

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCES INGEMANN

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History Project

Endacott Society

University of Kansas

FRANCES INGEMANN

B.A., Spanish, Montclair Teachers College, 1949

M.A., English as a Second Language, Columbia Teachers College 1950

Ph.D., Linguistics, Indiana University, 1956

Service at the University of Kansas

Came to K.U. in 1957

Assistant Professor of English, 1957-61

Associate Professor of English and Linguistics, 1961-66

Professor of Linguistics, 1966-2000

Chair of the Linguistics Department, 1968-70, 1981-84, 1989-

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Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Q: I am speaking with Frances Ingemann, who retired in 2000 as professor of linguistics at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas, on June 15, 2000. Where were you born and in what year?

A: I was born in 1927 in a hospital in Trenton, New Jersey, but my mother lived in Allentown, New Jersey. My mother was Margaret Graham and my father was Olaf Ingemann.

QQ: What was their educational background?

A: My father ran away to sea after he finished about eighth grade. My mother completed high school in her home town, but it only went to 10<sup>th</sup> grade at that time.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

A: As I said, he ran away to sea and he eventually worked himself up to being captain of a freighter. Then after he married he decided it would be a good idea to spend more time with the family, so he became a wholesaler of radio and then eventually television parts.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I have one sister, seven years younger than I.

Q: Did you grow up in Allentown, New Jersey?

A: No. When my father was on the sea, my mother was living with her mother, because he wasn't home very much. After he left the sea, they moved to North Jersey, where he set up his business. We lived in a number of different places there.

Q: Did the Depression affect your family?

A: Not extensively. It was difficult getting a business started during those times. But my father's feeling was that although people might not have much money, they really enjoyed their radios, and they would spend money to get them fixed.

Q: What elementary school did you attend?

A: Several, because my parents moved from one town to another.

Q: Did you join organizations such as Girl Scouts?

A: No, we weren't joiners in my family.

Q: When World War II came along, were members of your family involved in the war?

A: Not anyone really close. I had a cousin and a cousin's husband who fought in the war. Those were the only ones of the American family. My father was born in Denmark. His family was in Denmark during the occupation.

Q: What do you remember about war-related activities on the home front?

A: I can remember collecting scrap metal and throwing it onto the big scrap heap. Otherwise, I remember that things were rationed and you had to be careful with what you had. You couldn't necessarily replace something.

Q: Where did you go to junior high and high school?

A: Junior High was in Palisades Park, New Jersey, and high school was in Leonia, New Jersey.

Q: Were these large schools?

A: No. Both towns were fairly small town. Palisades Park had less than 10,000 population. But it was a typical suburb that abutted other towns. So for high school they sent the kids from Palisades Park to the neighboring town of Leonia.

Q: What were some of your favorite classes?

A: I liked languages. I can remember taking more than my quota of languages and therefore not taking some science courses, which I would have liked to take. Because they had the long labs, they kept conflicting with the language courses. So I opted for the language courses.

Q: So even though these weren't really big school schools they offered languages. What languages did you study?

A: I took Latin, Spanish, and German.

Q: Since your father was born in Denmark, did he sometimes speak Danish?

A: No. My mother was American born and therefore they couldn't converse in Danish, so he never spoke Danish.

Q: Do you remember influential teachers from your high school days?

A: I remember a couple of teachers, but I can't say that any of them were terribly influential. I don't remember who did this, but when I was in junior high, I had no aspirations to go on to college. In the junior high they had three tracks, a general track for people who were not going to go on to college, a business track, and a so-called academic track. I knew definitely that I did not want to become a secretary. So that one was immediately out. But I probably would have gone into the general track, which would have been terminal, except that somebody along the way said, "You can do the other. Why don't you do it?" So I went into the academic track.

Q: Did they have these tracks in high school too?

A: Yes.

