AN INTERVIEW WITH JUDITH LEBLANC

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History Project

KU Retirees' Club

University of Kansas

JUDITH LEBLANC

B.A., Psychology, Southern Methodist Cuniversity, 1957

M.S., Psychology, Kansas State University at Pittsburg, 1966

Ph.D., Developmental and Child Psychology, University of Kansas, 1970

Service at the University of Kansas

Acting Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development, 1969-70

Associate Director, Edna A. Hill Child Development Laboratory, 1970-72

Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development, 1970-74

Research Associate, Bureau of Child Research (now Schiefelbusch Institute for Research in Life Span Studies), 1971-present

Director, Edna A. Hill Child Development Laboratory, 1972-78

Associate Professor, Department of Human Development, 1974-78

Acting Associate Chairperson, Departmen tof Human Development, 1975-76

Co-Chairperson, Department of Human Development, 1976-84

Director, University of Kansas Institute for Research in Early Childhood Education of the Handicapped, 1977-85

Professor, Department of Human Development, 1978-97

Director of Computer Learning Center, Department of Human Development, 1984

Courtesy Faculty, Latin American Studies Program, 1987-present

Adjunct Professor, Department of Special Education, 1991-present

Associate Director for International Development, Schiefelbusch Institute for Research in Life Span Studies, 1991-present

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUDITH LEBLANC

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Q: I am speaking with Judith LeBlanc, who retired in 1997 as professor of Human Development and Special Education and also as the Associate Director for the Lifespan Institute for International Development at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas, on May 26, 1998. Where were you born and in what year?

A: Beaumont, Texas, in 1936.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: Eunice Estelle Thompson LeBlanc and Clifford Harris LeBlanc.

Q: What was their educational background?

A: Mother had two years of college and Dad had, I think, a year and a half.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

A: He was an engineer and then he became a draftsman for a company that he subsequently became president of.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes. Two brothers.

Q: Were they older or younger?

A: Older, twins five years older.

Q: Did you grow up in Beaumont?

A: Yes, until I graduated from high school.

Q: What do you remember about Beaumont? Was it a very big town?

A: It is about 90 miles northeast of Houston, almost in Louisiana, about 20 miles from the Louisiana border and about 20 miles from the Gulf Coast. I remember going to high school mainly.

Q: What elementary school did you attend?

A: Ogdon Elementary School.

Q: Were you in organizations such as the Girl Scouts?

A: My mother took a group of 15 of us in the Camp Fire Girls. She took us from Bluebird age all the way through Torchbearer, the highest rank. We all received the Torchbearer at the same time. The interesting thing was that I was a year younger than my grade group, because I had skipped a grade. So they had to wait until I was old enough to receive the award. So they postponed it a year. All 15 wanted to do it at the same time. She was nationally recognized for that. Mother worked a lot with young people.

Q: You went to camp, I suppose, and camping.

A: Oh, yes, in the summertime.

Q: Did World War II affect you and your family?

A: Well, in one sense, but in a very minor sense relative to other people. We had the usual rationing and those kinds of things. We did a lot of war effort things in our service groups.

Q: What sort of things did you do?

A: We would send packages to the boys overseas and collect things. We collected string and tin foil , as I recall.

Q: I wonder what they planned to do with string?

A: I have no idea.

Q: What Junior High did you go to?

A: Davy Crockett Junior High.

Q: And then you went to high school in Beaumont also.

A: It was just called Beaumont High School. It was the only high school, except for one in a suburb.

Q: What were your favorite classes?

A: That's an interesting question. I never really thought about it. In high school?

Q: Yes.

A: It probably depended on the teacher because I enjoyed biology, but I had a really good biology teacher. I enjoyed drama, because I had a really good drama teacher. So I think went more by teacher.

Q: Were you in plays?

A: Yes, but I wasn't really that good. When the play went to state I ended up being the person who did most of the make up work.

Q: Did you have honors in high school?

A: Honors? No. In other words, I didn't graduate as valedictorian. We didn't have a lot of honors in our high school. I was on the student council and I ran for a couple of offices. I usually came in second. I wouldn't run for the lower offices. I ran for the big ones. And I was editor of the yearbook.

Q: Any other extracurricular activities?

A: I was in the orchestra. I played the cello. I played the piano for 15 years and voice for eight years. I also belonged to a choral group. We sang for the military after the war because, of course, there were still a lot of people in the military. We would go overseas.

Q: That must have been very interesting. You went to Europe, I suppose.

A: Yes, we went to Europe. We went to a lot of different places. We went to New York when I was 12. Then we went to Europe, Hawaii, Greenland, a variety of different places.

