INTERVIEWEE: Sheila Counce-Nicklas
INTERVIEWER: Jessica Roseberry
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COUNCE-NICKLAS INTERVIEW NO. 1

JESSICA ROSEBERRY: This is Jessica Roseberry. I'm here with Dr. Sheila Counce-Nicklas.

SHEILA COUNCE-NICKLAS: Nicklas (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: Nicklas. I apologize.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: That's all right.

ROSEBERRY: She's Professor Emerita in Cell Biology. Today is June 21, 2007, and we're here in her home in Durham, North Carolina. And I want to thank you very much for agreeing to this interview. It's a pleasure to talk with you.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Thank you for asking me.

ROSEBERRY: I wonder if we might be able to start with a little bit of background, just kind of your—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Surely. Okay. I was born in a very small town—it wasn't really a town—in southwestern Nebraska. My mother was a high school teacher. My father was a small-town banker. And they were very good parents. They gave me a very strong sense of responsibility, in that when—if I was offered a choice, I knew I could make the choice I wanted, whether I did the choice to do something frivolous or to work in the bank. And I was always offered the choice. And I—no matter what choice I would have

made, I would have been allowed to do it. But they knew very good and well what choice I'd make. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: So anything not in the bank was a frivolous choice?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, no, but when I was—I would be needed in the bank—I mean, they were short of hand or something like that. Or my mother might have—my mother was a high school teacher, and she had to go away to summer school, and so I had been offered a chance to go to Mexico. And I could have gone, but I knew that I was needed at home, and so I stayed at home. You know. But I was always offered a choice. They knew what choice I'd make, but I had the choice—and that's important I think.

ROSEBERRY: So what interested you in medicine, in science?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I was interested in biology. I never was interested in medicine. I didn't get really interested in biology until I went to university. I mean, you know, I took biology, but I didn't have great teachers in high school. I had a wonderful history teacher, but beyond that, I went to a high school that had maybe a hundred students in it, all told. I had some very good teachers, and I was brighter than I knew. I mean, I don't think you ever know your own potential, but I had the highest IQ of the entering class my freshman year at Boulder. When I had my first meeting with my advisor in the biology department, she said, "Oh, it really is the name that counts." Then she told me. As I said, she shouldn't have told me, but—you know, that's genes. I had nothing to do with it.

ROSEBERRY: So did you feel, you know, with that knowledge that you could do something that was—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No. I thought, Boy, if I'm the smartest person in the class, this is—isn't going to be such tough work. You know, things have been easy for me—but I love to learn. I love to read. I'm a couch potato.

ROSEBERRY: What was interesting to you about biology?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: How things work. You know, I think that's what interests most scientists—no matter what field of science they're in—is how things work. My husband is interested in how chromosomes get moved around in cells and how cells come out normally—most of the time, fortunately. But it's the *how* and the *why.* I don't— I think—you know, I certainly never had any great humanitarian urges. But you know, I could have been very interested in English. I loved German, but there was no future in that. I mean, you know, teaching a bunch of people German didn't appeal to me, because I saw what trouble my very good professor of German had in his class—a lot of people taking it as a required course who weren't interested. And one or two who, you know, were delighted to learn a language. And I really had good biology teachers and people who mentored me and sort of pushed me along. This happened in my graduate work as well. I was fortunate, because Fulbright scholarships became available just as I was graduating from college. And for the Fulbrights, you were interviewed first by a local committee. Well, I knew about Edinburgh. I'm not quite sure why I knew about Edinburgh, but I did. And I knew how to pronounce Edinburgh. One of the people on the committee was a Scot, and he was impressed by that, I think. And another member of the committee said, “Well, why do you want to go to Edinburgh?” And I said, “Well, in addition to the place where I would like to study, there's the Edinburgh [International]

Festival. And it's close to the continent, and I expect to go to the continent—" and this kind of thing.

ROSEBERRY: So you got the Fulbright, and you were able to go to Edinburgh.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I went to Edinburgh. And you know, I've been very lucky at all the places, because I have been mentored by faculty members of both sexes quite equally. When I got to Edinburgh, I was going to take something they called the Diploma Course. I discovered subsequently that three male members of the faculty and one female member of the faculty went to Waddington, who was the head of this institute, and said, "She shouldn't be taking the diploma course, she should be working for her PhD." So I did a PhD. The diploma is sort of like a master's degree. And the Fulbright scholarships had just come in, so I got the Fulbright for two years. And then I had an American Association of University Women scholarship for the third year. So you know, it was very nice.

ROSEBERRY: Do you feel like you were able to answer some of those questions that were attractive to you about biology—the how things worked, and why they were working, and—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I think you never answer as much as you would like to. But I think I had an interesting idea, but it didn't—it's one of those things—you can't predict what's going to happen. And this is probably too technical, but I worked in the fruit fly with sex-linked lethals—in other words, genes that were lethal to males but not to females. Because you could get—viable females would have one chromosome that carried the lethal gene and the other chromosome would carry the normal gene. But males would get one or the other, because they only had one X-chromosome. And I

thought it might tell me differences between the critical factors in male development and female development. But it was much too subtle if there is one, I mean, why one gene works in females and (*laughs*) one gene alone doesn't work in males, I don't know. But anyway, it was a nice project.

ROSEBERRY: That was a short-term project that you were working on?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No, that was my thesis project at Edinburgh, so no. But I did several—looked at several different genes.

ROSEBERRY: So were you—it sounds like you were treated fairly—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I think if women assume that they're going to be, they generally are. I think you can look for slights. But I frankly have always found it to be an advantage to be a female, particularly when dealing with males.

ROSEBERRY: How so?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I think that you get away with a lot, (*laughs*) or you can get away with a lot. You know, I don't know whether it's partly just brashness, partly they—but I think you are treated with a certain degree of latitude, perhaps, that male colleagues are not.

ROSEBERRY: What kind of latitude?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I don't think they'd hit a woman. (*laughs*) No. Well, I don't know, but I certainly have never hesitated to say to a chairman what I thought I ought to say to a chairman. The time came in my career here at Duke when I was in the best position I was ever going to be for a promotion to full professor. So I went to my chairman and said, "I would—this is going to be my best chance to be promoted for full professor." Because I'd just been—I had been editor of a two-volume work on insect

development, which was very well received, and Dave [Robertson] got very good letters from many of these people. And he said to me, "I didn't know how good you were." And—but at any rate, the time came when I felt that that was the time, and I felt I had my best chance for promotion in the medical school. Also, because I had irritated Anlyan, who was then, you know—and I thought, Well, you know, if I'm going to get letters, this is the time to get them. (*laughs*) And Dave said to me, "What about so-and-so?" The man—okay, we had come at the same time. And as it happened, this man had been involved in a heavy romance and had been too busy doing that. He just hadn't gotten any real work done. And I said, "Right now he can't be promoted, and I'm not—I mean, I'm not competing with him, I'm competing for myself." And Dave went right ahead. And, as I say, I'd irritated Anlyan, but fortunately on the committee there was a colleague of Bruce [Nicklas]'s from the biology department who knew me very well. And Anlyan said, "Well, what about her reputation in Europe?" And he said, "Well Sheila's much better known than her husband is," which was not true, but—and so, you know, I've just been very, very lucky.

