

University of Houston – Clear Lake Oral History Project

Interviewee: Shirley M. Hart
Interviewer: Shelley Henley Kelly
Date: December 12, 2006
Transcriber: Technitype Transcripts

Kelly: This is Shelly Henley Kelly, and I am interviewing Shirley Hart for the University of Houston-Clear Lake Oral History Project. Today is December 12th, 2006, and we are in the archives office.

I'm getting a good signal, so could you just tell me your full name?

Hart: My name is Shirley. My middle name is Mae, M-a-e. My maiden name is Stalls, S-t-a-l-l-s. My last name is Hart.

Kelly: Okay. How long have you been here?

Hart: I came to the University of Houston-Clear Lake in January 1980.

Kelly: Can you tell me a little bit of your personal background, prior to coming to UH-Clear Lake?

Hart: I came to Houston in the very end of December 1977, and I came from Murray, Kentucky. I went to high school in Murray, Kentucky, graduated in 1961, and

immediately went to work at the high school, Murray High School, and I worked in the library. I worked for a lady by the name of Locki Hart [phonetic], and we are not related. Locki Hart's husband was the president of the Bank of Murray, and he was also a member of the Board of Regents at Murray State University.

Well, I came from this family that we really were poor, and I didn't know there were grants available. I really didn't know that there were dollars out there for people such as Shirley Hart could get and go to college, and Locki Hart wanted to pay my way to college. Being of this German background, very stubborn, no, I would not let her do that. So I just worked really hard, and then when she told me she was going to retire from the library, she was librarian at Murray High School, and she said, "I want you to take your application down to the Bank of Murray and give it to George Hart."

I took my application to the bank, gave to Mr. Hart, and he told me at the time he did not have a job. About a couple of weeks later I was walking in the hallway of the high school, and this really tall gentleman, almost red-headed guy, came walking down the hallway. There was no one in the hallway except this gentleman and myself. He appeared to be lost, and I said, "May I help you?"

And he said, "Yes. I'm looking for Shirley," and he called me by my married name at that time, which was Williams.

And I said, "Well, I'm Shirley Williams."

And he said, "I have a job for you."

And I said, "You do? Where is this job?"

And he said, "In the purchasing office at Murray State University." So I thought, wow, that's interesting, and I had no idea how he came to even know me. But Mr. Hart had given my application to Preston Ordway, who at that time was the vice president for business, equivalent to administration finance here. Mr. Hart told Mr. Ordway to find me a job, so Mr. Ordway found me a job in the purchasing office, so I guess that was kind of like a political appointment. [laughs] I don't know if Mr. Ordway had a choice or not, since Mr. Hart was on the Board of Regents.

So I stayed there from 1965 until December of 1977, and at that time I came to Houston, the very end of 1977. I had been divorced, and came to Houston without a job. When I came, I started working for the Houston Lighting & Power Company, because I'd been in purchasing for thirteen years, and I thought, I really don't want to get back into that field. But jobs were so available at that time in Houston. One could walk out on the street and pick up a job any day of the week.

So I was a little bit worried, and I was also kind of a basket case, because I'd left all my family back in Kentucky, and I had a small child at that time, five years old, and coming to Houston with no job, I just really didn't feel that it was good for him, to bring him, not

knowing anyone here, and not knowing what the school situation was, or daycare. So Marty Williams, my son, lived with his father, so that was very, very difficult for me to leave my child in Kentucky.

Then in May of 1978 I remarried, and I married Don Hart, and in April of 1978 I went to work for the University of Texas Health Science Center. I worked in the purchasing office there from April until January, and then I came to U of H-Clear Lake, in January 1980.

Kelly: Why did you choose to come to Houston?

Hart: Well, at that time the jobs were really available, and then I had met Don, and Don had recently retired from the military. He was coming to Texas, so that's why I came to Texas, for Don Hart. Came to work at U of H-Clear Lake, as director of purchasing, and at that time it was a three-person office. The two people I remember being here when I came, one was Fran Heath, and the other one was Joanne Pryor.