Q: There aren't very many high schools that do that kind of thing.

A: The high school didn't do it. This was a private organization.

Q: Did you have to have a lot of fund-raising to do this?

A: Yes, to a certain degree. But the military actually paid for it. I mean they took us in military planes to entertain.

Q: Did you have summer jobs or jobs after school?

A: I worked in my father's company, mostly during college.

Q: What did you do?

A: Secretarial work. I substituted for people who were going on vacation.

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

A: I didn't realize that people didn't go to college until I got out of high school. So yes, I presume so. It was never discussed.

Q: Where did you go?

A: My undergraduate work was at Southern Methodist University.

Q: Why did you choose that school?

A: Because it was an outstanding Texas school in music and I majored in music my first year and a half.

Q: Then you switched to psychology after that. Why did you decide not to major in music?

A: I wasn't good enough to be a concert pianist, and I decided I didn't want to be a music teacher, a piano teacher seeing students come in one after the other every thirty minutes. I wanted something a little more active.

Q: Did you have influential teachers in your undergraduate years?

A: I liked the teachers in the School of Religion, so I ended up minoring in Religion. The interesting thing about it was that at Southern Methodist they weren't necessarily teaching the

Methodist religion. They were teaching the history of religion, theory of religion, those kinds of things. So I learned a lot about the various religions of the world.

Q: Where is Southern Methodist?

A: It is in Dallas.

Q: Were you involved in extracurricular activities in college?

A: Yes, I was in some of the sports things. I did sports in high school too, swimming. I taught swimming. I guess the first time I taught swimming I was 12. I had my junior livesaving. They needed day camp teachers, so I started doing that early on. And I was involved in extracurricular sports in college, and of course the usual parties.

Q: Did you have honors in college?

A: No.

Q: And you said you worked in the summer for your father's company. Then when did you graduate?

A: It must have been 1957.

Q: Then what did you do after graduation?

A: Actually, it was very interesting. I went to Houston and for a year I worked in a public relations office. It was a very small company, so I essentially was a jack of all trades. I decided I was not meant to be a glorified secretary, basically. So I quit. Houston needed 50 teachers that year because they didn't have enough teachers and they had an influx of kids. So they said anyone with a college degree could come and apply and I did. Because I had a psychology degree, they decided I could teach special education. I had already said I would never be a teacher, which was kind of interesting. Then they wanted me to teach kids with retardation and I said I would never do that. So they gave me the classes with the physically handicapped. Now my career, of course, ends up being focused on kids with severe retardation. Never say never.

Q: So you taught these physically handicapped kids. Was this an elementary school situation?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you find it difficult? You evidently hadn't had much training in this.

A: Two things helped me. It was a fourth, fifth and sixth grade. They gave me all the stack of curriculum manuals. And I only had three hours of education in my background at that point. Of course, I had to go back to school to maintain temporary certification. Then there were a couple of aides who had worked there for years who took care of the children's physical needs. One of them was probably in her late 50s at that time. I was very friendly. She told me about all the kids and how to handle them, because I had not seen that many kids with disabilities at that point.

Q: What kind of disabilities did they have? Were they mostly students who couldn't walk?

A: It was cerebral palsy, spina bifida, polio--we still had the polio.

Q: So the kids could learn, they just couldn't get around.

A: It was interesting the mix of kids. Some could learn quite easily and some had a little bit of retardation. But they could learn.

Q: How long did you have this job?

A: Two or three years. I decided once I got my certification...

Q: So you were going to school at night and in the summer. Where were you going?

A: The University of Houston. And I was getting certification in special education and regular ed. Then I decided to make my regular education certification good I needed to teach regular school too. I think I did that for a year or so.

Q: What grade did you teach?

A: Sixth grade. Then I decided I needed some different things in my life and I liked to travel,

so I looked into teaching in the American military schools. I took a job in Germany for three years and taught there in the military school in Heidelberg, Germany.

Q: What grade did you teach?

A: Sixth grade.

Q: Did you have a chance to travel in Germany and Europe?

A: Oh, yes. I traveled all over. I learned to ski there. I traveled to Greece, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, all of the countries.

Q: Did you travel with other teachers?

A: Yes, and my mother on occasion. She would come over and visit me in the summertime and we would go.

Q: That sounds like a great job.

A: It didn't pay very much.

Q: Were these military children different from the students you had taught in Houston?

A: In once sense, yes, because there were probably in that era--I'm not sure that would hold true in the schools today-- more children who were kind of on their own, latchkey kids, not because their parents were both working but because their mothers were frequently alcoholics.