- Q: They have kind of gotten away from doing that now. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities?
- A: Yes, I was in the drama club. I was also in a couple of other things, language clubs, etc.
- Q: Did you have honors in high school?
- A: I was the salutatorian of the class.
- Q: About how big was your graduating class?
- A: I would guess between 160 and 180.
- Q: When did you graduate from high school?
- A: 1944.
- Q: That would have still been during the war. I suppose classmates were going off to war.
- A: There were a number of young men who quit school as soon as they were old enough and went off to war.
- Q: Did you have summer jobs during high school?
- A: No, I didn't. My parents had the practice of sending me off to spend summers on the farm with an aunt and uncle, so I just continued doing that.
- Q: Since you had decided in junior high to go on the academic track, was it then assumed in your family that you would go to college?
- A: The option was there. There wasn't any particular pressure. If I had wanted to do something else, they would have been perfectly happy.
- Q: I assume you went to college as soon as you finished high school. Where did you go as an undergraduate?
- A: Because I hadn't taken the sciences, there was a bit of a problem about getting into some

universities that required more science than I had. I did have a year of so-called general science. But I hadn't taken physics or chemistry. So I eventually went to a teachers' college in New Jersey.

Q: So you intended to be a teacher. What was your major?

A: I started off as a Latin major, but then I discovered that if you were a Spanish major, you have the possibility of going abroad, so I switched.

Q: What was the name of this teachers' college?

A: At the time it was called Montclair State Teachers College. Then it became Montclair State College. Then recently it changed its name, as all those places do, to Montclair State University.

Q: Did you live at home?

A: No, I lived in the dormitory.

Q: Do you remember influential teachers from those years?

A: Yes, I remember my Latin teacher in particular. Now that I look back on it, she wasn't that old. But at the time that I was there, she was approaching retirement. She was a wonderful woman who gave me one little piece of advice that has stayed with me. She said, "When I'm not feeling well, I don't stay home. I come in and teach. And I always feel better afterwards." I have found that true in my career too. It was better to come in and teach than to sit home and feel miserable.

Q: Were you in extracurricular activities in college?

A: Yes, I again continued with acting in some plays there. Also, I was very active in the Spanish and Latin Clubs.

Q: Where did you go abroad?

A: I spent a year in Mexico.

Q: Was that the first time you have been out of the country?

A: No, because my father, after the war ended, took us over to meet the other members of the Danish family. We spent about a month in Denmark meeting everybody and seeing the sights.

Q: When you were in Mexico, did you live with a family or did you live in a dorm?

A: No, I rented a room. I went down with another classmate and we rented a room first with one family and then with another.

Q: Were you studying Spanish at a Mexican University?

A: We were just taking courses. They didn't have any special courses for foreigners. We just went and enrolled in the regular classes.

Q: That must have been difficult. I don't suppose you had been around Spanish-speaking people much.

A: No, but that was the whole point of going there, to develop that fluency. But actually we eased into it in a sort of gentle way. When we got down there, the university was on strike. So for several months we kept waiting for the university to open up. In the meantime we practiced our Spanish.

Q: It is a lot different speaking it to Spanish-speaking people than it is in the classroom. I've had Spanish too.

A: I was very fortunate. In the first place where I lived there was a woman who loved to talk. So if I just sat down with her, she would jabber on for hours. I didn't really have

to say very much. So it gave me a good opportunity to listen and find out what the colloquialisms were and all that sort of thing. And I wasn't pressured into having to say too much beyond what I was capable of doing.

Q: Was this in Mexico City?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have jobs while you were in college?

A: Yes, I was in charge of doing the mimeographing for the college. It was a small college at that time, particularly during the war when there were no men around. It was almost all girls. They had one central mimeographing office. Everything came to me. So I did all the exams and all the administrative stuff, etc. Of course, in those days they didn't do quite as much with paper distribution as they do now.

Q: When did you get your undergraduate degree?

A: It took me an extra year because of that year in Mexico, so I didn't graduate until 1949.

Q: Did you go directly on for a master's?

A: Yes. I went to Columbia Teacher's College. Going there, I switched my major because while I was in Mexico I saw how many people wanted to learn English. So I thought instead of my teaching Spanish and never being like a native speaker, I would teach English and let the Mexicans teach Spanish.

A: So you majored in teaching English as a second language.

Q: Yes. There was one interesting thing about that too. When I went over there and started to enroll, the advisor that I saw said, "Oh, you shouldn't enroll in this because you'll never get a job. This is only for people who have been overseas teaching and who

have come back and want to get a master's. But you will never get a job." Then she looked at my background and saw that I didn't have an undergraduate major in English, so I couldn't do the regular English literature program. So she said, "I guess you'll have to stay in this." The funny thing is, of course, that I never had any problem getting a job. The field exploded. That, I think, was one of the worst pieces of advice I ever got.

