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John Cupples Oral History Interview

John Cupples
Raymond College

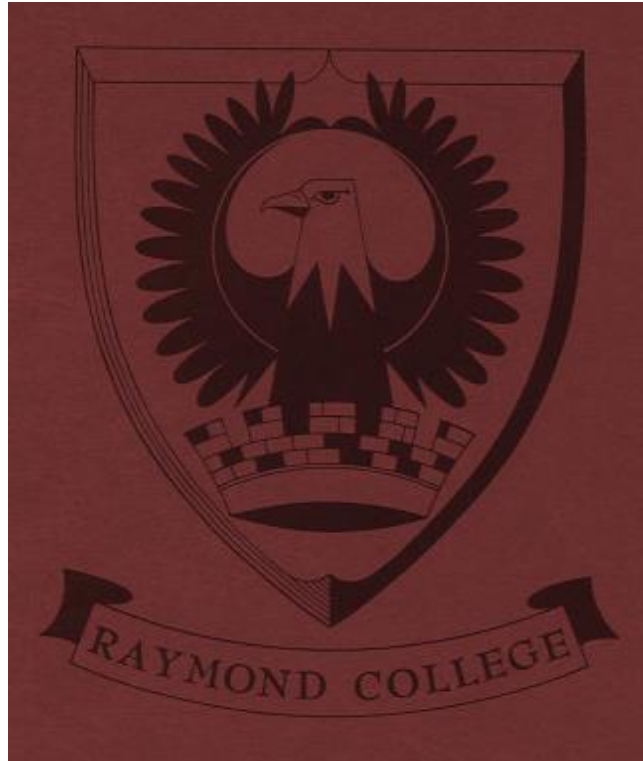
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RAYMOND COLLEGE PROJECT ORAL HISTORIES
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



John Cupples (1962-1965)
Raymond College Student

September 11, 2023

By Lorenzo Spaccarelli

Transcription by Lorenzo Spaccarelli University of the Pacific,
Department of Special Collections, Library

John Cupples Interview

Transcribed by: Lorenzo Spaccarelli

Lorenzo Spaccarelli: Okay. Hello, my name is Lorenzo Spaccarelli and today I'm going to be interviewing John Cupples. It is September 11th, 2023, and I am conducting this interview from my apartment on Pacific's Stockton campus. Can you state your name for the record and tell us where you're zooming in from, please?

John Cupples: My name is John Cupples and I'm zooming in from Boston, Massachusetts, where I've lived since 1965.

Spaccarelli: Perfect. Okay, thank you so much. So to begin today's interview, what years did you attend Raymond College?

Cupples: I'm sorry, just repeat that again?

Spaccarelli: What years did you attend Raymond?

Cupples: I entered in August 1962 and was in the first class and graduated 1965, as the first class graduating.

Spaccarelli: Nice.

Cupples: June '65.

Spaccarelli: Perfect. Okay, and then, so to begin, what was behind your choice in attending Raymond College?

Cupples: I always thought I'd go to college in California. My parents, I was the first to get a bachelor's degree from my family. And although- my parents were absolutely intent on both my sister and I going to college, so there was no option for us in that regard. And so my choices were basically I wanted to go to California, to a California school. And I think I was probably headed toward Berkeley. At that time, if you had a B plus average in high school, you could pretty much walk on and be admitted. Tuition was about, I think it was about 500 bucks for tuition. Those were the good old days, at least for that. Well, of course, housing costs in Berkeley were relatively high also, as they are now. But my folks also had a lot of familiarity with UOP through the Methodist Church. So Raymond was ginning up its recruiting effort at that point. And Bryan Martin, who was the provost, the first provost of Raymond College, did a recruiting tour down the San Joaquin Valley. Stopped in Mercer County, where I lived. And that pretty much, I think, was the single most influential factor. He was quite persuasive. And that sort of turned my

attention toward Raymond. That sounded pretty interesting. Plus the three years, getting done in three years was attractive.

Spaccarelli: Makes sense. Makes sense. So when you arrived on campus, what were your first impressions of Raymond?

Cupples: Well, the first impressions were set by the orientation for the first class and the faculty that we had at Lake Tahoe, which was pretty nice. And first impressions were the fact that the Raymond- the faculty was there, the whole faculty. We had a class of 65 students who were also in attendance there. And the first impression I remember I had was how vocal the female students were, including talking back to, I think, the dean of students for the university spoke at one point about parietals and rules for women in particular, and dress codes and no touch. And one of the women stood up and responded, if I want to have a man's hands in my pants, that's my business, not yours. I was pretty impressed with that. So the variety of people that I met there, obviously, coming from a public high school, and I came from a good high school, and California had a really good top notch education system then. It was impressive to meet kids who were, you know, at the top of their classes. So suddenly the competition was pretty stiff. What was also interesting, it was all white middle class. I don't... Peter Morales was probably the first Hispanic. He was in the next class. He was probably the first Hispanic. I don't remember any non-white, or even, from a class perspective, it was pretty homogenous. There were a few, well, Bill Kenah, for example, was one of the few private school students there. So it was, in that sense, in retrospect, it was much less diverse, even than my high school. And so that was a little interesting. And I don't know what that meant, but it's certainly an issue now. I think they would have recruited us more differently now than they did then.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Well, and also the number of people of all different ethnicities who are prepared for college is much greater. The diversity of high school grads and stuff.

