AN INTERVIEW WITH MONTROSE WOLF

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History project
Endacott Society
University of Kansas
MONTROSE WOLF

B.S., Psychology, University of Houston, 1959
M.A., Psychology, Arizona State University, 1961
Ph.D., Psychology, Arizona State, 1963

Service at the University of Kansas

First came to KU in 1965
Research Associate, Bureau of Child Research, 1965-2000
Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Life, 1965-67
Associate professor, Department of Human Development and Family Life, 1967-1972
Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Life, 1972-2000
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Q.: I am speaking with Montrose Wolf, who retired in 2000 as professor of human
development and family life at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas,
on October 3, 2000. Where were you born and in what year?

A.: I was born in 1935 in Houston, Texas.

Q.: What were your parents’ names?


Q.: What was their educational background?

A.: My father went to Rice Institute in Houston and my mother went to Bucknell. Her
parents died when she was young, so she was raised by her grandparents in Pennsylvania.

Q.: What was your father’s occupation?

A.: He worked for Exxon and was one of their investigators first in Tyler, Texas, where we
lived for six years. He was the director of claims and right of way for Exxon. Then he
moved on to Houston, got a promotion, and became the director of several enterprises of
Exxon, including their travel club. He talked to them about self-insuring. They were a
big enough company that they could self-insure, so he set up a company called Petroleum
Casualty. He was director of that.

Q.: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A.: I do. My brother is Pete Wolf.

Q.: Then you grew up partly in Tyler and partly in Houston.

A.: Yes. The first six years were in Tyler and then we moved back to Houston.

Q.: What elementary school did you attend?
A: I went to Gary Elementary School in Tyler.

Q.: Were you in organizations such as Boy Scouts or things like that?

A: Not very much. My parents loved literature and drama. They were members of the local Tyler chapter of a theatrical program, so I got to go watch them perform and bang nails in boards at the scenes. My mother was also a volunteer for the Red Cross during the Second World War. She would go out in the countryside to find people who had lost relatives or other people who needed information from the Red Cross.

Q.: Do you have any other memories of the World War II years, things that were going on in your town or school? Did you have relatives in the war?

A: Yes, several. I also remember that I wanted to listen to one of my favorite programs one night, “The Lone Ranger.” So I was dialing it and then a broadcast came on about the Second World War. I was pretty grumpy and disappointed because I couldn’t listen to “The Lone Ranger.” It was my favorite thing of the week. So my parents had to explain to me that something else was going on that was more important than my favorite program. We listened to the address about entering into the war. We stayed there in Tyler until the war was over. When the war was over Exxon began expanding, and that’s why we moved to Houston.

Q.: What junior high and high school did you attend?

A: In Houston I went to Laneer Junior High School and Lamar High School.

Q.: Do you remember influential teachers from that time?

A: Yes. I had really neat teachers. In high school there was a French teacher, for example, who introduced a whole new world of things that I hadn’t thought about. There were several teachers who helped me.
Q.: Were you in extracurricular activities?
A: Not very much. I had polio when I was 13. That kind of cut down a lot of things. My brother also had it. They said that I would never be able to walk again. But my parents wouldn’t hear of that. So they began reading the literature about polio and post polio treatment and began finding out about the options around the country. They found one place in Gonzalez Warm Springs called the Gonzalez Warm Springs Hospital, where they were doing cutting edge research on new ways of treating polio, such as helping overcome it using some of the muscles that were lost in ways that had never been used before, rather than just sitting around with hot packs, which was the typical treatment then. My parents felt this would be the best thing and they sent me there.

Q.: Was this in Texas?
A: Yes, it was in Texas. I remember my grandfather and all my uncles came to visit me, against the rules, of course.

Q.: Were you there a long time?
A: Oh, yes. I was there several months.

Q.: Did you have honors in high school?
A: No, I didn’t.

Q.: Did you have any jobs during this time?
A: Yes.

Q.: What did you do?
A: I worked at a playhouse. I was real interested in theater and worked at several different places in the Houston area.