I was hired by James Hale, James T. Hale, and Mr. Hale was the vice president for administration and finance. I came in for my interview in December of 1979, and my predecessor, Norm Grine, went with me to the interview. He told me that Mr. Hale was sometimes hard to get along with, but I always found that I could make friends with people, and that's what I did. The interview went really well with Mr. Hale, and he called

me and offered me the job. I came to work here, and I worked for him for almost sixteen years, until he went to U of H.

Kelly: How did you hear about the job here at UH-Clear Lake?

Hart: Well, I knew the director of purchasing, Norm Grine, because of some organizations with the purchasing department. So I knew Norm. I had been on this campus one time, and I said to Norm, “Oh, Norm, this is so close to my home. If you ever have a vacancy, give me a call. I’d like to apply for a job.” And so he called me one day because he did have a vacancy. He had a buyer vacancy. I came out, interviewed, and at the time the money was not what I wanted it to be. I was working at UT Health Science Center, making about the same amount of money, but at UT Health Science Center I was in a supervisory role. Here I would not have been.

So when Norm moved from Clear Lake to College Station, he called me and told me that his job was going to be available, and I might be interested in applying. So I gave it some thought, and I thought, oh, I don’t know if I’m ready to take on that responsibility or not. My husband at that time—Don and I had married, and he really encouraged me, and then I had another friend whom I thought, you know, she was just kind of pushing me too hard. But anyway, they both really encouraged me to come apply, and so I did apply and then got the job.

It just seemed like it was just so slow, because at UT Health Science Center we were very, very busy, and we did several thousand orders a year. I would go into work at about seven a.m., and not get off till five-thirty, work straight through all day, take work home with me. It was just so busy.

And when I came out here, this campus was small. We could get our work done every day. So I went to Mr. Hale and told him, "I know this is probably real unusual, but I just want to tell you I'm really bored."

And he said, "You are?"

And I said, "Well, yeah, I'm really bored, because up at the Health Science Center I was a lot busier than I am here, and I'd like something else to do." So he gave me the mailroom. Well, at that time the gentleman who was running the mailroom had been here for some time, and he did not like the fact that the mailroom was going to be reporting to a woman, so he left. Then Mr. Hale then gave me the job of measuring rooms, to report that information to the legislative budget board. So I did that, got that done. That was about a once, twice-a-year job. So I went back to him and again I said, "I'm bored."

So then he gave me shipping/receiving, and then at that time the print shop was reporting to the academic side of the house under the provost's office. So somehow they switched some areas. I don't really know what they switched. I was still pretty new. Then he gave me the print shop and quick copy. At that time it was called quick copy. Now it's called

copy center. So he gave me the print shop, and the person who was here running the print shop didn't like it that he was going to be working for a woman, so he quit.

Kelly: Was that usual or unusual at the time?

Hart: Oh, I think it was usual. I think it was pretty usual. At that time, men really didn't want to work for women. It was just, I don't know. But anyway, what was really interesting was a few years later he came back and he asked me for a job. I just said, "Well, you have to apply for the job," and he didn't get the job, not that I didn't hire him, because we had a search committee, and he just did not get the job.

So then when Mr. Hale gave me all of those different areas, then my title was changed to executive director of operations. So it stayed executive director of operations until December the twelfth.

Kelly: Until today?

Hart: Well, actually, the fifteenth, and then I think on the sixteenth my job is going away, and there's a reorganization that's taking place.

Kelly: Did you have any input in the new reorganization that will be implemented?

Hart: Well, Michelle and I had a lot of conversations about it. Then she kept asking me if I had any idea how to reorganize my area, and I really didn't, because it was functioning very well. Then when she told me what she had in mind, truthfully, I told her I was not for it, and very sad that she was just discontinuing my job, because to me it appeared, "Oh, we don't need Shirley Hart," even though she told me, "I can't replace you, because this job has evolved over the years."

Then in 1995 when Ann Lamar left the university and went up to central campus, then the auxiliary side came to me, and that would be the bookstore, copy, food service, the vending machines, Coke machines, and for a while the university leased an apartment, so that apartment function reported to me. And then contracts, the major contracts for the university that went through the B.P.'s Office, they were assigned to my office. So I just had a real variety of jobs, which was pretty interesting.

Kelly: Sounds like your stamp is just about on everything at this campus.

