



Thomas Brooks

President - 1970-71

Interview with Thomas Brooks (Norman Silber)
Carbondale, Illinois
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Prof. Silber: This is an interview with Prof. Thomas Brooks. The interview is taking place at his office in Carbondale, Illinois on April 12, 1983.

Prof. Brooks, can we begin by my asking you to tell me first, how you became interested in consumer affairs, then how you became involved with ACCI specifically?

Prof. Brooks: My work in the consumer area actually began during my graduate studies. I completed my graduate work, both my Master's and my doctoral degree, at Pennsylvania State University. For the Master's degree, agricultural economics was my major with a kind of specialization in poultry marketing. I had graduated from Ohio State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in poultry science. I was following that up at Penn State, and my Master's thesis was on the marketing of consumer preferences for stewing chickens, of all things!

I followed that with a doctoral dissertation on consumer preferences for different types of packaging. In the doctoral dissertation, particularly, I got interested in the idea of consumer preferences and how consumers make their choices, consumer values and needs and the whole range of behavioral aspects of consumers.

Upon graduation from Penn State, with the doctorate, I went to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington. That would have been in the Fall of 1960. I received the Ph.D. from Penn State in 1961. My work at the USDA dealt first with working on a study of freeze-dried foods. Then I worked on the commodity distribution program, a research project on that which took me to Oklahoma and to California.

I then worked on the pilot food stamp program that President Kennedy inaugurated. I was sent to Detroit to supervise the data collection for the research on the pilot food stamp program.

After a couple of years with the USDA, I tired quickly from the bureaucracy. I had an idea that I wanted to teach a course that would be labeled "Food Economics," and to look, basically, at the demand side of food in terms of the economics. I had in mind a course that would deal with the various government programs to encourage the demand for food, and finally consumer preferences, and so on.

My former advisor at Penn State told me of a position that was available at Iowa State University in the Department of Home Management, and they had a course called "Food Economics," so I took the job at Iowa State. By the way, I followed Gordon Bivens, who had the job immediately prior to my going there. He went on to the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, where he headed up the Consumer Affairs Center.

My course responsibilities consisted of the course in food economics, one in "Social and Economic Aspects in Housing," and of a course entitled, "Consumers in the Market." The course, "Consumers in the Market," was apparently one of the oldest courses of that nature in the United States, as I understand it. It was originally started by Margaret Reid. She was the one who established this course under that title, I believe, back in the early thirties or the twenties—somewhere along in there.

That got me into the consumer field in a full-fledged manner, not having any background in the consumer area at all, other than my interest in consumer behavior. I was completely new and, of course, I had all this preparation to do. In the course of things, I got very much interested in the consumer's role in the economy and all aspects of consumer problems that individuals deal with day to day in the American marketplace. That is, in quite a few words

[laughter], how this whole thing finally evolved.

NS: When was it you started teaching "Consumers in the Market"?

TB: It would have been January of 1963. I went to Iowa State the first of January. Margaret Liston, the department chairman, had already begun the course. They had a kind of strange course system out there. The fall quarter ended around the first of December, and they started teaching the winter quarter for a couple of weeks. Then they took the Christmas break. They came back right after the first of the year and took up again. I stepped in at that point to begin teaching. That course, interestingly enough, was my first assignment, even though I went there to teach "Food Economics."

NS: What was your perception of the state of the field at that time?

TB: I thought about that to a considerable degree, having come out of agricultural economics and the state that it had arrived at. I had the feeling that the state of the art in consumer economics and in the consumer field, generally, was probably about where ag economics was twenty or thirty years prior to that, actually.

NS: Were there any incidents or events or illustrations you could give me?

TB: No, I can't; but I can recall at the time it just seemed to me it was somewhat in a primitive state relative to the sophistication that I was familiar with in agricultural economics. I think that I've associated that largely in terms of the support of the consumer field, financial support, and the number of individuals working in it as opposed to the number that were, for instance, in agricultural economics because those that are in the land grant schools are relatively large departments. There certainly was a very large department in agricultural economics and rural sociology at Penn State.

NS: How did you communicate with other people in the field?

TB: I got acquainted with the American Council on Consumer Interests, which, at that time was called Council on Consumer Information. As a matter of fact, that first year that I was in Ames, the first meeting that I attended was in '64 at Madison, Wisconsin. We drove a university car up to that particular meeting. I got acquainted with all those people that I'd been already reading about that were involved in the consumer field.

NS: Do you remember that meeting?

TB: Not very well. I can remember attending it but I cannot recollect specific events necessarily. The one I remember more clearly, being the second meeting that I went to, was the one in St. Louis. That was in '66, and at that particular meeting, I had moved to the University of Connecticut to be chairman of the department of family economics and management, in September of '64. I didn't attend the Berkeley, California meeting because of the cost, but I did feel that the department could support my travel to St. Louis to attend the meeting in '66. I attended the meetings pretty regularly thereafter.

NS: What led you to get involved in an executive capacity?

TB: I really took an interest in the organization. One does not campaign for offices [laughter] in a professional organization. For some reason or other, I believe my first involvement was as a treasurer. Then I moved from there into the vice president slot, then on into the president's position later on. That was kind of a natural progression, I think. Traditionally, the people first served as treasurer, and then as vice president, and were in that regard, responsible for the annual conference program as a vice president. From there it was a natural progression. I don't know whether it still holds within the organization or not, but that was the general sequence.

NS: What was the group of active members like when you first joined?

TB: In what regard—enthusiasm or level of knowledge, or all those things?

NS: All those things.

TB: One of the things that I thought about, relative to the overall, that impressed me and was kind of contagious, was the enthusiasm of the members of that group for the consumer field. They always had experiences or anecdotes to relate of various things that had happened to people in their role as consumers. There was just a contagious enthusiasm that gets a hold of you.

NS: Would you say that they were mainly ag economists?

TB: Ag economists?

NS: How would you describe the body of these people, occupationally?

TB: I don't know in recent years, but at that time, they were basically people who were teaching some consumer education and some primarily in the university setting. That was the primary group. Always, at these annual meetings, there would be some high school teachers that would come in from the surrounding area when they learned of the conference.

Generally speaking, I would say that the organization was made up primarily of university people and they had some consumer affiliation, whether it was out of business education or what we would traditionally call home economics. Some, for instance, were from departments of family economics and management or consumer economics or whatever.

When I went to Connecticut, our department there was called home management and we changed the title very quickly to family economics and management, and that's where the courses were taught. We had a course entitled, "Personal Finance," that dealt with that range of things, plus one in "Consumers in the Market," and so on. I think that the people that were in the organization at that time were generally those that had some consumer course to teach.

NS: Were there any real dividing lines within that college educator group? Was there an intellectual divide at all?

TB: I did not perceive that there was—not at that time. I think the basic separation was between those that had identified with schools of business or business education as opposed to those who were identified with home economics or home economics education, or some aspect of that. In fact, I think that at one time, we did count members according to their affiliation in that way. Then, of course, there were so-called social scientists or social studies, which was basically the third group. I'm pretty sure that we at times broke down the membership along those lines to see what the affiliations were.

NS: Would you have called yourself a consumer activist back then?

TB: Yes. At that same time, I got involved with the Consumer Federation of America.

NS: That's '65? You joined in '63.

TB: When I went to Connecticut—I'm not positive of the date; I would say it was right around the end of '64 or early '65—we established the Connecticut Consumer Association, and I was asked to be president of that organization. I served as president of that for most of the time I was in Connecticut. At one time, I stepped out of the presidency and then I was asked to take it

back again. Through that affiliation, I would say, yes, I was active in the sense of trying to mobilize people to join the association. We lobbied at the Connecticut General Assembly to try to get some reform legislation through. We were successful as we attempted those kinds of things.

NS: What kind of legislation?

TB: We supported the consumer credit legislation at the time and I remember testifying personally on hearing aid licensing. In the mid- to late-sixties, I went to Washington to testify on a games of chance problem before the Federal Trade Commission.

Colston was also identified as one of the persons that testified at those hearings. I was involved in the movement, as it were [the popular movement], in addition to being affiliated with the professional thing. After all, it was a good thing to do. It was something that was needed to offset the influence and power that the business community has. We just testified on a number of different items of legislation in Connecticut.

NS: You said you went to the St. Louis meeting.

TB: Right.

