Barbara Owens: This is an interview with Joy Teague, recently retired from Deakin University, conducted by Barbara Owens. The interview is being recorded on the 14th of January 2006 in Clifton Springs, Victoria, Australia. It’s part of the Computing Educators Oral History Series. [clock chimes ] Hi Joy!

Joy Teague: Hi, Barbara.

B: Did I pronounce your name correctly?

J: Yes, you did.

B: OK. I would like you to begin telling me something about your parents. For example, what did they do for a living?

J: My father was a farmer. Before my mother was married, she — during the War she worked in a government department in … she was a shorthand typist. After she was married, she was a farmer’s wife. Wheat and sheep farm. I grew up in the north of the state on a farm. When I turned … when I finished high school, my parents moved to Melbourne because I was going
to be moving to Melbourne anyway. My mother never liked living on a farm.

B: Hmm. Did either of your parents have any degrees? What were their educational …?

J: No. No. I don’t think I have … apart from my brother on my father’s side I don’t think I have … I’m sorry, that’s not true … but my brother and I were the first people in our families, either side, to get degrees.

B: Were you a good student when you were in school?

J: Yes, I was a very good student. Yes.

B: Did you take courses in mathematics and science?

J: I did. I took typical physics, chemistry, two maths, English Year 12. There were … the school I was at there were thirty-two of us, I think, in Year 12. In the science/maths strain, there were three boys and three girls. In fact, there were two boys and two girls who had come through with me. The third girl had failed Year 11 and repeated and joined us. And there was a boy who had failed Year 12 and joined us in Year 12. We were equally divided male and female, which was probably fairly unusual.

B: Were there people that were particular influences on you when you were in school in those early years? Positive or negative.

J: Well, my mother, who hadn’t had much education, pushed … wanted me … wanted us to have education. Apart from that she didn’t really think women should do anything with their education. She didn’t think women should go out to work and take jobs from men. When they were married she thought that they should be staying at home and looking after their men. And [giggles] … she actually did her degree … she started when my brother and I were both at university. I went to university as a part-time student. My brother and I graduated together. My mother was still studying at that time. She did an arts degree.

B: What was your … she did an arts degree? What was your brother studying?

J: He was doing … well, he got a Ph.D. in applied maths.

B: So both math. Is there … you said your father had been a sheep farmer and moved to Melbourne. And what was he doing in Melbourne?

J: Well, he retired in his early 50s and then they bought a hardware store, for more or less something for him to do. Oh! He was driving trucks, delivery trucks, for a bit. Because he was still fairly young and he needed something to occupy himself, so he just … and that’s the sort of thing that he did.

B: Can you attribute why both your brother and you were following the math curriculum?
J: Well, my brother actually was sent to a technical school from Year 7, which … because he was going to be a farmer. But he was not terribly interested in going off to farm. So he went — technical schools finished at Year 11 — but he went to a technical school until Year 11 and then changed to a high school after that.

B: I see.

J: And we were just both interested in maths and science.

B: I see. I see. So your parents encouraged you both, but you brother more so — because of what you’d said about your mother — or … ?

[5:03]

J: No, no. I mean my father didn’t see much use for education because nobody he knew had been educated. In fact when I was about fourteen or fifteen [years old], fifteen probably, he said to me that if I left school he’d buy me a little red car. Well, I would have been too young to drive anyway, but he was going to buy me a little red car when I got to eighteen. He thought I should be at home helping my mother, which is what girls did in his family.

B: Hmm! I see.

J: But my mother didn’t want that.

B: Can you think of anybody else that was a big influence on you during those years — a teacher, a friend?

J: I probably … no, not really. I remember my maths teacher more than anyone else. But I don’t know that he was particularly either encouraging or discouraging. I guess we just had him for more classes throughout the latter part of schooling than anyone else. In terms of me continuing on, it was just what I wanted to do and I guess I just do what I want to do. [chuckles]

B: I see. Why did you choose to go to school in Melbourne?

J: Well, I didn’t actually. I … by the time I was finished Year 12, I was tired of studying and I went looking for a job. And in fact at the end of Year 11 — and I guess this is an influence on me — at the end of Year 11, we were down in Melbourne for holiday and I somehow went to — the University of Melbourne had a career guidance center and somehow I went along there — because up to that time, I had decided I was going to be a pharmacist or, rather, I think probably my mother thought that that would be something for me to do. And I thought … in Year 11 I was … thought I’d find out if there was anything else I might be interested in doing. And I went along and I met a man who spoke to me, told me about this job as a computer programmer. I thought that sounded interesting. I didn’t have any idea really what it was. But whatever he told me, it sounded interesting. At that time — that was 19 … I finished school in 1964, when no university courses taught computers — and I went looking for a job as a programmer and was interviewed for a
number of places and just missed out on a couple of jobs. And my brother had joined the state savings bank and he said that the bank had a computer. And my parents — my mother in particular — was getting a bit pushy about me staying at home and not having a job. I mean, this was only about a month after I finished school anyway. But ... anyway I joined the bank, started doing a part-time course. And I was working in a branch for a few months and then the ...

