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Interview with Robert Herrmann (Norman Silber)
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Prof. Silber: This is an interview with Professor Robert Herrmann. The interview is taking place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 18, 1983. The interviewer is Norman Silber.

Bob, could you please begin by telling me how it was that you became involved, first with the consumer movement, and then with ACCI specifically?

Prof. Herrmann: I had been trained as an ag economist, but had taken a job in the home economics department at the University of California at Davis and found myself rather ill-prepared for teaching family finance and consumers in the market. I kind of leaped at ACCI as a source of information on a lot of topics that I felt I needed to know more about, and I recently confessed this to some people for the first time because this was my 20th anniversary of my first going to ACCI. The first I went was in 1963 in Washington.

Part of my motivation was that I wanted to get back East to see my family that I hadn't seen for about 7 or 8 months. The program did look interesting. I got there and found the program was very interesting and the organization was something that I wanted to continue to be involved in.

NS: Where did you do graduate work?

RH: At Michigan State University.

NS: Then what? From there to Penn State?

RH: No, to the University of California at Davis, where I was in the home economics department.

NS: Had you published in areas related to the consumer movement prior to joining ACCI?

RH: I was a brand new faculty member. I can't remember how far I was started on any kind of research program beyond my Ph.D. thesis. I don't think I'd gotten anything started at the time I first went because I went in the spring following the fall that I was first employed.

NS: Did somebody contact you?

RH: A brochure came through the mail, and that was about all I knew about it.

NS: This would have been when?

RH: 1963.

NS: Do you remember thinking that a consumer movement was in the air at that time?

RH: I didn't think in those terms at all. I was thinking very much in terms of my own professional development and CCI as a source of help.

NS: What kind of needs did the CCI convention then fill for you?

RH: Partly it was just to see some people and meet some of the people that were in the field and get myself familiar with materials and ideas that I hadn't had any real contact with before. I never had any very useful or appropriate course work, so I found myself quite unprepared for the specific sort of job that I had taken.

NS: Did you find that there was a consumer component to the courses that you were teaching, that the information you were getting at the convention would help you to fill?

RH: I don't recall ever using anything I specifically picked up at CCI. It helped me with matters of emphasis, updating, current issues. It was more subtle than explicit.

NS: Were they strangers to you at that time?

RH: I knew a lot of the names. I thought Arch Troelstrup was going to come in floating on a cloud because that was such an important textbook and such an important name. It was a real experience to see at least a few of these people for the first time.

NS: How was it that you moved from being a member to a member of the executive board?

RH: I was very interested. I don't know whether I would have pursued this quite so quickly myself if I hadn't been encouraged by Father McEwen. Fr. McEwen may have partly tugged me in by the sleeve without my ever having thought about doing this on my own. It was not one of my ambitions or objectives to get involved.

NS: You had thought of yourself as an agricultural economist?

RH: About this time, I left the home economics department at Davis and went back into ag economics at Penn State. I still had a lot of interest in consumer education, consumer protection, and consumer information use. In a sense, ACCI was a little less relevant for me in this new setting, but I was still very interested and very committed to it.

NS: Do you recall when your identification as a consumer educator became as great or greater than your identification as a teacher in home economics or agricultural economics?

RH: My identification as a consumer educator overrode either of those other two. I haven't found some aspects of agricultural economics entirely satisfying. I've been often sort of on the boundaries between ag economics, consumer education, consumer economics, and consumer behavior. Sometimes it just depends on the given day that somebody asks me about what I am as to how I'm likely to respond to the question. There may be no final answer to that question.

NS: In the early and middle sixties, when you were first going to these conventions, if somebody asked you what you did, what would you have been likely to say?

RH: I probably would have said that I was a consumption economist because that was the legitimate, familiar, expected, status-giving title. That was my title from Davis. I wouldn't have put myself forward probably as a home economist.

NS: Did you think, at that time, that consumerism and consumer advocacy and consumer interest would turn into a discipline? That there would be such a thing as a consumer professional?

RH: I always thought it was. It may have been a failure of perception on my part. I thought that there was a consumer economics profession and I regarded it as already in existence. Of course, this may be the particular perspective and viewpoint of a brand new Ph.D., of falling into an area that they are kind of unfamiliar with. If I had been trained more specifically in the area, or if I'd been older, I might not have seen it this way. I've always thought—at least as long as I've been around—that there was sort of a consumer economics discipline.

NS: Did you see yourself as part of a consumer movement?

RH: I tried very much to keep that separate. I thought that was something you could indulge in off hours and that was a sort of a political, social, activism preference, and that it shouldn't have too much to do with what I did professionally.

NS: Could you comment on the effect that you think the consumer movement of the '60s was having on ACCI and on consumer education as you have just described it?

RH: It created a lot of pressure for ACCI to get active, so everybody was active. It was almost not legitimate to be non-active; that suggested a lack of social concern and commitment. The real watershed decisions of the organization were about whether or not they would be active. I think that Dick Morse would have to be one of the leading exponents of the activist stance. He was terribly disappointed that he couldn't get the organization to go along with that. They were basically an organization of academics and professionals and didn't feel very comfortable with this.

It was Fr. McEwen that really decided to take the organization and turn it into a truly professional organization. They were floating around in a little bit of a limbo because they were looking for a familiar model.

You could be an activist organization or you could be a service organization—which is in some ways what they started out with, with the pamphlets—or you could be a professional organization. They were really sort of all three of those and yet none of them. Fr. McEwen took the thing up and firmly just pushed it into this one particular form and I think it was a critical turning point. That's really one of the most important things that probably happened.

NS: What's your view of how that happened?

RH: I don't know. He had the experience of creating the Catholic Economic Association. I heard him talk about what he did with ACCI as being very parallel to the Catholic Economic Association. He saw sort of a parallel role for the two with focus on social justice and social issues.

I was sort of on the periphery as an observer, and some of the time, I was a member of the board. We were all sold on it and I don't think there was much questioning of it. Most of us felt very comfortable with it. The pamphlet thing clearly hadn't worked out very well and the thing we were doing well was running these annual conferences and providing a place for people to get together and talk to each other.

NS: Do you remember any of the discussions that may have, even obliquely, dealt with this issue?

RH: The only thing I remember must have been a business meeting or something that must have been in '63 or '64. There was an impassioned plea by Dick Morse to take positions on certain issues and a real reluctance on the part of the membership to do it. I think it was a real disappointment to him.

NS: Do you remember your attitude?

RH: I remember I felt kind of uncomfortable with it. This wasn't why I wanted to belong to ACCI, and it was something I wanted to express probably in a different way, through a different channel. I was, right along, in with the strong supporters of casting ACCI in sort of a professional association mold.

NS: You joined the board, if my records are right, in 1966.

RH: That sounds about right.

NS: It was in the years between '66 and '68 that several central decisions were made. One would have been to change the name.

RH: Yes, I presided as president at the meeting that that was done.

NS: Can you describe taht meeting?

RH: Yes. It was in Greeley, Colorado, and Fred Waddell was the chairman of the committee that was studying the name change. I hadn't even heard what the report was going to be until Fred made it. We'd all been terribly frustrated with this name change thing and very much wanted to suggest our national scope.

