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Professor of Biology

July 24, 2012

By David Fletcher

Transcription by Mark Linden, University of the Pacific Library, Special Collections

Subjects: Changes in biological sciences curriculum, general education programs, advising pre-health professional majors, role of faculty in shared governance and committees, role of administrators & relationships with faculty, makeup of student body.
FLETCHER: I’m interviewing Dale McNeal on July 24, 2012 in the Holt library. So let’s start by how you got to the university and when did you come.

MCNEAL: Okay, well, I accepted a position in April of 1969. Arlene and I moved to Stockton in late August of 1969. The University had not widely published the position, and that year there were only four openings for botanists that got publicized. One was at Laramie, Wyoming one was at Humboldt, one was at Long Beach and one was at Fort Collins, Colorado. I and the other fellow finishing his PhD in botany in Pullman (Washington State University) that year didn’t get invited to interviews at any of those places. One of Arlene’s bosses, she was working in Zoology, suggested I had better start writing some letters myself. I was unaware at the time that there were other people out there writing several hundred letters looking for jobs, and I wrote I think about a dozen. I had a nice phone call from [Dale Arvey] who was the chairman of the biology department, and he indicated that they thought that they hired somebody but it had fallen through, and if I would fill out an application they would consider it. And he sent it to me, and I filled it out and very quickly got a phone call inviting me for an interview. So I came down, interviewed, and they offered me the position and here I am.

FLETCHER: What were your impressions of Stockton when you first arrived?

MCNEAL: This would have been in April, the climate seemed fairly amenable. The airport was in use in those days. You could actually catch a flight from Pullman I’m trying to remember, maybe I flew to San Francisco or Portland, but then came to Stockton, but it may have been to Sacramento, I don’t remember. By and large it seemed like a nice enough town. The campus was very impressive. I thought, you know, it looked kind of ivy league-ish. Not quite what I had expected in the Central Valley of California, but a very attractive campus, and so that was a plus.

FLETCHER: How about the University? What about the people you met here?

MCNEAL: When I first interviewed it was interesting because they very carefully kept me segregated from the person that I would be replacing, who had left in less than auspicious circumstances. So I met with Dale Arvey who was the chairman and with Ed Smith who was the director of the Pacific Marine Station at Tomales Bay. Then I gave a seminar to the department, and before I left the following day, Dale Arvey offered me the position. So I was delighted, given the job circumstances at the time, and accepted forth with.

FLETCHER: So you arrived in August; was there anybody that you would point to in being particularly helpful in getting your organized?
MCNEAL: Well Dale Arvey was... He wrote and offered that Arlene and I stay with him until we got a place. He was in the somewhat unfortunate position of his wife just having announced that she wanted a divorce. So he was a bit upset, but he was very hospitable and we spent a couple of nights with him and then found an apartment and got out of his hair. Lee Christenson was very helpful because Lee and I for several years taught Biology 51 and Biology 61. Biology 51 in those days was more or less everything that was classified as plants plus some chemistry and genetics and that sort of thing. Biology 61 was zoology. So while we didn’t team teach it in those days why... he followed me, and he was very helpful helping me get things started. In particular then, those two people were very helpful.

FLETCHER: So you’ve started talking about the curriculum. Talk a little about how the curriculum has changed during your tenure at Pacific.