Cupples: Yes, exactly.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Well, perfect. Okay. And then did you have any first impressions upon arriving on campus?

Cupples: We got to work right away. There was no fooling around. We plunged right in. And the classes in the first year included some classical literature and German- in my case, you had your choice of German, French, or Spanish, I think. And so it started off right away. And then I think math.

Spaccarelli: Did you take Introduction to the Modern World?

Cupples: Yes. Toward the second two semesters, I took that and did the horrible 50-page research paper and actually did it. We convinced Mike Wagner to let a classmate of mine and I write it together. So we did a team effort. And he liked that. It worked out really quite well. And he was definitely a force to be reckoned with. Huge outsized influence on a lot of kids there.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. I wasn't trying to interrupt you, though. Were there any of those other classes that you wanted to elaborate on?

Cupples: Yeah, I would say the science course, in particular, Neil Lark's course on physics, for me, was very influential. Biology was, I got through it, but it was a mystery. And only, I think my project on using shrimp, brine shrimp, was the only thing that got me through on that one. I don't know. Biology was tough for me for some reason. I thought Hugh Wadman was good on chemistry. I think he had high hopes that he could turn the whole school into chemists. But he finally relented and said, look, I'm teaching liberal arts students science. And he did a good job of that. But I think physics was, for me, was particularly interesting. I had an inclination in that direction. And Neil Lark really was a very personable teacher, as well as- could explain difficult concepts in a way that was easy to learn. At least I thought so. Not everybody thought so, but that was the case for me.

Spaccarelli: Sounds good. Okay. Then once you're at Raymond, here you are, were there any memorable events that stood out to you during your time at Raymond? These could be high tables, but they could be anything, really.

Cupples: Yeah. High tables was definitely one of them. There was one spoof high table we did. We kind of turned the tables on the faculty. But there were also memorable high tables when- two of them stand out in my mind. One was the John Birch Society was always picketing UOP and particularly Raymond, because it was clearly a bunch of communists that were being educated there. So we invited them to- or the faculty invited them to speak. And they got grilled by, to some extent the faculty, but certainly the students for three hours after the high table ended. So that was interesting. I would say the other thing that stands out with comprehensive exams, so at least for our class, and I think for a number of classes following, until they were finally eliminated, that part of the curriculum included an exam at the end of the first year on everything you learned for that year. And at the end of the third year for everything you learned in the prior three years. Well, that- particularly the third year comprehensive exams, I think turned out to be a flop, to recall your language classes the first year, even though you took them for all three semesters. I actually passed it. And then I passed the, at Harvard, I was able to test out on German. So I didn't have to take any language classes at Harvard. So I must have learned something. Nevertheless, I think they were a waste of time. And I think the time you studying for them and- could have been better used, put to better use. And in fact, the faculty, we could see, they were disappointed with the results. And they had a huge argument going on, I think for two weeks, they sat in- kind of a fishbowl in the provost lodge and had windows all around, we couldn't hear them, but we could see them yelling and screaming at each other. So I don't think that was, that was a very successful, you know, it was a classical model. So they thought it must be good. I think they thought so. And so that part was a- both the first and the third year, comprehensive exams were not a good memory, not and not useful, I didn't think. The others, there's other things too. One is we had these gatherings in our lectures that would occur by various faculty members in the Great Hall. It was called- the big fancy lounge and, lounge-library. And some of those sessions were terrific, like the introduction to jazz, Charles Mingus,

I'm still a fan. That's, that was a, that was quite memorable. And then band frolic, that was part of the university effort. I think, do they still have that?

Spaccarelli: No, I think band frolic disappeared in the 90s. We have talent shows, I think that's the closest thing we have.

Cupples: Well, that's essentially what it was. It was kind of like a two day blowout with hours and hours of musicals. So that was fun. So and, and then there are lots of little memories, but you know, like the literature course with three of us in the, in the course was quite interesting. Getting grilled on Dante.

Spaccarelli: Who was that with?

Cupples: Yeah, so and then I had my time at high table. They used to invite anybody who got straight A's or they called them superiors. But their dear Norma Jean Scholtz and I, or Chinchilla, Bill's- Bill and Norma, she and I were invited to the same high table. And that was kind of, that was kind of fun. A lot of things, I mean, a lot of things. There was a lot of well, I think you have some questions about controversies. And there are some of those kind of memories also.