ROSEBERRY: So is medicine different in Europe than it is here?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I don't know enough to comment on that, I really don't. I don't—you know, I've never been involved with a medical department in any sense except teaching under—teaching what would be a course that I teach to graduate students anyway. I mean, you know, they wanted human embryology. I mean, human embryology is perhaps a little more pertinent to a medical student, but I didn't really get involved in anything that would let me make a critical comment on that.

ROSEBERRY: Well, you mentioned a reputation in Europe. I don't know if you wanted to talk about that at all?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, this is because of this two-volume work on insect development that I edited. And I chose a very wide range of contributors to it, so that there are contributors from all over Europe and the United States, and you know, I think the breadth of it was important. And I think it was probably exaggerated to the committee (*laughs*) for my promotion. Anyway—

ROSEBERRY: Well, how did you come to Duke?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: My husband was offered a job. Bruce and I met at Yale. I had—after I finished at Edinburgh, I went to Yale to work with a man who had done the first work on developmental biology of mutants in Drosophila embryos, and I thought that was a wonderful chance. Well, I never—the differences are too subtle between them that I never picked up anything of any real significance, but I picked up Bruce instead. And then when he was offered the job down here, we knew Monte—he knew Monte [Montrose] Moses from Columbia. And Bruce's old professor and his wife had moved down here from Columbia, which really was a spur-of-the-moment move. And Monte Moses went to Dave and said, "This—you ought to hire this person." "Oh," he said. So he did. And the medical students really didn't like the human embryology course much, so I never had a great following, but I enjoyed it, and I enjoyed my colleagues. And then we offered courses that graduate students took.

ROSEBERRY: You came in 1968, is that right?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No. We came— Let's see, Bruce and I were married in 1965—ah yes, '68 is when we did come, um-hm.

ROSEBERRY: It's funny. It seems like there were—a lot of the women that I'm interviewing came that year—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, Lois [Pounds] came that year, I think. Well, I think maybe it was a time when they realized they should be making some appointments of women. You know, women's lib was getting started. I don't know—at least I was a benefit of this. I mean, Lois Pounds is a wonderful person. She's so straightforward and honest. The medical students really love her.

ROSEBERRY: I look forward to talking with her.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, you'll enjoy Lois immensely. You'll enjoy most—I think you'll enjoy most of the women you talk to. Jo Rae Wright is just stupendous.

ROSEBERRY: Well, were there women in the medical center who kind of had been around for a while when you came who had made a mark, or—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, yes, surely there were. Rebecca Buckley, for example. I wrote down some names. She stands out—she really stands out. And Lois Pounds was here—was there. And then later, in Anatomy, Jo Rae Wright was appointed—and Nell Cant. And then when the Anatomy department broke down, Nell Cant went to Neurobiology. But the Anatomy department, that was after Dave's death, when, you know, they'd had—they decided that it was time to break up the department a little bit.

ROSEBERRY: And when you say Dave, that's the chair—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: J. David Robertson.

ROSEBERRY: J. David Robertson. Thank you. Did you know Molly Bernheim at all?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I know— I don't know her personally. I know who she was, and I admire her greatly.

ROSEBERRY: And I think Dr. Willett—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes. And, again, I don't know her personally, but I've seen her in action. I think—you know, I think they've—I think too, probably—particularly women of my age and older to be—to make it have to have fairly strong personalities, very—have some sense of self-assurance. But you know, I don't know. (*laughs*) But I think you'll—you'll certainly find Nell Cant, if you talk to her, is very self assured—and Kathleen Smith.

ROSEBERRY: And what area was Kathleen Smith in?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Kathleen's now in the Biology department. And Nell's in Neurobiology, as I've said.

ROSEBERRY: Tell me a little more about Dr. Wright, about Jo Rae Wright.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, Jo Rae is wonderful. She's the assistant chair of the department. She's a physiologist, basically—very, very bright, and very, very sensible, very—just a very good person. You should talk to her. You'd like her a lot. Nell will probably not talk to you (*laughs*), knowing Nell, but—but Kathleen and Jo Rae are certainly people to talk to.

ROSEBERRY: I wonder if—I mean, I'm kind of exploring just kind of what some of the impact of these certain women is on the medical center. So I don't know if you have any comments about any of them, and kind of encapsulate how they impacted Duke?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Lois Pounds was in charge of medical school admissions. And she impressed any student that—she met with all the applicants as they would come through. And they would all come to my office, the ones I interviewed, and be impressed by her. I mean, she's just, you know, very honest, very down to earth. She's very

sensitive about what she needs to know, or was very sensitive about what she needed to know. I think the medical school has become a much more open society, as far as women appointments are concerned, I'm sure. If you looked at the percentages—you'd probably know better than I. But—and it was very good being on the admissions committee, because male students, you know, were suddenly meeting women who were professionally successful, and I think that may have been a salutatory lesson. I don't know. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: And can you talk also about Dr. Wright's impact?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, she's now an assistant dean in the medical school. And she's just very professional and very successful and very hardworking. Her husband has a job in an industry that takes him away—they can't live together, except on holidays and so on. And both of them are independent enough to want to do this. She's this kind of person—she's very committed, she's very honest, she's very open, she's very talented.

ROSEBERRY: So I'm wondering about when you came, in 1968, what the department looked like. What was going on in the department?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, it was basically then just the Department of Anatomy—for teaching in the medical school, and it was just—they were beginning to get more grad—people interested in doing graduate degrees. And so when Dave Robertson came, the department expanded quite a lot. And Kathleen and Nell Cant were hired, and I was hired, thanks to Monte Moses. He said I should go see Dave, and I just said to him, "You need somebody to do this—I can do that, and here I am." And he said, "Oh, all right." (*laughs*) I think I've told you that. But it worked out very well for us. I've always kept

my maiden name as a professional, so they wouldn't think that I got something because of Bruce. It's just better.

ROSEBERRY: Now, he was in Zoology?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yeah, he was in Zoology. He was hired to teach Histology and Cell Biology.