There was some feeling that we ought to try to preserve at least part of the initials and try to maintain whatever identity we had built up previously. That sort of militated toward retaining the "CCI," and the "American" was to suggest our national scope. The "Interest" thing, I think, when Fred brought it out just seemed right and there was very little discussion. It just sounded right to everyone and everyone had been so frustrated in trying to think up anything. We made up our minds that we were going to change, and this just had a good ring to us and there was a minimal discussion. I can't recall if there was any, and it went in.

NS: Do you think the change from "Information" to "Interests" was significant?

RH: It was supposed to suggest our broader scope, moving beyond the previous focus solely on information. Let me comment on something else that I was thinking about here. There continued to be two major preoccupations of the outfit: information and education. ACCI has done less with safety over the years, and I think the educators have not felt technically competent to get into some of those issues.

The issue that's been pecularily neglected in ACCI—and I've commented on this in some things I've written in high school textbooks—is this anti-trust and competition issue. It's incredible how little attention has been paid to that issue over the years within ACCI.

You start looking at differences between ACCI in the consumer movement to the extent to which their agendas have agreed, and this is one of the clear differences. The agenda of ACCI and the agenda of the consumer movement have been rather different. We've been committed to education and information, and a lot of the consumer movement organizations have been committed to anti-trust and competition and product safety.

We've never been very imaginative about teaching about safety. There are ways that you can form generalizations about safety and teach about product safety. Some of the work that David Pittle and Rick Staelin did at Carnegie-Mellon several years ago show how you could formulate generalizations about this. We just have never done anything very good on that. I think it's been kind of lack of imagination.

NS: How do you account for this divergence, given that board members have been leaders in the consumer movement?

RH: Board members have been leaders in part of the consumer movement. They've been quite involved with Consumers Union. Consumers Union is an information organization with quite a bit of commitment to education. There hasn't been anybody mixed up with the organization that ever has done much in the anti-trust area or really in the safety area. Pittle and Staelin did these good things, but they were off in electrical engineering and marketing.

NS: How do you account for the lack of membership from those constituencies, or the failure to recruit from them?

RH: It was two rather different perspectives on what was needed and the fact that Ralph Nader is the Lone Ranger of the consumer movement. He didn't need us. There were occasionally some sarcastic and faintly bitter remarks made about the Naderites because they either seemed to consider us inky-fingered academics or totally wrong in our orientation and in our proposed solutions.

When I was on the Consumers Union board, Nader said that Consumers Union ought to quit spending all this money on consumer education and use it for litigation—something that would really be useful and effective. There was a real difference between the two groups and what was perceived as appropriate solutions.

NS: You were on the boards of Consumers Union and CCI at the same time?

RH: No. I was on Consumers Union from '74-'77. It was well after I had gotten off the CCI board.

NS: You mentioned that there were some sarcastic comments made about Nader.

RH: They were very veiled and were probably never made in general sessions. Everybody sort of vaguely sensed that the more activistic types—ones that were taking a more regulatory legal approach to things—didn't need us, didn't want to be bothered with us, didn't see us even as useful allies. We were just ignored. For example, it would have been obvious to have invited Ralph Nader to speak at ACCI, and I don't think that Ralph Nader has ever spoken at ACCI.

NS: Do you know if the question of inviting him was ever considered?

RH: No. I think that there was a long period when it would have been very appropriate. I was program chairman before he got to be quite such a figure. We have had a lot of other big types, and it's really kind of remarkable.

One of the problems was that even trying to make contact with the Nader organization was so difficult, even trying to get an address to write if you wanted information or something like that. It was extremely difficult, and they were kind of incommunicado. The stuff would be coming out, but if you ever wanted to send anything back in or put an inquiry in, it was very difficult to get a phone number or address or anything.

NS: Do you think there was any kind of a generation gap involved here?

RH: There might have been some. The leadership of ACCI and CCI was a little bit older. At the time, I was probably the first of a new generation of ACCI presidents. I got thrown into that position a little more quickly than I'd anticipated. I kind of came a little bit ill-prepared—as you can imagine—on the board in '66 and becoming president in '68.

Ray Heimerl was supposed to succeed to the presidency after being vice president and decided that he couldn't do this (and didn't want to do it), and stepped out. We had sort of a lock-step succession. You would start on the board, then would become treasurer, then become vice-president, and then become president. It was a kind of ritual routine which doesn't exist any more. I would have been in line to be moved up maybe a year later, which still would have been rather rapidly, but Heimerl stepped out of the succession and also really threw me into the presidency a little bit too quickly. I was probably 20 years younger than most of the previous presidents, which is quite something. There was a little change there.

I think this was part of it. It was a different view of what should be done and it was a view of what we could do; also, what was appropriate for us and the setting that we were in, and the way we could contribute most effectively, perhaps in thinking about comparative advantage and things like this.

NS: Comparative advantage?

RH: We were researchers and academics and presumably could analyze these issues and perhaps supply some useful information for the activists. We weren't in a position to be activists. We would try to make a contribution in this other way that we were better suited to. I think this is the reason for some of the resentment. The activists probably weren't very interested in anything we had to say.

NS: What would have led you to believe that?

RH: Just the fact that a lot of their stuff developed within their own closed system. Most of them didn't necessarily even perceive it in a way that most of us probably consider scholarly. A lot of times it was either journalistic or out of more of a legal research tradition, and most of us who were trained in the social sciences didn't regard any of the stuff they did as research. It was kind of polemic.

NS: How did you react to *Unsafe at Any Speed*?

RH: I didn't know very much about it. It was quite a while before I saw it. I think it was 1963 or late '64. By that time, I had changed to Penn State and I was trying to get myself started in ag economics. I remember being very interested, but I didn't pick up on some of this right away. At this time, I was very involved in trying to get myself ready to teach consumer behavior. It wasn't enough to learn how to teach consumer economics after not having been prepared for it—there I was trying to get ready to teach consumer behavior, which was kind of a rudimentary field at the time, and not being very well prepared for that either. That field was very thin at the time, just very thin. There were no textbooks.

NS: When you became president in '68, did you plan the program the year before?

RH: I did the program at Minneapolis in '67. It was a little more economic in focus—given my perspective on the world—than some of the other ones are. It's more like Jean Kinsey had for this year. It may become a self-serving comment, because I think the program this year is awfully good. I would be proud to compare what I did 18 years ago or so to this one. We did get some real economic analysis on the program, which had not typically been characteristic of a lot of programs. You wouldn't involve economists, *per se*. Often, there were consumer educators or perhaps consumer economists.

NS: Was there a policy emphasis to your program?

RH: Yes, there was kind of. I recruited a couple people out of my own department—my head who had done an interesting piece on research needs in the family and home economics area which essentially came out as sort of a research policy piece. That was from M.E. John. Another member of our faculty, George Brandow, had been the executive director of National Food and Marketing Commission. "The Use of Computers in Family Budget Counseling" was a real canned thing that just seems incredibly naive now. It seemed a little naive then because it was comparisons of family budgets to the BLS averages for the Pittsburgh area or something like that. It was kind of a comparative tool, so you could compare yourself to the average. There was one on "Cost and Benefits of Pesticide Use" that was really a rather sophisticated discussion of that, particularly for the time, by Chuck Headley from Missouri.