Spaccarelli: We'll get to those in just a little while. I had a question about something. Follow up question. Harvard. Was that a graduate study?

Cupples: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Got it. Okay. Got it. Got it. Got it. Okay, well, we'll get more on to that then towards the end because we'll talk about how Raymond shaped your continuing path. But that's interesting. Okay. Yeah, perfect. And let's let's keep going. Right, next is controversies. So do you remember any controversies during your time at Raymond? And these could be within Raymond, they can be between the cluster colleges, the university administrators, anything.

Cupples: So clearly one was the comprehensive exams. That was a big controversy amongst the faculty and amongst the students. The other, another one was- and I touched on a little bit of that, I wasn't really, didn't add anything to the educational experience. And certainly didn't for me. And I don't know that many of the students would have said it was a great idea. And the faculty was certainly split on it. The I think the other controversy that rippled through the three years that I was there, and actually through all of the Raymond experiences, I kind of followed it, was both how things were taught. And it changed drastically over the life of Raymond from the classical model, model that we had, which actually was, I think most of the students. Well, it'd be interesting to see what comes out of your- out of your interviews, but I think there was general agreement, people actually learn stuff out of the way we were taught. And I think our class, when the times that we've had reunions, seem to reflect that. That there was a general idea that it taught us to think. Maybe didn't, you know, we didn't have the, the breadth of things that you could have done it at UC Berkeley, for example. So we certainly learned how

to think and and we weren't, you know, a cipher on a 700 person classroom lecture, which I, you know, I had one of those at Harvard, and it was, it was quite a shock. I think there was ongoing controversy in the faculty and students about, you know, how things were taught and and about how life was managed. I think the university at that time was changing, was confronting a change in society, which the Dean of Students of Women at the university certainly was probably 20 years behind the times. So to tell Raymond students, Raymond women that they had to be in by whatever time, I think it was 11 o'clock on the weekends, didn't go over very well. And it didn't go very well at the university. Sororities and that was probably one of the few things in the sorority- that the Greeks and and Raymond would agree on.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, yeah.

Cupples: And there were some internal management problems to Raymond. The Dean of Students ended up getting, I would say, let go. To put it politely.

Spaccarelli: I heard stories about Peckham.

Cupples: Yeah. I knocked heads with him. I was the chief justice of the student court. And we had a number of cases around parietals and other petty charges that he would charge a student with that really shouldn't have been an issue at all or should have been solved without a major brouhaha. So the students who were in the court backed him down three or four- several times. And so he sent these nasty letters to my parents about what I was doing and causing trouble or something. I don't know. It was clear that he was in trouble himself. He was, he was really quite a good teacher, history teacher. He knew the Civil War backwards and forwards and taught it in a way that people loved it, loved taking it. And it was a jarring experience to see him in the classroom versus sitting in the dean's office. So that was a, that was that was a difficult- although I think I learned a lot from that. And one of the first things was that Peckham had really got all mixed up between what was academic and what was social. And, you know, would would take out his frustrations with students by, on their academic record, unjustifiably so. And- or make comments that were irrelevant. So that, that was- that was tough.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Cupples: It was tough for the time that he was there. But it was, it was also a learning experience. You know, I think that was my first. I had a few of those in high school, but it was, it was good to learn that, you know, there were arguments you could make that worked. You back down positions that were just unjustifiable, as his were, in some of the cases.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, yeah. Well...

Cupples: And parietals, we were going through a lot with parietals. And it was, it was a period of big change.

Spaccarelli: Right. Right.

Cupples: It was over things that were seemingly trivial, you know, whether female students could wear dresses or pants. It was ridiculous. So, you know, in retrospect, too much energy wasted on those kinds of things, I think.

Spaccarelli: No, but that's, that's interesting. So I want to take that, you know, pull that apart a little bit. So first off, you're talking about academics. I know Raymond had a pretty high dropout rate, right? Like a lot of people left. A lot of people...

Cupples: We started with sixty five. It dropped to thirty five.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. See. So, I mean, I hear what you're saying as to the people who made it through thought it was really valuable. But also there's a lot of people who didn't make it through.

Cupples: Right.

Spaccarelli: And so what was going on there that made it so hard for people to make it all the way to the graduation?

Cupples: I think the pressure was not well managed. I think comprehensives were part of that. I think this- the... I think the faculty or at least Martin and maybe Peckham in the beginning is they could see the school- sort of thought of it as an academic monastery or convent. OK, we would, we didn't wear robes like they do in Oxford. But...

Spaccarelli: I think they regulated what you wore, though.