ROSEBERRY: And that's university?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes. And then he eventually got a joint appointment in Cell Biology or Anatomy. When it was Cell Biology, he got the joint appointment. But he never really got terribly involved with—he gave a few lectures on Cell Biology, but that was all.

ROSEBERRY: Now, were you the first woman in the Department of Anatomy?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I guess I probably was, but I'm not sure.

ROSEBERRY: But when you came there were not women who stayed longer?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No, there was no woman in the Department of Cell Biology then, but—or, in the Department of Anatomy. No, it was men. And there was a—I met a little male chauvinism, but it didn't bother me.

ROSEBERRY: How did—what form did that take?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I made a slight mistake in—for example, when I was lecturing to the medical students—first year medical school students. And one of the—my male colleagues stood up and corrected me, which he shouldn't have done. It was trivial, it wasn't going to have any impact on what they said or did. And I resented that, but, you know—as I said, it was trivial.

ROSEBERRY: But overall it sounds like—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, overall I have no—never had any complaints. As a matter of fact, I think it was—with Dave Robertson as chairman, it was an advantage to be a female. They treat you differently (*laughs*) than they treat males if they're of the old school, and Dave was. But I had had very—a lot of support from male professors when I was an undergraduate at Colorado, too, so you know—. And I just find it hard to know how unusual that is—or common it is—and when you get through, I'll be interested to see what your results are.

ROSEBERRY: So what was the work that you were doing at Duke?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I—my own research is based on genes that affect development in fruit flies, and particularly the genes which act differently in males and females, because I thought it might give me some insight into differences between how the sexes develop; but it didn't, it's too subtle.

ROSEBERRY: So that was a continuation of your thesis?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, it was a continuation of what my thesis work was and some, you know—I didn't change to anything that was medically related, essentially—didn't have to. Had grants and, you know—.

ROSEBERRY: Was the emphasis in the department on research?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, I think—Duke was changing, and the emphasis became—I mean, you were expected to have research grants, and you were expected to contribute to the department in that way. And you don't get graduate students unless you have a research program. And the medical school departments were beginning to offer graduate degrees in addition to medical degrees. And so it was, you know, it was a time of

change. And Duke was sort of moving from a provincial university to a more competitive, Ivy League-type school, I think.

ROSEBERRY: I understand that just not long before you came—maybe in, I think in ’66 or something like that—there was a change in the curriculum, and Anatomy became much less of a teaching department and more of a research department.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, aand that happened more or less with most of the basic science departments. As I say, but it was a good time to come, (*laughs*) because you didn't have to be doing human anatomy to get a job in the Anatomy department.

ROSEBERRY: Well, how has the field itself changed? I mean, obviously the department has gone through name changes, and—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yeah, I think there's more emphasis now on the molecular level of events in cells, less emphasis on subjects like gross anatomy, because that's been pretty worked out. It's more in the molecular, biochemical fields that research advances are being made.

ROSEBERRY: Now, was that during the time that you were doing research? Were you making those changes as well, or—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Nothing I did contributed to it, no. I was still just looking for developmental patterns and not finding what I wanted to find.

ROSEBERRY: Was that frustrating?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No, because I was finding out other things. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed my colleagues.

ROSEBERRY: What were the other things that you were finding out?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, at this point I don't really know. But I mean, they were things that were probably pretty trivial, but they were fun to find out and, you know, they—. As I say, my main contribution was this two-volume work that I edited on insect development, because it was—it did me a lot of good, because my name got known in Europe, because I used a lot of European contributors to it, and I made a lot of wonderful contacts and colleagues through doing it—made a little money, but not a lot.

ROSEBERRY: When was that? When did you do that work?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, it was before we came to Duke, most of it was done. I—you know, I did it from the sort of time I started doing graduate study in Edinburgh, which was in 1949—yeah, 1949—where I was very lucky, as I said, because these people all went to Waddington and said, "She shouldn't be in this diploma program, she should be getting a PhD." And so I had the Fulbright for two years, and an AAUW Fellowship for the third year. And then I went to Bar Harbor, where they were doing research on mice, because I thought I should be doing something useful for humanity—and I discovered I hated mice, and I hated Bar Harbor. And Waddington wrote and said, "Come back home, I have another fellowship for you." So I went and spent another year at Edinburgh, and then ended up at Yale with Poulson and met Bruce. So I've just made fortunate moves, I think.

ROSEBERRY: So during that time at Edinburgh—or Yale—was when you were editing the two-volume work, or—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I started with Waddington, and then—but those things develop very slowly, because you have to contact—you have to decide who you're going to ask to write. You have to contact them. In spite of deadlines you set, you don't get the

manuscripts, you know. So that took maybe three years from inception of the notion to the finished product.

ROSEBERRY: When someone is working on those kinds of things, is that in addition to the work that you're—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: As I say, it really made my promotion, because I'd irked Anlyan, because I never know when to keep my mouth shut, and he was on the committee. And he said, "Well, what about her reputation?" And one of my friends from the Zoology department was on it, and he just said quite lightly, "Well, she's much better known in Europe than her husband is." So. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: So it helped.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: It helped. Oh, yes, it helped. But I think it was— I've been very lucky for the support I've had, from both male and female colleagues, and I think that's generally true in academic life. I don't think there's a lot of backbiting or, you know, behind-the-scenes backstabbing, at least I never found it. I think if you're a woman, you may have to be a little more aggressive than most women like to be. It never bothered me, but I mean, you have to be ready to go to your chairman and say, "I want to be considered for promotion now, because I'll never be in a better position." And when he says to you, "What about your male colleague so-and-so," you say, "I'm not worried about his promotion, I'm worried about mine, and right now he—I don't think he's in a position where he could get promoted"—because he was too busy romancing another colleague's wife, and divorces were going on and all kinds of, you know, office (*laughs*) things, which I'm sure go on every place.

ROSEBERRY: So when you are working in the lab, is that a fairly solitary activity, or is—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: It is. I mean, certainly at the final moment when you're working on a project, you're the person who does it. If you're a—if it's a student who's working under you, you advise them, you talk to them about what they're doing and you check how—what things are going on, and you read—get them to tell you where they're going, and you suggest things to them things that might—they might wish to consider in addition, and so on. (There's a beautiful woodpecker out there on that tree straight ahead of you, down at the base—that redheaded woodpecker.) (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: You get to see all kinds of beautiful things out that window. So sometimes it's a solitary activity, and sometimes—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I think—yes, I would say that it's more a solitary activity than not in the final analysis. And then you depend upon—I mean if you—you write your papers, and you give them to people who will criticize them—and they always find things, you know, that seem so obvious to you that you don't have to explain why you came to such and such a conclusion. But the real sort of original work is really a one-man show.