B: Can I stop for a minute and ask you? You said you were looking for a job as a programmer. [background tones from computer] Just a couple of questions. How did you know you wanted to be a programmer? And secondly is that what the bank hired you to do?

J: The reason I wanted to be a programmer was because of this vocational ... B: ... fair? The Centre that you'd ... ?

J: Yes. At that time they were hiring ... programming positions were generally being filled by people who had started university but not completed. [background tones from computer] So I was just a bit under-qualified, I guess. But they hired people by giving them aptitude tests and interviewing them, and anyway. I went for three or four interviews and got the ... just missed out on a couple of jobs. And then I joined them, the bank, because they had a computer, but I was not employed [background tones from computer] in that area at that time.

B: I see. I see.

J: And I started doing a course at Caulfield Institute ...

B: At where? I'm sorry.

J: Caulfield Institute of Technology.

B: Could you spell that?

J: C-A-U-L-F-I-E-L-D.

B: OK. Thank you.

J: It’s now part of Monash University.

B: It is part of? You said it is part of ... it is part of Monash?

J: It is now part of Monash.

B: OK. OK.
J: And it was a separate institution then.

B: OK.

J: And the accountant, I think, at the branch I was at knew the head of the programming area and phoned him after some months saying that I was in the branch doing this course. And then I went for an interview at that time. Then I was employed as a programmer.

B: I see.

J: Four weeks training at IBM, which was the standard at that time, and became a programmer!

B: Were there other female programmers …

J: Yes.

B: … in your area and …?

J: Yes, at the time I was there, there were five of us, I think.

B: And how many males? What does that number “five” mean?

J: I don’t really remember … I don’t … maybe … I’ve sort of got a figure of twelve in mind, but I don’t know whether that was really the total number of us, probably.

B: So fairly well balanced.

J: Yes.

B: How about management? What was the …

J: Well, it was bank policy … the bank policy was that there was a career path for men. They started off as clerks, then they became tellers, and then they became accountants, and then they became managers. And there were various levels within that. Women started off as clerical assistants, I think, and that’s where I finished!

B: So a programmer’s title if she were female would be “clerical assistant”?

J: I think that was probably true.

B: Mm hmm! I see.

J: Because I think people just fitted in the standard structure of the bank. And while I was there they brought in a salary classification range for women above the promotional range for women. There were six scales, six levels, and the highest level paid less than a junior teller.
B: Oh dear! I see.

J: And at the time I left I was on the highest level with a special allowance on top of that. So $200 a year extra, which made me the highest paid woman in the bank.

B: So, at level six of women, then you were still being paid what a clerk would have been paid at a much lower level male.

J: Male. Yes.

B: I see. I see. I see. When did you start your academic work?

J: About …

B: And what caused … what precipitated that shift toward academics?

J: My mother did! My mother sort of suggested that I might do a university course because she was, as I said, always keen … she wanted more education for herself, so she pushed me towards that. And I started doing some Year 6\(^1\) subjects at night school because at that time I needed to have a language at Year 12 level to do an arts course and — I think that for some reason I was thinking of doing an arts course — but I actually … so I did some Year 12 subjects. But I actually then went into … got admitted to a science course at Monash. But I didn’t actually need the language anyway.

B: I see. I see. What would have been a problem was not, in other words.

J: Yes, that’s right. I remember writing a letter, but I don’t know why. I remember getting an answer saying that I was exempt from something, but I can’t remember exactly what it was that I was exempt from.

B: So when did you …

J: Now, I started doing the Year 12 study …

B: Yeah, when did you sort of make that decision that …? When you first started university, you hadn’t — let me see if I understood what you said — hadn’t particularly set on a course of study and …?

J: No, at the time … I started taking doing the night class courses at Year 12 level, to get some extra …

B: In order to be able to get into the university.

J: Yes.

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\(^1\) This should have been “Form 6” rather than “Year 6”.
B: And that was … you were thinking of an arts [degree] at that point and then you …

J: [clock begins chiming loudly in background] And then I got accepted into science, which … and the bank actually paid for me.

B: I see.

J: [clock continues to chime] And so they determined what subjects I would do to a certain extent. That’s mainly why I did mathematics. I mean, I would have liked to have done, for example, more psychology. But that wasn’t something that was seen as being useful for the job I was doing and therefore I had to do maths and I did … [clock continues to chime]

B: Could we stop until the clock stops? [removed about 9 seconds of chiming] The bank was supporting you, was paying for the maths …

J: Yes, and also giving me time off, because I went to Monash. Monash was near where I lived but they didn’t … they didn’t have night classes, so I had to attend day classes. So I tried to get first thing in the morning, late afternoon. But sometimes … a couple of days, one day a week, I would spend the whole day at Monash and work at Monash. So they were supporting me. To that extent, however, I was required to make up the time that I was in classes. I did that. They didn’t give me any less working time. There were a couple of other people who they had taken on who were being supported full-time at the University of Melbourne. They only came to the bank …

[15:10]

B: Were those other people male or female?

J: One of each. At that point I didn’t … I’m not sure why I was low. On the other hand, at that time there were several others that were doing part-time classes like I was, but at the University of Melbourne, they went to night classes. So it just depended, I guess on … I’m not sure why those two were bring supported full time the way they were.

