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## **Edward Metzen**

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**Executive Director - 1966-75**

**President - 1975-76**

**Distinguished Fellow - 1982**

Interview with Edward Metzen (Norman Silber)  
Kansas City, Missouri  
March 16, 1983

**Prof. Silber:** This is an interview with Professor Edward Metzen at the University of Missouri. It is taking place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel on March 16, 1983. The interviewer is Dr. Norman Silber.

Mr. Metzen, could you first tell me a little bit about how you first became involved in the consumer movement and then how you became involved specifically with ACCI?

**Prof. Metzen:** By way of involvement in the consumer movement, I think I'm just naturally bent in that direction. My propensity tends—in the social policy arena—to be with the general public interest, and I think I've always been drawn to that.

I first became aware, really, of consumer education in my undergraduate days at Mankato State College in Minnesota. My undergraduate advisor had done some graduate work with Ray Price at Minnesota. I found that there was an assistantship available, furthered my cause; next thing you knew, I was in a Master's program at the University of Minnesota with Ray Price, who of course, has pioneered a number of things in this field.

I focused primarily on consumer education as it relates to the school setting there, curriculum content and the like. And then, as I moved on, later went to Stephens College when a position opened. Arch Troelstrup, who headed the program there, called Ray to see if he had any graduates out who might be available and interested in the position at Stephens and Ray recommended me. Next thing I knew, I was off teaching at Stephens College in the consumer program so that I think the interest kind of mushroomed in rather a big hurry.

It turned out that, unbeknownst to me at the time I was in Minnesota working on my Master's degree, the groundwork for the ACCI had been developed—in fact, right there across the campus with that initial meeting of Ray Price and Arch and some of the people who pioneered the ACCI (then the Council on Consumer Interests).

**NS:** Was your work in economics?

**EM:** No, it was in business and consumer education.

**NS:** Your graduate work?

**EM:** My Master's work. Undergraduate work was in business education, and for what it's worth, beyond that I'm supposed to be a football coach with a minor in physical education.

So, suddenly I found myself in a college program in—at that time—the only college in the country that had a department identified with the consumer field.

**NS:** When was this?

**EM:** 1955. Stephens had come off the pre-World War II consumer conferences which were—for that time—really massive conferences; I guess four or five hundred people. I still have some of the Proceedings of those old consumer conferences at Stephens College in my possession. Stephens maintained an active consumer program. I spent eight years there. In the meantime, I worked on my doctorate. That was in education. I did a curriculum degree and did most of my work in economics and finance.

Then I came upon a position in the family and consumer economics program at the University of Missouri, which I moved to when I finished my degree. That program has grown from a very

modest-sized service teaching program basically, at the beginning, to the point where we now have had one of the few family and consumer economics specialized Ph.D. programs in the country over the years. There are getting to be a few more now, but there have been relatively few until recent times. So that whole thing has kind of expanded.

Of course, with the ACCI just aborning, as I say (then the Council on Consumer Interests), and Arch Troelstrup having been a charter member and Ray Price having been the first president, I became rapidly aware of it, developed an interest in it and went with Arch, as I recall, to the second annual meeting.

I think I have missed two conferences: the very first one, and one a number of years after I came to Stephens and was working on my doctoral dissertation. Arch advised me that spring to stay home and spend the weekend writing my dissertation, rather than taking off to the conference.

From the beginning, I felt a strong affinity to the organization because of both the concern, the content to which it was directed and oriented, its whole philosophical orientation, and, beyond that, the particular kinds of people in the organization. That has changed over time. I think, when any organization gets bigger and the movement gets more widespread, you begin to get people who—I'm not denigrating them, but the movement begins to attract some people for whom it's this professional job or some other professional job and it's a little less religion and philosophy, and a little more business to them, perhaps.

I felt, particularly in those early years, that the people who made up the core of the organization had a philosophy about consumer interests and their relevance to society and to the economy very deeply ingrained in them; it wasn't a closed mind at all, it wasn't anti-business, it wasn't cloistered in any sense. . .but there was a dedication to that cause that imbued that whole core organization. And we were small then. I remember the time when we first broke attendance of 100 after a number of conferences. Everybody stood up and gave a round of applause at this marvel.

So, at least in the group that showed up at the conference—there were a few others who subscribed to the publications and the like—but the group that always showed up as devotees at the conference really had consumer interests in their blood. It was a group where, if you had that sort of feeling, you were just drawn like a fly to honey. And the kinds of people they were along with that: people of principle who would speak out and who could be counted on—people who simply put principle before other kinds of things, that had rather a total dedication to the things that they believed in. Somehow I just sort of found myself there and felt very at home about it all.

NS: What was the function that it performed for you professionally?

EM: I must admit that I was naive enough in the early years, maybe, not to have a good sense of the total function that it might perform for me professionally. I think that I found it an experience in associating with peers in the field and exchanging ideas that were valuable.

The *Newsletter*, early on, had some valuable bits of information that were useful in classes, updates on legislation and the like and some ready-made information about bibliography, teaching materials and so on that were available. I didn't have to do my own digging for some of that stuff. So it was functional in that sense, but mostly it was just a professional affiliation with peers who believed strongly in the importance of the consumer interest, not just for individuals, but for the society as a whole. It was just that sort of a feeling of fraternity that had that kind of philosophical orientation. I think that was more relevant than anything else.

NS: At the early meetings that you went to, do you remember any discussions about differences in attitude about what the organization should be doing, even then at the first meeting you

went to?

**EM:** I recall one of the early meetings. I think it was a meeting in St. Louis, where the issue of the ACCI getting involved in essentially lobbying kinds of efforts—in backing of legislation—that came up.

**NS:** Was that in 1957?

**EM:** Must be. I think that was following the second meeting I attended.

**NS:** '56 was Dayton, '57 was St. Louis and '58 was Cincinnati.

**EM:** Then it must have been the second.

**NS:** The 1961 meeting was in St. Louis, too. Could it have been that?

**EM:** I'm not sure; I think it was probably 1957. Now, this issue has reared its head a number of times. It's been dead recently, but on the issue of political action, there were some who felt that the organization ought to move into that arena.

It has always taken a stance that it might be appropriate to take a position on some matter having to do with support for consumer education or consumer research or whatever, and a few resolutions of various kinds in the past are on the record. Basically, I have a strong feeling that there is a need for a professional organization of this kind, that there are lots of arms of the movement that do various kinds of things.

The ACCI, for example, is not going to get into product testing, the Consumers Union handles that nicely, thank you. There are various kinds of political actions and legislative consumer protection groups out there, and admittedly, there were not so many of them in those early years. It was some time coming before the Consumer Federation of America was formed.

There was need for those kinds of organizations, but obviously, the feeling of the majority was that political action is very important but that ought to be left to some other entity. I daresay that all of the leaders of the ACCI over the years have been involved in impacting on consumer protection and legislation, but the feeling was, that there ought to be some avenue that serves another purpose.

**NS:** There were people from business groups, corporations or business schools involved with the organization, even at that early point, weren't there?

**EM:** Yes. In fact, I think there were some among the charter members. As I recall, Eugene Beem was one, and also Warren Nelson. Fred Willhelms I think in business education, Willard Cochrane, some of those. There were a number of them. Many of the people came out of business education backgrounds, essentially, and then moved into the consumer movement; there were some economists, some home economists.

**NS:** Would you call them consumer advocates?

**EM:** To some extent; I think it was probably mixed. I think some of the people had an interest in the consumer as an entity in our economy. To some, I think, it was rather an academic interest. To the people whom I think of as the ongoing driving force in the organization, it was a matter of a strong social philosophy, not just an academic interest.

At any rate, some of the early people who were charter members stayed with the organization and have been regulars and served in various capacities at conference after conference over the years. Some of them dropped out rather early on. In one case, somebody got involved with a

business and essentially got dissuaded from a consumer direction.

NS: Was that Gene Beem you refer to?

EM: Yes. Partially, I gather, because of a publication that was under way that had to do with trading stamps. That was about the time that I came into the organization, or shortly thereafter. The next thing we knew, there was no publication and he was off to the trading stamp company, which I always regarded as an interesting kind of defection.

NS: I talked to Gene Beem earlier. Were you involved in the discussions about what to do about the pamphlet, or did you come after that?

EM: I was not involved. It was going on at that time, but I was young and naive and knew little about whatever, and was not really involved in the leadership of the organization.

NS: Did you have any impressions about how it seemed to have affected others in the group?