Q.: Did you build scenery, do odd jobs, things like that?
A: Yes, that’s right. I helped with the productions. I remember one time I was looking through a peephole at the audience. All of a sudden I heard a big sound. A big sign that I inadvertently pushed became dislodged and fell down and everybody was laughing in the audience. So the director said, “Hey, what did you do?” I said, “I was trying to look through the peephole, but I inadvertently pushed the sign down.” He said, “Let’s include that in every production from now on because that clearly got a good laugh.”

Q.: When did you graduate from high school?
A: In 1953.

Q.: Was it always assumed that you would go to college?
A: Yes.

Q.: Did you go to college then in the fall?
A: Yes.

Q.: Where did you go?
A: I went to the University of Texas in Austin.

Q.: Any particular reason for choosing that school?
A: It was a good school and I knew a lot of people who were going there. I had some friends who were going there, so I would have a lot of good friends on campus.

Q.: What did you major in?
A: I majored in psychology.

Q.: Did you live in a dormitory?
A: Yes.

Q.: Why did you decide to major in psychology?
A: Because I was always interested in psychological issues. I was interested in Freud and his theories.

Q.: Oh, had you read about Freud in high school?

A: Yes. I was very interested in the neoFreudians and their observations about what was going on.

Q.: Do you remember influential teachers from your undergraduate years?

A: Yes. There was one guy who taught philosophy. He didn’t believe anything unless you were able to demonstrate it in some way. It was great fun to argue with him. Then I went to the University of Houston and finished up there. I met a guy, Jack Michael, who had been fired from Kansas University for teaching Skinner in his course in the psych department. I met him in Houston.

Q.: So you got your undergraduate degree from the University of Houston.

A: Yes.

Q.: Were you employed during this time?

A: Yes. I worked at a variety of things.

Q.: What did you do?

A: I worked at the testing center and gave all kinds of tests.

Q.: Psychological tests?

A: Yes. I worked for Richard Evans, who was a professor in the department, as an undergraduate assistant and then later as a graduate assistant. I also worked with Jack. As I said, he had been fired and had a number of other run-ins with people.

Q.: You mean people didn’t like Skinner’s theories?

A: No.
Q: I thought KU did go along with his theories.

A: They have since 1965, when we moved here as a group. But before then they didn’t.

He was fired for teaching *Science and Human Behavior*, Skinner’s book about the principles of behavior and important application possibilities in a variety of fields. Jack Michael arrived at the University of Houston in 1957. The first description of Jack by a fellow student was, “He obviously can’t be a very good teacher because he dresses so badly.” I had also heard the student rumor that Jack had been asked to leave Kansas University because he was teaching Skinner. Then Jack arrived in his strangely colored short pants and flip-flop sandals. And, to make matters worse, Jack announced that the course would concentrate on animal research! I began looking through my timetable for a course more in line with my neo-Freudian interests. But, Learning Theory was a required course for psych majors. However, I did arm myself with drop slips in case the course became too painful. I was already thinking about changing my major to philosophy, anyway.

Jack, rather than choosing something interesting like Carl Jung, assigned Keller and Schoenfeld’s *Principles of Psychology* (1950) as our textbook. The first few chapters did turn out to be fascinating. By the third chapter I was converted. I converted, not because they had all the answers, but, because their natural science approach seemed to hold the greatest promise among the psychological systems for achieving the answers. In addition, Jack was also excited about the application of behavioral principles to important human problems. Jack described Ted Ayllon’s pioneering research at Saskatchewan Hospital. At Jack’s suggestion, I read Skinner’s newest book, *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), which made a strong case for the application of behavioral
principles to human problems. I described my conversion to my girlfriend, Sandra, who was also a psych major. We first met in Houston and she later became my wife. She was horrified! But she sat in on some lectures and became a convert too.