Hart: Yes, pretty much, pretty much, because there for a while, even accounts payable reported to me.

Kelly: Do you know how long Norm Grine was here before you came?

Hart: I believe that Norm was the first purchasing director, so I don't know the exact date he was hired, but he was here till probably December '79. I would think he was here probably six, seven years maybe.

Kelly: Where were your offices when you first started?

Hart: I have to think, because we've been in several areas. The purchasing office was located at the corner of the second floor, and I think it's now 2311, and it's the large classroom, because the purchasing office was on the corner, and then budget and payroll was next, and then further on down was the vice president's office. So then we thought, well, probably the budget office should be on the corner, because they had so many people coming and going, and we just flipped offices. So the purchasing office moved from the corner to the middle suite of offices.

Then we left there, and we went in the area of—it's the office space now where budget is located, in between the president's office and Michelle Dotter's office. We were located in that area for a while.

Kelly: Primarily on the second floor, and on that one side of the building.

Hart: Second floor, yes. And then from there we went to an area downstairs. Our central stores used to be on the first floor, so we were in the warehouse of central stores for a while, because we were in the process of relocating again. At that time we were moving to the

suite of offices, first floor 610, and that area now is the entrance into this building from the new student center, so we were there, and then they moved us where we are now. So we've been about five different locations.

Kelly: Tell me a little more about Jim Hale.

Hart: Jim Hale, I can only tell you my personal opinion of Jim Hale. Jim always treated me with the utmost respect. He never told me how to run my office. He would hold staff meetings, and has a great sense of humor. A lot of people never saw that side of Jim Hale. He was a very compassionate person. I know for a fact, and he probably will not like my saying this, I know for a fact that, because I saw this happen, he took money out of his billfold and gave money to people he knew were in need of money at that time.

So he was very smart, very astute. I liked him. I always knew where I stood with him, because if I did something that he didn't particularly care for, he would call me in and tell me, and that was okay. If I were to get upset about something, and didn't particularly like something he had done, I'd go into his office so I could tell him. He would let me do that. I always knew he was the boss, but he always let me vent, and then it was over. So I really like that in a person. If I needed an answer immediately, I got it. He was very supportive of the purchasing office. He always felt that the purchasing office should report to a vice president, because at that time there were so many controls placed on purchasing because of being a state agency, so I appreciated that working for someone, because I'm a really bottom-line person, and he was a bottom-line person. But also I had

really good training, because I had worked for—two of my bosses in Kentucky were retired military, so I knew how to work with people who were pretty tough people, and got along well.

Kelly: I'm trying to decide which question to ask next. Tell me about some of the early challenges. It sounds like you said that Jim Hale put quite a bit of trust into your position, and when you approached him, were bored, he gave you all these different things, so tell me about maybe one or two of the really early challenges.

Hart: Well, I'll tell you my first screw up, to tell you what kind of person Jim Hale was. My first screw up was to buy a police car that did not have a police package. [laughter] So I went to him and told him, "Oh, god. I bought this car. The specifications showed it had a police package on it, and when we ordered it, it did not have a police package." So he knew the people where we bought it. He called them, and they took the car back. So he got me out of that one.

Some of the challenges were not from here. The challenges were from Austin, because at that time there were just items that were called constitutional items, and they were governed by the State of Texas Constitution. We could not buy them. One, paper. Paper was called a constitutional item. We could not buy more than twenty-five dollars worth of paper. We had to send our request to Austin. Austin would process that request. Pencils, just silly stuff. And then we used to have to bid everything over a hundred dollars. We couldn't just go out and buy a recorder that was a hundred and ten dollars;

we had to bid it. So it was really time-consuming. There were a lot of restrictions from General Services Commission.

Kelly: Would you say these restrictions have gotten lighter, or become heavier?

Hart: Oh no, much lighter. Much lighter, because purchasing used to be centralized in Austin, and now it's decentralized back to the universities, or back to state agencies, so it makes it a lot easier. We can bid our items, and we can get delivery much faster than going through Austin. So I'm really glad they did that, that now we have full delegated authority.

Kelly: Was the Developmental Arts Building already completed when you started here?