ROSEBERRY: So the interaction with the colleagues, it sounds like, is kind of looking at each other's work and—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, you know, and reading it sometimes as an informed but not specialist audience and picking out things that you should have put in to make something clear to somebody who doesn't know as much about your subject as you do, and to correct your English, *(laughs)* among other things. You know, because some things that

may seem very clear to you because you know it so well, you don't explain as well as you should.

ROSEBERRY: Well, what were some of the other things that people in the department were working on?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, there was a lot of work on neurobiology. I was really the only—well, Jack Everett had done some work on developmental biology. But I was really the only person in Developmental Biology teaching Human Embryology. It hadn't been part of the curriculum, and I don't think it probably needs to be, although it helps understand things. But I don't think it should be a requirement.

ROSEBERRY: Was it a requirement?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No. And you know, I never had enormous classes. I'd give a couple of lectures, maybe, in one of the first-year courses. And this was that—when they were doing second-year specialty courses, you know, the—I don't know how the curriculum is now; I'm sure it's completely different.

ROSEBERRY: Well, tell me about Dr. Moses.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, Dr. Moses was a histologist-cytologist, so he and Bruce had been at Columbia, and they knew each other very well. And he was interested in chromosome biology and the synaptonemal complex, which is what holds chromosomes together. And Monte and I got to know each other because I came back from Germany, where we'd been on a sabbatical with a technique for spreading cells on a water surface, which got rid of a lot of the chromosomal components which left others denuded, so you could really see them better, in whole—I mean, what they were like in their entirety, instead of looking at sections. And he got really interested in that, and sort of took it over

and did a lot of stuff. And that's really how—a I say, we knew Moses through his connection with Columbia, the fact that Bruce's old professor from Columbia had moved here, and Monte's the person who suggested I go talk to Dave. But you know, the medical school was a good place for me, because I didn't—the teaching load was light for me, because there was no lab, essentially, and it was—I had three students, I think, during the—three graduate students, who did some work on Drosophila. But you didn't get a lot of graduate students in the medical school at that time.

ROSEBERRY: Well, how much time was required to spend in the lab? How much time did you need to do that?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: In my own lab, or—? Well, I mean, that's mostly what you do. Your teaching load is light, and so you're mostly doing research and writing. So—

ROSEBERRY: Well, how—like, during a day, how much time would you—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I—because your days aren't divided like that. You were teaching, you were probably just teaching. You were doing your lectures, and then you were doing your research, and then you were doing writing, so it all gets sort of parceled out—at least, that's the way mine goes. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: Was it— I know that your husband was on the university side. Was it ever—did you ever cross paths, or were you ever—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, Duke was small enough, so of course you did. Since Bruce was in the university and I was in the medical school, we had lots of contacts in Zoology and Botany. And then I got— I was elected to, you know, the Academic Council, I met other colleagues that way, and—but—. And I served on committees for promotion or hiring. So you know, you meet your colleagues. But you never get to know them nearly

as well as you do the colleagues in your own department—or closely-related departments.

ROSEBERRY: Well, tell me about the Academic Council.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: (*laughs*) It's—. Well, the Academic Council. I don't know what it's like now, but sort of—the Academic Council, for one thing, looked at people who were being recommended for appointments. That was—Appointments and Promotions Committee was the one I was on. And that was a really interesting, because you got to see how departments varied in what they demanded of their faculty, what were the criteria, and it was also a time when Duke was more interested—was interested in increasing the racial diversity of the faculty, and so there were—you were looking at credentials from ethnic groups that hadn't had the same opportunities as you did, by and large, and trying to make fair judgments that didn't affect the academic integrity of the university, but also didn't represent blatant racial biases. And that was very interesting. As a matter of fact, one of the people whose committee I was on is now our neighbor up at the end of the street, and he was one of the first blacks hired at Duke at a professorial level.

ROSEBERRY: And what's the time period that those things were being considered?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, that's a long time ago. I really would be interested in seeing, say, a racial diversity profile of the faculty at various academic levels now and thirty years ago or twenty years ago. I think that would be an interesting thing to do. Done on sexual diversity and racial diversity. Things have changed.

ROSEBERRY: So was that kind of in the early seventies when people were—when African-Americans were kind of being considered?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes.

ROSEBERRY: So tell me about—I understand it's kind of within departments that things like paternity leave and maternity leave or the tenure clock were decided, is that right?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: That I don't know enough about to comment on with any insight, or—. And I think, again, it's the individual's personality that may have more impact than the sex or race or anything else—how much you're willing to risk by going to your chairman and saying, you know, I want—I would like this to happen. And walking a fine line between being honest and toadying, you know, making sure you don't rattle any windows or anything. And that I'm not good at, unfortunately.

ROSEBERRY: You rattled the windows?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I—if—yes, occasionally. (*laughs*) I rattle a window or rattled windows. But never—I never put myself at hazard, either—I'll be honest.

ROSEBERRY: How did you rattle the windows, if you don't mind— ?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I suggested that—at least on one appointment—that it was based purely on the race of the candidate, and that the credentials that we were seeing would not have merited an appointment at that level had that person not been a minority member. But, you know, I'm glad he was appointed. He's been a—I mean, he's in a completely different discipline, but he's been a contributing faculty member. And it probably has been good for good Southern white boys and girls to see a successful minority person. That's certainly good for other minorities. I sometimes wish I'd married a black, I mean, you know, (*laughs*) just to rattle the window a little bit. Oh, but you know, I think it's important to know that both male and female faculty members mentor

females. I had this male—I had a lot of male mentors as well as female mentors. But females are important to see, because women might not consider—I think it's different now, but in my day, I would never have considered becoming a university professor. But it's the way things happen.

ROSEBERRY: Well, who were some of those mentors?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I've made a little list of some of my mentors. At the University of Colorado, my German professor Gerhart Loose and Ed Helwig; Waddington, who was my professor at Edinburgh; and here Dave Robertson and Monte Moses and Bruce Nicklas.

ROSEBERRY: Sounds like a good list.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Good list. Women colleagues like Lois Pounds and Jo Rae Wright and Rebecca Buckley—whom I don't know personally, but—Anne Scott, you know. And I had—there were two women professors at Boulder, and in Edinburgh Charlotte Auerbach, who was a German-Jewish refugee, who was absolutely marvelous and a very good friend. And then here Sally Schrader, who was the wife of Bruce's professor. So you know—I've just been very lucky.