Q: Did you work during the time you were getting your master's?

A: No. I did a real quickie master's. I did it in one year.

Q: Do you remember influential teachers from that time?

A: Not especially.

Q: Any honors as an undergraduate or a master's student?

A: I graduated Magna Cum Laude as an undergraduate. At the master's level, no.

Q: Then you got your master's degree in 1950. Is that right?

A: Yes.

Q: Where did you get your first job in this field?

A: As soon as I finished that course, somebody was looking for somebody to teach English at the University of Puerto Rico. Since I knew Spanish, it made a perfect fit. So I applied for it and got the job and went down to Puerto Rico and taught there for a couple of years.

Q: How did you like living in Puerto Rico?

A: Very much. I enjoyed it. I felt very comfortable there. Maybe it was because I had spent a year in Mexico, so I had no problems with Spanish-speaking people around.

Q: Were you teaching on the university level?

A: Yes. The English instruction there was divided into two parts. There was an English literature department and then there was what they called basic English, which is sort of the equivalent to our freshman and sophomore English program. Everybody had to take that English. But it wasn't like here, where the emphasis is composition and literature. Down there it was sort of all around competence in English. There was some reading, writing, etc. It was conversational English as well as teaching them the grammar, etc.

Q: And you were there how long?

A: Two years.

Q: Then what did you do?

A: While I was there and preparing our teaching materials, everybody as we were preparing the lessons would say, "We have to ask the linguists about this, we have to ask the linguists about that." I thought, "I'm going to become a linguist." So I stopped teaching there and entered the Ph.D. program at Indiana.

Q: Do linguists study how languages are made up?

A: Yes. Actually, linguists are interested in just about anything that has to do with language. But at that time linguists had a high reputation because they had been extremely successful during the wartime in teaching languages that were otherwise not well known. They had all sorts of crash programs, such as teaching people Thai, etc. They had to get people to learn those languages, and they didn't have conventional language teachers for that, so they drew on linguists, who could analyze the language, find out the structure of it, etc., and then teach it to people with the help of a native speaker.

- Q: Indiana University is quite a ways from where you had lived before.
- A: Right. At that time there were very few universities that had linguistics programs. So Indiana was one of the small hand full. I applied there, was accepted, and went.
- Q: Who was your major professor?
- A: Thomas Seviac.
- Q: I suppose you did a dissertation. What was it on?
- A: It was on the Cheremis language, which is a minority language in Russia.
- Q: How did you happen to study a Russian language?
- A: Basically, I wanted a non Indo-European language. I wanted to become familiar with that for the purposes of contrasting it with Indo-European languages that I knew. They happened to have a native speaker of that language there. There was the opportunity to work with him. There was not much available in English on this language, so it made a good fit.
- Q: Did you teach while you were working on your doctorate?
- A: I only taught one year. The first year I was there I was a full-time student. The second year I taught English as a second language. The third year I had a Fullbright and the fourth I had a fellowship.
- Q: I read somewhere that you had a Fullbright to Denmark.
- A: Yes, that was during my graduate days.
- Q: What were you studying there?
- A: Linguistics. I went to Denmark and took courses in linguistics and phonetics there. That's really where I got my basic introduction to phonetics beyond what I'd gotten as an

undergraduate. I think I mentioned this Latin teacher who was very influential. She was also interested in linguistics and taught some sort of very, very elementary linguistics courses. Mostly she would teach things like phonetic transcription and what languages were related to what languages, etc. But I hadn't had any real phonetics until I got to Copenhagen.

Q: When did you get your Ph.D.?

A: In 1956.

Q: What did you do after you got it?

A: I took a job at Haskins Laboratories, where they were doing some work on speech synthesis.

Q: What is that?

A: Getting a machine to talk. This was precomputer days, so we did it in other ways. Anyhow, I didn't really have a very strong background in that, but the job was available, and, as I mentioned earlier, there weren't really very many linguistics programs around the country. So there weren't that many openings for linguists. I worked in this laboratory for a year.

Q: Where was Haskins Laboratories located?

A: It was in New York City. I was given the task of trying to draw all the information that had been accumulated so far about the acoustics of speech and writing some rules that could be followed in order to produce speech. So I was basically the first person ever to do this. Since then there has been a lot with computers speaking and things like that. But I was a pioneer in the area.