Cupples: Right. I think they would have liked that, at least in the beginning. I think after a while they finally thought that was trivial. But... So I think there was and there was a lot of pressure on them. So this was a grand experiment of the UOP president, Bob Burns. And and it got a lot of notoriety- at the whole Cluster College idea, not just Raymond. And it was a way, it was an interesting experiment of how they could cope with the baby boom that was taking place. All those students entering college at that point, scared the hell out of the colleges, including all the California system.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Cupples: They coped with it, more or less, in high school, with some federal help. And so there was a lot of pressure. And it, in this case, I think they got a little ahead of themselves on how to manage the academic pressure put on those students. It, it, I will say for me, it helped me. By the third year, I was coping quite well with the pressure, academic pressure. I even took extra courses on the UOP on the COP campus. You know, I had taken a fourth and fifth course. So somehow it worked well for me, but it

clearly did not for half, about half, the almost 50 percent of the- more than 50 percent of the class, of our class. And that was true, I think, for the classes for several years, as I understand it.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. That's fair. That's fair. OK. And then moving on to some of the controversies around women and what they were allowed or not allowed to do. My understanding was that changed pretty rapidly and that Raymond's women took a large leadership role in pushing the university as a whole to shift.

Cupples: Right.

Spaccarelli: Do you remember that? Do you, can you remember any examples of that?

Cupples: Well, it wasn't just the women, the men, too, but the women were on the tip of that spear. And Raymond was integral to that because by the third year, Peter Windrem became president of the student body from Raymond. And a number of us participated in the governance, student governance of UOP and parietals was pretty high up on... And I think the dean of women for the university, I think that- there was no such position at Raymond. But I think she left during the time that we were there. So I think there were I think Burns was probably beginning to make some changes. You know, he wasn't going to announce- he didn't, he didn't say that she was fired, but she was gone.

Spaccarelli: She moved on.

Cupples: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Oh, I've seen it. Don't worry. I've seen, I've seen that kind of speech coming to the university today.

Cupples: But they were, UOP was a little bit behind the times. And of course, things busted wide open with the free speech movement at Berkeley at that time during the three year period that I was there. And I think that the foundations were- of higher education were shaking a little bit at that point. There was a lot of reassessment going on. And Raymond was part of that experimentation. And I would say, still largely successful, but it was, it was an expensive experiment, which is probably why it failed after a number of years, a few decades, I guess. So I'm trying to think when it... was it 70, in the late 70s, when it ended? I can't remember.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, late 70s, '77, I think, is when it merged in with Callison and then '79 is when Ray-Cal closed.

Cupples: Okay. So, you know, it was a good idea. I think I think its success rate... Well, in one sense, the number of fellowships that the first few classes got to wherever, were pretty remarkable. So in that sense, it was good, but it was, it was kind of a meat grinder of a process. They clearly had to go back to the drawing board a little bit.

Spaccarelli: Well, cool. I had another follow up question. Ah, the courts. I am curious a little bit as to how that balance worked, because I know Dean Peckham, everybody talks about how he overstepped into students' lives in a ton of ways and he tried to micromanage things. And so I'm wondering what sort of confrontations the court had from your perspective as chief justice. And I'm not asking you to name names of people, but for what it's worth, Bill Kenah did lay out the entire story about the going in and getting sandwiches and ice cream is what he told me.

Cupples: Yeah.

Spaccarelli: So, I mean, that's already public. But if there's, if you, if you want to give examples of what that would look like, that'd be really cool. I'd appreciate it.

Cupples: Well, I- so there the court was instituted with the idea that there should be academic governance and then and and one of the learning experiences. I think this is correct. That Raymond students should gain during their tenure there was how to govern their own affairs. And so there was a lot of- at least in the beginning, there was a lot of leeway given to the the creation of the court and its charter. Which was that it would be, it would recommend to the, to the dean and and the faculty and the administration, what- what should happen with cases that came up regarding student behavior or so-called infractions. And in the case of Bill and some some other cases, they were taking. They were making... Academic punishments or sanctions- applying academic sanctions for social infractions. You know, if stealing sandwiches and ice cream were really the issue, okay, and he should pay for them at least and promise not to do it again or something like that. It's not as if stealing sandwiches is a- I mean, nowadays they have 24/7 food service at most colleges. So there's nothing to steal. Just go and get it. I got a grandson at Bucknell. It's a seven day, 24 hour process. So it was on the surface of it, from from the students perspective. It was laughable when that case came up with Bill's case and some others came up. And but the serious issue was that you can't, you can't take an academic sanction for, you know, a petty theft crime.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Cupples: And if it was really petty theft, I mean, there was probably food walking out the back door of the food service. I used, I used to run hospitals and, you know, this inven- called inventory shrinkage from food stores was just part of the business. I'm sure that was going on. So this it was really Peckham taking vengeance against students he didn't like is what it came across as finally. And and then he would put on- including mine- he would put comments on our academic record that had nothing to do with how you performed academically. So I want- at the same time that I got straight A's, he made comments to my- and they wrote these home to your parents, by the way. So your report card would get sent to your parents and he would put comments down the bottom about, oh, you know, he's devious.

