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President - 1978-80
Distinguished Fellow - 1984



Carole Makela

President - 1981-82



William Fasse

President - 1982-83

Group Interview with: Jean S. Bowers
Carole J. Makela
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Kansas City, Missouri
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Prof. Silber: This is a group interview with Jean Bowers, Carole Makela and William Fasse. It is taking place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 18, 1983. The interviewer is Norman Silber.

May I ask first, briefly, how it was that you became involved in consumer affairs and then, more specifically, how you became involved in ACCI?

Prof. Fasse?

Prof. Fasse: As an undergraduate student in a small liberal arts school not too far from here, I never heard of consumer anything in my life. I got involved in two issues. One was credit life insurance and the charges on credit life insurance. The other was a running gun battle with the Secretary of Agriculture in the State of Kansas over fat content of hamburger.

When I was ready to graduate, my life's goal was to be vice president of personnel for Trans World Airlines. I had an advisor who suggested that there was a guy up the road a ways who was involved in consumer (I have even forgotten what he said) but Don Rice sent me up the road to see Dick Morse. With the combination of a half-time research assistantship and the GI Bill, I would be making more money than I would have as a management trainee with TWA, and I figured I would have to stand on my head for a year, if nothing else, and that's how I got into the formal end of consumer affairs.

NS: And ACCI?

WF: I think the first ACCI meeting I went to was in Columbia, Missouri. According to pamphlets, it must have been 1970. I couldn't find the '69 one, so I'm not sure about it. 1970 was the first one I attended as a student. All I remember was that the total was four or five students at that meeting, of people who were actually students. Dick (Morse) loaded me up in the car. There was another graduate student from K. State. In fact, we took one undergraduate student and we drove to Columbia, MO to the ACCI meeting and I've been to every one of them since then.

Prof. Bowers: I had sort of a mid-life correction that really wasn't my idea and went back to school to pick up a PhD in something. At the time, I was in nutrition. It was the time of Rachel Carson, and I was really fed up with the nutritionists of the community and their reaction to her, and I didn't know it then, but I was also interested in consumer welfare, so I went back to school.

NS: Was that Ohio State?

JB: No, the University of California-Davis in agricultural economics, a very production-oriented department. They thought I was crazy. Even when I left six years later with a PhD, they still thought I was crazy to be interested in the consumer. When I went to Ohio State on my job in 1969, it was in the next year or two that ACCI was mentioned as the place to go if you were interested in consumer economics.

Again, I loaded a couple of graduate students in my car and drove to Terre Haute. I think the two things that really did it were Leland Gordon attacked Theodore Schultz for saying that the poor people in this country weren't really poor because the people in India were poorer. I can still see him in his white suit, saying that, and I loved him for it. The other thing which really

sold me was that Ed Metzen shaved off his beard between the afternoon meeting and the banquet, and I thought, "Now, this is a crowd I can get along with." That was ACCI.

Prof. Makela: The subject area is one I have been interested in for a long time. As an undergraduate who majored in home economics education (that I see basically as a consumer area), it has been a long-time interest. After two years of teaching, I decided to go back to graduate school and selected a program in consumer sciences to do my Master's degree. That's basically how I got in the consumer area. As for ACCI, going back and looking at the conference programs, it was in 1969 in Greeley, Colorado. I had just begun a teaching position 30 miles down the road, so I went to that conference. Prior to that time, I was very familiar with the publications that ACCI had been doing, the booklet series. We had used them in the classroom, so I was familiar from that perspective.

NS: This is a general question for whoever wants to jump in. Would you have characterized yourself as a consumer activist when you joined; or, if not, how would you have identified yourself?

WF: I wouldn't have characterized myself as a consumer activist. I think it was just the beginning of the whole situation that became known as activism. I was involved with campus politics. I had gotten involved in state politics, working on campaigns, working on various issues and came to work a lot on the two issues I described before. In my case, activism, but not necessarily consumer, I didn't know what it was. I could have very well been one. In that sense, I guess I came the activism route.

CM: I guess I see it as more of an issue orientation than it was activism connected to any particular consumer cause or issue.

JB: I guess I would probably say an activist, yes. After I had gone back to school, I got very involved. Of course, those were the '60s times and I was there and got involved, especially in the civil rights movement. In fact, I spent a summer in Selma. I don't think it was consumer. It was a human welfare kind of interest. I was looking for something, somehow, that could be expressed, I believe.

NS: How did you view the membership of the organization when you first joined? Could you characterize it?

WF: Basically, I was in awe when I arrived in Columbia. There was Colston Warne, all the names that I had ever heard of in terms of any kind of academic connection to consumerism. They were all there, alive and breathing! My initial reaction was total awe of the whole thing.

NS: Sounds like a ditto for almost everyone I've heard.

JB: Mine isn't a ditto because I didn't know those names. I had come through a production-oriented ag. econ. program and so I really didn't. I just looked at this bunch of people and thought those are the kind of people I can get along with. I just liked them and the things they talked about and the things they did. I think it's probably the same atmosphere that pervades the place today; I don't know about that. So mine was really more of a response to the kind of people I was seeing.

NS: When did you first become involved in an executive role in the organization?

JB: I think I was program chairman in 1973. It was my first job. I joined in 1971, and in 1973, I was program chairman. We had a very marketing-oriented meeting the year before, and people didn't like it.