Q: This was the military people?

A: Yes. They didn't have any roots. This was not necessarily the officers because the officers made enough money. We had the very, very good and we had the very, very bad students, because the parents who took advantage of this moving around in the world, their kids did quite well. But we had a lot of behavioral problems too, ones whose parents didn't take advantage of the opportunities, and did take advantage of the opportunity to stick around the clubs and that kind of thing.

Q: So you did this for about three years and then what did you do?

A: I decided I needed to get serious about life. So I came back and took off in my car and went across the United States looking for a job.

Q: Were you looking for a job as a teacher?

A: Not necessarily. I was looking for any kind of job that might interest me. I even applied for a job in northern California, a position as a photographer for the sports for the university, because I had also done photography work. He said he would hire me but I couldn't go into the men's locker rooms. But then I got all the way out to northern California and started back. I was visiting with friends along the way looking for jobs. I ended up in Colorado and ran out of money. I found a temporary job. What I ended up working with again--I fell into the job--teaching a classroom of kids that had essentially been kicked out of special education because of their behavioral problems, the severe kids. So I was back in my field of special education again, more by happenstance than anything else. The class was in the basement of a Mormon Church. They had donated that space. They were all the rejects from special ed, again, you couldn't do that today, but they were able to do that then. So we took the worst of the lot. They were pretty good kids, actually. I didn't think they were all that bad.

Q: But they just couldn't get along, even in the regular special education classrooms.

A: The teachers couldn't handle them.

Q: Now what city in Colorado was this in?

A: This was in Denver. Then on my weekends I went skiing and taught skiing so I could afford to ski because, again, I was not making very much money, just enough to pay my rent and keep the rest in my pocket really. But I liked to ski, so I volunteered to teach when they had overloads for the regular teachers of skiing. I taught the little kids.

Q: What did you like about teaching these rejects from special education?

A: Well, it's something that I have carried with me all along. I saw them as people. I didn't

see them as problems. We had one little kid who would run away. He was part Indian. But he was very smart, actually. He just had severe behavior problems. We were in the basement and he would sit in a tree and watch us. So we knew he was there. Well, eventually he trusted us enough that we could send him to the store because we had to buy certain things. We had to do everything ourselves. We had a certain budget to live within. But it was sponsored by the Crippled Children's organization. They weren't crippled, well, a couple of them had some problems.

Q: Oh, this was not a public school setting?

A: It was also aided by the public school funds but the rights of people with handicaps had not come in yet.

Q: Was this in the late 1950s or '60s?

A: I left Europe in 1964. In 1965 I was doing that until I got a call from my ex-professor at the University of Houston. He was moving to Kansas to do a research project down in Parsons, Kansas. He called and asked if I would like to be his coordinator of this research project, to which I agreed because He was offering me about 10 times more than I was making at the time.

Q: Now this was again working with special education. Was this working with children?

A: Parsons State Hospital for Retardation, kids with retardation.

Q: What was this project?

A: It was called the Cottage Demonstration Project and one reason I liked it was because it was using fundamental techniques to work with kids in the real world and try to move them back into a more normal life as opposed to staying in institutions. It was one of the earlier projects to do that. We have subsequently deinstitutionalized a lot of our institutions. But this was well before that time.

Q: So were you teaching them housekeeping skills, etc.

A: Community skills and how work in the homes, how to work in a community environment, if we could ever find them a job. We weren't too lucky in those days. We are much more fortunate now to be able to do those things.

Q: What are the difficulties of working with populations of this kind? It must be frustrating at times.

A: Well, you can get bunged up a bit until you learn what you're doing. Some of them are physically dangerous. Well, I have a theory about that. I have a theory that if you treat them like people they will not harm you. But if you treat them like they are a problem, they will. If you try to push them around, they will push right back. But then I do too if somebody pushes me around. So I don't see that as abnormal. I prefer to talk to them, reason with them. People say, "They don't understand." Well, I think they do. I really do believe we are missing the boat in terms of giving these people their just due. We label them as people with retardation. But that doesn't mean they don't understand. They just have a different way of learning. I prefer to call them people with different abilities rather than disabilities.

Q: You said it was a cottage project. Did you have them in small homelike settings such as group homes?

A: No, it was a three-story building. Each floor, because it was old-time architecture, was like a cottage.

Q: How long were you involved with that project?

A: Two and a half to three years.

Q: Then what did you do?

A: I came here to go to school because the Department of Human Development then changed, thanks to Frances Horowitz and Dick Schiefelbusch. I started working toward a Ph.D. project. I came here to get my Ph.D. in that program before there was a program.