NS: I guess that was the one, wasn't it, where President Kennedy wrote a welcome? Was it later that Phillip Hart appeared? Was that the one?

TB: I cannot remember. Phil Hart came to the one at Colorado State at Greeley. I drove down to Denver to meet him and chauffeured him back to Greeley.

NS: Would you pick yourself out as one of the more conspicuous activists at that time?

TB: Well, I'm not saying how conspicuously one would identify himself! [laughter]. Being the president of the Connecticut Consumer Association, that certainly did generate some visibility. That wasn't the main goal—my affiliation with it—of promoting my own visibility. Mainly, I saw that there was a job to be done and I had come fully into the consumer field. I felt that there were some definite needs; that consumers needed somebody to support items of legislation or reforms, social reforms and so on—the whole gamut of things that we associate with the consumer movement.

NS: Did you see ACCI as an activist movement?

TB: No, I didn't. I visualized it basically as a professional affiliation. I have always seen it as a professional organization. At times, we were asked to take positions on legislation and one thing and another. That was back when I was president, and I presume, before then and after that too. Generally, we did not. I know there were two or three times that it was suggested that we be more involved on an activist level. I don't visualize that, generally speaking, as the role of the professional organization.

Even though there are reforms needed, with people who are coming from different directions, it's hard to get them to vote to the point where they are willing to take a position on something like that. It would have to be out of the board of directors, and I think they're getting out on a limb when they attempt to take that position on behalf of the organization.

NS: The mid- and late-sixties were years of real social ferment in America. How do you see the political and social climate as having affected ACCI?

TB: I don't know that it had a big impact relative to ACCI and how it developed and operated.

NS: Maybe I could put it another way. Did ACCI help to coalesce the consumer movement in some way? Do you think it gave shape and form in those years to the consumer movement?

TB: I do not feel that it had a major impact on the consumer movement as it developed at that time. We had speakers at the conference that would speak on some aspect of it but as far as it really being influential and having any real forcefulness, I would say, probably not. Certainly not in the same way that I would look back at my CFA affiliation and the people who directed it. I was on the board of directors for the Consumer Federation of America for a few years. I always had the feeling that the CFA board members looked at academics as somewhat strange and unusual, and kind of apart from the people who represented the labor movement and REAs (Rural Electrification Administration), and the health cooperatives, the cooperative movement, and all those other people that were involved on a day to day basis, working with individuals in the community or in the market.

They were very much geared and oriented towards lobbying and legislation. I was certainly not the epitome of an academic, but they always viewed us as not really into it the way they were. Even though ACCI had representation at the CFA annual meetings, etc., I just never felt that the organization itself was making any influence felt on CFA or on the consumer movement as it was developing in the various states.

NS: Could you tell me about what you remember of the relationship between CFA and ACCI?

TB: It was basically that we had delegates from ACCI. Because of our affiliation, we paid our membership to the Consumer Federation, and so we had delegates that attended the annual meetings. Then there were some of us—and I can't remember now specifically who else from ACCI—

NS: I believe Father McEwen was.

TB: Yes, he was indeed. He was very much involved with CFA. There were only two or three of us. Actually, my affiliation was more through the Connecticut Consumer Association, even though I was playing the dual role at the time, because I was involved with ACCI. We would talk about it at the ACCI board meetings, but as far as being influential from ACCI's point of view as input in CFA, I would say it was relatively minimal.

NS: Why would somebody like you get involved in the rank and file of ACCI—if there's such a word?

TB: I probably could be proven wrong very quickly in this regard, but I think that most of the people that were members of ACCI were professionals and felt that they were somewhat aloof, as professionals often do, from the nitty-gritty, day-to-day things that happen in something like the consumer movement.

Of course, I was fascinated with it because it was contributing to my understanding of the consumer field and it was first hand experience out there working with these problems. I don't know if there's anything more that contributes to your class discussion when you bring back your experiences that you've had. I was just involved in it in all those different ways.

NS: Did the work you did in food stamps get discussed at ACCI meetings?

TB: No, it didn't. I had problems with the food stamp study. This was before I went to Iowa. One of my colleagues from the USDA and I had worked on a report. I ended up doing most of it because he transferred to the Census Bureau, but we collaborated because he had directed the data collection in Union County, Pennsylvania.

My part of the study in Detroit was to collect household food consumption data from four

hundred families. We interviewed in April and May, and then after they started the food stamp program. At that time, many people were on the commodity distribution program. They started the food stamp program about the first of July. We went back in September and October and attempted to interview the same families and get the identical data on their one week's food consumption. We went back—of course, this was a hot item in the USDA—and our supervisor pulled off the top data and indicated what changes had taken place in food consumption. The two of us started analyzing the data and processing it and making comparisons. I thought it was interesting, and from what I recollect, I had the feeling that more of the changes in food consumption were attributed to the termination of the commodities program than they were to the implementation of the food stamp program.

Naturally, when you suggest that—even though the data seemed to say it--that wasn't very popular with the people in the USDA who were hellbent on creating another big bureaucracy in the food stamp area, which they went on to do. That particular publication never saw the light of day. It was interesting; they gave it to some reviewers who made some comments—nothing dramatic—and we rewrote it and reworked it and then they gave it to another set of reviewers. We weren't always working with the same set of reviewers.

NS: We were talking about the relationship between your work with the USDA, and the food stamps and ACCI, and whether or not ACCI had become involved in pursuing this issue.

TB: No, not really. I don't recall anyone ever actually pursuing that within the consumer field. When I went to Iowa, I was still working on the drafts of the thing and sent it back after revising it again and again and it never went anywhere.

NS: Did you try to get ACCI to do something about that?

TB: No. I don't recall that thought ever occurring to me.

NS: Let me return to how you got involved in ACCI as an executive and member on the board. You said you started out as treasurer. Would that have been in '66 or '67?

TB: It probably was in '66-'67, somewhere in there.

NS: As treasurer, do you recall what the state of the finances of the organization were?

TB: Through those years, they were always nip and tuck. We certainly were not flush. It was usually a pretty tight situation, and as I recall, we always counted on a substantial contribution (I can't even remember the level) from Consumers Union to support the organization and make up the gap between what it was costing to run the organization and what the revenues were from membership.

NS: I think it was not until a couple years later that the organization was weaned away.

TB: We kept getting threatened. The Consumers Union didn't want this thing to go in perpetuity. They wanted us to become self-sufficient. I vaguely recollect—but I'm not sure—that we worked on a "development program."

I think they funded a larger than usual amount for one or two years to give us extra money to do some so-called development—establish the development program, do a little advertising, send out mailings to a lot of places that we hadn't traditionally been mailing to. In fact, I don't know that they did a whole lot of mailing prior to that. As I recall, they sent mailings to libraries and to membership lists that they acquired from various sources, trying to encourage people to join the organization. From my recollections, that paid off rather handsomely in a rather sudden growth in the membership.

NS: Do you remember whether Consumers Union ever tried to influence the organization because of the grant in terms of political issues, or for example, positions with respect to the business community?

TB: I cannot recall there ever being any influence or any ties connected with that donation. I guess the way I saw it in my mind was that Colston is looked upon as the founder of ACCI. He called together that original group of his colleagues to start the organization, as it were, and because of his role in Consumers Union, that Consumers Union would ante-up the money to fund this brain child to keep the thing going. I think he was responsible enough that he didn't want it to continue indefinitely either and was concerned that the organization become totally dependent on Consumers Union.

NS: In 1966, about \$3500 was coming from memberships in the organization and Consumers Union was providing about \$3500 in grants, so it was about half coming from CU.

TB: Yes.

NS: Do you remember writing letters to Colston? Was there anything touchy about getting the money from CU?

TB: Not that I recall. I cannot specifically recall writing the letters; I may have. It was kind of a traditional thing, but there was some feedback from them at that time that we needed to become self-sufficient. Again, I can't remember where that feedback came from, whether it was in discussion with him at the annual meetings or whether it was with the executive director at the time of Consumers Union.

NS: We're talking 1967?

TB: Yes.

NS: Sandbach?

TB: Yes, Walker. [Walker Sandbach]. He came to the ACCI meetings. It was discussions with both he and Colston, and the other people who were involved that came to the ACCI meetings, that were on the board of Consumers Union. We had informal communication with them in terms of what ACCI should be doing.