EM: I can't really read their minds and hearts. I think I had a sense, at the time, that there was some consternation about it all on two fronts. One, that here was a charter member of this kind of an organization and this kind of development happened; and, two, there was supposed to be this publication, which was a matter of interest at the time and relevant to the consumer scene, and this person was to have written it and what does one do about it now? Do you make some kind of use of the manuscript, which apparently you weren't going to be able to do, or do you go back to square one and somebody else does it? That just gets to be a messy kind of a situation.

NS: In terms of policy, did it cause a re-examination and a determination to prevent that sort of thing, or did it cause a sense of *sui generis*, you know, did it seem like it was an event that couldn't be helped?

EM: From my perspective, I did not sense any stance about how do we prevent a thing like this, or any policy stance or whatever. I guess it was probably thought of as one of those things where there was only one person who could have altered the situation, and that was the person immediately involved. If it was going to happen again, it was going to happen again. There was no way to deal with that, really.

NS: Do you think that Consumers Union in those early years was providing a great deal of financial support to the organization? If that hadn't been the case, do you think that its policy about no involvement with commercial interests affected ACCI's view?

EM: Not at all. Two things about that. One, I was the person who initiated and pushed and pushed and drove the issue about non-voting memberships for business people, people who were hired by commercial interests. So far as instigating and pushing that issue to a vote of the membership, I take responsibility for that, for good or ill. I did so without any word or pressure from Consumers Union or anyone else.

My sole concern, if we can turn to that era for a little bit, was that this was a time when business was very sensitive about consumer matters. They were laying on more and more people with the title of Consumer Affairs Director, or this or that or the other thing, many of whom were simply people to play off consumers and not really solve consumer problems. Not all; some were very bona fide, sincere kinds of efforts. The term, "consumerism" had been evolved to create the image of yet another evil lurking "ism" in our society, and all that sort of thing.

My concern was that, given the relatively small number of people that get to the annual meeting, and even fewer who come to vote—we've had some very small business meetings in

the past with barely a quorum—at some stage, if commercial interests decided that they either wanted to take over or do in the ACCI, they had simply to fund enough of those consumer affairs people with voting memberships to the annual business meeting and they could elect whatever Board of Directors they wanted to. Under the then-existing bylaws of the association, from the floor in an annual meeting, and that would be all she wrote as far as the nature of this organization was concerned.

A number of people said, "Well, let's deal with that when it gets to be a problem." My stance was that you can't deal with it when it is a problem, because when it's a problem, you don't have the voting power to deal with it. You either do it before or you don't ever deal with it at all. If you're ever a minority, then it's a problem, and then it's too late. Interestingly, while there was a lengthy and somewhat heated debate—you undoubtedly know from the record, a real floor fight—the vote was not nearly as close as the intensity of the debate would suggest. As a matter of fact, lots of business people voted for non-voting memberships for themselves.

Esther Peterson, who was then with Giant Foods, with whom I discussed the matter when I pushed it in the board the year before, in fact said that she did not believe that in her then-current job she should be a voting member of the ACCI. People like David Schoenfield, with whom I discussed the matter, told me that he would not feel offended, that it's appropriate that there be a professional association here not affiliated with any commercial interest, and that he would continue to come to ACCI conferences and be active in the organization.

Not everybody felt that way. But, in fact, a good many did. The people who felt most heated about the issue were the people who were employed by certain foundations and educational lobbies funded by business—and I must say I had, and have, considerable sympathy with them.

The reason for that, of which I was not aware at the time we made the motion for this change, was that unbeknownst to us, in the midst of that heated debate we had for hours, the SOCAP group (Society of Consumer Professionals in Business) had been formed a few months before, and low and behold, it wasn't until after our meeting that I got a copy of their constitution and found that, without so much as a voice being raised, they put into place a constitution that provided for non-voting membership for academics, and you had to be a business person to be a voting member. They thought nothing of it, about disenfranchising academics who might be interested in their efforts. They just set their constitution in place and did it.

Now, I should have been smart enough to explore the SOCAP charter. They were just then formed, and we could have come to the floor and said, "Now this is not in retaliation, but you business people now have an organization, SOCAP, which is a place where your interests are best represented."

By and large, it's professionals, academics, and the like, whose interests are best represented by the ACCI. For that reason, many of the people in business organizations, in fact, spoke in favor of our motion, said it was fine with them not to vote in ACCI. But they did not mention the SOCAP provisions; they knew about them.

Now, people from these foundations, these educational arms, were the ones who were heated, because it turns out, they were now totally disenfranchised. They knew that SOCAP was not allowing them to be voting members and here was the ACCI disenfranchising them; I didn't realize why those particular people were as hot as they were, that never really quite came clear in the meeting. I found that out after the meeting when one of them said to me, "Now I can't vote anymore."

NS: Do you happen to know how they qualified as academics by the terms of SOCAP's bylaws?

EM: I don't think they qualified as academics. I think it's in terms of the SOCAP saying that you have to be employed by a profit-making business entity. Of course, those are not, so they

fell between the cracks, and I recall several of those people at the meeting really being disturbed.

I must say, when I look at their interests, I think some of those people might as well be employed by commercial organizations. They further that interest rather strongly with what I think is a good bit of bias. Others are at heart much more public interest-oriented and much more true educator in nature, and neither one of them now had a camp—not even a choice where they could say, "Well, I declare myself this or that," and vote in one organization or the other.

**NS:** Did they stop going to the business meetings since they couldn't vote?

**EM:** A few of them did. A few of them quit coming to the conference. One of them in fact declared then that he would not come again, and has not to my knowledge, and had been to quite a few prior to that. But that's not true of most of them. Most of them took that in stride and if there is something of interest at ACCI that fits their schedule, and their funding, they're here.

I have not heard any debate about that whole issue since, but I know that it was not the people employed directly in business who were the most heated. I think there is a feeling that, "Look, I'm in this field and I've got no place where I can cast a ballot," and when the bottom line hits, everybody wants a place where they can stand up and say "aye" or "nay," and so I really have some sympathy with those people, I must say.

**NS:** Can you remember episodes on the floor concerning this debate?

**EM:** Yes, a few things come to mind. One thing, the meeting went on so long--we hadn't anticipated this—that we had to take a break in the proceedings because we had to be moved to another room. The meeting was being held where we were going to have the banquet and they had to move us out to start preparing for the banquet.

A couple of people were really feeling sort of out of it with the tension. One of the women told me later on, "Thank God we had that break. I went up to the room to take a couple of pills for my headache, I was getting such a tension headache." Well, this meeting just went on and on.

There is a tendency in that kind of situation to keep goring an ox after it's already been pretty well gored. I was president and I recall suggesting to the membership when the matter came up for consideration, "Let's do two things: one, let's try to keep the debate from getting personal or overly heated, and once a point has been made and it's evident that there are other corroborating witnesses, let's not drag it on and keep on whipping a particular horse. If you've got something new to add, let's add it in the dimension but let's not everybody keep getting up and pounding on the same point until it creates more animosity than necessary." Over all, it was quite controlled. There was a little tendency to applaud points, but I felt that we ought to keep that out of order and be business-like about it all.

**NS:** How many people would you say were at the meeting?

**EM:** I don't recall, but that business meeting was very well attended.

**NS:** Had people come just for this issue?

**EM:** Not to the conference, but they showed up at the business meeting, when some of them otherwise might have been having drinks and swapping stories, if the agenda had been routine with no controversial items.

**NS:** So almost everybody who was at the convention showed up at the business meeting?

EM: Well, big numbers at least. It was a well-attended meeting. The climax of the thing was interesting. I remember at the end of the discussion saying, "Now does anybody have a new point—not just reinforcement, but something new," and somebody kept pointing to the lady next and I said, "Do you have something new?" and she said, "Yes." She was a business person, and made this eloquent little speech about the rationale she had for why she was going to vote to have non-voting memberships for business people. I think anybody who was sitting on the fence as to how they were going to vote just swept along with her. It wasn't a put-up thing or anything. She said to me later, "I just sat in that meeting and listened to the various sides and I just realized that this is what made sense to me and I wanted to tell people that."

NS: Was it a new argument?

EM: Not so much new as it was well articulated by somebody in that camp who said, here's where I've come down. Now I've listened to this and I've put it through my hopper and here's how I come down, and here's why, and let me tell you my rationale.

Now, back to the broad issue you opened earlier: Did the Consumers Union orientation have an impact on the ACCI because of the financial support CU was providing? It seemed to me that was a question that sort of lurked around in some people's minds, particularly in those early years. There were always some people who argued and were suspicious that the Consumers Union had its heavy hand on ACCI.