Jack was also a pioneer in basic research. I think he did the first model study of applied behavioral research. He published in 1959 with Ted Ayllon, who also originally started here and went with Jack to Houston, which was where we met up. They published the pioneering applied behavioral study: “The Psychiatric Nurse as a Behavioral Engineer,” (JEAB, 1959), which had been done in Saskatchewan by Jack and Ted. It showed the use of mediators, in this case the psychiatric nurses, who were trained to apply the behavioral principles, working with the behavior analyst in the psychiatric institution, and how they thought mediators could be used in other settings, such as schools and institutions for other populations, and that has all turned out to be very true. Finally, others also became members of the group, which met in Jack’s living room, and planned how to save the world through behaviorism.

Jack shared his library with us, so we began reading more Skinner and the early issues of JEAB (Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior).

Q.: Did you have honors as an undergraduate?
A: No, but I did as a graduate student.

Q.: Where did you go for your master’s?
A: I started at the University of Houston and I was doing work at the University of Houston on combined discrimination of stimuli, kind of a basic science study of the effects of combining discriminative stimuli, seeing what would occur with rats and pigeons. That was my master’s thesis.
Jack generously shared his research equipment. I built a rat box to study the effects of combined discriminative stimuli. Jack let us use the equipment at night. We were responsible for rewiring the equipment so it would be ready for Jack’s research the next day. Unfortunately, there were times when we didn’t rewire the equipment correctly. Jack would make cracks about our long line of serendipitous experiments.

Q.: So for your master’s thesis you were working with rats and pigeons to do what?
A.: To see what would happen when I combined stimuli paired with a reinforcer of some sort.

Q.: Oh, yes. Skinner’s idea, kind of.
A.: Yes. To see what would happen when I combined those discriminative stimuli and compared what happened with different schedules of reinforcement. I found that they pressed longer and faster when I combined stimuli. That was my master’s. And also I replicated it with pigeons and that was in Houston also.

Q.: Then you changed from the University of Houston to the Arizona State University when you were doing your master’s.
A.: That’s right. I went to Arizona State University. Jack got a phone call one day from friends at Arizona State University. They said it might be possible to take over Arizona State and set it up as the first behavioral program in the country. Their plan was to establish ASU as the first psych department specializing in behavioral research, theory, and applications. They would be able to teach behavioral theory, application and research. So that was very exciting because it sounded like it might really be a place where we could get together. There were so many neat things going on all over the country in behavioral theory and basic and applied research. That sounded like fun, so I
got to go with them. Some of us went to ASU as graduate students and helped to set up *Fort Skinner in the Desert* and work with a number of other people, Izzy Goldiamond and Art Staats, for example, who were also there at Arizona State. I did my work there. Unfortunately, the new chairperson died from cancer and was not able to fulfill his vision of making this the preeminent place for behavioral theory. The chairperson who took over for him felt like he was getting a lot of criticism from other department heads for allowing so much emphasis on behavioral theory and research. So the new chairperson began trying to shut down the program and began referring to us students as poorly trained *relay raconteurs* for doing both basic and applied research.

At ASU for a few years before the program was torn down we had lots of exciting courses. For example, we got to read neat stuff like Bijou and Baer’s *Child Development* (1961). Those were wonderful years because we got to do all the neat things that we wanted to do. We also read a very interesting theoretical analysis by Charles Ferster (1961). He discussed how the behavior problems of childhood autism might be due to subtle positive reinforcement, punishment, and extinction contingencies. Ferster and DeMyer (1961) also published a very important laboratory study about autistic children. They showed that neutral stimuli could be conditioned in the laboratory.

We also read about the fascinating human operant research taking place in institutions. Few had made the leap from the lab to the other side of the one-way glass or to schools or to home. In fact, some were of the opinion that such a leap was premature and unwise because we didn’t know enough, that we needed to wait for more basic human operant research.
Q.: You were working with people as well as animals then.
A: Both. I worked with preschool children, for example, doing one of the first behavioral studies with normal preschool children. We found that if we set up a token economy it was possible to develop very powerful contingencies to help kids learn to read. We used reading as our measure and a token economy was very powerful. Others began hearing about that work, and so I was getting closer to my degree. Sid Bijou, who was at the University of Washington, heard about that work and was also looking for somebody to work with him in his new Institute for Child Development. We had read his book, Child Development (1961), which is about behavioral analysis of children. It was fascinating. So there were wonderful things that were going on in a very basic area, and they were very exciting. Then Sid visited ASU and said that he was interested in finding somebody who would try to bridge that gap, from the laboratory, which is where we were, on the other side of a one-way glass and trying to do some research on normal kids and disabled kids. Sid described his exciting programs and opportunities, for example, to teach a behavioral course to preschool teachers who were asked to convert from a psychodynamic to a behavioral orientation. Also, there would be a research opportunity to work with Jay Birnbrauer on a new behavioral classroom at Rainier State School for the developmentally disabled. We described to Sid the token economy research that we had carried out with preschool children (Staats, Staats, Schultz, and Wolf, 1962).