NS: Was that related to the Rachel Carson book and developments of two or three years earlier?

RH: Yes. I think I was fairly aware of that. I was also motivated by the dilemma that was being discussed then about the higher food costs vs. the safety and risks issue that was the focus of a lot of that at the time.

NS: Do you recall, as president, what you thought the constituencies in your organizaiton were?

RH: I saw it very much as a professional organization. I was probably preoccupied with the college level people and we were trying to reach out a bit to some other professionals in government and so on, but didn't see that real broadly. We had sort of a vague sense that we ought to try to help secondary school teachers but nobody quite knew how to do that. I don't think we do yet. Nobody has figured that one out completely.

About this time, or soon threafter, was about the time that Consumers Union told us that the annual grants were going to stop. We could have this $15,000 development money and that was going to be it, and goodbye and good luck. I'd been in consumer behavior long enough so that I thought, really, this is a marketing issue and this organization has got to be marketed. What is it that we're marketing? What is this organization?

I had a long discussion with a friend who was in college public relations about what we really were, what we really had to offer. My conclusion—I think it had a lot of influence on the effort and what Brenda Dervin did ultimately—was that the ACCI was really a channel for communication among professionals. We ought to find ways to do this and facilitate it with our conference or *Journal*, etc. This was really a role. It didn't inov!ve a lot of outreach and it didn't involve very much activism. It was, in the long run, a contribution to the professional development of the people in the outfit who needed help, and I think, still do. They were trying to cover a lot of territory. A lot of them, like myself, were not necessarily trained or prepared in the area or with issues that are possibly changing.

NS: Can you remember how you defined the sub-groups in the membership at that time?

RH: I don't guess I was conscious of any sub-groups. There weren't very many business people coming and there were just a handful (maybe less than a handful), so we were never very conscious of them as a group. There were never more than a small number of business people and they didn't seem to hang together.

The only thing that made them different was that they had expense accounts [laughter] and would sometimes take people out to dinner and seemed to live it up and enjoy themselves rather more than anybody else. That was the only thing that seemed the most different about them—that they seemed to have more *joie de vivre*, and a higher lifestyle than most of the rest of us. Their behavior was sort of viewed with mixed envy and suspicion at the meetings. I don't remember this idea about there being different groups or constituencies. I became more aware of that and the problems of serving the secondary school teachers. I think we sort of naively thought that the secondary school teachers would be interested in the *Journal* early on. The fact was that early on, the *Journal* was at a lot lower level than it is now. I tried very hard as *Journal* editor to limit the level of analysis to tabular analysis. Maybe if you have statistical tests, you could have chi square tests. If you had things like regression, you'd make it very easy to interpret in the text what was going on without having to understand the statistical tables. It was a naive hope.

I can remember, for example, of having problems within the organization about this. This is kind of a divergence of interest. Somebody was talking about regression analysis of spending patterns, and some of the extension agents in the back of the auditorium started to giggle. There was this wave of giggles from the back rows as this one speaker went on and on about the coefficient of this and that, and it certainly exemplifies some of the problems in the organization.

It has become an unresolved problem right now about the researchers or the people who are preoccupied with research vs. the educators. I don't mean to say vs., because it isn't that kind of opposition, but it is just a focus. Then there's the third group, the secondary school teachers, who have yet another set of concerns.

NS: The *Journal* was set up at the time you were president, right?

RH: Or right about then.

NS: The issue came up in 1967.

RH: The decisions were all made and the thing was all rolling then, and we're all very proud of it. The thing was really rolling already, and that wasn't a big focus of mine.

NS: You weren't making major policy decisions about the *Journal* during your term?

RH: As president, no.

NS: Were you ever frightened that having just committed a large part of the budget to the *Journal* and being told that the Consumers Union grant was about to run out, that really the organization might face dire financial problems?

RH: We were always pretty optimistic about it. We thought that there must be an awful lot of other people out there that were potentially recruitable, that what we had was kind of a communication problem. The fact that Brenda was able to increase the membership as she did, we were right.

Arch Troelstrup, maybe, brought the word back. Arch was kind of a liaison between the Consumers Union board and the ACCI board. It was a very important function for a while, there. We had to be somewhat sensitive to the signals from Consumers Union about what we could and should be doing, without saying that they were ever dictating policy or anything. There was always a concern about it because we were on a year-to-year basis.

They weren't dictating or anything, but we were always very cautious about it. I remember a kind of a sinking feeling. I think everybody felt kind of challenged (maybe not excited, but a kind of challenge) by that offer. I don't think we ever had any big doubts that we could pull it off.

NS: Were you receiving feedback about the *Journal* in the early couple of issues?

RH: I was on the ad hoc editorial board, but I wasn't very involved. I don't recall much feedback on it. This probably is typical because I never got much feedback on it as editor, either. There doesn't seem to be much comment about it. I think maybe authors get comments about articles but the editor doesn't get comment about it.

NS: Do you remember thinking that the *Journal* would serve primarily the research-centered portion of the community?

RH: We really thought that it would serve everybody and that it would be, perhaps, at a level that would make it simple for secondary school teachers.

It was probably, in retrospect, kind of naive. They were so time-pressed. A lot of the articles turned out to be so narrowly focused and later so research-focused that they became less and less appropriate. I think that's probably true. I'm looking through here. Here's a tabular thing with some ranking, etc.

Early on, a lot of these were papers that had been given at the annual conference and they were selected by the editor for publication. I thought it was a pain in the ass that the *Journal* editor had to make a decision about whether or not he wanted the paper or whether it was going to go into *Proceedings*, but the decision had to be made very quickly, and this kind of held up the *Proceedings*.

I finally said that I couldn't stand that any more, and that the *Proceedings* volume should go ahead with everything that anybody wanted to put in that they contributed. I would review separately, at our leisure, and insist on such changes as we thought necessary for anybody that wanted to publish in the *Journal*, and there would be two independent publications. There would be some risk of duplication, but we needed the time to polish and review systematically.

NS: That would have been 1977, when you became editor?

RH: Sometime after '77. We finally broke loose, broke the two publications completely apart. Part of that was probably the increasing complexity of the articles. You had to have more time to look at them. You just couldn't read through. Probably what happened is that we may have been right that this would be fairly useful for secondary school teachers, because I think probably earlier on it was, or at least more nearly than it is now.

NS: That really does raise the issue of how you perceive the evolution of the *Journal*.

RH: That's interesting, because I hadn't ever really thought about that. Early on, it was very much tied to the conference. That was the main generator of a lot of the stuff early on. A lot if was very non-quantitative. I think that probably, about the time that Joe Uhl took it, it started to be more quantitative in content. This is probably not too surprising, given Joe's training in ag. ec., and ag. ec. is just inherently kind of a quantitative area.