Q: Where did you get your master's?

A: While I was in Parsons I went to Pittsburg State College in Pittsburg. Actually, that was kind of interesting too. They gave me credit for all but nine hours of a master's degree because I had continually gone to the university. They interviewed me and decided I really did know most of what they would teach me in school. So I had to take statistics and a couple of other courses and then do a thesis.

Q: What was your thesis on?

A: On discrimination learning and problems that kids have when they are trying to learn. Basic discrimination in things like left right. Left right orientation was what I was talking about, but I was really interested in kids who reversed letters.

Q: Learning disabled?

A: Dyslexia.

Q: When did you get your master's?

A: 1966.

Q: So you had your master's and then you decided to go to KU. Did you say they were just setting up a Ph.D. program in Human Development?

A: Actually, I went there in 1966 and I don't think the program started until 1968. They were taking steps toward being fully accredited.

Q: Was your major psychology?

A: Psychology and Human Development. It was a joint program between the two departments.

Q: Do you remember influential teachers from that time?

A: Lots of them. Barbara Etzel, Don Bair, Mont Wolfe, Todd Risley. They were all very famous nationally and internationally for their work in behavior analysis.

Q: Who was your major professor?

A: Don Bair.

Q: What was your dissertation for your Ph.D.?

A: It was called "Continuous Reinforcement of Possible Behavior Modification Procedure for Decreasing Resistance to Extinction." The Department of Human Development is an applied department. But I had had at this point a lot of applied experience. I chose instead to go back into the rat lab to learn the basic skills of experimental work so that I would be able to use that knowledge in my applied work later.

Q: So you worked with rats on this project.

A: I was working with kids on other projects.

Q: So this was behavior modification with rats.

A: Yes.

Q: I have heard that behavior modification is a major theme of the HDFL Department.

A: We prefer to call it behavior analysis. Behavior modification usually means to most people that you are giving candy or rewards often not related to the task at hand. It's a lot more than that. We delve into, because we are experimentally oriented, the analysis of the interaction of a person's behavior in their environment, the static environment as well as the active environment and historical aspects of the person too. So we really do look at the whole person. We are not into just tossing M & Ms to kids. I feel very strongly about that. I am not a behavior modifier. I am a behavior analysist.

Q: Were you working with retarded or learning disabled children? Was that a focus of your Ph.D.?

A: Children who had some learning problems, yes. And I was also working with preschool children. As soon as I was hired by the department, a year before I got my degree, I was the

associate director of the Child Development Laboratory in the Department of Human Development.

Q: They had nursery schools at that time.

A: Yes, over in the old building, an old house, across from the stadium. But it has since been removed.

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

A: 1970.

Q: This was a very interesting time at KU while you were here getting your Ph.D.

A: There were a lot of drug problems, a lot of Vietnam War problems. There were hippie problems.

Q: Did this affect your department? Did you see students in HDFL being involved in these things or the professors?

A: I saw some students getting in trouble. The professors tried to help the students. Well, thee were some professors, John Wright, who marched on the football field, antiwar demonstration. He almost got himself in trouble but he lasted. He is a good professor too, and he was very concerned about his students. I was here during the time they asked us to forego all grading of students and that kind of thing, and the burning of the Union. And we had alert times when we had to spend time in our buildings over night on a rotation basis.

Q: Did you do that too?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: So did my husband. Then after you got your Ph.D., what did you do?

A: I started working as a professor in the department and as the director of the Child Development Laboratories. I did it before I even finished my Ph.D.

Q: So now instead of teaching special education people you were teaching college students

how to be preschool teachers?

A: That and teaching college kids how to teach kids with learning problems. My research emphasis has always been on analyzing why certain problems occur and looking for teaching techniques that would overcome those learning problems. Because, again, I think, it's not their fault when children don't learn. It's the fault of the teaching procedures that we are using. But it is not necessarily the fault of the teacher because we don't know what the right procedures are. My major research all through the years has been on trying to find ways to help people learn who have trouble learning. It can be adults, it can be kids, it can be mild learning disabilities, it can be severe. I like the more difficult problems. I like challenges. I get bored if I don't have challenges. That's why I subsequently moved down toward the more severe level.

Q: I assume you were researching primarily with people.

A: Yes.

Q: Were these people from the Lawrence community?

A: These were from our preschool population at that time. We were integrated very early on with kids who had learning problems, retardation, autism. We had them in our classes.

Q: I see, with regular children.

A: We had our own inclusion program before inclusion became popular.