ROSEBERRY: Well, were there people that you were able to mentor as well?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: A couple of graduate students. And I think in— I think I probably helped my younger female colleagues a little, although, you know, again, they were such strong women, they really didn't need any kind of support. But I think knowing there was somebody else who'd gone through what they were going to have to go through was useful to have around.

ROSEBERRY: So is mentorship an important part of the job, or—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I don't know. I think it's important for—certainly for PhD students to develop a sense of their own individuality. And I wouldn't want to be a mentor in the sense of babysitting. I would like to be a mentor in the sense if a student has a problem or wants advice, they would feel free to come to me and know that I would be honest. But—. You know, I think by the time you reach that age, you should be making your own decisions as much as possible. You shouldn't be dependent on somebody else to pull you out of trouble. You should make your own way, and if you feel you've been treated unfairly, you should have the courage to complain about it. It might cost you, but I think it would—it probably would cost you more, in the end, if you don't do it. You know, you don't have to be really nasty, but firm. I mean, as I said, when I thought I was in the best position I was going to be for a promotion, I went to Dave and said, you know, "I would like to be considered now," and there was this male, and he just wasn't in a position—he hadn't done anything for a couple of years in the lab. So—. But I have never felt it a disadvantage to be a woman, and certainly sometimes it's a real advantage. I don't think you should use—you know, I don't think you should use your sex as an excuse for what happens to you professionally, because there are more important yardsticks for measuring your contributions than what your sex is.

ROSEBERRY: Well, what are some of those yardsticks?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, you know, where your papers are being published, who knows you, what's your references, who you are able to ask for references and when those references come what they say about you, because people write honest references, by and large. You know, you've got to, to keep the sort of profile of a particular field up. I mean, you can't have bad professors, you can't have people who cheat and people who

produce wonky data, you know. You have to be able to read a paper and believe that it was done honestly and fairly and that the conclusions that are drawn from the results seem to be reasonable, and you try not to measure it against what you know about that person personally, I think.

ROSEBERRY: Do you feel that you measured up fairly well in those yardsticks?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I never—didn't—I mean, certainly I was honest, okay. I think I wrote quite clearly. I don't think I ever shattered the scientific world, but I had a good time, and I—. You know, I certainly—I was respected for what I did. My major contribution was editing this two-volume work on insect development that had a wide range of contributors. And that—I got to know these people in Europe in particular, and that was helpful, because it helps your reputation to have your name known. But I was never—I don't think I was really a terribly ambitious person. I wanted to do what I wanted to do, and if it wasn't cutting-edge research according to current fads or fashions, I didn't mind. I mean, not everybody cares how a fruit fly develops. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: Well, it sounds like you were given the latitude to explore that.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes. Yes. Or you take the latitude, you know. I mean, you make your decision—. Certainly at a place like Duke, where when you get a faculty position, nobody—well, at least in my experience, nobody—no person who is superior to you tells you what to do. I mean, Dave Robertson didn't say to me, You can't look at Drosophila, you've got to look at mammalian embryos. So your research is one thing, and your teaching, I think, is quite a different thing.

ROSEBERRY: And that's where the expectation might lie more heavily?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I don't think your teaching—in the medical school, I don't think your teaching matters very much at all. I think, you know, you've got to participate, you've got to do your share, but you don't have to shatter the world by the way you teach Gross Anatomy or Human Anatomy or Cytology. *But you have to get grants*. I mean that's—it's how much money you bring in that counts at a place like Duke. And then, of course, if you get to be well known, it helps the reputation of the university, too, and it helps attract other faculty members who might not otherwise come to Duke if they can say, Oh, yes, so-and-so was there. I'll have a colleague that I think I would like to interact with, you know. It's—but as I say, you know, this is my sort of view of the world, and I don't know how widespread it is. I'll be interested to see when you get some more of these interviews.

ROSEBERRY: So does that grant funding—is that primarily NIH [National Institutes of Healthy] funding?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, it's—there's National Science Foundation and NIH, and then there are lots of other sources of grants. I mean, you get whole books of sort of—of where grants are. But certainly NIH and the National Science Foundation are the major sources of funding for biological research. I mean, I'm not sure what people in economics and history, where they get their funds.

ROSEBERRY: Well, how do you—just out of curiosity, how do you first learn to apply for grant funding? It sounds like it's so important—that in and of itself is a skill.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yeah. But you learn—you learn fairly early, I think, because when you're applying for fellowships or scholarships, you have to justify your research, and you have to write clearly enough so somebody who isn’t a specialist can read what

you have done and what you plan to do and why you plan to do it in a particular lab or in a particular institute. I think it's important for a young scientist, particularly, to get criticism from colleagues he or she trusts, and ask them to read their grant applications. Because when you know a field so well, you sometimes don't make the connections that somebody who is peripheral to the field but competent to judge the general trend needs to know, that needs to be included in the grant. You need to be sure enough of yourself to ask to have your work—your applications—criticized before you send them out, I think.

ROSEBERRY: And then you kind of learn how that—what they're looking for?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, um-hm. And then you get—then, as I say, you get appointed to, you know, most of us get appointed to either reading grants and sending in critiques of them, or actually sitting on the boards that make the decision. And—so you learn a lot about the sort of best way to present your ideas and why this idea is important and why it's worth funding, even if it sounds like, you know— I mean, what's a person doing research on fruit fly embryos asking NIH for funds for? You also need to be sensible to which institutions and departments and funding sources you ask for the funds. I mean, you know. But these are all things you learn with maturity and from your colleagues and from your older colleagues. I mean, I think mentoring of younger faculty is really essential and important. And I think sometimes that's not realized. You know, people are too busy with their own work. And so it's a generous colleague who takes the time to mentor a younger faculty person. I mean, graduate students get mentored but then new faculty coming in frequently don't get the mentoring advice *they* really need, and sometimes themselves don't realize it would be valuable to find an older, more

experienced person in the department that they feel comfortable with to ask for advice or help or criticism.