B: How did that make you feel, I mean … ?

J: Well, for one, I … I think they were already there when I got there, they were already doing it. And because there were other people like me who were doing it part-time. That was …

B: I see. And how long were you doing this part-time going to Monash and part-time working?

J: I did four years part-time and then I left and did my last year, then, full-time.

B: And is normally the course of study four years?

J: No, it’s a three-year course.
B: Three year. And so it took you five years, three years by doing part-time and then one year — I understand.

J: I did the first two years …

B: And what diploma did you have? A maths diploma, is that what …?

J: I had a bachelors of science degree. Yes.

B: Bachelors of science. I see.

J: Australian university courses typically are three-year courses.

B: I see.

J: And then … at that time I had a husband, [Barrie,] who was working in Geelong and I wanted to come down here to Geelong. And that’s one reason that I did the course full-time, because I wanted to leave the bank anyway and come to Geelong. I wanted to get finished.

And he was working at the Gordon Institute of Technology. I was looking for a … expecting to get a programming type job and there weren’t too many in Geelong. There weren’t many computers in Geelong. A lecturing … assistant lecturer position became available at the Gordon and I was conscious of that, so we were working together.

B: In what field?

J: In computers. In computing.

B: But had you had any formal courses at Monash in computers?

J: One, just one.

B: Just one course.

J: I had the only one that was available. In fact that … I did … when I did my second-year classes there were no computer classes at second-year level. When I went on into the third year, they had then introduced a second-level unit. Sorry. The year … the last year that I was doing … the second year that I was doing my second-year units, they introduced a second-year unit in information … information science they called it. But I had already done a unit of that number of credit points. I could only have do one — well, I could have done more, but there was no need to do more. I had actually gotten an exemption from that second-year unit to do the third-year unit. I got the exemption on the basis that I had been working in computing.

B: I see.
J: So I just did the one.

B: So now you’re on a lectureship at Gordon.

J: Yes.

B: In teaching computing. And what was the atmosphere like at Gordon and how supportive were they? Were there other women there for you to …?

J: There was one other woman there for the first year I was there, I think … first couple of years. Almost all men. I was assistant lecturer. Probably the other woman was as well. All the men were lecturers — or about. And I was there for 1965 to … from … not 1965. I was at the bank seven years.

B: You said you started at the bank in 1964.

J: Yes.

B: So it was 1971.

J: 1971, that’s right! 1972 I was a full-time student, so I started at the Gordon in 1973. And at that time the Gordon offered — in computing — offered a diploma. It was a … like your … do you have …

B: A master’s degree?

J: No. It’s not a university degree.

B: Like a certification.

J: No, the sort of course … like your colleges that are not universities. Gordon Institute of Technology was not at that time equivalent to a university, did not offer degree courses. They offered diplomas.

[20:01]

B: I see. It would probably be like a certificate in the States, but we can …

J: Anyway, yeah. They were first off going through a process of getting … all of these colleges were in the process of getting … upgrading to being able to offer degrees, so there was this first step. Staff were being encouraged to take … to get master’s degrees and Ph.D.s and taking the time to do that.

B: Did you feel that you were being encouraged to do that?

J: I was being encouraged to do that, but I didn’t at that time want to do it. Barrie did a Master’s of education. He thought about doing an education degree and just did the accounting and got a Master’s of education.
B: And for those that might not know, Barrie is your …

J: Husband. I really didn’t want to be heading off up to Melbourne and studying and et cetera.

B: I see.

J: But we used to teach … well, our students used to have to do accounting, and they all failed dismally usually and I sort of did some accounting to find out why they did so badly and I did very well. I never did understand why our students did so badly in accounting. So I actually went on and did a commerce degree at the Gordon.

B: This is another bachelor’s level degree?

J: Yes.

B: So you have two bachelor’s level? You have the degree in sciences …

J: And one in commerce.

B: … and one in commerce. I see.

J: We got our … we were able to offer degrees. But the next thing that happened was the government decided it was going to create a country university. And they decided they would put it in Geelong and that Geelong didn’t need two tertiary — two institutions offering tertiary degrees — and therefore that the Gordon would cease to exist when Deakin started.

And then they went through a sifting process with the staff to decide which staff they would take on and which they wouldn’t. Well, back then they did at least take care of people. So the people who had teaching degrees who were not taken on to Deakin went into the education department, went back as teachers — which is where they mostly had come from anyway. And the people who didn’t have teaching degrees were given jobs in the state government, not necessarily in Geelong. But everybody …

B: Everybody found a job.

J: Everybody found a job, yes.

B: No one felt terribly threatened that they would lose their livelihood, or …

J: No, that didn’t happen. But it did disrupt their lives. And there was a woman in commerce who was very beat up because I think she was just about the only person in the department who didn’t get a job at Deakin.

B: That does not sound like she would be happy.
J: No, she was not happy.

B: But you did not have a degree in education and yet they kept you on at Deakin. Is that correct, am I understanding?