Q: Evidently, then you think this is a good idea.

A: That's a loaded question. I think that all children should have an individualized education. In order to do that, it may mean that children with retardation at certain times would be integrated with kids who move faster. But it also means that I am not necesarily wanting those kids to sit there during French class and not learn anything. I would prefer that they would be out learning something that would be useful for them. I am of the philosophy that these people can work and it's our job to figure out a way to get them to do it. They can become contributing

members of the community. They may be different all their lives, but then everybody is different. What is a disability? If you wear glasses you are disabled, if you stop to think about it. It means that you don't have perfect vision. I have implants in my eyes at this point. Am I disabled? It may not be what society thinks, but yes, in the true sense of the word. It is all on a continuum. These people are my friends, kids with autism, etc. They write letters to me.

Q: Autism seems to be one of the more difficult of these disabilities to cope with.

A: We didn't catch it early and we didn't know enough about it early on. I think in the next decade we are going to see a whole different population of people with autism. First of all, we are identifying them much earlier than we used to. We used to could not identify them until three or four years of age. Now they are identifying them as early as a year or a year and a half. The infant people are working hard to try to figure out if they can identify them earlier. The earlier you identify them and the sooner you get them into a specialized program, individualized, the better off they are. But you see, I think all people have learning disabilities in one way or another. I don't memorize well. Neither did Einstein, so I am in good company. That's why he flunked elementary school. He was bored too. I think everyone has specific ways of learning and specific things that will hold them back. I think our educational system, if it were ideal, would handle this. And also I think that education should not stop. I think the public schools should be responsible for adult education and continuing education, or the state system. I don't think it necessarily has to be public schools or state universities but the state systems, I think, should be responsible. What happens is you have adults who can't use computers but their kids can do circles around them. You have kids who are living in a totally different world than their parents. This is difficult. We should keep everyone on target in learning. That's ideal.

Q: And the people would have to want to, which some do and some don't.

A: Well, I think they would want to if it was presented right. Learning doesn't have to be a

chore. Learning should be fun. If it were fun, people would want to do it. Learning should be fun, it should be functional, and it should be failure proof.

Q: Oh, really? There has certainly been controversy about that.

A: As much as possible. Nothing is perfectly failure proof. And I recognize that you do need to make errors in order to be able to learn how to make errors in life. But for the most part, you shouldn't have so much failure that it becomes a burden to you and it becomes offensive to you. It can't be fun if you have a lot of errors.

Q: This has always been a problem in the schools. There are always a certain amount of kids who don't learn very well and feel inferior.

A: We don't know the techniques to teach them, or if we don know them, we are not using them.

Q: Which is hard for one teacher with 25 or 30 kids.

A: I understand. I have taught kids with 45 in my class, in the military school. There were 35 in the Houston school, but they were overcrowded.

Q: That's certainly very difficult. You were talking about autism. KU is known for its program in that, isn't it?

A: Yes. Jim Sherman and his work with community living organizations. Jim and I were co-chairs of the department for a while, for about eight years actually.

Q: When was that?

A: That must have been 1976 to 1984.

Q: Was there anything specific going on in the department at that time or that you originated?

A: Frances Horowitz was leaving. She was the one who had originated the department, also with the help of Dick Schiefelbusch from the Bureau of Child Research. When she was going on up into administration--she wasn't leaving the university--we had to vote on a new chair. Jim

Sherman and I were among the top five or so candidates. A couple of candidates opted out. They didn't want to do it. He could have done it himself, because he beat me out in voting, but he said he didn't want to. So we became equal co-chairs. He asked me if I would do it with him, which I did for about eight years. At that time Barbara Etzel had gone up the hill, who was the director of the Child Development Laboratories. So I was also the director of the Child Development Laboratories for about half of that time.

Q: Were you teaching classes also?

A: I was teaching full loads and doing research.

Q: You must have been very busy. What classes did you teach?

A: I taught a class for undergraduates that was called Introduction to Research with Children, because I believe strongly that you have to learn by doing. What this class was designed around was to let the students have their first opportunity to work with real, live little being under well-controlled conditions. That's basically what we did. Their job was to teach them something that the teachers indicated they needed to learn. So this was also a part of the Child Development Laboratory System. It allowed the students to learn how to work with children before they moved into their practicum. It enabled the ones who were going to get their certification to have a little experience with kids under better controlled conditions before they went into their practicum experience.

Q: Did you teach mostly undergraduates?

