core) committed to providing the personal and financial resources necessary to sustain the work of the Smith Society.
5. To partner with existing and emerging Guardian Scholars Programs like those at CSU Fullerton, CSU Pomona and UC Irvine to learn from one another and to build appropriate synergy so that Smith-Society-eligible youths generally, and foster youths in particular, have a range of available higher education options.

Working in alignment with UCSC regional admissions reps, form alumni-led chapters in most counties in Northern California with four purposes:

- to recruit Court Appointed Special Advocates and others to make ongoing commitments to younger kids to serve as brokers and advocates on their behalf, especially with regard to their educational needs,
- to mentor these youths so that they begin to see higher education as a desirable and available goal,
- to shepherd these youths into institutions of higher education, particularly, but not necessarily UCSC,
- to remain as educational mentors and brokers to these youths until they graduate.

This coming year we will concentrate especially in San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, and Monterey Counties, working in concert with UCSC's Community College Transfer and Dual Admissions Programs. (The thirteen community colleges in those counties already maintain primary relations with UCSC.)

PESSS will increase its connection in the Bay Area with: Larkin Street Youth Services (In San Francisco alone, there are some 4,000 homeless and runaway kids on the street each year.); Huckleberry House in San Francisco (the oldest program for runaway and homeless youth in the country), and the Omega Boys Club.

PESSS will continue to forge a network of strategic relationships with leading-edge organizations with proven track records such as, Barrios Unidos, CASA, Omega Boys Club, Larkin Street Youth Services, and Huckleberry House. These relationships will allow PESSS to reach out to California's at-risk youth population, and to help UCSC refine its programmatic and outreach efforts to increase its admissions yield from the populations served by those organizations.

Over the next several years, using the Pioneer Classes as our core, we will continue to build the donor base so that we are self-sustaining and have a viable endowment plan by the next Pioneer Classes reunion in 2009.

Our objective for the dissemination of our work is to provide up-to-date information on PESSS's efforts and successes with as many different audiences as possible, including our stakeholders, volunteers, funders, and community partners who are involved in and support our work. We will willingly share our knowledge with other schools (Community Colleges, CSU's and UC's) in Northern California interested in replicating our model. Additionally, we will make presentations on our work at relevant professional conferences and meetings on foster youth transitioning into higher education.

### **Evaluation and Dissemination**

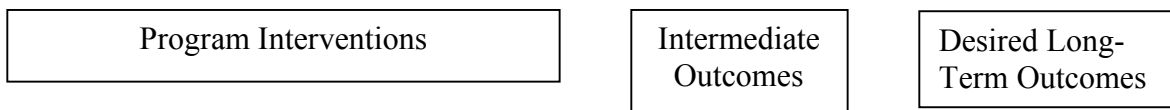
The evaluation of the project will be a central element in program planning, providing ongoing formative information for program improvement to the PESSS Steering Team and STARS Director, as well as summative information for accountability and dissemination. Annual cycles of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis will address three primary evaluation questions: (1) To what extent are program activities being implemented as planned; (2) What are the supports and barriers for program implementation; and (3) To what extent are program activities successful in achieving stated objectives, and from stakeholders' perspectives, which program activities add the most value. In collaboration with program staff and participants, the evaluator will develop metrics to assess the elements in the program theory of action, diagrammed on the following page.

*Formative Evaluation: In order to assess program implementation, procedures such as applications and sign-in sheets will be developed to monitor the number and demographics of students, faculty, and staff invited and participating in PESSS activities. Annual surveys and focus groups or interviews with samples of students, faculty, and program staff will be developed and implemented. We will embed these surveys into ongoing program management, e.g., monitoring students' education plans for program evaluation purposes at the same time that they are used to develop differentiated support strategies. Constructs to be assessed include student and faculty perceptions of the activities in which they are involved, student intentions to continue in and self-efficacy regarding higher education, students' perceptions of their educational support needs, and actual progress through higher education. These data will be aggregated annually and reported to the PESSS Steering Team and STARS Director for use in program improvement. This is primarily a descriptive evaluation design, focusing on program implementation, necessitated by the early stage of development of this program.*

