

*Adult Education Students Succeed Interview
With
John Basor*

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Adult Education Students Succeed

Interviews by Cuba Z. Miller

John Ivo Basor

Additional Interview

Ann Veronica Coyle

California Department of Education
Adult Education Oral History Project

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PREFACE

Adult education in California has a proud history of helping its citizens to meet the challenges of life in a huge, complex, multicultural state. Through the years, California adult educators have provided leadership to the nation in the development of innovative instructional practices and creative educational solutions.

The California Adult Education Oral History Project began in 1992 as a companion to a print history of adult education commissioned by the California Department of Education. The oral history project started with a small group of leaders whose careers began in the 1950's and 1960's and who witnessed and influenced important events in the development of the nation's largest adult education program.

To date, thirty-two educators whose careers span seventy years have participated. They represent the varying professional roles, organizations, and geography that comprise our state's diverse adult education programs. Some of the educators were adult learners who reached their life goals as a result of participation in the system.

These stories tell how California adult education met the needs of citizens in the wartime 1940's, and those of veterans and an exploding population in the 1950's. The growth and energy of California adult education in the nineteen-sixties, the institutionalization of competency based education in response to the influx of refugees and immigrants in the seventies and eighties, and the innovative uses of technology of the nineties have been recorded.

Significant assistance to the project was provided by the staffs both of the California State Archives and of the Oral History Program, History Department, California State University, Fullerton. This project could not have begun without the vision of Raymond G. Eberhard, Administrator, Adult Education Policy and Planning Unit, California Department of Education, and the support of the late Lynda T. Smith, Consultant, Adult Education Policy and Planning Unit.

Linda L. West
March, 2005

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer

Cuba Z. Miller

Interview Times and Places

John Ivo Basor: one interview was conducted in Watsonville, California on June 10, 2004.

Ann Veronica Coyle: one interview was conducted in Watsonville, California on June 11, 2004.

Editing

The interviewees reviewed and edited the transcript. When the tape was inaudible or when necessary for clarification, some information was added and is indicated by brackets [].

Tapes

The original cassette tapes were transferred to reel to reel format at California State University, Fullerton and deposited with the California State Archives.

California Department of Education
Adult Education Oral History Project

Adult Education Students Succeed

John Ivo Basor

Pajaro Valley Unified School District
Watsonville/ Aptos Adult Education

Instructor, 1975 - Present

Student, 1967-70, 1974-75

Concurrent Student, 1963-67

Pajaro Valley Unified School District
Other District Assignments

Instructor, Watsonville High School
Administrative Intern

June 10, 2004
Watsonville, California

By Cuba Z. Miller

PROJECT: Adult Education Students Succeed
California Adult Education Oral History Project

INTERVIEWEE: John Ivo Basor

INTERVIEWER: Cuba Miller

DATE: June 10, 2004

CM: This is an interview with John Ivo Basor in Watsonville, California, on June 10th, 2004. John is an instructor for the Watsonville/Aptos Adult School in Pajaro Valley Unified School District. John also teaches at Watsonville High School. The interview is a part of the Adult Education Students Succeed initiative. The purpose of the interview is to highlight the impact adult education has had, and continues to have, on Mr. Basor's education and his career.

 Good afternoon, John. You're an exemplary example of the successful adult school student by virtue of your experience as an adult school concurrent student, a regular adult school student, and eventually an adult school teacher. But to fully appreciate that journey, we need to start at the beginning. Could you please tell us, then, about your childhood background and your arrival in the United States?

JB: Well, I was born on July 18, 1948, in a little village in Croatia near the city of Dubrovnik. And my father was born in Lead City, South Dakota, because my grandfather went to work in the gold mines of Black Hills, South Dakota. My father was five years old when my grandparents returned with three boys to the village of Dunave in Croatia. My two sisters, my parents, and I immigrated to the United States, to Watsonville, California, in 1963 on January the 3rd.

I went to school up through the first semester of eighth grade in Croatia. I went to primary school in my village, a one-room schoolhouse where we were all together, grades one through four. Then I moved to another nearby village and went from fifth through the first semester of eighth grade when we moved to California.

CM: What influenced the decision to come back to the United States for your dad?

JB: Because my dad had two brothers here in Watsonville. They asked my dad if he would be interested in joining them here in California since he was born in the United States. My father always had a desire to visit and live in the United States since he was born in this country.

CM: Although you were in what we would consider the eighth grade in Croatia, when you got here you were placed in seventh grade.

JB: Exactly.

CM: What was it like for you to start school here without knowing any English?

JB: I knew a little bit of English. I knew a few words, because they started teaching us [three] times a week for [forty-five] minutes in the middle school, or junior high, from fifth through eighth grade. We had English [three] days a week. But I knew very few words. My aunt enrolled me in Salsipuedes Junior High School in January after we arrived. But since I knew very little English, they placed me into a second semester [of] seventh grade.

CM: Did they have special English classes in the junior high school at that time?

JB: No, they didn't. They placed me right into a seventh grade, but occasionally, like once or twice a week, there used to be a person, like a language teacher [or a tutor], who used to come and pull me out of the seventh grade class to teach me extra EFL.

They called it English as a foreign language. Now they call it ESL (English as a Second Language). She used to come and – it would depend, once or twice a week for fifteen, twenty minutes to a half an hour.

CM: So she would like throw you in class to sink or swim.

JB: Right. Sink or swim system.

CM: Do you remember much about your first teachers? Were they patient with you as a non-English speaker?

JB: Right. Actually, I was the only immigrant, as far as I can remember, in my second semester of seventh grade. My teacher was Mr. Howard Peterson. He was very, very patient with me. He really took extra time to help me with English.

CM: After a short period of time, maybe right away, you also started attending English classes at night school, which adult education was commonly called at the time.

JB: Right.

CM: Were there any special requirements for you to attend since you were so young?

JB: I really don't remember, but right after my youngest sister Lucille and I started at Salsipuedes Elementary and Junior High, my Uncle Steve enrolled my other two sisters. My sister Ann went to Watsonville High. [All four of us, including my oldest sister Stella, were] enrolled at Watsonville Evening High School. It used to be night school, but it was an evening high school, with former director Lester Oakes. He enrolled us to take English as a foreign language, beginning English as a foreign language. I don't remember exactly, but we were able to enroll. Maybe because since we were going to day school, we were able to go also to the night school. We went four nights a week from seven to ten in the evening, Monday through Thursday.

CM: How many young people were in the English classes at that time?

JB: As far as I can remember – well, under eighteen – there were two of my sisters and myself. If I remember, there was one more person that I met a few months later from Croatia. So maybe four or five.

CM: Not a lot.

JB: Not a lot.

CM: So even at that time it was unusual for you to be attending the evening school.

JB: It was. Right.

CM: What do you remember about your first adult education teachers?

JB: My English as a foreign language teacher?

CM: Yes.

JB: My first English as a foreign language teacher in the evening school was Jack Hamilton. Jack Hamilton was a full-time teacher at the Watsonville High School during the day, and he taught EFL at night. He taught us [beginning English] four evenings a week.

CM: The same teacher all four nights.

JB: We [had the] same teacher four nights at the beginning. He was very, very patient. He was very patient with us, even though way back then there were very few materials to teach English as a second language. He made us repeat and repeat after him a lot. A lot of oral repetition in the beginning.

CM: I was going to specifically ask you about that, because the way we teach ESL has changed a lot.

JB: Right.

CM: I'd kind of like for you to go ahead and describe your English classes as you started out. You were saying that there was lots of repetition.

JB: Exactly, yes.

CM: Do you know what you had for textbooks and that kind of thing?

JB: Actually, he only used one book. I still have it at home. I don't remember the title of it, but I have it at home. (*Second Book in English* by Robert J. Dixon, Regents Publishing Co.) It was mostly like conversation, little drills. Mr. Jack Hamilton used to read it to us, and then we repeat it as a whole group, and then he'd call on us one by one. He would make sure that we pronounced and repeated correctly. He wouldn't let you go before you pronounced it right.

CM: Was there a lot of emphasis on grammar?

JB: There was. There was lots of emphasis on grammar. He would write sentences on the board, and he used to make us copy off the board, and from the book, too. But we didn't have any workbooks or we didn't have any handouts.

CM: So it was pretty rote learning.

JB: Rote learning, yeah. Like orally from the book, and then he'd write on the board, and we would copy from the board and from the book. It was strictly like an oral grammar reading method that they used. But he was very patient. There were immigrants from many different countries in that class.

CM: About how large was the adult school at that time? About how many classes each night that you went?

JB: As far as I can remember, there was one beginning EFL class and there was one intermediate and advanced. That was only two nights a week. Then there was one

developmental reading class. As far as I can remember, there was a total of about three or four classes in the evening.

CM: Not very much at all.

