CAROLYN STIEBER

August 1, 2001

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is August 1, the year 2001. I'm Jeff Charnley, interviewing Carolyn Stieber for the Michigan State University Oral History Project, for the sesquicentennial, to be commemorated in the year 2005.

Professor Stieber, you can see we've got a tape recorder here. Do you give us permission to record this session?

Stieber: Yes, I do.

Charnley: I'd like to start first with some personal and educational questions about your background. Where were you born and raised, and where did you go to school prior to college?

Stieber: I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio. I went to the University of Chicago for my undergraduate work. I then worked for the United States Navy as a civilian for a couple of years, first in Cincinnati, then in Washington, D.C. I transferred to another government program called the Veterans Emergency Housing Program, where I met my future husband. At the beginning of the time that we were first married, we lived in Minneapolis. A year after that, we moved to

Pittsburgh and I attended the University of Pittsburgh and took a master's degree, both of my degrees in political science.

Charnley: What interested you in political science initially?

Stieber: In political science, the University of Chicago had astoundingly fascinating faculty, some of whom were in Washington, because this was during World War II. But those who were still on the campus were teaching the courses that I thought were the most interesting of all the courses that I took, and I think it was one of those love-at-first-listening things. It never occurred to me to major in anything else.

Charnley: Were you active in politics?

Stieber: No, not in the sense of practical politics, but I have always been what you might call a political junkie. I read a tremendous amount of political news and I'm just enormously interested in things political. But I never held an elected office politically. I have held other offices, but not that.

Charnley: How was it that you came to Michigan State?

Stieber: We came to Michigan State because Jack Stieber was offered a position with the newly

formed Center, and later School of Labor and Industrial Relations. When we first arrived, with two small children, I was interested in going to law school. We had just finished paying for the years of Jack's Ph.D., when we lived on his fellowships, and I had a small amount of earnings because I had been doing some editorial work for the Russian Research Center at Harvard. I wrote to the University of Michigan and to Wayne State. There was no law school in this area. There was no expressway between here and those places, and it appeared to me that if I were to go, I would have to live either in Detroit or Ann Arbor, and that was very unappealing, with two little girls.

Within six months, somewhat to my surprise, an individual who knew that I was still working on a book that I was trying to put into better English for the Russian Research Center at Harvard, someone who knew that here mentioned my name when the political science department said that they had an emergency. We came in the spring of 1956. This was now, I think, December that same year. They needed to cover an evening course in American politics at the university, in political science. Would I conceivably be interested?

I had never thought of teaching in my entire life. I said, "Sure." And because it was in the evening I didn't have to deal with babysitters and that sort of thing. My leg was trembling so much, Jeff, that I stood as hard as I could that first evening, before that first class. I had a wonderful time. I think because I had worked in a couple of government agencies and I had also been an intern at the Bureau of the Budget in Washington, I was able to make vivid for students some of the things that American government faced.

It was a successful term. At the end of that quarter, the department asked me if I

would do it again the next term, and I said yes. It began to branch out from just American politics to state politics and urban politics, so I did those three courses for several years. When the younger of our daughters was now in first grade, I decided that I could teach during the daytime instead of in the evening, which was a lot easier in many other ways. Eventually, the Michigan politics class, which Charlie Press [phonetic] had taught for a couple of times, needed someone, and I took that over and that became sort of my baby. In fact, I wrote a short book, because Michigan was changing very much politically at that point, from the Democratic regime of G. Mennan Williams to the Republicans.

It was extremely interesting, and I loved teaching. I was always, of course, the sort of odd man out in the department because I did not have a Ph.D. I had never even considered such a thing. After doing this, though, for a number of years, I decided that I did not have the circumstances that were very reliable. I was really hired term to term, and even though I did keep teaching term after term and year after year, I wanted something more than that, and told the department that I was not willing to continue that way, at which point I was made an assistant professor with tenure.

By now I had written lots of articles and I had published a book. The present governor of Michigan had been a student in my Michigan politics class, and the present Secretary of Energy was also in my class.

Charnley: That's Spencer Abraham and John Engler [phonetic], right?

Stieber: John Engler. I had Spencer Abraham. And in fact, the sheriff of Wayne County, Robert

Ficano [phonetic], is a former student of name, so I have some names to drop, too.

The department was agreeable to changing my status. In the meantime, I did become involved in other things at the university, and I have never regretted that this is the way I went, instead of the law school thing. To satisfy my law school aspirations, my younger daughter went to law school. It had nothing to do with me, of course, but, nonetheless, we now do have a lawyer in the family.

