

**PRESERVING OUR HISTORY:
ROTARY CLUB OF GREENSBORO**

INTERVIEWEE: Kenneth Keller

INTERVIEWER: Kathelene Smith

DATE: April 25, 2013

KS: Hello, Mr. Keller. Thank you for having me to your office today for the Preserving Our History, Rotary Club of Greensboro Oral History Project. It's April 25, 2013. So we'll get started. Please tell me your name and when and where you were born.

KK: I'm Ken Keller. I was born November 17, 1946 in Ames, Ohio.

KS: Did you grow up there or did you move here?

KK: I was born after World War II. My dad and mom had met in college at Iowa State before the war and of course Dad, along with everybody else, went into service and when he came out, they got married. I was born while they were—while dad was finishing up his doctorate. When he finished his doctorate, he went with the USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] and went to Oregon with a [hop breeder] program. He stayed there probably through first grade, and then went with the USDA to Beltsville, Maryland. He stayed there probably second to fourth grade. Fifth grade—by the fifth grade, dad had been recruited to be the assistant director of research at State [North Carolina State University] and so we moved down and he found a place outside of Raleigh—outside of Cary. At the time, you had to go down two different dirt roads to get to it, about ten acres, and he bought that and we lived there until—in fact he and mom lived there until they both died.

KS: So you spent how many years on the ten acres?

KK: That has always been the home place and my son and daughter-in-law own that now.

KS: So did you all have animals? Was it like growing up on a farm?

KK: No, the garden was so big it felt like a farm but—we had a tractor and—but we cleared some of the land, but no livestock. It was just dogs and cats.

KS: Tell me a little bit about your family and your home life. Did you have brothers and sisters?

KK: I've got one brother; he's three years younger, we're very close. I was the older, obviously, since he's three years younger, but I was less mature. He was more mature, and we had a number of shared friends and still do.

KS: So any other special interests when you were young? Did you like sports?

KK: My brother was big into sports: football and what-not. I was in the band. The one thing that we both liked, and still like, is motorcycles. We've basically done motorcycles all my life of one type or another.

KS: So you still do that?

KK: I do. I don't have a dirt bike anymore. For a number of years my brother was with American Honda and was able to put together really special trips using some of the demo bikes, and we had a number of excursions down into Baja Mexico and what-not and I would ride dirt bikes here in the Uwharries or wherever. I no longer have a dirt bike. I've got a sport bike that I ride from time to time.

KS: That's really interesting. So did you all ride a lot on the property?

KK: We did, as kids. We had littler-type bikes.

KS: So what did your parents do? You said your dad worked with the USDA. What about your mom?

KK: And then was at State College and then State University. Mom, when she was in school, was in a graduate home ec [home economics] program having taught home ec high school prior to that. But once she and dad married, mom remained a homemaker and was civically very active. They were both very, very, very active in their church. Mom helped start—it's called the Dorcus Shop in Cary and it provides financial assistance, clothes, food for underprivileged people and it's—she died probably in '87 and it's still a very active, strong organization. In fact expanded—new facility and it's quite the deal.

KS: So where did you go to high school?

KK: Cary High School. We were bussed into Cary; went to Swift Creek Elementary and then for—I guess middle school would have been Cary and then Cary High School.

KS: And you played in the band in high school, too?

KK: Right, right.

KS: Any particular subjects that you liked best?

KK: Probably more the English type subjects were enjoyable for me.

