

**Oral History Interview**  
**with**  
**Sue Knight**

Interview Conducted by  
Latasha Wilson  
August 2, 2011

O-STATE Stories  
Oral History Project

**Special Collections & University Archives**  
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# O-State Stories

An Oral History Project of the OSU Library

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## Interview History

Interviewer: Latasha Wilson  
Transcriber: Kortni Wren  
Editors: Ashley Sarchet, Latasha Wilson, Tanya Finchum

The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

## Project Detail

The purpose of O-State Stories Oral History Project is to gather and preserve memories revolving around Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (OAMC) and Oklahoma State University (OSU).

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on October 5, 2006.

## Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Sue Knight is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on August 2, 2011.

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## About Sue Knight...

Sue Knight was born in Holdenville, Oklahoma in 1933, one of five daughters. She graduated from Altus High School and attended Hill's Business University in Oklahoma City, where she met her husband, Earl. The couple married in 1956. In 1965, while raising three children, Sue decided to return to college. She enrolled in home economics classes at Oklahoma State University, and really enjoyed it. She obtained her bachelor's degree in home economics and education and also got a teaching certificate in 1969. She substitute taught for a year and then continued on for a master's degree in food science. She began working in food product development during her master's and then went on for a PhD in food science, which she completed in 1977. She taught at the Christian Academy of Greater St. Louis for a while, then returned to Stillwater where she continued her research and taught Food Science courses. She was a member of Institute of Food Technologists and also became a registered dietician.

In this interview Sue talks about growing up in Oklahoma, starting college later in life, and the impact her Oklahoma State University education had on her as well as the impact she was able to have on others throughout her career here. She also discusses some of the research projects she was involved with that contributed to increased nutritional content and preservation.

Sue and Earl have four children, Benita, Amy, John and David. They have six grandchildren, all of whom are OSU alum or currently enrolled, and three great-grandchildren, who they enjoy spending time with. They reside in Stillwater but love their cabin in Creede, Colorado.

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## Sue Knight

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Latasha Wilson  
August 2, 2011  
Stillwater, Oklahoma



**Wilson** *Today is August 2, 2011. My name is Latasha Wilson, and I am with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at Oklahoma State University Library. I am in the home of Sue Knight today visiting with her about her time growing up and some of her stories for O-STATE Stories, a project of the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program. [Her husband Earl Knight is also sitting in.] Thank you for talking with me today. Let's start out by having you tell me when and where you were born.*

**S. Knight** All right. I was born in Holdenville, Oklahoma, October 12, 1933. My official name is Norma Sue Burris. That is what is on my birth certificate. I never have gone by Norma because that is my mother's name. My mother's name was Norma Burks and my father's name was Andrew Burris.

**Wilson** *Where were you born?*

**S. Knight** In Holdenville.

**Wilson** *In a home or in a hospital?*

**S. Knight** At home. My mother had five daughters and I think all the first three, I think we were all born at home. I know I was. Then the other two were later on and they were at the hospital.

**Wilson** *So where did you fall in the line of children? Were you the third?*

**S. Knight** I was the middle daughter of five. For many years, I guess five years or so, I was the baby. A couple of interlopers came in and I wasn't the baby anymore. (Laughter)

**Wilson** *How did your parents get to Holdenville?*

**S. Knight** They came in to Oklahoma. I am not sure what date it was. I know my father was born, I think, in a wagon after they had come to Oklahoma and were waiting to get their farm. They came in from Missouri with his family. Lena Burris and James Burris were his parents. They were all kind of camped out while they were waiting and would hang their clothing and such and what they washed, and the ladies would drape them around places. That came to be called Ragtown. There is still Ragtown there—what highway is that off of Earl?

**E. Knight** 75.

**S. Knight** Off 75 a few miles out east of Wetumka.

**E. Knight** No, I am sorry it is south.

**S. Knight** South of Wetumka. Anyway, nobody knows now why it is called Ragtown.

**Wilson** *Do you know how long that lasted?*

**S. Knight** Well, probably not that long because they were getting into homes and buying farms and such. I think probably a number of his family may have come too at the same time, or there were certainly a group there. He was born in 1901. I suspect by 1904 or '05, all of those people were probably in houses, but that was when they came in. The closest town to them was Wetumka. Then my mother's group, my grandmother and her family. She was a young bride at the time. Anyway, again it was two or three families came together. One of the families that came was a widow named Burks and she had four boys, and my grandmother had married one of those boys. Then my grandmother's maiden name was McCray and she married one of the Burks boys, Andrew Burks. Later on after they came in, there was some marrying again because she was a widow when she married, so we wound up with a bunch of double cousins and things before it all settled out. They were also in Wetumka. As far as I know they were in one part of the county and my father's family were in another part of the county, but my parents met at high school in Wetumka.

**Wilson** *Do you know when they got married?*

**S. Knight** 1927. My oldest sister was the same age as my husband.

**E. Knight** I was born in '28.

**S. Knight** '28. So they must have...

**E. Knight** '26 or '27.

**S. Knight** So I think they married in 1927. Anyway, when the parents first came in, when this group came in their covered wagons actually, coming up from Texas (this was my mother's family) they first came into Broken Arrow. That is where my mother was born, so she was born actually in, and I think it was already statehood. No it wasn't statehood yet because she was born in 1905, so it was still Indian Territory then. Two years before it was Oklahoma. She was one of six girls and one boy. They only had one boy to carry on the maiden name. Well, now my grandmother had been one of nine McCray girls, and so the McCray girls and some of the Burks boys married, but in both cases as far as we are concerned the McCray name was lost. Got daughtered out, as they say. My grandmother had six girls and one boy, and my Uncle Clyde had three girls. That name, when you are doing genealogy searches suddenly you kind of come to a block at times like that.

My father, I don't remember much about the Depression because I was born in '33, and I can remember things looking back. I can see that people were pretty poor, some of aunts or uncles or cousins and moving in with the ones on the farm and that sort of thing, but I really didn't think about it. My dad got a job. He had come up to Oklahoma A&M and I don't know whether he had taken some, whether there was kind of an academy there at this time and if he was there for a while or if he had to come back when times got hard. But anyway, he was an engineer. So he got a job at the WPA, and such, helping with the road construction and different things. I can remember his saying if they were clearing out to build roads then people would be paid what little amount it was they would be paid, but he would always have them cut up any lumber or anything if they had to clear out and people could take it home for firewood. I don't remember very much at all about the Depression.

**E. Knight** He may have come up here—kind of a high school cadet?

**S. Knight** I am not sure.

**Wilson** *The CCC?*

**E. Knight** No.

**S. Knight** Well he was actually, see there was already the college here and it was somehow associated with the college, but I don't know whether it was something for high school boys or whether he actually had a year or two.

Anyway, I know he finished high school, graduated from high school the same year, and yet he is two and half years older than my mother, so somewhere in there. I just never did think to try to figure out how to straighten that all out.