I served as executive director for almost ten years, during some of the years when ACCI was really going to Consumers Union hat-in-hand for funds, and I must say, if there was ever any slightest pressure of that kind, it is totally unknown to me. It certainly never happened during those almost ten years, and to my knowledge, it never happened before that time either.

The Consumers Union's interest, it seemed to me, was basically two-fold: One, that the organization become a viable entity and do something worthwhile in the field, whatever that something may be—that it not just be a forever-dependent, wheel-spinning organization. The second one was that sooner or later, whatever we did, we get on our own feet and become independent financially.

There certainly was never any policy pressure of any kind. Arch Troelstrup was on the Consumers Union board for a goodly number of years and was on the ACCI board. He would come to the meetings and report simply that the CU board is anxious to see us do well enough so that we get a broad enough membership and we can become independent.

NS: What about Colston Warne? Was he a presence?

EM: There is only one Colston.

NS: I don't know any other one, either. (laughter)

EM: He was a presence, but again, not in the sense of heavy handedness at all in terms of policy. Colston is such a principled person that I know there were some issues with this organization, as with others, that he cared very much about. He is a caring fellow and he cared deeply, but he functioned as another dues-paying member who raised his hand and voted, but never exerted any kind of pressure or inappropriate influence.

NS: There wasn't undue deference paid to him at the meetings because of the funding?

EM: No, there was deference paid to Colston because of his obvious leadership in terms of consumer matters. He would sometimes be introduced and note made that he was there, and that we greatly appreciated his service to consumer interests. He was honored in that fashion,

in the same way that he might be recognized in any other organizational circle, but nothing ever that had to do with funding. That was as clean a matter as anything ever possibly could be. It just didn't come up.

Anyway, we did get funding from Consumers Union for the first 15 years or so, and then a special development grant to put on a big push for financial self-sufficiency.

NS: I believe that the date on that letter that I sent you, that year was the year that Brenda Dervin was appointed as development director.

EM: Yes, Brenda was on for two years, as I recall.

NS: So it would have been 1969 and 1970. Is that about right?

EM: Yes, it was about that time. That was the purpose of the special grant that we got from Consumers Union. Finally, we decided we were at a point where we had developed a viable enough program. Consumer interests were a visible enough matter now, nationally, that if we really put on a push, we just might be able to get over the hump and fly financially independent.

So, CU continued to provide its grants, so much per year to help support ACCI, and then we put in a bid to them to hire somebody to do this public relations job and try to pump up membership over the couple year period; then we put in enough additional funds from the ACCI budget to see that effort through. We really stuck our necks out to do that, but it worked.

We had 900 and some members at that stage—right around a thousand—and that went up in the couple of years following that drive to 3600 or something thereabouts; so the development effort really paid off. Brenda did a terrific job part-time.

That effort, of course, stretched the budget terrifically. What it meant was we were pumping current membership dollars along with the CU grant into that developmental effort, and at the same time trying to maintain services. So, we were really stretching dollars pretty thin and hoping to goodness that we generated enough members out of all of that so that the cash flow would be such that we could continue the membership service commitment to the members and not go bankrupt in the meantime.

I must tell you of ACCI's financial condition prior to that time. This was during one of the early years after we founded the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*. At that time, membership dues came in somewhat throughout the year; the bulk in the fall. But the membership renewal date for a member was 12 months after that member took membership, so we had a cash flow coming in throughout the year. But in summer, the treasury was always lean, and I do recall one summer writing a check for an issue of the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* to the printer, and paying some other bills, and then here I sat as the chief executive officer of a national organization that had 38 cents in the treasury—38 cents!

Now I had every confidence that in the days ahead there would be some membership dollars trickling in, but it was a bit scary.

NS: Do you remember when that was?

EM: No, but it was probably about the first year after we founded the *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, whenever that was.

NS: I mean, if you had to pick a nadir in the organization's finances, that sounds like it was it.

EM: Yes, and I hope we never face such a condition again.

NS: I recall a letter (from reading through the records) that you wrote explaining—I think that was '73—the dire financial problems that the organization was facing.

EM: Of course, I probably wrote many such letters. In fact, I remember toward the end of that membership drive, when we were determined to become financially self-sustaining, I had already notified the Consumers Union board that we had it figured out we were going to make it on our own and we would not come with any more requests at hand for another grant. That, of course, was good news to Consumers Union; we were going to fly on our own.

Our solvency was predicated on a dues increase. Now this was during the Nixon years, and along came the price freeze; I anguished and anguished over that and finally called Colston and said, "Colston, I think that just as a matter of principle it behooves an organization in the consumer field not to suggest a dues increase, even though we could do it under the guidelines and have clear need. Under present conditions, I think we ought to go along with the spirit of the freeze, but if we do, we're going to have to approach the CU board again for another grant request—another 4,000 dollars or something like that to see us through the year." He suggested that he think about it and talk it over with the CU board and I talk it over with the ACCI board; it was a significant decision at the time. Well, we did request another grant and delayed our dues increase a year because of that.

By the way, in those years I suspect a lot of people heard about this national association. I don't know what they thought, but they must have visualized a headquarters office of some substance. People used to be surprised at the fact that the executive directorship was not a full-time job for me. They thought we had an executive office filled with staff and all that sort of thing. The fact is that at that time still, it was a Saturday night/Sunday labor of love, basically. The organization did pay an honorarium, which was the practice during all those years. As I recall, the last year I was in that office, the honorarium was \$800.

NS: How did the work get done?

EM: As I said, Saturday nights and Sundays. Of course, calls came to my office during the day and I handled some of the business during regular hours, but most of it was done nights and weekends.

NS: Did you have any help?

EM: Well, yes, office staff of course. Back in those years my wife was the secretary, working at about 60% of scale. But the nice thing of it was, she did the work at home. The headquarters' office for the ACCI for some five years or so was in my unfinished basement with bare cement walls next to the furnace with a few bare bulb lights hanging down from the ceiling—and that was it! [laughter]. That was the august headquarters of our national organization! That's where I wrote the check that sent us down to 38 cents, down in that basement. So, conditions were pretty humble.

NS: In planning that membership drive, did you try and figure out just who this organization conceivably might appeal to?

EM: Actually, we decided that prior to the drive as I recall, at some point, and it was at the point when the name change came about. We took a hard look at the thing and said, "Look, this organization has, since its inception, tried to reach two groups of people: professionals and the lay public, and how are we doing?" And the answer came pretty clear: We were doing a rotten job of reaching the lay public and a pretty good job of tapping professionals who had an interest in consumer affairs.

NS: That's about April 1968, I think—the name change, anyway.

**EM:** That must be about the time. It was about the time we had the meeting at Greeley, Colorado—as I recall—'68 to '69, something in that time frame. I think we took the action during the meeting at Greeley in 1969. I don't know exactly how those times jibe.

At that juncture we said, "Let us simply declare that we are what we're best at—and that is reaching professionals and serving professionals—and become a professional service organization and forget about trying to reach the public; we're not going to be able to do that."

**NS:** Did you really think there were enough professionals to make it a going concern?

**EM:** Yes, by that time, and obviously there have been. Now we felt we'd have to put on a drive. We also felt that once we had cleared up that image problem, that it was going to be a lot easier to say, "Let's really tap them." The *Journal* issue really came to a head, I think, also that year, having really been raised for very serious consideration at the Penn State meeting the year before, as I recall. I remember someone gave a speech in which he really put it to us for not having founded a professional journal. That had been discussed before, and I remember the ACCI board had some real anguished, long hours of debate about whether we were sure we could make that thing fly. Given what it takes to finance a journal—the tremendous percentage of a budget that would have to go into it—we really debated the matter long and hard.

Once we had made some move in that direction, the organization's image became more clear, and then we decided, "All right now, let's make sure that we've got every viable professional who might possibly be interested in this field as a member of this organization. If we're going to have a journal, let's go out and tap those libraries, as well as individuals."

The advice we got from everybody that ever dealt with a journal was to work through a good university press. Thank goodness the University of Wisconsin Press was available; they had an orientation and service record ideal for this kind of thing. And then we put Brenda Dervin to work on that development drive to expand membership.

**NS:** One question divided into three parts: First question, how did you find Brenda? Second question, who was it that you contacted at the University of Wisconsin, and is there somebody at the University of Wisconsin who has been helpful all these years? And third, how did Gordon Bivens get chosen to be the editor?

**EM:** That's a long question. May I go back first?

**NS:** Yes, please.

**EM:** The one group that we did not ever manage to tap effectively is secondary school teachers. We tried and tried for years. The year I was program chairman in one of the St. Louis meetings, 1966, I tried like the dickens to set up a meeting that would be of particular interest to secondary school teachers and flooded the St. Louis area with mailers to teachers about the conference. Nothing. They just didn't show.