Charnley: That time in the 1960s was the great transition time in Michigan politics. Were you involved at all in the constitutional convention? I know President [John A.] Hannah certainly was.

Stieber: I wrote a monograph about the constitutional convention, and that got a fair amount of publicity. I attended numerous sessions. I talked to a great many people in preparing this monograph. It was an interesting time, because the G. Mennan Williams to [George W.] Romney change was an enormous change in Michigan, and Romney was able to do some things which probably a Democrat could not have done, namely, to get an income tax in Michigan. I don't think any Democrat would have succeeded in doing that, but he really pushed that very hard. I did interview then-Lieutenant Governor [William G.] Milliken. I had a session with [John B.] Swainson. I met with G. Mennan Williams. I never was able to interview Romney directly, but I did talk to three or four of his assistants, as well as the lieutenant governor, and I was able to talk to leaders in the House and the Senate, and several people who were active in the convention. So I was extremely interested in the convention.

Charnley: When you say you interviewed them, did you tape record any of them or would you take notes?

Stieber: I didn't tape-record, but I'm a pretty good note-taker. If it were today, I would, of course, have a tape recorder. I've always had pretty good notes. And later on, much later on, my good note-taking was to be a valuable resource. I should also tell you, I have one of the world's worst handwritings. In order to keep notes confidential in the ombudsman's office, I never had to worry, because nobody could read my writing. [Laughs] Even I could not read it too well sometimes. But, no, I didn't use any tape-recording, but I did take extensive notes. The people I interviewed did get copies before the book was published, in case they had some changes or corrections.

Charnley: What was the title of the monograph?

Stieber: The monograph--I'm trying to think. I think actually I brought a crib sheet with me. No, I just say, "I wrote an article on Michigan Constitutional Convention." I'm not sure now what the title was. I could give it to you if you wanted it. I know the title of the book, but I've kind of forgotten what the monograph was called. I'd written a couple of articles, too, before the convention.

Michigan had had a tremendously difficult financial struggle, which was being played out politically in the legislature. The automobile industry was changing. It was doing a certain

amount of relocating to the South. It was getting pushed by competitors from other countries. The automobile industry's relationship, on the management side to the Republican party, and on the workers' side to the Democratic party, was fairly unique in Michigan. There wasn't any other state that had quite that stark division in a tremendous industry that really split along political lines. And Romney, of course, came out of that automotive background.

Charnley: American Motors.

Stieber: Right. And he was extremely sensitive to the relationships between the different forces in Michigan, and he knew pretty much what he could do and what he couldn't do. It was interesting, because I think he was very astute in Michigan. He did not come over that way when he tried to play a larger role outside the state, the first campaign for the presidential nomination and later in the cabinet position. I don't think his reputation was anywhere near what he had earned in Michigan.

Charnley: How would you describe the campus in the 1960s, when you were teaching?

Stieber: Well, the campus was, of course, increasingly--the war, the Vietnam War, escalated, and that's not so much the early sixties, although it was really showing itself through the whole decade. There were a lot of adventures on campus. I remember broken windows, I remember demonstrations of all kind. There were professors who canceled classes. This, of course, is the reason that an ombudsman's office was established on this campus. You haven't asked me that

question yet, but I assume we're getting to that.

Charnley: I'm not there, but we'll come to it.

Stieber: Political science was particularly divided, and I can remember vividly, at department meetings, folks over there didn't talk to the folks over there. A lot of members of the department had been involved in Vietnam.

Charnley: In the Vietnam Project?

Stieber: Exactly. And had been advisors, had been over there for years, and there was a great deal of hostile feeling between those who felt very bitterly that this was not a war that the United States should be pursuing, and others who were very much committed to it.

There was even a very big reception, I remember, at the Kellogg Center, when the president of Vietnam and his wife and somebody else were here, and then Williams, I guess, was still the governor at the time. It was a tremendous involvement that Michigan State had in Vietnam.

Charnley: This was President Ngo Dihn Diem

, wasn't it?

Stieber: Right, right. That definitely showed itself in the department. I guess because I was the

only female in the department for ten years, and had this rather odd status anyway, I was never one of the boys, and so I attended department meetings, but I never really was caught up in these divisions. But I can tell you, they were very deep and very hostile. Political science was sort of the eye of the storm in many ways.

Charnley: Wesley Fishel [phonetic] was a colleague?

Stieber: Yes, definitely.

Charnley: When the *Ramparts* article was published, that must have created a furor on campus.

Stieber: Oh, yes. Absolutely. I remember, at a memorial service for Wesley Fishel, in the chapel here, given some of the people who were there and who spoke kind words, President [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.] said to me, "Lots of hypocrites here today."