J: That’s true. They were not concerned about … Deakin sifted people on the basis of their suitability and apparently they didn’t know what to do with the computing people. Our head of department just sort of worked through everybody in the department and said, “Well, yes, we need this person because … we need this person,” et cetera. And all the computing people were transferred across and that was a big relief to everybody. The majority of staff were moved across except in the humanities area, where their — I don’t remember the term that was used back then — but the dean in that area was just not supportive and quite a number of them didn’t get taken.

B: So you were fortunate.

J: Yes. Yes.

B: I see.

J: But I got appointed as a principal tutor, which was a scale which, in salary terms, was similar to lecturer — which is where most of the men went. But principal tutor, the increments weren’t quite as big, cut out at a lower level, and it was definitely — had I been a man, I wouldn’t have been on that.

B: And this was true of all the women that … how many women were with you who were in the programming area?

J: Just me.

B: It was just you. So there were men in the programming area and they all became lecturers and you were the only tutor in your area?

J: I was the only assistant lecturer anyway.

B: I see.

J: So all the men were lecturers or above. But I should have been taken across as a lecturer, because I was appointed at the same salary level but on a different scale — which didn’t have the same opportunities.

B: I see. I see. So when did you decide to study for a master’s degree? Or why did you decide to start to study for a master’s degree?

J: I guess that was the early 1980’s. There was a man appointed as a senior lecturer and he was … just going back a little bit. The Gordon Institute was much more … was a teaching
institution, rather than … not a research institution.

B: I see.

J: And the courses that were offered were fairly … were much more vocationally oriented than universities tended to offer. When we got transferred to Deakin there was some pressure then for the university staff should be doing research, et cetera. And there was an appointment made where the person appointed was — part of the reason he was being appointed — was to improve the research effort from the school. And he encouraged me and one of the men to do a Master’s with him supervising. [clock chimes]

That is when I started doing the Master’s. He wasn’t much of a supervisor. He’d just finished his Ph.D. and I think a problem that often people have when they are supervising their colleagues is, because their colleagues are essentially their equals, they’re not very good at taking on the role of supervisor for them.

B: I see.

J: And he never … he really didn’t do much supervising. He’s never read my thesis, my Master’s thesis.

B: Oh, my goodness!

J: He went…

B: Did you go directly to the thesis? Where was the coursework? No coursework involved? It’s just …

J: We don’t have coursework.

B: I’m sorry, I didn’t understand.

J: There are coursework Master’s, but in Australia, Master’s and Ph.D. traditionally — it’s like the English system traditionally has been — research and thesis.

B: I see.

J: Typically there is a … to get into a Master’s program you normally would need to do an honor’s year and the honor’s year is sort of the preparation for doing research. It’s got coursework. And it’s got some thesis work. And that’s where students are taught to do research. Master’s is one and a bit years of research.

B: What was the area of research? I’m sorry, I don’t know …

J: For me? I was comparing … (I can hardly remember it now! And I don’t even have a copy of my Master’s thesis.) Looking at children learning a bit of programming — and this was
lower secondary students learning programming — to see if it helped them learn mathematics.

B: I see!

J: Logo and BASIC and the results were very inconclusive. There may have been a slight indication that if they were doing a little bit of programming that they did a little bit better at mathematics, but it was certainly not conclusive by any means.

B: Did you enjoy that experience of conducting research in doing your Master’s?

J: It took me the maximum time, and I deferred, so I think it probably took me six years to do it. No. Four years, I guess. Because I was working and the workload was pretty high. No I don’t think I did enjoy doing the master’s. I enjoyed the Ph.D. a lot more.

B: So you went directly … you were still teaching. You were doing the Master’s. You got the Master’s. And this is about when?

J: Early 1980’s. I can probably check on the date …

B: On the wall. Let’s look at the diploma on the wall …

J: … to see when I actually graduated. And I didn’t …

B: And how much time was there between the time when you received your Master’s and then you went on for your doctorate?

J: Actually, I think that I received the Master’s in 1989, because I was away for the graduation. I think I was in Russia.

B: I think I was in Russia, too, at that time.

J: [both laugh] And it didn’t bother me one little bit that I wasn’t going to that graduation, I was …

[29:59]

B: Was it … it sounds like you’re saying it was not a pleasant experience. Is that … ?

J: Yeah, I didn’t … it was not so much that it was unpleasant. It’s just I didn’t … it was not all that interesting, and I was not terribly interested in getting another … didn’t really feel that it was something that I … I had done a tremendous amount of work and I know I was happy with it. As I said my …

B: Were there any influences during that period of time that changed your direction or any particular people or events that made a big difference as you … ?

J: No, I don’t think so. I was doing something, which was in part involving the psychology
people, who were also doing research in the same sort of area. They were doing research with
Logo and with the same students, some of the same students. I was working a little bit with
them, but not really discussing what I was doing with them.

And my supervisor used to have a chat with me about once a year. At the time I finished,
he’d gone overseas, so he wasn’t available to read my thesis and … But one thing that he did
do was that the fellow who had started the same year that I did — we started together, I
defferred for 12 months somewhere along the way. The other fellow also took the maximum
time, but because he hadn’t deferred for a year he finished 12 months before me. And his
thesis got sent off to somebody in Sydney who was working in the same area, was not
actually known to the fellow who was supervising us. Came back and the whole thing had to
be re-written, re-done. It was an enormous … you know, it just didn’t fit in with the…

B: Oh, dear.