**E. Knight** He came up here as an engineer and paved Main Street of Stillwater.

**S. Knight** Yes. I was in junior high, I think, then. He was a contractor and built roads.

**Wilson** *He paved Main Street in Stillwater?*

**S. Knight** In Stillwater, yes. I got a picture of that if you want to see it.

**Wilson** Yes.

**S. Knight** He paved an awful lot of the roads, and then when I am remembering him, I always remembered him as working for the Highway Department. He drove a little orange pickup and built a lot of bridges and roads. As I got older he left the Highway Department and was a contractor and still built a lot of the bridges and things on our interstates when he first went in. Some of our best memories I can remember was when Ada, and I was four or five is when we moved to Ada, and that is where I moved to grade school. When I was in about the second grade, second or third—I can't remember now exactly which it was. I remember Pearl Harbor day. The *Ada Evening News* actually came out with an extra. We heard them going up and down the street.

**E. Knight** She worked during the war. You know she was one of those volunteer workers. (Laughter)

**S. Knight** Yes. (Laughter) During third and fourth grade I went around with a friend. Did I tell you this earlier? We were gathering bacon grease because you would see all of these posters. You would see a poster of a lady pouring grease and it wound up pouring down and coming out of a cannon. Apparently fat like that is an ingredient in manufacturing what would have been...

**E. Knight** Gun powder.

**S. Knight** Gun powder. It was a hot day and I had my little wagon and a friend, and we went around gathering up bacon grease, which splashed all over everything because it got all melted. Then we were supposed to be able to turn it in at grocery stores. None of the grocery stores wanted my grease because none had set up for them to collect it for someone. I finally got somebody out of pity, I think, took the bacon grease. Anyway

that was the war effort that didn't quite turn out like I thought it would. But in school, one day a week we would sell the stamps like I showed you. When you got the little book full that was \$17.75.

**E. Knight** \$17.50 I think.

**S. Knight** \$17.50 to feel up one of those...

**E. Knight** \$25.00 book

**S. Knight** ...and then it would mature as a \$25.00 bond.

**E. Knight** I still have some.

**S. Knight** Anyway, that was an interesting thing to do, because everybody was involved.

**E. Knight** Too bad you can't get this. (Laughs)

**Wilson** *Do you remember your parents doing anything?*

**S. Knight** Well my dad, having five daughters and was probably in his forties by then, so there was never a problem with him being drafted. But he was involved in a lot of road building and things like what needed to be done to keep—we still have, but we definitely then had quite a few—well I know Altus and Norman and Enid and McAlester, and how many places did we have military bases or plants or factories or something? In Oklahoma City there was Douglas Manufacturing...

**E. Knight** I worked out at Tinker Field.

**S. Knight** And Tinker Field. There was just a lot that had to be done in Oklahoma at that time. I remember we had moved to Ardmore. I went to junior high at Ardmore. Finished elementary school in Ada and junior high in Ardmore, and I remember sitting out on the swing in the front yard and hearing a lot of honking one afternoon. It was V-E Day, Europe.

**E. Knight** Was it V-E Day...

**S. Knight** No, I think it was...

**E. Knight** ...or Normandy?

**S. Knight** No. It was...

**E. Knight** V-E Day? They were celebrated.



**S. Knight** Both of them were celebrated, but it was the day that was victory in Europe. I am not sure. It was some months after that before Japan surrendered.

**E. Knight** Quite a bit. At least three months.

**S. Knight** I don't remember where I was then, but I just remember we were out several blocks from downtown and I heard this honking, then realized what it was. That was before television or everything.

**Wilson** *So it sounds like were you kind of a city girl growing up? Lived in town?*

**S. Knight** Well sort of. I lived in town the whole time. I never lived in a big city though because by the time I got to high school we had moved again. I went to high school in Altus but the war was over then. The house we had in Altus was one that was built. There was an air force base that had been there. They'd go in and build a bunch of nice houses, small houses. Just two bedroom and such but they were...

**E. Knight** Wartime housing.

**S. Knight** Wartime house is what it had been built for, but the war was over, and I graduated from high school. I was salutatorian of my class.

**Wilson** *How many were in your class? Do you remember?*

**S. Knight** We had a very small class. We were kind of known for that. For some reason or other there was just sixty-seven or sixty-nine in our graduating class. There were three hundred in the high school, which was three grades, so our class was kind of small. Then my parents moved to Oklahoma City. Some time went by, and I didn't want to take practical things when I was in high school like how to type. (Laughs) Things like that. Things that I knew I wouldn't be good at. So I am in Oklahoma City and in order to get a job I was going to Hill's Business University. This fellow had come back from the marines and I think the typing teacher was trying to do a little matchmaking, but anyway she had me go up and show that fellow how to set the tab on his typewriter.

**E. Knight** That's right, but that is your excuse [not] for the first date but for the second date. (Laughter)

**S. Knight** Well, I just sat down behind him in case he had any more trouble setting the tab.

**Wilson** *What was that fellow's name?*

**S. Knight** That fellow's name was Earl. (Laughs) But we dated for some time.

**E. Knight** For almost three years.

**S. Knight** He had to finish his and I finished and got to where I was working as a stenographer.

**E. Knight** Making more money than me.

**S. Knight** Yeah, I went to work for the company that wound up after several name changes to be Amoco, which is now taken over by British Petroleum. Anyway, I guess I worked for about three years. But we got around to being married.

**E. Knight** We went to work first. The old Standard Oil Company.

**S. Knight** Yes. Standard Oil was what it was then.

**E. Knight** Then it became part of Amoco.

**S. Knight** There are kind of a couple of interesting stories about this. I had a job while I was going to business school. I worked for a real estate company. I had a job delivering various papers, contracts, deeds, that sort of thing to different places there in downtown Oklahoma City. My office was in the First National building. I was a file clerk and would have to run around all over the downtown delivering these things. Just worked afternoons, but it was kind of important for me to tell time to get back from some of these. I had never had a wrist watch of any kind so I went into to B.C. Clark and they were having their anniversary sale. I bought a watch. I think the watch cost nineteen dollars. It was a beautiful little Bulova.

**E. Knight** Gold case.

**S. Knight** Yeah. It was a nice little thing. They let me pay it out at five dollars a month. I think I got it paid off early, I believe. So then some time went past and Earl and I decided to get married. We were going to buy a house so we went in to buy a house. We were going to get it on the G.I. Bill. We had trouble getting the mortgage because neither one of us had credit.

**E. Knight** No credit.

**S. Knight** Neither one of us had ever borrowed any money. Everything was just cash. Then I remembered my wrist watch. (Laughter) So that is the way

we qualified for a loan. (Laughter) One of us had a credit rating. I thought that was funny. You can see he and I feel the same way about being in debt. (Laughter)

**E. Knight**

It was a real nice house.

**S. Knight**

It is still, if you drive through that part of Warr Acres, it was called, in Oklahoma City. It is still a nice house.

**Wilson**

*How long did you live there?*

**S. Knight**

We moved from there in...