There are social studies teachers, home economics teachers, business teachers, and others involved in consumer education, but if they got off at all, it's with some of those meetings, and we have just not been able to tap them. I only know of one secondary school teacher who has been to a very substantial number of meetings, and how he managed to get himself into a position where he could get time off for it, I've never been quite sure. But we've not been effective in that matter—and that's unfortunate—but it's true.

Now, back to your questions. First of all, when the *Journal* was founded somehow Gordon Bivens seemed to the ACCI leadership as the natural to be the *Journal* editor, and he had

expressed an interest in this role. Gordon had been at Wisconsin, on the Milwaukee campus, as the director of their Center for Consumer Affairs. He later came to the University of Missouri and was in the department that I chaired.

When he came to Missouri, we worked out an agreement for part of his appointment to be allocated to the *JCA* editorship. We worked out an arrangement that he would come in, and for whatever period he chose to do so, have his *Journal* editorship as part of his academic appointment at the University of Missouri, so that worked nicely.

He had some ties with Wisconsin, of course, and with some people at Wisconsin Press. We explored several press services and printers—including the University of Missouri Press—and they all said, "That sounds like the kind of thing—if you can get Wisconsin Press to do it—go there." That's the word we got all over.

They were very helpful, very knowledgeable; they performed services at what constituted a pretty big lug out of the ACCI budget, but at very modest rates for what they had to do at their end. They were very helpful. There were a couple of Steves there and I'm ashamed to say I don't remember their last names, but I know there were two fellows by the name of Steve who were just very helpful to Gordon as editor and they were very helpful to me and other editors later. They were also very helpful to me as executive director—just really neat people to deal with.

NS: Did you have to put other kinds of plans on the back burner in order to fund this *Journal*?

EM: That's an interesting question. As it turned out, no. If you had asked me, might there have been other plans that would have been put on the back burner, I'd presume so. But at the time, the field needed a journal, we felt, and the whole question was, were we going to be able to fund the journal and was it going to, in effect, add enough stimulus to garner enough membership and library subscriptions, etc., so that we became financially self-sustaining and moved a big important step ahead in terms of the field at the same time. And it turned out that strategy worked.

It wasn't as though we had some money and were asking what were we going to do with this money. The *Journal* was part of the strategy of both doing what we felt a professional association ought to do and solving our financial problem at the same time.

NS: Did you hope it would solve that secondary school problem?

EM: No. In fact, that was one of the reasons why we developed the Consumer Education *Forum*, which has been good and bad and never really solved that problem either. We hoped to have an organ that would tap the secondary teachers and be meaningful enough to them to attract them. Whereas they might have some interest in the *Journal*, read some of the articles, we did not try to target secondary teachers with the *Journal*.

We saw the *Journal* as primarily an avenue for reaching pretty much the college, university and related-academics, and probably not the thing that would attract secondary teachers.

NS: Did you assume that the pamphlet system would go by the board when the *Journal* was created?

EM: Yes. We made a decision then that we would cut out the pamphlets because they were largely geared to a lay audience. What mostly happened is that academics used them, maybe got batch orders for their students in college classes to study some of those issues, but there was, to my knowledge—certainly in my time as executive director—never widespread distribution of those to the lay public.

NS: I see. Most of the pamphlets that sold were sold to the professionals who used them in their courses?

EM: Yes. They probably bought batch orders for their students.

NS: So the *Journal*, or maybe reprints from the *Journal*, fill that function as well as the pamphlets?

EM: Yes.

You asked about Brenda Dervin. How we came to hire her is interesting and that goes back to Gordon Bivens too. Brenda had been at Wisconsin; in fact, I think, in the employ of the Center for Consumer Affairs in some office with public relations capacity. Gordon was very impressed with her for very good reasons; she's a live wire, dedicated, a person of integrity. She had gone to Michigan State to work on her degree in communications—her doctorate—just before we started looking at names of people who might take on this venture.

I don't know how many we considered, but it was pretty evident that the ACCI development position would suit Brenda well as a matter of her own professional interests and her fiscal situation—to continue her studies, do this on a part-time basis, and earn her daily bread in something that she had an interest in. I'm sure that Brenda gave more service—as many people do professionally—than she was paid for. She certainly gave dedicated service and did a superb job of putting that thing in motion.

There were an awful lot of things centered around Gordon Bivens at that particular time with respect to the *Journal* and this whole drive. After that, it was a matter of Brenda up in Michigan, and me in Missouri exchanging gobs of correspondence and late night telephone calls and whatever, to keep this whole venture sailing on all fronts.

By the way, it comes to me that it was just prior to that, we took a fairly substantial jump in membership the year or two before Brenda, and a particular individual ought to be given credit. As I remember the circumstances, Tom Brooks was the national membership chairman that year; and an awful lot of people become national membership chairmen in various organizations, and they spin wheels trying to make some things happen and things don't happen. But I'm quite sure that that year we went from right about 1000 to 1500 and some members. I'm quite sure the record will show that Tom Brooks was national membership chairman that year, and Tom was not just chairman in name only. Tom shook the trees and the folks out there and made some things happen.

NS: Is this when regional memberships were discussed?

EM: I don't know whether they set up a regional membership network or not. No, I think that came later.

Tom didn't do a lot of talking. I don't know how he got the action done, but somehow he got people at it and gave them enough suggestions as to where to shake members out of the trees in their vicinity and the like, and he is to be given a lot of credit for that effort.

NS: How much credit goes to the membership drive and how much to the political and social climate of the 1960s and early '70s?

EM: That's hard to say, really. I suppose there is some question about whether we would have launched the membership drive had it not been for the climate. With a different societal climate, it just may be we might have looked around and said, "Look, we've taken a shot at this stuff and we just don't think the odds are good to stick all that money into a drive to try to get membership pumped up to become self-sustaining."

But it did look—at the time—if you could manage to pull it off and launch a journal to attract the professionals and develop a clear-cut identity as to what you're about—with the seed bed of interest nationally in consumer matters—it just seemed like all systems were go; the time was really right. If any one of those elements had been missing, it might have been a no-go all the way around.

**NS:** Do you know if the real number of professionals skyrocketed at this time? In other words, how could you date the rise in the number of people whom the organization could really serve?

**EM:** I think the people were there before. I wouldn't say that they were all professionals with a primary interest in this field. There are economists, agriculture economists, business educators, and various other professionals who had some interest which then became intensified, highlighted. There was just a lot more focus, and it seems to me that when that happens, people then begin to get more interested in a professional association, its conference, exchanging ideas with other professionals. It becomes a bigger element of their life, even if it's not their main thrust.

I think that the people for whom this was the primary interest—I mean, even though they may have had some other professional responsibilities—the thing that really tugged at their heart was consumer interests; they were long since in the field. You attract new people who fall into that flow, but somehow, I think, those were going to come to ACCI anyway.

The others include those who say, "Hey, that organization looks pretty good now that they have got a thing going; they've got this journal and so on, and even a peripheral interest for me. Boy, for that size membership they put on a good conference. I'll try to get there once in a while. I'll latch on to that even though it's not my main interest." So we picked up a goodly number of memberships that way, I think.

**NS:** Would you say that the proportions of various constituencies have changed from when you first joined to when you left as executive director?

**EM:** Well and beyond that time, yes. I think, again, in those early years the people who showed were people whose first and primary interest was consumer interests. To my recollection, there were very few business types, some few from the business-funded institutes, but very few business types. And just jumping from there to now where we have bigger conferences, bigger membership, I think we have more people for whom consumer interests are somewhat peripheral, or not a life-long commitment.

For some it's a way to make a living—some with a fleeting interest. But you also pick up some new people who essentially are the young hard-core that are sort of the equivalent of the founders—they've really got it in their blood—this whole consumer thing is their first love. So there's new blood coming along that will replace essentially that real committed orientation.

**NS:** Do you think ACCI got its proportionate share of those committed consumer activists who joined the Nader organizations, who set up the PIRGs around the country and who began working on regulatory reforms—the grass roots consumer professionals, as it were, activists?

**EM:** No, I don't think we have a great many of those. Whether we should have or not may be another question. We probably should.