### **Summative Evaluation:**

The overall goal of the project is to increase the number of foster youths and other emancipated youths successfully transitioning from high school to community college and university. In addition, we aim to develop an efficient organizational structure integrating existing volunteer-driven PESSS activities into student services administration and to develop fundraising capacity to ensure a sustained program. As we participate in partnerships with allied educational and youth support organizations, we expect to influence policies and practices that will support foster care youths in other regions as well. Annual evaluation findings will be aggregated and synthesized to assess the extent to which these aims were realized. Lessons learned from organizational partnership activities and from direct work with the foster youths will be disseminated as outlined below, contributing to the literature regarding development of educational support systems for emancipated youths.

### **Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society Theory of Action**



Dr. Barbara Goza will direct the evaluation as an external evaluator. Currently the Director of Research and Evaluation for UCSC's Educational Partnership Center, Dr. Goza has conducted and supervised program evaluation of educational and mental health programs for over 25 years. She has taught the principles and practices of program evaluation to undergraduate and graduate students as well as to program staff members, both in the classroom and in the field. The evaluation model that best describes her work is utilization-focused evaluation, in which program evaluation is conducted with the primary purpose of providing feedback for continuous improvement, as well as for accountability. Also a program manager, Dr. Goza developed and implemented the youth grants committee for



the Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County, teaching a group of 12 to 20 year olds how to evaluate grant proposals for projects for and by young people. In addition to involving program staff in refining the evaluation plan and procedures, she will involve Collegiate Fellows as part of the evaluation team in collecting and analyzing data regarding PESSS activities and success.

### **Dissemination**

An important aspect of our work will be to communicate or disseminate lessons learned from our work and evaluation to relevant audiences in a way that is timely and consistent. This disseminating of information will help to:

- \* provoke thinking and discussion about the issues;
- \* maintain and renew interest and commitment to our project, and encourage others to take action;
- \* attract volunteers, funding and in-kind resources from alumni, local citizens and agencies;
- \* establish a network of people and agencies with similar goals; and,
- \* encourage community partnerships.

Some of our dissemination activities may include:

**giving presentations** - to community members, local agencies, local politicians, civic and business groups, service clubs, etc;

**working with the media** - newspapers, radio and television;

**getting the word out** - writing reports  
 creating newsletter  
 using the internet for our website  
 accessing professional journals by collaborating with university or college based research teams.

We will use the following UCSC campus office resources to disseminate information about PESSS' work and accomplishments, and make a concerted effort to raise interest and awareness of our work widely:

1. Office of Government and Community Relations--the University's liaison to elected federal, state and local officials, public agencies, and the community--develops and maintain relationships, to provide public visibility, awareness, and support for the University's mission and to link campus resources with public policy.
2. The University's Speakers Bureau offers opportunities to hear informative and exciting presentations by our diverse faculty and staff during the academic year.

3. Public Information Office promotes a broad understanding of the academic programs, research achievements, and public-service projects of the people at UC Santa Cruz.

4. The Alumni Association fosters a lifelong connection with the university, and provides a means by which alumni may both serve the university, its colleges, and its students, and to help guide the university in the future.

#### Staff and Governance

The PESSS program will be staffed by a program coordinator and part-time administrative assistant, reporting to Corinne Miller, director of Services for Transfer and Re-Entry Students, with very substantial volunteer assistance from the Presiding Senior Fellow, Bill Dickinson, and others. The coordinator will be responsible for carrying out the goals and objectives of the Smith Society and seeing that the work plan is implemented.

The qualifications of the PESSS Steering Team are as follows:

Bill Dickinson, presiding senior fellow (president) grew up in foster homes and an orphanage. In addition to his UCSC degree, he holds advanced degrees from San Francisco State and Harvard and has pursued successful careers as an educator, Washington, D.C. speechwriter, business journalist, and entrepreneur. He has taken the lead on all PESSS fundraising to date.

Anita Harten-Kroeber, Senior Fellow for Records (secretary), an alumna, is a professional psychologist, consultant, and educator with experience teaching in a group home setting.