**E. Knight**

Four years.

**S. Knight**

Yeah, probably about four or five years.

**E. Knight**

Benita started school.

**S. Knight**

Benita started school. We had Amy and we had John, then Earl got a job with the Department of Agriculture being an auditor and we moved to Woodward.

**E. Knight**

We were there four years.

**S. Knight**

We were there four years but he had to...

**E. Knight**

Travel.

**S. Knight**

So this was the first time that I had ever had to spend nights without him. That was something. We moved into this house and this was just a few years after that Woodward tornado.

**Wilson**

'47?

**S. Knight**

Well, it had been more than a few years, but anyway the town...

**E. Knight**

The tornado was in '48.

**Wilson**

*I think '47.*

**E. Knight**

'47 or '48. I don't remember, but it was right in there somewhere, the worst tornado Oklahoma ever had, casualty[-wise].

**S. Knight**

The house we had, had been destroyed in the tornado and it was rebuilt. Except that when they rebuilt the house, now the family that was there,

they had run down in the basement and so they all survived. But they rebuilt the house and they decided they wanted it a little bigger. On one side of the house where the bedrooms were, they just went out and poured another foundation and built the house out there. Somehow or another that part tended to settle, so here I am and down that hallway from the bedrooms you could just hear somebody walking as the house would settle.

**E. Knight** She thought it was a ghost. (Laughter)

**S. Knight** I mean, I was terrified. I slept with a .22 beside me. I know it was just the sound of this house. Then we got a cow dog. Her name was Gina and she was a really, really nice dog but she would prowl up and down that hall, and I knew all I was hearing was Gina's toenails. That was the main thing I remember about that whole thing. I could sleep and I could sleep in peace and I knew that dog was going to protect me. Then we moved to Stillwater in '64?

**E. Knight** '64.

**S. Knight** We put one daughter in junior high.

**E. Knight** She moved to Stillwater. I had arrived here and then moved back over to Arkansas. Do you remember Billie Sol Estes? I got in on all of those investigations that they were having. It was a big thing that happened back then in agriculture, so I had just left home.

**S. Knight** But we did very well and we lived on North Husband. He was traveling so much that our summers we just walked out and traveled with him. The kids learned to swim in the motel pools.

**E. Knight** One of us worked and the others loafed.

**S. Knight** Sometimes I would take my sewing machine with me, but we had really, really nice summers and really enjoyed the kids. We were all together as a family for the whole summer. So the traveling, and every time Earl could get home on weekends, of course he did. It was pretty nice the fact he had to travel so much but we were together so much during the summers that we enjoyed.

**E. Knight** I would get through to the kids.

**Wilson** *Would you drive from place to place?*

**S. Knight** Yes, strictly because for being the Department of Agriculture you were almost always going to rural areas, and so it was driving. He drove so

many [miles] that usually every year he had to buy a car. We had a car for me and bought it while we were in Woodward. It was a Plymouth. What was the age of it?

**E. Knight** Ooh.

**S. Knight** It was fairly old then.

**E. Knight** Fairly old. '50s. You bought a Chrysler, didn't you?

**S. Knight** It was a Plymouth, but it was the Chrysler- Plymouth dealer is where we bought it.

**E. Knight** Yeah, but it was a Chrysler wasn't it? That was a Chrysler.

**S. Knight** No, the grey one was a Plymouth. The white and red one was the Chrysler that Benita liked to drive, but that was later. Anyway, this was an old car and our son John at this time was about five or six, he was ashamed of that car. As we would be driving down Duck Street he would like to roll down the window and yell, "My dad drives a Ford," whatever it was, Ford 500, but this is up-to-date car and it really bothered John that he had to ride in the bad one.

**E. Knight** She never got of town with it.

**S. Knight** I got tired of being the only adult alone for most of the time. So I decided to go to college.

**E. Knight** With three kids.

**S. Knight** And I enrolled in home economics and wasn't really sure I could, real trepidation about coming back to school because I was an older woman by that time and all those young kids. I thought, 'How can I hold my own with all these kids?' So I only enrolled in ten hours my first semester. I made two A's and a B. I thought, 'Man, that is good.'

**E. Knight** What was the B from?

**S. Knight** What was the B from?

**E. Knight** I think it was the only B you ever made.

**S. Knight** Only B I have ever made. (Laughter) Oh, there was a humanities teacher that I didn't get along with once.

**E. Knight** Is that when you took bow and arrow, something?

**S. Knight** That is right, archery. I didn't do well.

**Wilson** *Before this did you get an associate's degree from the business college or did you just take classes?*

**S. Knight** No, what I did was I just took classes until I got a job. Just went in and tested for the job and was able to do it, but I knew business was not the field for me to go in.

**E. Knight** (Laughter) I could out-type her, but she had a good business sense.

**S. Knight** Yes I did, but I knew I wasn't good at things like typing, and I could learn the shorthand fine, but building up speed. I guess I did alright.

**E. Knight** Yes you did.

**S. Knight** I am not sure where I was going with that. Oh yeah. That was my first [semester], and I kept going until I got three degrees.

**E. Knight** She had no credit hours toward college. She had three kids. One was in high school.

**S. Knight** When I started I think she was still in junior high.

**Wilson** *So what year did you enroll at OSU?*

**S. Knight** 1965, I think. I figured it would take me a long time to graduate and I graduated in '69.

**Wilson** *With a degree in...?*

**S. Knight** Home economics, education and did get the teacher's certificate along with it. Then I decided...

**E. Knight** You did teach, didn't you, for a while.

**S. Knight** No, I did a lot of substitute teaching for a year after that. Then I decided to go on and get my master's, and did that, did research.

**E. Knight** Dairy science.

**S. Knight** Dairy science. My master's degree. Got a food science degree in the Dairy Science Department. Dr. Jim Mickle was my advisor in that.

**E. Knight** Real nice fellow.

**Wilson** *What year did you start your master's? How soon after your bachelor's?*

**E. Knight** '70 I guess, wasn't it, Sue?

**S. Knight** It wasn't long.

**E. Knight** She just turned right around. She decided she could do it.

**S. Knight** Then I went on into and got involved in food product development during my master's. Then went on to get my PhD and was working with... I did interesting things with yeast in my master's degree and we were trying to grow yeast on cheese whey.

**Wilson** *On cheese whey?*

**S. Knight** Yeah. Because it was a real waste product then and we met a fellow at one of the dairy meetings and he was then owner of the Watonga cheese plant. He was having a terrible time getting rid of his whey when he would make cheese, because only mammals can eat milk sugar and so you couldn't feed the whey to chickens. It would kill them. Dogs, pigs could handle whey but even cows you couldn't feed them very much of the sugar. I am not sure why cows couldn't, but nonetheless there was a real problem with how to get rid of that cheese whey. He had been spraying it on fields as fertilizer. One day one of the people who were supposed to carry the cheese whey off decided to quit early and went and dumped it in the North Canadian River and killed fish all the way to Oklahoma City. He was afraid he would be subject to a real lawsuit except I don't think they ever figured out who dumped it. It was a problem so we were trying to figure out a use for it.