MCNEAL: Well of course one of the things in biology that’s happened is there was literally an explosion of new information in Biology and Genetics. When I first came here for example the polymerase chain reaction was unknown, and ten years later it was the centerpiece of a lot of biological research, so there were some really serious changes. I had a minor in genetics for my PhD and the doubling rate of knowledge in genetics at that time was about three years, so there was tremendous change in biology, and it was difficult because the department and the university didn’t really have the resources to take advantage and to teach that kind of thing with hands-on perspective to students. It’s only been in the last fifteen or twenty years that we’ve had that ability. The explosion of knowledge in biology was one of the things. I came right at the beginning of the I&I program, which I think stood for imagination and innovation or something of that sort. It was an interesting idea that suffered, I think, in the execution. First of all everybody was expected to participate, and you know there were a lot of people who didn’t want to, and you can imagine how good a job they did. I remember going to an early meeting the first semester I was here about the I&I program and talking to people that I might pair a course with, and being told by a number of people in the humanities that they couldn’t see any way that they could pair one of their courses with a science course. That kind of thing was discouraging. Winter term was interesting, and again suffered from the inability of the faculty committees to monitor what was going on and insist on rigorous, good quality offerings, I think. There were strange things going on, and nobody had any control over it. In the biology department we were in Weber Hall, which was not the best facility of course. We would be there for another eight years, and there was that kind of problem with facilities. Then very shortly, it couldn’t have been more than five years, when the I&I program kind of died and winter term was gotten rid of. We’ve gone through a number of iterations of general education since then. Some of which have been better than others. So that was one kind of curricular situation.

FLETCHER: Did you participate in any of those general education programs?

MCNEAL: Yes I did, because finally we got into a situation where you were teaching a course and students then chose courses. Why you know California Flora, for example, was a general education course, and I had designed it to be either a major’s course for those students that
were interested that way, but also that it would be something that someone could take that wasn’t a science major. So yes, I was participating in that way. I kind of tried to avoid Mentor Seminar (aka Pac. Sem) which just didn’t appeal to me. I sat on a couple of committees that decided what would be accepted in which general education category, and you will probably remember that was often a painful situation because there were certain departments and people who wanted every course they had to somehow or another fit into every segment of the general education program, whether they did or not. There was that. Then I got involved in the... well first of all I guess it was the Ryan Act for teacher education. It must have gone through three iterations or changes in the state of California for teacher education since then. Again it kinda tended to be frustrating because it seemed like every four or five years the state decided that they needed to do something completely different than what they had done before, and so you had to sit down and start all over again, and so there were those kinds of curricular changes that you had to deal with. As time went on and the department... Well when I was chairman, which would have been 1979-85, we were faced with a situation where the other budget, the budget we used to buy supplies, not only didn’t increase over a six year period but actually was reduced. So the department wound up ultimately having to charge lab fees in order to run laboratories. That was a painful decision, but in the long run it paid off because it gave us a budget that allowed us to do a lot of things. We couldn’t have begun to support undergraduate research, for example, if we didn’t have that money. Even nowadays when we’ve got grant money from a number of professors, and in those days the idea of grants was really difficult, I’ll put it that way. I might as well say that one of the things that bothered me after I got here was the general attitude in the University and in the college toward research. It was particularly true in the college. There was a core of faculty who just did not want to be involved in research and didn’t think that anybody else ought to be either. That was very frustrating. Fortunately Dale Arvey was very encouraging to continue to do our research. Then when he left and Fran Hunter took over that encouragement continued. The department was in pretty good shape with regard to research because of the efforts of those two people to kind of continue to encourage us to remain active. But as I say, there was an attitude in the college that was depressing when it came to scholarly activity and research and that sort of thing.

FLETCHER: Well you talked about developing California Flora. What other courses can you point to that you developed or other programs that you were involved in?

MCNEAL: Well of course California flora was my prize and the one that I really cared the most about. Over the years, I had taught things like plant histology, plant ecology, which really hadn’t been done before I came here, at least not in the immediate past. I was involved in the department when we finally got to a point where we decided that it was no longer feasible to run Principles of Biology as a single section course. When I first started teaching it I had I think the first year about a hundred students and that slowly increased to the point that in the 1980’s it had gotten to be 250. There wasn’t even a room big enough to have lectures. So we had to start thinking about doing something differently. So we decided to team teach the course. It wasn’t the way that some people always think of team teaching. This was, everybody always had their own lecture section. The syllabus was the same for each section. The grading was
across the whole spectrum of the course. It wasn’t that you grade each section separately. Occasionally there would be some blip where you would have to make some adjustment in grades to be fair, but it worked pretty well. Now I guess there is some place between four and five hundred students, and we have about five lecture sections. That was the way it evolved. From Lee teaching one semester and I teaching the other semester and we were the only people teaching it to what it is today. Those were some of the curricular things that we did.