I think Joe was very comfortable with that, very ready for it. There were some new younger researchers coming on stream, and some new names, and we were kind of ready for them, and Joe was ready for them. Then the *Journal* started to become more quantitative.

As I told you earlier, my concern was about keeping it readable. Some of the articles inevitably have gotten more narrowly focused and more complicated. As I'm looking at this: Leland Gordon, *Some Current Issues in Consumer Economics*, really a broad ranging kind of thing; Ed Metzen—I guess this was his doctoral dissertation—*The Importance of Consumer Competencies for Women*, quantitative but not complex, statistically.

NS: Did the timeliness problem bother you at all?

RH: Yes. It bothered us a lot, especially early because of all the activism stuff. We felt some real obligation to have research commentary on current issues. Finally, we gave up worrying about that because we realized it just wasn't possible to do scholarly resarch quick enough to have it come to bear on activist issues.

This is like an experience I had one time. I went down to see people at the Office of Consumer Affairs on the White House staff. I was asking about what research needs they had. They said we have a hearing next week and we really need such and so. There's no way that an academic can produce an academic document for next week's hearing. They had something that we needed in maybe a couple of months was the other suggestion.

NS: You mean you were thinking about an intermediate publication between the *Newsletter* and the *Journal*?

RH: No. I don't think we ever did. This was out of planning my own research program. I think they decided we were hopeless, and we decided that we probably, as researchers, could never really meet their needs. I think there was some misunderstanding and erroneous expectations on both sides.

NS: Did you ever think about perhaps including scholarly research about timely issues in the *Newsletter*?

RH: I think not. Stewart Lee had the *Newsletter* and everybody was so pleased with it in the form that it was in and liked the bibliographical content so much that we were very grateful to Stewart and didn't want to tamper with it too much, and deferred to him on it for content. There was a period there where it was expanded, I think, from about 4 pages to about 6.

NS: And the number of issues per year increased.

RH: Yes. The number of issues was increased. That was another thing. I can't remember all the timing. Again, that was sort of more of the same rather than striking off in sharply different directions.

NS: Before the *Journal* was created, did you feel the need as a young faculty member for a place to publish which accommodated the peculiar interests of consumer professionals?

RH: Probably, somewhat. I didn't feel entirely comfortable with publishing in publications like the *Journal of Home Economics*. Another thing I'd done was a bankruptcy study. It was sort of an odd thing to have, but they took it for the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, so that was, again, family sociology.

I did some food spending-related things. That was appropriate enough for the *Agricultural Economics Journal*. There was a real problem there, about where this stuff could go and there's still a bit of a problem about where things can go if they don't go in *JCA*.

NS: You published something called *The Consumer Movement in Historical Perspective* in 1968?

RH: Yes. I think it must have been about then.

NS: It was an agricultural monograph at Penn State?

RH: Yes. It came out of the ag. econ. and rural sociology department.

NS: Should that have gone into *JCA*?

RH: It was too long, for one thing. It could well have gone; as a matter of fact, it probably should have. It was like 35 pages of typed script. It was clearly too long. I don't know if I ever even thought of that or boiling it down. It may have been a lack of professional imagination.

NS: This development of consumer professionalism as a career; it seems that the creation of the *Journal* seems to be an important aspect to the creation of a discipline in some ways.

RH: Yes. I would completely agree. It's sort of like demand creates the supply, ultimately.

NS: You handled the book reviews for a while, didn't you?

RH: Early on when Gordon was editing. I think I even volunteered myself to do that. I thought that we needed a book review section, so I said I would do it.

NS: How did you decide what fit in and what didn't?

RH: There wasn't all that much to choose from. You kind of would take everything that seemed sort of related. My big headache was what to do about textbook reviews. Textbook reviews basically are kind of deadly. It becomes a little easier if you can do a comparison of several.

That becomes a little bit more possible, but even those are difficult. It requires a certain amount of experience and some kind of explicit evaluating criteria before you can do a very good job of textbook reviews. That was really frustrating. There's a need for those, but we never could bring it off.

NS: Did you ever have any indication of whether a bad review in the *Journal* provoked a negative sale of the book, or a positive review provoked a positive sale?

RH: I don't think we ever had any feel for that. It's very hard to assess. In some ways, it's the same problem as with the *Journal* itself.

NS: Were there any indices?

RH: I have been interested in the question about what is the impact of the *Journal*. I got interested after I passed the *Journal* on to Monty Friedman, to try to figure out a way to assess it. I thought I had some ideas. The *Social Science Citation Index* has done some cross-indexing of what's referenced where.

You can figure out from that, to what extent the references to the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* show up in the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* itself, how many references to the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* show up in the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Home Economics*, etc., and so you get this cross-referencing and find where we're really having an impact. Then, you could do some other things like how many requests for permissions were there to the University of Wisconsin Press. I'm very sorry that I haven't had a chance to follow through on this.

NS: One of the things that I'm speculating about is that when you have a journal and it's a periodical that comes out regularly, libraries buy it. The pamphlet series was sporadic. There were no institutional subscriptions to the pamphlet series.

RH: I guess the *Newsletter* was sort of an ephemeral piece that probably got thrown away.

NS: I notice that in the latest membership tally, there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 600 library subscriptions, which is a substantial chunk of membership.

RH: This was another thing that I was involved in because I was just the immediate past president when we were trying to work on development. I got very aware of libraries as a very attractive kind of subscriber because they'd be long-term. Once a library starts a serial, they don't want to discontinue it. It should be very steady, and we were having some trouble with turnover. Also, in a more altruistic approach, it's a good idea to get the *Journal* into libraries because this makes it accessible to large numbers of people and permanently available. I talked to friends at the Penn State library about how libraries decided on acquisitions and we spent some real effort on this.

NS: Approximately when would this be? Was this while you were president?

RH: This must have been about 1969 or so. I found that one of the things that was very important is, is it indexed? We were trying to do everything we could to get it indexed, and it was one of my real disappointments that we never made it into the *Index of Economic Literature*. I pressed Gordon about that, and something happened and we didn't quite make it when he was editor. I don't know whether Joe Uhl ever tried it. I tried it and we got turned down, and I was just furious about it. It was sort of a "we don't have room" kind of thing. They seemed to have room for the *Katmandu Economic Journal* and for things they had picked up 10 or 15 years before, but they didn't have room for anything new. I really think the content of the *Journal* had a lot more economics than some other things they had like the *Journal of Consumer Research*, which is a sociological/psychological applications journal.

NS: Could you comment on the status of consumer economics in the economic profession?

RH: There have really been some fine consumer economists, like Ferber, of tremendous prestige. People like Jim Morgan, George Katona, a psychological economist. These would be some of the really preeminent people in the consumer economic community.

It's kind of a disappointment that a lot of these people have never been really involved in ACCI to any significant extent. It's been people who were more teaching-focused rather than research-focused. At least back a ways, I think there are some very research-focused people who have been active in the organization now, but a lot of the preeminent consumer consumption economists didn't have any real links to ACCI.