So this is what Dr. Mickel was doing but we did find out most yeasts don't like milk lactose either, so I wrote to the American Type Culture Collection. Which all of that is organisms, you know, if you are wanting to do some research or something with an organism they have these so you can get them. There was only one kind of yeast that they had there that was both recognized as a human food source because that was going to be pretty important to us and could ferment lactose, so we had that. Now this is some years go by, but that is a little interesting thing about that. I started back and got my degree and for some years we went to St. Louis. Came back and I got a job at Oklahoma State University teaching my favorite classes. I was just thrilled and was involved in research.

**E. Knight** In the interim you did get your PhD, and while we were in St. Louis they did hire you to teach.

**S. Knight**

Oh yeah, I taught at Christian Academy of Greater St. Louis. Taught high school.

**Wilson**

*After you had your PhD?*

**S. Knight**

Yeah.

**Wilson**

*What was your PhD in?*

**S. Knight**

It was also in food science.

**E. Knight**

What did you teach?

**S. Knight**

But I got it in the School of Home Economics. I taught everything. They decided at the Christian Academy of Greater St. Louis—it was a private religious school and kids got bused in from all over. They thought nobody associated with the school had a PhD and I had finished and gotten mine and so they assumed I could teach anything so I did. I did teach a home economics class, I taught math to seventh and eighth graders, and I taught science to seventh and eighth graders and biology to juniors and something else to seniors.

**Wilson**

*Was that all at the same time?*

**S. Knight**

All at the same time. (Laughter)

**Wilson**

*Oh, my goodness.*

**S. Knight**

That was kind of funny. Well, if you got that you can teach anything. (Laughs) I didn't teach religion but...

**Wilson**

*Had you gone on straight from your master's to start your PhD?*

**S. Knight**

Yes. I did.

**Wilson**

*Do you remember what year you finished your PhD?*

**S. Knight**

'77.

**E. Knight**

'73, I believe, is when you got your diplomas.

**Wilson**

*For her master's?*

**E. Knight**

Because we moved to St. Louis.

**S. Knight**



That was something I was going to check for you before you came back. I forgot to get those actual dates.

**E. Knight**

I believe we moved to St. Louis in '70. I moved before you did because I had to get up there and get a house. I believe you came up right after school was out.

**S. Knight**

But I had to finish writing my thesis dissertation and then go back for my orals.

**E. Knight**

Something like that.

**S. Knight**

But anyway.

**Wilson**

*What was your dissertation on?*

**S. Knight**

Dr. Winterfeldt had gotten a large grant from the Department of Agriculture to try to establish a relationship with dietary chromium and diabetes. That was what I worked on and put in a lot of time. We just never really could document a strong relationship there.

**E. Knight**

When you got your dietetics... Let's see, what do you call it when you become a registered dietician?

**S. Knight**

Yeah. I became a registered dietician, too. We really got a better relationship. What we were doing, we were analyzing hair. Some researcher had determined that dietary chromium could wind up in hair, so then we tried to establish there was a relationship between the amount of hair and what was in the hair and the others. But the chromium was so hard to analyze in such small amounts. About a year or two after I was through, they came out with equipment that could really measure in parts per billion, and that is really what you needed for the chromium. So we just looked at several other minerals too, and I got a pretty good relationship between zinc and the hair and the diet. We were collecting food and everything, had the students keep track of what they were eating. Which is pretty easy when we had all these kids that were eating in the dorms, but what we started out to do we weren't able to do. I was doing this work for her as part of that.

I got to do some teaching, and so I had experience in teaching. Anyway, I was going to go back now. I am back now and I am going to work for the university. I got my lab over in the old building and we are doing things. I was a member of the food technologist, IFT [Institute of Food Technologists]. We were touring different food things here in the state and Phillips Petroleum was trying to get into some food manufacturing. They had set off another spin-off company called Provesta, which was

doing their food, and so those Provesta people had become members of the IFT. I was president that year of the IFT section and we set up a tour of the Bartlesville plant where they had worked out a way to actually grow yeast starting with petroleum. It was an interesting thing to do, but it is all hydro carbons no matter which way you are going. So they had ripped that away to develop this yeast that they were growing. Anyway, we did a tour of their lab and I went in to where they were drawing and experimenting with different kinds of yeast and I said, "You're growing kluyveromyces in cheese whey." You could tell by the smell, and also I had seen a box over here that had dry yeast and dry whey. They had dry whey they were using and they were doing this. The fellow looked kind of funny and he said, "You're not a..." What did he call it, kind of a spy? That was supposed to be a real secret what they were doing. (Laughter) So anyway, I mean, I worked with that in my master's and so of course I knew that was the only yeast they could be using because that was the only one that was rated for human consumption. I would see them in these big things full of dried whey. Anyway, I kind of impressed them. I got a grant from them to develop food uses for this yeast they were doing. At that time, it seems like my first grant I got was almost for I think \$100,000, and the dean and the department head were just (gasps). That was, at that time, the biggest grant they'd ever received.

**Wilson**

*Who was the dean and the department head at that time?*

**S. Knight**

The dean was, oh the name is not coming to me. The department head was Esther Winterfeldt.

**E. Knight**

Was the other gal's name Barbara? Who was that?

**S. Knight**

No. I'll look it up. I know her very well. There has just been one other dean after her. Since I have retired there is another dean over there now. That was kind of a funny thing, because that really set me up. They wound up at the dean. I was over in the old Home Economics Building, and it just really was not a very good, well it was kind of falling down. So anyway, developed one of the basement labs, really large lab, that I could teach both of my experimental foods class in and continue whatever research I was doing.

**E. Knight**

Tell her about the yeast they come up with.

**S. Knight**

Well, we put it in a 'meal on the go' bar, took it to different things. We had another thing that worked in, really was something we called potato puffs. We would take instant potato. There is very little protein in potatoes. But kids love potatoes, particularly fried. Some of my graduate students we would work together and they made something that was called potato puffs. We put the yeast in it. This was a nice, mild flavored

yeast, so it wasn't real strong. Started with instant potatoes and had that in there, and so it really improved the food value of what would be like a french fry. What you would do was use the inside of a doughnut cutter. We took the little center thing that cut that out. We would make those and fry them, and that's one thing that the Phillips Provesta people liked real well and they wanted to take it to one of their food shows.

Carla, she was making these and she would take one and she would slap her hand and knock it out of the little thing. There is no way. They wanted thousands of those things to take to a food show. The Phillips people bought us a cookie cutter. You could fill this vat with the stuff and it extruded it through and it worked with Bama to make it something, Bama pies, so that they could be extruded and put out there. So we were making some of these. We got the cookie cutter and filled the vat. They had to mix up a big batch of it. They put it in there and it mixed it up and it extruded it.