Hart: Yes. At that time it was called the DAB. We would go over there and we would do our aerobics. It had a dance studio, had I believe volleyball. It was the sports-and-recreational building. I don't know who was running it. The one person I remember who ran it was Jeff Kuhl, and Jeff was a really nice guy. But then I don't think it was utilized, probably, to its fullest, and that's why it was renovated to become the Delta Building.

Kelly: A lot of people talk about the unique roof that it had at the time. Did you know anything about that?

Hart: I don't know a lot about that. I know that we had problems with it. Oh, I can't remember, I really can't remember everything that was going on with it; solar panels, I believe. Because my office didn't get involved very much in the renovation. Most of that was handled down at facilities, at systems level, so I really don't know too much about that.

Kelly: What role did your office play in the new Student Services classroom building?

Hart: Well, we ordered the furniture, and we worked closely with the architect to try to order all of the furniture. I would tell you that even though the purchasing department did a fair job, if I were to go back and redo this, if I were staying on and a new building to be built, we would handle the purchasing differently than we did. We took the word of the architect, and we were told, "You can trust the architect to give you exact numbers, to give you locations," and that was not the case. So if I were to be here and we were building another building, I would handle things differently.

Kelly: When you say trust the architect to give you exact numbers on locations, to what are you referring?

Hart: Okay. Like your office, you need a desk, you need this, this, this, this. They would go through, count the offices and tell us, "We need twenty desks of this number, twenty desks of this number, twenty desks of this number." And it became very, very complicated. We would just do it differently.

Kelly: Who came after Jim Hale?

Hart: Michelle. [Dotter]

Kelly: Oh, really. I was trying to put that together in my mind. I didn't realize it was just Jim and then Michelle.

Hart: Michelle already worked here.

Kelly: What was her role prior?

Hart: Was she director of business services maybe? And then when Dr. Staples became president, he appointed Michelle into that position.

Kelly: How well did you know Michelle prior to her assuming a V.P.?

Hart: Well, she worked here. She was on staff, and reported to Jim Hale, and I reported to Jim Hale, so we were co-workers. But I would see her at staff meetings. You know, I liked her, just knew her, but didn't really work for her until she became V.P.

Kelly: How would you describe your relationship with her in that role?

Hart: Michelle's personality and Jim Hale's personality, they're totally different people.

Michelle is a much more relaxed person, and she's the same way as Jim Hale. She lets me run my operation. I sometimes go for days or weeks and I don't see her, so it's been a good relationship working with Michelle. Yes, I've been really fortunate. I've had good bosses.

Kelly: Any particular department that you were over that had growing pains, or gave you a particular challenge?

Hart: Well, right now the biggest challenge we have is the print shop, because we used to do all the printing in the print shop, and, of course, our revenue started falling, because if you want something printed, you just print twenty-five copies. Or if you want to send out a distribution, you just send it out to all employees. We used to have to print all that, and send it out, put it in the mailboxes downstairs. So our revenues have dropped, and the print shop is no longer generating enough funds to cover all the costs. So that's been a real problem, and that's one that we have taken a hard look at, whether or not to keep the print shop, and that's probably going to be an ongoing process for the next two to three years.

Kelly: What was your recommendation?

Hart: I really had mixed feelings about it, because I know that Richard [Adams] can do some jobs much more quickly than we can get them done outside, but I also know that we've

analyzed the number of jobs that are done over there, and anything that's under \$5,000, we could get that printed outside probably pretty fast, and none of Richard's jobs have been over—if they are, they're very few and far between—have been over \$5,000. So the purchasing department could probably handle taking on the printing.

But at this point, I don't know that I really have a recommendation one way or the other. I think that's something that's going to have to be something, whether or not it's important enough to the university to maintain a print shop. And if so, they're going to have to come forward with some funds, because right now there is a deficit in the printing budget. Also his equipment, some of it's like thirty years old, old technology. So if they want to keep the print shop, then they're going to have to make a lot of changes.

Kelly: Put some investment into bringing it up to a new technology, audience, and marketing?

Hart: Absolutely. Right.

Kelly: Big decision.

Hart: Absolutely.

Kelly: How else do you feel that your duties and responsibilities have changed over the past years?