They were much more oriented toward the economics profession *per se*. I don't think ACCI ever saw itself as a sort of an applied branch of economics. They never quite defined themselves that way. That would be the way ag economists would define themselves.

Of course, this is part of the continuing debate about the whole discipline. I remember being in on a review at a university and they said they were an "applied discipline," and I kind of looked at the person that had made this comment and said, "Applied what?" [laughter]. They were really very vague about the parent-discipline that they were going to link to and I really think—this is personal prejudice here—that you've got to peg to some parent-discipline particularly for students' education. I wouldn't necessarily insist on that for ACCI, having to decide that they were an applied economics organization.

NS: Did ACCI, in your experience, try to raise the visibility of consumer interests and consumer information in disciplines like sociology or history or anthropology or political science?

RH: Not anything very systematic at all. I don't think we had much effect beyond home economics and business education. There have always been a few ag economists that have been important in ACCI. I'm not the only one. There's Joe Uhl, Marguerite Burk and some others, and more recently, Jean Kinsey. That's been possible.

NS: Were you involved in the controversy about the associate membership for business?

RH: No. Only as a spectator at the annual meeting. I remember being tremendously disappointed, though, when they decided they just had to brush off the *Changing Times* contribution for the research award that had been given initially with such good spirit and so generously and with a fair amount of altruism. They wanted to identify good stuff. They did expect to use it, but I think they weren't going to necessarily preclude anyone else from using it.

NS: My records have very little about the award.

RH: I think I was the one who suggested that originally. I got stuck with implementing it too.

NS: How did it happen?

RH: I had decided that we really needed some way to encourage good research in the area, encourage good young people, and get recognition for good younger people to help them with tenure, career start, and all that stuff. A research award would really be kind of a cheap way to do this in a sense of monetary outlay. It might have cost a lot in time, but it wouldn't cost us much financially.

NS: When was this?

RH: Oh, golly, it must have been around 1970 or so.

NS: Maybe this will help.

RH: I guess I really can't peg it.

NS: Is it 1969, 1970, or 1971?

RH: I can't remember. I sort of have some link back to somehow remember having suggested this maybe about 1965 in Berkeley, because I helped with local arrangements there.

NS: You didn't have *Changing Times* in mind?

RH: No. That came along sort of coincidentally with the proposal and I don't know whether they helped fund it initially. There wasn't quite so much money involved early on, I don't believe. If somebody probably wanted to trace that, they would probably have to look at the *Newsletter*.

NS: I have the records; I found references in the board minutes.

RH: That awards thing turned out to be easier to conceive than to deliver on. I really found it kind of difficult to judge in the awards competition.

NS: *Changing Times*, at that time, didn't take advertising, did it?

RH: That made it easier, made us a little more comfortable with it.

NS: Was there some concern about a joint research award?

RH: I can't remember how much attention we paid to the fact that they did this. I don't think it was a joint research award. I think it was all in the CCI name. I think there was discussion that *Changing Times* helped fund it, but I don't think it was ever indicated in solicitations or submissions, anything like that. It was indicated more informally, maybe at the time of presentation, or other times.

NS: Can you speculate on the motive of *Changing Times* in donating the money?

RH: It was to encourage research and to help them a little to identify pieces that would be adaptable to their magazine. They were hoping for rather applied pieces, and this is the same kind of thing that the classroom teachers would be looking for. We never got much of anything like that. We got some good pieces of research, but they were not things that lent themselves very well to adaptation for the classroom. There were a few, but I don't think *Changing Times* got anything much out of it; they weren't the kind of thing that they might have hoped for.

NS: Is the award still given?

RH: I kind of got to wondering about that. I'm just not sure. I think so. Somebody was asking me about it. I hadn't heard any discussion about it. It's a burdensome and kind of time-consuming thing to review, to get through these, read all of them, and try to judge them. There weren't a whole lot of submissions, but it is something you feel like you've got to be careful with.

NS: Is it still funded by *Changing Times*?

RH: No. That was part of purifying ourselves, along with putting business people in associate membership status. We couldn't even take this money from *Changing Times* because it was from a corporate source.

NS: Do you remember when that came to a head?

RH: Five to seven years ago. I thought it was a big mistake. I can see a lot of occasions that you might not want to take corporate money for, but after having seen the way that had worked and the fact that it had become sort of a tradition, I just didn't see a problem with it. I was embarrassed because I'd been very involved with the whole thing, that *Changing Times* was almost brushed off.

NS: Did a letter go out to *Changing Times*?

RH: I suppose so.

NS: Did you fight against that?

RH: I don't know that I fought very hard. There seemed to be a lot of passionate feeling in the meeting that year and a real willingness to really draw the line, and you draw it all the way across the board. I don't think I even said anything. I thought it would have been futile, I guess.

NS: What is your view of the evolving relationship between ACCI and the business community?

RH: It stayed about the same. I don't think it's really evolved at all. There's kind of been a continuing strain and business people have a hard time at these meetings. They're not always received as politely as they could be and they're not always given fair credit for good intentions. Sometimes their intentions may be good, but there are some that are ill-informed. Sometimes they're not given credit for good intentions. There are some undertones, often, of business-baiting and I don't think that has changed much over 20 years.

NS: Do you think that this relationship has been adversarial? How would you characterize it?

RH: The business presence here has changed over the years. There are people that may come for a few years and then not come anymore. Sears had a representative that came—Terry Finlayson—a number of years in a row. Then a woman from the pharmaceutical manufacturers came a number of years. Grolier had someone that came a number of years in a row. A lot of the other actors have sort of changed. I don't know that it ever hardened or formed into a real adversarial thing. You had to have some sides. A lot of times it would depend on the issue about where these various businesses were. They wouldn't necessarily all be allied on a particular issue, either, with these business reps that would come. I don't think they would necessarily caucus or anything like that. I don't think they necessarily saw themselves as a group.

NS: What impact do you think that the presence of the business constituency has had on the agenda of the organization?

RH: Minimal.

NS: What about the presence of representatives from government to consumer organizations?

RH: There never have been very many of them. They have been mostly speakers. I can't recall that anybody has ever been on the board. The fact that Colien Hefferan is going to be the program chairman for next year is sort of a first. I can't remember anybody. Marguerite Burk, for some of these times, might have been with government. She was in and out of USDA, but there's really been minimal government involvement.

NS: Do you feel that the objectives and goals of ACCI today are the same as they were when you first joined the organization?

RH: When I first came on board they were still in the pamphlet era. I think they really thought that the academics that were in the organization could write pamphlets that would be interesting and useful to the public. They found out they couldn't, and they found the editorial help to really translate this academic language into something that might be readable was too expensive, beyond the resources of the organization.

They also found a real distribution problem. It was expensive and complicated. They have had some real marketing and distribution problems. They always, vaguely, thought of themselves on the model of public affairs pamphlets, but this was just too tricky and too difficult and was never quite pulled off. The pamphlet series kind of petered out.

There hadn't been much coming out about the time I came in. They were looking for a different role. Not being in the inner councils, etc., I was not thoroughly aware of what was going on. I think there was an openness to other roles. There was this pressing for activism on one hand, and then there was pressing for a professional organization on the other, and the professional organization was the thing that most people felt comfortable with. There were clearly some people that didn't feel comfortable.