One very, very hot day we decided we better fry them. You see, we had gone from little batches of 100 grams of potato up to these huge amounts. So we took it in the lab and there was a salesman or something coming in and wanted to talk to me. One of these students come out and her eyes are just like this and she says, "Dr. Knight! They are exploding!" So I went in and they were exploding. They were flying all over that old building. (Laughter) Apparently, I didn't know there was any gluten in potatoes and it was developing something in that extra mixing that was developing toughness.

**E. Knight**

They added quite a bit of protein.

**S. Knight**

Well yeah, but there is no gluten in protein. Whatever it was, each one of them was flying into three pieces. The top and a bottom and still a soggy middle. They were just going all over the lab. I looked and all we could really do was just let them all pop. There wasn't any lid or anything. I crawled under a table and reached up and got some aluminum foil and myself made a shield to put over the top. (Laughter) The students were really impressed. All we could do was just let them all pop, but at least they were contained. I bet when we moved out of that lab if you looked close enough you could still find pieces of potato puff. (Laughter) We got them.

**E. Knight**

They were delicious.

**S. Knight**

But all we had to do was we had to measure up 100 gram batches, give them just the right amount of mixing, put that one little thing in there and extrude it. So we had to have an assembly line. Start off with these small amounts and put them in there and the mixing and then go

through. That was the only way we figured how to do it on such short notice.

**E. Knight**

Tell her what you were going to do with them.

**S. Knight**

For this meeting what they were wanting to do was they wanted to set up in a fancy hotel suite and invite all the people that were coming to this IFT convention that was starting and invite people. They wanted to serve these potato puffs as something they were doing. Of course, we couldn't have them flying all over. They did tell us later that apparently one batch that we had already mixed up had gotten in accidentally and it did. I had warned them, you know.

**E. Knight**

She took them to Atlanta and it was very well received. The idea was to sell them to old folks' homes because they would up the protein content.

**S. Knight**

As well as to school children.

**Wilson**

*How would you package them?*

**E. Knight**

Like popcorn.

**S. Knight**

They would just be packaged, and my thought was fried on sight. Like your frozen french fries and things. But anyway, Provesta sold off a part of that and then I had also done a 'meal on the go' bar, which was going very well. The company that bought that off called me and they wanted me to make all kinds of nutritional claims. I guess because of these health food stores or something. Well no, I approved the protein content and I made it a better food, but it wasn't anything magic. I don't know where it went from there.

**E. Knight**

When we went to Creede, There was a guy selling them up there at a store there. He said it was the only kind of breakfast bars he liked. It kind of flattered me there. He didn't even know you developed them. Tell them about the other products you made so well, biscuits. We would go to Ole Rabbit Ears down there and eat biscuits. Those were your biscuits.

**S. Knight**

Oh. (Laughs) You see, I had worked with Bama Pies and the lady there at Bama Pies that did their new product development—this is our Tulsa Bama Pies. Anyway I got a telephone call one day and they came in and said, "She has told us we want to start making biscuits." They were doing a lot of work with McDonald's and they wanted to start making biscuits for McDonald's. I said, "Well, I can give you my biscuit recipe but I see two things wrong with it. I am used to making it in small batches and to make it in a big batch you will have to do a lot of

experimenting with it. I will give you my recipe and I'll tell you what it is. It's just a standard recipe for biscuits, but first off, let me tell you if I don't have buttermilk, I don't make biscuits." Then I just gave the standard thing, but my recipe is two teaspoons of baking powder, quarter teaspoon of soda, cup of buttermilk, two cups of flour and some shortening to cut in. That is it, but that is a pretty standard recipe. I told them I know you can buy dry buttermilk, but I have not had much luck with it. I just didn't see having gone through an operation how they could adapt my recipe to what they wanted to do. About six months later again the IFT was taking a tour and we were going through Bama Pies. I walked in there and there was a silo, it looked like, that was two or three stories high of buttermilk. Cold, chilled buttermilk. So they did it. I haven't heard any more whether they're still making those but my grandson says he loves their biscuits.

**Wilson**

*At McDonald's?*

**S. Knight**

Yeah, at McDonald's. He was real smug about it and then I told him I gave them the recipe. I have no idea what changes they had to make but they did taste like mine. All the other places I go that have biscuits now, I can taste the baking powder in it. They use too much. They want to try to make them lighter. Maybe it's I'm tasting soda. I don't know, whatever it is, there's something in there to me that interferes with the flavor. According to my grandson, and I have never gone in and gotten McDonald's breakfast biscuits. I guess I need to, but he keeps saying.

**E. Knight**

They are still your recipe. You like to downplay what you did. These days you sell things like that, but in those days you gave it away.

**S. Knight**

Well it was just a standard recipe. There wasn't anything precious about it. It was just that they took my word for it that it wouldn't be the same if you didn't have the real buttermilk. (Laughter)

**Wilson**

*So over time, doing all this work, have you really developed your taste buds?*

**S. Knight**

I guess. That was another thing we would always do. Anytime you have foods classes, or particularity experimental or anything, you do try to do some sensory evaluation and develop the techniques for sensory evaluation.

**E. Knight**

You had classes on it.

**S. Knight**

We didn't have classes on it. I never did feel like I was....

**E. Knight**

Mom, quit being so dang modest. I have gone to those classes.

(Laughter) I was recruited, and you'd have big classes on it.

**S. Knight**

Well, yeah.

**E. Knight**

The people enjoyed it. And also you didn't mention the fact that it was you and your students that really helped that guy with Head Country. He came over here, too. I wish you would claim some credit for that and after all, I helped taste test it. (Laughter)

**Wilson**

*What is your Head Country story?*

**S. Knight**

Well, see this again, I am not sure, because this is actually for a company that could name. Danny Head, the owner of Head Country, has this barbeque sauce and it is good barbeque sauce. There was a certain brand of ketchup he used and they were going to double almost the price of the ketchup, and that is the basic ingredient. Anyway, he had to develop a substitute for the ketchup, because he just didn't want to have to pay that much. He had tried all the other ketchup brands. His customers could tell a difference and would pick up phones and say, "What have you done to your ketchup?" All we were wanting was the flavor, not the texture. He just wanted the flavor. One of my graduate students at that time lived at Ponca City. She sat up this, trained her panelists, and they tried to get all the ingredients. Then what's on the label will tell you what's in there but not the amount and all of that. She had to work with the ingredients that were there and come up with a substitute for that ketchup.

**E. Knight**

This is a young lady, inexperienced, being tutored by...

**S. Knight**

This is beside the point. That is your job as a director of a graduate student. Anyway she put them together. I don't think I would have been sensitive enough to pick up this, but sure enough, she got a ketchup that the taste was there. So then he came up with his other secret ingredients and put it together with the brand name product and with theirs, and they couldn't tell the difference. So he went back to them and said, "Sorry, I don't need your ketchup anymore." Suddenly they decided they could sell their ketchup to him at the price they had been, which was probably better than what it cost him to try and put it together himself. So somewhere he has got that recipe down. (Laughter) If the ketchup people give him any more problems... But he did, when this girl graduated, he hired her to help develop some of his others, like the smoke. Anyway, he has got two or three different flavors now that they have.