FLETCHER: Talk a little bit about the development of the pre-med and pre-dent programs. Biology had a big part in those.

MCNEAL: Fuad Nahhas was the pre-medical advisor for years. He had all of the pre-med students and Fuad was very good about keeping up with what the medical schools required. The students were getting, I thought, good advice as to what their curriculum should look like and that sort of thing. In dentistry it was much the same way, I did a little pre-dent advising, but Lee Christenson did most of it. He’s has a very nice leather sleeve jacket that he got from the dental school as a thank you one year. Anyway over the years we would talk and the dental school people would come over and we’d talk and get the curriculum worked out so that the students were taking the courses that they needed to take. It was interesting because I remember I had an advisee that came in in the fall semester of her junior year. She was a Southeast Asian student, and she said, “Doctor McNeal,” she says, “I want to go to dental school.” She says my parents are both dentists, but I don’t want to be a biology major. I looked at her record and she had taken organic chemistry and chemistry and she had taken all of the courses that the dental school would say this is what you have to take. She had gotten A’s and B’s in everything. I said well you’ve taken everything you need to take, you’ve gotten good grades, I don’t see any reason why you can’t major in something else. What would you like to major in? She said well I’m not sure what I could finish in a year and a half. Well what are you interested in? Well I’d really like to do something in theater arts. So I looked it up and this is not a knock on theater arts but it would take about three semesters to take everything you needed to get a major in theater arts. So Rose decided to do that, and in fact spent her spring semester in London. She came in to me when she was doing her applications and wanted me to look at her resume. I knew, I mean she was Vietnamese, I said Rose you don’t say anything about foreign languages. Do you speak Vietnamese? Oh yes she said, anything else? Well she says I speak French and I speak Mandarin. I said why don’t you put those down on your resume. She said, “Do you really think that’s important?” “Yes,” I said, “that’s very important,” and I thought to myself that we (UOP) weren’t doing a very good job of selling the importance of a second language to a lot of students. So that was one thing that I found. A lot of students, I mean, I get people coming in all the time. I had a young lady come in last fall, wanted to introduce to me her father. She had just been accepted into the dental school. She was on the three year plan. She wanted me to meet him because he had taken Bio 51 from me twenty years earlier. He remembered, and we had a very pleasant conversation, and she is off to dental school this fall. I don’t know if that really says much about what I did vis-a-vis the dental school but...

FLETCHER: No, that’s good. Now you were the department chair for a period of time. Talk a little about your term as department chair.
MCNEAL: Well, it was sort of an unfortunate circumstance because Fran Hunter was the department chairman, and Fran had cancer and passed away rather suddenly, so the department elected me as chair, which I was thrilled, if you’ll pardon a bit of sarcasm. I was chair for six years. It was a little difficult; we had to hire somebody to replace Fran, and that’s when I ended up hiring Paul Richmond. We had just moved, the whole department hadn’t yet moved from Weber Hall to the Classroom Building. Part of the department had moved the year before Fran died. The rest of us, including me, had moved over after he had passed. The classroom building was okay. You know there were things that had to be done. The freshman biology labs had been sewing labs, and it had all this electrical stuff hanging from the ceilings that they plugged their sewing machines into. Things like that, so there was a lot of that sort of thing that had to be done. One of the things... I had Sara Schilling who had been the department secretary for years. At that time she had been the department secretary, I guess, for about 20 years. If there was anybody who knew what was going on, Sara knew and was an anchor that I could get advice and information from. We were not able to hire anyone else until after Lee became chairman. Paul was my only hire. I did hire, while Fran and Alice were on leave in... I believe 1974. I hired Rich Tanaza because we had a faculty member that bailed out on us in the middle of the year, so we needed somebody to teach. Rich in 1974 and Paul in 1980, maybe ‘81. We didn’t have another hire until 1991, so we had a long stretch. I think that was not unusual in COP, that there were long stretches where there were no new hires. There was not a lot of opportunity to move in academic circles in those days. So people got a job and then kept their head down.