- KS: So when did you graduate and what did you do next?
- KK: Sixty-five and then went directly to State [North Carolina State University]; started off in life sciences. Dad was a professor at State at that time, Director of Research-Life Sciences, and so all of the professors knew dad and it was always, “Oh, you’re Ken’s boy. We’re going to expect an A in this course.” And so I did that for the first few years and then said, “You know, I think I’m going to switch.” So I switched to an English major and took a degree in English. It ended up working out pretty well.
- KS: What was the campus like in the sixties?
- KK: In the sixties they had just then started bringing women in, and I remember a number of the girls I went to high school with also went to State and some of the other upper classmen were just so thrilled to see them, so our class was quite the hit because we brought very attractive women with us.
- KS: Did you all feel a lot of what was going on in the nation at the time with the protests?
- KK: I was probably insulated from that some in that most—I was living at home and most of my friends were high school friends and we kind of continued to do the same sort of stuff we had done in high school. I had a group that we would ride dirt bikes with; we would do a little bit of sort of enduro riding, a little bit of flat-track riding, and we just continued to do that and so we didn’t really get that involved in campus politics or swept up in any fervor about the war one way or another. I remember one time we were riding bikes through one of the woods and came up on a tie-dyed hippie group exchanging flowers and I just remember, “Hey, that’s kind of weird,” but they didn’t bother us and we didn’t bother them and we kept going and they kept going and everything was fine.
- KS: So you didn’t keep going with music formally in college.
- KK: No, no, I was not that talented. I was more of a technician. Some of the folks in that high school band I played with, though, were very gifted. They could write their own music and—Well, Buck Keener went on to play with Bill Deal and the Rhondels. No, no, no. Keener went with the Embers; Howard Eaton went with Bill Deal and the Rhondels, and a couple of the guys went with the Commodores, which is—there’s a beach Commodores but this was a big band Commodores, a swing band. But no, I was just a technician so I didn’t follow it beyond.
- KS: So after you graduated from college, what did you do then?
- KK: While I was in college, near the end of my senior year—well, I guess into the senior year—I’d been making great grades, doing super. I’d gotten married and so I was working and going to college and hadn’t really thought what I was going to do for a living. It just really never dawned on me I was going to have to make a living and one of my friends said, “Well, I’m going to go take the LSAT over in Chapel Hill. Do you want to ride along and take it with me?”

I said, “Well, sure. Why not.” So I signed up and they sent you a little brochure. I looked over the brochure and we rode over and took it and I did fine on it and said, “Well, maybe I’ll go to law school.” So I applied to Carolina [University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill] and was accepted. I didn’t apply anywhere else. And then dad had a friend who was a lawyer. We did even know—I didn’t even know a lawyer and I didn’t know dad knew a lawyer, but Malcolm Sewell had been Attorney General of North Carolina, and Malcolm and dad had been on several trade organization trips over to Russia and what-not because Malcolm represented the Bright Leaf tobacco, Bright Belt organization. So he said, “We ought to talk to Malcolm about it,” and what Malcolm said was, “If you’re going to go to law school, you want to make sure you do all three years at once. You don’t want to break it up.”

And I had gotten a deferment from Vietnam from the draft in order to finish college, and I talked to the Draft Board and they said, “It’s very unlikely that you will get three more years. In all likelihood, you’re going to be drafted after maybe a year, after a semester.”

KS: Even when you’re in law school?

KK: Oh right. Right, right, right, because I’d already had a deferment for college, and this was before a lottery and your name was just in the pot, and so I would have been one of the more mature ones in the pot, and so basically they said chances are your time is going to be up so I just volunteered for the Army and went in and I was in service from—let’s see, I graduated college in ’69 so that fall I went into the Army, and then I was in there, I guess, two years and got out in ’71, and Carolina held the spot open and so then at that point I went to law school.

KS: So tell me about your time in the military. What was that like?

KK: I signed up; my brother and I both went in at the same time because he was just getting out of high school when I was getting out of college, and I remember we didn’t really even discuss it with our parents and what-not and just went down and volunteered. Dad had been in service, and so we assumed—well, we didn’t even think. It was just, that’s what you do. You know, if they’re drafting people, and if there’s a war and there’s stuff, that’s what you’re supposed to do because—that’s what dad did.

KS: And as a parent, you probably know that that’s probably pretty shocking.

KK: But we didn’t even think. We didn’t even talk to our parents about it. We just figured that’s what we were supposed to do, but they were horrified. But it was too late. So I signed up for OCS [Officer Candidate School] since I had a college degree, and Charlie signed up for Signal [Corps] and so I went in basic at Fort Dix, combat engineer at Fort Leatherwood, and then was in the eleventh week of a twenty-some week program at Benning for Officer Candidate School when they came out with a RIF [reduction in force]. The war was winding down and they were graduating too many officers and they said, “If you want, we will honor our commitment. We said we will let you be an officer. If you want to do it, we’ll let you do it. However, if you want to reconsider, what we’ll do

is this: If you become an officer, your obligation is going to run three years from graduation.” And graduation was still, you know, several months down the line, and in the interim, I had gone ahead and signed up for flight school because it was clear to me I would not make a particularly effective infantry platoon leader, but I did think I would make a real good pilot. And so that’s what I was going to do and then it would be another four years after finishing flight school. They said, “We’ll do that if you want or if you choose to revert to enlisted status, your obligation will be two years from the date you came in.” I’d already done a year so that meant I would have one more year obligation in service, and you get so swept up in the program that that was a tough decision, so I called dad and he said, “Well, are you going to make a career out of this?”