**Wilson**

*So for something like that, is that just part of the land grant mission, to help other people?*

- S. Knight** That is kind of the way I viewed it. A lot of people charged a lot. He would have paid me something, but as an individual I thought no, that is part of the four things of...
- E. Knight** Some lady out west you did that for.
- S. Knight** Yeah, I have done an awful lot of things like that...
- E. Knight** Okie Girls, or the Okie Ladies, trying to get into their own business.
- S. Knight** We work with them, because if you go from a small amount to a large amount it is... One lady was trying to start, and did start, selling her cookies. I don't know how well it did, but her grandmother made the very, very best cookies. She came up and we presented her problem to my Experimental Foods class. She said, "I have seen my grandmother make her cookies. I copy them exactly. She will write out a recipe for me. I try to copy it and I simply never can." So we had some students take on this as a challenge to try to just start with the basic recipe as Grandma gave it. She said, "But let me tell you the problem that I have. One day I said, 'Mom, I am going to follow everything you say and each thing as you measure it out, I am going to carefully weigh and try to get exactly how much it was.'" Like she would use a teacup instead of a regular cup so she would be trying then to put that in a regular cup so she would have something, other than stealing her grandmother's teacup.
- She is doing it all and she is trying to get it together. So she said add the salt. So she put the salt in there. She tried to figure out exactly how much salt was in there, so Mom helped her figure out how much salt was there. Then, Mom went over here took a pinch of salt and dumped the rest in the sink. (Laughter) She said, "We realized, Yes! Any of her recipes are going to be hard to follow." But they did work with them and she tried to describe what it was in the recipe as best she could and use all the techniques they had learned in this class. There wasn't anything magic about it but still they put that together.
- Other people had their pickles. They were all spoiling because they would get yeast in them. I found out, I said, "Well you are not heating it enough." They said, "We don't heat them at all. We don't even have a stove." I said, "Well, you are just going to be out of business, because you do have to. You obviously have yeast contamination." They thought they had so much vinegar in the pickles, but yeast can tolerate an awful lot, and so they had to kind of pasteurize it. In other words they didn't – it was just things like that. Then one of my graduate students worked with it to try to determine exactly how much heat they would have to have, take it and culture it to see if they caught them all. We did things like that, but I really enjoyed doing that. People got to where they would

call from all over. I think then they put in the....

**E. Knight**

Yeah, your students enjoyed working on actual projects.

**S. Knight**

(Laughs) We kind of got in trouble once, or close. Caffeine is extremely bitter, so when we are doing sensory evaluation there is sour, bitter, sweet, salty, so you have a control for each of those, which was going to be your sour, bitter, sweet, salty. Well, we would usually use sucrose for our sweet because that is the most common sugar that we use. We had these different things that we used for each of these. What we use, and this is standard throughout the industry, for bitter is caffeine. We just use tiny amounts of it to make your standards. Do you remember where I am going with this now? Oh yes. Okay. So anyway the kids got to thinking they knew that a lot of their friends all they did was have a cup of coffee before they came to class. They thought they would do better if they at least had something with some food value in it besides just the coffee.

They said, "Could we put caffeine in a muffin?" I thought that was innovative. "Yeah. Try it. Go for it. You can't put in very much or it is going to start tasting bitter." They set it up and they did their experiment. They got a muffin recipe they tried and everybody liked it. Then they started trying to see how much caffeine they could get in with it. What they were aiming would be the equivalent of caffeine that you could get in a cup of coffee. Sure enough, they can make it and get it sweet, and it worked. Well then somebody picked up on what we were doing, came in and interviewed us. I think Tulsa picked it up. So in the newspaper and on the radio, and oh, did we start getting complaints. Well, it was better for them than the cup of coffee. Oh, you are trying to put caffeine in all of this. Well anyway, some things do not rebound to your glory. (Laughter) But I thought the kids did a good job and it was a good idea.

**Wilson**

*What are some classes that you taught?*

**S. Knight**

I taught just what we call Science of Food Prep. That was a class where—I loved that class as an undergraduate. I loved that class because it tells you what happens, like why does broccoli turn a strange color when you cook it. Any of the green vegetables, what you can do to keep that from happening. The affect of different flours, like bread flour and cake flour and all purpose flour, and what happens if you bake like a biscuit out of all those three, or what if you tried to make a cake out of all of those three. In class you could have enough people there that you would assign different ones and then you evaluate them and you see it. Just learn what happens in food and why some starches don't freeze.

If you make a pudding out of certain starches and you take it out and if you have frozen it like for dessert or something that you want, some of



them are awful. All they do is run water. If you put regular cornstarch or flour to thicken a pie, or if you have made an apple pie and you decided to freeze it, save it for Thanksgiving and it is all soggy when you get it out, it's because you have starch that separates when you freeze it and the water comes out. Not all starches do that. Tapioca doesn't. Waxy potato starch. Anyway, those are the kinds of things that if you are going into a restaurant or something where you might be wanting to freeze something, that is something you need to know. There, too, we would have people like from Bama, I really had a good relationship with them, come over and talk to us and tell us how their suppliers for certain kinds of starches for whatever it was they were wanting to do. I just loved that class, and I loved to teach it because it was so practical in what you could do.

**Wilson**                    *Sounds fun.*

**S. Knight**                Yeah.

**E. Knight**                She would have like the Cain's coffee people come in as part of the class and give lectures about coffee.

**S. Knight**                They loved to do it, because they knew some of these people were going into restaurants. It was just practical knowledge and things that you knew but didn't know. One of my best, greatest things I think, impact I had, see about the time I got through all of this and started teaching, I was already at about the age of when I started wanting to do something. I would see these women coming in who would be in their mid-forties maybe, divorced and suddenly they were out and their self-esteem wasn't very high and they really didn't think they could hack it. Well I knew they could, because you got so many life situations and things that when you come into school you are way ahead of those freshmen as far as what decisions to make and things like that. Anyway, they would come in and sometimes they would really be low and they would love that kind of class. Knowing there is some of this and then too I would love to talk with them and let them know I came in as a later student and did fine.

**Wilson**                    *Can we talk about that a little more? When you started school your first semester went well...*

**S. Knight**                Yeah.

**Wilson**                    *But what about your first day on campus? What were you feeling?*

**S. Knight**                Strange, out of place, excited.

**Wilson** *How old were you? In your early thirties?*

**S. Knight** No, late thirties.

**Wilson** *Late thirties.*

**E. Knight** I would say so.

**S. Knight** I think I started '65. Then it wasn't a matter of going on and getting an advanced degree so I could do something. I was just starting from scratch.

**E. Knight** She was about thirty-three years old, I think.

**S. Knight** But I still had time for that, and I could have. I retired at sixty-five just because I wanted to, and you could retire at sixty-five. Earl had already started having some health problems and I just wanted to so we could travel and do things. I really probably should have taught two more years. You don't think you can do that anymore but when your age and your years taught come out to eighty, or something like that, you can get full retirement, and I lacked two years.