Hart: Well, I've had such a variety. I used to be really a hands-on person, especially with purchasing, because that was my field. I just grew into that. In purchasing, honestly I was pretty good at it, because I'm a thinker. I try to think through everything that I buy, and I try to look at it as though I'm an auditor. I'm going to come in and audit this purchase, so I want to make sure that I have everything done exactly right.

Then when I kept getting all these other areas, and the people reporting to me, so then I found, well, I can't do all this hands on anymore, because I would get in the middle of something and then something else would come up, and then I would get behind. So Debbie and Jeanie for the most part have done the purchasing, probably for the last four to five years, and I really have done very little.

Kelly: You said you were a three-person shop when you first came. How many employees are in purchasing now?

Hart: Well, we have Debbie, Jeanie, Daisy, and we have Renee. They are actually purchasing people. And then Mike does contracts. But Mike's not really under the purchasing department. He reported directly to me. And then Alicia is our business assistant. So in that one office there are seven people, counting myself. But Mike's job is for the most part he takes care of the contracts and auxiliaries, and then Alicia does all the accounting and balancing of the accounts, etc., so four. We really haven't grown that much.

Kelly: Well, that keeps you busy.

Hart: Yes.

Kelly: Tell me some of your interactions with Dr. Neumann.

Hart: Well, I don't remember the year Dr. Neumann died, but I really, like going in and out of his office, like that, I really didn't, but when I would see him, "Hello. How are you?" So at that time I did not have a lot of interaction.

Kelly: Do you have a particular impression about him?

Hart: Well, I thought he was very dignified, very handsome. I would see his wife more than I would see him, because she was here for events, and I would see her. And occasionally just the one on one, "Hello. How are you?" and just social small talk, but for the most part that was it.

Kelly: Did things change that affected your department when Dr. Stauffer became the chancellor, and later president?

Hart: One of things I really liked about Dr. Stauffer is he instituted leave time for fitness. My interaction with the president really is not that much.

Kelly: I didn't know if his coming into office effected any changes in your department.

Hart: No. No.

Kelly: What about Dr. Goerke, because I know when Dr. Goerke came there were a lot of budget issues.

Hart: Well, in 1991 we had a layoff, and so in my area we laid off—I had an assistant director at that time, and she was moving. Her husband was relocating, so she was moving. I did not replace that position. And then we had a person in the print shop, so I think I lost two people during that time, during the layoff.

One of the things that Dr. Goerke did when he came is, he had all of the departments to give presentations of their departments, like take an organizational chart and tell what all the different areas did. It was almost as though we were justifying our existence. But then I really didn't see much of Dr. Goerke either.

Kelly: Okay. Have you been involved with the PASA [Professional and Administrative Staff Association]?

Hart: Yes.

Kelly: Well, tell me about how that came to be about.

Hart: Oh, god, I can't remember. Well, we realized that the professional staff, not administrative staff but professional staff, had no organized representation. The support staff had gotten together, and they were pretty much organized, but then PASA was not. So Jackie Raspberry and—oh, man, the scholarship is named for this lady, and I can't even think of her name—just called a meeting, and it just sort of came together. I really don't know. I do know I went to several of the meetings, and still go to the meetings occasionally, when I have time.

But I know it was kind of a hard-fought battle to get representation for the professional group, and it's still, I think, going to be an ongoing battle. I think for professional staff maybe more than support staff, because it was kind of hard, I think, for faculty especially to think that there is a little bit of difference between professional staff and support staff. I'm not talking about difference in the people, I'm talking about difference in the jobs. So I was here doing it.

I never had an office in PASA. I was approached two or three times to be the president, but at the time I was just busy, really busy with what I was doing, and didn't feel like I had the time to devote to being president. But I was very supportive on the background, you know, and really supportive to the support staff. I think sometimes I've been more supportive of support staff maybe than the PASA, because I have been a very, very advocate for support staff, and I have tried, tried, tried very hard to make sure that everyone who worked for me had the opportunity for professional development, got raises, got recognition. I'm a real people person, and I know that we have a lot of people

here that work very, very hard with no recognition, so I'd like to see our support staff have a little more money. [laughs]

Kelly: I have the same issue with my assistant, with anything that I can get for her, because she does such a fabulous job.