Coming from California, I had a reputation as somebody that might be able to put a little

something different into the program. In fact, I invited Jesse Jackson. I can remember, at breakfast, Carole Vickers coming down and saying, "Would you mind being program chairman?" and I said, "Sure." Someone looked across at me and said, "Do you know what you just said?" Of course, I didn't!

NS: Did the political climate of the day affect the program?

JB: Oh yes, it certainly did. At the time, I guess, it seemed to the membership—at least this is the way I've worked it out—that I seemed to be an answer to a problem that had arisen the year before. What they did was substitute one problem for another.

NS: So, are you saying that you felt you needed to balance the program in some sense between certain kinds of competing interests?

JB: I think ACCI felt that; evidently they felt that.

NS: I was asking about when you first became involved in an executive role.

CM: As I recall, Dick Morse asked me to be on the nominations slate as a member of the board of directors in 1976, so that was my start.

NS: Do you know why he did that? Had you been particularly active in the organization as a member?

CM: I had been a regular attendee, but as far as committee service or other activity up to that point in time, no.

WF: I went on the board in Dallas in 1972. As to why I was asked, Tom Brooks came and caught me in the hall. Fred Waddell had resigned. As I remember the story, he had pulled out because he was going to work for AARP at that point, and it being a quasi-profit organization, he thought he shouldn't be on the board. Tom Brooks came and got me and asked me if I would serve on the board and I said, yes. Why they asked me, I don't know.

I had been working to try and get more students to the meetings, basically trying to get a student operation going. We had started along with who then was an undergraduate student of ours at Kansas State, Bob Flashman, who later went to Ohio State in a student consumer organization. In 1971, we had held the first national conference of the student consumer movement at K. State, so I guess I would like to hope that the reason they asked me was that I was doing that kind of thing. You would have to check with whoever was there at the time to find out.

NS: Could I ask you what the biggest problem was while you were an executive?

WF: I have another one [laughter]. I was waiting for it to come.

JB: The problem I remember, to start you off, seems to me was actually the introduction of the associate membership when I think Ed was president.

WF: Ed was still executive director.

NS: Could you tell me about that?

JB: I would rather Bill would talk about that because I had my own problem.

NS: Mr. Fasse, was that your biggest problem?

WF: If you put it that way, I will agree to talk about it. I wouldn't classify it as the biggest problem. It was certainly one of the crucial points, I think, in the organization. The issue really had two prongs to it, one prong that for the most part has been forgotten. The issue revolved around what to do with students at that point. The other prong of that was the issue of the representatives from for-profit organizations. The issue has to be in some context. It's the only way I can deal with it.

The student prong of the issue, for the most part, has been forgotten. We had been working very hard, some of us, to get more students involved and, in fact, we had done that. We were getting substantial numbers of students coming to annual conference. At that time, at annual conference, the directors were voted in and everything took place. All the governance of the organization took place at annual conference, so there was the issue of student voting rights.

If you go back through the literature or the archival pieces of the organization, students are not really mentioned until you get to that point. As I say, the first thing I went to in 1970, there were four or five of us. I don't think we were identified on the roster as students. There were no student fees, as opposed to regular fees, none of that that I remember. I could be wrong, but as I remember it, there was none of that. That was, as I best remember, how the issue began to come up.

At the same time—and you have to understand in 1969, for example—throughout the United States, there were six state's attorney generals who had consumer protections laws. There was one county in the country that had a consumer protection law. There were, to the best of our knowledge, three cities. To the best of our knowledge at that time, there was no corporation that had anyone titled consumer affairs.

By the time the voting rights issue in this organization came up, we had—and I don't know how else to get into it because you have to make reference to another organization—SOCAP (the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals), which was formed the same year that we went through the voting rights issue in this organization. When SOCAP was formed, their first roster of membership to go after contained about 650 identified individuals in corporations in the country who had consumer affairs, somehow, either in their title or in the title of the office they work in. OK? So that's how the voting rights issue evolved in this organization.

We were getting larger and larger in numbers of students and individuals from the private sector coming to the organization. You also have to—I don't know how else to say it—you have to do some correlation with the history of the American Home Economics Association through that same period, and the issue within that organization, developed of something called HEIB (Home Economists in Business). The way AHEA handled it was to have an organization within the organization. I want to make it—as the man used to say—"perfectly clear." I'm not criticizing AHEA; that's not the point of this, but I think that history is part of how the issue evolved within this organization.

Although it's been mentioned, I've heard it mentioned in public by individuals that no one was aware of SOCAP's formation a month before the meeting here in Kansas City in which the voting rights issue took place in this organization. It was known. I knew about it, and some other people that were working on this issue knew about it. SOCAP had been formed.

One of the reasons I think we were getting a larger proportion of individuals from the private sector, consumer affairs coming to ACCI, is that they had no place else to go. They were not welcome in the Consumer Federation of America, in any kind of involved status. At that point, marketing and the American Bar Association and other organizations had not formed a consumer affairs section of those organizations. I don't think they came because they had no place else to go. They came because we had good programs, good materials, and all of that. They also were coming because there was no other alternative, in terms of affiliation with a national organization.

All of those things came together and culminated in some action appearing to be needed if the organization was to basically remain a professional, academic organization. The leadership at that time, I think, made the decision that that was its function within the movement. If you come from that position, the organization is—or was, and should remain—basically a professional, academic organization within the consumer movement.