I think, for some of them particularly, consumer interests generally may be of short-term duration, perhaps. Some of them are particularly interested in a single issue but not in the consumer interests over the long term broadly spelled out, it seems to me. By and large, I suspect they tend to be impatient to get on with moving toward a specific solution or at least a solution to a specific problem and then on to other pastures. I think that kind of thing is

desperately needed in a movement. At the same time, I think there is room for an organization that, over the long haul, says we will explore interests—and issues will come and go—but the consumer interest will always be there. There will be other issues and other matters and, in fact, one of the things of interest to this professional association is other consumer organizations and the function that they play in the consumer movement, and how they perform and how they work and what, in fact, they have accomplished.

NS: I'm wondering if that relates to the decision not to take any political stands as an organization, and what other implications that decision may have had and how it came about?

EM: Yes. That decision came about largely because people felt (I hold this view) that the consumer interest as an element in our society needs a number of different organizational structures and purposes addressing it. Sure, the people (as myself) who voted that the ACCI should be a professional organization serving professionals in largely an academic sense—if there were no activist groups, we'd vote to form activist groups. We're members of them. I founded our state association in Missouri, was on the steering committee at the founding of the Consumer Federation of America, have been very much involved with activist groups. And so were most of the other leaders in the ACCI very much involved, but feeling that there also need to be other avenues for serving consumer interests; for example, there is good reason to have a consumer product testing organization in this field.

So, for myself, it makes good sense to have different kinds of groups approaching this whole broad interest area with, hopefully, similar ultimate commitment, but with different contributions to bring to bear, different concerns to address, different modes of operation.

NS: I know that at various times groups would come to the convention and try to have resolutions adopted of one sort or another: recommending the passage of the Truth in Lending Act, or recommending approval of appointments to the consumer commissions and that sort of thing.

EM: Yes, and I must admit my recollection on exactly what we did is a little bit hazy. If anything, I think we may have been a little timid about some of those things because of our tax-exempt status. We probably bugged-off on some things and said, "Oh, we must not enter into that arena," when we probably should have said, "Let's pass a resolution supporting this or that and get on with it."

The easiest thing to do, of course, was give more support for consumer education. That's pretty clean and you don't have to be too specific. And yet, in some ways, the way to stay away from the whole issue and never get quagmired in it at all was not, for example, to support given individuals for offices or specific protection legislation, or whatever, through this organization.

NS: You mentioned the IRS tax status. How does the need to remain within the confines of a particular IRS tax bracket or tax position affect an organization?

EM: In retrospect, we let it affect us maybe more that it needed to. Although times have changed some, as I see it now, the tax board allows a bit more stance-taking by exempt organizations than I thought, and in truth, that is not a matter that ever interfered with ACCI all that much. We could function for what we are without ever feeling any real discomfort from the IRS code. The one thing that has been the pain in our side—which, happily, Mel Zelenak as executive director got resolved with the aid of an attorney who had been through these halls before—was the postal service code which cost us a lot of money over the years.

NS: Could you tell me about that?

EM: Well, the fact that you're a G-3 or whatever status for IRS purposes does not guarantee that you are in the educational organization mailing status category with the post office. It

turns out that somehow, when the office was at Greeley, Colorado, and Ray Heimerl was executive secretary (that was the title of the executive office in earlier years) the ACCI enjoyed the most favorable mailing rates.

If I may digress and comment on the executive office for a bit, the organization was founded on—appropriately—very democratic principles with a mode in mind that there be elected offices and somebody would carry out the will of the elected officers. Eventually, it got to the point where it was pretty clear that the elected officers were appropriately involved in making decisions, but an awful lot of implementation and moving the organization had to take place on the part of the executive officer, and so they eventually changed it to executive director during my tenure in that office. Not, in fact, at my request. That suggestion had been made several times before the change was made, and I was never sure as to whether my academic institution might feel that the change suddenly then reflected a whole lot more coming out of my hide and might find it objectionable. I kept saying, "Well, let's hold off on that." Finally, I felt secure enough about support there and nobody giving me any hard go about this office taking too much of my energies that I finally said, "OK. I think executive director better depicts the nature of the office and I'm not going to run into any problems, so if you still want to change the title, go ahead."

At any rate, Ray had the office (I'm sorry for that end run). [laughter]. Ray had the office out there, and to my recollection, had the most favorable postal rate. Then the office moved to Columbia, and of course, I had to apply there for the bulk mailing and didn't get the most favored rates. In spite of my filing petitions and explaining to the post office time and again over the years that we were the same organization, didn't have a name change yet, same purposes—if anything even more so now serving professionals as a non-profit educational entity and not even trying to reach the lay public directly. It seemed to me all the more the requirements for the postage rates for educational organizations, but they kept arguing that we were more like a trade association. In fact, they used the professional thing, sort of against us, and said that, in effect, "See, you are a trade association serving the people in your trade," so we had a drawn-out skirmish.

I remember Bob McEwen—maybe about the year after he had been president—said he was going to take the thing on and I think he thought that I was (pardon me, Bob, but this is what I think) a little wet behind the ears and not very adroit at handling bureaucracies, so he was going to handle this bureaucracy. Well, at the end of the year he came back to report that he had been drowned in the same quagmire that they drowned me in [laughter] with my petitions.

Mel Zelenak, finally, in those later years, got hold of a lawyer (I think from Chicago)—anyway, somehow he got wind of an attorney who had handled this kind of matter with postal categories for some other organizations. I don't know how he got wind of that, whether we found that out because the American Home Economics Association had used him, or—you might talk to Mel about that—at any rate managed to get a change again. The postal matter has been over the years—just because of the nature of our organization and the percentage of the budget that goes into postage—has been much more of a thorn in our side than any IRS regulation ever was.

I must tell you this. When the organization came to Columbia, I found out that much to my dismay, apparently neither income tax reports nor social security reports had been filed for the organization.

NS: By Ray?

EM: And to my knowledge by nobody before that. I guess there was just an ongoing presumption that this was simply a humble little organization of a nature that was tax exempt. We all knew that—a few part-time employees, doing some of the office work, stealing time from his university and mine and wherever else, you know, doing it that way—that the formalities were

not addressed. Well, when I inherited the office and it moved to Columbia, all of a sudden I found the IRS confronting me with the prospect of somehow having to retrace steps and file 12 or 15 years of some kind of reports. Happily they let me off the hook. [laughter] It was not difficult for me to prove that we were not a profit-making organization! That was easy and I convinced them pretty readily that it was kind of a futile effort to monkey around with any back reports.

Further, at that time, the rule on social security still prevailed: that employees had the option as part-time employees for an organization of this kind, as to whether they wanted to have social security or not. Given what the regulations were and the nature of the situation, that issue just apparently never came up. My wife, for example, opted out; it would have been a disadvantage for her to pay social security taxes given the circumstances. And for the several years after, when she gave that up and went to work full time elsewhere, and I hired some other part-time employees, they consistently opted out of the system given their own personal situation, because this was just modest part-time work.

NS: You mentioned one move which was the move from Colorado to Columbia, Missouri....

EM: I just knew you were going to bring this up! Actually, if you hadn't, I would have.

NS: Could you tell me from the beginning as early as you can—and going on—how it happened that there was a later effort to move the headquarters?

EM: Well, I'll tell you what. I'm going to give some personal comments on this issue because I think the perspective is important, and partly, somewhere along the line, history has to be set straight. A lot of this stuff is documented, but people easily forget and believe what they want to see on an issue like this. I mention that because, as a matter of fact, I am the one who brought up a possible move from Columbia. You have undoubtedly got this from somebody else already—or sooner or later you will—there is some notion that I tried to keep the ACCI under our thumb there at Missouri and all that sort of thing.

After I'd been executive director for five or six years or something like that, I said to the board, "Look, I like doing this. It's of interest to me, and it keeps me embroiled in some things that I do enjoy and I can handle, but the time spent on the executive director duties is probably keeping me from doing some academic things that I need to do and that I probably—to be frank about—am perhaps a little bit afraid of getting into. But the fact is, I've got to get busy about some academic matters, get some things published; and the needs of our graduate program are growing. Where is a volunteer to replace me as executive officer?"

By the way, I must tell you how I got to be executive director. That's a story worth recording. There were no volunteers forthcoming, so the board said, "Well, we know it's difficult to do this on the side and keep on doing it; we know it's a sacrifice and all that, but will you do it for another year?" So, I'd say, "Well, sure, until you get somebody else I'll do it for another year." Well, that went on for several years. That probably started back when I was in the office for about five years, so each year it sort of got like that.

Now, the board did raise the honorarium connected with the office several times. I think the first year I had the office I got \$400, as I recall, for the year and it went up eventually to \$800, which I think, came out to a pretty modest hourly rate, which I also didn't mind. But the point is, there was not a lot of money involved. More significantly than that, my institution through all those years—first my family and then my institution—really subsidized the heck out of the ACCI. I mean, there was no question that some of my time and energy that might have been devoted otherwise was devoted to serving the organization. You can't just do it all on Saturday nights and Sundays. It takes other time.