Hart: That's right.

Kelly: Were there any other organizations to which you belonged?

Hart: I belonged to the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, NIGP. I'm a founding member of the Southeast Texas Professional Purchasing Organization, National Association of Educational Buyers, the National Association of Colleges and Auxiliary Services, the National Association of College and University Food Service, so I think that was it.

Kelly: Keeps you pretty involved?

Hart: Some of them I got really involved for a while, especially the SETAP, that's the Southeast Texas Purchasing Association. But it's kind of hard to do that, working, and then a lot of the meetings were at night. But I really have kept membership and stayed active.

Kelly: You said you were a founding member. What year did they form?

Hart: Oh, man. Oh, dear. I'm going to say probably about fifteen years ago, so that'd be about '80, '81; no, no, '90, yes, '90, '91 probably.

Kelly: And what is the purpose of that organization?

Hart: Well, it's a combination of educational people, and also corporate people, colleges, just different purchasing people from different organizations coming together, talking about purchasing, having meetings, different subjects to talk about. It's just to get together and kind of do a little brainstorming, and find out what other people are doing.

Kelly: Do they have meetings where they have programs for educational—

Hart: Oh yes, yes.

Kelly: And then some networking opportunities?

Hart: Right, right.

Kelly: Tell me about food-services contracts we've had.

Hart: Since I've been here we've had—when I got the food service, when it started reporting to me, that was a contract, I think, that was just renewed on a yearly basis. I don't know. But anyway, when it came to me we had Aramark, and then the University of Houston System Office decided that we were going to go out for bid, and all the campuses had food service, and they would do one really large bid, and try to have all the campuses to have the same food-service provider.

We did that, and for a number of years—actually, there are only three or four food-service organizations that will run operations such as ours. We had Chartwells for about seven years, and then the contract was re-bid, and then Aramark came back with a better bid, so now Aramark is back for about, it could be a ten-year contract, and I think they are in their second year.

Kelly: I think they've been here a little longer, haven't they?

Hart: Well, they'd been here probably five years, because we had a contract, we being Clear Lake, had a contract with them on, like, an interim basis, until the contract with Chartwells—Chartwells left our campus early. So we had to bring another contractor back on campus, and we re-bid that service, and Aramark actually was the only vendor who bid. It's very hard for Clear Lake to get a food-service provider.

Kelly: Are we that small a campus?

Hart: We're that small a campus, and our sales are not so good, yes, to even be self-supporting.

Kelly: That's a shame.

Hart: Yes.

Kelly: Was the Pub here when you were here?

Hart: The Pub was here, but it went away shortly, I think, after I came.

Kelly: Can you tell me any recollections that stand out about the Pub?

Hart: It was there, I think, where the police department is now. But truthfully, I never did go there, so I really can't tell you anything about it. It just seemed like all of a sudden it went away, closed, I don't know.

Kelly: Have you been involved in any of the discussions to bring alcohol back on campus?

Hart: Oh yes. And the only reason we have alcohol on campus right now is a catering license, and it's actually for catering beer and wine, for catering. We don't have license for hard liquor. It's a catering license for beer and wine, and we don't sell it over the counter, plain and simple. It's a catering license.

Kelly: Okay. Any other particular recollections of your job here, the people you've worked with, that you want to put down, put forward, talk about?

Hart: Well, one person I worked with for a long time, and I don't know if you interviewed her or not, was Ann Lamar. Ann worked for Jim Hale for years, and then she went up to central campus to work for him. She's the one who knows everything that went on early on, because she was one of the first people hired on this campus.

Kelly: What if any traditions do you see UHCL having here? People are always asking me, as the archivist, what traditions UHCL has, and so I've been posing that question now with people I talk to who have been here.

Hart: Truthfully, when I came in 1980, I really didn't see anything at all. I don't think there were any traditions, because since it's a commuter school, students really don't get that much involved. Faculty come and go. They come and teach their classes, and they go home. There were, like, a few traditions that are going away. For instance, just like the decorating of the atrium, that used to be done by student life, and then they got tired of doing it. Then we used to have doors decorated for the holiday, and we had contests for that, and so that's something that's sort of gone by the wayside. Those are the two things I can think of now. Maybe it's just because we're in this season.