David Brick, Senior Fellow for Finance (treasurer), an alumnus, is a senior attorney practicing in Santa Cruz, California specializing in family law issues, and has served as a juvenile dependency court judge pro tem.

Kenny Buckler, Presiding Collegiate Fellow, is a UCSC student who has been the student leader for the last two years.

Deutron Kebebew, Lead Senior Fellow for Outreach, is a former foster youth who is about to complete his degree in Electrical Engineering at UCSC and is Independent Living Program Coordinator for Santa Cruz County and former board president of California Youth Connections.

Mary Male, Lead Senior Fellow for Admissions, is a professor of special education at San Jose State and a CASA volunteer.

Lorraine Sintetos, Lead Senior Fellow for Campus Affairs, an alumna, is a professional writer.

The project will be jointly monitored and governed by the PESSS Steering Team, Francisco J. Hernandez, vice chancellor for Student Affairs, Larry Trujillo, executive director, Student

Academic Support Services, and Corinne Miller, director, STARS. PESSS has established a number of meaningful handshake agreements --many are already in place with mission-critical external agents--but none of them formal or binding.

### Budget

The majority of the budget is needed for staffing to transition from a purely volunteer organization into one that is fully operational within the University. The staff includes a full-time project coordinator, a part-time assistant, and a percentage of time for an internal evaluator and a community college outreach coordinator. It also provides Collegiate Fellows with employment through work/study or student employment that prepares them for future leadership with PESSS. The supplies, materials and printing budget reflects substantial mailing and other publications costs involved in recruiting new mentors and donors. The travel budget primarily reflects costs associated with trips to various social service agencies and local school systems in the Bay Area. The conference and meeting costs reflects our practice of providing meals for visiting youths and their chaperones as well as those who attend our regular community meetings.

### Future Funding/Sustainability

Over the next three years, we plan to develop a cost-effective, replicable delivery model that can become self-sustaining through a number of institutional and private funding sources. We will continue to seek support from a variety of funders, and once we can showcase our effectiveness and results, we should be able to ensure our future funding and sustainability. The campus is committed to the long-term viability of PESSS after Stuart Foundation funding ends.

Our goal is to institutionalize PESSS at UC Santa Cruz. With this in mind, we plan to begin to negotiate with the Student Affairs Division early on to explore ways to fund ongoing or operational PESSS costs, including technology upgrades and staffing support well before Stuart Foundation funding ends. Funding requests for ongoing support will be submitted to the following:

Student Affairs Divisional administrative discretionary budget.

Student Fee Advisory Committee, which advises the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs on matters pertaining to Registration Fees, UCSC Student Programs Fee, and certain Miscellaneous Fees, and provides student input into decisions regarding the allocation of these fees. It also provides a continuing study of programs supported by these fees and it recommends funding.

Place a PESSS measure on a ballot and ask UCSC students to support it by voting to pay a higher quarterly fee to maintain the program.

Over the next several years, using the UCSC Pioneer Classes as our core, we will begin to build the donor base so that we are self-sustaining and have a viable endowment plan by the next Pioneer Classes reunion in 2009.

**Tax Status**

An IRS tax status determination letter for The Regents of the University of California is attached.

### Smith Graduate Comments

The Smith Society shaped my character. From my first year at UCSC I was exposed to its motto: “the pursuit of truth in the company of friends”, a maxim not merely said but lived by everyone in the organization. I was surrounded by authentic experiences that opened my eyes to the world around me and helped create my identity. I’m especially grateful to my mentor, Gary Miles, who showed me, by being so real, what kind of man I want to become. Being with him I could be real, too. I want to walk in his footsteps and emulate his best qualities. But it won’t stop with Gary; Smith is a community of people who reveal their true selves to each other in ways that let you be yourself and feel connected. Amidst the complexity of life, I continue to look toward my time in Smith and strive to shape my life to its motto.