NS: Is that what you felt comfortable with?

RH: Yes. I very definitely did. I think that Fr. McEwen identified a couple of people as sort of prote'ge's, and as I said, sort of pulled us in by the sleeve. I guess I was one of those, and I'm sure that partly the recruitment was due to the fact that I agreed with his views and partly had to do with the force of his personality.

I think there was a twinge that the secondary teachers were getting very concerned and uncomfortable with what was going on in the organization. It was when the Illinois Consumer Education Association was founded that there was some real concern. I'm a little bit vague about some of the details, but there was a real concern that there was going to be some kind of a break in the organization, that there was going to be a break between the classroom education orientation and the research orientation and that this new teacher organization was going to pull membership out of ACCI and that there was going to be some kind of a split. I can't remember when that was exactly; it must have been around 1970 or so.

NS: Do you remember where it was?

RH: I can't even place it exactly. It might have been in '67 in Minneapolis. I can't quite place it, but I remember there was some real concern about whether there was room enough for two organizations and whether we could stay viable if this group splintered off. We were trying very hard to service them and we weren't doing a very good job probably, but we were very upset at the possibility they might be pulling out.

NS: Do you remember how you tried to resolve or ease the situation?

RH: Yes. I think there were some attempts then to incorporate a little more specifically, education-focused things, sessions on the program, etc.

NS: Is that how the *Consumer Forum* grew?

RH: That was part of it. Sometime in there, the annual conferences went to multiple sessions, and that partly represents a little bit of this. Some of those were more research-oriented and some of them were more practitioner-oriented, and I think that's probably part of it.

If you look back at that thing I ran, it was all general sessions. Part of this was attendance —that you might have 75 or 100 people at the meeting--and the idea of splitting in sub-sessions seemed sort of unnecessary, inappropriate, that kind of thing. So what you'd get would be sort of broad-ranging papers that would be of interest to everybody, but often not research reports. Some of them would be more research-based like the reports that Brandow and Headley did for the '67 meeting that I was chairman for. We would try to put these things in a more general perspective and discuss them almost on a semi-popular, semi-technical level.

NS: What's the most memorable conference you can point to?

RH: In a lot of ways, the Greeley conference was one of the really fine ones. I guess I was kind of excited about it. That was in '69. I was kind of hyped up about it because I gave my presidential address.

We were kind of isolated in a motel, out at the edge of town. There was no place to go, so everybody was very much thrown together at this motel. There was a lot of interaction. A great opportunity to get acquainted, better than we'd had at some other places where it was easier to wander off to town. The meals at that place were really excellent. So, here we were, isolated all together, no chance for people to wander off, great chance to communicate, being very nicely fed and taken care of.

I was sort of all hyped up, tuned to give my presidential address with which I was pleased, and waiting for the birth of our first child—I have to stick this in—who was timed not to interfere with the ACCI conference [laughter]. Probably the only kid I ever heard of whose birth was supposed to be timed not to come later than March or earlier than June. We kind of worked on that the best we could, so we ended up having a May 28 baby [laughter].

That was one of the really great conferences from a personal standpoint, probably as much as anything from a social communication standpoint. The content might be something else. I was very excited about the content of the comments I put together because there were people I really wanted to hear it and respect it. Content-wise, I was really pleased with that.

NS: Do you know if the sex ratio has changed over the years in the organization?

RH: There have always been a great many women. That's a kind of an interesting question. I think the women probably may not have been in the highest leadership positions quite in proportion to their numbers. Part of this is because a lot of them were in extension positions or secondary teaching positions where it wasn't quite so easy or appropriate for them to do it. There has been a real minimum, from my perception, of sexism in the organization. There was a little bit of rumbling and bad feeling and back-talk right at the height of some of the feminist militancy from some of the women that were on the board of directors or associated with the organization.

NS: Do you remember that more concretely?

RH: I don't necessarily want to say names, but there were some real hair-trigger remarks. They were very quick to take offense about innocent remarks. I didn't then—and I still don't—think they were sexist. Some of it had to do with social interaction, too.

I was very proud of a new kid and offered to show pictures. This one woman said, yes, she'd like to see some of them. She said, "Well, I won't offer to show you mine because men are never interested in pictures."

There were some little strains there on that issue. This may show up a little bit in the elections, too. It may be a little bit difficult for male candidates now, with the ballot sent out by mail. In a sense, if it franchises the full range of the membership where we used to elect by voice vote from a single slate at the annual conferences, there may be a pattern (and it's probably not surprising) of women favoring women, and I suspect, men favoring male candidates. I think we're seeing a lot more females on the board and I don't know if we'll be getting more female presidents or not.

NS: That's interesting. I guess there have been more female presidents in the last few years. Do you think that's a consequence of the mail ballot?

RH: It might be. It would be interesting to look back and see. The mail ballot has only been around for three to five years; I can't remember how long. There was some sort of erratic inter-mixture there earlier, but it was probably particularly in relationship to the membership being disproportionately male. There tend to be more females here more recently—many more. It gets you to start thinking.

NS: What have been the factors that have led to advancement in the organization?

RH: I think good performance as committee chairman, and attendance at the meetings. I don't think you necessarily have to be a contributor at the meetings. I don't think that necessarily cuts any ice.

NS: How about publications?

RH: I don't think publications are so important. There are even some people that viewed too much publication or too many papers at the meeting as if you were using the association to your own advantage rather than being concerned about serving. There's a chance that you might be viewed with suspicion if you were too visible in certain ways—a lot of publishing or a lot of conference papers suggested that you, in a sense, were getting more than you were giving.

I've always felt different about that, but I thought that putting together a conference paper was a lot of trouble and that a lot of times it wasn't quite suitable for publication anyway, in a journal. Early on, before the conference papers were refereed, they really didn't count for much professionally. I think, maybe now, they're taken a little more seriously in a promotion and tenure review. I think it's committee chairmanship performance.

There was this kind of lock-step thing, too, that people would come on as a director early on and sort of move on through. Also, if you got too abrasive, rocked the boat too much, raised too many unpopular questions, and there was even one instance where there was an individual that maybe put the needle into some business people a little bit too hard.

NS: Would you care to be a little more specific?

RH: One individual was a bit too barbed in questioning business speakers at the conference. He wasn't renominated to the board because his behavior concerned some of the nominating committee.

Continuation of Interview with Robert Herrmann
State College Pennsylvania
May 10, 1983

NS: Mr. Herrmann, in the last session that we had, we had discussed, and only begun to discuss the question of how the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* affected the professional consumer education and what kinds of steps you can take to try and affect the way in which consumer professionalism was perceived. Would you talk to me a little bit more about that?

RH: Yes. We had several goals for the *Journal* when I was working with Rex Warland as associate editor. I thought it was very important to get a journal that was intellectually and academically respectable, one that would carry appropriate points for young professionals in the battle for promotion and tenure, one that they would be proud to contribute to.