Kelly: Were you involved with the shared governance?

Hart: I've been on shared-governance committees. I've been here before shared governance, and I've been here since shared governance. Even though shared governance has gotten a bad name, I think that having shared governance has taken a lot of pressure off of top administration. I think that's one of the reasons why Jim Hale had such a bad name, because at that time it was usually the president, vice president, and the provost who ran the university, and faculty became angry because they never, ever knew what was going on.

And I think—this is pure Shirley. This is what I say when it's pure Shirley. I think it was the lack of communication between the two areas that maybe caused a division, because to me, if people are communicating and people know what's going on, then they don't become suspicious. I just believe that some of that stuff could be avoided if people were communicating better. So yes, I was here when shared governance started, and I think it's good.

Kelly: It's good to hear somebody say that it's better with shared governance, even if we have to go back and readdress it.

Hart: Yes.

Kelly: How do you the faculty and staff viewed the administration in the early years?

Hart: Well, in the early years I think there was a really big division, because as I was saying, I think that's one of the reasons why Jim Hale got such a bad name here, is because Jim being the keeper of the money, I think they just came to dislike him because he was in control of the money. They probably thought that maybe they didn't get their fair share. I don't know, I'm just thinking, because I saw another side of Jim Hale. I mean, Jim didn't open up the purse strings to me. I had to fight to get money for my department, so I had to fight to get raises for my staff, so I'm not saying anything about him because he showed any special favors to me, because he certainly didn't. But I liked him, and I just always thought it was really sad that maybe some people didn't just see both sides, they only saw one.

Kelly: How well do you think the faculty and staff have worked together at this campus?

Hart: Truthfully, I'm in an area where we work with faculty, but we work with them differently than being in the departments with them. So I would have to say, we get along well with faculty in our office, but we're working with them on a different level.

Kelly: What direction do you see UHCL going these days?

Hart: To me, I'm a little bit concerned about it. I'm concerned about the fact that the fees are going really, really high. I'm concerned that the numbers probably are going to be leveled for a few years, probably, and I think it's going to be a struggle. But I think it's probably a struggle right now for all universities, because in I've been watching

Kentucky—Murray State University is in Kentucky. Even though Murray State has been determined to be a really topnotch school, it's still struggling to get money from the state, and right now I was reading where they have this building program going, and they are fifteen million dollars short. So to get a building started and then be fifteen million dollars short before you've even got the building under a roof, that to me is pretty bad. I don't foresee this university getting another building for a few years.

Kelly: Define a few.

Hart: I would say it would be probably another six to eight years before we'd get another building.

Kelly: That's actually much more positive than others I've talked to.

Hart: Really?

Kelly: We laugh because it's the library building that is supposed to be the next.

Hart: Yes, yes.

Kelly: But they are going to push forward, it sounds like, with developing the Arbor Building, and expanding that, so that's good.

Hart: Yes, it is good, it is good. I don't think the building is taken care of as well as I'd like to see it taken care of, but then facilities really, they have to really work hard to get money, and especially to get custodians, because I know that when we had the layoff they had to lay off several custodians, and the building is just not in the condition it once was. That's pretty sad to me, because I think it's a really beautiful building, and I just don't want it to deteriorate.

Kelly: I see you crossing your fingers there. This is going to get back a little bit more personal. You said when you came down here you had to leave your son in Kentucky. Did he ever come and join you in Houston?

Hart: No. He came every summer, and then during the holidays, and then I would go back and forth all the time to visit with him. Then when he was, like, twelve years old he came down and we talked about it, and he said, "Mommy, how come I don't live with you?"

And I just told him, "Marty, when I came to Texas I didn't know anyone. I didn't have a job at that time, and I knew that you were there with your daddy and with your aunts, my sisters and my mother, your grandma, and I just knew that you were going to be well taken care of, and at that time Mommy just didn't, I didn't know. I didn't trust people to put you with anyone." But I said, "If you're ready to come live with me, then we'll talk about that. And if we have to, then we'll go talk with a judge and let you come and live here."