Then the voting rights issue, I think, is put in the context that the issue came down. It was an extremely difficult issue. It hurt personally, it hurt generally, because there were and are individuals who have given long service to this organization and to consumer education and higher education; given greatly of themselves and their talent, who are in the private sector. It hurt that way. It was a difficult issue for many, many people within the organization to try and decide how they wanted to come out. There were individuals from the private sector consumer affairs area who, at the meeting, spoke in favor of disenfranchising themselves. It was just a very difficult issue to resolve.

Back to the SOCAP connection. The month before, SOCAP had been formed, and in their constitution, they had written that their organization was for consumer affairs professionals and business and, if you did not work for a profit-making organization, you could only be an associate member. At the same time, there was the beginnings of the formation of NACAA, (the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators) which was to serve the government people and/or those in government.

The American Bar Association—and I don't know the acronym for it—had formed a unit within the structure of the American Bar Association for those attorneys in the public sector who were engaged in consumer affairs enforcement and activities. I think what was happening in the context at the time was that groups and organizations were finding their niche in the consumer movement, and we were seeing the development of new organizations to serve specific professionals within the movement.

ACCI was possibly the oldest national organization which had always had an open door policy, and I think it still does. But in terms of voting membership, it had an open door policy either to be in the position of potentially being overrun by all these other professionals or carving out its niche. I think, if ACCI had not existed prior to that point, it would have come into existence—and it would have come into existence specifically to serve the university and academic professionals—and the issue would have never come up. It would have been accepted across the board by everyone. This is the college, university, academic consumer affairs organization. Here is SOCAP, and here is CFA, here is NACAA, here is the American Bar unit, etc. It would never have been an issue. We were somewhat a victim of our own history.

NS: Could you tell me along what lines the organization divided? Can you generalize about who was for it and who was against it?

WF: I'm not trying to evade the thing. I don't think you can do that. I think it broke not on any kind of click or element. As I pointed out, there were private sector consumer affairs people who spoke to the issue for the concept of disenfranchising themselves. There are people in the private sector and in university work, who—and don't ask me to try and remember who they are—I don't think they have been to an ACCI meeting since that one. They philosophically said, "That's not right. I don't want anything to do with an organization that does that." I thought about it a couple times, but I don't think it broke on any clear party or click lines or anything like that.

NS: But people in business did continue to join the organization, didn't they?

WF: Yes, to the best of my knowledge. We looked several times. We watched the membership, as you might expect, very closely. As a matter of fact, we had an increase, as I remember, in the

number of associate members, from the time we started keeping track of it that way. I don't mean to imply anything by that, because also what was happening was that there was more and more of those folks out there. The new people joining didn't even know that there had been an issue. I don't think it had anything to do with that--just simply growth of the field.

NS: Thank you. We'll come back to that. Jean Bowers?

JB: I agree with everything that Bill said. I think he has presented an accurate presentation of the situation, but my own feeling is that it was one of the turning points in the organization. I think that it has helped the organization become somewhat more focused and clear and has probably also helped give it a look of being more focused to those outside. I think that Bill is right.

Some people see it as being more focused, and disapproved of the focus. In my own mind at least, I see it as a very important turning point, and a very courageous thing to do. I remember many other people from the private sector who spoke and said they could see the point and they believed that the organization would be stronger if it were structured in that way and they would become associate members. You even saw people who changed their view during the discussion and would stand back up and say, "I'm beginning to see what this is all about and I appreciate what it's all about." To me, it was one of the important things and I think it was a good thing to happen.

NS: If it wasn't a particular crisis, then who was it that really pushed this issue and brought it to a vote and really wanted to make sure it was resolved?

CM: When was it? Let's go back.

WF: It was in Kansas City.

JB: In 1975.

WF: Sidney Margolius was the main speaker.

NS: Does anyone have a view?

WF: This is straightforward. He has claimed credit for it, and my recollection is he deserves the credit that he claimed. My perception of how the whole issue—it really did not start with the issue of the private sector consumer affairs people—the issue began with discussions within the board and within people who were generally active in advising the board, I guess, would be the way to put it.

The student voting was, as I remember, preparing for the debate, preparing for trying to resolve the issue. The main focus of our concern was on the students wondering how they would vote. There were enough of them there, that if they had voted as a block, could very well have decided the issue. There was concern about that. Ed interjected the issue. As I remember, his concern was the AHEA situation where the point to which the HEIB unit had developed. There was concern within AHEA about who was running who in the organization. That's my recollection of how it came up.

Again, my recollection of how the whole issue started on voting rights, so to speak, within the organization began with the issue of students, and the concern, given the geographic location in the country where you were at, and one school or another being able to dominate because of the students coming. I don't mean to imply by that, the concern that some school was trying to take the thing over, but the sheer mathematics of it were, whatever location you were in, you got lots of students from that locale. Concern about that was my recollection of how the issue started and the issue of making non-voting associate member status for those in the private

sector was brought into the thing.

NS: Jean, what would you say was the central issue or major problem (I don't want to limit it to that) that you faced during your presidency?

JB: In my estimation of the problem, it was something that wasn't terribly important, but it got built up to be important, and that was the problem of location. We had been housed at Missouri for years, maybe forever. There got to be some interest by other universities of having us housed there. There was also some interest—and there always has been—of the possibility of us going to Washington, D.C., just because it was the center of government. It took a lot of work and a lot of effort in order to get it settled that we remained happily at Missouri.

Again, there was really a lot of discomfort on the part of many people, and even some feeling that maybe ACCI would be stronger if we would move often, like other organizations. Ag. econ., for example, moves around. But I think since it got settled, I haven't heard much about it after the first year. If ever you hear it now, it seems to be mainly whether or not it should be Washington, rather than any of the kinds of places that were considered before. It had nothing of the complexity of the sort of thing that Bill has talked about.