Also, we wanted something that would make a real contribution to the field. So we were always trying to balance multiple goals, particularly the need to try to help young professionals publish, and at the same time hold high standards and publish useful stuff that would have a useful impact.

Warland particularly had urged us on with the philosophy that one of our functions was a tutorial function. We got very involved with trying to do reviews for authors that would provide guidance, particularly to young professionals, on how to do research effectively, how to shape their research results effectively and present them effectively. Rex particularly urged this role of being kind of a training school to the extent that we really could. Partly, you are limited by the expertise of your reviewers and your own expertise and by what you can really do and what you can really contribute. Of course there are always time limitations, too.

NS: Are you saying that you tried consciously to get as many young up-and-coming consumer-oriented economists and home economists and agricultural economists to publish in the magazine?

RH: I think we were particularly solicitous of that group. There were other groups that we were a little less interested in. There were a lot of people out of the marketing departments that had no long-term commitment to consumer education because of their particular career goals. I don't think they even completely understood the function of the *Journal*. They thought that anything with consumer in its title would be appropriate to shovel in our direction, particularly if it had been rejected several places previously.

NS: Can you remember examples of that?

RH: Oh, yes. We had things that we rejected that would show up in the English journal, *Journal of Consumer Studies and Home Economics.* Lots of times you could sense we were getting things that had been tried somewhere else. They had not made it there and were sent to us. We would reject them and they would go on, maybe show up in the English journal or sometimes I would see things show up in the *Journal of Consumer Policy* too, that clicked with them that we didn't want or couldn't use.

NS: This was in the period between 1977 and 1979?

RH: 1977 and 1980, yes.

NS: Did you have any on-the-job training for this?

RH: No, and other than just sort of being interested in writing and publishing and having a little bit of experience with working on a textbook, I really didn't know anything about this particularly. It is sort of flattering to have one's peers trust you with this, particularly when their own welfare and their access to print would be affected. It's a fairly personal decision about whom you're going to trust. It is coming up all over again with a new *Journal* editor selection to replace Monroe Friedman.

NS: Is it your view that you were confined by the previous format of the *Journal* in any way?

RH: Oh, not too much. I think we had a lot of discretion. The thing that really confines any journal editor is what you receive—I've gotten this in conversation with other journal editors, including a colleague here at Penn State, who was editor of *Rural Sociology*—unless you go out and start inviting manuscripts. There are problems with that too, because you get certain obligations to publish once you've invited a submission. You're constrained very much by what you get. You can rework it and reshape it and reject a certain part of it, but ultimately you are governed by what comes in.

NS: Did you consider reshaping the physical form of the magazine?

RH: We did manipulate it a bit. I thought the original design as received was too arty. It looked like a literary magazine. I even had a little bit of an outside reaction to this. There was some question about whether ACCI was, in fact, a non-profit scholarly organization.

Mel Zelenak had given a bunch of ACCI journals to the attorney down at Columbia, and he had taken it home and he came the next day and kind of handed it all back to Zelenak and said, "Gee, this really is a scholarly journal!"

Looking at it superficially, with sort of a very artsy cover and a lot of white spaces as it had been designed originally by the University of Wisconsin Press, it looked more like a literary magazine. I manipulated it a bit and kept a lot of the same look. I did put print on the inside of the back cover as most journals do, rather than having all this elegant—and in a sense—kind of expensive white space. I also did change some things about design, article headings and things like that to get something that looked a little bit more like a scholarly journal.

I can't recall how much had been done with headnotes and abstracts at the beginning of the articles. In the early years, the *Journal* had been nothing like that. This omission added to the arty, carefully designed, rather elegant look, but I think it interfered with the usefulness of the *Journal*. Also, putting in abstracts at the beginning of the article made it look like other journals. Part of this is a real marketing effort.

NS: Do you have a feeling about which were the articles that were published during your tenure that were most influential?

RH: I think there were a couple that were very, very important and I was very proud of. One was the Fred Langrehr article on the effectiveness of consumer education in comparisons of work in Alabama, and I think, Illinois. That legitimized the consumer education and demonstrated its effectiveness in a more solid way than any other article had done.

Another one that I think was really important was the two-part Lynn Phillips article. That caused a lot of headaches. It came in originally as about a 70-80 page manuscript, which is really much too long for a journal, and after a lot of negotiation, we told Phillips it was just impossible. He said it was written especially for the *JCA*. It was obviously important; the flaws in typical evaluation research were examined. Phillips held any number of studies up to criticism and started in each instance with two, three or four examples in some detail in the original manuscript. So I said we have just got to cut everything out except maybe one good example to shorten this. We ultimately came up with a two-part article with maybe 30-40 print pages. That was one of our really great ones.

NS: Did you get a lot of feedback about the article?

RH: No. I never heard very much about it, except maybe from a very few people, but I still feel very good about it.

NS: Do you know if any of the articles were picked up by any of the other wire news services?

RH: I never saw much evidence of that. As a matter of fact, there's a real question about how you even assess how much impact anything has. I had thought about that and I even thought about trying to put together a little journal article on it. I had done some looking at things like *Social Sciences Citation Index* to see where articles got cited. They have some tabulations on that about who cites what. I was a little disappointed how infrequently *JCA* was cited, even in

JCA.

You'd like to think your own authors were finding their own *Journal* useful, but there's an awful lot of outside stuff coming in from marketing faculty and others. Maybe that's good cross-pollination and all that, but I was disappointed. I was also disappointed at how little *JCA* seems to get cited in other journals. Maybe you could argue that it's so unique that it doesn't have a whole lot of carryover. That was a disappointment.

Then the other real disappointment was not ever having to be able to crack indexing in the *Journal of Economic Literature*. I had a little bit of a go round with Perlman, the editor there. The biggest argument against indexing the *JCA* seemed that they were already so full that there wasn't room. And yet, they indexed a lot of things taht had a minimal economic content.

NS: Was there correspondence about this?

RH: Yes. I don't know whether it's still in existence any more. A lot of it was phone calls. It was a disappointment and I was particularly offended by the argument that it was a space problem. It may have been a nice way of brushing us off, but I thought it was a very weak kind of argument.

NS: Did anyone ever suggest to you, or did you ever have any discussion about changing the magazine in any substantial significant way?

RH: I think the one thing I worried about and the one thing that maybe some people fussed at us a little bit was including reports on action programs. Some of the people in the action programs had reports that clearly weren't journal articles and didn't fit in very well in the context of what we had. I'm sorry now that I didn't try to be a little more imaginative about trying to find a place for them. We could have had reports on the successes and failures of some action programs, but the problem was that a lot of them were very descriptive and weren't very analytical. I don't think that another person in an action program would have learned very much from them about how to avoid potential pitfalls or how to do a good action program. They were sort of vague descriptions of a not-particularly useful kind and yet I was concerned about them.

NS: We may have covered this ground in the previous interview, but did you try, with each journal or over the course of the year, to make sure that you served all the constituencies of the organization?

RH: I think we were always conscious that there were a lot of secondary school teachers that might not find some of the contents so useful and so I think we tried to keep that in mind, but again, we were governed by what we got.