Q: That was a long time before computers.

A: There were computers around, but they were these big things that occupied whole rooms, etc. There weren't very many around. But I do remember that even after I took the job here at K.U. I did go back to the laboratory in the summers and continued research there where they had the facilities. By the early sixties people were beginning to say, "We'd better investigate how computers can do this."

Q: Then you were also a visiting professor of English at New York University.

A: That was just one summer. I went there and there were Puerto Rican teachers who had come in and wanted training in methods of teaching English and some work on the structure of English and English phonetics. I taught in that program.

Q: How did you happen to come to Kansas?

A: As I said, there were not very many places that had linguistics positions. I did get a good piece of advice. When I was working at the laboratory, I felt the need to do more than just work in the laboratory. I felt the need to get out and teach. My first thought was, "I will stay at the laboratory and I'll just look and see if I can get a job somewhere teaching a course." I went up to Columbia and talked to one of the linguists there. He gave me a very good piece of advice. He said, "Don't do it. You will be exploited. Get yourself a full-time job." We know that even today they talk about how these adjuncts are being exploited, etc. That was an extremely good piece of advice. Then I began looking around. Of course, in those days nobody advertised jobs. You had to do it through the network. My dissertation advisor knew of some jobs as they opened up. In those days the way you recruited people was to write to universities that had a

linguistics program and say, “We want a linguist. Do you have any students who are graduating who would be suitable?” So my professor sent my name in.

Q: What year did you come to K.U.?

A: 1957.

Q: Did they have a Department of Linguistics here then?

A: No. I was hired into the English Department because I also, in addition to teaching linguistics, taught English as a second language. At that time there was no separate place as there is now for English as a second language. It was done out of the English Department.

Q: What building was this in?

A: This was in Old Fraser.

Q: Who was head of the department then?

A: The person who interviewed me was an interim chair, Carl Edwards, who is still around. It was very nice at my retirement party that he came so I could thank him for all the years I had had at K.U. The chair when I came into the department was Bill Albrecht.

Q: The university must have been a lot different in 1957 than it is now.

A: Yes. I remember, having come from Indiana, where they had about 12,000 students, that I really felt it was too big. I thought it was so nice to come to Kansas where they had about 8,000. Much more manageable.

Q: Lawrence must have been a lot different then too.

A: Yes, I can remember some streets west of campus and east of Iowa that weren't even paved yet.

Q: I understand you had something to do with the founding of the Intensive English Center.

A: What happened was that we were getting more and more foreign students. The linguistics program was growing. It became clear that this really required more than one person to give it attention. So I persuaded the university to hire somebody to deal with English as a second language, that is, teaching foreign students. This became the Intensive English Center.

Q: They go to that before they start their regular university career here, don't they?

A: They often co-enroll, depending on what their English proficiency is. If it is good enough for them to try and take some courses, they take a course or two and then take some English. If it is not, then they are full-time in what is now called the Applied English Center.

Q: I would think it would be very hard to go to college in a language that you really haven't been familiar with or used to hearing people talk it. Then you were a lecturer in phonetics at Edinburgh.

A: Yes, I took a year's leave of absence and went over there. They had a different speech synthesis system from the one I had worked with at Haskins in New York. They were interested in my expertise, as one who had been writing rules for speech synthesis to come over and see what could be done with their synthesizer.

Q: And at that time I don't suppose this had anything to do with computers.

A: No, still not with computers.

Q: Did you like living in Scotland?

A: Very much. I enjoyed it.

- Q: Are students different in some of these other countries than students at K.U.?
- A: I didn't actually teach, although I had the title of lecturer. I was really doing research over there. So I didn't teach them, although I did come into contact with them because if they were doing phonetics they would be doing things in the lab and I would help them out with whatever projects they were interested in.
- Q: Then you also went to the Soviet Union.
- A: Yes, that's because my dissertation had been on Cheremis, which was spoken there. I had worked with one speaker, but I wanted to verify some things I had picked up from this one speaker. I always wondered whether that speaker was typical of his language group or whether he had any peculiar idiosyncracies. I was hoping to get to the area where Cheremis was spoken, but I never did succeed.
- Q: Where were you in the Soviet Union?
- A: The first time that I went, I went to Leningrad and Moscow. Actually, I went to Leningrad at the invitation of somebody who I had met at an acoustics congress. She said, "If you can ever come, come visit my lab in Leningrad." So I went there. Then I went on to Moscow and I made contact with a man who did work on Cheremis. I basically just met him. I didn't do any research. It was just a short trip.
- Q: Where is Cheremis spoken in the Soviet Union?
- A: It is spoken between the Volga River and the Ural Mountains. It is a Euralic language related to Finnish and Hungarian.
- Q: When you were back at K.U. were the English and Linguistics Departments still together?