Spaccarelli: Devious! (Laughs)

Cupples: So which was really uncalled for. You know, you don't put that on...

Spaccarelli: No, you don't. In retrospect, it's amusing, but I'm sure it was not fun at the time.

Cupples: Well, I laughed it off. It was such an absurd... And, fortunately, it didn't didn't slow my academic progression down, but it really screwed up some, some of the students. And I think in my, in my memory, the main issue was taking academic sanctions for non-academic issues and trivial issues at that. The other one was one of the students rolled a manhole cover down the concrete staircase and chipped it. You know, so you make him repair the thing and make him pay for it. It was ridiculous, some of the stuff that got blown up there. And then manipulated behind the scenes.

Spaccarelli: Right.

Cupples: To students who were otherwise- and to be sure there were some, there were some behavior process. You know, one of the things I was- your interview made me do was to go back and look at what was going on. Contextually, you know, all the, all the, I mean, a lot of things are coming apart. Kennedy was assassinated. King's march. King's speech. And freedom-, you know, the freedom summer thing in Mississippi. And then in Stockton itself, I got involved in a bunch of civil rights stuff and labor stuff. And the society was kind of coming apart and the free speech movement, all those things were swirling around us. And it was Peckham worried about stealing sandwiches and stuff. The rest of the faculty, by the way, did a good job in helping us cope with and deal with and understand what was going on. So whenever an event would occur, we would gather and discuss it, which was great. And that happened, to some extent, in the university, too. So. They were supportive in that regard, that regard, you know, on all that stuff swirling around what was going on, particularly the Kennedy assassination. I mean, that that was, most of us. You know, this Peace Corps was starting at that time, and I almost- I signed up for it at the Seattle World's Fair and would have gone to the Peace Corps rather than school. And my parents not- said, you know, not sure about this went off to Nigeria or wherever it was at that point. And. So it was, it was a, at least from my perspective, you know, 18 year old in the, in that context was... It was a learning experience and having been at Raymond, I think, helped a lot.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, yeah, that's fair. That's fair. OK, cool. Moving on, then. What were your thoughts on the educational style of the Raymond teaching philosophy?

Cupples: I thought it was great. And it was. And I look back on it from my three years at Harvard, which were kind of an extension of my liberal arts work because I took courses all over the university. And. The teaching at Raymond was- the educational experience at Raymond, I thought, with some exceptions, was superior to Harvard.

Spaccarelli: Wow.

Cupples: Overall. I had, you know, some of the lectures at Harvard were a joke. From, you know, I I thought this is great. You know, I can go, I can go take courses from professors who I read, you know,

during my stay at UOP. I can see them in the flesh. Well, by the time I got there, I don't know, whatever they were in decline. These so-called famous authors, you know, and the learning experience of a, of a 200 or 500 student lecture is not exactly...

Spaccarelli: It's not a seminar.

Cupples: No, but the seminars at Harvard were terrific, just like they were at... And I had a lot of that. So I was, I was fortunate at Harvard and changed my program a little bit to make sure I could get more of those than the traditional Harvard Divinity School curriculum. So I think, I think the, the pedagogy and the liberal arts education at Raymond was top notch. Clearly, it was- there was something wrong with it. It worked for me. The dropout rate was too high. So there was a... There was a problem there. And that was as much social, I think- I guess- as it was also something in the teaching and curriculum. And I think the comprehensives had, had something to do with that.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, yeah. That makes sense. OK, moving on, then the individuals at Raymond who are most memorable to you and why?

Cupples: Well. Well, Bryan Martin, Warren Brown- Bryan Martin was clearly a magnetic personality. He didn't... He he did a lot of those presentations in the Great Hall, you know, like he did the introduction to jazz seminar would be like a one or two day seminar, probably a total of four hours. And and he did really well on things like that. Gene Rice was probably one of the top people who oriented me to and helped me get a fellowship to Harvard. So he was quite influential in that regard and also got me interested in sociology. And then Mike, Mike and Pat Wagner both, I took courses from Pat. She was teaching on the, on the COP campus. So I took courses from her. So they were, they were almost a team. And and then Neil Lark, as I said before, you know, his, his... The way he dealt with science and teaching it was really superior. And particularly, you know, atomic. Atomic science and relativity, all that was still pretty new then. And so he took us down that path in a way that made it manageable (?) without getting too lost in the math and the calculus. So so he was clearly quite influential, I think, on me.

Spaccarelli: Nice, nice.