JB: I don't remember at the time if there were any day classes. There was one citizenship class in the evening. So it was four to five classes.

CM: It seems kind of strange to think now of there being just one beginning ESL class, doesn't it?

JB: Exactly. (both laugh)

CM: In learning English, John, what was the relative importance of friends and other community members in contrast to your formal classes?

JB: Well, my sisters and I, since we went to day school – two of my sisters and I went to day school and then went to night school four nights a week. We tried to use as much English as possible among us at home when we were doing homework, even though our parents were elderly [and did not know English]. When we came here, we spoke Croatian with them, but when we were doing homework, we used to use as much English as possible. We used bilingual English-Croatian, Croatian-English dictionaries. Then we had some cousins that used to come over to the house and help us to practice English. And we tried to mix with the people in the community so we were able to learn English as fast as possible.

CM: At the time, your cousins had been here long enough that they were fluent in English?

JB: Right. Some of them were born here, some were from South Dakota, and some came from Croatia, former Yugoslavia, before us. They came over and helped us learn English. Also they taught us how to drive.

CM: You did just spend one year in junior high school, is that right?

JB: I spent a year and a half. I went second semester seventh grade. Then I went a full year to eighth grade. And I graduated from Salsipuedes Junior High School in June of 1964.

CM: After you started high school then, you continued to take classes at the adult school. What classes were you taking at the adult school when you were in high school?

JB: Well, for the first year when I was at Watsonville High School, it was the fall of '64, I kept taking more advanced ESL classes. Then the following year I talked with the principal and the counselors at Watsonville High School to ask if I could take some academic courses in the evening school, because I lost a year. When I came to Salsipuedes I was placed a year back because of my limited English. Also I was a year older than my other classmates because, in Croatia, you start the first grade when you're seven years old. So I was actually two years behind the rest of the classmates. So I talked to the counselors and the principal. We met with former evening high school principal, Lester Oakes, to ask if I could take some academic courses in the evening. So I took – for example, I took geography, I took federal government, I took science. So I had enough credits to graduate from Watsonville High School in three years, in 1967.

CM: But you actually took quite a few of your academic courses at the adult school.

JB: Yeah. I took, like I said, U.S. government, U.S. history, science. I took math, I took geography, I took a number of classes in the evening high school.

CM: Were they formal structured classes at that time?

JB: Yes. At that time, they were formal lecture courses, used to meet three hours a week at least for three hours per class. They were structured.

CM: None of this independent study at that time, or self-paced.

JB: No independent study, no. No learning center. It was totally lecture, like a day class.

CM: Okay. Now, I believe you also took your citizenship class from the adult school.

JB: Also, yeah.

CM: When did you do that?

JB: I did that in 1974, '75. I took a citizenship class.

CM: After you'd been out of high school for a while then.

JB: Right. Almost eleven or twelve years after, I went back to adult school to citizenship class from Bud Rowland. He taught U.S. government at the high school, and he taught government at night. I took government from him before, and he taught citizenship for many, many years. I became a citizen in 1975.

CM: Was the process difficult at that time, to earn your citizenship?

JB: The process, it was more difficult. There were a lot more questions. Then also, what they used to do – they don't do it right now. You had to take two witnesses to your interview, a couple of people who knew you at least for five years.

CM: To kind of vouch that you were a good guy.

JB: What kind of moral character I had.

CM: Did other members of your family take their citizenship training at the adult school?

JB: Yes. Actually, all of my sisters took a class with me in the evening school to become a U.S. citizen.

CM: Your dad had been born here.

JB: Right.

CM: Did they recognize that? Did he have to do anything about his citizenship status?

JB: Actually, it's a long story. As I told you, my uncle and my aunt tried way back to bring us over to the United States in the early fifties. I forgot exactly, '53, '54, my dad used to tell me. They worked on it for a while, but the last he was told was that he lost his citizenship because he was in World War II. Before that he was in the Yugoslavian Army, way back in 1924. He was in the Yugoslavian Army, and then he was in World War II, and he lost U.S. citizenship.

CM: I didn't know you could do that.

JB: Then they forgot all about it and then he can't come to the United States. So it was all over. Then in the late fifties, in '59 and early '60, '61, my uncle said – he asked my dad if he wanted to try to do that again, if he wanted to come over to the United States. And my dad said, "If you like, you can try it." So my dad had an attorney in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and my uncle had an attorney in Watsonville. They worked on it for a while. Finally, in 1962 my dad regained his U.S. citizenship. He got his U.S. passport in Croatia. So that's how we got to come here, my mom and my sisters and I. He didn't have to take a test. He came as a citizen.

CM: Obviously, that's what we all think of. You're born here, you're an American citizen.

JB: Right. My mom also became a citizen, maybe about fifteen years later on.

CM: Okay. A little later in her lifetime. Okay. Once you finished high school, you started your college education at Cabrillo, the local community college.

JB: Exactly.

CM: But you continued in the adult school also. Why did you continue to take classes at the adult school while you were in college?

JB: Well, I kind of wanted to be in touch with adult school because some of my adult school teachers, like Jack Hamilton and also Ken Harrison, who also taught me ESL at night, kind of – they influenced me some day go to college and teach. The way they taught me – and also O'Brien Riordan taught me Spanish. He also taught ESL at night and taught Spanish during the day at Watsonville High School. They influenced me to become a teacher. So I kind of kept in touch with adult school. [I know that] when I finished my Bachelor [of Arts] degree and teaching credential, I'd like to come back and maybe teach other immigrants, like Jack Hamilton taught me, or Ken Harrison. Ken Harrison was from England. So I enjoyed how they taught me.

CM: So it was primarily your relationship with the teachers that you wanted to stay involved.

JB: Exactly. I wanted to get involved, yeah. I felt very comfortable going to the evening school because there were students from many different countries. There were quite a few from Croatia then, or from Yugoslavia, and from other countries. So I felt really comfortable going to night school, much more than day school.

CM: Much more than the day school, okay.

JB: Salsipuedes Junior High or Watsonville High School. There weren't very many immigrants going to day school at all, like it is now.

CM: I was going to say, Watsonville's always had immigrant communities. Is it just that the kids did not stay in school?

JB: At that time, actually, I don't remember meeting any other students who didn't speak any English. At that time, at Salispuedes Junior High and Watsonville High School, there weren't very many immigrants at that time, so I kind of thought they are more comfortable going to night school.

CM: Where people had common experiences.

JB: Right. Common problems, common experiences.

CM: It was during this period, John, that you were on the advisory council for the adult school. Tell us a little bit about that. What was it? What did you do? How did you get on it?

JB: Well, former director Lester Oakes asked me to be on it because [of my experience]. I was only fourteen years old, I was very young when I first came here, and I was learning English then. Later he said, "It would be a good idea for you – you would be a good example to be on the student council. We hope that one day you will become a teacher of adult school." We met like twice a month. We talked about school issues and problems and things like that.

CM: Even as early as then, did you go to classes and talk to other students?

JB: Yeah. We made presentations in other classes about our own experiences, how you could come from another country, how difficult it is when you come to a new country without learning the language, without knowing anybody. We didn't know anybody when we came to Watsonville. Just my father knew his brothers, but he hadn't seen them like for forty years. It was a shock.

CM: You mentioned a little bit about thinking early about becoming a teacher, but let's go ahead and elaborate a little bit on your completing college and your decision to become a teacher. Obviously, Cabrillo was a two-year school.

JB: Right, so from Cabrillo I transferred to the University of California at Santa Cruz, and I continued there. My major was foreign languages and linguistics. Spanish was my major and Russian was my minor. Then I had a second major in linguistics. I got my B.A. from UC Santa Cruz in 1971 in foreign languages and linguistics.

CM: So you speak Russian, you speak Spanish, you speak English –

JB: Right. Croatian. I did study German for a while at UC Santa Cruz.

CM: That's quite an achievement.

JB: Yeah, it is.

CM: It's something that I always admire about so many Europeans, that they do speak four and five languages.

JB: It's very common in Europe.

CM: It makes us look bad when we go over there. (laughs)

JB: Right.

CM: So did you work on your teaching credential at Santa Cruz, or did that come later?

JB: Well, after I graduated in 1971 from UC Santa Cruz, I applied at San Jose State University to do my teaching credential program. But it was very difficult to get in. There were a lot of students in the education block courses. So in 1972 I started to take some classes, but I couldn't get into the program. I took some graduate courses in Spanish and Russian. Then my dad got sick. He got sick in 1972, I think it was. I kept taking some classes. I wasn't in the teaching program yet. I was a graduate

student taking some classes. Then I worked in the Pajaro Valley Unified High School District. I worked in the maintenance department to help the family, because of financial difficulties then. For a couple years I worked and went to classes, and then I transferred to UC Santa Cruz. In 1975 I transferred my units from San Jose State University, and I got my teaching credential in 1975 from UC Santa Cruz.