FLETCHER: Now had the department always elected the chair?

MCNEAL: I wouldn’t say they always had. It was my understanding that Dale Arvey had been hired because the university was not satisfied with the department’s administration and had specifically hired him to be chair. When Dale elected to move on, we had already hired Fran and Alice, and Fran had experience as a department chair. So we recommended Fran Hunter, the university was not about, I would say, to go out and hire another chair as a new position. So we got together and suggested Fran as chair. He was amenable, and the university was amenable so that took care of that. When Fran died then we were in a mode where the University had (supposedly) had gone into this ‘department chairmanships lasts for three years and can be renewed one time’ kind of thing, and the department was electing chairs. So to answer your question things had progressed or regressed to that point.

FLETCHER: So you had actually only been here three or four years before you became chair?

MCNEAL: Actually I came in ’69 and became chair in ’79.

FLETCHER: Sorry, I misunderstood.
MCNEAL: Well, in ’74 I was chair for I think one semester when Fran and Alice were on leave. That was Fran’s doing, in other words, I guess he asked the department if it was okay, but he basically appointed me as chair.

FLETCHER: You hadn’t had previous experience as a chairman. How did you develop your style as department chair?

MCNEAL: To a large extent I followed what Dale Arvey and Fran had done. I did have department meetings, and we did discuss things, and on a couple of occasions I actually had a retreat. We went out to my house on a Saturday afternoon, and we spent some time discussing about the curriculum. Changes that we wanted to make in the curriculum and that sort of thing. We tended to be a department, ever since I got here, where we worked very well together, and by and large we reached consensus about the direction we were going and what we ought to be doing, and basically what I tried to do was build consensus. It worked; it was pretty successful I think. Nobody got mad and resigned and left.

FLETCHER: If you think about the process of electing the chairs for fixed terms as opposed to other units of the University that chairs are appointed by the dean. How would you compare those two?

MCNEAL: Well, there are clearly advantages to both. I’m a little leery when the department chair is completely beholden to the dean for his position. By the same token there are certainly examples that I will not point to in the University where faculty elected chairs have not been the greatest thing to happen to a department. So yes, there is good and bad in both systems. You know, I don’t know what you do about that. We had a department where it worked for us, but obviously before I came here there was a… When the dean was appointing we had a situation where the University felt they had to go out of the department to hire a chair because it wasn’t working. I think the circumstances dictate how well something like that works.

FLETCHER: Let’s talk a little about university committees. You have served on many of them, as did I. How did you first get involved, and what it was like.

MCNEAL: Well I remember very well because it was sort of suggested the first year I was here that, you know, that this here was an important part of the job. The participation in the University and that a good place to start was the Committee on Courses and Standards, so I wound up serving a couple of terms on the Committee on Courses and Standards. Then different sorts of things happened. Stan McCaffrey appointed me to the Athletic Advisory Board. That was a bit of a frustration. Not so much that it was Stan doing it, but that the Athletic Advisory Board was a bit of a frustration. Then I was elected to a number of other committees. I suppose generally I was one of those people that didn’t say no. If somebody wanted to nominate me I, if I wasn’t serving on too many committees, I would say okay. Sometimes I got elected and sometimes I didn’t. That was fine, but I wound up serving on the COP Council, on the Curriculum Committee, the Academic Council, Athletic Advisory Board and a number of other... and then there were the ad hoc committees that various administrators
would put together that you wound up serving on. That was sort of the way it happened. I guess you could say that I was just someone who couldn’t say no.

FLETCHER: Do you think the structure is effective or was effective?