I said, “Well, no.”

He said, “Well, for crying out loud.”

So anyway—

KS: But a pilot and an officer for a young man must be awfully romantic.

KK: Well, the pilot more than the officer. Officers were getting pretty well shot up pretty quickly, and I knew my limitations, and I think I would be an excellent pilot; I think I would have been a mediocre infantry platoon leader. So anyway.

KS: Any thoughts of military law?

KK: No, I didn’t at all, because I didn’t know what law was. I didn’t know a lawyer and the law school—I figured, well, I’ll give it a try. If it’s something I can do and I like, I’ll stick with it; and if it’s not, then I won’t. I’ll figure something else out. But anyway so I finished the year, actually in Colorado. It was marvelous. We didn’t have any money. My wife, son, and I were there. We would go hiking, and we’d get these topo [topographic] maps and a compass and, you know, from service I knew how to do the orienteering and what-not and we could say, “There’s a waterfall here.” I can tell the layout. Let’s hike in to it. I had a friend that had finished—incidentally, he had finished one year of law school and then he got drafted and then was going to go back. We were in the same unit and we spent a lot of time together.

KS: So what kind of work were you doing in Colorado? What did they have you doing?

KK: When I got into—I was in processing. I had a combat engineer MOS, Military Occupation Specialty, and was going down to a line unit, and it was winter and they were sending them out and what-not, and when I end-processed, the guy who end-processed, he said, “Oh, I see you’ve been to college.”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Let me ask you something; can you type?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Can you use both hands?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Well, look, I’ve got an option for you. How would you like to go to headquarters company. I’ll send you down to the line unit and you’ll go out in the woods

and freeze your butt, or you can have a nice warm place, sort of nine to five. How does that sound to you?"

I said, "You know, that sounds pretty good." So I spent the year doing records review and clerical stuff. We had a—our E7 was really a decent sort, and we were all college grads, and we made it a point to dress sharp, to be where we were supposed to be, and to do the job, and we never saw him because he knew we'd take care of everything. And so it made life easy for him and he made life easy for us. So I spent the rest of the time doing that and then when I got out, headed back to North Carolina and started law school.

KS: So no thoughts of doing anything different—staying in Colorado or not going to law school?

KK: A bunch of the guys stayed in Colorado. If you go to Colorado, it's hard to come out. But no, I had such a weird upbringing, if you say you're going to do something, you do it. And I said I'm going to go to law school and try it out, so I went to law school and tried it out.

KS: So by that time you had a wife and a young son, so when did you have your son and what is his name?

KK: The oldest boy is Rod; Rod was born, I guess, junior year—going into my junior year in college.

KS: So you moved back.

KK: I moved back.

KS: And you're going to law school for sure.

KK: I started law school, had no idea, you know, how it would go, and it turns out that that was something that came pretty easy. I mean you have to work and spend a lot of time, but if you spend the time, I found I got the results. So I qualified for law review and then wrote on law review and then it was published and then got on editor's board and all that junk.

KS: So you did real well in law school. [laughs]

KK: I did. I did fine. I did fine. There were certainly people that did a lot better and definitely people brighter but, you know, it worked out.

KS: So any other interests while you were in law school or did you just study?

KK: It was pretty much all I could do to say grace over doing the work for law school. I found that pretty time consuming because then doing law review and especially board of editor work, you're putting together the publication. It takes a tremendous amount of time. And between doing that and trying to keep up on the studies, that was all I could handle.

KS: Are you still involved with your law school in any way. I mean, have you been involved through the years.

KK: Well, I send them money. [laughter] That's about it there. I do preceptor work with Elon here, but not so much with Carolina.