CM: All along had you been planning on teaching, from the very beginning?

JB: Yes I had. In January 1975, I had enough credits, enough courses, even though I was still working on my K-12 credential, I had enough credits to get my adult school credential. Lester Oakes, the director of the night school, hired me to teach ESL at night at Watsonville/Aptos Adult School where I started [as a student] in January of 1963. That's like eleven years, twelve years later.

CM: And of course by then you had studied linguistics and had a little better idea about how to teach language.

JB: Exactly. How to teach language, yes.

CM: John, you've taught at all of the local schools: Cabrillo, the adult school, and the high school. What has influenced your movement from one system to another?

JB: Since I first started teaching for the adult school at night in 1975, I've never left the adult school. I kept teaching always, evenings or mornings, I'd teach a couple courses. Then from adult school, I tried community college for a few years. I taught one or two classes for Cabrillo Community College. Then from Cabrillo I came back full-time for adult school as a full-time teacher. Then five years ago, I kind of wanted to try high school because, like I said, all my high school teachers [were influential]. I'd like to mention also Mr. Jack Spurlock, who taught me Spanish. He was an

excellent teacher. So I wanted to try high school. But I always kept teaching at the adult school.

CM: Okay. So you've never left the adult school.

JB: I never left. After a while you want to try something different, you know.

CM: Okay. And you have taught ESL, as we call it now, in all three systems.

JB: Right.

CM: In retrospect, what is the difference in the approach of the different systems, and which do you prefer? This is specific to teaching English.

JB: Like specific which way I prefer, you mean –

CM: Well, as I say, the college probably has a different approach to teaching English than the adult school does.

JB: Right.

CM: And the day school probably has a little different approach as well. I want you to kind of compare the different approaches to teaching English, of the three different systems.

JB: Well, I would say the adult school approach to teaching ESL is more – how do you say? – more kind of cooperative learning, kind of integrating the teaching of all the four skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The community college is more for reading and writing. And as I say, kind of similar as in high school.

CM: So a little more academic approach.

JB: It's a little more academic. Adult school is more kind of life skills oriented.

CM: Every day living.

JB: Yeah, every day living. Life skills, basic skills.

CM: Which do you find most effective?

JB: Well, I think for the adults, I would say the adult school would be the most effective for the life skills.

[end tape one, side A; begin tape one, side B]

CM: You talked about the methods and materials you experienced as a student in the 1960s when you were talking about a lot of rote memory, repetition, copying.

JB: Exactly.

CM: Let's carry that a little further to contrast ESL instruction from then, which we've talked about, to when *you* started teaching in 1975, until now, because things have also changed from '75 until now.

JB: Right. Well, like I say, in 1975 when I first started, we had very limited resources again. It was still pretty much like 1963 when my teachers taught me. I kind of started the same way. It was rote work. Then a couple years later we were able to get a workbook. The resources were very limited. Like today, we have so many different resources—textbooks, workbooks, tapes, videotapes, computers that I use in my classroom to teach ESL, a lot of visual aids. Now we have a lot of different conferences, like CCAE (California Council for Adult Education), CATESOL (California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) to attend – to be able to get some techniques. So we have so much more now than way back. Packets. We have packets.

CM: You did a lot of kind of in-service learning through the years then.

JB: Exactly, yeah.

CM: Did you go to any of the ESL Teacher Institute training sessions?

JB: Yeah, I went – I don't remember the instructor's name. I went to the ESL Institute.

Actually, she came once down to Watsonville High School. I can't think of her name.

Do you remember her name?

CM: There were a number of trainers –

JB: There were two ladies.

CM: Lynn Savage was the [director of the Institute].

JB: Lynn Savage. She came here to Watsonville High mainly to give us an in-service.

And another lady. I can't think of her name. I remember Lynn Savage.

CM: There were lots of trainers. Could have been Sharon Bassano.

JB: Yeah, and also Sharon Bassano came over from Santa Cruz Adult School.

CM: Peggy Doherty.

JB: Yeah, I remember Lynn Savage and Sharon Bassano. Our director, Lester Oakes, and later, other directors, Jim Eachus, Joellen Bruce, Claudia Grossi, and now Bob Harper, they all have been very supportive, sending us to workshops and conferences, from local to the state level. They've been very, very helpful. So I attended some workshops, different institutes. CCAE, CATESOL, ESL Institute, citizenship workshops. I taught citizenship for many years.

CM: Have you taken some of the methods that were designed for teaching adults and used them in the high school?

JB: Yes, I have. (both laugh) I used all of those things, the materials, too. I sure did, yeah.

CM: Not that I'm partial or anything, but sometimes I think that when it comes to teaching English, the adult schools have the inside track.

JB: A lot more actual materials in the adult schools than the high school has.

CM: My guess is – and you have kind of alluded to this – that you make use of your own life story as a model for your ESL students. Anything we want to elaborate on with that?

JB: Well, I tell my students how difficult [it can be]. Sometimes they tell me how difficult English is, how difficult to learn English and how difficult life is here when you come from another country. I agree. But then I tell them my own story, how far and where I came from and how difficult it was – my family coming to the United States without really having any money or knowing any language, or very little language – we had to start from scratch. So I had to go to grade school and high school, and I had to work always part-time. We lived on my uncle's farm, my dad and I and my sisters. We picked apples and apricots and picked blackberries. But I tell them, if a person wants to do it, he can do it.

CM: The opportunities are here.

JB: There are a lot of opportunities.

CM: When you first started teaching, John, did you work with any of your own former teachers? I mean, were they still around when you started teaching?

JB: When I first started teaching, yes. One of them was O'Brien Riordan. He's the one who taught me English at Watsonville High School. O'Brien Riordan, [Kenneth Harrison], and also Norm Hagen.

CM: Actually, kind of what I'm interested in here is: what's the relationship as you move from former student to peer, to colleague?

JB: Right. Well, I kept calling them "mister." Mr. Riordan or Mr. Harrison. Yeah, I felt different. It was a good feeling. They were very supportive. I kept calling them ["mister"]. They are my mentors.

CM: So you had a number of mentors.

JB: Right. Yeah, I sure did.

CM: You say they were supportive, they were welcoming to you and –

JB: They were welcoming me and helping in the curriculum and materials, stuff like that.

CM: Very good. You chose to do your master's thesis on the history of Watsonville/Aptos Adult School. How did you come to that decision? Why did you choose that topic?

JB: Well, again, I started there as an ESL student in 1963, and I kind of wanted to do something to pay back, because everybody was so nice – Lester Oakes, Jim Eachus, all the directors. And my teachers were really great. They helped us a lot. And I kind of wanted to do something for the adult school and for the community, do a study, personal fulfillment. How would you explain that? To give something back to the adult school. Because it would be good to do a study, to have something for the other students so they can look back on the history. How much adult school or evening school helped other students. That's really what made me do that.

CM: Okay. Now, the adult school was formally established here in 1937.

JB: That's right.

CM: You were fortunate to be able to interview the first director, Carl Coehlo.

JB: Exactly, right.

CM: I'm always interested in what we can learn from the old-timers. What are some of the things that he told you about getting this school started?

JB: If I can remember, he taught in the social studies department at Watsonville High School during the day full-time. He was approached by, I think it was the superintendent of Watsonville Elementary and High School District, Mr. Thomas McQuiddy, who was the principal at that time at Watsonville High School. He approached Mr. Carl Coehlo [and asked] if he would start a program for the adults in English. He did it on a part-time basis. He was a full-time teacher during the day and a part-time – the adult school director in the evening. He felt very proud of that. He was the one that initiated the program, with citizenship and English as a foreign language, the two classes, I think, only.

CM: I was going to say, it probably started very small.

JB: Right, with two classes, citizenship and ESL. As far as I can remember. I'm glad that he was still alive [when I was working on my project].

CM: Yes. And you were very fortunate that he was.

JB: I took a picture of him.

CM: It was a great deal of foresight on Mr. McQuiddy's part as well.

JB: Right.

CM: To want to bring education to adults in the community.

JB: Even though there were some – in the early twenties, there were some English as a foreign language classes, but that was informal. It was less work. I guess it was Watsonville High School, but it wasn't organized as a school until 1937 when Mr. Coehlo became director.

CM: Was Mr. Coehlo the father of the former congressman from this area, Tony Coehlo?

JB: I don't know. I don't remember that.

CM: The second adult school director was Fred Floodberg.

JB: Fred Floodberg, yeah, from 1938 to 1959.

CM: And I believe you talked to his secretary, June Stromberg.

JB: Right.

CM: Do you recall any details from that interview?

JB: I don't remember. I don't remember exactly.

CM: Okay. Because he was here for a long time, so there must have been some changes that took place during that time.

JB: Yes, uh-huh, but I don't remember.