MCNEAL: I found it really frustrating. I thought there were far too many committees taking up far too much faculty time and by the same token as the University in the last few years by my observation, has put a good deal more emphasis on scholarly activity. The participation of the faculty in the governance procedures seems to have fallen off a cliff. People are not doing that because they don’t perceive that they get credit for it. When we were here of course it was considered important. Now that still doesn’t mean there weren’t too many committees, and I think there were and are too many committees, and given the current climate they ought to take a very close look at all of those committees and see whether they really want and need all of them; Particularly since we’re having trouble manning them.

FLETCHER: Would it be your position then that this notion when we came of shared governance is sort of dissipated?

MCNEAL: I think that perhaps that the notion is still there as long as individuals have to do it. Does that make sense? In other words, I want shared governance, but I don’t want to have to participate. You can’t have shared governance if you’re going to do that. The other thing is that, I find it extremely frustrating as I watch the burgeoning of the administration. It has always been a frustration, but it just seems to go on. You know, we’ve got all these administrators, so then what we need is some oversight by the faculty, and we can get away from some of the committees. I think you and I both know we tried unsuccessfully to reduce the number of faculty committees. I’m not sure we’d be unsuccessful today.

FLETCHER: Talk a little bit about the people at Pacific that are the most memorable and why?

MCNEAL: Well of course Dale Arvey because he hired me. He was a good chairman and he was a good scientist. He continued to publish right up to the day he died kind. Fran and Alice, Hunter, and it’s hard to separate them in my mind. Although you know Alice was here many years after Fran passed but again good teachers, good researchers they were the kind of people I think I and others should model themselves after in terms of their science and their teaching. They were quite memorable to me. Ken Beauchamp - he wound up being dean of COP during the first year I was here until they hired Roy Whitaker. As far as I’m concerned he did a terrific job. He was an excellent dean. He didn’t want the job. That’s one of the things that I have often noted about administrators, the best ones are the ones that don’t want to be. It’s the ones that want to be that you have to watch out for. David Fletcher I mean, you’re someone that I’ve been able to go to and talk to and bounce ideas off of and that’s been important. Reuben Smith, same kind of thing, you go in, you bounce ideas off of him, he’d tell you what he thought. You two were both important and continue to be important. You’ll note that I haven’t named a lot of administrators and frankly, there were not a lot of administrators that I found to be particularly helpful. So I suppose maybe if he’d stayed longer I would not have liked him as
well, but I did like Bill Binkley. He was the dean when I first got here, and he got fired the first semester I was here. He was very helpful at that very important juncture when I first came here. This is not to say there weren’t people I liked; I liked Judy a lot, and by and large I thought she did her job well. I had various moments when I was unhappy with what went on in student life sometimes, but that didn’t necessarily reflect on Judy.

FLETCHER: How about people you felt hindered the advance of the University.

MCNEAL: Okay, I’ll talk about that. I dreaded going to department chairmen’s meetings with Roy. I cannot describe how irritating it is to have somebody send you stuff in the mail and then go to a meeting and have him read it to you. That was kinda the way that department chair meeting went. That was really... Beyond that there were certain faculty members at the department chairmen’s meetings. They just would irritate me. They would sit on their hands until the very end of the meeting, and then they would want to introduce a new subject that was not on the agenda and was going to take fifteen or twenty minutes. Those kinds of things really did bother me. When Bob Benedetti came on board, I was chair of the COP council I think then. With Bob, we’d go through meetings, bing, bing, bing, bing but that deteriorated. He fell into what I call the dean’s malaise, if a meeting was supposed to be a two hour meeting. It’s gotta last for two hours, even if I have to read the agenda to people. Those kinds of things, I found to be particularly frustrating. I don’t know what you do about the proliferation of administrators. It just seems to me like everybody... In order to be a success at a position you count the number of assistants that you have, or something of that sort. It’s not what you get done, it’s the number of assistants that you have. So this university, as well as apparently most universities in this country, are way too heavy in administration. You know from the top right on down to the dean’s level. We have assistant dean, associate deans, and yet the enrollment is not a whole lot different than when we started here. You know, it’s not like there is this tremendous new work load that was never there before. Now the government has put strictures on us for reports and that sort of thing, but you know you’re talking about if you’d had a doubling in the number of students then you might be able to justify a doubling in the number of administrators. You haven’t had that, and yet we’ve had way more than doubling in the number of administrators, so it seems like in order to be a successful or to be measured as a successful administrator you got to count on having lots and lots of assistants.