ROSEBERRY: Well, so tell me more about the—just the nature of your work in the— I know that we've kind of talked a little bit about it, but when you were looking at the fruit fly and the human embryo. What—it sounds like two completely different worlds to me.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: They are complete—I mean, I've never looked at a human embryo except, you know, teaching human embryology. I had hoped—working with a particular kind of mutant I worked with, as I said, that I might find subtle differences between male and female development, and they're too subtle to find at the level I was looking at things or the particular mutants that I chose. There was no clear reason why having one X chromosome and two X chromosomes made a lot of difference if they had the same genes on them, where it would be lethal to the male embryo and not lethal to the female embryo. But I never— I either looked at the wrong things, or I missed it, or there just aren't differences that are visible at the cellular level, that it's a molecular thing that is just beyond present knowledge to distinguish. It was fun. (*laughs*) But—

ROSEBERRY: Is there latitude to not make those earth-shattering discoveries but to say, this is the work that I've done, and these are—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, no, I wouldn't think—. That's not really true. I think you have to have a certain level of productivity. I think it has to have a certain level of respect. But—and, you know, I mean, so far people can—your sources of funding are much less if—than if you were doing something, say, with mammalian embryos that might, you know, shed some light on a particular disease or something. But you—it doesn't cost that much, either, to do research on fruit flies. (*laughs*) So I don't—I haven't

applied for a grant for such a long time, I really have no notion now, you know, what the situation is about—whether you have to choose your research by what you know will get funded, or whether it matters so much to you what you're doing on a particular research problem—is it you're willing to take your chances? And I suspect for a lot of scientists, the latter is a choice they will make. But—depends on other responsibilities. If you have the responsibility of a family and children to send on to university, so you know—. But we didn't have—by choice—have that kind of responsibility, though; we've lived it up.

ROSEBERRY: Well, did you ever feel like there was a—you were having to balance home life and work life and—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No. But I—as I think—if you don't have children, you don't have to worry about that. We shared our home life because we both had responsibilities. And now because I am, you know, unable to do a lot of things, Bruce does all the shopping. I've sold my car because I don't feel safe driving a car anymore, so he has to do all the shopping, and he does most of the cooking. And he doesn't complain, and he seems to enjoy it, as a matter of fact. So—and you know, we have a cleaning woman who comes, and I do the laundry. And you know, we don't have a lot of—we don't do a lot of entertaining. We tend to take people to restaurants, rather than cook at home. Because then everybody can sort of relax instead of, you know—. We've had to give up our yearly trips to Italy, which I regret. We had this lovely country house we rented near Sienna which was really nice, but the people who were the rental agents have retired to New Zealand and the owner is trying to sell the house—so everything sort of came to an end at the same time. We didn't have to find another place. Somebody's going to have

that nice house. And if it had happened five years ago, we might have considered buying a house.

ROSEBERRY: Well, were there other pairs, you know, husband and wife pairs, that were—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, well, the best example were Bruce's mentors, Sally Hughes Schrader and Franz Schrader. They were both cytologists. And, of course, there were the Curies. There's a rather interesting book—if I find my copy of it, I may have done something with it—on husband and wife pairs in the sciences, which you might find interesting just to read.

ROSEBERRY: Do you know the name of that book?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: (*laughs*) I've been trying to think of it.

ROSEBERRY: Okay.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: And then there's also one on women Nobel prize winners, which I think—and again, if I had—I have a copy of that some place, if I find it I'll let you have it—which is very interesting. I mean, people like the Curies, of course, everybody knows about. But Sally and Franz were a good couple. They worked on different things entirely. But certainly some of my friends in Edinburgh were husband and wife science pairs who worked on different things.

ROSEBERRY: Seems like there were quite a few at Duke as well.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Um-hm.

ROSEBERRY: Was that ever—you know, when you were on committees to bring in new faculty, was that— I mean, did you kind of have—did you say, This person in this department, and this person in this department, and how—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I think— I don't think that ever was a major thing. I mean, sometimes you might make an exception if one of the people was just worth having, and you were willing to say, "Okay let's get the other person as well, if that's the only way we can get this person," because you wouldn't get somebody that was impossible. You might get somebody you thought probably would never make the same kinds of contributions to the university the same way. But I was always— . When I was on the selections committee, I was always impressed with how careful people were to make their decisions on the right—or, what I would consider the right—qualifications, rather than having something like the person's preference for certain kinds of food or this—I mean, that's an exaggeration, but—

ROSEBERRY: That you like this person—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, or somebody that you really didn't like as a person—you found their personality antagonistic or something. But if they were really good at what they did academically, you had to put that low on the list of things. I mean, you might bring it up for discussion in the committee, but it was never a decisive point, as far as I knew.

ROSEBERRY: How big are those committees?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: They're not very—they're not terribly large. They're diverse, but they're not terribly large. Because if you get too many people, they're unwieldy, they don't work. And I think, also, the committees generally recognize when they need outside advice. You know, they—the point comes up in the discussion about this person's contribution and how original is it and so on. If it's something that you're not close to yourself, if it's, say, in—because these committees are from diverse fields, and so

you're looking at people whose specialties are very different than yours sometimes, and you don't know, necessarily, the people and the reputation of the people who've written the recommendations, and—. So then you would talk to a colleague who was better informed and—or listened more carefully to their opinion, than they would listen, say, to mine. But I was generally impressed. I think only a couple of times that I felt a decision was made for convenience sake, but in the end it worked out. I mean, it was like, you know—I know in one case where we took a minority member where if the qualifications and letters had been of the same level for a Caucasian, that person wouldn't have been appointed. But they've all worked out, as far as I know.

ROSEBERRY: What's the name of that committee? Is it the—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Promotions and Tenure Committee, I believe. I don't—it may be something different now, but I think it's Promotions and Tenure. And that's a—I mean, you usually have—you may have a small committee in the department that considers a person and then a letter is written. But then the Promotions and Tenure Committee is an across—has a cross discipline committee. Because you can ask—people might have questions about qualifications that are not apparent to somebody outside the—that particular branch of knowledge. And those get discussed. And I think that's a good thing, by and large. As I say, I can only think of one committee where if the person had not been a minority, we—the committee would not have made the recommendation that they did. But, as I say, it's worked out very well so, you know—and also sometimes—not sometimes, but frequently—somebody that looks very good on paper and has gotten glorious raves turns out to be a mediocre colleague for other reasons, you know, so—.

But I haven't had many of those. I think, you know, given human nature, academic life works pretty well.

ROSEBERRY: How long did you serve on that committee?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Probably three years. I can't remember. May have been two. Not sure.

ROSEBERRY: I don't know if this was a—I understand there was a book that was written in anatomy that—and I'm not sure who wrote the book, but that there were some pictures of the female anatomy that was kind of a little risqué—more than the male anatomy—and it was written, maybe, by a Duke professor, and I didn't know if you were familiar with that.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I'm not, fortunately.

ROSEBERRY: (*laughs*) Okay. Okay.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I don't know who it would have been.

ROSEBERRY: Well, that's fine. Just thought I'd ask. I understand that there's a lectureship in your name, is that right?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Not that I'm aware of.

ROSEBERRY: Oh, okay (*laughs*). I guess I had kind of—in doing some research, one of the things that I had done was kind of Google your name, and someone said that they had been involved in the Sheila Counce lecture, that they had done—.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Hmm.