CM: Both Mr. Floodberg and Lester Oakes were here for about twenty years each.

JB: Yeah. Lester Oakes was here from 1959 to 1978. He was a math teacher at Watsonville High School first, and then he was part-time math teacher and part-time night school director for a while. Then he was only a full-time evening school director.

CM: I believe he was kind of a special mentor to you.

JB: Yeah, he was. Because when my uncle came and enrolled us – even though I was fourteen and my youngest sister was eleven – he still let us take classes in the evening school. He was a mentor, yeah.

CM: Is he still living?

JB: No, he isn't. He passed away.

CM: But then he was also the first person to hire you.

JB: Yeah. He was the first person to hire me in 1975.

CM: So kind of letting you take classes as such a young person.

JB: Right.

CM: Asking you to serve on the advisory council.

JB: Exactly. And they hired me as an ESL teacher.

CM: And then hiring you as an ESL teacher. Is there anything else special about him that you might want to mention?

JB: Well, again, mostly because he enrolled us. I remember the very first night he enrolled us in ESL classes. Then we were always – he was always friendly, became kind of a family, and also with my uncle and my aunt. My first cousin dropped out of high school, but she came to the night school and got her high school diploma with Mr. Oakes, so he became like a family member.

CM: Is this your cousin that went on to become a professor?

JB: At Cal Poly. Estelle Basor. Right. Yeah, she got her diploma in 1963 or 1964 through evening school with Mr. Lester Oakes. She was in Catholic high school, and she dropped out as a junior. Then she went back to night school and got her high school diploma.

CM: So the Basors have a lot of successful adult education students.

JB: Yeah. I mentioned her in my book, I think, right?

CM: Yeah, you did. I think that's really an achievement also.

JB: She's a professor. She has a Ph.D. in math. At Cal Poly. She's been there for many years.

CM: John, you taught a lot of different classes at the adult school. We've been talking about the English classes, but you taught other things as well. Do you want to just give us a rundown on those?

JB: Well, I taught English as a Second Language for the most part, but since 1991 I've been teaching citizenship classes. Then for about two or three years I worked in the high school diploma, GED (General Educational Development test) program here. I taught reading and writing, social studies. I taught geography, reading, writing, and basic math in the learning center – high school diploma program and GED. I also taught Spanish GED for a while.

CM: We were talking about when you took your high school courses, they were formal lecture courses. Now you're talking about a learning center. What's the different approach in those?

JB: Well, I think that in a learning center as we have right now, you get maybe more hands-on. You use computers, you use different materials, cooperative learning, packets. I think it's a little bit more of a [practical approach]. There are more activities. I think a student benefits more than from formal lectures.

CM: Is everything in the learning center kind of self-paced?

JB: It's pretty much self-paced. When I taught here in the learning center, we did have also formal classes certain days of the week.

CM: Discussion groups.

JB: Discussion groups, yeah. That's good. I like that, too.

CM: That's particularly important for the social studies.

JB: It is. Then a combination of independent study, computer lab sessions in the learning center, too.

CM: And you've taught a number of the foreign languages?

JB: I taught Russian here in the evening, and I taught Spanish.

CM: Has there been a need, a desire for people to learn Croatian? Has that ever been taught in the community?

JB: Yes, it has been taught through adult school. Nevenka Radich taught Croatian for quite a few years when there was enough interest. But recently she isn't teaching it. There aren't enough students right now. But she taught it for quite a few years.

CM: I was just wondering, because a lot of times in immigrant communities the children start losing the language, and then eventually they become interested in coming back to learn it.

JB: Right, exactly.

CM: So I thought that might provide an audience for it.

JB: Yeah. She taught it for a while.

CM: You've mentioned going to some of these conferences. What role did the professional organizations play in your teaching career?

JB: Well, like I think I mentioned earlier, I've been a member for a few years of CATESOL, but I've been a member of CCAE for probably more than twenty years, maybe twenty-five years, so I feel kind of – CCAE is a great organization because it's for everyone: for teachers, for directors, for classified employees of the school, and we can learn together from each other. We have workshops for the teachers and administrators.

CM: You've had leadership positions in CCAE, haven't you?

JB: Yeah. I was – let's see. I think I was the secretary for the local chapter. We used to have Central Coast Chapter here, and I was secretary for a while.

CM: Were you a section officer?

JB: No, I wasn't. I was an officer for Central Coast Chapter.

CM: Okay. Oh, I skipped over a question here when I was talking about the different classes that you taught at the adult school. I was just going to ask, would it be possible today for a fourteen-year-old to attend one of your adult school classes?

JB: I wouldn't mind having a fourteen-year-old. When I was fourteen, I appreciated my teachers taking me. So I wouldn't mind. Not too many.

CM: Would the school let them in?

JB: Probably not. I think the youngest can be sixteen, but you have to be, of course, going to day school. But I think it should be at least sixteen too. My youngest sister was eleven. (both laugh) That's way young.

CM: I know we used to have – and you probably see it in your classes, too. A lot of our students used to bring their children with them.

JB: Right.

CM: For a couple of reasons. They didn't have anyone to take care of them.

JB: Exactly.

CM: So they brought them along. Then they would also use their children to interpret for them. As I say, I'm sure you're familiar with that phenomenon as well.

JB: Yes.

CM: John, did the opening of Radcliff [Adult School] have any direct impact on you?

JB: Well, I think it did because before Radcliff I taught at many different locations. Like in the evenings I taught at Watsonville High School for a while. Then we started an ESL program during the day. We had two classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. A couple other teachers – I worked with Gayle Larson and Georgene Goodwin. You probably know Georgene.

CM: I've met her. I can't give you any detail about that now, but the name's very familiar.

JB: They started – Georgene Goodwin and Gayle Larson – morning and afternoon classes. I joined them later at the house behind a store here in Watsonville. Then we had classes in houses. The school district leased the houses, like two- or three-bedroom houses, for ESL in the morning and afternoon. They leased another house for ESL parent education. But then when Radcliff Elementary School closed for children in 1981, we moved from those houses into a kind of regular school, a regular campus, where for the first time we kind of became a real school, if you know what I mean. The office was at a different location. The office was across from the high school. The office was in a portable classroom at Watsonville High School, and we had classes in different houses. So when Radcliff Adult School opened in 1981, the office and ESL classes and ESL parent education classes moved from those houses to a regular school campus. That was a great move. Even though we kept having classes in the evenings at Watsonville High School and some other outlying sites and elementary schools, but the day classes moved into Radcliff. Then we started classes at night, too, at Radcliff. So we felt like it was our first real school.

CM: And it helps in terms of sharing materials and things like that as well.

JB: Sharing materials, office was there, the director was there. I think it was Jim Eachus when we made the move. Because the kids were bussed to another school. So the Radcliff and Linscott Schools closed, elementary schools, so we were able to use part of Linscott also. So kind of like a campus and a half.

CM: What happened that you lost Radcliff?

JB: [When Radcliff was first acquired] Mr. Jim Eachus wrote to the superintendent, and they went to Sacramento. Some of us teachers went, and students. Actually, we bought Radcliff campus with adult school money to be only adult school. But recently, I think it was about four years ago, we lost it because apparently [the district] wanted to build another elementary school there. So we moved here to downtown to the Porter Building and to an old hospital on Green Valley Road. But [Radcliff] was the adult school for many years, from 1981 to 1998 or 1999.

CM: When you lost that school, and I know you're now divided in two main campuses –

JB: Two main campuses, plus the off-sites for the evenings.

CM: But has that had any negative impact on the school's program or operation?

JB: Actually, I think it did, [even though] everything went pretty smoothly. I mean, we have two main campuses now. Actually, the enrollment grew. Our a.d.a. (average daily attendance) grew. So it hasn't really made an impact as far – we didn't lose students, things like that. But we were divided, and sometimes the communication is not as easy as on only one campus. Claudia Grossi was the director then, and I think she did a great job, having two campuses. And now Mr. Bob Harper is working very hard to have good communication between two campuses.

CM: Do you teach at both campuses, or are you just at one?

JB: I don't teach here at the Downtown Center. We use another site. It's called One Stop, here on West Beach Street. We have classes there in the evening: citizenship, Spanish, GED, ESL. They have office skills classes both day and evening. But recently, we did purchase a building.

CM: Oh, you're going to get another site?

JB: We purchased a building here on Rodriguez Street. It used to be, way back, a Buick garage. After Buick left, then it was a store, a bread company. What's the name of the store? Starts with an L.

CM: I'm not thinking right now. I should know.

JB: So we got a building.

CM: How long will it be before you move into that?

JB: I'm not really sure. Mr. Bob Harper's working on getting ready to do some remodeling.

CM: Well, always. (laughs) And then as soon as you get that remodeled, the district will want it for some other reason.

JB: Maybe not, because the property, the land – you know what I'm saying? Because the school and the land belong to the district and the state.