NS: There is some discussion in the correspondence that I read about just what the objectives and goals of ACCI were—whether they were strictly professional or whether they had a large grass roots function. This may have been reflected, for example, in something like the pamphlet series.

TB: Yes.

NS: Do you remember anything about that general problem?

TB: No, I don't, honestly.

NS: Did you use the pamphlets yourself?

TB: Yes.

NS: Did you find them valuable?

TB: Yes. I thought they were pretty well done.

NS: Did you think that the pamphlets served the professionals? I know you were measuring, at the time, the sales of the pamphlets. You were charting; I don't know who it was, specifically—maybe it was Ed Metzen.

TB: The sales, as I recall, were pretty minimal. We got a report pretty much every year as to what the sales had been.

NS: I've got a chart here that I can show you. This chart of pamphlet sales shows that starting in about 1956, they climb up to more than 3,000—and then they dip, and then they come back again, and then they dip precipitously after 1966. It may be that there were only two or three best-selling pamphlets. We're really not talking about huge numbers—we're talking in the neighborhood of 3,000 to 4,000 pamphlets, but they appeared to have been the chief publication of the organization. The *Newsletter* and the pamphlets were the main publications.

TB: Yes. The *Forum* and the *Journal* did not come along until much later, actually. The pamphlets of course were already on the scene when I came into it. I had bought them and used them to some extent, but they were geared basically to the lay audience. I would say that was the thrust of them, generally. It was somewhat akin to that series that the Better Business Bureau put out.

NS: Were you unhappy when they stopped?

TB: No. I don't recall that I was particularly distressed about it.

NS: Why was that?

TB: Partly that it was my perception of the role of a professional organization. If we had money to invest, there might be better ways to use it to enhance the professional organization rather than to spend it to pay somebody to write those publications and then have relatively nominal sales from them as far as being a profit-making thing. Normally, we don't find many professional organizations developing these kinds of materials.

NS: As a young professional in the consumer field in the mid-sixties, and having ACCI as your central identification professionally, what was ACCI doing for you professionally?

TB: The main thing was the annual meeting and the *Newsletter*. Those were the two big benefits. When I was in Connecticut for several years, I was the only consumer person on the faculty. It was a very small department and the other individuals were more geared to household equipment and home management, so I was primarily responsible for the consumer courses, and it gets kind of lonesome.

The annual meeting provided a place where you'd go and associate with people that were of like mind or at least with a common interest. It was reassuring. I was reinvigorated, renurtured, or whatever from that affiliation.

NS: Did it help you advance in your university?

TB: Not really, because my promotions have come through transfers [laughter]. When I went to Connecticut, I went as an associate professor, from Iowa State where I had been an assistant professor. I had a total of four or five years in the profession at the time, counting my USDA experience, so I went to Connecticut as the head of the department also.

When I moved out here, I came out as a full professor and dean of the School of Home Economics. I endeavored to do some research, and did some at Connecticut. I published a couple of things but nothing to the point that is required nowadays for academic people going up through the ranks.

Here at SIU, I think it's a formidable thing in terms of what Rosemary [Walker] and Brenda Cude both are doing. They are amassing a considerable publication record in just four years. I think one of them came in the fall and the other one came in the winter of the same year. They are just doing phenomenal work and it's all on their own. I'm not making any contribution to their endeavors.

NS: When you were around as a younger professor back then, was it hard for a professor to publish something about consumer affairs without any outlet?

TB: Yes, it was difficult to publish. I've said it so often, it almost feels like I'm alibiing, but there's no funding for consumer projects. There's been, historically, a real dearth of support for consumer-type projects.

We've seen one of the sources dry up with the Reagan administration in the U.S. Office of Consumer Education. I was the happy recipient of support on two projects when that was first inaugurated. I had wanted to do a pilot program for consumer education in prison residences. The other one was to do a study on consumer education competencies among high school students here in Illinois. We had publications from both of those projects.

I've been interested, since that pilot project, in consumer education for prison residents. I've maintained an interest in that area and want to go further with it, but there's been no support for it. Historically, I think, there's just not been financial support of any magnitude for consumer research. Most of it has been bootlegged. Rosemary and Brenda get small grants from our research projects office over here to the tune of \$500 or \$750, or in some cases, \$1,000 to do the kinds of studies that they have been doing; some on supermarkets, a telephone survey on mail order purchases by consumers. They've been done locally, and that's fine. I think they're really making a contribution, but it's not at the scope or depth that we could get if we had a larger population to work with.

NS: Are you saying that the problem wasn't the shortage of journals to publish in, it was the shortage of funds to do the studies?

TB: I think that's basically the main problem because there have been several journals through the years that would accept the kinds of articles that we deal with in the consumer field. Your journal of sociology, and so on, have in the past had some. The journal of marketing would be a possibility, etc.

There were some places, so that it wasn't a complete void as far as publication opportunities go, although it certainly has been greatly enhanced with the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. It's hard to say which comes first. I think that, if there had been more support for consumer research, the *Journal* would have come along a lot sooner to capitalize on that.

NS: Did you ever try to get out a pamphlet series of your own?

TB: No, I didn't.

NS: In the period, then, before '68—I think the first *Journal of Consumer Affairs* was '67—would you have been one of those agitating for a journal?

TB: To some extent. I believe that all of us felt that that was a very desirable thing. It accomplished several things: One, it gives an element of prestige to the profession to have your own journal, and it certainly gave a forum for people to submit articles to. It created another opportunity for people to get published, but it also enhanced the field, the profession generally. It's a natural progression. When you start back in '54 and '56 with the organization—and it takes money to publish a journal and you finally arrive at a place with a small group that was

supporting ACCI through the years—to finally arrive at the position where it means, in essence, that we have arrived as a professional organization, I think it was a real landmark at that point.

NS: To start a journal like that when you're still receiving half of your funds from Consumers Union—and you were treasurer around this time—it must have been a tenuous undertaking.

TB: It was, but at that same time we undertook this development thing, we also increased dues. For years, I've always recalled the value of the membership in ACCI, which I felt far exceeded the membership fee. There was always a group of people that said, "Well, we raise those fees even a dollar or two dollars, it's going to drive some people away." I said, "My God, you've got nine issues of this *Newsletter* that's got a wealth of information in it and that alone is worth the membership fee" (of whatever it was at the time, maybe five or six dollars.)

While I was on the board, we raised the membership dues once, if not more than that. Then, when the *Journal* came along, you'll find also in connection with that, that we increased the dues rather substantially to begin to cover those costs.

NS: For the record, you appeared to have been appointed treasurer for the year '68-'69. I would assume that would mean, for the year '69-'70, you were vice president.

TB: Right. And then I was president from '70 to '71.

NS: In '67, your role seems to have been as a membership coordinator, because I have a statement here. Take a look at the *Newsletter* of December, '67. Could you read the first part?

TB: "Under the capable leadership of Dr. Thomas Brooks, University of Connecticut, and his many diligent co-workers, the membership of CCI has increased in recent months approximately 20% from slightly over 1,000 to over 1,200 at present. Each member can act as a membership committee."

NS: How did that come about?

TB: I can't say specifically, without going back and looking at the minutes. It was a matter of mobilizing the current membership of ACCI to get out and help attract new members into the organization. I know in recent years that they've worked through the idea of a state membership chairman or coordinator on a state by state basis. I don't know if that's the way we did it back then.

NS: A number of people commented on the fact that they seemed to remember you as having really suddenly done something for the membership to take off.

TB: That's nice of them to remember me that way! I guess it was just through the basics of advertising or personal contact that we were able to get that moving.

NS: Did you have a background in marketing?

TB: Yes. At Ohio State, I was in agricultural economics finishing up my undergraduate work there and I took a course in marketing.

NS: Do you remember targeting specific constituencies—people who weren't members of ACCI who ought to have been?

TB: I honestly cannot remember specifically what I did [laughter]. I think you'd have to go to the minutes of the board meetings to find out. I don't know what they might reveal in that regard as far as a report on the membership. I would presume that I gave a fairly decent report

on what we were doing and how it was moving along at that time.

NS: I have the board minutes of January 20, 1968, where a report was given that membership revenues exceeded grant revenues for the first time. That must have been a major milestone in the organization, when you're finally receiving funds, and it does seem to be the case. A year later, a proposal was put forward for a specific development position. In 1969, discussions were held—I think with Consumers Union—and I think there was a Brenda Dervin who appears in 1969 as a full time development person.