We had Gordon there as *Journal* editor. I think he was editor for seven years while he was at

Missouri—a one-third time appointment as *Journal* editor out of a little department. For several years we were the only faculty in our department in our field of Family and Consumer Economics. That's a big slice out of a small shop, and it's to the credit of the University of Missouri that they supported this field to that extent.

Finally, I said to the board, "Look, we have got to do something about this. Our graduate program is growing. I've got to devote more of myself to it; this is not the way I can spend any more of my life. We've got to do something about this." So they said, "OK, we'll put out offers for bids for who will take over this organization."

NS: Do you recall who did that?

EM: The board. I was involved in processing the ads and was to receive the applications.

NS: I mean, was the idea of putting out bids yours?

EM: Yes. I said we have got to find a place. So that rather than trying to keep the organization there, just insisting that it be in Missouri—which some people in the organization, frankly, have painted me as wanting to do—I was the one who instigated the search for another location. Well, so we put out ads. Out of that, as I recall, I got three telephone calls and then we got one bid. When I say bid, the offer made by ACCI was to essentially have the organization headquartered somewhere on the current basis: an executive director getting an honorarium, and that's it, plus paying for secretarial help, with some of it—still at that time—stolen from the local department. The department secretary would help out with correspondence and the like, but basically ACCI paid most of the secretarial work, but none of the salary—just a side honorarium as an overload kind of thing—to the executive director. That's the way it had been run up to that time.

One institution offered to have a young faculty member serve as executive director—who was still working on a degree, who would have in that second year been away at another institution finishing off the degree. Eager as I was at the time to say, "OK, I need to get out from under this office," that did not seem to me like a viable solution. And the board said, "Hey, this isn't a go; Metzen, suck up your belt, you're going to have to do this for a while longer."

The three phone calls I got were all from individuals in institutions whose first question was, "How much money does the organization bring into the institution if we have it lodged there?" The minute they found out that it wasn't a matter of bringing money into the institution, they just thought that was dumb, and that was the end of that; they were not the least interested. My institution had been subsidizing it, Ray Heimerl's institution had been subsidizing it—although obviously a subsidy that was smaller for all those many years.

Nobody wanted the organization on that basis. So finally I said, "Look, I will do it until we get somebody else, but we have got to build this into a position somehow for somebody. Apparently we are not going to get anyone to hold the office on this overload basis. And I'll make you an offer: if we get the right person, I'll try to get it built into a position at Missouri. It can't be mine; I've got to do other things. But we've got a position coming along in Extension. We'll try to hire the right kind of person and get an agreement attached—like for a journal editorship, except this will be executive directorship—and tie it in that way." So the board then negotiated to have the position lodged at Missouri with somebody now on a partially paid basis. Now, the fact of the matter is, it was still subsidized by Missouri for several years after that because the stipend that ACCI paid was far less than the percentage of time that that person put in, but at least there was some partial funding.

Now came the issue that was brought to the board, I guess, by somebody then on the board; at least the question of negotiation of the contract with the University of Missouri came up. At any rate, somehow the thing came to a head with the board, surfaced as a matter of

interest—shall we relocate?

NS: This is the ACCI board?

EM: The ACCI board, and I was no longer on the board.

NS: You were still executive director?

EM: No. Karen Stein was executive director. That new arrangement was part of her position at Missouri—paid now—where the function was built in as part of her load and the ACCI supplied part of her salary. And, in fact, I stayed on longer in the office than I had intended to because I was able to save the ACCI some money. I stayed on, as I recall, through the end of June, some half-year situation to save ACCI from having to pay some of that salary early in the year, because ACCI was still not out of the financial woods, even when we operated somewhat in the black. Operating in the black meant that next year's dues were enough to pay for this year's services [laughter]. We really weren't yet ahead of the game fiscally. That came some years later.

So, the issue of location came up to the board. They called me about it, as a former executive director. I had to remind people that I was wearing two hats. One was as a former executive director; I have an interest in that organization from that standpoint, but I was just another past executive officer. As a department chairman at the university that had housed and subsidized this organization for all those many years, I also had perspective on the situation. People had a tendency to think of me as a past executive director, but not in terms of my administrative role in the host institution. I thought there should have been some kind of communication, because all along there was always—year after year—"Keep it a while longer." Now, all of a sudden, this issue was raised about relocating, at an awkward time for Missouri, and with ever such short notice. And then, when I requested of the president, who was Helen Goetz, the opportunity to come to the board meeting, I was told, "No." I would be seen as having a vested interest in this matter! Now, I was never seen as having a vested interest by some of those people when I was holding the executive director position as a labor of love to keep the thing from going under, but now I was told I would be seen as having a vested interest, so I couldn't even come and dialogue with the board about this matter.

I must tell you candidly, there were, in my view, several players in this game. One apparently wanted the organization in another region of the country just to have it in another region of the country and to highlight that there were things going on in this field.

NS: Was that Oregon?

EM: No, no. Let me make very clear that none of these comments have to do with the particular institutions that put in bids, all of which bids were offered with integrity and honorable intentions. In fact, I think all of the institutions were harmed by the process that ensued. But on the board, you had the dynamics of several things. One was an executive director whose position at the University of Missouri, as it turns out, had been cut; and it would have made a nice package to be able to go somewhere else and say, you don't even need a whole salary to hire me. I come with this executive office for the ACCI with me and I can wave that about and all somebody has to have to hire me is a part of the salary.

Someone else who did not want to confront the issue at that time, as best as I can piece together, would very much have wanted to see the organization move eventually to that individual's institution from wherever it went initially—it seems to me it was almost a fore-ordained case that Texas Tech was going to get the nod at this time—and use it as a P.R. piece there later. Texas Tech had, in fact, indicated at the outset that they did not foresee the organization staying there for very many years. As a matter of fact, Texas Tech had a new building, they needed to fill it, and this was one of the things they were going to fill part of

that tower with. It was interesting that some of the ACCI people thought that Texas Tech was going to be good at helping ACCI get grants. What they didn't realize was that Texas Tech was good at getting grants, and they saw the ACCI as one of the grants they were going to get. I don't denigrate that. In fact, I can share with you the comments of the person who I think was associate dean at the time at Tech, who came to that first membership meeting where the issue came up, and that heated vote was taken over the issue of relocating, and the membership voted to reverse the board decision on relocation.

She told me later that she had been informed that Missouri was no longer interested in hosting ACCI, that the department chairman at Texas Tech had been asked to contact Missouri to find out whether Missouri was interested. Now, if Missouri was contacted, the only person I know of who might have been contacted would have been the executive director, and Tech was apparently told that, no, Missouri isn't interested; when as a matter of fact, that person knew that we were planning to put in a bid, and that I was drafting papers to have ACCI stay at Missouri under the right conditions. So Texas Tech was misled and the associate dean at Tech told me later on that if they had known that Missouri was still interested they would not even have put in a bid. I suspect that may have been true with some other institutions as well, but I don't know.

Well, somebody else on that board, I'm convinced, had hoped that because of the location and other reasons, if the ACCI went to Texas Tech and went into doing some grants there, it would provide the opportunity to serve as a grant consultant. Now, what I'm telling you here about these cases is a little conjecture, based on conversation and comments of other people since that time.

You had somebody on the board who, prior to coming on the board, had never attended an ACCI conference—didn't understand the organization, didn't understand the nature of organizations—who said to me right out, "Hell, I think organizations ought to change locations every two or three years just for the hell of it." No appreciation for the sense of identity, the costs involved—the personal costs, the relocation—I mean, none of it, just no understanding at all! He was sitting on the board and voted! He got on the board because the executive director named him as somebody that might well be considered for replacement in a vacancy because he had distributed some membership promotion brochures in his state, and the board named him.

I don't know if I should be telling all this quite this way, but we might as well get it on the record. I later said to another board member who voted for relocation, "I cannot figure out why you took the stance you did," and was told, "Well, I just thought that the organization needed to get into a situation where there was some new blood and a young faculty." Well, without in any way denigrating another institution, I think it fair to say that the Missouri program has a long history of special focus on consumer interests. We had more faculty members with a strong consumer orientation than most programs.

The head of the department at Texas Tech, for example, was a University of Missouri graduate in interior design. But the comment that really interested me, because we had in our department—of the four of us—three faculty members who were from 32 to 36 years of age, and I—who was apparently seen as sort of the over-the-hill one in the crown—learned in later years that I'm a couple of years younger than the person they were going to name as executive director.