CM: Yes. Okay.

[end tape one, side B; begin tape two, side A]

CM: This is tape two of the John Basor interview. John, a successful life is not defined by one's profession alone. I believe you're very active in your community. What community activities play a significant part in your life?

JB: Well, as I said earlier, I've been involved with the adult school and Watsonville High School community, as well as with the Croatian community in Watsonville. We have Slavic American Cultural Organization that I was one of the founders in the late seventies. We have monthly meetings and doings, so I've been involved with that.

CM: What kind of activities does that organization do?

JB: We have speakers. We have groups come here from Croatia, the cultural folk dancing.

CM: Music, dance.

JB: Music, dancing. We have potlucks, picnics, we have speakers, we have films, things like that.

CM: How large is the Croatian community here now?

JB: To tell you the truth, I'm not really sure, but it used to be a real large community way back. When I came here in the early sixties, it was pretty large. But now, I don't remember exactly how many. We have mostly second and third generation. There aren't very many people who came from Croatia.

CM: When did that immigration start tapering off?

JB: Probably in the early sixties. Quite a few people came after World War II and then again – after World War I and then before World War II. Then after World War II. Early 1900s also quite a few came. A few Croatians started coming here like around

1860s. The first Croatians come to Watsonville in the 1860s, 70s, and 80s, and then the turn of the century, too.

CM: Did the changes in Yugoslavia after Tito's death have anything to do with the drop in immigration, do you think?

JB: No, not really. I don't think so.

CM: Other than the Slavic American Cultural Organization, are there other community groups that you are active in?

JB: Well, I've been active with the Farm Bureau organization here in Watsonville, attending some of the Agricultural History Project activities that we have here at the fairgrounds.

CM: In addition to your teaching day and night, I believe your family operates a travel agency. Is that correct?

JB: Yes. My wife and I, we own the travel agency called Adriatic Travel Agency.

CM: You're actively involved in that as well?

JB: Yes, uh-huh.

CM: I assume it specializes in –

JB: Croatia. Yeah, we specialize in Croatia, but [we book all kinds of travel today].

CM: In the lands bordering the Adriatic.

JB: We do any kind of travel business. We have a lot of clients for Mexico, Mexican clients, as well as people going to Hawaii, anywhere in the world. It's a full service travel agency.

CM: Okay. John, from age fourteen until now, you've had forty years association with adult education.

JB: Right.

CM: Can you pinpoint just a few of what you consider the major changes that have taken place during that forty years, and what stands out as being really of major importance to you about that?

JB: I think that starting as a ESL student, and there were only three or four classes in ESL and one in citizenship. The growth – I mean, night school now being called adult school, where the programs – you know, mornings, afternoons, and evenings, and even on Saturdays. It's not night school anymore.

CM: That gives you a good title of a book. (laughs)

JB: Yeah. Night school became day school and night school and Saturday school, and it helps so many people, not only to learn English but finish their high school diploma, learn their vocational skills, and many other things. It grew so much, and I'm so happy to see that. It's hard to believe how much it grew, enrollment, the offerings of the courses in every field. It's amazing. There are still quite a few people out there in the community, who don't know that – a lot of times they ask me, "Where are you teaching?" "I'm teaching at adult school, and I'm going to teach in the morning." She said, "Is that the night school?" Still there are some people, they're not educated.

CM: That think about it that way.

JB: That think I only teach at night. So I feel proud that I've been associated with the adult school for forty years. The growth was amazing. And we offer classes at not only these two sites now, downtown and Green Valley site, but we offer classes everywhere in the community. Wherever there's a need, we offer classes, in ESL, health classes, Spanish.

CM: Family, parenting.

JB: Family. And they have the shop classes.

CM: Is there anything in particular that you would like to change about adult ed? Do you have a wish list?

JB: A wish list? I can't think of a wish list. Well, even though, like I mentioned, we did purchase this new site, new building, in the future, down the road, I would like to have a big adult school, bigger than what we purchased now. Something like Radcliff, even bigger. I'd like to see something like what Salinas Adult School did.

CM: They have a wonderful facility.

JB: They have a wonderful facility. I would like to see that here, but in Watsonville, the Pajaro Valley Unified School District has nothing like Salinas has. It's kind of like a community college.

CM: Well, it's tailor-made for the adult school. It wasn't adapting something else.

JB: Right. It was totally tailored, like you say, for the adult school. That would be my wish one day, that we have a facility something like Salinas has.

CM: We've mentioned a lot of people –

JB: I would recommend anyone to take classes in adult school, after they finish high school, or even in high school. I tell my students to take more English, take other classes, computer classes after school or in the evenings.

CM: So you're a true believer in lifelong learning.

JB: Exactly. I keep pushing adult school after three o'clock to high school students. It's a great place to learn.

CM: That's good. We've mentioned a lot of people, John, but I just want to – are there other leaders or teachers that you have special memories of that you would like to share?

JB: I mentioned Jack Hamilton, right?

CM: I think so.

JB: Jack Hamilton, my first English teacher. Edward Kilburn, who taught me developmental reading, I'd like to mention him.

CM: He was a reading teacher?

JB: Reading teacher. I might mention Salsipuedes, Howard Peterson, seventh grade teacher, and Philip Griffin, my eighth grade teacher when I first came here. I mentioned O'Brien Riordan and Jack Spurlock, Spanish teachers. Bud Rowland, my government and civics teacher.

CM: A lot of people have made lots of contributions. Just as we know that you've made contributions to lots of people as well. I sort of alluded to this earlier, but certainly the Basors have turned out to be an adult education family. We talked about your cousin Estelle getting her diploma and going on, and now a professor at Cal Poly. Your wife attended adult school as well, didn't she?

JB: Yes. When she first came here in 1989, even though she spoke English pretty well, she studied English there. She worked at the airport in Croatia. She was a manager there and she studied English. But she needed more conversation practice, so she took advanced ESL at Radcliff Adult School. Later, she was into computers, through the ROP (Regional Occupation Program), through the county, which was held at the

Watsonville High School in the evening. She took computer programs through ROP under the adult school.

CM: Did she do her citizenship through the adult school?

JB: No. She didn't take a class. She studied on her own. She went to Cabrillo later to take Spanish for three years. She needed Spanish for her business.

CM: I was going to say, living in the area, Spanish is very helpful. That's for sure. Okay. We're about to wind up here. If there's anything else that you would like to add, that you would like to talk about?

JB: Like I mentioned, I taught in different locations, facilities, in houses, in warehouses, We had a class of ESL in warehouses, different homes. It was great when we got the first school, Radcliff school. This was an ESL school originally. So then we moved all the ESL programs to Radcliff, from small houses and other ESL sites; we moved all to the Radcliff campus.

I would also like to mention Dr. William Zachmeier. When I mentioned to him that I needed my master's degree, I wasn't sure exactly what project to choose. We talked about this, and he said that would be good, the history of adult education. He inspired me, too, about doing the history of adult education. Dr. Zachmeier was a professor at San Jose State University. I don't know if you've heard of him. He has retired since then.

CM: I certainly enjoyed your book.

JB: Thank you very much.

CM: It's fascinating reading. I'm interested in adult ed history, so it was really nice to see that you've done that as well. Well, John, I want to thank you for sharing your experiences.

JB: Thank you very much for taking your time and interest.

CM: And for your contributions to adult education.

JB: Sure. Thank you very much.

CM: As a student, a teacher, and a model. I can't think of a better model.

JB: Thank you very much.

CM: The Adult Education Students Succeed initiative is a part of the California Adult Education Oral History Project.

END OF INTERVIEW

California Department of Education Adult Education
Oral History Project

Adult Education Students Succeed

Ann Veronica Coyle

Pajaro Valley Unified School District
Watsonville/ Aptos Adult Education

1980 - Present

Student Advisor
Department Chair
Coordinator
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June 11, 2004 Watsonville,
California

By Cuba Z. Miller

PROJECT: Adult Education Students Succeed
California Adult Education Oral History Project

INTERVIEWEE: Ann Veronica Coyle

INTERVIEWER: Cuba Miller

DATE: June 11, 2004

CM: This is Cuba Miller interviewing Ann Veronica Coyle in Watsonville, California, June 11th, 2004. Ms. Coyle is student advisor and coordinator at Watsonville/Aptos Adult School in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. The purpose of the interview is to profile Watsonville's adult education programs and, as a part of the Adult Education Students Succeed initiative, to comment on the contributions made by John Basor. Good morning A.V.

AVC: Good morning, Cuba.

CM: I want to thank you for nominating John Basor for recognition in the Adult Education Students Succeed project.

AVC: You're welcome.