**Wilson** *How was it being a young mother with your husband gone some traveling and going to school? How do you balance all of those?*

**S. Knight** Well, probably too, if anything it hurt the children, because I know there would be times that I was in the house. I tried to schedule my classes so that I would be home particularly when they were little, but I was home in body. I would be writing a paper or I would be studying for something. I was there in the house. I wasn't in class but I was there and Earl was gone. I am afraid that the fact that I was just there in body but maybe not getting enough involvement. None of them ever acted like they didn't get enough of my attention.

**E. Knight** Fortunately we had an older daughter and then we had a middle daughter which is five years younger and then we had the little boy, so they would supervise.

**Wilson** *The older girls helped out?*

**S. Knight** Yes. We still shared the work. At home, we always shared the work. We didn't expect Mom to do it all, but a lot of times I would do a lot of work after they were asleep. Looking back that is one thing that bothers me. Particularly, they say often times the middle child is the one that gets left out, and I kind of think my middle child could have used a little bit more of my attention. (Laughs) She doesn't complain about it now. Things

- like that.
- E. Knight** Benita matured.
- S. Knight** Well the older child, she just took over and did things.
- Wilson** *So you were in college at the same time as some of your children when you were working on your advanced degrees?*
- S. Knight** Yes. As a matter of fact, David, our fall crop, our late child, the one that I was getting pretty close to forty when he was born, he was much younger than the others when I was working on my PhD. That was interesting too.
- E. Knight** But Benita was...
- S. Knight** Well Amy was the one that raised David pretty much. Because Benita had gotten married.
- E. Knight** What I remember was she would tell us she was in competition with her mother because she was in college and making not as good of grades as her mother. (Laughter) We had to have a lecture about that.
- S. Knight** But that was a good thing that the kids didn't need to feel like I was in competition with them.
- Wilson** *What is some advice you would give to older students who are just starting out? You mentioned women that have come back when they are ready to start again.*
- S. Knight** Several would come back later and tell me that it had been a real... Most of these women were women who had been in a divorce. Maybe the husband had gone on and gotten a degree and probably they had put him through for a degree. They were intelligent women. I knew they were, they just thought, "Oh, I am so far behind." And usually I just tell about me, that I started back and look. They all thought of me as being one of their best teachers anyway. That was just great encouragement to them.
- E. Knight** What about Marilyn? Everything you're talking about, look where she's at.
- S. Knight** Oh yeah, I think she may be department chair down at Edmond now. But that was really all they needed. They are better off than the kids are. They may know a thing about computers, they may have had higher math than you have had but you have so much more maturity, and you are not worried a whole lot about if the fellow sitting behind you is real

cute and things like that. You can really devote yourself to learning and get in an area you like. I don't know of a single returning student that didn't do well.

**Wilson** *How many students do you think you have taught?*

**S. Knight** I don't know.

**Wilson** *Do you know how many you have advised in graduate degrees?*

**S. Knight** Oh, probably twenty, twenty-five. Some of them were international students, some not. I was blessed with having really good students, so they did well and they could do these things on their own. Like the girls that develop the procedure for really trying to help people with the testing. I didn't have time to do all that, but they were good and if you are really working toward a degree they need to have the responsibility and do it. You are there if they are completely doing it wrong or getting off or whatever, but I always had such good graduate students.

You can get a research assistantship or a teaching assistantship. When you are applying for jobs, sometimes the teaching assistantship is viewed better for a lot of jobs you are applying for. I am not sure why. I would see to it whether they were on—like your teaching assistantships were usually through the department and paid through the college. My research assistantships I usually had enough research money coming in that I paid for them a lot myself, which was one reason why a lot of these researchers if they are struggling along with just one assistant that is paid for, he can't get as much done. But if you got good ones, but you are spending an awful lot of time guiding these people. Because then that is your chore to guide them, and they are supposed to be learning how to do all of this, and they need to be accepting their responsibility too, but I have had really good ones.

**E. Knight** Little miss what's her name? Is she a dean there?

**S. Knight** She is something. She is a dean or vice president or something of a school in Indiana now.

**E. Knight** Marylyn is what? She has these people strategically placed all over. In really fine positions.

**Wilson** *And you still hear from former students?*

**S. Knight** Yes. I want to show you something from a former student. I had totally forgotten about this girl. Not completely, because she would every once in a while call me and say something. She had come up last year and she

was representing, I guess, her twenty-fifth year or something, I don't know what. She called and they called me and said this girl said she wouldn't come if I wasn't going to be there for their fall [event]. Having Homecoming you try to bring back the students and such. There she is.

**Wilson** *She said she wouldn't come if you...*

**S. Knight** If I weren't there. (Laughs)

**Wilson** *Oh, if you weren't there. Oh wow.*

**E. Knight** Was it the one you wanted to introduce?

**S. Knight** Well, she wanted me to meet her whole family, but she has done great things. I just couldn't even realize at all that she had her own company doing something. She was chief dietitian for the Oklahoma City schools for a while. She has just done great things. She gave me a ride home in her... I think there was another one too, but she was the first black student I think we had in our college. I'm for sure in our major, anyway.

**Wilson** *There just weren't very many?*

**S. Knight** No, this was kind of early on, and she just thought I was the greatest, and I didn't realize I had done anything extra special for that child.

**E. Knight** Where is she in relation to the girl in Memphis? In what position is she in relation to who you trained? You said she was the first. I thought this other girl might have been.

**S. Knight** No, Tara came after this girl. Tara came in to me as a graduate student. Anyway, her husband is from Nigeria. That was interesting having two as my graduate assistants.

**E. Knight** Tara was a pretty girl. Her mother was a teacher. They are doing very well, both of them. I just think that is great. (Laughs)

**Wilson** *What year did you retire?*

**E. Knight** '98 or '99, I cannot remember.

**S. Knight** I retired in December at the end of the semester. It was either '98 and very close to '99 or '99 and very close to 2000.

**E. Knight** I cannot remember either, and you went on to become a judge. She was traffic judge.

**S. Knight** Oh, yeah. I was traffic judge for a while.

**Wilson** *Really?*

**S. Knight** Yes.

**Wilson** *In Stillwater?*

**S. Knight** Yes. At the University. I don't think they particularly liked me as traffic judge.

**E. Knight** The students liked you.

**S. Knight** Well, we would go out. I would have Earl drive me around and we would look at the different places and if they said—one person said, "I got this ticket for not being in the right parking place." He said, "You couldn't see the markings because they were covered in mud." It had rained. So I went out and looked, and it had covered all the markings. It would really get them because I forgave a lot of them, but I hung in really tight, too, with a bunch that didn't. We would just go out and look.

**E. Knight** It was too late, because you were being fair. Otherwise, if a student got a ticket, he was guilty. I mean, that was just the way it was.