ROSEBERRY: So that may be someone other than—there may be someone with the same name?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: No. No I don't—I'm sure not. Did I give some money to the department to use to—? I don't—I have no idea right now. If I suddenly have a breakthrough in memory, I'll let you know. (*laughs*) You know, I may have given some money to the department to—for lectures—but I don't remember doing it, so— it was not substantial, if so. If you find out more about that, I'd love to know. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: Okay.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Love to have my memory jolted.

ROSEBERRY: Okay. Do you—I wonder if we could talk more about just changes in the department.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, it's gotten much broader. I mean, it was a very small department. It is now much larger, and it now has both cell and molecular biology represented, and I think much less anatomy, per se. I don't know anybody who's doing research on human anatomy in the department. There may be some research being done on mammalian cell function and structure, but it would—I think—I'm pretty sure it would be at the cellular level, rather than at a higher level of organization.

ROSEBERRY: And you say that's maybe because that territory has been explored fairly well?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I should think so. But you know, I would really have to know more than to say that. But it's easy—I think now that kind of research is probably much harder to get funding—government funding—for than cell and molecular biology. I'm pretty sure. I'm sure—I would bet my bottom dollar on that. (*laughs*) But—and, also, there are now so many sources of research that, you know, you get research for hormonal studies, or you can get studies for glandular anatomy. And they intertwine, and they

interleaf, and so I think you have to be canny about where you send your grant applications and how you write your grant applications. Grantsmanship is a very important talent to have. I mean, you have to know how to present your research in a way that it seems more important than it probably is. But—

ROSEBERRY: Has that always—has grantsmanship always been an important part of—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, it certainly has been during my lifetime as a scientist for fellowships or for research awards. I mean, you have to know how to write clearly, succinctly, convincingly. You have to have an eye for what's important to you, and how to make it seem important to other people. Otherwise— . It can't seem trivial. It may seem trivial on the surface, and yet you suspect there's something really much more significant under the surface, and that's what you want to find out. Then you have to convince somebody that that really is a good probability. But you know, I think that's true of writing any kind of grant application. You have to have, I hope, a sincere conviction that there is good reason to think what you want to do and why you want it supported is a legitimate and good reason for supporting the research. I mean, you can't do research anymore just because it's fun. (*laughs*) At least and get it supported. Because there are too many people who want part of the pot that isn't quite big enough.

ROSEBERRY: Well, the pot was bigger back in the 1960s, wasn't it?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Certainly—at least on a dollar-for-dollar comparison, in terms of inflation and all that kind of thing. But, you know, then you got a war to pay for, got George Bush to get rid of. (*laughs*) If you're Republican—

ROSEBERRY: Things to do, things to do.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: If you're Republican, I'm sorry, but not very. (*laughs*) Oh, he's so awful. I mean, you know, this thing about stem cell research I think is just—. I think it's immoral. I mean, the—his stance is immoral. I really do. Oh, well. We can go kill other people, but we can't kill embryos.

ROSEBERRY: Well, you had mentioned that the death of Dr. Robertson affected the department and the state of the department.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well it—I mean, you bring in a new chairman, you change the, you know—because the sort of—in the medical school, I think the sort of research interests of the chairman for the department are very important, and the status of that person in his own discipline and particular subdiscipline is also very important for the way the medical school or that department is going to be looked at by people who are considering funding to the department or sending students to the department, all this kind of thing. You know, that's why I was so pleased when they appointed [Richard] Brodhead president, and I am so sorry this Duke lacrosse case has arisen, because Yale—Brodhead had been offered jobs from practically every major university in the country. And they just thought he was—people had stopped trying, because they didn't think they could move him from Yale. And I bet he regrets that he isn't still back at Yale, which I think is just too bad.

ROSEBERRY: So you like Dr. Brodhead?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I like what I know about him. I don't know him personally, but I, you know—. Certainly from everything I— I have a friend who sends me the Yale bulletin—Yale graduate bulletin, because he knows I'm still interested in old colleagues. (We were at Yale before we came down here. And so there's still gossip about people I

know, this kind of thing.) And he sent it to me. And there was just this sort of heartbroken article about the move of Brodhead, because people just had given up, you know, worrying about it, because they didn't—he'd given up so many more attractive places, I think, than Duke. But maybe he thought he could really make a difference at Duke. I just hope he stays.

ROSEBERRY: Well, what has been Duke's reputation in the academic community?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I think Duke has a very good reputation in the academic community, certainly. Well, you wouldn't get the kind of applicants you'd get at Duke. I mean, you know, in terms of graduate and in terms of their averages and their academic ability. You have to take some alums', you know, grandchildren or children. But that's a small price to pay for it if you—just because their parents went to Duke (*laughs*) doesn't mean that they're going to be washouts. So yeah. I think—we're very happy that we moved to Duke. You know, you don't attract as many graduate students as you would if you were at Yale, but you still get good graduate students, and you get good—Bruce enjoys the undergraduate students a lot. He teaches a course that nonmajors can take, and they take it for their science requirement. And the students and Bruce have such a good time together. (*laughs*) I went to one of his lectures, and, you know, it was terrible. Everybody thought this was—now, this was really a pleasure. They were learning something, but they were having a good time while they were doing it.

ROSEBERRY: That's the way to do it.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes.

ROSEBERRY: Well, I want to go back to something we had talked about a while ago when we were talking about, you know, in 1968, people were kind of deciding that this

was the time when we can hire more women. Was that—did you see—were there a lot of women at Duke, or were there—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, there were enough women at Duke that you didn't feel that you were, you know, standing out because you were a woman. There are a lot more women at Duke now than there were when we came. That's for sure. There are some women that I wish weren't at Duke, but (*laughs*) that's a story I'm not taking any farther. But you know, and there are male colleagues you don't like either, so—. But— . We have never regretted at all the move from Yale to Duke, not for one minute—for lots of reasons—colleagues, climate. We couldn't have afforded a house like this in New Haven, out here in our own little woods.

ROSEBERRY: Well, were— I'm trying to formulate my question. I think I lost it. So were there different departments that more women were involved in, or—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, there—I mean, that's certainly true, but it's also true that, you know—I mean, physics departments tended to be mostly male, because there are not a lot of women who are doing physics or were doing physics. In English, I think, women are as apt to do English—women are as apt to get a degree—a PhD—in English as men are, or, you know, in Biochemistry I don't—. Biochemistry certainly has female faculty members as well as male. I really just, you know—I'm so used to having had both female and male faculty members at the universities I know that I don't think I make—probably may have a very good notion of what the real world is like. And you know, I just have found both the male faculty members I've known from the time I was an undergraduate at Boulder to be extremely supportive of me.