—David Buros, JD, U.S. Navy’s Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps

I would like to give the Smith Society some credit for my success. When I first heard about the Smith Society, I wondered why a group of people would want to help me get through school. I quickly found that it was made up of a lot of other students like me. It made sense that we would become a family, trying to help one another succeed. I am especially thankful to my mentor, Anita Harten-Kroeber, a lovely woman who was always willing to listen and provide much needed support over a nice lunch. It was nice to have a mentor who cared about me while I figured out my future in a big university.

—Gladys Macario Garibaldi, MSW, mental health social worker

Joining the Smith Society marked the first time in my life I ever felt my identity as a foster youth was understood and appreciated. I instantly had over a dozen friends who could relate and empathize with my story. The Smith Society helped me celebrate this piece of my past and understand my role in helping others see higher education as a desirable and available option.

—Danny Ambrose, EdD, Assistant Dean of Student Success at Guttman Community College, City University of New York

My UCSC years would not have been the same without the support I received from the Smith Society. I had leadership opportunities, such as a campus tour guide, make life-long friends, and had an amazing mentor, Beth Remak, a remarkable lady and role model. I enjoyed our weekly dinners, tutoring in English, and advice on boys! She took me in to her home and made me feel like a part of her family. She was a stranger, yet cared enough for me to help me succeed in life.

—Yenly Thach, MA, staff member at U.S. Department of Homeland Security

The Smith Society provided me with educational resources and a community of engaged students and adults with a positive social purpose. The message it promoted helped me to be involved with helping others, an opportunity I would not have sought otherwise. The Smith Society inspired me and taught me to believe and trust that people working together can really make a difference. I learned core lessons that act as a moral compass and guide me even in my business decisions.

—Phillip Rose, JD, principal PBR Associates and adjunct lecturer at Lincoln Law School

When I came to UCSC, I was not initially interested in getting a mentor but I decided that I should at least give the idea a chance and accept a resource that was offered me. I didn't think I had a lot of needs in terms of mentorship but found that having an adult friend with whom I could talk about my life, the challenges I was facing in school, and to call when times got tough made a huge difference. For most of my education at UCSC I was not in contact with my parents, so I didn't have someone to call when I needed support. Even though it was an institutionalized mentorship, Janice (Lasnier, her Smith mentor) and I were well matched and I never felt like it was a forced or inauthentic relationship. Her friendship and support were invaluable to me and I am incredibly grateful to her.

—Shaeleya Miller, PhD, Lecturer at California State University, Long Beach.

Smith was very financially and emotionally supportive. I hit rock bottom when a seventeen-year-old loved one was murdered and I thought I was done with school. It felt like a bubble to the reality of what happened back home. Without the emotional support I received from Smith, I would have dropped out. Smith showed me love when I was broken.

—Darius Brown, MPA, Development Officer at San Jose Homeless Interventions and Solutions Division

Smith was invaluable and a big reason I chose UCSC: priority enrollment in classes and tutoring were essential to my success. Guaranteed off-season housing during breaks helped me to feel at home and connected to my school. Smith Senior Fellows felt like family and helped me to move through many challenges with grace and confidence.

—Stephanie Frigault, Associate Director of Housing Navigation at Hamilton Families, an organization that helps homeless families find housing.

The Smith Society is the reason I was able to finish my degree at UCSC. It is no secret that obtaining a college degree is challenging. It takes a tremendous amount of hard work, dedication and passion to get to the finish line. The 180 credits and long list of required classes are daunting to any student. For a Smith student, fulfilling those requirements seems almost impossible. While everyone around you has the emotional and financial support of family back home, the Smith student does not. Smith students must navigate college life and adulthood by themselves. That is until the Smith Society comes into the picture. Smith didn't fix all my problems or bail me out of every mistake. But knowing that there were people rooting for my success gave me comfort. It was the first support system that I had. It was and is a group of people who try their best for students who never had that type of support before. It may not result in a totally equal playing field, but it is a tremendous factor in the success of the students who are under their care. I loved my experience at UCSC because I love the Smith Society. They taught me responsibility, grit and empathy, which happen to be all the things I love most about myself.