FLETCHER: How have the students changed over your time here if you think they have.

MCNEAL: It’s been interesting, I remember the first year I was here it was the end of the 60’s. You know it was Vietnam, it was all the rest of it. I had a lot of very good students. I had some I swear were high half the time when I saw them, on something, I have no idea what. It’s just glassy-eyed and not really with it. So that was one of the things. If you looked at the student body it was primarily white with a good number of Chinese from Taiwan and Hong Kong, some Japanese, some from Japan, some from Hawaii. There were virtually no Southeast Asians. A lot of people wanted to go to medical school, a lot of people that wanted to go to dental school. Pharmacy seemed to be less of a big group. Then that changed in the seventies. All of a sudden the oriental population went way up. It was mostly Southeast Asians. They are very self-
directed. They and their families have a goal, and they work toward that goal and in some cases almost single-mindedly. That has been one thing. The demographics of the University I’m sure have changed rather substantially in that time. There seems to be a, well, the Southeast Asian population wants to be pharmacists and dentists. I’ve had a few students that have broken away from that mold. They decided, you know I don’t really want to do that. I had one advisee a young Vietnamese girl came in who said, “I just don’t want to go to pharmacy school.” I wasn’t quite sure how she was going to deal with her family, but she decided that she wanted to get into student life. She graduated, went to Santa Clara, no, went to USC got a master’s degree in whatever you get a masters in if you want to do student life, and the last I heard she was over at Santa Clara. Some of them do break that mold and convince their families that there are other things than these health-related fields. We still have a tremendous number of students that, that’s their goal and that’s what they’re working for, and they’re pretty single minded about it. What else? It seems to me that a lot of students aren’t here to learn. They’re really here because I want to be a dentist or I want to be a pharmacist, and these are hoops I have to jump through but I’m going to jump through them and learn as little as I can as I go along. You know the intellectual curiosity about things just doesn’t seem to be there. That’s much too broad a brush to paint the whole student body, but an awful lot of students that I see, they’re just wanting to get their tickets punched. If they have to learn something, okay they’ll learn.

FLETCHER: How about your relationship with administration and staff over the years?

MCNEAL: I’ve had a very good relationship I think with staff. Sara Schilling and Ginger Hudson, but other places too, because I deal with staff in the Baun Fitness Center, and I deal with staff over at the DeRosa Center and that sort of thing, and you know I’m pretty easy going and they seem to appreciate that. Staff has never been a problem. Administration, well of course there was the famous Atchley incident which never seems to want to go away. I was the chair of the Academic Council the year that Bill Atchley came on board. A lot of people don’t really remember that. I thought I had established a pretty good rapport with Bill. I don’t know and I have no way of confirming this after he had his heart problem down in Los Angeles, he just didn’t quite seem the same and things did not go well, and you know it was too bad. The whole thing, the way he was hired, everything else was a mistake. The one thing I will give him credit for is he at least began to change the attitude on the Board of Regents. Don DeRosa picked up on that and continued it. I’ll give Bill some credit for that, but that was a hard time.

FLETCHER: Well a few years later there was the most famous incident at commencement ever at the university. What would you say about that?