J: It was just a terrible job for him. He spent 12 months working pretty much at home, had a
fairly light teaching load, redoing everything. So my … our supervisor then realized that you
need to be careful about who you select as examiners. And so he did sit down with me and
we talked about people that we knew who might examine this and who might … well, who
weren’t going to have strong views that were different as had happened with that fellow in
Sydney. And my thesis was sent out to two examiners and it came back and I didn’t have to
do anything to it!

B: So this was 1989 and you now had a …


B: Uh huh.

J: And 19 … Now, the thing that happened that really changed my life — in 1987 I got invited
to a People-to-People tour of China. And went to China with a group. We got very friendly
and …

B: What was the topic of this People-to-People?

J: Computing education. And they had a reunion in November — we went in May — in
November that year they had a reunion in New York, which was … sort of put up as a
symposium. So I was sent an invitation to a symposium, which we all knew was really just a
reunion, but there was an opportunity for us to give papers. I took it along to my head of
department. And I … he knew what it was I was going to. But he happened to have some
money left in his budget for sending people to conferences and he paid my trip to New York
to what was basically a reunion, and I gave a short paper on something or other. And I’d also,
when we went to China, presented a couple of papers I think. But that was the first
experience I’d ever had at actually presenting papers.

B: So this was 1987. It was prior to doing your Master’s or during the period of time you
had just started your Master’s?

J: Well, I must have finished my Master’s. I think I had actually finished my Master’s at the start of 1988, because it then had to be sent to be examined. And I did it. And the graduation was 1989.

B: I see.

J: But when I went to New York, my roommate from the China trip had come there from a conference in — I’ve forgotten where the conference was — but it occurred to me that the following year I could probably present at that conference myself. So I then started working towards being able to write a paper that I could present at that conference. And that’s really what got me started in research, in really doing research.

B: What conference was it, do you remember?

J: It was a … it was a not one that I went to regularly after that. I went to a couple of them. I think it was an information systems conference. And it was in Dallas, I remember, in 19 … probably 1989. But I don’t remember which one it was. So that was what actually got me started in doing research. And then in…

B: Were there particular people on that trip — you said that that changed your life and giving papers — were there particular people who encouraged you in that group or was it just the being part of this group?

J: Just being part of the group and having an opportunity to go.

B: Was that group balanced with men and women?

J: Oh! No, no. It was I guess predominately men. I think there were about 32 of us. There were three couples, one of whom was professional; the two of them came as computing professionals. And there were maybe five other women. So it was predominately men.

B: I see. But very welcoming.

J: Yes.

B: I see. So now we’re back and it’s 1989. Did you become part of professional organizations? Fit in when you went for your Ph.D. and how you just made that choice and how you became professionally active … in addition to this process …

J: Well, I started doing the… I went to the Women, Work, and Computerization conference in 1991. And that came about because I was talking with one of the psychologists who — with whom I then did most of my research — about the conference, which was in Finland. And I said, “I know some people in Finland, I met them on … And we could go and stay with them and go to the conference!” So we wrote a paper together and it was accepted and then she
decided she couldn’t go to the conference, so I went on my own anyway. But we, from that point on, we were working together and doing research into the under-representation of women in computing. She was doing it because she was a social psychologist and she’d started working in that direction and I happened to be the only woman in the computing department.

B: You’ve been there for … almost 20 years at this point, at Deakin or Gordon.

J: Yes.

B: And the number of women hasn’t grown?

J: There was a female, a part-time tutor, and me, I think.

B: I see.

J: Sometimes there were part-time maths maybe, it was a department of computing and mathematics, so a couple of part-time maths tutors, female. But apart from that they were all men.

B: I see.

J: And around that time, it was just a little earlier, I read that article by Ellen. Ellen Spertus.

B: Mm hmm!

J: And that also had a major influence on me because I had never felt discriminated against. I mean, my colleagues didn’t discriminate against me, they treated me as an equal. I read her article and I realized just how much discrimination there was.

[recording ended and restarted as Joy became emotional and took a break]

B: We are resuming the conversation with Joy Teague after a short break. At the time we were just talking about how Ellen Spertus had been a major influence, having read her paper.

J: Yes. So much of what she said I could see related to me. And prior to that I had never thought of myself as being discriminated against. I … all of my colleagues always treated me as an equal. But I had a heavier load than anybody else in the department. I was more junior than most of the people in the department. And there were all sorts of things in Ellen’s paper that I said, “Hmm! That applies to me.” So I started to view the world differently then.

Just going back a little bit, I mentioned the man who had been my Master’s supervisor. At the time that he was appointed, the position was advertised as being for either a lecturer or a senior lecturer. And they were going to appoint him, but what they actually did was appointed me to a lecturer’s position and then created — prior to that I had been a principal
tutor—they appointed me to a lecturer’s position and then changed my principal tutor
position to a senior lecturer’s position and then appointed him. And that was done that way
because the head of department and, I think, the dean realized that I was … I should have
been promoted anyway and it was not possible to get promotion from principal tutor to
lecturer. I could only get it in response to an advertised position. So even though they wanted
to appoint this other person they actually did it in a roundabout way in order to get me
promoted, or to get me further up the scale.