KS: Now did you specialize while you were there in any kind of law, or did you do more of a general—

KK: You don't really specialize that much. You can emphasize courses and I— rather than emphasizing the tax-corporate courses, I emphasized more of the litigation-commercial type courses, and when I took a job with a firm, it was a civil litigation position doing insurance defense work initially.

KS: Did you intern during the summers, or is that as big as it is now?

KK: Yes, and I did. In fact, I clerked here in Greensboro and that's why I decided to come to Greensboro with a boutique insurance defense firm, and four or five of us would ride over from Chapel Hill together. I think we had—I guess it was four of us, three of them went with Smith, Moore and I went with Perry Hinson, and we would all alternate driving days.

KS: So what year was this—you graduated in what year?

KK: Seventy-four.

KS: And you were over in Greensboro with your wife and son.

KK: With wife and son and so then things had settled down, so we have son number two and let's see: We were in a rental house in '74 and then in '75 bought a house in Jefferson Gardens and we're still there.

KS: So what was Greensboro like when you moved here? Was it a lot different than it is now? What kind of atmosphere was it?

KK: The downtown was different; the downtown was not as vital and active and safe at night as it is now. You didn't have—you know, the stuff out Wendover wasn't built. A lot of the little strip centers weren't built; Four Seasons was, I believe. But it, other than that, not that much different. Again, I was starting the career, and so basically you have to start learning all over again. You know, how do you actually do this stuff? And that again was about all I could say grace over.

KS: So, very busy. Well, were you interested in politics or anything like that.

KK: No.

KS: So you didn't have much interest in politics.

KK: No, never have. I mean I'm interested and distressed by it now, but I am not personally involved. I don't—I vote; I vote in every election. I support candidates; I don't work the polls. I do talk about with friends and acquaintances what I like, what I don't; what they like, what they don't like; try and listen to their views and try to get a feel for it.

KS: Do you recall any kind of traditions that were interesting in early Greensboro? I don't know if the Christmas parade was still in existence by the time you all moved here. I've heard a lot about the famous Christmas parade.

KK: Yes, I think the Jaycees were putting it together. The Jaycees were a big deal; very, very active and, of course, ran the GGO [Greater Greensboro Open Golf Tournament]. I was not part of the Jaycees at all, but no, we'd take the kids to the parade and it would be a lot of fun and you would always get a kick out of—even then, you know, the A&T [North Carolina A&T State University] and Dudley [High School] and all were very colorful. I'd been in the marching band so I got—I especially appreciate what they were able to do as far as both the marching and the showmanship and the musicality.

KS: So anything else that you all enjoyed during those years?

KK: Usually just outdoors, like going to Hanging Rock and hiking around, park-type stuff. Money was not particularly plentiful so we did fairly inexpensive stuff.

KS: Was the Guilford Courthouse Park, was that here?

KK: Oh, yes. Yes, yes.

KS: Not being from here originally, I'm not quite sure when that developed.

KK: It has grown. They've expanded beyond now to the point where they've got sort of the historical reenactment areas that those folks come into, but the area up there—Country Park, and then where you wind through to the Natural Science Center—all that was there.

KS: So tell me about your practice, your law career.

KK: Civil trial, insurance defense initially. One of the guys left and went with another firm, and after awhile called me up and said—actually he didn't. What he did was one of my classmates that was with the same firm called me up and said, "Let's have dinner." And this was a guy I hadn't seen in awhile.

"Okay." So my wife [and I] went over and had dinner.

He said, “You ought to make a change. You ought to come over and join us.” And so my wife and I talked about it and decided yes. And so we went over and continued to do civil trial work but then got into commercial and got into employment which is what I do still today. And the people I was practicing with there after several years got together and said, “You know we’d like to do our own firm.”

And about that time—so we hired a consultant and then the consultant was working with the Falk—Bill Falk—Carruthers and Roth [law] firm and they were looking for some special expertise, part of which were people with civil trial experience, and so the consultant said, “Wait a minute here. Why don’t I just put these two guys together.” So we merged our group with this group, and then that was ’86 and I’ve just been here ever since.

KS: You’ve been here ever since. That’s great. Is your wife from North Carolina?