ROSEBERRY: So it's not unusual for women to be in the basic sciences?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, they certainly were apparent in the basic sciences—not in the same numbers—not in the same proportion as males. It wasn't a 50-50 thing, but it wasn't, you know, all or none either.

ROSEBERRY: Was that true for your department as well?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, certainly true. It's certainly true. Well, you know, Cell Biology now has a woman chairman. And Kathleen Smith is chair of a department. You should talk—well, she's in the Biology—chair of the Biology Department. But Neurobiology, for example, in the medical school—Nell Cant, I think, is probably the only female member of the department that I'm aware of. But you know, I may be wrong. I doubt that Nell would be willing to be interviewed, but you'd sure have fun if you did. (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: Well, I can at least ask.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: You could at least ask. Don't tell her I suggested it!

ROSEBERRY: Well, (*laughs*) we've got it on tape, so I don't know.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: That's all right. Nell will understand. She'll tell you what she—she'll tell you yes or no, and it will probably be no, but you'd have a good time.

ROSEBERRY: Well, what things have I not asked you that I should have asked?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I don't think there's much you've missed. You didn't ask me about male mentors, I had plenty of those.

ROSEBERRY: Okay, well, let's talk a little bit about that.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, you know, I just—I mean, there were people both at Boulder where I was an undergraduate—one of my biology teachers, one of my German teachers was certainly—were certainly mentors. Waddington at Edinburgh was—he and

I were good friends. I mean, we used to go out and have lunch together. Because he liked American women, he found them very easy to talk to He liked women period, some a little bit too well. But he really felt much more at ease with women than he did with men for some reason. And I really felt a pang when he died. It was a real loss. And you know, here Dave Robertson—I could say anything to Dave I wanted to, and he'd never—he would never of hit me, (*laughs*) although he may have been tempted occasionally. And Monte was helpful. And Bruce has been very helpful and supportive.

ROSEBERRY: Now, would he hit somebody else?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Hmm?

ROSEBERRY: Would he hit somebody else?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I don't—no. Never.

ROSEBERRY: Okay.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: But you know, I just had so many male and female role models that I—and just have been so well treated professionally from the time I started to college—well, actually in high school. I went to this really small high school. We didn't have a lot of male teachers.

ROSEBERRY: (*to cat that has come into the middle of interview*) Hi, cutie.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes—come on, Cat. Poor old girl, yes. Yes, you can go hide. I fixed it so you were well hidden. She can't see you.

ROSEBERRY: That cat's got a rough life.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes, that's right. Yes. She has a rough life because a stray kitten appeared here about two years ago. And he was so tiny we didn't think he'd survive, and so we brought him in the house and had him neutered. And he's now an indoor cat, and

he is so naughty. I mean, the other day I heard Cat squealing. She had gone under this thing of mine, this—my walker. She was under my walker, asleep, and Bit had seen her, and he came over and was biting her. And she didn't know what to do. She's not aggressive. Anyway, but—. They live together, more or less. Yes.

ROSEBERRY: Well, how would you kind of sum up your experience—or your time—at Duke?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I—it's been a very positive—certainly been very positive for me. But most of my academic experiences have been very positive.

ROSEBERRY: And how would you sum up, maybe, your impact on Duke?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: (*laughs*) Well, I think it's been interesting in a way that I've never been afraid to say what I think to a male colleague, and I think they probably at one time were used to more reticent women. Certainly I could say anything I wanted to Dave.

ROSEBERRY: Some of those reticent women—were those at Duke before? Were they— Molly Bernheim, was she a reticent woman?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, I— I've never—I never saw them in any way—any place where I would be able to—. But, I mean, I'm sure Lois Pounds has always said exactly what she thought.

ROSEBERRY: Well, it sounds like it's a good thing to, as you said, rattle the windows, that that's kind of a well-respected trait in the culture that—?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, I think you have to—I mean, I'm not sure. It certainly hasn't hurt me. But, you know, you're—I was dealing with individuals and not as a general rule. And I'm sure there are men who think women shouldn't be mouthing off or

shouldn't have such strong opinions or should be more ladylike about the ones they have. But you know, you can't let that—I mean, I couldn't let that stop me from saying what I thought. Because I'd have to—I'd lose my own self-respect. I'd rather lose their self—their respect—than lose my own self-respect. And certainly I'm sure that Nell is even more strongly of that opinion, and I think Kathleen probably does it in a more diplomatic way and probably gets away with more. I don't think you have to be nasty, but I think you have to be honest, and I think you have to say, you know, what you think and have what you think are good reasons for backing up—being able to support your point of view. But—.

ROSEBERRY: You think if that's—is that a quality that it's important for a woman to have, or is that important for anybody in academic medicine—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I think—well, I think it's important for anybody period, you know. Certainly I think it's important, you know, in academic life, because the truth is what is the basis of academic science. But you know, you can say pretty strong things tactfully, and you can say pretty strong things not so tactfully, and that, I think, is something that the individual—I felt—I mean, I'm sure I could get away with saying, you know, sort of rabblerousing things to Dave Robertson. I mean, I could put them in stronger terms than a male colleague might, because Dave would never hit a woman. (*laughs*) But he was a sweetie pie. As a matter of fact, I think one of the things that probably was not a very good character-former for me was the fact that people enjoyed my being sassy when I was a kid, you know. But—. And a little bit later, I mean—. (*laughs*) So I've probably been more forthright than I might have tactfully been, but it doesn't seem to have hurt me much.

ROSEBERRY: Well, are there other examples of that? I know you talked about your promotion. Were there other examples of that when you've—that characteristic has come forward?

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Oh, definitely. Oh, there's so many of varying degrees of importance I couldn't begin to list them. (*laughs*) I mean, you know, that's really true. I try to be as honest as I can and as tactful as I can, but I don't think tact is one of my big points. I hope I'm wrong. I hope I'm underestimating myself. But you know, I think people respect what they feel are honest opinions. I think they'd rather have an honest opinion than a toadying opinion—unless they have terrible ego problems.

ROSEBERRY: Well, I want to thank you very much for—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Well, you're very welcome.

ROSEBERRY: —talking with me today. It's been a real pleasure.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Okay, and if you have—think of any more questions—let me know.

ROSEBERRY: I will. Thank you.

COUNCE-NICKLAS: I look forward to seeing—hearing some of these things when this all gets put into a—

ROSEBERRY: I will certainly let you know—

COUNCE-NICKLAS: Yes.

ROSEBERRY: —how to access that.

(end of interview)