[40:49]
But even so, by the … when I read Ellen’s paper, if I’d been a man I would have been a
senior lecturer. I was still a lecturer at that time. So that’s when I started taking an interest in
women in computing and discrimination and that sort of thing and started to work more
closely with Val Clarke, who was the psychologist. We were on the same floor of the same
building and her interest was social psychology. One of her areas of interest was women in
computing. And so we started to work together and worked on a variety of projects and
papers. A bit further along … I forgot what I was about to say there.

B: We … at some point you decided to get the Ph.D. Was that part of that?

J: Yes. That sort of … that happened after we’d written several papers together and Val said to
me that I could continue with the work that we were doing and use some of the work that had
already been done and do a Ph.D. And I had some trouble getting enrolled to do a Ph.D.
because I couldn’t do it in psychology where she was because I didn’t have a psychology
degree. And my head of department and the other professors didn’t see what I was wanting to
do as being computing. And I talked to the women’s studies people, but they — again, I
didn’t have a women’s studies background. I eventually enrolled in the department where I
was working. And Val was my secondary supervisor and there was somebody up in
Melbourne who was appointed as my supervisor. And once again, I had a supervisor that …
Val did all the supervision. The actual supervisor did nothing. But …

B: Is this person at Monash that … was the university in Melbourne?

J: No, he was at … sorry. In the early 1990s the government decided that there were too many
tertiary institutions and they didn’t want any of the … what we call “colleges of advanced
education.” They all had to become universities and merge together so that there were less of
them. So we actually … Deakin by that stage, or as a result of that, became five campuses:
three in Melbourne, one down at Warrnambool, and one at Geelong. And … because they
merged with an institution at Warrnambool and one in Melbourne, which was the result of an
earlier merger of three institutions. So there were three campuses in Melbourne, one in
Warrnambool, and one in Geelong.

B: What was the second name? I got Melbourne, Geelong, and the…

J: Warrnambool.

B: How do you spell that?
J: W-A – double R – N-A-M-B – double O – L. One of the men up in Melbourne was supervising me, sort of. Normally my supervisor …

B: In … in computing?

J: In a women in computing … study.

B: I mean, was that his … what was his area of expertise? Was he in computing?

J: He was in computing. I was actually doing it within the department. He was within the department. And I’m not quite sure why it was that he was chosen to supervise me. Or elected to supervise me. And he … I think he became sick and wasn’t able to continue, and I transferred to somebody on the same campus who also didn’t do very much supervision. And meanwhile I just sort of went along working with Val and doing it myself. An a result of these mergers we had a … had another professor appointed and … Barrie retired in 1993, I think. So he was home here. I was working 60 hours a week in an environment that I was not very happy with.

[45:15]

One of the results of the mergers was that the people in the top echelons had this view of where the university was going and everything was wonderful for them. They just forgot to tell anybody lower down. I was an enrollment officer advising students, second and third year students. The students would tell me what the new regulations were because it just never got passed on. That sort of … so where previously people had worked together as a team, there was no feeling of that. The new head of department … got to the point I wouldn’t go into his office. If I had to talk to him, I’d wait until I met him in the corridor. He just made my skin crawl. Anyway I decided to leave.

J: I left at the end of 1995. And I didn’t want to continue with the Ph.D. in the same department and because he would have been … I would have been his student without any power at all. And I transferred to management information systems. One of the men there took me on and I was given a scholarship. I’d done most of the work I needed to do in the women in computing area, but Val thought the Ph.D. needed a bit more. And one of the things that had interested me had to do with personality types, the sort of person that goes into computing. We added a second part to the thesis looking at personality types of people in computing. I wrote up the women in computing work. The university, or the faculty rather, gave me a scholarship, which went for three years. Now, I’d already been enrolled; I really should have completed the Ph.D. in 18 months. But they’d sort of overlooked the fact that I had done quite a bit of work and gave me a three-year scholarship, so I took three years to do it. The facilities for students were just appalling!

B: And this is when?

J: I worked at home because, as I said, the facilities in there were appalling. There was a common room for students, but I didn’t … I wouldn’t have had my own computer terminal.
there …

B: This was at Deakin?

J: At Deakin.

B: At Deakin. In Geelong?

J: In Geelong. In management information systems. It was actually the faculty of commerce and law, I think. If I had stayed where I had been — computing, computing and mathematics — I would have had a computer on my desk and that sort of thing, but in management information systems I wouldn’t be able to sit in there all day without having my own computer and there wasn’t one for me. And so I just worked at home. I wrote up the work I had done on the women in computing, gave a chapter to my supervisor — Val was still my secondary supervisor and still doing all the work with me — for him to read. The next few times that I saw him — I didn’t see him all that often — he started reading it. And then he didn’t like the way I had written it. And he thought that perhaps that I needed to re-write it. He never actually finished reading the first chapter, so I never bothered giving him any more.

B: I see.

J: And I guess it sort of took three years. I mean, I didn’t spend three years working on it by any means, but I worked over the three years and did a lot of other things. Didn’t have to go in there. Occasionally I’d go in and say “hello” to him and talk to Val.