So I got a job at the University of Washington in 1962. Sid hired me on his NIMH grant. I arrived at the University of Washington on the first day of July.

Q.: When you were at Arizona State what was your Ph.D. research on?
A: It was in experimental psychology formally.
Q.: What was your dissertation about?
A: It was combined discriminative stimuli with pigeons.

Q.: What year did you receive your Ph.D.?

Q.: And then you went to Washington.
A: That’s right.

Q.: Were you married at this time?
A: Yes. I was married to Sandra Spiller Wolf. We first met at Houston. She is still a behavioral psychologist.

Q.: Did she get an advanced degree too?
A: That’s correct.

Q.: Then you were a research assistant while you were doing your Ph.D. also. Did you have honors as a Ph.D. student?
A: Yes. I was honored for completing the first Ph.D. at Arizona State University. The committee for the dissertation oral exam included the chancellor of ASU and several department heads.

Q.: Then you went to the University of Washington. Did you teach classes there or were you just doing research?
A: One of the fun things about that position that Sid described is that it was possible to go from the laboratory with one-way mirrors to the outside to try to do some things with kids who were having problems of various kinds.

Q.: Did they have lab schools like they do at KU?
A: Yes. The lab schools were built with the purpose of observing what was going on. Sid
also presented me with the opportunity to work with preschool teachers, who had been trained in psychoanalysis, the psychoanalytic approach. We were retraining them in the behavioral approach. That was especially fun because we were also working at that time with an autistic child by the name of Dickie, who arrived a couple of weeks after I arrived in Washington. Sid called Todd Risley, a graduate student, and me into his office one day and said he had just gotten a phone call from Jerman Rose, the Director of the Children’s Psychiatric Hospital at Fort Steilacoom, Washington. Rose described a problem he was having with a child named Dickie. He was three and a half years old. He had developed normally until about nine months old. He had been diagnosed as autistic. He developed a high rate of self-destructive temper tantrums. He was a mess, all black and blue, according to his parents, most of the time. He had no normal language. He was Echolalic. He would imitate commercials and things like that, but he wasn’t normal. He was not toilet trained. He didn’t go to bed at night. He had tantrums unless one or both of his parents were up with him all night. He did not eat at the table. He would kind of graze. His problems were so severe that permanent institutionalization had been recommended by everybody. And also, cataracts had been removed from the lenses of both his eyes. The ophthalmologist predicted that if he didn’t begin wearing his glasses within the next six months, he would permanently lose his macular vision. He had been hospitalized for three months and they had not been able to teach him to wear his glasses.

So a couple of weeks after I got there, in July, Sid called Todd Risley and me into his office and said he had just gotten this phone call and wanted us to check it out. Was there something we could do? And so we knew that nobody had ever really gone into
any kind of clinical study like that and tried to apply behavioral principles to the problems of autism. Also, this would be the hostile environment of a psychoanalytic hospital. For example, the self-destructive behavior, according to them, was due to self-hate. The reason they were hitting themselves and scratching themselves and hitting their heads against the wall was because they hated themselves. So what the hospital chose to do was to hire some person to treat them who was to reassure them, when they were in fact engaging in those types of behavior. They would reassure them that they were in fact loved and cared for to try to convince them, while they were having those behaviors, that they were loved and cherished.

Q.: And that wasn’t working?