NS: Do you think it was a personality rather than a policy matter, essentially?

JB: I really don't think it was. It was just that somehow, maybe people were feeling that it was. We had been in one place for a certain length of time and then rising with that is interest on the part of other places that maybe it would be good to have ACCI as a status organization at their particular university. It may have been for some people. I have a feeling it was mainly policy. Whenever you have a lot of people interacting, you are bound to have that too.

NS: One of things I am trying to understand is, why would a move constitute a change of policy? What would the implications of a move have been in terms of policy?

CM: I don't know if this addresses your question, but one of the things I felt was going on at the same time was the organization was maturing. It was at a point at which oftentimes the question would come up, "Is this something the membership votes on or is this something for board action?" Also, we had become incorporated, so the board was given the policy handling of the organization. I think that was a transition, and people didn't fully understand in all cases when the board had the prerogative to go forward and when it was necessary to have the input not only by vote but by input of members.

JB: You are really saying it was generally a governance question?

CM: I think it was.

NS: I didn't ask you, Makela, what the central issue you faced was.

CM: Overall, it was somewhat the question, now that ACCI has gone through some of the questioning period and the growth period, where are we and where are we going?

NS: This was 1981?

CM: Yes.

WF: There were days when it seems like a hundred years ago.

CM: I think some of the other aspects of it were policy development and directions from that point on.

NS: Could you elaborate on the directions that you considered?

CM: The main ones basically, were fiscal soundness. There were many times we were questioning that particular aspect of the organization, also, fiscal soundness in relationship to membership dues and the trade-offs for increasing dues. I think the other aspect was getting into the projects, basically. This oral history has developed, the index of the *Journal*, and the ultimate development of a research symposium conference, that was the point in time these began.

NS: This is a general question. What constituencies or sub-groups did you discern within the organization that you took leadership of? When you became president, were there different groups that you thought were competing inside the organization that were represented or had different interests within the organization?

JB: I would have been president first, of those here. The student thing was still an important one and really hasn't been settled until now. The organization of the individual student groups in the past year has probably been a good step forward. I think there might be some problems, but that one has pretty much been taken care of.

The group that really felt it wasn't being served by the organization when I was president—and there were any number of meetings with the group—was the secondary school teachers. They are still not being served very well. There is nothing special for them. We have a few secondary school teachers come—I don't believe they are very pleased or very satisfied—and they often come only a year or two, and don't come anymore. The question about whether or not we should try and serve them in some way is one question that hasn't been settled. If we decide the answer to that is, "Yes," then the next question is, "How?" Again, that has never been settled, mainly because if we did it, it would mean decentralizing. They can't get away like the university academics and the agency people. So a meeting in their home town, or near their home town means costs, and costs mean increased membership dues. It just never goes beyond there. I think that group is still either coming and not being happy or not even coming.

NS: When you first discussed being president, you said you sensed that you had to balance advocacy and education. I'm wondering what other kinds of balancing one did. Was there a need for balance in terms of research vs. education?

CM: In regard to the balance, as per example research and education, I think that has frequently been a question that the board and the program chairman have dealt with, because it has been more through the annual conference program of whether or not there was a balance than through any of the other activities. Basically it has been an accepted fact from the beginning that the *Journal* was research-oriented and that the *Newsletter* was broader-based, basically with an update orientation. I think, in dealing with the annual program where that most frequently came up, that was usually part of the responsibility that was accepted by—or given to—the program chairman.

JB: I think that what Carol said was true, and the program has shown that. The program has tended to swing a little, that it may go what some people think of as too heavily research one year, and very likely to swing back the next year. I think more and more that is understood, and there is more effort to do a balancing thing than have that.

WF: I would tend to agree. Although this is to be a history, I guess I would have to make a prognostication at this point. I think it's germane to the history of this organization, but the history of this organization is not separable from the history of the movement, I think. What I see happening to the group who are the public school educators—which is the dilemma of trying to balance this out—when this organization made the turn of the voting rights issue to be basically an organization of college and university consumer affairs people, or to have that focus, once that decision was made, then the mandates and the activities of consumer education

and the public schools began to come on line, which was about that same time.

We were faced with another situation similar to the college/university people and the private sector consumer affairs people. They had no place to go and this looked like a place to come to. There were individuals—as I'm sure the history will show when these interviews are transcribed—the beginnings of this organization had a strong orientation or a strong foothold because of the backgrounds of some of the individuals in public school, what now is called teacher education operations. So there was a built-in opportunity for individuals within the organization to want to reach out and bring the public school people in, that those were their students out there.

I agree with Carol and Jean. At the moment we made the turn on the corner with the voting rights issue, that focus had been set in motion. I don't think it was in place yet, but it had been set in motion to focus this organization on college and university consumer affairs programs.

The public school teachers still have no place to go. I think what is happening—and my prognostication—would be that the Coalition for Consumer Education will, in fact, either become or be spun out of that group, a national organization specifically for public school teachers and administrators involved in consumer education. I see no other way. If it doesn't happen through the Coalition for Consumer Education, it will happen some other way. It has to happen. We had to have NACAA, we had to have CFA, we had to have SOCAP. They had to be, if you step back and look at the growth of the field. They are given the diverse interest and needs of those now segmented groups. No organization could serve all of those. No organization, I believe, could serve any combination of, or permutation of, that array of needs. The evolution in the field is inevitable. We have made valiant efforts at it.