TB: Right. I remember the name.

NS: Do you remember if you had a role to play in this idea of a full time development person?

TB: I do not recall having suggested that. This may have been something that came from Consumers Union, actually. I honestly cannot say where that particular idea developed from.

NS: Let me put a related question in a more general way. Do you think that ACCI was getting its share of the new blood and the new people who were beginning to see themselves as consumer activists in the years 1967-1969?

TB: Yes. I would say it was, because it was through the years that I attended regularly, and that includes when I first began and first got acquainted with the organization. The young people particularly seemed to be so surprised that there was an organization that just fit right where they needed help and to have that affiliation, so we did seem to attract young people. Some of them were the young Turk types—"young bucks," as it were—that felt they had a better idea about how the organization should be run and one thing and another.

The board generally was balanced with one or two senior members, as such, who either were retired or nearing retirement, or certainly are elder statesmen in the consumer field. I can recall clearly, for instance, serving with Louise Young, who had preceded me as president. She always had a good solid head on her shoulders and was just a person with excellent judgement, and the same for Arch Troelstrup. He served on the board from time to time. Those people really had excellent judgement and were kind of the "leavening," as it were, to keep things on a relatively even keel without stifling progress or change. They just had a very mature approach to things, and so on.

NS: Did you volunteer to head a membership drive?

TB: I must have. I didn't say, "I'd love to be your membership coordinator" [much laughter]. I'm not that aggressive, never have been.

NS: Did you get up at a meeting sometime and criticize the membership development situation?

TB: I don't recall that. It may have been partly what we were doing in Connecticut in regard to the membership, and maybe some people felt that we had some degree of success there.

NS: You were growing pretty quick in Connecticut.

TB: We did a pretty good job initially in recruiting a good number of people but it was hard to hold them.

NS: It appears that your success as a membership drive coordinator must have had something to do with your election as treasurer the following year.

TB: It probably did. Yes, I would say that probably was a key factor.

NS: CFA was launched that same year, according to the same *Newsletter*. We have the statement, "The Consumer Federation of America was launched on November 3, 1967, and McEwen was its first vice president," so there's somebody from ACCI.

TB: Right. He was an activist, too, though very much so in the Massachusetts Consumer Association. He was more activist than I. At the time when I came in, I was just getting acquainted with the whole thing, particularly in the Connecticut Consumer Association. I hadn't been asked to serve as president of that, but Bob McEwen was looked at as one of the primary activists in the country—very outspoken, aggressive individual etc., but it wasn't because of his membership in ACCI.

NS: You are saying that you and he were pretty atypical of the ACCI membership as a whole?

TB: I would say so, yes.

NS: In your aggressive pursuance of a consumer cause as opposed to simple consumer education?

TB: Right. That's not to say that other people haven't been involved. For instance, Lee Richardson was with the Department of Marketing at LSU and he was also involved with the Louisiana consumer group.

I was trying to recall whether he ever served as a president of ACCI. He attended the meetings, he spoke to our meetings from time to time, but really, his identification through the years has not been with ACCI. It may be that through his marketing orientation, he may have a stronger affiliation with the American Marketing Association, or whatever.

NS: You joined the board when you became treasurer, would that be right--1969?

TB: I joined it in '68.

NS: I note that the period you were on the board of directors was a period of extraordinary change for ACCI. As we've already mentioned, the membership grew dramatically. The relationship of CU grants to membership changed, a journal began to be developed, the name of your organization was changed. Can you recall any of the board meetings when those issues came up?

TB: The one where the *Journal* was established in '67, the first year or so. I wasn't directly involved with that, but that was handled by the previous board. I think that may tie in also with this growth that you're talking about in terms of membership and so on, in terms of getting the publicity out about the existence of the *Journal* and so on.

You mentioned the *Journal*. I can't remember anything relative to the specifics with regard to the change in the funding except I remember we discussed it at that time to decide what we would do and what approach we would take. I honestly cannot remember whether the idea for the development fund came from us as a proposal to CU; it may have. We discussed it and said maybe if we could just get a kick in the pants here, we could really get something going in the way of developing publicity materials and so on to send out, and develop membership lists. This all costs money.

Ed Metzen was really a driving force at that time as executive director. Some of these ideas may have come out of him or they may have come from any one of a number of people. The records aren't clear as to where the specific idea came from. That was all a part of the growth and of the change of funding, and so on.

Regarding the change in name, we felt that the Council on Consumer Information basically needed to be changed because it wasn't really professional enough.

NS: Why would "Council on Consumer Information" be less professional than "American Council on Consumer Interests"?

TB: I don't know; it just has a better ring to it. [laughter]

NS: I have a memo here which discusses the various names that were considered. Might you read those off and tell me about them?

TB: Fred Waddell, I think, was serving as chairman of this. He worked for me at the University of Connecticut at the time. I remember his going through this process of trying to come up with a name. I just think that we felt that the "Council on Consumer Information" was really not reflective. It was too narrow, for one thing. I personally didn't think that it was really something you could hold up on a banner and say, "I'm a member of the Council on Consumer Information," and that would say to people that that is a professional organization.

NS: What did "professional" mean to you?

TB: Professional means to me that it's a body of individuals who are united through a common professional interest. I would almost interject something with regard to some degree of objectivity, that from an academic point of view, I saw it basically as those that were interested in supporting the profession of consumer education, of doing research, of instruction and improvement of instruction and teaching of consumer education and the element of service. Basically, the role that you would identify with the professional educator is the way I would see the person relating to that organization, and that organization serving those interests.

NS: The word "interests" instead of "information" seems to be the key to changing it.

TB: I think so, because when you talk about information, we generally think of basic communication. You would almost carry that further to the quality of information, deceptive information vs. non-deceptive, etc. You get kind of hung up on the information characteristic rather than that the idea of interests was multi-purposeful rather than concerned about information *per se*.

NS: You were all in favor of that name change?

TB: I was in favor of a name change. I can't think back how that one actually grabbed me as the final one. I don't know if I was more geared to the use of the term affairs or association, but nearly everybody found they could buy into the American Council on Consumer Interests.

NS: Do you have any memories as to whether or not there were people in the group who felt that, really, the word "interests" might be implying an adversarial relationship with the business interests or anything of that sort?

TB: No. I do not recall that being an element in the discussion.

NS: "Information" is pretty neutral in that sense, where "interests" seems to imply a feeling that there is a consumer interest. Maybe I'm extending here, but my feeling was presumably an "interest" ought to be serviced as opposed to providing consumer "information," which can simply be neutral.

TB: I think, basically, that's part of the consumer interest concept; that it was something that needed to be fostered.

NS: With respect to the name change and this question of fostering interest in 1969, you would have been vice president. Would you have been responsible, then, for planning the program

after 1969?

TB: Yes. That was the traditional role of the vice president.

NS: What was the conference that you planned?

TB: The one that I was program chairman for was the one that was held at Colorado State in '69, in Greeley. I was the vice president that year and the role of the vice president was to plan the annual conference.

NS: Do you remember how you conceptualized that problem?

TB: Planning the conference? I had, of course, observed and talked with, and had the records of the previous conference chairman. I had pulled together a conference at the University of Connecticut.

When you mention the membership and the drive, I feel that I have some ability to organize those kinds of things. A few years ago, down here at the Presbyterian Church, I was the chairman of the stewardship committee. Everybody was pleased with the job I did because we got more pledges than we had gotten before. I don't know whether it's a native ability or training, or whatever, but I think I can attend to those kinds of details and generally do a pretty good job of planning those kinds of events, whether it's a membership campaign or the organization of a conference, or whatever.

It's a matter of getting yourself organized, handling the details one by one, assigning what your sessions are going to be about and then ask people to line up the speakers or line them up yourself. I took my ribbing on the Greeley, Colorado one. I had tried to get the fellow that was probably the first—if not the only—black member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Well, he couldn't make it, so we ended up with a guy out of the San Francisco Federal Reserve Bank.

NS: You're talking about the keynote speaker?

TB: Yes, for that conference. I don't know exactly what all he said, but people were ribbing me about, "This is some speaker that you got for a consumer conference." I guess the guy was spouting off gross national product things, and generally a business orientation thing rather than to speak to the consumer interest.