CM: He's an excellent example of successful adult school alumni, having a forty-year association with adult education as a concurrent student, a regular student, and finally, an adult school teacher. We know that student successes don't just happen. They are the products of quality programs and supportive staff, and that's what we'll be talking about today. Let's start with you. How long have you been with the adult school here and what positions have you held?

AVC: I've been with the adult school here in Watsonville since 1980, so that would be twenty-four years. I started out as a classroom aide, and then I taught a class called Armchair Travel for a little while. I then began to work in a couple of departments: in the ESL department and then in the ABE/ASE (Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education), and that is where I have spent most of my time here at the adult school. I have been a teacher in this department, an advisor, a student advisor, and now I am the department chairperson, and I coordinate all the academic programs associated with this department.

CM: As student advisor, is that what many people refer to as a counselor?

AVC: Yes.

CM: You do the counseling work for the school.

AVC: Yes.

CM: Okay. Can you tell us just a little bit about the communities and the types of students that Watsonville/Aptos serves?

AVC: Watsonville/Aptos Adult School serves a very broad and diverse community. As the name suggests, we serve the two communities, Watsonville and Aptos, and there's a distinct difference between the two communities. The County of Santa Cruz, into which Watsonville and Aptos fall, is one of the more affluent in California. The south county, which is Watsonville in general, has not fared so well. Most recent census figures show that Watsonville incomes are three-quarters that of the county average, and Hispanic households in Watsonville are another 10 percent below that. In contrast, the income level in Aptos is one-quarter greater than the county average. So there's a little disparity between the two parts, and we serve both parts of the

county. The area where we have the largest program is Watsonville, and then we serve a number of Aptos community members in classes such as vocational and lifelong learning.

CM: What's the largest population student group of the school?

AVC: The largest population by far is the ESL department, and that is always somewhere between 50 and 60 percent of our population.

CM: Okay. So it's Hispanic, and they're primarily agricultural workers? Is that correct?

AVC: Yes, that's correct.

CM: Other than ESL, what are a couple of other [departments] that you consider major programs? Even though percentage-wise they don't begin to touch ESL, what are a couple of other major programs that the school offers.

AVC: Certainly vocational ed is becoming more and more a major program. It's now the second largest program. It's a very diverse program of offerings. We have a very strong office skills program. In conjunction with the ESL program, we have Vocational ESL [VESL] programs, which are a cooperative venture between the two departments. We have students who are learning vocations in the healthcare areas and in the construction trade and in clerical areas that are also developing their English skills. Then we have just a vast array of other vocational courses.

CM: I would imagine lots of computer training as well, as a part of your clerical.

AVC: Oh, very much so.

CM: Now, we want to spend a little more time talking about ESL because it is, as you say, between 50 and 60 percent of your total program. You actually have a variety of ESL programs that kind of fall under different names. Can you describe the different

approaches and target audiences? I mean, you have your regular ESL, and then you have other things. You mentioned VESL.

AVC: Yes, we have the VESL, Vocational ESL. We also have a very strong CBET program, Community Based English Tutoring, and that's a program that enables parents and others who deal with children to bring home the English that they are using, so the courses here have adapted to that. Those who attend the course are given materials to take home. Childcare is provided so that the parents and childcare givers have a place that's safe for their children to go into the babysitting room while that's happening.

We have a very strong distance learning program in ESL, by which students check out videotapes. They watch them, and then they return the tapes every two weeks and take a little test on each tape, and when they pass they move on to the next tape, with a more advanced level of English learning there.

Then we have family literacy, a very strong ESL family literacy program that's connected with our parenting department. These classes are parenting, bilingual parenting classes. Together in the Park is what the programs are called, and every Saturday the parents and children actually go to the park. They learn parenting skills and how to enable their children to play and express themselves while they are learning English.

CM: Okay. The CBET program is offered in cooperation with the elementary schools. Is that correct?

AVC: Yes.

CM: Targeting the parents of elementary students. Do you have an EL Civics [English Literacy and Civics] grant?

AVC: Yes, we have a strong EL Civics grant as well.

CM: That's targeted more towards community responsibilities and access.

AVC: Yes, definitely. This year the EL Civics program, at the request of the students, focused on how to deal with the police, what to do if you're stopped for a traffic violation, what to do if the police come to your house, what to do if you're a victim of a crime, how to go to the police and present what has happened to you. So that has been one of the focuses here.

CM: Do many of your ESL students, once they've kind of gotten a medium amount of English mastery, do they go ahead and enter your vocational training programs?

AVC: Some enter our vocational training programs. Some enter our adult basic ed programs because their English is now strong enough to enable them to participate. After that a next step would be to the adult secondary ed program if they wish to continue to develop their English. Through the use of the advisors, too, many students begin to think about and to attend the local community college, Cabrillo College, which is less than one block away from us at this site. A very good connection.

CM: And you've got good liaison with the community college, do you?

AVC: We have such an excellent liaison with the community college that one of the workshops that was presented at last month's CCAE (California Council for Adult Education) conference was on that exactly, how to foster and enrich strong working

relationships with the community college. This coming semester, we will actually be teaching adult ed ESL classes on the community college campuses.

CM: Oh, very good.

AVC: Yes, very, very good.

CM: Do they send their admissions people down here to talk to your advanced students?

AVC: Yes. Not only that, their admissions and grant-type people, counselors, come and talk to our ABE and our ASE students, too, because then that's definitely a very natural next step for those who graduate in the academic area.

CM: As student advisor, you do work primarily with these basic skills classes.

AVC: And secondary.

CM: Well, I'm including secondary in basic skills, the basic academic skills, ESL, ABE, secondary, the high school diploma program.

AVC: Yes. I myself work only with ABE and ASE, not ESL.

CM: Okay. You don't work with ESL at all.

AVC: No.

CM: Even in a counseling capacity you don't work with ESL.

AVC: No, not at all.

CM: Okay. So, we have ABE, the diploma program, and GED (General Educational Development test). Can you talk about some of the different instructional approaches employed by these classes? Are they separate classes? Are they open labs?

AVC: We use a variety of instructional approaches. We have individual instruction for students, for example, who are working on packets and assignments to help them earn high school diploma credits, or be more ready for the GED exams. We have small

groups. We cluster students together who are working on the same areas for small group instruction. We have some large group instruction. We have a very strong computer assisted instruction program, both for high school diploma and for GED. We are just beginning as a pilot project for the California Distance Learning Project. The CDLP has just [started an online ASE pilot test] with a series of [high school diploma] courses, which we will begin to pilot in the state of California to help determine if this is an appropriate mode for adults to learn. So we'll be piloting this during summer school and through the first semester. It's to last at least until December 2004. Those are our main instructional methods: individual, small, large group, and computer.

CM: The CDLP pilot. Is that general secondary, or is it targeted towards GED or –

AVC: Secondary, high school diploma.

CM: It's general secondary, high school diploma.

AVC: That will be a strong pull then for us to pilot in our independent studies program.

That would be just a natural for that, too.

CM: You said – did you mean the interactive whiteboards?

AVC: No. CDLP is having us pilot [a series of online secondary level courses].

CM: So, a pretty wide range of –

AVC: A wide range of all academic courses needed to earn a high school diploma.

CM: But your approaches hit many different learning modes.

AVC: Yes.

CM: Whatever kind of best helps the students. A.V., have you noticed that the increased diploma requirements have had an impact on your program?

AVC: Yes.

CM: Can you elaborate on that?

AVC: The greatest impact we noticed [was] with the graduating class of 2003, when many students rushed to finish their high school diploma requirements in order to avoid the algebra requirement. So we had the largest graduating class in maybe twenty, twenty-five, thirty years last year. This year, the impact is, obviously, a smaller graduating class.

However, I think that the increased requirement is a good thing. It will take a while for our students to begin to catch up. I think we all know that when a student comes to adult ed, oftentimes that student has had a rough road to get in here. They wouldn't be here if they had sailed right through high school, that kind of student. So study skills are rusty. Maybe attendance at school and learning hasn't been as dedicated and as effective as it had been in other students. Our students come with less recent experience, really, in schooling, so to learn algebra is a challenge. But we had a number of students who learned algebra this year. Maybe those aren't the students that actually finished enough of their other credits to graduate—some of them were—but our students are learning algebra. Our students can learn algebra. So that's good. I approve of the requirement, and I think that's a good thing for us, a good thing for our students.

CM: This is guessing, I understand that. Do you think that the increased requirements will put more of a demand on your concurrent student program?

AVC: Actually, it already has. We saw a significant increase in the number of concurrent students referred to algebra this year, and we will continue to see that. That is my

guess. This district also has increased its requirements, effective over the next several years, from ten credits of science to thirty.

CM: That's a big jump.

AVC: That is a very big jump. And courses in algebra, that's going to be another big jump. So these are the kinds of things that will impact our district as a whole, and ourselves as providers to some of the concurrent students.

CM: When John Basor started adult school classes he was only fourteen, and his sister was only eleven. Would that be possible today?