A: No. I taught several graduate courses. I taught a graduate course in applied techniques. The one that most everyone in the department remembers me for is a course in applied research and what is involved and how one reads the research literature critically. Iit has been my experience that undergraduates really do it and graduates still do it. They believe everything they read. In order to change that, I worked out ways for them to analyze, again in a very active

environment, research and critique research articles so they could learn how to look at what was really good and what was not, based on what you need to do to have controls in research.

Q: I believe you went on a trip to Japan.

A: Yes, early on. Then I went on a second one. I worked with a professor who had come over for a year's sabbatical. We called him Peter. Actually, that was his Christian name. Fugita was his last name and he had a first name, a Japanese name. But he had also been christened Peter because his father worked with a missionary. Anyway, Peter came and he declared that he was going to bring me and Barbara Etzel to Japan within the next five years, which he did, so that we could go around and teach his people the same things we were teaching at the university.

Q: Did this have to do with special education?

A: Somewhat and just learning in general. You see, all of the special education and learning ride together. They were more interested in Japan at that time in the learning aspect, what's involved when people learn and how one can analyze this.

Q: Were they using different teaching methods than people did over here?

A: Quite likely, yes. They always have. They are much more structured, I think, than we are.

Q: And you were teaching them how to learn about different ways of teaching people who had difficulties.

A: And also how to research which ways are better or will work for a particular individual.

Q: Have you had publications? I suppose you have because you've been involved with research.

A: Yes.

Q: Any books?

A: I have only edited one book. I have had chapters in books but I've never written a book.

I'm in the process of doing that right now based on my work in South America.

Q: Were you on departmental or university committees, I suppose?

A: A ton of them.

Q: Any particular that you remember?

A: Again, they are all listed in my Vita.

Q: Do you belong to professional organizations?

A: Yes. I belong to the American Psychological Association. I was a named Fellow in that. I belong to the Council For Exceptional Children, the National Association for Young Children, and of course the Association for Behavior Analysis. In Behavior Analysis I was given the first award for my work in international development and then since that time they have had an annual award for people who promote international development.

Q: Have you held offices in these organizations?

A: No. I'm not politically oriented in that sense.

Q: Have you ever had sabbaticals?

A: Yes. My first sabbatical was to Europe and we traveled Germany, Italy, England and mainly looked at work that colleagues were doing and presented our work to them. Barbara Etzel went with me on that sabbatical.

Q: And this was about how people learn.

A: Yes, and then after seven years I had my second sabbatical and I went to Latin America on that. That's when I first started working regularly each year down in Peru.

Q: About when was that?

A: In 1985-86. In 1981 I took my first trip to Peru because the director of the Ann Sullivan Center of Peru found me at an American Psychological Association meeting. She had come to the United States to learn more about behavior analysis because she had opened a center for all

of the rejects of Lima, Peru, whose parents couldn't find educational services or even psychological services. People wouldn't work with them. I was a visiting professor in Venezuela. So she tapped onto that to get me down to Peru for that first trip. That was in 1981. She started the center in 1979.

Q: So you were advising her on how to teach these children.

A: What she wanted was concentration on seeing what they were doing, see if they were doing it right. The reason I stayed with the program--and subsequently it has gone into programs all over Latin America and Spain--was because they were doing things quite well. It was on the basis of them having read a couple of books that had been translated into Spanish, which I found absolutely amazing. They were doing pretty much state of the art work at that time.

Q: And you said you were also in Venezuela at this time?

A: Yes, I had gone there because I was helping them set up a preschool laboratory in their university.

Q: So you are saying that these countries are doing similar things to what is being done here.

A: Perhaps a little behind us because of not having the funding we have for those kinds of things. They have the same problems and they are looking for the same solutions.

Q: Have you had outstanding former students who have gone on to other things?

A: All of my students are outstanding. First of all, they all have jobs and that's good.

Q: That's amazing.

A: And most with universities.

Q: You mean they are now college professors or running preschools?

A: College professors. Some are running preschools, some are in more clinical type psychology. Some are in community work for adult people with retardation.

Q: So there are a lot of jobs for these peoples.

A: It is getting tougher and tougher. But for the most part, if they are really good, they will find a job and a pretty good job.

Q: You said you have continued to be involved in Peru with this program. What is it you do?

A: I went there first in 1981, then I went back in 1983 to do a conference. Then in 1985-86 I took a sabbatical and spent a year there, thanks to the help of Dick Shiefflebush and the Life Span Institute as well as the blessings of Jim Sherman, my co-chairperson. But I had resigned the year before as co-chair. And with the blessings of my dean they were able to work out a way for me to spend a year, and subsequently thereafter I spent a semester a year. So in order to do that the dean gave his permission--again Dick Shiefflebush was helping with that--and what I did was double up on my teaching in the other semester. So I did double time in the time that I was here. I taught more than the average annual number of student credit hours for our department. So I carried my load that way.