The man that I tried to get as our keynoter was identified somewhat with consumer issues, and I can't, off the top of my head, remember his name, so the substitute was somewhat less than satisfactory. Otherwise, the conference went off pretty well, and it was, I presume, a successful one as those things went.

NS: When I talked to others about how they planned these programs, some of them seem to have thought of how they would have run them differently than others. For example, some of them thought of it as an opportunity to sort of inject some of the consumer movement into consumer education. Others seem to have thought of it in more discreet terms in dealing with certain consumer education topics.

TB: I may be manufacturing here, but currently or back then, I think my orientation would have been to try to address the issues of the day, basically, in a conference like that, to try to get a variety of input on the topics so that the people then coming out of it would understand better the issues from different points of view.

NS: This would have been 1969, the year after Richard Nixon's election in the middle of the wage/price freeze, unless I'm mistaken. I don't know, but I think that's when his Phase 1, 2,

and 3 began of the price controls and all this kind of thing. I guess it would be a period, in some sense, of stagnation (momentary) for the consumer movement. After all, major legislation had been passed in the Democratic years and when Nixon comes along, there is a holding pattern, I guess one could say.

TB: Certainly with regard to consumer affairs, that was felt very definitely the case. You probably recall his appointment of the special assistant for consumer affairs?

NS: Virginia Knauer?

TB: No, he appointed one before that. Look back in the records. This woman was a director of the Good Housekeeping Testing Service, and her name was one of those joint names like Bille-Jo, or something like that. Well, the comical thing was, she was going to be part-time director of the consumer affairs thing and also the Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs. When this came down and it was announced, Washington just literally blew the lid off. She lasted either 24 or 48 hours, and she decided that she wouldn't continue her job [laughter]. Later on, he selected Virginia Knauer, who was a pretty good selection in the fact that she had established her credentials as the director in Pennsylvania, so I think she became more acceptable in that regard.

I just received an invitation to this conference they're having in the last week of this month. Maybe you've seen that. Remind me to show it to you. It's hilarious. It's an invitation from the White House to this conference that they're having. It says, "From the Office of the Special Assistant for Consumer Affairs and Avon, Inc." [laughter]. I couldn't believe it! This thing has something to do with consumerism and the Third World countries or developing countries, or something like that. They're having it in the State Department Conference Room, or some such thing like that. I can't believe it. Right there on the invitation.

NS: Can you speak a little bit about the problem of commercial involvement with the consumer movement and the relationship between—and efforts that have been made—to alter the course of consumer causes by business?

TB: I can't speak to it at great length. I think it's something of continuing concern from ACCI's position. You know of the breach that occurred several years ago when they decided that the people who had a business affiliation could not be full-fledged members of ACCI. That, of course, alienated some of them very much and some of them no longer belong as a result of that. They migrated to SOCAP because they felt, "If we're going to be second class citizens, we won't be citizens at all." So, they withdrew their membership and maintain that position to this day. Others, of course, have not been that rigid. There was a growing concern among the long-term members of ACCI that we could be taken over by the business interest, and it would simply be another mouthpiece for business. I think that would be a mistake.

When you're in consumer affairs, it's not unlike people on the other side in business affairs. If you're concerned primarily with the consumer, then you have to try to put yourself in the consumer's role. It's almost a welfare model, to some extent, in terms of what is the best interest of the consumer individual. At the same time, when you're in that, you try to maintain your objectivity relative to the various influences, and so on, that are happening. Your biases for the consumer do not say, "Well, I'm for the consumer, right or wrong." An example, for instance, is with so-called retail theft.

The business community continually points up to us that it is consumers that are doing this. Statistics indicate that, yes, they're consumers, but they're also employees of your damn firm! I certainly don't approve of people going into stores as consumers and shoplifting, but, by the same token, I don't appreciate business saying that it's all consumers that are doing this.

On balance, you have to recognize what the problem is and its various elements, and deal with

it. Business would have you believe that it's all people who are running in and out of the stores that are doing it. A very large portion of it—if not the larger portion—is actually from the employees themselves that are working for this character.

It requires our concern with this unit in society and with the consumer and individual's welfare, and many different circumstances. From the days when I was more concerned with reading about welfare economics as a graduate student and so on, that's a very value-laden area, and it's awful hard to say just what is in the best interest of consumers. If our interest lies with the consumer as he or she relates to the business community, or to their families, or whatever, it's a very involved and complex situation as most things in society are. So that's the context that I try to deal with it in.

NS: Did this come up while you were either planning your program or while you were president?

TB: Just offhand, it seems like we did discuss it relative to nominations to the board, what the person's affiliation was. Looking back at most of those years, you see people who were generally from academia. All of them in '68 were, in some ways; Faith Prior was with the Cooperative Extension in Vermont, Gwen Bymers from Cornell, Louise Young from Wisconsin, Bob Herrmann from Penn State.

You get to '69; we've got Florence Rice. Florence, I think, attended the meeting in '68. You've met her, haven't you? You haven't? Harlem Consumers Council. Florence was quite a gal. I don't know whether she's still around or not. She came out here one year to give a lecture at SIU. She was chairman or president of the Harlem Consumers Council. In fact, there was a movie done, *The Poor Pay More*. Did you ever see that documentary? She's in that. Florence Rice and her daughter and son-in-law are sitting there in the kitchen when this guy comes in and tries to sell them a freezer plan. Well, Florence was an activist. She came to the meeting and was kind of critical of the format. It wasn't active enough. She wore these badges that said, "Green Power," and they were distributing those all over the hall [laughter].

NS: Green Power?

TB: Green Power, meaning dollar power.

NS: She was coming to SIU, or she was coming to the conference?

TB: She came here at my invitation, to one of our lectures and entertainment things that we used to have. The departments would invite somebody, and so she came.

NS: You brought her on the board?

TB: She came out. I don't know who brought her on. She was on in '69 and '70, at least those two years. I'm not sure how active she was or how well she attended the board meetings. She had a problem with finances, and so as I recall, she wanted to know if there was any money to help her get to the board meetings and that kind of thing. Most of us had our professional affiliation to support our travel. She was kind of a free-lance person.

As I look at the rest of it, Suzanne Matsen was with Cooperative Extension out of New York and the rest of us were on there the year before. Then the next year, again, it was the same line-up. That was a part of the nomination activity that I think you see reflected here.

You don't identify in here, people that had a commercial affiliation. Some of them had a business affiliation—for instance, Carl Hall, when he first joined. He was on the board in '78. I think Carl was teaching in a business education curriculum at Oklahoma State or Oklahoma, someplace there. Joe Uhl was out of Ag Economics up at Purdue. So, again, there were some of

them that began to come from business ed, but as far as being an employee of some commercial organization, you just don't find it.

Bob Gibson was one of those persons with a commercial affiliation. He is president of the National Foundation for Consumer Credit. He was active, attended the meetings regularly and so on. He was really put out when they decided not to permit people that had a business affiliation to be full-fledged members.

NS: Was the actual split while you were still on the executive board?

TB: I think that came a couple of years afterwards. As a matter of fact, it may have been as late as 1975 that that actually occurred. It seems like it was Kansas City. They had some pretty heated debates on that, apparently, and people's tempers flared somewhat.

NS: Were you alone in this debate?

TB: No, I wasn't.

NS: Could you talk a little bit about that?

TB: There were two things that happened and I'm not sure exactly when they happened, whether it was during my presidency or around that time. I think I was involved at that time. That was the establishment of the Colston Warne Lecture Series and the establishment of the Fellows Program in ACCI. I think those both happened during the year that I was president, but I couldn't swear to it. That's one of the things that I kind of recall as having something to do with because I remember that they were both important to me. I was glad to see them come about. Whether it was actually while I was president or not, I don't know. It wasn't original with me. Sometimes, with those kinds of things, you discuss them and discuss them, and it's hard to get some closure on it. By God, we got closure on those two items and I'm really pleased that they are part of the ACCI.

NS: What were the obstacles to getting the Colston Warne Lecture Series?

TB: One thing, of course, was funding it. What we had in mind was kind of an endowed lecture where we would accumulate a fund and then use the interest from that fund to pay the honorarium and expenses of the speaker to come to the annual meeting. Arch Troelstrup and I together, following my year as president, kind of served as a committee to raise the money and look at different ways to solicit monies to build up that endowment.

NS: Was there any dispute that it would be called the Colston Warne Lecture Series?