MCNEAL: Well we had gone through this situation where I understand that one regent had told the chair of the regents it was time for him to retire. I think, without a lot of thought, or a lot of planning, it was just done. So the regents met and elected Dale Redig as chair, and it was pretty clear right from the beginning that Dale and Bill weren’t on the same page. Bill I’m sure engineered or got together with some of the regents and engineered a change with the head of the Board of Regents. In retrospect it was probably a good thing, but at the time it was a real
slap in the face to the University and to the faculty. Someone, I think Andres Rodrigues, had nominated me for distinguished faculty member that year and whatever committee decided, okay we’ll give it to McNeal. Then a week or so before commencement we had this big meeting of the regents up in Sacramento, and they changed the leadership of the regents. I think a rather precipitous move, don’t get me wrong, I think that Bob Monagan did a terrific job but the whole thing was not handled very diplomatically, and I made my statement at graduation or at commencement, it wasn’t at graduation. There was no diploma being handed out or anything else. After consulting with the former chairmen of the Academic Council so that at least they had some idea of what I was planning. Staged the walkout, which had the effect of tilting the situation to a point where Atchley had to leave. In retrospect it all worked out for the best, Bob Monagan did a terrific job as chair of the Board of Regents, and there was a legitimate search committee put together that wound up hiring Don DeRosa. While I don’t always agree with the administrative decisions that came down from the DeRosa administration, it was far away the best administration that I know we’ve had.

FLETCHER: Were there other controversial issues that you were involved in that you could talk about?

MCNEAL: It was less controversial. You know there was a faculty member whose wife had to, wanted to get a master’s degree. She had a bachelor’s degree from another institution. The way the handbook was written, she should have been able to get it with tuition remission, and the registrar’s office and the finance office said no. I had to go talk to Bill Atchley, and Bill looked at it and picked up the phone and called and said give him his tuition remission. That wasn’t a big controversy, and it was one of the things that made me think that “Bill Atchley is somebody I can work with”. Of course the whole football thing was a controversy ever since I got here. Thank goodness they finally pulled the plug on that. It was such a corrupt operation. That whole business back in about 1980 when they hired Bob Toledo and did talent exemptions for athletes and of course they were going to do them for conservatory students, as though the conservatory wanted a bunch of dumb musicians. I remember somebody asking Terry Liskevich if he was going to use talent exemptions for volleyball, and his response was “I don’t want any dumb volleyball players”. That was certainly controversial. I was on the Academic Council, and I remember we really got after Ced Dempsey because of that. By the time it got to the Academic Council it was already it was already done.

FLETCHER: If you look back on your own career, what you would consider your major achievements? What are the most significant things that you’ve accomplished while you’ve been here.

MCNEAL: I think by and large I was a pretty darn good Principles of Biology professor, or I finally developed into a pretty darn good Principles of Biology professor, which was important because that was the very first course that biology majors, pre-pharmacy, pre-dent, pre-vet, pre-med, pre everything had to take, and I think I got to the point where I did that pretty well. I taught that course, Principles of Biology 51, for thirty out of thirty-three years. I had some very good students in that period of time. In about 1976 I had two students that got NSF Graduate
Fellowships. I think that is the only time that that has happened at the University. Those were certainly memorable times and memorable students. There had been a lot of really good memorable students over the years. People that have gone on and gotten into veterinary school and have gone to medical school and have gone to PhD programs. Yeah, those were memorable people.

FLETCHER: What about anything in the way of laboratories, facilities, anything like that you were involved in?

MCNEAL: To some degree I guess I was involved in planning the laboratories as they got set up in the classroom building, when we moved from Weber Hall to over there. By the time we got to the point when they were going to put together the biology building they were talking to me about what should go in there. So I did and to regress I guess, one of the nails I put in Bill Atchley’s coffin was when the curriculum committee or whatever it was that the Board of Regents decided they wanted to have a meeting over in the classroom building. So I talked to the chairman at the time, Paul Richmond and said, you know they really ought to have it in my teaching lab. He arranged for it to be in my lab, and when you walked into my lab in those days there were these shutters on the south side of the building and there were all these pigeons nesting in there and there was about six inches deep in pigeon stuff, anyway feathers and dead pigeons. Ted Baun took one look at that lab, and he walked into the office and he picked up the phone and called Bill Atchley and asked him what the hell he had been doing with the money he’d been giving to the University because he’d just been in that lab and he was appalled by what he was seeing. That was another time that I think Bill thought I slipped one to him.

FLETCHER: Not without cause we might add.