—Joobin Kim, MA, inner city high school history teacher

Smith is and will always be my family. I am beyond grateful. Many individuals planted a seed within me that I eventually watered and continue to water. I have always held onto the days leading up to declaring my major. I took a nice walk from Cowell College to the STARS building, where I sat with Amy Hamel (Smith student adviser) for hours talking about my life situation and how I could not determine my major. I left declaring a Feminist Studies major and Legal Studies minor. I could not have flourished without the many individuals like Amy, who went the extra mile for me, and still do. Smith has shown and taught me patience and sincere

love. Unlike my time in foster care, once I found Smith, I was no longer lost: I belonged. I always had someone to lead me away from the darkness even when I didn't ask for help. I will always make time to give back to a community that means so much to me.

—LaToya Mae Brown, MSW. Foster family adoption social worker at Childhelp, an organization that supports children who are victims of abuse or neglect.

### **Cheryl Jones, Smith Society leader**

I met Smith Society founder Bill Dickinson in 1999 when he created the Page and Eloise Smith Memorial Scholarship Fund, in honor of the first Cowell College Provost Page Smith and his wife Eloise. As the administrator of all the undergraduate scholarships for our campus in the Financial Aid Office, I began working with Bill to identify the young independent students he wanted to help, namely former foster youth, orphans, and wards of the court. Bill's desire to help young, independent, financially needy students spoke to my heart. From a financial aid perspective, you cannot find a more financially needy student than a former foster youth. I also found it fascinating to hear him talk about the early days of the UC Santa Cruz campus and the living and learning community that Page and Eloise Smith created at Cowell College.

That first year, I sent applications to all eligible students while Bill raised enough money to award three full-tuition scholarships. I hoped to receive some impressive applications and be able to select three worthy recipients from this pool of candidates. What I received was so unexpected; it was the strongest application pool I had ever worked with! Each applicant was impressive and so worthy that I wanted to award each a Smith Scholarship! It was an extremely difficult task to narrow the candidates down to three recipients.

When I mentioned this to Bill, we agreed to reduce the annual scholarship to \$1,000, which enabled us to award eight in the second year. I spoke to Bill about the quality of each student in the pool of eligible candidates. I had never seen anything like it. Each had overcome difficult hardships and challenges just to get to UC Santa Cruz and was an excellent candidate for the scholarship. That was when Bill got the brilliant idea to stop being a scholarship competition and become a scholastic society, a club that any eligible student could join and receive a Smith Scholarship, the size of which would be determined by how much money Bill raised. This changed everything!

For several years, alumni/ae from UCSC's Pioneer classes were the core of our generous donors. Through Bill, I saw the impact that Page and Eloise Smith had, and continue to have, on those students more than fifty years later. He told me about the unique learning and living community at Cowell College that Page and Eloise had created. By 2001, Bill realized that the early community he had experienced in 1965 had largely disappeared, in part because the campus had become so large. So in our third year we began building the Smith Society, a community of students, mentors, donors, staff, faculty, and volunteers, modeled after the intergenerational community at Cowell College in the early days of our campus. Our mission was to encourage them to dream bold dreams for themselves, help them to have a great college experience, including clearing away bureaucratic and other obstacles, and be a lot of fun along the way.

In the process of creating this close and caring community, we also created the first University of California group focused on helping former foster youth earn a college degree. I believe we are also the only one that offers their students a community. The others are staff-driven programs.

Community building has been one of the most enjoyable aspects of being a member of the Smith Society. Fortunately for our students, Professor Gary Miles joined the Smith community early on and created the Smith mentor program. This became a cornerstone of our community, offering a personal mentor to every student who requested one. It also brought wonderful, caring, generous people into our community as mentors. They are my kind of people and many have become life-long friends.

While I was still working, I was fortunate to have partnered with Amy Hamel, the Smith Student Adviser, housed in the STARS Office. Together we offered individual appointments, workshops, leadership opportunities, and team-building activities to our students. We hosted parties and weekly lunches at the



Cowell College Dining Hall and the Cowell Provost's House. We connected deeply with our students and that has enriched both our lives. We made a great team and continue to do so in retirement as volunteer leaders, working hard to keep the Smith community spirit alive and well.