A: Gradually, we began a little bit of separation. Somewhere around 1960 I started getting a small budget for hiring a student secretary to come in for 10 hours a week. Then we started getting a little bit of supplies. Then we got a little more budget. Then when we hired some new people, we would hire them jointly in linguistics and whatever other department they were in. We didn't get a full-time hire in linguistics until later on. We started out with these joint appointments. About 1967 I was talking to the dean, Dean Waggoner at the time, and said, "I keep getting all these notices about departments, but we are not a department. We are a program that is run by a committee."

He said, "What is the difference between that and a department?"

I said, "As long as a committee runs it, it is not a department. If it is a department, the faculty who teach in it will be running it."

"What do we need to do to make it a department?"

I said, "You have to stop appointing this committee."

He said, "Okay. I will not appoint a committee."

So the next year we printed up a letterhead that said, "Linguistics Department."

That is how we became a department.

Q: Who was the first chair of the department?

A: I was, because I had been chair of the committee, basically since I had come to K.U.

Not the first year but every year after that.

Q: Then you also instructed Peace Corps trainees about this time.

A: Yes. That was in 1962 or 1963.

Q: The Peace Corps must have been fairly new at that time.

A: It was, and K.U. became very much interested in training people and getting involved because we had the Costa Rica program going. So it made a nice fit with the Costa Rica exchange that we had going to train people to go to Costa Rica. And we did that successfully for a year or so. Then for some reason or another they felt that they did not want to continue this at K.U., that we were too expensive, that we were giving them too rigorous training in the disciplines they were going to be teaching. They were more interested in having generalists in the Peace Corps. So they did not return to K.U. It was one of the very early programs and, I think, a fairly successful one. I had the opportunity to go down to Costa Rica to follow up on the people that we had trained. They seemed to be doing a very fine job.

Q: There was a lot of enthusiasm among some college students at that time for the Peace Corps. They must have been interesting students to work with.

A: Yes.

Q: Then was it about 1964 that you began to field work in New Guinea?

A: Yes, when I finally realized that I was never going to get to the Cheremis people, I decided I wanted to do field work on a language where I could get to the people.

Q: You mean because of the government system in the Soviet Union?

A: Yes, in those days there were only certain parts of the country that you could get to. You could get to Leningrad, Moscow, and a few other cities. But you could not travel freely within the country. The Cheremis area was closed. So there was no opportunity to get there at all. So I decided that I would switch to a language that I could get to. I knew that New Guinea was just full of languages that nobody had ever studied. So it

looked like a good opportunity.

Q: It's a long ways away. Did you go in the summers?

A: I had a sabbatical, so the first time I went over there I was on sabbatical leave.

Q: I believe you went to a mission.

A: Because there are no motels out in that area, what I did was wrote to my church's mission and said, "I'm a linguist. I want to work on a New Guinea language. Are there any languages there that you would like to have somebody do some work on? They said, "Yes, we just opened some work in a new area. We would be happy to have you come."

So I went as a kind of volunteer, but they did provide housing and a subsidy, so it worked out very nicely.

Q: Now New Guinea is an island. About how big is it?

A: About 1,000 miles long and about 300 miles wide.

Q: It was very primitive at that time, wasn't it?

A: Yes, the area that I went into had just had sustained contact with the outside world for about five years. There had been some patrols that had gone through before that.

Q: With the war, I suppose.

A: There had been some exploratory patrols in the 1930's. Then the war came along and that sort of stopped everything. After the war they decided to open up these areas in a sort of gradual way.

Q: Did it belong to some other country?

A: New Guinea right after the war was divided into three parts. There was the western part that belonged to the Netherlands as a colony. Then there was the southeastern part that

was an Australian mandate, or something like that. The northeastern part was a United Nations mandate, a protectorate. But the United Nations had turned the administration of that protectorate over to Australia. So although it was not Australian, they were the ones responsible for maintaining some kind of law and order in the area and developing the schools. They went about this in a fairly slow way. They didn't get around to this particular area until 1959, when they began to build an airstrip there. There were, of course, no roads in there.