A: No, that wasn’t working. But they had been trained that way and that’s what they believed. So here we were going to try to give them an entirely different perspective. Could we do that? We argued with Dr. Rose about the various options. But he kept nodding his head and saying, “That’s okay. Yes, you can have a private room for him. Yes, you can hire and train attendants. If you don’t want him to see his parents because that might interfere with the things you were doing, that’s okay.” At the end of our list, he said, “When do you start?” So we were stuck then with taking on this kid. It was a challenge.

We began working first with his glasses and tried to shape his behavior with the glasses with reinforcers of various kinds. We also trained an attendant to try to shape that behavior too. But after about a month we still hadn’t gotten very far. So we decided maybe we should move him and work with him on campus so we could make sure we were doing everything we could do. For example, we started off using candies
and fruits and things like that. Then we started using meals. That upset everybody. We decided we had better go ahead and do that because that might be the only level of reinforcer that he would find sufficiently interesting. So we went and got a motel in Fort Steilacoom and checked in. We showed up at six the next morning before his breakfast and we observed him. We tried to use bites of his breakfast as reinforcers. He didn’t pay any attention. So we came back for lunch, roast beef, green beans, potatoes. So we tried to use those as reinforcers. He still wasn’t interested. So then we went to the dietician and the cook and asked if he had any foods he really liked. They said, “Yes, he loves ice cream.” So we went to the store and bought all the ice cream they had and took it back to the hospital. So that afternoon we went with a big bowl of ice cream to reinforce him. After about 20 or 30 minutes we had him shaped to carry the glasses around like this, looking at Todd’s green ring through the lenses. So we were able to shape that for the first time. We went back for dinner that night. We did all that plus a big bowl of ice cream for dessert. The next morning we were still there with all those things plus ice cream. After about a week on campus there he was doing pretty well. He wasn’t completely wearing his glasses all the time but he was coming along. At that point we were able to train the other attendants what to do and how to reinforce it and have lots of good ice cream. So we were then able to, after a few months, have high rates of his wearing glasses for about 12 hours a day by the end of the time. We also trained him to reduce his self-destructive behavior, to reduce the nighttime behaviors and all those things.

Also, another problem developed out of the glasses wearing, namely, glasses throwing began. So we developed a procedure called time out from positive
reinforcement. We wanted to find something we could convince the parents to use, because we were afraid that they might inadvertently reinforce that behavior. So we used time out from positive reinforcement and that was very effective. We sent him to his room for 10 minutes whenever he threw his glasses or until the tantrum was over. Sure enough, the wearing of his glasses went up very nicely. We were able to show the parents all those things. When we first sent him home, he did, in fact, throw them occasionally but they sent him to his room and he never threw his glasses again. And he also learned about how to eat and how to go to bed at night, all those things. The parents were wonderful and they were able to teach Dicky so many things. However, after five months in the hospital, although at that point we did have a number of things he was better at, we worked on his language. He learned a lot of words that he could name from pictures. But he still didn’t have anything approximating normal language.

You may have been wondering what happened with my course for the preschool teachers at Washington who had been trained in psychoanalytic psychology and who learned behavioral theory. Well, it went better than you might expect. I was very fortunate in that I was working with Dickie at that time. Todd and I began our weekly trips to Dicky’s hospital that summer. So, we took the preschool teachers and others on our weekly trips and presented Dicky’s data at every class session. That fall they could see Dickie and all the progress that he had made. So it was pretty easy to convince them that we have something here in behavioral theory, behavioral analysis, and behavioral application that was important. The teachers began looking for opportunities to replicate those things that we had done with Dickie by behaviorally analyzing the normal behavior problems of the preschool children in their classrooms. We were able to find a number
of normal problems that the kids had in school, for example, regressed crawling. At that
time the theory was that kids were crawling because they had regressed back to an earlier
sexual stage of development. Their treatment, again, seemed a little odd to us because
the treatment was to have people attend to them whenever they were crawling and not
attend to them when they weren’t. It was like the paradox when we were trying to teach
things in the mental hospital. We had the same thing at the preschool. They began
reinforcing everything else but crawling, and it disappeared. The teachers published
this study and it became a citation classic because it was so important at that point. The
teachers also published a number of other things that we worked on and designed there
while we were at Washington. They began with “regressed” crawling behavior (Harris,
Johnston, Kelly, and Wolf, 1964) And then they moved to isolate behavior (Allen, Hart,
Buell, Harris, and Wolf, 1964), operant crying (Hart, Allen, Buell, Harris, and Wolf,
1964), and motor skills (Johnston, Kelly, Harris, and Wolf, 1966).