The program board has tried numbers of ways to come up with some way of trying to serve, as Jean enumerated. Several of them we talked about: regional activities, about the traveling workshop show. The board has wrestled with this problem. Ultimately, this organization can't do it. This organization made the turn to focus itself on college and university consumer education programs and that's its place in the field.

NS: I don't understand how a voting change would have created that kind of divergence.

WF: The public school teachers were not at all involved in the voting issue. By your very question, it may be wrong [laughter]. The way I see it, what happened is the voting rights issue made the organization face up to what it was about doing. It was no longer about trying to educate the general public about consumer issues. It was no longer trying to educate business about consumer issues. It was no longer about all these other things that, at various times in history, it had tried to do. I believe the voting rights issue focused the organization, made it come to grips with what it was—a basically research-oriented service to college and university professionals in consumer affairs.

NS: Is there agreement about that?

JB: I guess I would disagree with Bill.

WF: I would be amazed if you didn't disapprove. [laughter]

JB: I certainly know that that vote caused us to focus. To me, the focus didn't say college and university quite as loudly as it seemed to have to you. Maybe because I was president soon after and remember these many meetings with the secondary teachers where they complained, and by midnight you got to the point that if we have regional meetings for you, that's a very expensive proposition, and the dues are going to go up, and that would always be the end of it. Maybe it either didn't focus as quickly as you see it, or it focused and I didn't know it. I don't know if that issue has ever come up in the two or three years. It may have, but my own feeling

is that Bill is ultimately right in that while maybe it hasn't even come up anymore, maybe it is settled and I don't even know it, because I have been off the board three years now.

CM: I think the question that does come up from time to time is, "What should this organization do for secondary teachers?" Maybe it still hasn't been completely thought through of whether ACCI's role is—as Bill was saying—solely higher education and is more indirect to the secondary level teachers than it is direct. Another thing we have to remember that was happening historically, at the same time, was the much greater pressure put on secondary teachers to first and foremostly belong to the National Education Association or a teacher's union. That was, with many of their salaries a fairly costly outlay, so belonging to subject matter organizations was not always a priority, and in some cases, not a possibility.

JB: Let me just raise a question for it to be there and then we can think about it later. My understanding is that the American Home Economics Association is moving to where the secondary teachers are much more strongly involved in its governance than they have been.

I think that the kind of organization that you see might develop from the consumer coalition is one thing. I think maybe AHEA may become another of their places, and especially that ACCI is really the place where we give our service and our time and just the money now is going to AHEA.

NS: This raises a related question; actually it is a slight change, but in your experience in ACCI, has the sex ratio changed?

WF: I'll speak to that. I've only heard the issue of sexual ratio raised twice in this organization. Once was the year we gave out the first ACCI Fellows. The first group of ACCI Fellows were: Colston Warne, Arch Troelstrup, Ray Price and, I can't name them all, whoever they were. They were a group of males.

At the business meeting, the report of the Fellows operation was done by Carole Vickers. A young woman stood up in the audience and proceeded to essentially make a speech about sexism, and why were we honoring all these men. Weren't there any women in this organization, etc.? Carole handled it extremely well. The young woman asked what the ratio of men and women were in the organization and several other questions relating to ratio. Carole's response was, "I don't know, we don't keep those kinds of sexist records in this organization."

The other time that I've heard that raised, fairly recently, was the issue of elections. Personally, I have never been conscious and quite honestly, if asked, could not give what the ratio is in the membership of this organization. I honestly couldn't do it. In other organizations that we get involved with, that's a very big issue with this organization either in the past officers, in ratios or boards and all of that. I think it is a non-issue, in my opinion.

JB: I think you omitted a very important event that occurred before I came on the board. I recall hearing that evidently there was going to be a questionnaire mailed, and the board was discussing it fairly late at night. One of the board members who was female was resting with her head down and she heard that this was going to be a mail questionnaire and she raised her head and said, "We're NOT having MALE questionnaires in THIS organization!" [laughter]

WF: Statement, so it's on the record. The correct statement is, she rose from laying her head on the table and said, "What do you mean, MALES ONLY voting in this organization!" She retarded, in my humble estimation, voting through the U.S. mail by at least three or four years. The issue couldn't be raised in board meetings for several years after that. We tried to raise the issue, and people started falling on the floor. And I'm not being totally facetious. For some period of time, we really couldn't seriously discuss the issue.

CM: Overall, I agree with what's been said, and personally, I wouldn't even want to guess what

the ratio might be. I don't think I could come anywhere near.

NS: Would it not be a signal accomplishment of ACCI, given the degree to which the problem of sexism has been a serious one in other organizations, that it has not been one in this organization?

WF: I would agree with that, and I think as long as this history is being done, I'm not real sure I even like talking about the thing. Of those whom I know and have had the pleasure of being aware of—who were sort of the founding group of this organization—I think also in my reality totally in the consumer movement, there is one thing that has always made me feel good about the thing: I've never detected any sexism or racism. We don't have a large number of minorities and have never had, but in my opinion, it is not because of racism or anything like that. It is because minority groups have other things that they need to be involved with socially, in a sense. It's just not there.

NS: In going through the list of presidents, one finds women among the list well before the women's movement developed into a powerful political force. That would lead me to ask about how one accounts for that.

WF: Let me speak to that. I never noticed that you helped make my case for me; off the top of my head, none of us had ever noticed that. That had never been mentioned. Let me tell you why I think it is.