Cupples: And German, I guess. Barbara Sayles somehow taught me German. And I was able to pass the test at Harvard and not have to worry about taking a mandatory. You know, language course.

Spaccarelli: Right. And Barbara Sayles, to my knowledge, she was the only woman on the faculty, right? Or do you remember differently?

Cupples: That's certainly true in the beginning. Yeah.

Spaccarelli: Wow.

Cupples: You know, Pat, Pat Wagner was not on the faculty. She was available.

Spaccarelli: She was in the College. Yeah.

Cupples: And she spent, she was influential on the Raymond campus because Mike and Pat lived, for a while, they lived in the dorms, which, which was probably not a good idea either.

Spaccarelli: An act of dedication on their part. That's for sure.

Cupples: Yeah. It just didn't work. I think it was as much negative as anything. So. But it did, it... And that probably contributed to the pressure cooker. Because you were never away. You couldn't get away from it. You know, you ate with the faculty or lived with some of them. Literally, they were just down on the first floor in a bigger, bigger room than you had. And kind of in their living room when you went to class in the dorm, that was, that was a little too, too close, I think. And that probably contributed to the pressure cooker. And I think the failure rate. The dropout rate.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. OK. Cool. Cool. What individuals were you involved-? What, sorry, what issues were you involved in that stood out in your mind as important to the growth and development of Raymond and of yourself while at Raymond? You were the first class, so I'm sure you were seeing all sorts of changes.

Cupples: Well, I think we were influenced by what was going on in the outside world a lot. One thing I didn't mention. So by the third year, a lot of us were involved in civil rights, labor, free speech movement stuff. I was, I worked with some civil rights organizations and labor rights organizations in Stockton. A lot of the students, well, not a lot. Some of the students went to Freedom Summer in Mississippi or got involved in terms in the Bay Area or wherever they lived. The... So so I think. You know, and with the faculty, I mean, they were affected by all this stuff going on, too. There was a social consciousness that developed. And then for the female students, the... You know, the whole consciousness around feminism beginning to bloom at that point, it was pretty, compared to now, was pretty... It was not very sophisticated. And then, you know, the, the pre Woodstock stuff going on in San Francisco. For, you know, Ferlinghetti and things like that. So, those... And then at that- a number of us got involved with, with activities in the city of Stockton. Particularly when Pete Windrem became president of the student government. They put a big emphasis on engaging with the city. Yeah, you know, it was. You're only there for nine, 10 months of the year. So you come and gone. But nevertheless, it was, it was. Stockton was a tough town.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Cupples: Still is. But it's much more sophisticated than it was. And, you know, it took us a long time to figure out why you could go to downtown Stockton, the old section of town and get a Chinese dinner for a buck or whatever it was. Because the labor was all smuggled in, found out later, and, and it was a. You know, it was, because it was an inland port, there was a lot of stuff going on under the, under the cover

and the labor situations. So far as I got involved with it, was pretty brutal. That was just the beginning of the agricultural labor movement. And it was, it was. It was eye opening. I mean I was familiar with it living in the Central Valley, little bit. Because I worked with- in the orchards and packing sheds for summer employment, and so I'd run into braceros at that time. And, and went to bracero bars as a high school kid, because they didn't ask for your ID. And you can get cheap beer. So, when I learned when I got involved with the stuff going on in the city of Stockton, in my third year there. That opened my eyes to what a difficult situation it was. So, so that experience and that was more of a general student experience in Stockton at that time. That was, that was eye opening. I think that was also quite formative for me.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, I agree. It makes perfect sense. So, okay, moving on. This one's connected to the previous question, but it's a little bit different. So what was the conversation around civil rights, feminism, community activism, and the war in Vietnam, and how did Raymond support those conversations?

Cupples: It, it, it grew from year to year. So by the third year it was top of mind, all the time, and I would say, when Kennedy was assassinated in '63. At the beginning of our second year, right?

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Cupples: Yeah. Beginning of our second year, in November. That, that really more than anything that probably shattered the... You know, what we expected to have as a kind of pleasant college experience, you know, an ideal world. That, that changed everything. So that was a... That was probably the most influential, and then add to that. The March on Washington, that same year. And in the Mississippi summer, you know, and the. Who was it that matriculated to U Miss, the first black person. Medgar Evers- was that it? Can't remember now, but all those events just kept piling up. And so by the third year, things were different. The context, same, different, and then of course the Vietnam War, you know, I come home on term breaks and stuff and find out who had gotten drafted and who wasn't coming back. And I was, I lived in an Air Force town near Merced. And so, there are a lot of the kids that are joining the Air Force to be pilots or whatnot. Some of them got stuck in the army and shipped off to Vietnam to be a pilot, helicopter pilot.

Spaccarelli: Yes.