They were also very sympathetic then as we imposed a behavioral program on
Dickie for the next two years. Because the teachers made the conversion, we were able
to provide Dicky with a strong behavioral treatment program for the next two years,
which made him ready for special education classes at school. If we hadn’t had their
cooperation, we wouldn’t have been able to make progress in those next two years. We
needed constant positive reinforcement set up for him and the first time out procedure
ever used in the preschool. We had set up a time out room, and sure enough, the
procedure completely eliminated self-destructive behavior, hitting, pinching, things that
made him really unpopular with his peers. We also toilet trained him and a number of
other things, again, working with the parents.
We were later informed that he went into regular classes. He graduated from high school. His IQ also changed. During his early years he was untestable. A Washington psychologist sent us a copy of a report in 1985 when Dicky was 26 years old that included an IQ test. According to that psychologist, Dicky’s WAIS Verbal IQ score was 98. Todd Risley has visited with Dicky in person and on the phone. Since high school he has lived independently and has had a series of jobs.

We also set up a powerful demonstration program at the new behavioral classroom at Rainier State School for the developmentally disabled with Jay Birnbrauer.

We can draw some conclusions about the impact of the studies. First, time-out has been widely disseminated. According to Hart and Risley (personal communication), about half the teachers and parents in their study use time-out as a nonviolent disciplinary procedure. Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics published an article in the journal *Pediatrics* encouraging pediatricians to recommend that parents use ‘time outs’ and positive reinforcement instead of spanking when children misbehave (*Pediatrics*, 1988). Finally, the behavioral autism treatment program has been widely adapted by others.

Q.: How long were you at Washington?

A.: I was there for two years.

Q.: Then you went back to Arizona, is that right?

A.: That’s right.

Q.: Why did you go back?

A.: Well, we liked Arizona a great deal. It was a wonderful thing to go back and be in that culture. Tucson is a special place. We both graduated from Arizona State in Tempe,
Arizona, so Tucson was a place we both liked a lot. Also, unfortunately, Sid was not going to be able to set up the kind of program that we wanted to set up at Washington, because, again, there was animosity toward his Skinnerian approach. His success was resented so much. So he was going to have to move, too. He went to the University of Illinois. A number of us went here. Don Bear went here, Todd Risley, Betty Hart, and a number of people. We collected here because we got an opportunity to do the kind of behavioral research, theory, and treatment that we wanted to do.

Q.: Before you came to KU, you went back to Arizona.

A.: That’s right. After one year at Arizona, we came here. We got a phone call from the chairperson of Human Development and Family Life, Francis Horowitz, about an opportunity to take over the department and do the things we wanted to do as far as undergraduate training, graduate training and everything.

Q.: What year did you come to KU?


Q.: What were some of your first impressions of KU and Lawrence at that time?

A.: Well, it looked pretty dreary. We originally visited in March. It looked pretty awful compared to Arizona. But we could tell that this was going to be a unique opportunity to be able to conduct research from preschools to college and everything between. They had a really good special education department here.

Q.: Did you have children when you came?

A.: No. Peter and Julie were born after we moved to Lawrence.

Q.: Since you came in 1965, you were here when all these things were happening in 1969 and 1970.
A: Yes.

Q: Did that affect you, or the department or the students you taught?

A: Of course, there was some effect with the Union burning. But we just kind of did the best we could with the kinds of things we were doing and the kinds of programs we were developing.

Q: When you came here were you both teaching and doing research?

A: My wife got her degree here. She got her master’s at Arizona State and her Ph.D. here. She began working as a therapist in the KU Health Clinic. She just retired this year.