MCNEAL: That’s true, you know it was, anyway... That did sort of spur the idea that we need new facilities and better facilities for biology, particularly if they were going to recruit so many students to biology.

FLETCHER: If you were to look at changes that the University has undergone and that you had some involvement in, what stands out in your mind?

MCNEAL: Well of course there were a number of curricular changes over the years, and I didn’t instigate them but I participated in planning them with the department. The curriculum that you see in biology today is largely a result of those efforts by the biology department. I keep hearing a tale that the provost would like to discontinue Principles of Biology labs, and I hope that doesn’t come about, I think that would be a gross error. Among other things, that’s where our students learn enough biology that we start to involve them in undergraduate research. We do a lot of undergraduate research in the biology department.

FLETCHER: How about the Workload Committee?
MCNEAL: That was always kind of a frustration because there were always faculty that thought they were working too hard, and there were always administrators and regents who thought they weren’t working hard enough. There was always that, and Pacific is so much different from other institutions. Yeah we’re a university, but you start looking around and there are not a lot of universities that are really like us. I mean, we talk about peer institutions but peer institutions aren’t necessarily exactly like we are. So you got... Let’s go back, what was the question?

FLETCHER: About the Workload Committee and how that got going.

MCNEAL: So you start trying to compare, and the former provost wants to increase research. Well you know, I’m not quite sure where he was going with that or where they are going to with it, but if you look at institutions where there is a lot more research, the teaching loads are way less. My friends at Berkeley teach one course a year. You know they have an expectation of research, but they teach one course a year. We’re expected to teach four courses a year. If they’re going to expect them to do research and they’re going to expect them to participate in faculty governance, you know it doesn’t make any sense. So work load has always been a sore point as far as I’m concerned at Pacific. It’s always been a sore point, faculty against administration. Since most of the administration has been faculty, I don’t understand why all of a sudden they don’t understand what work load is all about. It’s like they put on blinders once they get into the administration about that. I’m not suggesting that faculty at Pacific should only teach one course a year, but we’re never going to be, I hope, an R1 university either.

FLETCHER: What about the community relationships? I know you’ve got a lot of involvement in the local community, and how about the University relationship with the local community?

MCNEAL: I always thought that the University needs to be participatory in the community. I think we need to remember that the University is a private university, it’s not a public university, and as a private university its resources are somewhat limited, and it needs to husband these resources rather carefully. It can’t be a UC to the Stockton community, for the simple reason that it doesn’t have the resources nor the revenue to get the resources. We need to be, I think, pretty circumspect; we need to be as participatory as we can, but we need to remember that our mission is education of students who are paying a dear price to go to school here. I get a little antsy sometimes about some of the initiatives, not so much with the Stockton community as I do with Venezuela and in Japan and other places. It seems to me that we need to be just a little bit careful.

FLETCHER: So at this point, has your career here been satisfactory from your perspective?

MCNEAL: Yes it has. I think both Arlene and I have been happy at the University; we have been satisfied with our salaries though wish we could have been paid paid a lot more money, and a few things like that. But you know it’s been a very satisfying career, and I’ve made a lot of good friends. I had a lot of good students, I had some memorable students as well for various reasons, but it’s been a very satisfying career.
FLETCHER: Is there anything else I haven’t asked you about that you’d like to talk about?

MCNEAL: Let me take a quick look. I tried to write some things down. You were asking me about individuals that were helpful and another one I forgot was Ann Funkhouser. Ann and I had a really good working relationship over the years. We had three or four graduate students that we both advised and that sort of thing. That was a very satisfying relationship as well. I suppose I could also add controversial issues. We talked about athletics, but football and budget as they were intertwined was very controversial particularly in the late 70’s and 80’s. Thank goodness that has gone away pretty much. I suspect that the relationship between Stockton and the University has not changed a lot since I came here. There is still a kind of division in spite of various initiatives the University has taken. I’m not convinced that the community necessarily has accepted the University as anything more than a sort of privileged enclave.