Cupples: Lost some classmates from that. So it was, it was an interesting time- and then the free speech movement so that, you know, the society was kind of coming apart from what we thought was the case in high school.

Spaccarelli: Right, right. Transitioning. Yeah. And Raymond was overall supportive of most of this discussion, you think?

Cupples: Yes. That's when those great hall discussions would be pulled together.

Spaccarelli: Oh, right, right, right. Yes.

Cupples: And so we process- it was very helpful, I thought- that we process some of those things through that mechanism of lectures and seminars, special seminars that would take place. They were pretty much mandatory. It was part of the curriculum. So you had to, had to be there. Just like you had to be in class. So and those were pretty well done, even though they were kind of ad hoc. And some of them were, some of them had been planned long in advance. Others they did in response to... You know, the assassination of Kennedy or things like that. So, yeah, I thought they were good in that regard. And that was also true of the university. They, they, they were doing stuff campus-wide. So there was all that, also that we could take advantage of. You know, the other thing that I left out in terms of controversies is there was some significant controversy between the Greeks and Raymond students.

Spaccarelli: In what way?

Cupples: I'm not sure what all of it was about. I think- we were, we were obviously non-Greek. We weren't allowed to rush, nor was there much interest in rushing. And I think that was a threat. Some of us got involved in sports. I, I went out for spring football and decided that when I saw how many injuries there were amongst the team, my teammates, I thought, no, you know, I don't think so. And- but we did- in intramural sports- we did pretty well in basketball. And for some reason, the Greeks. Well, some- not, not universally. It was really one or two fraternities were offended by Raymond or threatened or something. I don't know. So there were some physical altercations a few times. But...

Spaccarelli: Really?

Cupples: Yeah. One time, one of the, one of the Greeks was having a beer party on the ditch bank next to the campus. And we were having a tag- a flag football game and- on the big playing fields, it used to be between the campus and the stadium. And they had a car that they chased us around that field. We responded in kind and pelted the car with rocks and basically destroyed the car. And- so there was a bad relationship that developed between at least that one fraternity.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Cupples: So there was that kind of little bit of rub between Raymond and, and to some extent, Callison, and the university. It would bubble up every once in a while. It was pretty much gone by our third year. But the first two years were a little rocky in that regard. I'm sure that, I'm sure the administration must have intervened. I don't know. I wasn't privy to that, of course.

Spaccarelli: Right. Right. Of course. Of course. OK. Makes sense. So I know you touched on this a little bit earlier, but I want to ask if you have anything more to say. What contributions do you feel that Raymond made to the local Stockton community?

Cupples: Well. My, my experience was that we would have made that through the university. I mean, Raymond got involved in the university more. Raymond students got more involved in the university in our third year when Peter became president of the student- student body. And through that, we became involved in the community. Both through the, the chapel as well as I can't remember what the, the outreach that the organization that found- it might have been the chapel. I don't know. Anyway, there was a lot of student activism.

Spaccarelli: The Y? Was it the Anderson Y?

Cupples: Yeah, it was the Y. Had a lot of social. Other. I know there were kids with disabilities who would be brought to campus. And so I did a little bit of that and then got involved with a African-American youth program, which I helped with the recreation program. And a lot of the students did some of that. I mean, a lot of the, a lot of all of the university students did a lot of that kind of work. The Y was pretty influential, it seemed to me, at that point. And particularly in that kind of stuff.

Spaccarelli: Right. OK. Perfect. Glad that there was an opportunity to get back to Stockton. So... Has Raymond College met your expectations as an institution and as an education? And why or why not?

Cupples: As an education for me personally, yes. Even with all of its faults and that really huge dropout rate. So for me, it was terrific. It set me up. It got me money. It got me paid to go to Harvard, which is a pretty good deal.

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles)

Cupples: And for somebody who did not have a vocational trajectory. I never knew what I was going to do when I grew up. I changed... Well, I have a thread to my career, but getting into health care was not on my list of things to do. When I started out, I had no idea what I was going to do and still didn't. Even after Harvard, I just did things opportunistically and turned out well. And I think Raymond and UOP was a really good springboard for me to open up, you know, from farm kid from Central Valley to broaden my vistas and get a fellowship to Harvard. And there was no question that that opened doors that I wouldn't have even found had I not, had that not happened. So and that's true for, I think, you know, for a lot of my classmates, too. We were spread all over the world and did all kinds of interesting things.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Makes sense. Makes sense. So, OK, moving on then, this is, this is the big one. And that is how is your education at Raymond influence your career or life decisions? So just keep expanding. How did you get into health care?