Q: Did you have to learn Spanish to be working down there?

A: The only Spanish I knew when I went down there was, "El gato bebe leche." Do you understand Spanish?

Q: A little bit. The cat, something about the milk.

A: The cat drinks milk, which was totally nonfunctional. And I remembered it from the fourth grade. I have no idea why.

Q: Did you take Spanish in the fourth grade?

A: Yes, and I had some in college, which didn't help me either apparently. I do believe in learning by doing, as I have said before. I think language is a perfect example of that. If you are really going to learn the language, you need to be immersed in the language. So then the vocabulary I picked up were preschool educator's terms, you know, like the colors, the shapes. That also wasn't very functional in social situations but it got me through the class time. Then

gradually I got tutors there in Peru and studied a bit on my own and picked it up. I have a very large vocabulary and a very poor grammar, basically.

Q: How do you like living in Peru as compared to living here?

A: I wouldn't do it full time but it is very active and the work at the center is very active. Tthey work from 8 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night. I pretty much try to keep up with them. So even in retirement I am saying I am going to spend time here in Lawrence. Also, I go to my physical therapist for my arthritis. She gets me in shape so I can go back. Then I come back and she has to get me in shape again.

Q: It must be very hard to work those hours teaching little children.

A: These are not all little children. The center serves children from birth to whenever. They have programs from infant stimulation to supported employment for adults.

Q: What city in Peru is this in?

A: Lima, the capital. Then the center is also at this point well known throughout Latin America and especially in Spain, and they have model centers that are building up like them. The center has been named the University of Kansas Model Center of International Cooperation. People from other universities and programs have also joined me and go down there on a regular basis, an annual basis. They don't stay as long as I do. I usually stay from four to six months.

Q: Do you have a place to live down there?

A: I live with the family of the director. And initially I had to pay my own air fare. Now they have made good friends with American Airlines and they get free tickets from them. It's a shoestring operation. They don't have much money.

Q: It's not a government function.

A: No, there is no government right to education in that sense. They don't really want the government to control it because the government keeps changing. The curriculum of education

changes as the government changes. See, this is what's wrong when you have national education. State education, see, your curriculum doesn't really go so much with political changes. But theirs is federal. So if somebody hires a new minister of education you get a new curriculum. So they chose to stay out of that system. But they do say that no one will be turned away for inability to pay.

Q: That could be a problem.

A: It is a huge problem. There are 250 families of students being served there.

Q: This must be quite a large school.

A: Not that big. I have a brochure from them which you can take with you. They do two turns. They do one group in the morning and one group in the afternoon four days a week. So the maximum time that a student will be there is 16 hours a week. The minimum time is three to four hours a week. It is strongly dependent upon parent cooperation in the education of their child. Parents who have a child being served there sign a contract saying they will participate in the education of their child and they will participate in their own education to learn how to educate their child.

Q: Does this mean they help out at school or are these things they are supposed to be doing at home?

A: We want them to learn how to work with their child and learn how to treat their child the way they should treat their child. Learn how to deal with crisis situations. Those who are on scholarship do have to pay a certain number of service hours in order to maintain their scholarships. So they might help in painting the school or they might help in the office. Actually, our whole supported employment program runs on unpaid people who go out in the community and work with these kids. They are parents who are making up their hours. So it is an unusual program in that sense. We have special training programs for those people. They

don't work with their own child, they work with someone else's. The center requires the parents to have 90 hours of education, roughly a year, 90 to 120, and in large groups we have bimonthly 300 to 400 people in a group where we bring in special topics and discuss them. Then once or twice a month we have small group, 30 to 60 people, not really a small group, education. That's where they work in their classroom settings and age groups with the teachers. They actually do a lot of role playing learning how to work with their kids. Then we have individual education in the classroom, where the parents come into the classroom and work with their child to learn how to work with them. Then we have individual, where the teacher goes to the home and works with the parents there. So it is a very intense parent participation program.

Q: Do they have anything like that in the states here?

A: To that extent, not to my knowledge. Many people tell me that people in the United States would not do that. Many parents that I have talked to in the United States say, "Why don't we have that program?"

Q: I would think parents would want to know how to cope with these problems.