If nothing else, the people in this organization—and generally in the consumer movement—somewhere there is in our genes a missionary gene; not "Jean" Bowers, a gene. The focus is always on the issue, the consumer issues that our people are working on at that time. It has nothing to do with sex or race or national origin or religion. Equally, you could ask the question, how many Baptists, how many Jews, how many Catholics are in this organization. I have no idea. If someone is asking this of other organizations I belong to, you could ask those questions and I could tell you the answer very quickly. But in this organization, it just didn't happen.

CM: I think, to your list we can add age, because I don't think that people have been put through a series of hurdles before they can be put on the board—that they have to earn their way by experience. There was a feeling if people could do the job and make a contribution, they were given the opportunity.

WF: I'm a fine example of that. I came to my first meeting in 1970, and in 1972, I was on the board. It was the biggest shock that ever came to me and to this day, one of the things I want to see in the oral history is if someone ever speaks to how I got there in the first place. [chuckles]

JB: Sheer unadulterated ability.

WF: Or brass, one of the two. That's a good point, Carole, because those issues in this organization have just never ever come up.

NS: Perhaps from your perspectives as presidents, you could talk about what factors led to the advancement during your terms in the organization. Were publications important from your perspective? Were good programs important? What were the factors?

JB: I can speak to that. For one thing, I was told I came in at a time when there was sort of a dearth of leadership which helped me some. What I think was basically important as I look now, the young faculty members that I personally would like to see president of ACCI in 10 years and I think that mentoring is what's really important.

I think I can put my finger on the person that put her finger on me and said, "I would like to see this person eventually be an officer and a director in ACCI." When I was president—I'm sure others have done it too—you look at the list of committees and there's not much way for a young person. The research committee is probably the best way to do it because you get some exposure and that's almost the only way. Career competency, the education careers and different research committees is another way. There are not more than five or six slots, if that, for a young person to get a chance to show what they've got, so I think mentoring.

Give a paper if you can, try to get on the program as moderator, try to get some exposure for the people that you see as potential leaders. I think it is very difficult now for the people who may come from places where the mentors aren't available. I think that is a rather important question, really, to find some way to get out to the person who may come from the small school—the school that hasn't been involved—and become a leader without something exceptional happening.

WF: I agree with Jean. In reality I am sure, my mentoring within the organization is multiple. The first formal course I had in the consumer area was taught by Stewart Lee. Dick Morse was my major professor in my Master's program. My major professor, when I went to the University of Missouri to work on my doctorate, was Gordon Bivens. When he left to go on sabbatical with Ken Boulding, officially Ed Metzner ended up signing off, so I probably have more mentors than anybody.

I would add to Jean's perspective that I think it is also a matter, if you want to try and understand how people move in and out, it is true, and one of the things that concerns me is that we have no sort of middle management of this organization as with many other organizations. There is no real middle management pathway from this stage to middle management and upper level, etc.

To explain how people get into the official governance of this organization, this organization has to be kept in the context of the consumer movement. For the most part, I don't know this to be a fact; I would say there is a high probability. I know almost every other consumer organization—CFA, NACAA to some extent, all state and local consumer groups and education associations, and AHEA sections that deal with mainly economics or consumer affairs. The ACCI leadership is also in that, and I think when people are moved into positions, it is not to identify who is sort of coming along. I look across that spectrum not just what they are doing in ACCI. You can identify them because they are doing things other places too.

I was a vice president of Consumer Federation of America and several other things that are in it, and in my recognition the mentoring is extremely important within the organization. I don't mean to diminish what Jean has said, but I think that mentoring can only answer part of how it happens because students of those same mentors for whom the mentors also had great affection or encouragement or whatever, didn't make it through the thing. You go through the list of the leaders of this organization and do a correlation with the leadership in other organizations within the consumer movement, and I would suspect you would find a high correlation across the thing. That's important.

CM: I think another factor is, in some cases, the opportunities have developed—some strictly a factor of time and situation—that people have been basically able to show their competencies in being program chair, or in some of the other positions, or to work on some of the committees or in other offices in the organization at the time when there was a need and some definite direction to give or direction to change.

NS: The question of leadership would lead me to another question: In your experience with ACCI, have there been periods when the leadership was closer or farther away from its membership as a whole? Is the communication between the membership and the leadership less than it ever was, or greater?

CM: I would probably say that the distance between the two is probably at a point where it's less than it's been, in some cases, in the past. It's very difficult to put a finger on just why that is. Sometimes, in answering that question, I, at least, may be coming from the perceptions of what you hear one or two individuals tend to say.

I often feel that sometimes the distance and the communication is really part of what the individual member puts into it. There has been a great effort in recent years to communicate to the members and keep them up to date on what has been going on in the organization. Whether or not it has happened to the extent of intent may be questioned. I think it has happened. It is still up to the individuals as to how far they have come to it. Have they read their materials, or asked the questions, or taken part in the opportunities that have been presented?

NS: Perhaps I could just refocus it a little bit. In other interviews that I have done, I've spoken to people who, when they first came to the organization, shortly thereafter knew most of the members of the organization by name and were on a first name basis with a preponderance of them.

CM: I think that is definitely a fact. We probably don't have that today, but part of it is because of growth. I can't say exactly what period of years were the greatest growth, but I think that in and of itself is a factor. Going back to the first conference that I attended, some of our meetings were in a room not much larger than this, and everyone sat around one table.