And then, you know, he asked me some things, and we talked about this at great length, and I said, "If you're ready, you just let me know."

And he said, "Well, when do I have to tell you?"

And I said, "You don't have to tell me till you get ready to go back, and if you want to stay, then you can stay."

And so he said, "Okay. I'll let you know." So he spent the whole summer here, and then when the summer was over he said, "Mommy, I think I'm ready to go back and see my friends."

Kelly: Sounds like he was a very mature little boy.

Hart: Yes, he was. So we've maintained a really good relationship. He was my only child. In fact, I'm going back up there to be with him, and he has two children, Shanna, eleven, and Ryan, nine, and then he and his wife are expecting a new baby in April, so I'm going to be Grandma Shirley one more time.

Kelly: Do they all live in Murray?

Hart: Yes. Yes.

Kelly: And that's where you're headed, huh?

Hart: That's where I'm headed. And Shana said, "Grandma Shirley, now when you're retired we don't have to wait weeks to see you."

And I said, "I know it." And then Ryan, he's just a little-bitty guy, he's nine, but he's about forty-nine inches tall, and he weighs about forty-nine pounds. He'll climb up in my lap and he'll just hug me and pat me on the back, and he'll say, "My Grandma Shirley, and no one else's." [laughs]

Kelly: So I guess you're really looking forward to your retirement.

Hart: I am excited. I'm ready.

Kelly: Your husband is ready to go back up there with you?

Hart: Don's been retired for several years. Don's retired military, and then Don retired from Lockheed company after he had this motorcycle accident, really bad motorcycle accident in 1988. I was working here, and we used to ride motorcycles. So he had a really bad accident, and then when he had that he had some injuries, so he had to recover. He lacked just a few hours of having his degree. Well, he came to Clear Lake and it took him three years to finish, because his hours were so old that—he did, 1991, so that was good.

Kelly: What did he get his degree in?

Hart: Business.

Kelly: And then he went to Lockheed, or he was already there?

Hart: No, he was already at Lockheed, and he had the motorcycle accident when he was at Lockheed. So then by the time—he was with a Lockheed company, and it was called Mantier [phonetic] Management Systems. By the time Don got able to go back to work, they had already sold the company. And then when finally he did his degree, he was like fifty-one years old, and at that time, you know, people fifty-one years old had a tough time going to work.

And then his mom got sick, so he was going back and forth to Tucson, and then he just decided, well, I don't think there's anything out there, and he started substitute teaching for the local school districts. Then he worked with the Big Brothers and Sisters. He was on their board for a while, and then he was a counselor with the Houston Crisis Hotline.

Kelly: Doesn't sound like he slowed down one bit. [laughs]

Hart: Oh, he didn't, he didn't. No. Kept going, and he's still really busy, really active. It's just time for us to go have some more fun. I mean, we've had a lot of fun. We've

traveled to forty-nine states; we have one more to go. We're going, the good Lord willing, going to make that trip in May to Alaska. We're going to drive, take about a month, six weeks, whatever. And then we've been to eleven countries together, so yes, we've had a great life.

Kelly: What was Clear Lake like when y'all moved down here?

Hart: Oh, nothing like this. We lived up by Ellington Field in a subdivision, Sycamore Valley, and that was a brand-new subdivision, and we were the second people on that street. Coming down Highway 3 it was a two-lane, and Clear Lake City Blvd. was not there. Trying to think. Pineloch only came about halfway down, maybe to right along where the post office is now, and then we had to turn. Yes, because that's El Camino. We had to turn right on El Camino to come over. So, a lot of difference. The area Bay Glen and along Pineloch, that used to be just fields of flowers, beautiful wildflowers. So when they started developing that area I was so sad, because I didn't see those beautiful flowers. Then we ended up buying a house right there in that area. [laughs] But it was amazing. It was nothing like this.

Kelly: Sounds great. I thank you very much for coming out here today—

Hart: Well, my pleasure.

Kelly: —and squeezing me in, with all your lunches and dinners, and being feted all over the place.

Hart: It's great. It's been a great place to work, and I hope you get to stay here a long time.

Kelly: I plan on it.

[End of interview]

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