So, the stances and the arguments just simply seemed totally ludicrous. The way it was handled seemed totally ludicrous. Here was a university that had provided a home over the years on such a subsidized basis, yet it could not even be recognized to speak to the board on this issue. It was handled behind closed doors.

I found out from somebody that there was a suggestion made by one of those people on the board, that after the decision was made, the records all be sealed from the membership. Now

when you get a professional association, especially a consumer association, where anybody on the board suggests that the records on the matter be sealed from the membership, something is smelly in places other than Denmark. So it got to be rather smelly.

The process ran late. Some of the site visits ran late; some were never made at all. The decision ran late. We were within three weeks of the conference—the annual business meeting. I pleaded with the president that there ought to be an opportunity for dialogue among the membership there, that the issue ought to be discussed, and why not let the membership take a stand because it's this late now. I was told, "No, the board had to make a decision," which decision was then made by telephone call a few weeks prior to an annual meeting where you've got a big issue up that had never been up before with the membership able to consider it.

I think several of the institutions that put in bids were harmed. Oregon State had been told that they were going to have a visitation team come, which visitation never happened. To my knowledge the communique that it wasn't going to happen was not appropriately forthcoming. A good loyal member there—who had facilitated the bids through the university, had communicated with their administrators and all that—was now caught in a situation where the organization didn't come through, and I would say that Oregon State people had reason to be doggone angry about what happened.

I think Texas Tech had some apologies coming from a number of quarters; they apparently were not given full information about the whole situation. And certainly the University of Missouri was treated shabbily. And some of the other institutions that put in bids—each in their own way—may have suffered over bad handling. I think the bad handling was due to the fact that several different players had different vested interests in seeing the organization move. So appropriate processes with integrity and full and free flow of information, and voicing perspectives and weighing alternatives broke down. Communication was completely closed off and it was a botch, and the organization looked bad. A number of individuals suddenly got hurt, and the institutions were a bit embarrassed and angry at my institution, my dean who was new at the time. She reviewed the history and the developments and said, "It looks to me like this is a clear-cut case and you go take your stance; you have my backing."

Let me add one additional point, if I may. In the middle of all this, the University of Missouri, and of me specifically, were characterized by some as wanting to clutch this organization to our bosom. I'd like to set the record straight on that. The minutes of the board of directors meeting a year before the fracas show that I told the board that we had a new dean coming to my college, and that I would carefully monitor the situation and if I got any sense that this dean was not supportive of a consumer organization, had a philosophy that was antithetical to that, or in any way brought pressure to bear on the ACCI being at Missouri, I would alert them immediately that they should stand ready to find another home for the organization. I was eager for the ACCI to be in a philosophically- and administratively-supportive environment, be it at Missouri or elsewhere. By the time that dean was there two months, I knew that there was not a problem. That was evident from everything.

I alerted the board to that possibility because I wasn't just interested in having the organization at Missouri; I was interested in having the best possible home. Given the alternatives, I'm convinced that Missouri has been the best possible home. I think it still is. If it ever isn't, I'll be one of the members that says, "Let's move the headquarters." But I will not be on that side just for any old whimsical, nonsensical reason for anybody else's self interested reasons.

Anyway, the thing came to a head. It took a while before I became fully aware of how strange the decision process was. The dialogue had broken down—this was always an open organization with dialogues—and there I was cut off from talking with the board after all this time. The board announced their decision to relocate the headquarters in that kind of climate. I realized it was somewhat strange but I wasn't quite sure why. And, in fact, I had prepared a

document—which you may not even have in your possession—all set to hand to the board to arrange for the transition to another location.

NS: I haven't seen it.

EM: I think I have one here for you. I know I have file copies. I had already given copies to Karen Stein, who was executive director, to take to the board for a board packet. And then some pieces began to fall together. I began to realize that this whole thing was a little fishier than I thought it was, and I decided to change strategies. I knew enough by now and I perceived enough of the situation to know that there were some strings being pulled and it was just kind of fishy; there were some shenanigans going on. So I decided to withdraw my transition proposal and take a different stance. I decided I'm going to buck it; I'm going to fight. So, I went to Karen's home (fortunately, she hadn't left for the board meeting yet) and I said, "Karen, I need to change those documents." I didn't tell her what I needed to change or what I was going to change them to, but I said, "I'm going to revise my transition proposal, so let me have those so I don't get them mixed up, and I'll just bring them to the meeting; tell the board I'm bringing the documents later."

The document that I had prepared was a simple one, saying we really can't afford to cover the postage that will be due on some things coming in here, and we'll need X hundreds of dollars to take care of the little transitional kinds of requests; it was very humble. In fact, when I look back on it, it was an embarrassingly-humble request. So that was all set. Then I realized that things were not straight.

So then I prepared this packet—which you may have seen—of documents that I distributed to 25 or so former leaders of the organization at the meeting, and said, "I'm going to make a floor fight out of this, and I would like your support." And at the business meeting of the membership, every former leader of this organization except one got up and spoke against the move, and argued for opening this thing up to dialogue and really exploring what ought to happen. I think that—to anybody who looks at this issue—when you see the likes of Stewart Lee, Dick Morse, and Arch Troelstrup, Carole Vickers, Tom Brooks, Gordon Bivens, and so on, line up one after another taking the same sort of stance for the same kinds of reasons, there ought to be a message in that. At least there is to me.

NS: Could you speak about how the board of directors could not be in touch with those people in making that kind of decision?

EM: You see, the people who wanted to manipulate this thing did not want to be in touch. There were one or two who wanted to make a decision sort of in isolation, because frankly, I think they couldn't face a lot of wear and tear and pressure. They thought somehow out of the purity of some hypothetical decision model would come the real truth that they could rest on. But mostly, there was a group of players, who—for individual selfish reasons—wanted this thing to happen.

NS: Does that suggest to you deficiencies in the way board members are chosen, or does it suggest to you that some kind of radical change had taken place in the nature of the board?

EM: I think several things happened. One is that a number of things came to a head. Had Karen Stein's regular staff position at Missouri not been cut out, things would have been different. We had a big budget shrink on there; she was untenured, and that was just one of the positions that was squished. Had that not happened at this time, the whole thing may not have arisen; it might have, but I doubt it.

Had some other people not been on the board at that particular time, the issue would not have arisen. Had this one individual who was just going to take a little fling at this organization and just raise a little hell—had that person not been there—there might not have been a

majority. If somebody with a solid orientation to the long-term good of the organization had been in that board slot at that time, it might have swayed the whole in a different direction. There were several stalwarts on the board at the time who had sound perspective on the issue, but they didn't constitute a majority vote.

I don't think anybody, early on, quite saw the dynamics of what was going on, and in fact, I think the players who were doing some manipulating didn't see all the dynamics. And I don't think they each realized that somebody else was playing games in this scenario either. The fact of the matter is, a couple of people really sharp at manipulation could have pulled that thing off.

**NS:** Did everybody's term come up at the same time?

**EM:** No. There were staggered terms, so all of a sudden you had a strange sort of mix and majority. I doubt that under the new bylaws and election procedures we have, a situation like the one we've been discussing is likely to happen again. For myself, I believe that irrespective of board prerogatives, sound judgment ought to prevail, and when an issue is that significant to a membership organization, we ought to take it to the membership—at least at the business meeting—for a dialogue and a vote. We ought to circulate for suggestions and comments from the members by mail—those who can't get to the board meeting—and get some input.

**NS:** There was some suggestion that the membership wasn't entitled to make that kind of decision.

**EM:** Oh, that's right. To this day, I'm convinced that, when the parliamentarian ruled that the motion to set that board decision aside was out of order, technically that was probably correct. The bylaws clearly said that the board of directors makes the determination about location. But the nature of such a membership organization must be taken into account. I had contact with our university attorney before I took on this battle. I told of my planned action, and that I didn't want to get my university into a situation where there is any lawsuit or something like that, and he said, "I can't imagine a university lawyer in this country taking on a professional association membership vote....I don't care what the legalities are, I don't care what the bylaws say, I don't care what anything says. If you have a professional membership association that wants to vote on an issue, there's no way that any lawyer would take that on. The nature of the enterprise is such that there is widespread support for a membership expressing its will."

Since that time, the bylaws were changed to provide for a membership vote on a change of headquarters location.

**NS:** In a more general sense, you were executive director for 11 years, I think?

**EM:** A little less than 10.

**NS:** You were in a position to see just how the president and directors related to the executive secretary, later the executive director, and the membership. What made for a good relationship between you and the presidents you served with and what kinds of factors did not?