NS: Do you remember when the program split in the sense that there were concurrent sessions?

WF: If you look at the programs, that has been done off and on for a long time. It's been done ever since I have been coming to the things off and on. Some years it is done more than other years.

To the issue of how well people know each other in the organization, I would agree with Carole, it's just bigger. The movement is more diverse in the sense that college and university people are coming through different paths. I now have students, for example, that started out in an undergraduate program in consumer studies or science or whatever, into a Master's program, into a doctoral program. When I first came into the movement, I was in a family economics program, what was technically called a consumer program. There was a great diversity there. In that sense, there are a number of kinds of things happening that do that. The point I would like to make about communication between the governing bodies and the members of the organization is, I think it is much better now.

Things like balloting through the postal system has opened the thing up. I can remember for a number of years, there were not open charges, but there were sniping—I guess that would be the best way to put it. It was being run by a clique, that it was all inside in the nominations process, although the voting was done at annual conference. By the very fact that it was done at annual conference, you see, only those who could afford to get to annual conference had any say. The way we do it now, anyone who is a member can vote whether they have ever been to a conference or not. There was some question about that when we went to the voting by postal service issue. I think it is much more open.

This year—I am just an immediate past president—I think it is much more open. The committee structure of the organization—and Jean was speaking a bit from historical—in the last two or three years the committee structure, I think, has matured. I'm not saying under my direction. I think Carole started it. It is a natural evolution of the organization.

More and more the committee structure has taken on tasks and roles that previously were done by the board, because that was really the only functioning thing in the organization. There is

that kind of maturity which makes the communication change a little bit longer but also opens up, and more people know more about what is going on in the organization than, I believe, was known in the past. It's much better. I have not heard, for several years anyway, any complaints that there is a clique running the thing. That was sort of a perennial comment that you heard if you were in a leadership position in the organization. Sometimes it was raised in the open, sometimes in business meetings, and that hasn't been done recently.

NS: When would you have put that through?

JB: My second term. I was the first elected president. That's not very long ago, 1976, and that's what you were speaking of when the board and the officers were elected by the membership by this new method.

WF: And the nominations committee.

JB: And the nominations committee that came at the same time.

WF: If you looked at the structure—and I have had this happen in other organizations—you had a board of directors who appointed a nominations committee who came in with a slate—a slate, one person per office, presented that to the annual meeting, and you voted on it. There were occasions when nominations were made from the floor and that sort of thing, but basically that was it.

I'm not saying that was wrong. That was the system that was in place. It's much more open now. I have not heard that criticism for several years. Again, we are also maturing in development of the committee structure—project committees, ad hoc committees, standing committees—that are beginning to take over more of the operational part of the organization, and the board dealing with issues of priority and policy. As an example, it wasn't until 1979 and 1980, the year Carole was treasurer, that we had a budgetary process where the committees could submit budget requests. I was the treasurer prior to Carole, and I asked the committee chair people how they got requests into the board, and several of the major committees in the organization said, "I didn't know we could ask for money." I'm serious. It came as a great shock to some committee chair people to find out that other committees had been given money or given funds to be able to carry on some programs. Now committees have budgets, they submit requests, and the board is making those kinds of decisions of setting priorities and reconciling policy and that sort of thing. That has opened the process up.

NS: So, in a sense, you are saying the organization recognized that it was no longer a personal, small kind of group, sometime—when was it—in the late '60s, or early '70s?

JB: Later than that. I was president in '79. This was in '78.

CM: Also, at this time, with the mail ballot, the board expanded in number, and that, again, I think was an example of opening it up wider. People were asked for input and had the opportunities to get in on both sides, not only what they are doing, but, as Bill was saying, to ask and request a budget to help them do what they were intended to do.

NS: It is interesting that the big jump in the membership occurred between 1970 and 1972. I'm talking about a jump from about 1,500 to close to 3,500. And yet, you are saying that the period between '72 and '78 was the period of most considerable dislocation in the administrative structure of the organization. Would that be correct?

JB: I don't think it is quite correct. I think probably that '70-'72 increase may well have come as a product of the late '60s as the people got off the streets and began to see that there maybe had to be different kinds of ways to work for social change. They either had to get the gains or consolidate the gains. That may be what happened there and it took the organization just that

long to find out what had happened. Now, maybe that is dislocation.

CM: As I mentioned earlier, it was somewhat the situation of the increase in membership and making the adjustments from operating and administering a fairly small organization to a larger organization. There is lag time. I think that was evident.

WF: I would like to make a comment on the graph that you have just shown.

NS: A graph of the growth in membership in ACCI.

WF: I think the jump in those two years or so are explained in several ways. One, there was a substantial amount of money provided by Consumers Union and they did that funded membership drive. That is one explanation. The other explanation, as I was just mentioning when we were talking about voting rights again, it was in that time period from about the first Buyer Protection Act in the country as such was passed in 1968. It happened to be in Arizona, as a matter of fact.

By 1971, almost every state in the union had a Buyer Protection Act. We had, as I pointed out before, consumer affairs positions within corporations and that sort of thing springing up overnight. You couldn't even keep track of how many people were coming on line.

Those last several years of the 1960s and the first several years of the 1970s saw huge growths, not only in the private sector, but colleges and universities renaming or redefining or developing or putting into place consumer majors and consumer programs. That, coupled with the money that was expended on the membership drive to go back and pick up all of those people who had really gotten into consumer education/consumer affairs in the 1960s—that's where that almost vertical growth curve, I believe, comes from. That's my explanation of it.