One thing that I think that Rex Warland and I did rather successfully was to keep the analytical and statistical levels down. Sometimes you have a tabular presentation of chi-square analysis. We always had that in mind about keeping the level accessible, putting some of the more complex statistical stuff either into footnotes or appendices and trying to keep the main body of the article small.

NS: There is an apparent contradiction between aspirations for a scholarly journal respected by, for example, the American Economic Association and the *Journal of Economic Literature*, and on the other hand, a popular journal accessible to secondary school teachers.

RH: I think we tried very hard to be accessible. I'm not sure that we really ever tried very hard or were very successful at being popular.

One of the other things that we were also very aware of was that there are a lot of people from a lot of different disciplines involved with the consumer area. You couldn't risk a lot of jargon or a lot of statistical stuff. You had to assume an intelligent, educated, interested reader, but not one that would necessarily have a great deal of familiarity with the technical jargon of a particular discipline.

NS: Do you remember what people, either on the board or in the organization, would have lined up on either side of that argument—if there ever was one— if there had been a hypothetical argument? How would you have divided the lines?

RH: I think that most of the board in years past probably would have come down on the more popular side; and more recently, I think, it would come down more on the research side. I think that the whole tone of ACCI has changed to a much more research-oriented organization, and reflects the more sophisticated training of a lot of the younger members.

It's really remarkable to look back at the initial issues in the *Journal*--and I know we've gone over this before—but there's very little statistical analysis. A great deal of stuff in the early journals was really papers that were presented at the meetings and there's very little stuff there. What there is, is very low level. There is a marked contrast to what's in there now. Looking back at it, it really was kind of a literary journal. It was a literary discussion of consumer problems.

NS: Did you ever think about the *Journal* as a focal point for a curricular realignment at universities, such that many universities might have full fledged departments of consumer affairs?

RH: I don't think so. I guess I've always had some problems with the idea of a consumer affairs department and have kind of gotten into rounds with people, particularly attempts to put together multi-disciplinary applied departments. I don't think that unless a field has a particular applied perspective, that it is going to be very rigorous.

I'm very uncomfortable with these applied psychology, applied sociology or applied economics amalgams as approaches to consumer affairs, and I don't think I ever perceived the *Journal* as having any particular role in that.

NS: What about a theoretcial basis, then?

RH: I guess I've always sort of gone to economics, being an economist by training. It had more to offer than other fields, although as I get older, I worry more about that. I don't know that I ever had such august hopes for the *Journal.* I think I was more interested in intellectual and academic respectability, and we weren't trying to manipulate the direction of the field or guide it.

NS: Were there people in the organization that did have some grand design for consumer affairs?

RH: I'm not sure. Maybe if you polled them all, they would say they weren't quite imaginative enough. Interesting, as almost an exception in this industry, is Ron Stampfl. Ron, I think, does kind of think in some of these big picture ways. He's been very interested in some of the possibilities of a new discipline, and held a conference—I guess it was last summer—in Madison.

One of the real problems always has been this problem of critical mass. At any particular school maybe there were three or four dynamic, active people, even at some of the better schools that could have provided some leadership. There were just never quite enough to really get things going.

There is one more thing that might be worth commenting on. There was a particular area that we chose not to publish in the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. I was kind of worried about it, but in the end, I think that my decision was right. There was a lot of work being done on consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction in marketing, who was satisfied and who was dissatisfied, what were they dissatisfied about. A great deal of it was really focused on marketing efforts to deal with dissatisfied consumers. It had really nothing to do with *helping* consumers.

NS: So the criteria that you used was helping consumers?

RH: Helping consumers or something that contributed to consumer policy or something that contributed to consumer education or something that might be used to educate consumers about how to complain more effectively.

None of this research was really going in that direction. It was always focused on how can business deal more effectively with consumer complaints. We published virtually none of that. So here's a whole literature that *JCA* all but ignored. I think it was a good decision because I really don't think that it would have contributed much of anything.

NS: Did you find that it showed up elsewhere?

RH: Oh, yes. It showed up in marketing journals. I think that essentially, it was, it is, a marketing issue and a marketing problem. It was not really a consumer problem.

NS: I don't know if we discussed this, but did you play a role in the creation of the *Consumer Education Forum*?

RH: Not really. I always thought it was a good idea, had big hopes for it. I don't know why it didn't do better than it did.

NS: Did you feel that it met the objectives for its creation?

RH: I always ended up just a little disappointed with it. It never quite did what I wanted. I looked at it in a particular way, since I wasn't teaching the subject matter but more recently have been interested in textbook writing. I was looking for ideas, approaches that could be used in that way. I occasionally would find things, but not as often as you might hope.

NS: The *Forum* seems to be in a state of drift. Is that a correct analysis?

RH: Is it still in existence?

NS: Didn't you know it was still in existence?

RH: No. I thought it had ended about a year or so ago.

NS: Does that impermanence reflect a degree of indecision about what to do about serving the needs of the secondary school teachers who are in ACCI?

RH: Yes, I think it does. I think it probably does reflect a surrender on that whole thing. Maybe we were wrong earlier; we thought we really could serve them, and ending the *Forum* shows the association giving up a little bit. I don't think it was a conscious decision. I think it was an almost unconscious decision, the giving up on the secondary schools.

NS: Who are the people who represent the core of the membership of ACCI today?

RH: I sort of suspect that the active membership is a group of college faculty, probably out of home economics. I think there are a group of other library and corporate subscriptions like

SOCAP people and other people like that.

I think a lot of the subscriptions are really not members—they're libraries and so on. We sent out ballots to maybe 800 or 900 people at election time. That gives you some idea of the active, non-business membership. I think the largest loss in membership in recent years have been secondary schools, too. There hasn't been a great deal of loss, but there has been something of a downward drift, I think.

NS: In conclusion, I should like to ask you about the future of ACCI and to what degree the past decisions have affected the future and what that means to ACCI.

RH: So many things have happened. For example, this business about what we were going to do about the secondary schools.

I really almost suspect that at some point, there's going to be a national consumer education organization that is going to be more for secondary school teachers. I know that ACCI felt very threatened when the Illinois Consumer Education Association was formed. Some of us saw this as sort of pulling out an important part of our membership—you know, potential clientele —and yet we haven't done a very good job serving them. I'm not sure whether we ever can.

We had close to 30 years to try to come to terms with that. The active membership has always been at the college level.

NS: Do you think that any of the institutional patterns that have been established—the conference, the *Journal*, the *Newsletter*, are likely to change noticeably? Do you think that the basic elements that make up membership in the organization are likely to change?

RH: I kind of doubt it. A lot of them are very typical of an academic organization for college level teachers. The one thing that is not so typical is, of course, the *Newsletter*, and yet it's a real attraction to a part of the membership. A lot of the membership find it very useful and I'm sure a lot of the secondary school teachers wouldn't belong at all if it weren't for that.

The *Newsletter* doesn't fit in the conventional, traditional, academic association framework. I guess that could cast some doubts on what its future might be if it ever went to another editor like Stewart Lee. It's an interesting question.