One of the aspects of the Smith Society for which I am most grateful is the opportunity to get to know our students well. Even though I had previously awarded financial aid and helped former foster youth, it wasn't until I actually got to know these students through the Smith Society that I realized the difficult challenges and hardships that they had faced in their lives. Can you imagine what it must be like to have the State of California be one's parents? Or how it feels to be placed in as many as thirty different foster homes and/or group homes? My respect and admiration for our Smith students grew in leaps and bounds the more I got to know them. They are resilient, persistent, courageous, focused, smart, and adaptable. They are survivors. I have marveled at their ability to navigate their paths to UC Santa Cruz. How did they know the right courses to take? How did they do so well in school without a stable and nurturing environment at home? Usually they were fortunate enough to have one person (a teacher, neighbor, counselor, friend's parent) that saw potential in them and encouraged them to go to college. They have taught me that it only takes one person to make a difference in the life of another.

The more I got to know our students, the deeper they connected to my heart. I came to know that this is where I am called to be and this is the work I am supposed to do. I love being a part of a community where I can join others in helping our students have a great college experience and reach their dream of a college education. It is a privilege to share their college experiences, help with their struggles, and witness their lives and accomplishments. When I was still working, I covered my office walls with Smith student pictures to celebrate them and feel the joy I received from looking at them every day!

The impact that the Smith community has on our students, alumni, and community members continues to amaze me. The first time I realized how powerful this was happened years ago. A Smith student had waited in line at the Financial Aid Office for thirty minutes to ask to see me. When he finally got to my office, I asked how I could help him. He told me he had passed a very hard midterm exam. Of course, I was ecstatic and congratulated him. When I realized he had waited in line just to tell me his good news about his exam, I was struck by how powerful our Smith community had become. He knew that we truly cared about him and his exam. We did it! We had bonded with each other.

Besides enriching my life on a personal level, my participation in the Smith Society also positively impacted my UCSC professional life. Financial Aid Director Esperanza Nee was a wonderful mentor who encouraged me to be active in the Smith community and to become involved in statewide efforts to support the higher education needs of former foster youth. Representing all University of California campuses, I became a member of the Chafee Grant Stakeholders Committee of the California Student Aid Commission in Sacramento, tasked with administering this federal grant for former foster youths in California colleges and universities. In addition to attending meetings I also spoke at statewide conferences on Strategies for Higher Education for Former Foster Youth

I was able to get a question added to the University of California Application for Admissions allowing current and former foster youths to self-identify. This allowed UC to track the number of former foster youth applying to each campus, and made it possible to identify potential Smith students earlier in the process. In my naivete, I didn't realize that I should have gone through my Director and then her chain of command to request an official change to the UC Admissions Application. Instead, I went directly to my colleague at the UC Office of the President, telling them that I needed to know how many former foster youth applied to UCSC. I asked if they could help me get that information. I suggested that the other campuses might also want to know this information as well given the current national focus on foster youth and higher education. It delighted me that this led to a new question being added to the first page of the UC Application for Admissions.

I was greatly honored to have been selected as the UC Santa Cruz Outstanding Staff Member of the Year in 2005, largely due to my work with the Smith Society. I am beyond humbled and grateful to have received this incredible honor. The timing of this award was also magical because both my father and mother, who were both in poor health, were able to attend the luncheon and celebrate this honor with me.

In addition to supporting my Smith efforts, Esperanza also was very supportive of Smith's growth. From the outset, the Smith scholarship had been supported entirely by funds Bill raised, an increasingly difficult challenge as we grew past thirty students. Esperanza decided to allocate Adolph Miller Scholarship funds to Smith students, matching every Smith Scholarship awarded; every student who received a \$500 Smith Scholarship would also receive a \$500 Miller Scholarship. This support helped the Smith Society to grow and become financially sustainable. Smith students continue to receive Miller Scholarship funding to this day.

Esperanza also supported the Smith Society by allowing me to become the designated Financial Aid Adviser for all Smith students. This turned out to be a great benefit for Smith students since the financial aid process can be complicated, especially for young independent students without any adult guidance. The Santa Cruz campus also stepped up by granting priority enrollment, guaranteed housing to Smith students, and hiring Amy Hamel as the designated Smith Student Adviser.