NS: Did you see a difference between that new crop and the previous members?

WF: I couldn't speak to that. I came in in 1970, which is when the thing starts to take off. I have no way of making a comparison.

NS: You are all members of that new crop. The time runs short, so I would like to ask a few questions in conclusion. One of them is whether or not you believe that ACCI has reached all of its potential members or whether or not there are people in other disciplines—sociology, political science, anthropology—who would be members of ACCI if they knew about it and thought about it, and whether or not you made efforts or thought about that problem when you were president.

WF: The issue has been raised several times since I have been on the board. I do not believe ACCI has reached its potential. We have a good mix of disciplines represented in the organization. There are marketing people, journalism, advertising discipline, home economics, business education. There's a good mix, but I don't think we've reached our potential. To my knowledge there are no academic engineers, and I personally am aware of some engineers who primarily work, what I think is, on consumer issues. There is one segment of the engineering community that deals with the liability of testing of products, and some of those people work exclusively on consumer products, but we don't have any of them in this organization. We don't have any social anthropologists that I'm aware of. We don't have very many sociologists or very many psychologists. If they are out there, I'm not aware of them. I don't think we have reached our potential. I think there is an opportunity. The time hasn't been right, but there may come a time when we will really solicit other disciplines. Who did we mail to?

CM: We mailed to all the SOCAP members. We have had membership efforts at the American Home Economics Association meetings.

WF: As an example of that, Jean Kinsey, who did the program this year, made a special mailing to a list of ag economists that she was able to secure, and Chuck Monsma provided a list of political scientists to Jean for solicitation of papers for this program. We are beginning to move in the direction of going after some disciplines that traditionally have not been represented heavily in ACCI. My response to your question is, no, I don't think it is.

If your question is, "Did we hit the peak back some place and are we falling to a plateau?", I would have to use the subtitle of Mike Pertschuk's new book, *The Rise and Pause of ACCI*. I think we are just pausing. There will be some collecting of things that tie up loose ends. I would expect the chart to start off again. There are other disciplines out there that need us and we need them and it's a matter of finding each other. I think it will be done eventually.

JB: I would agree mainly with Bill, and something I have wondered about and haven't done, is look at whether the mix of articles in the *Journal* has changed. We have had, up to now, either consumer economists or economists or ag economists. Monty is a psychologist. The mix on the editorial board is changing.

CM: I don't think it's so much a function of ACCI in and of itself. I think it is a function of professional organizations overall, and that most have seen somewhat of a dip. People are looking at how many professional organizations we belong to, and can we justify it. What is the give and take and the benefit from some of these. I can't help but say, "That's true," when Bill says, "Yes, there are engineers out there." I just saw where the engineering coordinating society has 47 professional organizations, so you can see what they are selecting from too.

NS: Is there a cost attached to having members who are only tangentially consumer professionals, as opposed to primary consumer professionals? Is that something that has to be balanced?

WF: If the thrust of your question is, "Is there a cost to the organization of having people who view their ACCI membership as a secondary membership," in real world terms, "No." I think every organization has that kind of situation.

It would be nice if every member saw this organization as their only thing in life. I think that is unrealistic. The tangential, or secondary, people who view this organization as a secondary professional membership are useful to the organization. I wouldn't like the organization to do some kind of litmus test, and only those who showed up blue on the litmus test because this was their only thing in life, could be members. I think that would diminish the organization. It is good that they take from ACCI to their primary function, things that they get at ACCI. That makes us better.

NS: A final question. What do you think are the major accomplishments of ACCI? What would you call the milestones in the organization of which you are proudest?

JB: One of the most important was certainly the establishment of the *Journal*. There simply was no other place that academics with a particular interest in the consumer could publish their research. If you were a sociologist, it might go into a sociology journal, but I have a feeling that might be more difficult. Having the *Journal*, I would say, is definitely a real contribution.

CM: That was the first one that came to my mind as well. I think another, probably more generalized overall contribution, is what it does contribute to the professional development of members and the caliber of that development.

NS: Do you think that has always been the case? Would you say that, from the moment you joined, it has made a continual contribution?

CM: Overall, I think it has and it is probably important to look at that in view of the fact that a

number of people have not—as Bill described earlier—come up through consumer programs at all levels. They may have become established in another field, whether it be ag economics or sociology or education and have subsequently come into the consumer field. I think it has been very important from that aspect, for the development of consumer programs and consumer research.

WF: I would concur with both of these responses. Milestones, I tend to think, get worn down after a while, and if there are lots of grains within this organization, lots of little bumps in the road that have been significant things. One of the major contributions this organization has made to the nation and literally to the world, is the milestone I think is the existence of the organization—a place where people can come to talk about these kinds of things, about consumer issues. They can write about them through the *Journal*, and prior to the *Journal*, the pamphlets. The mere existence of this kind of organization is the milestone.

What is done contextually within the organization are fine, notable achievements, but the milestone is the existence, and it has existed for all these years and has allowed the focusing of attention on issues and policies. The people have gone, I believe, forth from ACCI into every facet of the consumer movement and made contributions again.

I feel, someday, we ought to have someone sit down and do a correlation between the leadership in this organization and the leadership in other things. You are going to find ACCI people were there and the reason they were there is because of the existence of this organization—support to go forth and do the things that they have done. I know in my experience, working with other organizations, etc., the support I got from ACCI, and the people in ACCI that made it possible that I could go out and do that.

NS: Thank you all, very much.