A: We don't give them silly tasks. We don't ask them to sit down across the table and teach their child something. We ask them to take that child in the kitchen while they are preparing dinner and while they are engaged in a functional activity, teach that child. And while they are going to the grocery store, teach the child. So we're not trying to alter their schedule in any way. We want them to include the child in so that the child can learn in the real world.

Q: Are the children who come out of this program able to function in the real world and get jobs?

A: That is our goal. In most cases if the parents really do their part, we're successful. I'd say we are 90 to 95 percent successful. The times when we are not successful is when we've got home environments that are not really good. It's not necessarily the fault of the parent. It could

be that the mother is living with her parents and they are messing up the system. We serve 250 people in a very intensive program for right at $325,000 a year. So it is a very inexpensive program too, a little over $1,000 some odd dollars a year per child, or per person. They are not all children.

Q: During the time you have lived here in Lawrence, have you been involved in community activities?

A: I haven't had much time since I was working pretty hard while I was here and have been traveling since then. So, unfortunately, no, I haven't. I like to go to concerts and I go to the art fairs, etc. But my life is so active, I have very little time left.

Q: You are continuing your involvement with this program in Peru. Do you have any continuing involvement with KU since your retirement?

A: Yes, because Dr. Steve Schroeder, who is the current director of the Life Span Institute, which used to be the Bureau of Child Research, is actively involved with me in seeing that we, through a private foundation that he and his wife Carolyn Schroeder have, they are actively involved in working with me on that. And I'm still, in name only, the coordinator of international development for the Life Span Institute in recognition of this connection between Peru and now all the other Latin American countries. Peru is now the central location from which we work out into the other countries.

Q: The Life Span Institute then has to do with these programs in Latin America.

A: That's one thing they do. It's a huge multimillion dollar research institute that involves many, many different projects, things over at the Medical Center, Juniper Gardens in Kansas City.

Q: They give grants to these projects?

A: They don't give the grants, no. They are a central organization through which these

grants come. And they don't pay me, just in case anyone is wondering. They did help with my payment while I was still working here at the university. I had to go on their payroll the last three or four years because some differences of opinions came into administration. So I went on their payroll for the time I was in Peru. That was because of the support that Dr. Steve Schroeder has given to the institute.

Q: It looks like you have some interesting Peruvian arts and crafts in your home in Lawrence.

A: I like that kind of decor, yes. And you make enough trips going back and forth since 1985, and you can bring home a few things.

Q: So what you will be doing in retirement is primarily continuing on with this Latin American project.

A: Steve said to me the other day, "You know, you planned that pretty well. You planned it so that when you retired, you would have something to do." I said, "It wasn't planned, but it did work out very well." I did take early retirement so I could be more active in this. I'm only 62 at this point. But I wanted to have more time to devote to this.

Q: I see that you have a piano. Do you also continue your interest in music?

A: I wish I did more of it. The piano was because of the time when I majored in music. My mother insisted that I bring it always with me. But I don't get to play it as much as I would like.

Q: What is your assessment of KU or the Department of Human Development?

A: I think KU is a fantastic school. I went to school there and I have worked there all my career. The Department of Human Development has been known for years as the top research department in the nation in the field of behavior analysis. So I feel very honored to have been a part of that history, a part of the history of the department development and seeing it advance and diversify.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add that I haven't asked or left out.

A: I don't think so, just that when people retire, I think it is important that they have something to do.

Q: It doesn't sound like that will be a problem for you.

A: We are doing an educational video in South America about our work in Peru. So I am keeping my skills up in computer, photography and now I am into video editing and learning how to do that.

Q: Are you video taping how these learning processes take place in one center?

A: We video tape examples of what goes on in the center. Then we put it together as an educational video for other professionals. We have a very large professional educational and parent educational program, international. People are really after this information that we have. That's why I'm trying to write the book now too. Everyone's after me to do that. So I'm combining the book with the videos and the manuals for the videos. I figure I might as well be doing this work all at the same time.

Q: So the book is on what they are doing in these centers.

A: In this center. This center serves as a hub for the centers, the educational center that is a hub for the centers. Then hopefully they in their countries will become the hub. The idea is multiplicative education. It's the only way. Bringing one person at a time up from Latin America and educating them is not going to solve their problem. Many times they stay. And I can't blame them. The opportunities are pretty good here, relatively speaking. It's better to educate them there and it is better to educate them so they can educate themselves. So the center is really a resource center, an adult educational center, and a center that serves special kids. They are working right now on actually receiving formal papers for being a university level technical school in a sense, to get master's degrees. They are not going to compete with the other universities, but they want to give a master's degree in the specialty of retardation, autism and

related disabilities. So that's where we are.

Q: Thank you very much.