Cupples: So I, I- at the, at Harva- at the end of Divinity School, I got recruited to work for a religious group organizing against the war in Vietnam, was affiliated with the National Council of Churches, met all kinds of interesting people. Martin Luther King was on the board. By that time, he had given his famous speech coming out against the war in Vietnam. All the religious luminaries, you know, I got to

meet and were on the board. And so I did that for seven years and then I decided I wanted to get involved in something more local. So I got involved and I founded a, helped found a community health center. We got it federally sanctioned, federally sponsored. And it was the start of the, of the community health center movement in the United States, which is about the only thing Congress agrees on at- any time, anymore. And that led me into, after a few years of doing that, one of the big hospitals here in Boston recruited me to come and take charge of community health on behalf of the hospital. And that led to teaching at School of Public Health and then became involved in hospital management. And when I was recruited for that, I said, well, you know, I haven't- I was taking a course here and there at the School of Public Health at Harvard. And they said- I said, you know, I don't, I'm not, I don't have all the pedigree to be a top level administrator. And they said, well, you went to Harvard, did you? I said, yeah, but not in not in health care or health care management. They said, yeah, that's good enough.

Spaccarelli: That's funny.

Cupples: And it was health care, health care management at that time was a little bit more diffuse field than it now is. So I took a few more courses and started teaching at the School of Public Health, never did finish my degree there. And I basically got involved in it because of community health. And then my last, and spent until 2002, you know, actively managing hospitals and then retired from that and wanted to go back, decided I wanted to go back into community health and formed a consulting firm to automate the processes at community health centers, which was really fun, did all over the country. And then retired from that finally five years ago.

Spaccarelli: Nice, nice. Well, sounds great. Just to get back to Raymond, how do you feel that Raymond gave you- did you feel that Raymond gave you any sorts of skills or any sorts of experiences that you applied over the course of your career?

Cupples: Yes, yeah, I think the most important skill that it gave me was to think critically because I didn't, I had no idea what that meant. I went to a pretty good high school, you know, we learned all the fundamentals, but Raymond took all that fact that I had, you know, loaded into my brain and said, you know, question it. How do you, you know, how did you arrive at those conclusions? Question everything. And it got me in trouble a few times, even at Harvard Divinity School where I, you know, the pedagogy there was pretty stuffy, except for the seminars. And that I chafed at that and that was good. It made me work all the harder. So I think critical, Raymond developed my critical thinking skills and that served me well. That's probably the most important thing I got out of Raymond, I think. And that's the only thing that got me through Harvard, I think. Harvard was a tough place socially for me as much as anything else. It was still a legacy. You know, all the proper names were there. So that was a jarring experience. And, but it made me work all the harder, I think.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Cupples: And had Gene Rice not been there to point me in that direction, it never would have happened. And there were people at Raymond who had connections with the right foundations and

knew how to get the fellowships and knew which fellowships to go after. And you got really personal help, personalized help from a faculty member to get those fellowships. And that was the one thing the faculty agreed on, which was their reputation and the school's reputation and the university's reputation for this experiment in those early years was how many fellowships can we get? How many, you know, how many colleges, particularly overseas fellowships can we get or big name colleges back east, can we get our kids into? So, we got, we got, there was no question that they had that on their checklist. They had to get a certain number of those things in those early years. I don't know how that played out after our class. I know that there were still a lot of kids who got a lot of fellowships for the, probably first three, four, five years. As I recall. I don't know how that did in later years.

Spaccarelli: Well, perfect. Okay. Well, that's it for my questions. Now I turn it over to you and I ask you what have we not covered in this interview that you still want to discuss?

Cupples: Well, I think we've aired some of the dirty linen. I, well one thing that I've reflected on is that my experience at UOP and Raymond in particular has made me concerned about, these years, is the shrinking of liberal arts education, and I'm glad to see that you're a history major. More power to you. We need more and more of those. And so I'm concerned now about our... We're measuring our success so much in terms of careers, and to be sure we need... We need more doctors, we need more nurses, given the wreck of the health care system we now have. So, so some of that career-oriented education is important, but we also need people who can think. And even, you know, career-oriented education has- should be building in critical thinking. I'm concerned that the shrinking of liberal arts education, which is the foundation, in my mind, of critical thought, critical thinking. Is, is on the decline right now it seems.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

Cupples: Hopefully a few schools will keep that going but so that's, that's one issue that the positive aspects of my experience at UOP and Raymond makes me reflect on. And it's too bad I guess that the university couldn't figure out how to- and it's a difficult problem- how you make a sustainable model out of that, that highly intensive education. You know, I guess, I guess you have to really get a huge endowment like Oxford and Cambridge or Harvard. Although Harvard doesn't use the Oxford model, but at least not universally. So, anyway, I think those are some of the concerns or reflections I've got.

Spaccarelli: Perfect, perfect. Okay. Well, if that's it, then I will stop the recording. If we can chat a little bit more after the recording, that'd be great. But yeah, thank you so much for your time today.

Cupples: My pleasure. My pleasure.