I finished … I was aiming to finish just before going to a conference. And, of course, it always takes a bit longer than you expect. Well, the day that I was … the day before I left for the conference I finished at the point where, I thought, it was ready to be examined. Val had read it. I took it in. My primary supervisor wasn’t in his office, although I had said I’d be coming, but I hadn’t actually specified a time. So I left it on his desk with a note saying, “I’m leaving tomorrow. Please let Val know if there are any major problems, anything that needs to be done. Otherwise she’ll send it for printing (this is printing to be sent out for examination) next week.” Anyway, he contacted Val and he really didn’t ask Val for her comments last night, because she was just appalled that he didn’t like the font that it was … that I had used. He didn’t have any comments whatsoever about the content. It was all about the appearance.

B: I see.

[50:19]

J: The other thing that … I needed to interview people. Well, Val thought that as the person in computing, he was the one who should be finding people for me to interview, which he didn’t do at all, he just left that entirely up to me. And one of the difficulties is that if you’re just a student, people take a lot less notice. It would have been a lot easier if he could have found people for me. But anyway, he wasn’t happy — he didn’t like the way I had written it, et cetera. And once again …
We had to list four examiners and the university randomly selected two of them. And I was not allowed to know who they were. I was not allowed to make contact with them. I mean, I knew who was on the list because I’d helped compile it and that was OK. We’d chosen people who we knew who had some interest in the area, once again, would be possibly thinking along similar sorts of lines. One of them happened to be the person who had been my supervisor for my Master’s. And, as it turned out, it was sent to him. And, once again, he didn’t read it.

B: She chuckles here.

J: He did eventually send it back. But it took him so long that in the meantime they had found somebody else to do it. Because he just wasn’t doing it. And so they sent it to somebody else on the list who got it back before he got it back in. My … as I said, my main supervisor, the first bit I’d given him to read, he was not happy about it, he thought it needed to be written in a different way. And once again I didn’t get anything that had to be changed and I think two of the three examiners commented on the style of writing in a positive way. Once again, that supervisor also had recently got his own Ph.D. and was supervising for the first time. Anyway, it annoys Val intensely that she did all the work and he gets the credit because he was the primary supervisor and she was the secondary supervisor.

B: But eventually it passed the examiners.

J: Yes, the two who did actually assess it, as I said, they didn’t require any changes and it just passed, yeah. So that was … I worked on it from … I left Deakin at the end of 1995, so I was a full-time student in 1996, 1997, 1998. Completed in 1999. I probably graduated in 2000 because it took a while to … for the…

B: To get all the paperwork through and …

J: Yeah.

B: Mmm hmm.

J: I didn’t do anything in a work sense for several years. Do you want me to keep going then?

B: Well, I think yes, because that’s part of your career path, is that you came … that you come back into computing and computing education after you received your degree. And you might tell us about how that took and how it is going now.

J: In fact, I think somebody — I don’t know, I think it may have been Boots Cassel — said to me most people get their doctorate and then go out to work. In my case I finished work and then got my doctorate and then didn’t do anything.

B: What were your outside interests in that period of time?

J: I actually spent quite a lot of time on trading the stock market. I used to do that, sort of sitting
watching it during the day, and trading. And then …

B: It would be a good time to be doing that. It was during the up part of the market.

J: No, at that time it was when the market was going down. So I worked on it pretty much full-time, but I was doing a lot better than the market was.

B: Good.

J: The market … it was when the market went down, not up.

B: I see. Mmm hmm.

J: I was at least in positive ground. And then we went round Australia, we … to do that we spent a lot of money we took out of savings. Came back and decided that we really needed to try to replenish that.

[54:45]

We decided we’d teach computing at home. Set up a classroom downstairs and put flyers in peoples’ letterboxes and started doing a bit of that. We used to offer a free class teaching what you could do with a computer. Barrie used to conduct it. The class would arrive and I would take a photo of them all. And then I’d go upstairs and edit the photo and clear away the background clutter, and put paintings on the wall [chuckles], and then email it to them. So that they each got an email with an attachment and they could have a look at this photo that had been taken just a short time before. Basically we were just showing people what you could do with a computer and different sorts of things you could do. And then Barrie talked about when people wanted to buy a computer what they need to look at.

And then we went along to a meeting, community meeting. And this woman came up to me afterwards and said “hello” and sort of introduced herself. And I knew who she was because I’d — she’d been a student of mine about — well, she said it was 25 years earlier, I didn’t remember, but she didn’t look too much different. She had just taken over as the coordinator of the local … the neighborhood house, which offers computing classes … offers classes in a whole variety of things. Anyway, she wanted some help with their computers. And so I started doing that and became the volunteer computer manager. So I keep everything going. I don’t know what it’s like for you working in computing, but at Deakin we had a system programmer and we had some technicians who used to fix, maintain, you know, do the hardware-related things, so I’d never done anything like that. However, while I was trading, I talked to the technical support person at my broker’s and for some reason he took a liking to me. I don’t … and he was only there a few months and got sacked. And he … [clock chimes]

B: Wait a second while the clock gets through.