TB: Not that I recall. I think we all clearly saw his involvement in the creation of the thing and felt that it was an appropriate gesture for the organization to honor him in that way.

The other thing was with the Fellows Program. Some of those folks were getting up in years and they had attended virtually every ACCI meeting, particularly of that founding group. There was the feeling that, by golly, for those that had maintained the organization, their contribution should be recognized. For instance, Eugene Beem. You ran across Eugene, undoubtedly—the fellow that went with Sperry & Hutchinson?

At one of the meetings at Connecticut, Ruby Turner Morris. Is she still alive? Have you had any contact with her? She was at the Connecticut College for Women at New London and she used to come to some of our meetings. She was a hell-raiser. She just was very vocal and outspoken. She was a very brilliant woman. She asked me one time, "Are you going to be another Eugene Beem?" [laughter]. She wondered if I was going to get up in the organization and then be bought out by some commercial firm.

NS: She was a purist?

TB: Yes. I would say she definitely was a purist.

NS: Could you describe the Fellowship?

TB: I can't remember now the exact criteria. I think maybe it's spelled out in one of the newsletters. It's certainly in some of the information. It was to recognize those people who had made a significant contribution to the consumer field and particularly that had maintained a long affiliation in a significant way with the ACCI.

NS: Was it just an honorary title? There was no funding?

TB: No. Just a kind of recognition. Many professional organizations identify, according to some criteria, people as Fellows.

NS: Would a model be a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences?

TB: It was the idea of distinction within the professional ranks and particularly as it related to this organization.

Gladys Bahr was finally recognized, I guess, prior to her death. Persia Campbell, of course. Marguerite Burk, and so on. Eugene Beem was not. I don't know Howard Bigelow; I don't even recognize that name. Helen Canoyer, I don't believe was ever one. She was Dean of the College of Home Economics at Cornell. I think, because of other interests or whatever, she did not follow through as being a long-term supporter.

There was basically the initial group of some 5 or 6 who were people who had really made a contribution to the organization through the years. Their interests have been supportive and they have established good reputations in the field. I don't know what they're doing with that now.

I haven't attended these meetings in the last few years, basically, because of a conflict, not a lack of interest. I have been on our local SIU Credit Union board for the last 4 or 5 years and served as president of it for a couple of years. The Illinois Credit Union meeting is held in Chicago, often on the same weekends that ACCI meets. I feel torn, but I've resolved it by going to the league meetings. This year, interestingly enough, when I could have attended, dammit, they would have the ACCI meeting during spring break, and I just wasn't willing to give up my spring break to run to Kansas City to attend that meeting.

NS: At what point do you think you would have seen this membership as more central than your other identifications with the Connecticut group or with the credit union?

TB: I would say that since my initial membership in ACCI, I have seen it as my primary professional group. My service, for instance, on the credit union board is not a professional affiliation as much as it is a service kind of thing. For these meetings we would go up to Chicago for some entertainment. Also, they have some educational sessions which supposedly help us be better board members, etc.

My lack of attendance at the ACCI meetings has definitely not been any less supportive of the ACCI because it is my primary professional group. Back in the late '70s, I served as the recording secretary for the American Home Economics Association and was on that executive board. Even though I have maintained a fairly regular membership in the AHEA, I still do not consider it as my primary professional group, and it costs a hell of a lot more than ACCI.

NS: What does ACCI do that AHEA doesn't?

TB: It's consumer orientation. AHEA maintains the primary orientation that they have is family and family life. I find a lot of inconsistencies in AHEA in that regard. They have a group that's known as Home Economists in Business. When you see them as a group or operation, etc., their primary concern is with their business interest, as one would expect it to be. They're a powerful force within the American Home Economics Association to the point where their support, or lack of support, can mean success or failure on an issue.

AHEA does take positions on legislation, particularly at the federal level. That legislation a few years ago was perennial for a long time in terms of establishing the Department of Consumer Affairs, or whatever they were going to call it. AHEA went on record at least at one meeting—I recall the one in San Antonio—against it [laughter]. This is not consistent with my interest in the consumer field.

NS: Relating to this, would you say that the existence of ACCI has helped redirect curriculum at the university level or correct or counter forces that are exerted by other professional organizations, or has that not been the case?

TB: I don't perceive it as being a factor. I know that, of course, through the professional affiliation with ACCI, we come back with curriculum ideas, etc. That certainly is a reinforcement and gives us stimulation to think about things that we should be doing. As for the direction of our own curriculum, I don't think it's a factor.

NS: Around the country there are departments of family economics or human development and home economics, but I don't know of many departments of consumer affairs specifically.

TB: No. We just recently changed our title this past fall. It was approved as Consumer Economics and Family Management. We were Family Economics and Management. I think we have a respectable listing of consumer courses. I'll give you a copy of our catalog so you can see. We worked on that for about 3 or 4 years.

We came up against the College of Business. All we proposed, originally, was to change the name from Family Economics and Management to Consumer Economics and Management. It doesn't show any less interest in the family, but it shows the primary thrust of our program, our curriculum, and our majors. The students were interested in it. They thought it would be more meaningful to employers, etc., so they liked that idea and they were supportive of it. The only objection on campus was from the College of Business. They objected to our use of the word "management" in this new title, so we went round and round with them for a couple of years on this, and we finally compromised. Their final suggestion was that we call it Family Management and Consumer Economics. They wanted something in front of that word, "management." They said that they were afraid for their accreditation association, that other places on campus would be dealing with management, or some such argument. We said, "Look, consumer economics is the primary thrust, so we want the wording to be Consumer Economics and Family Management," and finally they acquiesced. [laughter]

NS: There's more in a name, I guess, than meets the eye.

TB: Absolutely. It's true.

NS: I would ask you the same thing about the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. Was that a problem?

TB: I think there was a problem. I don't remember specifics, but there was a problem in coming up with an acceptable name. In fact, that's where I think that I came off on the name change of the organization to be the "American Council on Consumer Affairs," in keeping with the title

that had been selected for the *Journal*, but it didn't come off that way.

NS: Can I go back to the other train of thought that we'd been following about the presidency and your role as president? How did being president affect you personally?

TB: Not greatly. The organization was still small enough. It wasn't like the person, for instance, who served as president of CFA. Whenever they made a statement, it would be picked up by the press and either be broadcast nationwide or at least in the Washington, DC area. This was hardly the case with the identification as president of ACCI.

NS: Did you try?

TB: No. I had no occasion to, really.

NS: I mean, did you try to make a statement on behalf of ACCI and find it didn't get publicized or widely distributed?

TB: No. I had no occasion to, as I recall.

NS: Were you invited to functions that you hadn't been invited to before?

TB: Not that I recall, because about the same time, I was already involved with the Connecticut Consumer Association. I was invited, mainly because of the Connecticut Consumer Association, to that initial gathering that Esther Peterson called that eventually the Consumer Federation grew out of. It did grow out of the Consumer Assembly, but the plans were all laid and in place before the Consumer Assembly, and the Consumer Assembly was simply the launching pad for the Consumer Federation of America. We had a meeting of consumers. There must have been around 40 people or so there at Esther Peterson's invitation.

NS: You were there?

TB: Yes. But that was before my presidency of ACCI.

NS: Do you remember having an agenda?

TB: Yes. Those two things that I mentioned, basically, were what I would say was my agenda for action for the year as president, because I felt strongly that those things needed to come off, and I would say that I can't recall other items, other than the continued growth of the organization, membership and so on.

NS: Between 1970 and 1972, the membership appears to have grown from about 1,700 to close to 3,500, which is the biggest growth in the organization's history.

TB: I think those were the same years that we had the development effort.

NS: Do you remember any perception of a radical or even a gradual change in the composition of the organization as a result of all this new membership? Do you remember thinking about whether this meant that the new membership coming in was different from the established membership that existed?

TB: I had the feeling that there were a lot of younger people coming in. I think that's the real change. Actually, they come in with different ideas and ask questions, and so on, that make you stop and think. That happened about that time. The size of the annual meetings are getting considerably larger with those people. That's where I would reflect on the change. It wasn't so much just a membership out there, it was who came to the annual meetings. That's the judgement that I'm basing my opinion on—that and the changes that occurred there.

NS: They were different, they were younger?

TB: Yes. They were younger, generally speaking. We even started getting some graduate students involved.

NS: When you took over as president, did you know everybody in the organization?