Charnley: They'd forgotten the earlier words. How was it that the Office of the Ombudsman came about?

Stieber: Got established? Well, of course, I didn't establish it. James Rust, as you may know, was the first ombudsman. I will try to not give you the long-winded answer to that. This really

came out of a study done by the Carnegie Commission that had been headed by Clark Kerr. Clark Kerr had been caught in the disruption in California and he was famously fired by Ronald Reagan, who was then the governor. Kerr became the head of the Carnegie Commission, and they did a number of studies in universities, and one of them was called "Dissent and Disruption."

In that particular volume, the suggestion was made that universities might try an idea that had germinated centuries ago in Scandinavia, to have somebody who was perceived as neutral to handle complaints and grievances. This university turned out to be the first school of any importance--President Hannah must have been persuaded when he read that volume. I think Eastern Montana holds the record for establishing the very first office, but this was the first place of any consequence that established one.

So when James Rust was appointed, he became, in many ways, a template, so to speak, for other offices that were to come afterward. There was a good deal of correspondence, which I read long ago in the office, of other schools writing to him.

I can tell you now that there are probably 150 college and university ombudsmen. There are even some in other countries. I know there's one in Cork, Ireland, and there are a couple in New Zealand, and I think there are some in other places, too, and all across Canada. It mushroomed very, very fast, because it gave some flesh to the concept that there would be someone, presumably independent and reporting to a high-level person--and in this case, directly to the president of the university--who would be in the students' corner if something was unfair that, upon investigation, seemed to need some remedy. Now, that doesn't mean that the ombudsman didn't hear lots of stuff that was just

complaints because they thought deserved a four-point when they only a three-five, and they worked so hard.

It was also a time, Jeff, when it wasn't just the war. It was part of post-war America, in the sense that universities had grown so fast and were very bureaucratic, and almost impossible for a full-time student to take the time to work through what might not, to us, seem like a big problem, but was something that was terribly frustrating to them. Their housing application had been lost and the residence hall said, "We never heard of you. We're full. You can't come in." That sort of thing. The tremendous bureaucratization, and particularly in the state universities because they're the ones that really grew probably the most and the fastest. I think that fed into a sense, on the part of students, that they were sort of the proletariat; nobody cared about them.

In addition, it has always been the case--wartime probably makes it more so--but I think it's always the case, that a certain number of faculty are not on campus. They're doing consulting work. They're doing it for the government, they're doing it for private industry, they're everywhere but where they're supposed to be. Therefore, the teaching of the classroom is rather low priority because most departments are not going to promote you on what a terrific, inspiring teacher you are. They're going to look at your publication record and so forth and so on.

So the absence of faculty, and I think the perception that teaching just wasn't important, it didn't matter that Professor Zilch didn't show up for three days and sent in a graduate student who doesn't know us, who possibly doesn't speak English. If it was in a quantitative area, that was frequently a very strong complaint. All these things kind of

added to a sense that students don't matter, nobody cares.

I think by establishing an ombudsman's office you are sending a message that somebody cares. That doesn't mean that the ombudsman gives orders and makes policy. Far from it. But if it's well-established, and this one, I think, was well-established, with a direct reporting line to the president, it doesn't mean that you're on a line with the president all the time. In fact, very infrequently. But nobody knows for sure where you're going to go and how high up you're going to go and how hard you're going to fight, and that's really where your clout comes from. I found that it proved to be considerable.

Charnley: Did you find that Professor Rust's model was a good one for you to follow, as it turned out?

Stieber: Yes. I made some changes from his period. Now, of course, I was in the office longer than he. He had been there seven years. He wasn't in there physically when I took over. He had been ill, and the office was being minded by Frederick Dutton [phonetic], I think as a favor to President Wharton. Dutton had been the head of Lyman Briggs School, and I think now had been replaced in that capacity. Dutton was extremely kind and very helpful to me, so Rust really wasn't there when I took over.

The big change that I made was that he had had one or two other faculty assisting him. I decided to post this as a graduate student's assistantship, and I stuck with that for my fourteen years in office. Seventeen years in office, actually. It was seventeen years. My two successors have stuck with that also, so it's a very interesting job for a graduate assistant, and these were

advanced graduate assistants and people who were almost always working on their doctorate. They came from all different parts of the university, and some of them stayed a couple of years.

It worked out very well, because it added a point of view in the office that was not my point of view. These were people who were going through the registration hassle, and I don't know about that. Registration here used to be--

Charnley: I went through the pit.