Q: This is jungle we are talking about, is that right?

A: Yes, basically. There are very steep mountains.

Q: How did you get around then?

A: You flew into the airstrip and then you walked.

Q: And these were fairly primitive people.

A: Yes, in terms of their technology, yes. I was absolutely amazed at how well people could live with so little technology. They didn't make cloth, they didn't work metal, they didn't have pottery.

Q: Were they primarily hunters?

A: No, they farmed. Their principal crop was sweet potatoes, but they also had a number of different kinds of leafy vegetables and root vegetables.

Q: And, I suppose, fish.

A: No, there weren't any fish in those rivers. They are very steep mountain streams. But they did have pigs. That was their domestic animal.

Q: How did you communicate with these people? They didn't speak English.

A: There had been about five years of some kind of contact. So the lingua Franca of the area was pidgin English. So I had to learn pidgin English and communicate that way. A lot of people didn't know pidgin English, but there were enough people who did, that I could make contact that way.

Q: So you were studying how the language was structured. I don't suppose it was a written language.

A: No, so I wrote things down in phonetics.

Q: That must have been a very interesting experience.

A: It was. It was something totally different from what I had experienced before. It was a very pleasant experience, in the sense that people were extremely friendly. They were extremely curious about the way we did things, which I felt opened the door for me to be very curious about they way they did things. So if they could come around and stare at me, I could come around and stare at them.

Q: When you came back to K.U., were you chair of the department again?

A: I was chair during all of the sixties. Then towards the end of the sixties I decided that I was going away so much and the department was growing and it wasn't really appropriate for me to just abandon the department in the summer. It really needed the full-time attention of somebody. So I stopped being chair for a while and David Dineen took over.

Q: But you were chair when there was so much going on here about 1968-1970.

A: I've forgotten when I resumed being chair, but it was around 1970, I guess.

Q: But you were here during that time.

A: Oh, yes, I was here during that time. People nowadays have so many rules and regulations, etc. People were much more relaxed in earlier times. One of the things I used to do was bring my dog up with me to classes, when I had a small seminar. The dog would sleep under the table and we'd have our class and everything was fine. When they started having these fires all over campus, and after the Union burned, they asked faculty to stay in the building over night and watch for fires. So I was up there with my dog over night.

Q: I have talked to other women faculty about this time period, and they tell me they were not allowed to stay in the buildings over night.

A: But I was the department chair.

Q: Were your students involved in what was going on?

A: Not that I was aware of. Although there were all kinds of things going on all over campus, it never bothered any of my classes. The students were all there and they were all ready to learn. The discipline in the classes was good, probably because linguistics was not political.

Q: Do you remember any specific challenges as department chair? What was going on in the department at that time? Were there new programs started?

A: Not particularly. Obviously, things keep changing. You get new faculty and they have new ideas. Then the university decided you had to bring students in to become voting members of the department. That all had to be dealt with. But it all went in an orderly way. We didn't have big problems.

Q: And your department was growing during this time.

A: Yes. It never has been a big department. That may be why we had so few problems, we all know each other.

Q: Then you also went to Liberia. How did you happen to go there?

A: I had been interested in the use of linguistics for Bible translation purposes. The people who do Bible translations on these unwritten languages or lesser known languages usually study linguistics. Then they use their linguistic training to help them deal with these languages that they encounter where they don't have text books and grammars and dictionaries.

Q: Is that what the missionaries in New Guinea were interested in?

A: Yes. So I was involved with this group of translators and they were beginning work over in Liberia. They asked me to go over and help them get started.

Q: Some of those countries have been very unsettled.

A: Oh, yes. But at the time that I went there it was really amazing. They were really proud of their long democratic heritage, the fact that they had never been a colony, that they had a democratic government (corrupt, but that is par for the course for Africa) and they were proud that they had never had a government coup, that everything had always gone by the rules and regulations. So everything was just very good over there.

Q: Were you working at a university?

A: I taught courses at the university and then in the vacation periods I would go out and do a lot of linguistic survey work in the country. So I was able to get out of the capital and get to the more remote parts of the country.

Q: Different tribes spoke different languages, I suppose. I have read that there are a lot of

different languages in places like that.