**EM:** Oh, dedication, communication, follow-through—very often follow-through was mine—but particularly communication. The really fruitful years were years in which the president had a notion that some particular thing ought to happen, and there was a drive to say, "OK, we've built this kind of base, now here's my thing; I want something to happen, not something that was 'off the wall,' but something that was clearly in the flow of the association." And the president would devote some real energy and commitment to seeing this thing happen to move the organization ahead.

That was helpful, but most of all, communication and effective kind of follow-through and some

take-charge. It's an awkward position for an executive director to be in when you don't have an elected official who is a take-charge type. Then you get to be seen as a person who is running the meetings, which is not an appropriate role. I think an executive director has got to be a pusher and mover as an implementer—maybe as one who is making suggestions—but not as one who basically sets the course; that's what they elect officers for.

My basic stance was that this is not a policy-making position, it's a policy implementing position. I've got to admit, I got a little tired for a few years of having boards anguish over this and that at great length, and then in the last 15 minutes of the meeting before everybody had to run for planes, pass half a dozen motions, each of which ended with directives to the executive director to implement. And I finally said, "Look, we've got to have committees; we've got to have somebody besides the executive director go back home and implement." That may sound like you're being awfully efficient, but motions don't make results.

NS: When did that come to a head?

EM: We didn't really have a confrontation, but I suppose I'd been in the office four to six years when it began to be apparent that more and more roosted with the office, and of course, as the office built, the load became heavier. It was a sort of transition, except things don't happen in little inch steps, they happen a yard at a time or a block at a time—you know—in big jumps. And there came a time, eventually, when enough pressure built that we had to have somebody who had time to devote to the executive office, and it wouldn't any longer be just an overload, nighttime and weekends labor of love.

NS: Was the committee structure established before you had come?

EM: There were committees, but not to the extent that they have committees today. We didn't have nearly the network of those kinds of activities that exist now.

NS: I might bring this full circle by asking you to tell me a story you said you would, which was how you became executive director in the first place.

EM: I swear this is true. This was in Spring of 1965. I had been elected to the board of directors—felt rather neophyte about the whole thing. I was invited to the pre-conference board meeting in Berkeley to observe and become familiar with the matters under consideration, and was then to join the new board at a post-conference meeting. Well, I was walking down the hallway of the hotel to the board room for my first observer session. Ray Heimerl, then executive secretary, came from the other direction and when I got along side of him—I swear to God—he grabbed me by the lapels, slammed me up against the wall and he said, "Ed, my wife says if I come home with this office one more time, she's going to divorce me, and I think this time she means it, so you're going to be the executive secretary," and he shoved me through the door of the meeting room. I guess it was one of the few times I have been totally speechless. It wasn't too long until Ray raised the issue and said, "Ed Metzen will do this."

Bob McEwen was president. He said, "Well, wait a minute, let's give ourselves time to think about this." Now, the good Father didn't know me from Adam and I suspect he spent the evening going door to door getting background on me—like, was this some screwy kid we have on our hands or what kind of a bird is this anyway. The next day it was agreed that, if I could get clearance back at home at the ranch, if my dean was supportive, then I would go ahead and take it on. I didn't want to commit myself without asking my boss, "What about me taking this on?" But she said it was fine, so a major commitment in my life was launched.

Now, to provide a feel for our circumstances in those times, let me tell you this. The bulk mailing permit at a location was \$30 per year. Ray wanted out as soon as possible, but he agreed to keep the office through December so we wouldn't have to pay that 30 bucks twice [laughter]. So that's how it was in those times; we really nickled and dimed. Then I got myself

in a bind because I took on that office in January, and lo and behold, this program chairman for the national meeting that April had a baby expected in April. That was not too smart, but it was an exciting time. Anyway, that's the way I quite literally got pushed into the office.

Well, briefly, just a couple other vignettes. From a personal standpoint, I'd like to mention that for a number of years when my kids were small, the big thing going in Columbia, Missouri for them was to go around the table and earn their 15, 20, 25 cents an hour stapling and folding the ACCI mailings. It was kind of a family subsidy that not many people in the organization were aware of. I'm not sure I'd let the kids spend their time that way again, but that's how they earned a little vacation money. Meanwhile, many people envisioned the national organization with a full-time office staff and headquarters of its own, and an office building, and all that sort of thing—interesting perspectives that people had of something that was really a pretty doggone humble, skimpy operation.

Another issue in the organization's history was the matter of the ACCI getting involved in a formal sense with the J.C. Penney Consumer Affairs Forum. There were rumors started by a few to the effect that Jean Bowers and I—because we were the resident faculty representing ACCI—made some grandiose sum like \$5,000 a week for our involvement, with the implication, I guess, that we might compromise our consumer orientation. We did get an honorarium for doing that. The honorarium was, as a matter of fact, less than my salary rate at the University of Missouri. I'm sure it was for Jean, too—and we took our vacation time to do it. But, again, if people want to form some perceptions, that's what they do. The important thing, I thought, was that we guarded ACCI interests very carefully in terms of the memorandum of understanding with the Penney Company. I frankly told David Schoenfeld, the consumer advocate in the Penney Company, that if there was any pressure at all about what goes in that forum in terms of dialogue—any conditions or constraints at all, other than that there was an agreement that their president would give their perspective on consumer affairs—I not only will have ACCI pull out of the program immediately, but would go public with such a problem. That was just to emphasize the point that we had a clear agreement that this would be a hands-off arrangement, with no constraints on the consumer interests participants. And it was a good experience all the way around. I have never been sorry ACCI got involved in that. Despite that fact, it was a hot issue and we then took a vote the following year regarding ACCI not getting involved in any kind of joint venture like that again with a business operation. Such relationships can be tricky, but that one, I thought, flew very well.

You may have found some documents related to the ACCI board having a meeting with representatives of the Joint Council on Economic Education just prior to the ACCI meeting.

NS: Yes.

EM: The long and short of that was, after ten minutes, I totally lost interest in the meeting and was sorry that I'd flown in a half day early. It became very apparent that they were willing to dialogue on the grounds that ACCI would become their affiliate and that we would become the arm for doing some consumer stuff—not on any kind of joint venture basis—but with them essentially calling the shots and us serving as a distributor of their materials and philosophy. That was a disenchanting experience, to be candid about it.

Another incident that deserves mention is this. Esther Peterson was having the first of her four regional consumer meetings shortly after she came in as presidential assistant for consumer affairs; this was in St. Louis, immediately prior to the ACCI meeting in Madison, Wisconsin. I think it ought to at least be recorded that the consumer movement could have gone down the tubes almost totally on that occasion. We chartered a plane, complete with box dinners, to get from the closing session in St. Louis to an evening session in Madison. As I recall, there were 28 people on that plane, and they included Colston Warne, Arch Troelstrup, Dick Morse, Esther Peterson, Gordon Bivens and others who were providing significant leadership in the consumer movement. At any rate, there were probably in the country at that time, 60 people who were

dyed-in-the-wool consumer interest folks, and 28 of them were on that one airplane! I remember thinking somewhere between St. Louis and Madison, God, if this thing goes down [laughter] that's all she wrote! It would take centuries for the consumer movement to revive—they're all sitting on this one airplane.

NS: Worse than the basketball team that went down.

EM: Yes. A couple of leaders from the old St. Louis Consumer Federation, real stalwarts in the movement—all these key people sitting in that one lousy little plane. I began to wish we'd split up.

Well, I wanted to share those vignettes.

One other thing I notice on your list is a question about CFA. There certainly were ACCI members who were instrumental. I was there the night we sat around until the wee hours in a smoke-filled motel room in Washington during Esther Peterson's meeting of consumer groups at the White House, when the seeds of CFA were planted. The time was ripe for such a development, and Esther distilled the thing, brought representatives of consumer groups together and knew that without explicitly instigating it, that there would develop a movement toward a coalition of consumer organizations; and it happened. ACCI had been represented in CFA as a dues-paying member organization, and many ACCI members have been involved as members of other groups, consumer action organizations.

ACCI took what I thought was a very appropriate step in offering to have our voting power in CFA reduced from the ten votes maximum that we held, to a single vote, and we encouraged other large organizations to adopt that position also—in a democratic spirit—so that the organizations with large memberships would not carry more voting clout than the small consumer groups. I have no idea what's happened to CFA voting power since then, but I do know that the ACCI took the stance and I thought it was an appropriate move in the democratic spirit in CFA. So ACCI and its individual members have had significant impact on consumer interests in a variety of ways.

NS: Thank you.