Stieber: It was pretty bad. It was pretty bad. I once went through registration, simply standing behind some students going through. I could only do that once, though, because then the registrar people knew who I was and wouldn't do it again. But it was kind of awful, and we were such a big university and yet we seemed to have this tremendous paperwork process, whereas other universities seemed to be going in a different, more computerized direction. Obviously we caught up with them finally, but registration was always something of a hassle, but that wasn't all of it.

I thought that having that young person's point of view was wonderful. These were very bright people, men and women, and I learned probably ten times as much from them as they learned from me. It worked out, and I was rather pleased to note that my two successors have continued to--

Charnley: Did that graduate assistantship have a specific title?

Stieber: They were just called graduate assistants.

Charnley: They worked in your office?

Stieber: Right, right.

Charnley: When you first started, what would say your main duties were?

Stieber: I had to become known around the campus, and I did pilgrim's progress. I invited myself to every college on the campus. I wrote to every dean. The cooperation was terrific. I went to every office that I could think of, from financial aid to housing, to pest management, to the public safety, places that were flashpoints in office traffic. I truly did a pilgrim's progress that first year, to try to familiarize myself with the campus, because although I had already been here for seventeen years, I knew the political science department and I knew something about my husband's department, but I didn't know anything about pest management, for example, and I certainly didn't know anything about the registrar's office. Registrar and financial aid are particularly involved with students because they have some commerce with other every single term. I needed to learn the campus.

I was extremely pleased that year when I wrote a report to the president, which I was commissioned to do by the Academic Freedom Report, President Wharton used the report in a way that no other president ever has since. He clipped it apart, and if I referred to a squeaky problem in, let's say, financial aid, he sent it to financial aid and said, "I want to know what

you're going to do about this and you report back to me." He had a deep interest in the office working well.

I found it interesting that after he left here and he left the SUNY complex in New York and became the president of the TIAA, he established an ombudsman's office, and he sent the ombudsmen here to spend a day with me.

Charnley: Is that right?

Stieber: And I liked that very much. I needed to not only learn about the campus, but I needed to learn to handle things in a way that was going to work well. I will give you one example which sticks in my mind very hard. I was fairly new on the job when something clearly egregiously was wrong in one of the nonacademic departments on campus. I called the head of that department. Never met him before. And he said, "You're bothering me? I've never had to deal with an ombudsman before. I do not want you to call me. I do not want to be bothered by things like this."

I hardly had time to say, "This is an error and it is going to be very embarrassing if it isn't corrected." I was in tears after the conversation. In fact, the secretary said, "What are you crying about?" and I said, "I've just been talked to just horribly." But I didn't tell her why.

I told my husband that night. I wrote a letter to this department head. Big department. I said, "After I dried my tears, I realized I did not explain to you sufficiently how important this is to be corrected."

My husband said, "Tear that letter up. No tears. That's what they think a woman is going

to do in the job. Just tell him, in a very short note, that since he doesn't want to be bothered in the future, and you do report directly to the president, you will simply tell the president--"

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Charnley: When the tape ended, you were talking about one of the first disputes that you had with a faculty.

Stieber: This was the head of a big department on campus and there was an egregious error made by that department, which was going to be very embarrassing if they didn't correct it. When I called the head of the department, he literally screamed at me over the telephone and he said he never had been bothered by the ombudsman before, he didn't want to be bothered by me, this was not something he was going to deal with. It was just a terrible conversation, and I burst into tears when I finished talking to him. The secretary saw that I was crying and asked me why I was crying and I said, "Oh, no. Nothing."

I wrote him a letter in which I said, "When I dried my tears, I realized that I had not explained this sufficiently well to you, but this is an error that is going to be embarrassing if it's not corrected."

When I showed a draft of the letter to my husband, he said, "Tear that letter up. No tears. That's what they expect a woman to have, as a reaction. You just tell this person, in a very short note, that since he doesn't want to be bothered and since you report directly to the president, you will simply contact the president next time there's a problem in his office, and then the president

can deal with it." I got a tremendous apology very quickly that week, and we were kind of buddies ever afterward.

Charnley: So your husband's counsel was good.

Stieber: He was very helpful. He was very helpful. And my learning curve went up rather rapidly at that point. I don't know if you are going to ask me what I think was my biggest achievement, as the ombudsman, but I'd be glad to tell you.

When I was fairly new, still, on the job, this was an academic dispute and it was one where a student had been severely punished for the absence of a single day. There was no indication that there was something that happened in that single day. He got a zero for the class for a single day's absence in the whole quarter. This was not a terrific student, but otherwise he would have passed the class.