A: Yes. One of the things I was trying to do was to determine how different each of the local varieties was to decide whether they were dialects of the same language or different languages.

Q: Then when you came back you were involved with university governance for a long time. You have been a member of the University Senate since early on.

A: In the old University Senate, I think you had to be a full professor to be a member, or was it associate professor? It was faculty only. Then the whole thing got reorganized in 1969 with the student involvement, etc.

Q: Then you were on the University Council. I guess I'm not sure just what that is.

A: That came along with the new governance system, the one that evolved in 1969. What they did then was say we couldn't do what we used to do, which was bring together all the full professors and just have them sit down and decide what rules and regulations there were going to be. We had to do something else. There were too many. If we were going to let students in, it would still make it too difficult. So there would be elected representatives who would form this council. That's the system we have now, where there are elected representatives of the faculty who form the council and elected students as well.

Q: Do you remember any particular issues that were difficult or challenging?

A: There are always these minor tempests in a teapot going on. One of the things I do remember about the first time I was elected presiding officer of the University Council and Senate was that that position had absolutely no power. It was simply somebody to

stand up in front and recognize speakers. The real work was done by SenEx, which was the executive committee of the Council. I had been active before that in AAUP. One of the things we did in AAUP was to monitor the governance. So we would send people in to sit in on SenEx meetings. So I decided that I was going to go sit in on those meetings, since they were officially open meetings. I just showed up there every week when they met. Finally, they found the situation somewhat embarrassing. So they eventually made the presiding officer an ex officio member of SenEx.

Q: I believe you were the first woman to be head of University Senate.

A: Yes.

Q: What are some of the classes you have taught through the years?

A: When I first came to KU as the only linguist, I taught everything. Then as the years went by, I became more and more specialized. I guess in later years the particular thing that I taught was phonetics. I also taught field work a good number of times.

Q: Did your students go off to these remote places like you had done?

A: Actually, not many of them do, because it is hard to get off to these remote places. I really only had one student who made it over to New Guinea. Most of them are going off and working with Native American languages. But even if they don't go work with some exotic language, they are still supposed to take this training so that whenever they encounter a language that they don't know, they know how to deal with it.

Q: Did you originate any courses?

A: Most of them.

Q: So they didn't have any other linguist when you came.

A: There was a man who had been in the German department and who had gotten a couple of linguistic courses approved. I thought that he taught one of them before I came, but then I spoke to him many years later and he said, no, he never got to teach those courses. They had just been approved and then he left KU. So I came in and did teach the first two linguistics courses.

Q: Your research interest has been primarily this language in New Guinea?

A: Right, that's the one I am focusing on and continuing to work on.

Q: Oh, are you still involved with that?

A: Yes.

Q: Have you made other trips back to New Guinea?

A: Yes, I went there several time in the sixties. Then I basically ran out of money and had a lot of material collected. Later I started doing things in Africa and continuing things with acoustics, etc. So the stuff was sort of lying there. I went back in 1980 for a few months to do a little additional field work. Then I came back and got terribly involved in governance activities. So then in 1994 I made a brief trip back to find out about the feasibility of getting back there for any length of time. In the meantime the area has become independent and the infrastructure has gotten to be very poor in some ways. They now have a road that goes into the area, but they also have highway robbers who stop cars and hold them up. It is not nearly as safe as when I was over there originally.

Q: Have the native people changed a lot? I suppose they have had a lot more contact with the outside world.

A: Another thing that happened is that a major gold mining operation moved into the area.

Right now they have one of the most lucrative mines in the world taking gold out of there. This has affected the local people, first of all because there has been this great influx of people from outside who have come in for this. It has introduced all kinds of goods that they didn't have easy access to in the past. They have a lot of economic benefit, in that the mine is sort of required to pour money back into the community. So they have educational programs and things like this going on. They also when they got the land had to provide houses for the people they dispossessed. Of course, one of the problems over there was that there was no firm land ownership by individuals. It was sort of claimed by various clans. Negotiating for the use of the land over there was, and I think still is, an ongoing problem. So everybody sort of had to be paid off something to be compensated for the use of their land and the destruction of it where the mine is. But in terms of jobs that they have, they only get the very lowest of the low-paying jobs because they are not an educated people. The women are the ones who tend the gardens, etc. They have been doing a fair amount of raising crops for sale to the people at the mine. So that has helped them economically a bit.