AVC: It might be possible for maybe a youngster who had entered high school at a tender age and was fourteen years old and was referred maybe in the second semester of his freshman year. I can't remember that ever happening, although I suppose it's possible. Those students are pretty young to come to adult ed, and they're still young enough and green enough in their high school years to catch up at the high school. We wouldn't foster that.

CM: You said that you had an increased number of concurrent students this year. Is that a significant part of your program at all? I mean, do you have a pretty healthy number of concurrent students?

AVC: We have a modest number of concurrent students. This district has made efforts to try to serve the high school students at the high schools.

CM: Yes. Good for them.

AVC: Yes, it's very good. To increasing their offerings, to offering a very, very extensive after-school program. The district has a *very*, very extensive program of extended learning. The district utilizes PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence), the migrant

PASS program for migrant students, quite a bit. Because you have many students who qualify. The wonderful thing is that, in addition to serving the students in high school who are migrants through the PASS program, our own students who are migrants can go there. Young seventeen- and eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds also have access to PASS. So they can be doing PASS programs concurrently with their programs with us.

CM: That's very good.

AVC: Yeah, we have a very good working relationship with the district in many areas.

CM: What requirements do concurrent students have to meet to attend adult school? I'm assuming there's some kind of formal referral system.

AVC: Yes. They must have a formal release form from the State of California. Well, from their high school. It's required by the Ed Code of the state. And they need to have had a conference with a parent or a caregiver present with the school counselor to verify that. Then the school counselor has to indicate exactly what courses are needed, and we will not give the student any other courses, except for those that are written. Sometimes a student will come and say, "Oh, I'm almost finished with my World Civ. I need some more English. Can you start me in English?" They have to have that approved by the home school.

CM: If the parent meets with the student and the counselor, that's at the high school. Do you require the parents to come here when the students register?

AVC: No. That is not required. Some parents do come, and that's wonderful when they come. We have an orientation that occurs weekly for all concurrent students coming in. They must participate in the orientation, and sometimes parents attend that.

CM: That's very good to have a precise orientation for concurrent students.

AVC: It's very important.

CM: Are you the only student advisor for the ABE and high school diploma programs?

AVC: No. For them we have two student advisors, myself and another, because you run many hours during the day. One person probably couldn't handle it all. So with this program we have two, as is also the case in ESL, we have two student advisors.

CM: Then it's kind of a joint responsibility – the counseling aspect, plus you kind of serve as coordinator?

AVC: Yes.

CM: For that ABE/ASE?

AVC: Yes. They're two distinct jobs. Of course, there's an overlap, but they are two distinct jobs.

CM: Other than academic counseling, what support services are provided for the students here at school?

AVC: We offer students, in addition to the academic counseling – of course, it's very hard sometimes to separate the academic needs of the students from the personal and social needs. Oftentimes, when a student will come in for academic counseling, it will become apparent immediately that in order to help the student achieve his or her goals, there are other areas in that student's life that we are addressing, other obstacles that are very extreme. We have a very comprehensive referral program for various community resources in the areas of health, physical health and mental health; helping students receive financial assistance when that is warranted; food and clothing and housing. Those are all the kinds of referrals that we are able to make to

support our students. We work very closely with the One Stop Center and the various programs there. We feel that's a strong support. We have students that are participating in other programs besides our own – CalWORKs, (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids), CalLearn, Career Works, for example. Those are the students that have a greater chance of succeeding because we're working together to support that student.

CM: That's very good. Now, you mentioned childcare in connection with the CBET classes. Is there other childcare for –

AVC: Actually, that's called babysitting, not childcare.

CM: Yes, and there is a difference.

AVC: There is a difference. That is the program that has babysitting that we offer. We have recently purchased a new building which is just two blocks away from this building, and there will be a babysitting room in that building. [We] hope that perhaps we could offer babysitting services to those students who are participating in classes other than CBET. Lack of childcare is a huge obstacle for adults who come to school. Huge.

CM: Does the community college, by any chance, have an early childhood training program?

AVC: Yes. Both English and Spanish.

CM: If you could open a babysitting room, perhaps that would be another way that the college and the adult school could work together to help staff that room.

AVC: Exactly.

CM: It does make a big difference, particularly on ESL attendance, and certainly some of the others as well. Okay. Now, do your vocational classes have placement services, or do you rely on the One Stop and some of your other referrals for placement?

AVC: In addition to relying on the One Stop, several of our vocational classes do offer some various levels of placement. Our print shop class has just about 100 percent placement rate for students who learn the printing trade, which is great. When they take the long route to learn all the printing skills, our students are generally placed, almost 100 percent. In the health careers, CMA (Clinical Medical Assistant), CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant), our placement rate is pretty high. It's an informal program, and there's not a structured placement office for our vocational students. But the word is out, and the demand is great in the health careers. The instructors are aware of where the demand is and are able to refer the students.

CM: And probably the people that need the jobs stay in close touch with the instructors as well.

AVC: That's correct.

CM: What kind of student recognition activities do you have?

AVC: Throughout the year, and this is especially true in the ESL programs, students receive certificates each time they pass from one level up to the next. Those certificates are very important to students. I mean, those are treasures to indicate how much they have achieved. We recognize students who are in the ABE and ASE programs when the ASE [students] have earned credits, because sometimes students come with forty or fifty or sixty credits that they have to earn. That's a lot. So at each milestone if

there's some recognition, a little sign that the student has earned this many credits, that's a help, that's a motivation to the student.

We of course have our graduation of students who have earned their GED and their high school diploma, both for the students who are attending classes in the community, and then a separate graduation ceremony for the students who are incarcerated at the Sheriff's rehab. There's a special ceremony there as well. The ceremonies are always very moving, of course. At the ceremonies, there are scholarships. This year we were able to raise in excess of \$5,000 from community donations for scholarships.

CM: That's wonderful also.

AVC: It is wonderful. The largest scholarships were \$500 each. We had several at \$500, and then on down, to several hundred dollar scholarships. In addition, we were able this year to recognize with a very small monetary gift the students who are continuing and pursuing their goals, who have progressed but have not yet reached their goal, which is to graduate. So we had twenty-five of our students receive recognition awards at the graduation ceremony, on the stage, with certificates and so forth. That is very motivational, too.

CM: Do you have student speakers at graduation?

AVC: We have student speakers. This year's student speakers were Ramona Linan, who is a former student and is now a registered nurse. She has the dream job of her life, as she said. And her husband, Jaime Molina, who is actually an instructor for adult ed in the parenting program. He too has struggled to bring himself to where he is now in the social services profession.

Two other of our students were speakers – well, several others. We had Kurt Vojvoda, and he is a student who came to us with pretty severe learning disabilities. He told us he had been diagnosed with dyslexia, and he overcame that and finally earned his high school diploma, after much hard work. He is now a firefighter and a very, very active community member. He's *always* active in community affairs.

Marita Rivas is a woman who grew up in Mexico, and she came to the United States with really not even a primary education. She is a very bright woman. She studied. She finally graduated with her GED and went on to become a nurse. She's now a nurse at Dominican Hospital.

We also have a GED graduate, Chuck Carter. Chuck is the former police chief of the City of Watsonville and the former mayor of the City of Watsonville. He held both of those positions and, of course, has continued to be very active in the community.

Those are just several of our very successful adult school graduates. We see them around town. Watsonville's a small town. We run into our graduates all the time.

CM: But it's grown a lot since I was here the last time, that's for sure.

AVC: It has grown very, very much. Recently, I met a young man in the health clinic. I was in the health clinic. He was a former graduate, and he was escorting some mentally disabled adults through the clinic. He is a case coordinator for mentally disabled adults, a job that he's always wanted. We have quite a few students that fit that description.

[end tape one, side A; begin tape one, side B]

CM: This is side B, tape one, of the A. V. Coyle interview. I want to ask you a little more about your scholarships because you raised a *lot* of money. Can you tell me a little bit about your fundraising for your scholarships?

AVC: This scholarship fundraising program has been going on for several years, so of course we're beginning to establish ourselves in the community as a known place for people to make contributions. What we have done is – because many of our staff are active in the community and have associates and associations within the community, we are able to solicit from various community organizations, agencies even, private businesses, and individuals who will contribute money toward the scholarship fund. The two Rotary Clubs—the Rotary Club of Watsonville and the Rotary Club of Freedom—each give us a significant scholarship. The Pajaro Valley Federation of Teachers gives a significant [amount]. There's a philanthropist in the community, George Ow, who donates a large amount each year. So we have several that give significant awards and others who give pretty nice awards. For those who are able to give smaller amounts, even a small \$25, \$40, \$50, those amounts are combined to give a student an award that will make somewhat of a difference. None of our awards yet is in the thousands, but that will come.