The student filed a grievance under the Academic Freedom Report, and won the grievance in his department, because the department said, "There's just nothing on the syllabus that indicates that one day's absence--it was not test, it was not any special day. It was just a day."

There was no mechanism in that original Academic Freedom Report, other than persuasion, to get justice done for the student. I went to the department head. He agreed with the student. In fact, the student won on an appeal, too. The faculty member refused to change the grade. I talked to the dean and the dean said, "Nothing I can do." In fact, the dean said, "He's a horse's ass, but there's nothing I can do." [Charnley laughs.]

I was determined then that the Academic Freedom Report really needed to be changed. It was a long struggle, and part of the antagonism came from students on the Academic Council because they wanted students to be in charge of students' grades, and I knew that was never going to fly.

But what we finally achieved--it was about a two-year struggle, through the Student Affairs Committee and then through Academic Council--was that some named individual--the dean, if no one else will act--must see that justice is done if a student wins a grievance, and on appeal also. Everybody's got a right to appeal, both sides.

That hasn't had to be invoked too many times, but it has been invoked, and it means that you're not just spinning your wheels, because if persuasion were all that it took, you could have persuaded the faculty member in the first place. But there are faculty members who will no more part with a zero than they would part with a grain of rice in their rice bowl. I considered that change in the Academic Freedom Report to be my monument. It doesn't say "Stieber" on it, but I know it's there.

Charnley: When was this accomplished?

Stieber: I would have to look it up to give you an exact date, but this was early in my ombudsman years.

Charnley: President Wharton was still--or was he president yet?

Stieber: I believe so. I believe so.

Charnley: What would you say your relationship was with President Wharton, in terms of working relationship?

Stieber: My relationship with President Wharton was one certainly of deep respect on my part. I liked the way he handled my annual reports, which I put a lot of time into, and I thought that by clipping them apart and sending them to the relevant places and asking for comments and replies, that was a way of getting something done.

In truth, we did not have long conversations about very many things. A few times a year I might call his office about something. He was very helpful and very supportive, and I think he understood what this kind of job was supposed to entail, very much.

I didn't have any problem with subsequent presidents, but subsequent presidents did not use the report. They always sent me a letter, thanking me for the report, but whether they did anything with it or not, I don't know. In latter years, by the time President [John S.] DiBiaggio was in the office, a good deal of the contact was with the provost, with David Scott, rather then with the president's office. But I did need to talk to the president on a couple of occasions, and he was very helpful.

I should stress that the ombudsman does not have any tenure as ombudsman. You have tenure as a faculty member, but not as the ombudsman. So I really served at the pleasure of the president, and any president who wanted to replace the ombudsman, all they had to do was say, "I replace you." So I was rather pleased that, due to a change of presidents several times, that I was

retained, without lifting a finger to bring that about. There was no way that I could cause that to happen.

Charnley: Have university presidents, since President Hannah, respected that office, in terms of not replacing one just at will when they disagree?

Stieber: As far as I know, they have. Now, of course, I started with President Wharton. I think we had an interim of about a year with President [Edgar L.] Harden. I'm not sure that President Harden was aware of the office. I'm not too sure. I saw him once in a receiving line and I think I said, "Hello, boss," and he sort of looked at me, as if to say, "Who is she?" But certainly I think that was true of President [M. Cecil] Mackey and President DiBiaggio.

I suspect that the office problems have changed. I would guess that registration is much less of a hassle now that it's handled in a totally different kind of way. I don't know whether financial aid is the same kind of hassle that it's always been for so many students, because we have a very large number of students who are getting some degree of aid, and the rules are complicated.

I would say, the answer is yes, there are presidents at some universities who have abolished ombudsman offices. However, more are established every year. The number that are abolished are very small. But some important ones have been abolished. Ohio State is one that comes to mind. The continuance here, I think, is reasonably assured, at least that's my impression.

Charnley: Was your office directed primarily towards students?

Stieber: Only students, only students. It's written that way in the Academic Freedom Report. Now, that's an interesting question, because there are ombudsman offices on other campuses where the ombudsman deals with students, faculty, support staff, unionized staff, everybody. That was never true here. It's written strictly for students. We have a faculty grievance officer who is, in a sense, a counterpart, with somewhat different responsibilities, but that's a quite separate office. Our clerical workers are unionized employees. They have their own avenues that they're supposed to go through.

Charnley: Through normal contract and grievance procedures.