**S. Knight** And then try to appeal it, but very few of mine were appealed because I had the goods on them whatever it was they were wanting to appeal. I would tell them sure, appeal it. You can do it. There is a board of people you can take your appeal to, but you were on the line. I went out and I saw what the situation was. It wasn't exactly as you described it. Very few of them. I don't think I ever had an appeal that was turned over. Finally they just disbanded the appeals court.

**E. Knight** Yeah, because for once the kids were getting a fair shake, guilty or innocent. That was something that needed to be done. I hadn't thought much about it. I got a ticket or two over there. If you got a ticket you were guilty. I just paid. That's easiest if you were guilty or not. Then they went out and found this ole judge, she would go out and look.  
(Laughs)

**S. Knight** He was retired you see. He is driving and I'm looking.

**E. Knight** She'd write it down. When you got the answer from her you admitted in front of the court. Look, I went out and saw you are guilty as sin or you are not guilty.

*What was your position when you retired? What was your title?*

**Wilson**

**S. Knight**

Associate professor. I needed to write more articles. That's one thing. You sit down and you write the stuff up, that is what gets you known in the school. People, if your researcher is publishing the good articles it really makes your university have a real good reputation, too. It is important, and that is part of the extension, is getting your results published. I guess you could say I thought of my extensions as what you say and I didn't get enough things published. They were publishable but I was busy doing other things.

*Well, what are some things that have kept you busy in retirement?*

**Wilson**

**S. Knight**

Oh, cross word puzzles, walking the dog, the grandchildren. We now have two great-grandchildren. Three! Three! (Laughter) So far all girls.

**E. Knight**

Normally we were raising grandchildren. We had somebody in the house.

**S. Knight**

Yeah, Michaela when she was three years old, [her dad's] wife just asked him to leave. She just wasn't ready to settle down yet. Michaela moved in with us, she and David, when she was about three. I remember reading in the divorce decree that he had a place to go to take her, so that he wasn't like these single parents that don't have enough time with the child, too. So anyway, so she was with us. Spent some time with her mother but mostly...

**E. Knight**

We raised her.

**Wilson**

*She is how old now?*

**S. Knight**

Sixteen now. Now she is spending most of her time with her mother. That was her decision. She still—like she drifted in here yesterday for some reason or another.

**E. Knight**

I actually have power of attorney for her, but before that Amy was here for a while, we had Mary Joe.

**S. Knight**

Yeah. (Laughs) It is my theory, empty nests is a rumor. (Laughs) Now the kids are mostly gone but we have got their animals they left. Two cats and two dogs.

**Wilson**

*What in your life has given you the greatest satisfaction?*

**S. Knight**

First, my marriage.

Hey, that's okay. (Laughs)

**E. Knight**

**S. Knight**

All the other things pass away. (Laughs) I think through it all I really thought I couldn't stand to be away from school, because I really did think that I taught my classes better than anybody else could, and I haven't had any urge to go back. I think it is because of the family. We have had family around. It is here and there are things that sometimes I couldn't be a part of because I was teaching. I love my professional life but I didn't have any trouble at all giving it up, and it kind of surprised me.

We are very lucky only one of our children, David, is in Afghanistan now but that doesn't count, John is up in Indianapolis and that is a long way off and we don't get to see as much of John, but our other children are close. Amy is in Tulsa. She is the one that is the farthest away right now. Up until recently Wyatt and Katie were here so now they have scattered. As I talked to other people when they grow up the kids usually go off. Like in your family, your mother and her sister, you are still close enough you are all here and can be a family, and you get together pretty often. Many other times the kids move to Alaska, they do something. So it has been real nice having family. I haven't ever felt bored. I kind of feel bad that we don't do more things but we have just been content.

We got old real quick.

**E. Knight**

*Well, how important has OSU been to you?*

**Wilson**

**S. Knight**

Very important. In the first place, it is sometimes kind of hard to get a job where you went to school. They think of it as inbreeding but on the other hand they were impressed with me as a student. I have really appreciated this college and the university.

**E. Knight**

I think what impressed me as an outsider is they were, at least in her college in her degree, they were loyal to their good students. Two of them worked there for a while and were well received. I think that is kind of rare.

**S. Knight**

Yeah, and I liked the philosophy about the university and about the college and about the department. They put up with a lot from me, too. (Laughs) Like I wasn't publishing as much as I should, but I was doing the things that I wanted to do and so much of the outreach with people in the state. I think my dean appreciated that. She would go out and be talking to somebody and I would be telling her about, "Oh, yes, we've been working with Dr. this, that and the other," and she would say, "Could you kind of keep me posted about what it is you are doing? It's kind of embarrassing sometimes." (Laughs) I didn't do a very good job of keeping her posted sometimes, but I like to work with the little



people, I guess. In extension, if your job is pure extension you are doing a lot of that but I just love teaching, too. This way I could do it both. Teaching, as I said, the classes that I loved. The ones I liked best as an undergraduate were the ones I got to teach.

*Have you had some family members graduate from OSU?*

**Wilson**

**S. Knight**

Let's see. (Laughs) John, Benita finished with that two year degree, Amy has her degree in wildlife management. None of them chose my field. David went to school for a while but not long. John got three degrees from OSU.

**E. Knight**

Jeremy finished over there. Jesse finished over there, or I think he is going to. He is just a casual student but I think he is going to make it. Mike, of course, finished and worked for them for years. Mary Jo finished over there.

**S. Knight**

Yes, and has been teaching. Mary has been teaching in art. Katie.

**E. Knight**

Now Wyatt and Dustin.

**S. Knight**

Claim another one.

**E. Knight**

We're pretty much an OSU bunch. (Laughter)

**Wilson**

*Sounds like you have some great-grandkids that are going to be ready in the next fifteen years.*

**E. Knight**

And Steven has swore that is where he is going

**S. Knight**

And Amy's son is a senior at Broken Arrow. I think he is going to Tulsa for his first two years because it is free. He is already working with advisors so that whatever he does over there at Tulsa will be transferred.

**Wilson**

*Awesome.*

**E. Knight**

He gets good grades, so he will. We have tried to set up an account to help him, too. We hope to get all our grandchildren to OSU.

**S. Knight**

Or the great-grandchildren. (Laughs)

**E. Knight**

That will be up for the next generation.

**Wilson**

*Well when history is written about you, what would you like for it to say?*

**S. Knight**

I guess, well, I think that all of my students really felt that I was fair and did a good job, and if they needed something extra special, they got it. Now about the rest of my life, I don't know. (Laughs) I would like to not do as much as we did. I liked my involvement with church work and particularly with international students with the university that we would teach English to. I like serving on the University Center Foundation at church because I think of my experiences of being a teacher at the University. It helps me have a feeling for what the university students at church do need, but I have been very unremarkable about most things. I didn't win any peace prizes but I think what I did, in my mind I did well.

**Wilson**

*Wonderful. Well, thank you very much for visiting with me today.*

*----- End of interview -----*