Q: Has their language changed because of all this contact?

A: Yes. There's a lot more borrowing from pidgin. So you find a lot more pidgin terms.

Q: You have written some books, I believe.

A: Not really. I wrote two, but so long ago. When I was a graduate student I collaborated with my professor on a book on the supernatural beliefs of the Cheremis people. Then after I did my dissertation I collaborated with him on a textbook for learning Cheremis. Those are the only two books. The other things I have done have been edited stuff.

Q: You have mentioned some sabbaticals that you have had. Were there any others?

A: No, that was probably it.

Q: And you have had awards.

A: Not particularly

Q: You were inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame as a pioneer researcher in linguistics.

A: Yes.

Q: You have been on university and department committees, I suppose. Any you'd like to mention?

A: I was for many years on the committee for tenure and related problems. For many years it was a fairly good committee to help deal with various problems that came up about people who for one reason or another claimed that their tenure rights were being violated.

But the last time I was on the committee was a much less pleasant experience. That was the committee that was involved in firing somebody.

Q: Fairly recent then.

A: Not that recent. There has been another one since then. We were the first committee that had to hear on a dismissal.

Q: I suppose you belong to professional organizations.

A: Yes, but nothing that I have been terribly active in. It has been for the most part fairly passive membership.

Q: I was going to ask if you had held offices.

A: No. Well, I did in the local KU AAUP but nothing national.

Q: I read that you were the first woman president of that organization. Are there

outstanding former students who you remember who have gone on to greater things?

A: I'm afraid not. We have students who have done well but no one who has become nationally recognized, someone whose name I could mention and everybody would say, "Oh, yes."

Q: Do your students usually go into universities as professors?

A: Yes. That's basically what happens. But there are just a lot of them who change professions and go on to other things. They are sort of scattered around. I remember one who I had as an undergraduate, a very good undergraduate. We had great hopes for him in linguistics, but he decided not to do that. He went into landscape architecture. He wrote back and said, "You won't believe this, but my linguistic training was very good for this. Although it has nothing to do with language, the discipline that I learned in linguistics has helped me. I see the difference between what I can do in this program and what other students in this same program are doing without that kind of discipline."

Q: Any community activities?

A: Not especially.

Q: Are you having continuing involvement with KU since your retirement?

A: It has been such a short time that it is hard to say. All that I can say is that I am being dispossessed from my office at the end of this month.

Q: What are you planning to do during retirement?

A: I plan to stay in Lawrence. I will continue with my Ipili work.

Q: Is that the New Guinea language?

A: Yes. Otherwise, I will enjoy doing things at a more leisurely pace.

Q: What is your assessment of the linguistics department or KU, past, present, hopes for the future, that kind of thing?

A: I found KU to be a very good place for me. Like many people who come, I thought, “Well, it will be okay for a few years and then I’ll move on someplace else.” But I discovered it was very nice for me because being in a department that was just developing, I could do whatever I wanted. So I wasn’t being forced into directions that I didn’t want to go and do. This was very good. Right now I think the department is in a transition. We have had some new people come into the department recently. A number of the older ones are retiring. So I think the department at this point is looking for new directions, etc. I wish them well.

Q: Where is your department located now?

A: Blake.

Q: Anything else you’d like to add that I’ve forgotten to ask?

A: There are lots of anecdotes, but they are not according to your script.

Q: You can put in anything you want to.

A: I did sort of think what happens when we get new people in the department. We will just start talking and then I will start dredging up all these things that we used to do. For example, we have a linguistics colloquy. One of the things we used to do after that was have a get together, usually at my house but if not at mine then somebody else’s house. There was a great social atmosphere that went on that way that doesn’t exist now. We also used to do things like have Halloween parties where people came dressed in linguistic themes. They would take some linguistic term and then dress like that.

Q: You mean dress like somebody from New Guinea?

A: No. You take some word. For example one linguistic term is a bound morpheme.

That means it is a meaningful unit that must be attached to something else, like a suffix.

So then somebody would come with arms and legs chained as the bound morpheme. We had to guess what they were.

Q: That's a different sort of Halloween party.

A: It was a lot of fun. There were all kinds of things like this that just pop up when you start talking to people about things in the past.

Q: I guess that's all, so thank you very much.