Q: Then you were teaching classes here. Which classes were you teaching?

A: I got to teach a class on the experimental design for applied research. I would present examples of those kinds of things in class and they would be responsible for presenting at the end of the term a hypothetical example they would make up research proposals about these things we had been discussing.

Q: The department was primarily interested in Skinner when you came. Has it remained that way through the years?

A: Yes.

Q: Did the number of students increase during the time you were here?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have sabbaticals?

A: Yes.

Q: Where did you go?

A: I got to go to Boys Town.

Q: What were you doing there?
A: I was working with them trying to develop a replication of The Teaching Family model that we had developed at KU. I got a phone call one day from the president of the board of directors of Achievement Place for Boys, which was a new group home here in Lawrence. The president asked me to become chairperson of their advisory committee to try to figure out what they should do with kids who were having to go to institutional settings. The local judge thought that they were often ineffective, expensive and inhumane. There was a lot of literature about conclusions around the country that that was, in fact, often the case.

Q: Were these people who had broken the law?

A: Yes. For example, in Texas, the judge said that they could no longer do the kinds of inhumane things that they had been doing in that Texas school. That was back in about 1968. So he closed it down. He said it would never be put up again because of the cruel, inhuman, physical damage sorts of things. For example, one of the things they did was to beat the kids on their feet every night if they got a demerit that day. Then they would get so many blows to their feet with a rod. Unfortunately, the kind of damage that produced over the years was tremendous. They had to walk in pain forever. That was just one example. In Massachusetts the governor there closed the biggest institution and sent the kids home. There were a number of people around the country who had come to similar conclusions. So it looked like it might be possible for us to do something in this new group home that was being developed here that might have replications around the country. I began consulting with the president and the board. We hired two of our students, Lonnie and Elaine Phillips, as the first teaching parents. They were teaching with positive reinforcements, teaching social skills, academic skills,
anything and everything. We developed a curriculum for them. And sure enough, we were then able to get a grant from NIMH, who was interested in seeing if it was possible to develop an effective program locally, as opposed to the traditional large, obviously failing institutions around the country. We were working with Saleem Shah, director of that agency, and developed a series of grants. So for the next 20 years we worked for the original development, refinement, evaluation and dissemination of that model. One of the places where we sent it to was Boys Town.

Q.: Did this work somewhat in those settings?
A.: Yes. It is wonderful.

Q.: You have probably had quite a few publications from all of your research.
A.: Yes. Here is a list of publications.

Q.: There certainly are a great many articles in professional journals. You were also involved in some editorial activities as well as doing writing yourself.
A.: Yes, that’s right. I was the first editor of the first applied journal, The Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. So that was fun.

Q.: I suppose you served on University committees.
A.: Yes.

Q.: Do you remember any in particular?
A.: We set up a joint Ph.D. degree between psychology and human development. We set up a joint Ph.D. program for clinical psychologists and worked for several years on that committee. We hired a director to come in after that was approved. The results were wonderful to watch.

Q.: You’ve been a member of professional organizations, I suppose.
A: I have been a fellow in AAAS and a fellow in division 25 psychology and a fellow in the Society for Behavioral Analysis. Here is a list of the awards:

Five publications were selected as “Citation Classics” by Current Contents: Social & Behavioral Sciences.

Selected in 1967 by the Society for the Experimental Analysis of Behavior to be the Founding Editor of the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis.

1983 Received the University of Kansas Higuchi/Youngberg Research Achievement Award.

1984 Recognition Award for Outstanding Contributions to Programs for Children and Youth, Pressley Ridge School, Pittsburgh, PA

1987 The first Distinguished Contributions Award from The Teaching-Family Association “For Exemplary Contributions to the Teaching-Family Model and the Association.”

1993 Achievement Place and the Teaching-Family Model were selected as a Model Program in Service Delivery in Child and Family Mental Health by the Joint Task Force of the Section on Clinical Child Psychology and the Division of Child, Youth, and Family Services of the American Psychological Association.