Stieber: Right. On occasion, someone would call me or come into the office, and this happened with a number of faculty members particularly, but sometimes other folks as well. And I would explain that I'd be glad to listen if they want me to listen, but I can't lift a finger to do more than listen. But they just wanted to know whether I thought they had a case, where I thought they should go. I became fairly familiar with different avenues of access on the campus. I don't want to exaggerate how much I knew, because it was always a very small amount, but probably I was more knowledgeable than when I started. There are a few people with whom I did have long conversations, either on the telephone or in person, who just wanted me to talk to them.

Charnley: You mentioned the situation where the person treated you rudely. As word got out, as

the faculty learned about what your job was and who you were and why you did it, did that change? In other words, were there instances when you were able to, without having to threaten that the president would have to take of this, where you were able to work with the department heads and deans and that sort of thing, after they learned about your--

Stieber: There were exceptions, but almost always, and I think I got smarter. I think I used a smaller amount of ammunition as I went along. I probably became more confident, whatever.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Stieber: --quite good, and I think I became more skilled in how to get it. I do think that most people want to be fair. They do not want the perception out there that they're unfair. They can have high standards, and high standards are not going to be a basis on which a student is going to be able to win any kind of argument, because a professor can be as persnickety as they want to be on what constitutes four-point work. You don't have to give four points at all. We did have a faculty member who failed a whole class and then left the university. He was sending a message to his department, not to the students, really. The students were just the troops.

The department wanted to do something, and we conferred with each other and I suggested that they ask deans and provosts to approve this, and the registrar had to get involved. They simply gave the students a pass for that term. It was not one of these pass/no pass classes, but they just changed everybody to a pass, because they were certain that this entire large class did not deserve to fail, and that this was someone who was very angry with his department.

I would have to tell you that a few years later, from some other university where he ended up, he called me and he wanted some advice on how to handle a cheating case. [Laughs]

But cooperation was not an endless struggle. It was, by and large, very good. You couldn't operate otherwise.

Charnley: Over the course of your career, did you see the nature of complaints change, or were there some that were the same?

Stieber: The academic ones pretty much stayed the same, and the percentage of them pretty much stayed the same. Graduate students were more likely to have different complaints because graduate students were being used more and more in the classroom, and in some cases being given very heavy responsibility.

In some fields, as you would be aware, the opportunities for what's out there after you get your Ph.D. in hand were not as attractive as they had been, and I would say over a decade or so, the change in the objectives of the student and the likelihood of the student having a rewarding career beyond this university and this degree got to be more difficult in some of the fields. I think that led to some increase in graduate student grievances of various kinds. "I'm not being given credit for something that I helped write and I did all the work on it." "I was told that I was going to teach one section; I'm given four sections." "I'm only half-time; I don't have time to do my own work." "I'm not getting the guidance that I think I need for my committee." "My committee chair is now off in Pakistan," etc. So I would say the graduate things, you could see some change there because I think things got tougher for a lot of graduate students.

Charnley: Under President Mackey, with the cuts in the programs, did the students feel that, or did you see an increase in complaints at that time, as a result of the disruptions [unclear]?

Stieber: I don't think it had much effect on the traffic was in my office. It had a tremendous effect in Academic Council because I remember banners being carried in to Academic Council by James Madison students. There was some turmoil over the fact that I think they had just ordered a couple of pianos for Cowles House, and one of the banners said, "Ditch the piano. Save James Madison." That sort of thing. But I did not discern any difference in terms of the traffic in my office. I was just aware of it because I, as ombudsman, had an ex officio seat in Academic Council, and so I just saw the banners come in. I didn't have a vote, and I was usually pretty quiet.

Charnley: The Academic Freedom Report, which the board adopted in 1967, had that been revised over time?

Stieber: There have been some minor revisions. Dan Soffin could probably answer the question better than I can because I think they were working this past year--Dan is the ombudsman now--and I think they were working this year on some other changes. There have been some small revisions. I didn't have the impression that there were major ones, except that there was a lot of time spent working up a companion graduate document, and then there's a third document for medical students. That was sort of constantly being revised, and I don't know what the status of

that is right now.

The big change that I think has taken place, and I don't know that it's incorporated in the report, but after the turmoil in East Lansing, after this basketball fracas, I guess in 1999, they now have some provision where the university is able to punish a student for accidents off campus. Now the Academic Freedom Report is the opposite, and it bars that. Whether they changed the language or they're just doing it, I don't know, but that would be a major kind of change.

Charnley: Were you involved in the judiciary as it related at all to the student grievance that they have through the judiciary?