Unfortunately for me, Esperanza's successor as Financial Aid Director did not support my involvement with the Smith Society. I was not allowed to serve on the Chafee Grant Stakeholders Committee in Sacramento or be active in foster youth issues on a state level. All my Smith efforts had to be on my own free time. I volunteered with the Smith Society as much as I could while working full-time. So I was thankful that I was able to retire in 2012 because it allowed me to become much more active again in the Smith Society. I have held leadership positions since I retired, first as board president and now as a member of the Smith Administration and Oversight Team, which has replaced the board as the main decision making body.

One of my favorite Smith activities over the years has been participating in outreach to current foster youth. Our students love helping pre-college foster youths who are facing similar challenges to the ones they had faced in their childhoods. They are powerful role models and speak candidly and courageously from their hearts, encouraging them to see that college is an option for them.

To date, 543 students have joined. Once a student joins us, they are forever part of our community. One of our favorite sayings is "once a Smithie, always a Smithie"! We are blessed to still be in contact with so many of our alumni/ae. It is a great privilege to witness their lives after college and be able to meet their partners and children. Recently, they have set out to build community among themselves. We are now holding events on Zoom to connect them with current students. It warms my heart that such powerful connections are being made.

Bill's vision and hard work in creating the Smith Society greatly changed my life for the better. Being part of Smith has given me the opportunity to discover my passion for helping former foster youth and other young independent students go to college, have a meaningful college experience, and then graduate from college. I can truly say that partnering with others to lead the Smith Society and serve our students has become a calling.

Now in our 22<sup>nd</sup> year, I have learned that it only takes one person to make a difference in another's life. And I have learned that it takes only one man, as long as that man is Bill Dickinson, working in partnership with a dedicated community of volunteers and donors, to make a difference in the lives of 543

Smith students, as well as the hundreds of volunteers, mentors, and donors that, together, make it all possible.

Cheryl Jones  
Smith Society leader  
November 30, 2020

### **Mary Male, Professor of Education Emerita, San Jose State University**

As a “Slug-by-Marriage” to a member of the UCSC Pioneer Class, I attended annual reunion events as a good sport, a little envious of the UCSC student and alumni/ae experience. I attended the Pioneer Class main event in 1999 expecting it to be pretty much like all the others.

Little did I know that my life would be changed forever, and the lives of so many others, alums and students alike, when Bill Dickinson stepped up to the mic as the featured speaker and described his journey to UCSC as a former foster youth and his transformation and blossoming with the nurturing and mentoring he received from UCSC faculty and staff. Gratitude for that experience led to his announcement that he was creating what would become the Smith Society. He invited members of the audience to join him. Moved to tears by his poignant stories, as were so many in the crowd, I turned to my husband, David Brick, Stevenson '69, and said, “THIS. We MUST **DO THIS!!!**”

And, in fact, we did! A small group of us formed a steering team. Meeting around our dining room table, we set out to experiment with a variety of collaborations, events, mentoring—finding our footing as a tiny little organization with a big heart in the midst of a large university bureaucracy. We were solid in our commitment to the students, to each other, and a vision of the pursuit of truth in the company of friends, just as Page Smith imagined in the founding of Cowell College, our original meeting place. The relationships endure and the Smith community grows and changes, with a bright future ahead.

As a result of that evening in 1999, I became a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer for ten years to expand my own first-hand knowledge about the foster care system. I also supported two Smith student leaders, who went on to become social workers, in creating Foster Youth Initiative, which linked K-12 foster kids with our UCSC former foster youth.

With Bill’s help, support from SJSU alumna Connie Lurie, and Emily Bruce, Professor of Social Work, I was able to help establish a similar effort at San Jose State, where I taught in the College of Education: the CME Society (Connect, Motivate, Educate) which later morphed into a Guardian Scholars affiliate.