1995 The Teaching-Family Association named a new award after me: The Montrose Wolf Award for exceptional application of the Teaching-Family Model in Treatment Foster Care.

1996 Boys Town’s Father Flanagan Award for Service to Youth

1996 The Teaching-Family Association Recognizes the Achievement Place Research Project, at the Life Span Institute, University of Kansas as its Founding Site with
Appreciation for Significant Contributions Made in the Research and
Development of the Teaching-Family Model.

1998    Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis Award for Distinguished
Service to Behavior Analysis for 1998.

1998    American Psychological Association, Division 25, Award for Outstanding
Applied Research - For innovative and important research on applications of
behavioral principles to address socially significant human behavior.

Q.:    Then you have also have had something to say about the continuing controversies
concerning foster care in Kansas.

A::    Yes, that’s right. It’s such a bad job. They do things wrong because it costs a little
more to do it right. So it has been tragic to watch that over the years, when it would be
possible to set up a really good program. Boys Town, for example, has sites all over the
country, replicating everything that we have done here. They have group homes. They
have treatment foster care. Those things were going on at the campus of Boys Town and
then all over the country.

Q.:    So what is it that you think Kansas should be doing in their foster care that they are not?

A:    They should be setting up a program, because it is important to make sure that you are
getting good foster parents, training them in how to provide good foster care.

Q.:    Do they train foster parents now?

A:    No. They might have a half-hour workshop on a Saturday or something. But they need
intense, continued training also. The training should be linked with consultation, where
they have a consultant assigned to them so they can answer questions. Also, we need to
build in evaluation, to make sure they learn and act on the things they are supposed to.
So what we do in our treatment foster care programs around the country is training, consulting, and evaluations. They are an integral part because they tell you where the strengths are so that you can reinforce them and where weaknesses are. We get feedback from all the consumers and all the line staff about each of these issues, training and consultation.

Q.: They seem to be trying to move children out of foster care faster. Is that necessarily a good thing?

A.: Well, it isn’t if you don’t have any place to send them, which is the way it is now.

Q.: Do you remember outstanding former students you have known who have gone on to greater things?

A.: Yes. One of the neat things about the teaching family model has been that any number of people have gone off and set up replications around the country, former students and Ph.D.s of our program, at Boys Town, for example. Pat Fieman is director of research at Boys Town. He is one of our Ph.D.s. We have a number of other people around the country.

Q.: Are your graduating students mostly connected with universities then?

A.: Some are with universities, Jon Bailey, for example, is at Florida State University. He is in the School of Psychology program. He works with a number of important issues in Florida. He has started a number of important programs for the developmentally disabled in a number of settings.

Q.: You have been involved in community activities with Achievement Place. Is that still going on?

A.: No, we had to close it down because we couldn’t afford the cutbacks in monetary
support. We hope to be able to reopen some day when there is funding. We can still do
the kinds of things we used to do because we have biannual meetings for the Teaching
Family Association, which is the association that grew out of Achievement Place. It’s
fun to go there and give awards and various things. We also have replications in other
places and other programs.

Q.: Are you going to have continuing involvement with KU?
A: Yes, they very kindly gave me my office and emeritus status, which allows me to
continue these kinds of things.

Q.: Will you continue to do research?
A: Yes.

Q.: What are some other things you plan to do in retirement?
A: We still enjoy Arizona, for example. So we are usually able to figure a way to get back
there. We are on the board of directors for the Intermountain Center for Human
Development that meets twice a year, once in Santa Fe in the summer and in Tucson in
the winter, so we go there, to see what’s going on with the graduates of our program and
contribute to their issues.

Q.: What is your assessment of the Department of Human Development and Family Life of
KU, past, present, hopes for the future, that kind of thing?
A: The Department of Human Development has really been wonderful. Every time I go
any place I always look to see if I should move to someplace else. And I always
conclude that this is still the best place in the world for the kind of basic research and
applied research, theory and practice and all. I continue to treasure my opportunities
here.
Q.: Anything else you’d like to add that I forgot?

A: No, I think that sums it up.

Q.: Thank you very much.