Stieber: The student judiciaries, through the student affairs offices, really had to do with behavioral problems and residence hall problems and vandalism and that sort of thing. The ones that I was more familiar with were the academic grievances, which they did not handle at all. On the grievances that did get a hearing, and there aren't ever that many of them, but there have been a few over the years, I was not someone who was participating in the procedure or anything; I was advising on how you go about setting this up. Only once did I ever participate in a grievance hearing, and, again, this is one that sticks in my mind because this was a very bright student, who had all four points in a rather rigorous class. They had quizzes every week and he put his name on the wrong part of the score sheet, so he got a zero for the class.

Charnley: For the whole class?

Stieber: For the whole class. Even though all of his grades had been four points. I did participate in that grievance. I attended. I just wanted to see what happened. The colleagues of the faculty member mopped the floor up with the faculty member and said they'd never heard of anything so outrageous. And I had tried to talk to this person for weeks, saying, "You know, I've read the syllabus. It sounds like such an interesting class, but it's not about where you write your name. That was stupid and careless." He never handed the things back, so the student didn't know that he kept putting it in the wrong place. I said, "But that's not what the class is about." Justice was done, and the student got his four point. That's the only time I ever attended an actual grievance.

Charnley: How about the board of trustees? Were they ever involved, in terms of your contacts with them?

Stieber: I seem to remember that there was one trustee, who shall be nameless, and is no longer on the board, there was one trustee who seemed to occasionally write to the president's office and say, "What does that office do?" I don't know who ever answered the question. Nobody asked me to answer it. I would say the involvement of the trustees was close to zero. I think some of them knew about the office. I don't think very many of them did. Once in a while, even a legislator--you know, students who are aggrieved about something, and if their parents are aggrieved about something, they'll go wherever they think they can go.

Once in a while someone would call from a legislator's office and say, "Is this student being treated so miserably at Michigan State?"

I would always say, "Why don't you send the student in. Please send the student in." Sometimes the student would come in and sometimes you'd never hear anything further about it.

But I would say, whatever it says about this community, the campus community, the greater Lansing community, I did not feel that there was pressure coming from other places. I don't think that happened. I, again, know of some colleges and universities where that's not the case. I think the legislature gives a lot of scrutiny to the university because we're down the road, so to speak. And when the turmoil was going on, with the broken windows and we had this camp of students living--

Charnley: By Wells Hall, was it? Or by the International Center?

Stieber: I'm not sure exactly where it was, but the university was really getting pounded by the legislature in those days. I do not speak to what the president's office gets. That, I have no idea. But I would say the ombudsman's office was not interfered with by any member of the board of trustees that I can ever remember, or anybody else in any political position.

Charnley: Were you teaching at all during that time?

Stieber: That's a good question. I was. When I started, I was teaching very large classes. That obviously had to be adjusted because I was drowning in blue books and exams and lectures and etc. By the next year, the large classes became somewhat smaller. I had been doing two very large classes; that became one class. And then a few years after that, that became a seminar.

And a few years after that, it became independent study.

I think the last two, maybe three years that I was the ombudsman, I was not doing any teaching at all. I still went to department meetings and I still have a mailbox over in political science, but I just couldn't, in fairness, handle any more. The ombudsman's office was much too busy. And by then I had served a term as president of the College and University Ombudsmen. I was on the board of directors of something called SPIDR, which is the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution. That was a three-year term which involved some out-of-town excursions. I was just too busy and I just didn't think it was fair to the students.

I once had one of my own students come in--this was still fairly early in my tenure as ombudsman--complaining about his grade, and I was not about to change my mind about how terrible his work was. He screamed at me and he said, "I don't have an ombudsman to go to."

I said, "Yes, you do." And I sent everything to the president's office and I said, "You handle this. I don't want to know what you do with it." And I don't know what they did with it. They could have done anything they wanted. I think they gave it back to political science and political science gave it to somebody else. That only happened once.

The teaching I loved, and it was with difficulty that I reduced it, but I just simply had to. As the years began to go on there, we were just so busy and it really always remained a one-person office, with a half-time graduate student assistant. I really couldn't manage in the probably old-fashioned way that I taught, with blue books and that sort of thing. It was just too much. I loved teaching, though. I miss it.

Charnley: Did you remain a political junkie?

Stieber: I think I am still. I think I am. Probably I concentrate on international politics. It's less depressing. I attend, every year the political science has a symposium going and a lot of rather good speakers over the years, and I'm a very faithful attender of that. I just enjoy knowing what's going on in politics, but I'm not involved in any firing line kind of way.