[removed about 43 seconds of the clock chiming 12:00]

J: All right. Anyway he had a … not a programming knowledge, but a tremendous knowledge of computers in the hardware and systems-type areas — the areas that I knew almost nothing about. And when he got the sack, he started putting flyers in letterboxes and set himself up in
his own computer business. So 12 months later we decided to start teaching and did the sort
of thing he had done, put flyers in letterboxes. And then somebody else did the same thing
and they are offering teaching plus fixing computers. And we decided we needed to do that
sort of thing, too.

I had become involved with a computer user group, small computer user group, up at the
neighborhood center. And there was a man there who rather like my friend in — did I say
where he was? He was in Perth — with a … neither of them with any formal training or
much education of any kind, but very good with computers. Anyway, I talked to this fellow
and sort of … we got on well and we decided that if something came along in the hardware
area that we couldn’t cope with we’d get this other fellow to do it. Well, we started doing
that, but the problem turned out that once he went to someone’s house, he more or less took
over. He gave them his phone number and then we lost them. Not that he was doing it in any
malicious way; he just liked solving problems and he liked helping people. So that
arrangement didn’t work all that well. There were various other issues. We set him down one
day and said, “Well, here’s what we see as the problem.” And he said, “Well, I’m not going
to change.” So then, we’re still sort of offering classes and offering other support and I had to
learn things. So, somebody would phone and say “I have such and such a problem” and I’d
phone Jonathan and say…

B: Jonathan’s the man in Perth …

J: Yes.

B: … you work with.

J: Yes. “Somebody’s just called me about such and such, now what do I do?” And so I’ve been
learning as I go now.

B: And so currently you are doing that work and teaching at the community center?

J: And teaching at the community center, which we started last year, teaching at the community
center.

B: So very different kind of students from the students you had at Deakin?

J: Very. Yes, they’re almost all female. They’re elderly. They’re … they enjoy themselves. I
mean, they don’t have to go home and do assignments. They don’t have exams. It’s just an
interesting … nobody cares if they do work or they don’t. We teach them … the classes last
well, their classes typically were lasting three or four weeks. We are extending that this
year, and sort of slowing them down, really, and spreading them out over eight weeks for
reasons related to the funding that the center gets. We’ve built up a number of classes.

We also do some teaching at Ocean Grove, which is another neighborhood center. Because
the person who had been doing their advanced classes got sick and couldn’t. And, in fact, the
classes that we’re offering at Springdale, which is our local one, came about because we’d
been asked to offer them at Ocean Grove and then, because we’d prepared material for them, we then started offering them at Springdale.

B: I see. I must say to the mike that your face has lit up as you talk about teaching those classes. Does that …

J: Yes, yes. Well, it’s different. And I teach one class … have been teaching one class down at Queenscliff, which is another neighborhood center, on how to use your mobile phone, which is …

B: Not the thought that you had when you started your academic career, that you’d be doing this. If you’d look back on it, what advice would you give a young woman about to start out in computing education?

J: First of all, nothing that I have done has ever been planned. I just fall into things. It was never my intention to be an academic. In fact, when I was at school, most of my friends were going to be teachers, because at that time there was a shortage of teachers. The government used to pay them from the time they started university, or from the time they started their training. So a lot of my classmates went on to teaching because they got paid ever since they started. And I always said “No, I don’t want to be a teacher.” The way I got into teaching was because Barrie moved to Geelong and I wanted to come down to Geelong and that’s where a job happened to be. And similarly, the Gordon there was no research. When we became a university I was not particularly interested in doing research until I went to China and the way to see the people I had been to China with was to do research and get papers accepted overseas so that I could go to the conferences.

B: But what would you tell a young woman who is interested in it?

J: Who was interested in it. [pause – removed about 9 seconds of silence] I’m trying to think. My niece actually has just recently started in computing. And I’m trying to think what I have said to her in the past about it. Not that I’ve spent a lot of time talking to her. But you’re talking about a young woman who wants to become an academic? In computing?

B: In computing. In computing.

J: Well, what I found was that my colleagues, people I worked with, always respected me and treated me as an equal and I think that the sort of discrimination that I know I faced in a lot of areas I didn’t find in my immediate working environment. I think that if — my life has always been if I want to do something, go ahead and do it. And that’s what I …

B: Your advice to someone else.

J: That’s the advice I’d give to somebody else.

B: If you could change one decision you made, which one would it be? You said … and you also said that you didn’t really make the decisions straight out, but you fell into them …
J: No, no!

B: … but if you made one, what would that be?

J: Yeah, yeah. Yes, it’s interesting how some people say “I want to do this” and they spend years working towards it. And other people just fall into things. So, if I could change one decision … [pause – removed about 12 seconds of silence] Can I tuck it back in?

B: No, no! [both laugh]

J: Well, I’m thinking that being the only woman in the department, I used to be on all the interviewing committees. And therefore, I was on the interviewing committee that appointed the head of the department that was there at the time I left. There was another candidate. I would have voted for the other candidate if I’d known. I don’t know, it probably wouldn’t have made any difference, but …

B: I can understand. Thank you for spending all this time. And I know that some of this was very painful for you. Some of it I hope was enjoyable for you. And I really want to thank you for letting us interview you today.

[64:57]