TB: No. I would say not. The number that attended the annual meeting back when I went to that first one in Madison, and then the one in St. Louis, there was a relatively small number of people that attended. I can't give you numbers; I would say maybe 150 or something like that. When they mentioned that we topped 500, that was quite an increase in the size of the group. At that time, when we were meeting back in St. Louis and Madison and those places, you got to know everybody that was at the annual meeting. Now that's pretty much a thing of the past.

Generally speaking, in the first years that I belonged, much the same people would come each year. Then, as they began to move to different extremes in the country, you picked up either some activist people that would not go half way across the country, or clear across the country to attend one of these meetings.

High school teachers that were teaching consumer ed or home economics or business ed would come to the meetings, so you had that kind of change occurring as you went from one part of the country to another. In those early years, I think that's why some of us kind of got into being on the board of directors, because we were coming regularly year after year. Many had already served on the board and they weren't geared up to be on it again. New people that would attend the meetings would be asked to do various things, especially if they felt that the person had a commitment to the field.

NS: That meeting you presided over as president, was that one of the first big meetings?

TB: As I recall, the one at Terre Haute was a pretty good-sized meeting. I can't remember exactly how many we had at Greeley. I think it was a smaller number, but then Greeley isn't the most accessible place in the world either, for that matter.

NS: I know that there have been many women in the organization. Have you had an impression about the role of women within the organization, whether or not the consumer movement included women long before the women's movement became a political force?

TB: I would say it had. As I recollect the makeup of the organization, particularly when you look at the board, there have been women involved. When I came on the board, there were women on the board and there wasn't any attempt necessarily to keep it proportional in any way. They were just looked at as full-fledged professionals. I think that's a unique part of the ACCI, as opposed to many other organizations.

For instance, I think back to the days when I was a member of the American Economics Association. It was heavily dominated by men in the profession. I think, partly because of the location of the consumer economics and business education programs, etc., and the kind of people that go into them, that it is a mix of men and women. I think that's been healthy.

NS: As a field, women have entered into home economics in larger proportions than men. I know Colston Warne often would be speaking entirely to audiences of women. Is that your experience, too?

TB: I certainly see the predominance in most of the classes that we teach. Our clientele has been very much women, unless it's a course that's attractive to students from other program areas. It depends on the particular course you're talking about. In general, we do have a mix of men and women, although in a lot of the classes it's more women than men—maybe 3/4 to 1/4.

In my experience with the Connecticut Consumer Association, with CFA, and with ACCI, it's always been a fairly good mix. We're talking about AHEA and the meetings that I've attended at the state level. There have been times when I was the only male present.

NS: Did you notice any prejudice?

TB: Certainly not strong, but a lot of them kind of make you feel like you're out of place.

NS: That you shouldn't be involved?

TB: That's right. Many of the women are not liberated in the sense that they see home economics as traditionally a women's area and probably men shouldn't be involved.

NS: Can you think of any illustration of that?

TB: At one time I attended a meeting—I cannot remember the exact meeting—but it was sponsored by the AHEA and there were other men there, just a handful. As I was leaving the conference, one woman made it a point to come up and tell me, "Thank you for coming." It didn't ring right with me that I should have been singled out to say thank you. Why didn't she thank everybody else for coming? As a member of the association, I had as much right to be there as she did, and it was out of place that she should thank me for coming.

NS: That never happened to you at ACCI?

TB: Oh, no. There was a real mutual respect in the consumer field for both men and women and their accomplishments are recognized. Gladys Bahr was an excellent professional in the field. Marguerite Burk was certainly an eminent economist and person in the field, and for her affiliation with the organization, Persia Campbell was. Those people were strong individuals. They had confidence in their abilities as much as you would expect from any good professional person, and that was really all that counted.

NS: Is there anything unique about these men willing to go into an organization that has such a large number of women?

TB: I think, in a way, they realized that when we talk about consumership; the American woman has been identified as the principal marketer, the gatekeeper—as it were—to many of the items that furnish the household. If you respect the consumer as an individual, then you automatically would respect the person you're talking about and dealing with. It's kind of the difference we see with much of the business community in their arrogance to the consumer. I'm trying to think of the word which means contempt for the individuals as consumers. To me, this has been reflected so much from the business side.

I once heard a fellow speak about consumerism. He was a business person. I cannot recall right off the top of my head what his affiliation was, but it was a well known concern. He equated consumerism with communism. That's just the way it was. This was a movement that was out to do business in, just as communism would have been. That's just the way it came out. As I recall, this was a Home Economics Association meeting in Connecticut. You could see a lot of women sitting there shaking their head up and down. They were agreeing with it. It was not an ACCI meeting, it was another group which I have commented on earlier. I think that's a kind of distinction between the individuals that go into the consumer field, but it's appreciation for the individual in our society, really.

NS: Was there a status hierarchy in the ACCI?

TB: I don't believe I really could say that there was. Naturally, your leaders are accorded respect at the time, not overwhelmingly, but people do recognize who the president is and vice

president and the officers of the organization, and they accord them respect. Whether that's a status hierarchy or not, I don't know. I don't think it really does.

NS: What about secondary school teachers in the organization?

TB: In the years that I attended—I can't speak for the last few which I have not been able to attend—I don't think they were accorded any less respect than the other members. My recollection is that it was kind of a temporary involvement in the annual meeting. Of course, they were accorded the same membership benefits as anyone else. It was just that, you go to meetings regularly and you get to know your colleagues. When some of those people would be able to attend in Washington, DC, but not necessarily when it was in St. Louis or wherever, that's where you start losing some of those contacts, I think.

NS: Do you remember how it was that the *Consumer Forum* came to be created?

TB: The basic idea there—and I don't remember specifically the discussion—it may have been a replacement for the earlier pamphlets. The idea behind its establishment was to provide them with ideas on ways of presenting consumer education topics. I want to say that, it seems to me, some of the first editors of that *Forum* were identified as people from high school ranks, if I'm not mistaken.

NS: The first editor was Suzanne Matsen.

TB: She was on our board of directors at that time, too.

NS: I asked the question about whose needs ACCI was meeting and it seemed to you that the primary function was the consumer educator in the academic world and the university and college level. What kind of needs was ACCI meeting for those in the newly-emerging government consumer positions, working with the government? There were people in the business community, too.

TB: I don't know that we had any specific objectives that we were attempting specifically to meet the needs of that group, other than through the conference to explore the issues; and hopefully, help them to understand better the parameters and the problems associated with some of the issues. Of course, the *Journal* and its coverage, in the same way, of some of the important issues that people were writing about. I don't recall any discussion, specifically, that was concerned about meeting the needs of either one of those groups.

NS: What about minorities?

TB: I don't think that there was ever any real concern there—not an expressed concern that we needed to be doing such and such for minorities.

NS: You were talking about the membership rates. Was there a concern that you were raising the rates such that people perhaps of lower income might not be able to afford them?

TB: Of course, we were geared to professionals. My feeling is that when you compared our membership dues to other professional organizations, we were ridiculously low. There was some concern about the question as to whether we were a primary professional organization or a secondary. If we were a secondary, then there is the possibility that if you raised the rates too much, you may lose those secondary members. I think that's a chance you have to take.

You have to look at it in terms of the benefits that they're getting. When you start giving them a *Journal* twice a year, plus nine issues of that *Newsletter*, along with the two or three of the *Forum*, you're talking about a package of benefits plus an annual meeting that they can attend at which the registration fee was usually far below that which you would pay to most other

professional meetings. All in all, it was a package of benefits that I thought was really an excellent buy, and I think it even is today—even with the price of the membership that it's had to go to.

NS: You mentioned Florence Rice before, from the Harlem Consumer Council. Did she—or do you remember any others—express concern that there weren't more minority members in the organization?

TB: No, I don't. When I've attended, there were very few minority persons that attended the annual meetings. I don't know what the makeup of the organization is relative to minorities, but just off the top of my head, I don't think that there were many minority people—particularly black Americans—that are associated with the ACCI. We've had several students; in fact, our undergraduate majors in the consumer field are predominantly black, which is rather interesting.

NS: This is at SIU?