In order to receive the award, students must apply. We have a written application that a student must complete. The applications are read by a panel. And students need to demonstrate that they are serious about continuing their education in order to receive a scholarship.

CM: Certainly, the amounts are sufficient to cover the first years of the community college.

AVC: It would help with books. If you had a \$500 scholarship, that will help a lot with tuition and maybe your books. Some students need help with transportation. Some students even need help with childcare. It could be used for anything that contributes to their education.

CM: Well, as I say, that's a significant scholarship fund for a school this size.

AVC: We are very happy that we can have it.

CM: A. V., is there a school newspaper or anything like that, that the students write, submit stories?

AVC: Not at this time. We used to have a wonderful school newspaper, and that was in conjunction with the vocational print shop program. So not only were the students learning the printing skills, students in other departments were writing. But at this time, no, it is suspended and not in operation.

CM: Everyone that's involved in adult education in one way or another has contributions to make outside of the school. Have personnel from Watsonville/Aptos made contributions to state committees, that kind of thing?

AVC: Probably the most significant contribution is that we always have staff members participating in Focus on Learning, the WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation process, in different schools. A former director, Joellen Bruce, served on a state Model Standards Committee. Our present director, Bob Harper, has served on several different kinds of committees, and so forth. So yes, throughout the years we have contributed.

CM: We hadn't discussed this earlier, but what role do the professional organizations play [for] your staff?

AVC: Our staff participated in a number of professional organizations. When we had our accreditation in 2002, it was just a delight to see – there's a section there where we would put down the staff member and the professional organizations in which they all participated. It was really wonderful to see the number of professional organizations dealing directly with adult ed or dealing with a specific area, Mathematics Council or science or English, and so on, of which our staff are members.

CM: Does the California Council for Adult Education have a pretty active presence in Santa Cruz County?

AVC: No. We have members of our staff who are members, but no, the CCAE does not [have a local chapter]. We have actually just commented on that recently, that maybe we need to be leaders in bringing CCAE into Santa Cruz County.

I would say another contribution, too, is probably in our piloting of the California Distance Learning Project secondary program. There are twenty-five schools throughout the state, as I understand, that are contributing to that by piloting a program. That benefits us as well as benefits the project itself.

CM: That's a major contribution as well. A. V., you've been a colleague of John Basor for over twenty years, and you obviously decided to nominate him for this successful alumni recognition. I'd like for you to talk about him a little bit in terms of what you consider his major strengths and what his major contributions to the adult school have been.

AVC: John's greatest strength, I think, is his wonderful way of interacting with students. I have worked with John for twenty years, sometimes in our own ABE/ASE department and then as a colleague when he was working in ESL and I was in other areas. Never, ever has there been a student who had anything but just the warmest feelings for John. He is absolutely kind and devoted to the students. The students are number one in John's world. That, I think, is his greatest, greatest strength.

Another strength that John brings is the fact that he himself was an immigrant, and John knows what it's like to come to the United States and put your feet on this soil and not know a single word of the language, and to be immersed in surroundings that are absolutely out of your own world. And that is what many of our students experience. So that in teaching, especially ESL and the citizenship classes, John is just a perfect fit for that, a very good ESL teacher and – I think we've been blessed to have had John.

CM: He's a good model for his students.

AVC: A very good model. He's also very active in his local community, particularly in the Croatian community, so he's a model, too, of civic involvement for his students.

CM: Yes. This idea of culture shock and how to deal with it for immigrants is very important, and it's good that they can have someone that's been through it to help them through it as well.

John has been employed by the adult school since 1975. He's never left it even though he's had other jobs as well, at Cabrillo and the district's high schools, and so on. Are you aware of any other adult school alumni that work for the district, for example?

AVC: I know there are a number of adult school alumni, and I run into adult school alumni all the time. Someone working here and there whom I recognize or who will say to me, "You know, I graduated in such-and-such a year." I don't have those people's names, but I know Pajaro Valley Unified School District is the biggest employer in Watsonville. Many of our students come to us because they value education, so a natural would be for them to continue their careers by working in education.

CM: Not everyone is a John Basor. We were talking about what a good model he was for the students. But is there any routine use of returning alumni to motivate current students?

AVC: I would say that probably the tapping of those resources is not routine, but it is something that we do do all the time. Oftentimes, as I mentioned before, I'll see somebody in the community who has done – and we stop to chat and reminisce and catch up. This happens with other teachers, too, of course. And we see what the student has accomplished in his or her life. Then we'll invite that person to come in and talk with our students and to show them how it's possible. So there is definitely a presence in our schools of former students who come on back and offer words of encouragement and motivation to our students.

In particular, in our department, the staff of the adult secondary department, where we have resource persons for our students in different areas of employment, we want to help our students know what's out there. If we know somebody who is an adult school alumni who is working in that area, that will be the kind of person to have, because that person will have the greatest identification, and our students will have a great identification with that person.

CM: Obviously, you said you nominated John for this successful adult school program, but Watsonville also had another person that was selected by the Adult Education Succeed initiative. Do you want to tell us a little bit about her?

AVC: Yes. Ramona Linan was selected last time around, and Ramona was nominated by one of our ESL advisors, and that is CathyJo Diaz. Ramona was a young woman who came to the United States and was working and trying to support her family, young children. A turning point that she described that's very touching is that she went home one night, and her little daughter said to her, "Oh, Mommy, when I grow up I want to do everything just like you and Grandma. I want to work in the strawberries." Although work in the strawberries is important work and we need that work done, Ramona thought of how hard she was working and how much she hoped that her work in the strawberries was a stepping stone to something more. That just fueled her desire to maybe pick up her pace and move to the next step. So that motivated her to come to adult ed, to get to learn English, and to begin to revisit her dream of becoming a nurse, because that was what she always wanted to do. She did graduate with her GED. She went on to Cabrillo College, and she's now working in what she calls her dream job, [a dream] that she's had since she was a young child, and that is to be a nurse.

CM: Okay. Is she an RN?

AVC: RN.

CM: That's very good. Did she speak at your graduation?

AVC: This last graduation. She was one of the keynote speakers, with her husband, Jaime Molina.

CM: That's very important. Okay. And you've mentioned a few. You mentioned the firefighter and your police chief, and so on. Are there any others that come to mind that you would consider highly successful adult school graduates?

AVC: There are other students whom I meet who tell me about their careers, their professions, their family lives, their community involvement. Those students are very successful, and they aren't shy about expressing their gratitude.

CM: That kind of feedback is always very, very rewarding.

AVC: It's wonderful, yes.

CM: When I was talking with John yesterday, he had a cousin that was an adult school graduate, who's now on the staff at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She was a product of Watsonville adult education as well. Okay. A. V., we're about to wind up here. Have we left anything out? Are there other school practices we should talk about, or anything that's popped into your mind that we want to add to this?

AVC: When we had our CCR (Coordinated Compliance Review) review this year, the reviewers in the state at the closing conference stated that Watsonville/Aptos Adult School is the best adult school in the state of California. She said, "It's the best adult school I have ever seen." One of the most important contributors to that, she explained, was the fact that we do have a very focused plan that guides us in many areas of our achieving our mission. What it is, is that we're focusing very strongly in all areas on determining and responding to: what do our students need and what do our students want? We're continually trying to find that out, and we're continually trying to provide that.

For example, curriculum is written with that in mind. Teacher evaluation is based upon those same questions. How are we looking for and identifying what students need and want to learn? Are we incorporating that into our instruction? The work of our school council is based upon that. The fact that we can have a unified kind of underpinning focus was recognized as something that was a very strong factor in our high rating on our CCR. We received many commendations and no recommendations. So we were gratified that what we're doing, what we're working towards is indeed being recognized as contributing to the education of our students.

CM: That's very good. Who is your consultant?

AVC: The person who came was Mahnoush Harirsaz.

CM: Well, that must have been very gratifying.

AVC: It was very, very gratifying to hear that in front of all the representatives from other programs.

CM: They say everything they ask us to do pays off. (chuckles)

AVC: Yes.

CM: You won't get so many complaints when you say, "We need to do this."

AVC: That's true.

CM: I gather from what you said then that the faculty is very involved in the goal setting and the curriculum writing.

AVC: Much of the faculty is. I think, as is typical in adult schools, we have a very large faculty, over one hundred. Some of our faculty are not full-time and they have other responsibilities, so it's hard for them to devote themselves as much as they would

want. We have a higher than ordinary number of tenured staff, so that does lend itself to dedication.

CM: And it lends itself to stability in the program, and a core group of teachers that can do Okay. Anything else?

AVC: I think that's it.

CM: Okay. I want to thank you again, A. V., for nominating John and for the interview and for the contributions that you and Watsonville/Aptos Adult School have made and continue to make to California adult education programs. This interview is a part of the Adult Education Students Succeed initiative of the California Adult Education Oral History Project.

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