I am now on a Community Relations Coalition. I have joined that in the last year, which was established after the 1999 fracas in East Lansing. This consists of university representatives and businesspeople from East Lansing and East Lansing city officials and the police department and lots of students. I'm just a member of the community; I'm not representing the university. There are some university folks on it. I suppose you might say it's slightly political, but only slightly.

Charnley: It's interesting your husband was involve in scholarly study in arbitration, and experience in consulting in that area, and then you, professionally, developed that area of expertise. What prepared you for that?

Stieber: I don't know. I'm not sure. I should tell you that when I was appointed ombudsman, my younger daughter was a student here. She was not living at home. She saw my picture in the paper, in the *State News*, and she called up, and this is how she congratulated me. She said, "Why on earth did they appoint you?"

I said, "Why shouldn't they?"

She said, "You're not even a good listener." [Laughs] Over the years, I think I've become a

somewhat better listener and she gives me much higher marks now than she did in those days. I'm not sure.

Jack and I do attend a number of meetings. He's been to some of mine, I've been to lots of his, including one just last month in Oslo. I am going to go through some training the end of this month to become a mediator. Whether I will actually ever handle a case, I don't know, but this Community Relations Coalition in East Lansing wants to offer mediation to some of the neighborhood disputes, which are largely between the so-called permanent residents and the increasing number of students who live here. I decided that since the training is available, I'm going to go through--it's a fairly intensive two-week training period and internship. I hope I survive it, but I am going to do it.

Charnley: When you came to East Lansing, did you anticipate that you'd be here for most of the rest of your career?

Stieber: No. When we came to Michigan, I had never been in the state of Michigan. We came with the condolence of--

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Charnley: This is tape two of the Carolyn Stieber interview.

When the last tape ended, we were talking about whether or not you felt that you would stay at Michigan State.

Stieber: I came to a place that I had never heard of. I went to the University of Chicago two years after football had been abolished, so I was totally not tuned in to anything that the Big Ten stresses. I had never been here, and we did come with the condolences of everyone we knew. We were told that this was a tremendous area for hunting and fishing and all kinds of outdoor things, none of which I'd do or care about. It was really unknown territory. I can say, after a good many decades behind me, that I think it was a very fortunate move. We knew people who said they would never leave Cambridge. Harvard, traditionally, does not hire its own graduates, and Jack had just finished his doctorate there. I knew quite a few people who said they can't leave, it's just too interesting there.

Well, my feeling was, I can go back to that area if I want to because now I can afford to, but when I lived there I didn't have enough money to get out of Massachusetts, ever. We were counting every nickel and dime, since we were somewhat older than other graduate students and had two children. I have never regretted coming here. I found Michigan extremely interesting politically, and within six months I was working in something that I found that I loved and had never considered doing. There was a school system here in the primary grades which people seemed to think was pretty good, whereas nobody thought the schools were good in the Boston area. It was just a tremendous change for us, and I could give these two little girls the freedom of the town here in a way that I could never do in a very large city. I liked Massachusetts and I liked Boston, and, oddly enough, I have a daughter who lives there now. But I have never ever regretted coming here.

Charnley: In looking back at your career at Michigan State, is there anything that stands out as most important? I know that might be a tough question.

Stieber: Well, I suppose being appointed the ombudsman changed my life very much, and when I said good-bye to President Wharton, that was what I said to him, that "You changed my life." I found that it opened a tremendously interesting world, and because I am interested in political science, I am interested in government ombudsmen, and I have written some things that have to do with government ombudsman and many of the most interesting meetings that I, personally, have been to in Buenos Aires, in Australia, just now in Oslo. I visited the ombudsman's office for Norway.

I have written some things, I met and very much profited from the knowledge of that wider world of government ombudsmen, and I have belonged to their organizations for years, as well as the university and college people. So I think it just led me into a wider world than I had been in before, and I think that the university, given its size, it's an interesting place to live. I'm one of these people who wouldn't consider coming to Florida or Arizona or any other--I don't like hot weather to begin with, but it isn't that. It's just that I think it's more interesting to live in a smaller town where you don't have to navigate tremendous amounts of traffic. On the other hand, you have the lectures, the concerts, the other activities. The library.

Charnley: The Wharton Center [for Performing Arts].

Stieber: The Wharton Center. All the things that come with being part of a university, and I

really think that that's about the most desirable living space, as far as I'm concerned. For vacations I like to go kind of far away, but I always like to come back.

Charnley: I want to thank you on behalf of the project, and I really appreciate the time that you've spent and your sharing your perspective.

Stieber: You are very welcome. I've probably told you more than you wanted to hear.

Charnley: Not at all. Thank you.

[End of interview]

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