TB: Yes. I can't say exactly what the numbers are, but of the 20 or 25 persons that we have majoring in our program area, if it isn't predominantly black, it's about 50-50. Our graduate enrollment has been way down for the last few years, but in the past, we have had several Master's degree students who were black. I have run across some of them at the ACCI meetings. Whether they've continued to stay in the field, I don't know. We haven't maintained a contact with them to know just where they are or what they're doing. I'm sure other schools have graduated some of these individuals, also. There are not many of them going on for PhDs and getting—what we consider—the full credentials of the profession to stay in university settings, anyhow.

NS: That does raise the question of whether ACCI should be servicing, or should have been servicing, those kinds of people.

TB: I don't know that their needs would have been any different than the rest of us in terms of professional orientation.

NS: Do you think that the content and appeal of the *Journal* grew in the fashion that you had predicted from the beginning?

TB: I'm not sure what my thoughts were in regard to it. I've been on the editorial board now for the past five or six years and get one or two articles to review a year. I think content, again, reflects the fact that there are not resources available for consumer research.

NS: Is it more quantitative than you would have anticipated at the beginning? I mean, is it too statistical and too mathematical?

TB: I do not feel that it is.

NS: Did you expect, when it started, that the *Journal* would have concerned itself more with timely political events with regard to consumer affairs?

TB: No, I would have thought it would be mainly a research-reporting vehicle. I could refine that to say that I saw it basically as a research-reporting vehicle and as an outlet for our researchers and others. There is the section on comments, etc. It isn't strictly research, but there's room in there for other types of articles, viewpoints, etc. I think that that's the way I would have visualized it, as being the appropriate document for the organization.

NS: As somebody who's been on the editorial board, has functioned as a teacher in the classroom, do you feel that the *Journal* has served the classroom?

TB: Occasionally. I have not used it a great deal. I've used it in classroom assignments and in various ways from time to time, but not on a regular basis. I guess I feel that its major role—and of course it comes up to play in that regard—is to give the professional audience greater depth about some topics that the researchers are looking into and different ways of thinking about something.

NS: Do you think that the *Journal* has been as interdisciplinary as the consumer movement is?

TB: I think it reflects that interdisciplinarianism.

NS: One of the things that struck me, going to the convention and not being a member before this time, is that currently there aren't too many sociologists or political scientists or historians—people from other disciplines outside economics and home economics—in the organization. I'm wondering if that has been a concern to ACCI in the sense that it might be broader?

TB: I do not recall having heard expressions of that. I think that it's accounted for in some way in that I would identify the consumer field as an applied area as opposed to your so-called basic—or, as some people would say, "pure"—areas of sociology, economics, political science, etc., which are generally housed within the college of liberal arts and sciences, or whatever.

I think that a lot of it simply reflects the fact that those people are not aware of the consumer field as an applied interdisciplinary field of study. In fact, I have, on a couple of occasions, had people from the economics area suggest that consumer economics was not even economics and that they would prefer to not use the term family economics or consumer economics. I think that's a very narrow view, but it reflects how little they know about the field. You can't get sociologists or political scientists and those people interested in it if they're not even aware, basically, that it exists.

NS: Is the *Journal* read by economists?

TB: I would be surprised if it is to any degree.

NS: Do you think that one of the original missions of the *Journal* would have been—when you were voting for it back in 1966 and '67, and proposing it—to give the profession of consumer economics some kind of theoretical respectability in the profession of economics generally?

TB: It would be nice if it could happen that way, but I don't really think that it's a very practical point of view. Unfortunately, I don't think these people are really willing to consider ideas other than what they've dealt with—gross national product, indifference curves, etc.

NS: Thorstein Veblen was president of the AHEA, belatedly, but he was at one point.

TB: He was a very unique individual. On the other hand, we've got our first speaker of the Colston Warne Lecture Series—Kenneth Boulding, the eminent economist and social scientist. The last time I heard about him, he was at Boulder, Colorado. He was selected as the first Colston Warne speaker because Colston Warne was an admirer of his, and he is just a very excellent social scientist and an eminent economist. He, too, was president of the American Economics Association. Those individuals are rare that would understand and have an appreciation. Most of the time, the economists talk to themselves, as sociologists and political scientists do. Unless they get out and talk with some people that are in an applied area, such as we are, they're not even aware of what's happening, so to speak.

I'm not sure just exactly what it reflects. For instance, I would have thought that more people—maybe historians such as yourself—would have been interested in the consumer

movement, or political scientists would have been interested in the activities of this movement as something to study and look into. We have virtually no evidence of that interest. The only thing you can surmise is that their interests lie elsewhere and their priorities lie elsewhere and studying Nixon or Carter or whoever or the issues like the ERA and some of those things.

NS: This is a related question. Why wouldn't Ralph Nader have joined ACCI in the years that you were president, 1969-70, the year when Nader was really coming to the forefront as a leader of the consumer movement?

TB: He was primarily an activist and I don't think that he, other than his membership in the American Bar Association and the Consumers Union; I don't know whatever...

NS: Was thought given to trying to rope him in?

TB: No, not that I can ever recall. I was trying to think whether we had him as a speaker at ACCI. I cannot recollect, right offhand, whether he actually appeared on our program. He did, several times, for the Consumer Federation of America, but of course, that's in Washington. He does command a high honorarium. Whether he would have come to ACCI, I don't know. We have not funds to pay honorariums. I don't see it as a role of the association to try to attract individuals like that unless they are attracted to us. If they feel that the organization has something to give them and they can give something to that organization, then that's fine, but I don't see that we would go out, and in essence, try to recruit them.

NS: I've talked to people in ACCI who don't consider themselves part of any consumer movement. They would consider themselves consumer educators. Can you illuminate that distinction for me?

TB: Basically, I would say it's like somebody in political science being a political scientist. Their role at the university is to impart knowledge relative to political science and not feel that they are directing or manipulating or influencing people in terms of what they would do relative to the consumer issues of the day.

I take the opportunity, when it arises, to suggest to students that you ought to do this, or that you might do this or that in terms of exercising some influence. If you think something is wrong, then think about it and try to figure out what you should do about it rather than just talk about problems with life insurance, or the increasing cost of health care and so on. One of the students raised a question with me this semester. We were looking at inflation and the consumer price index and he said, "Well, these costs are getting out of hand. Is anybody doing anything about this?" I said, "Well, not very much. There is some concern here or there, but think about it. What should people be doing?"

This is where you get the opportunity—and, from time to time, I'll interject a little about some of my experiences in one of the consumer associations or something, and in essence, telling them, "Look, you're living here in this country. You need to be involved and rather than just earning a living and going home and opening a can of beer at night and sitting down and watching TV and not getting yourself involved in all that there is to be involved in," which brings me to the point that I mentioned.

There was one thing that I wanted to give as a closing statement. It depends on what else you want to ask. One thing that's bothered me through the years about the consumer movement—and I think clearly back to my days with CFA—it's that nobody, to my knowledge, has ever tried to develop some kind of a grand design. I feel that the CFA in particular, in the days that I was affiliated with it, was largely a reactive organization. They have established some goals, but they all related primarily to legislative goals to get this item of legislation, that item of legislation, and so on, rather than to address the question of what kind of economy or society do we want as a result of this consumer movement.

It seems to me that it's been largely simply a reaction to abuses and to eliminate those abuses without thinking anything further. If we had our druthers, would we move toward a more cooperative society? For instance, I saw some reference here the other day to Huxley's *A Brave New World*. Well, that was a grand design and it's obvious that a lot of people wouldn't accept that. Where is it practical to think that the consumer movement should take us as an American society?

We can think of it relative to the dissemination of information. We can think of it in the way that information is disseminated through the media, and so on, and try to establish some guidelines rather than saying, "Well, that's not right," rather than putting forth, in essence, a positive stance on what direction we would like to go. I've never seen any evidence that that kind of thing is being thought about and it certainly has never come up. I think the people who were in CFA that were directing it and were a bunch of activists—and that's fine—but they largely are reactive in terms of wanting truth in lending to resolve the abuses in that area or automobile safety, or whatever.

NS: Is that something for ACCI to consider?

TB: I'm not sure. I don't know whether it's the role of ACCI to engage in that. I guess it's kind of up to whether ACCI, the membership and the board, to view it as part of the role of the organization.

It kind of comes back to the question you raised a little bit ago, that people say that they're consumer educators and not part of the consumer movement. When I'm talking about this kind of thing, I'm talking more about the consumer movement in terms of what kind of society we want to live in.

NS: Thank you.

TB: You're welcome.