Being part of the Smith Society also led to my helping to launch, together with Esperanza Nee, UCSC’s former Director of Financial Aid, Dreamweavers, a similar effort to provide mentoring, housing, and fundraising for another group of UCSC students needing and deserving support, undocumented students. That work continues today through UCSC’s Educational Opportunity Program (EOP).

The Smith Society is a part of my life I am most proud of and am happy to continue as a supporter!

—Mary Male  
Professor of Education Emerita, San Jose State University

**Anne Smith Easley**  
**Page and Eloise Smith's daughter**

Bill Dickinson was always passionate about the program he created. From my involvement in the early years with the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society (now the Smith Society), I was impressed with the good and caring people that Bill drew in, how effective he was matching students with mentors that could help them with their goals and interests, and how important the students' needs and scholastic success were to him.

He spent a lot of time individually with each student getting to know them and making authentic connections. And from those connections he created a supportive community of students, mentors, teachers, and campus staff.

To my mind, the success of this program is largely due to Bill's love for the students and his determination to see that each student succeeded. Page used to say that the world owed much to enthusiastic people – people who had a passion to create and accomplish a dream. I think he was referring to people like Bill.

—Anne Smith Easley  
Page and Eloise Smith's daughter

**Susan Seaburg**  
**Smith Senior Leader**

In early 2011, I was chatting with a friend who worked at UCSC, who told me about the Page and Eloise Smith Society and the students served by them. By then, I had retired from my full-time career at Hewlett-Packard, and I was doing part-time consulting for several years. But I needed something that really spoke to my heart. My friend suggested I speak with a Smith mentor and see if that might be a good start in terms of something that would bring more meaning to me personally.

I met another UCSC staff member, who had been a Smith mentor a few times, and her experience convinced me to get involved. I started by being a mentor, then I got much more involved in the Smith Society leadership team. I also have taught workshops for Smith students on Leadership, Resume Writing, and Job Interviews. Almost from the start of my involvement, I've been part of Smith's senior leadership, first as a board member and now as part of the Administration and Oversight Team, both of which have called for a significant contribution of my time and skills.

My Smith involvement has significantly enhanced my connection to UCSC. Although I had lived in Santa Cruz County for over a decade before learning of Smith, I had never been on campus, except to attend Shakespeare Santa Cruz performances. UCSC was "that campus on the hill", but it really didn't mean anything to me. And I certainly never had considered donating to UCSC either money or time; my engagement with Smith means that I am now a regular donor to UCSC, in both ways.

When I started with Smith in 2011, I did not realize at the time that I was the first person with no UCSC connection to be a mentor or volunteer. Looking back, I realize I had a lot to learn about UCSC, but I also brought a fresh perspective. I was someone who often asked why things were done a certain way, making suggestions based on my decades of business experience. Over the years, the Smith Society has involved other volunteers who, like me, do not have any other connection to UCSC, and I have recruited several other mentors, volunteers, and donors from the community at large.

Perhaps the most important and meaningful outcome of my involvement with the Smith Society has been the opportunity to be part of a cross-generational community, leading to deep and rich relationships with UCSC students and graduates, as well as friendships I have built with other volunteers. This has enriched my life greatly. Our support and love for Smith students provides critical support to them; these are young people who have often been let down by the adults in their lives. We are there for them, and they know it. But it's in the nature of a genuine community that the relationships don't need to end when a student graduates. It has also been a special joy to me to continue to be in their lives after they graduate.

I will always be grateful to the Smith Society for the work we do, and for the way it has become a meaningful and treasured part my life.

### About the Interviewer and Editor

**Sarah Rabkin**, who served as interviewer, transcriber, and editor for this oral history, is also the co-editor of *Seeds of Something Different: An Oral History of UC Santa Cruz* (Regional History Project, UC Santa Cruz Library, 2020) and *Cultivating a Movement: An Oral History of Organic Farming and Sustainable Agriculture on California's Central Coast* (Regional History Project, UC Santa Cruz Library, 2010). She has conducted many oral histories for the Regional History Project and is also the author of *What I Learned at Bug Camp: Essays at Finding a Home in the World* (Juniper Lake Press, 2011) and many other publications. She teaches writing workshops and can be found at:

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