KK: My first wife, who I married when I was in college and with whom I had the first two kids--Rod and Char—was from North Carolina. In fact I had met her—or she grew up in North Carolina—and I’d met her in high school. And then we separated and divorced, and I met my second wife through my then next door neighbor, and she was born in Binghamton but came down in the first grade and had gone all the way through school actually here in Greensboro.

KS: Oh, what school did she go to?

KK: It was Greensboro High as it was becoming Grimsley. So she would be like a ’72 grad.

KS: Did she go to college here, too?

KK: She then went to college; started off at Elon, then would work and go to UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro], and then ended up taking her degree in business. I think she said it took her seventeen years by the time—and graduated with a phenomenal grade point average.

KS: Also from UNCG.

KK: From UNCG. Yes.

KS: So you all have the connection with our university.

KK: I don’t know if you know—does the name Naomi Albanese mean anything to you?

KS: I’ve heard of her. Why have I heard of her?

KK: She was head of their home ec [economics] department and I don’t know that it was called home ec. When dad was director of research in Raleigh, and she and dad collaborated on a number of things, and she thought he hung the moon. So anyway.

KS: So what do you all do now? Are you involved with the school or other schools in town or do you participate in things like that.

KK: I'm involved, as far as school things, with Elon Law School and, like I said, do preceptors work there.

KS: And what does your wife do?

KK: She was a paralegal when I met her, working at another firm, and therefore had a real good grip on the pressures that lawyers are under, and the fact that you're not home doesn't mean you don't want to be home; it means you've got something that needs to be done for a client and you have to do what you have to do. And she just, you know—that's standard. There's no big deal; it wasn't a cause for concern or anything like that. She retired from that firm, was called back, worked another ten years, and then retired again, so she is now full-time retired from work outside the home but now her mom lives with us, and my wife's becoming daily more and more a caregiver.

KS: Sure, sure. Since you've been in Greensboro really most—or I mean in North Carolina most of your life, how have you seen North Carolina change through the years, and specifically Greensboro, but either one. [pause] Or have you?

KK: I don't know if I've been colored by what's going on now, but I just do not remember politics being as polarized. I don't know if I'm not remembering right or not, but it seems to me that everything used to be a lot more centrist and not as driven by the extremes on either end and that there used to be—and again I have faulty vision—but it used to be more of a, you know, what's good for the entity focus as opposed to what's good for my position. So that's—and maybe I'm seeing what used to be through rose-colored glasses, but I just don't remember this; I really don't.

KS: It seems like it's a national issue, too, though, doesn't it?

KK: Oh absolutely.

KS: Let's see; as one of the things that I've got down on my questions that the people have talked about in the past are just issues like population growth, economic growth, leadership, race relations. I guess the water shortage has kind of fixed itself locally.

KK: No, it didn't fix itself. We had some visionary people who got together and said that piping it in from Burlington is not going to get it long-term. We need a water resource, and pushed it through and now we've got it. It did not fix itself.

KS: I've heard various things about that. Well, at least we're past it.

KK: Yes.

KS: I know your wife had graduated from college locally. What role do you think that local colleges and universities should play in the cultural development of the community? Or do you?

KK: I do; I definitely do, and I think they are. The joint nano-science, nano-engineering project out on Lee Street, I think that's marvelous. Any of the—any collaboration you see going on, you know, raises it. The more they can do on that type of thing, the better we like it.

KS: We've got a lot of great colleges right in town, which is amazing.

KK: Stunning, just stunning, because we're out there by Guilford College, and then you've got Bennett, you've got Greensboro, you've got A&T, you've got UNCG.

KS: Right, and we do a lot of collaboration with all the different colleges, and the community colleges have really come out, too.

KK: Yes, yes.

KS: That's been something that's been—just in the time I've been here—that I've been amazed to see. Okay, let me ask you this. Talk to me about the Rotary Club; when did you get involved in the Rotary and what have they done while you've been a member?

KK: I got—I joined in '97. John Redmond, one of my close friends, a UNCG Bryan School professor, suggested I do it. He said, "I think you'll enjoy it, but you will get out of it what you put into it."

And so I joined and I said, Well, let's give it a fair try and so whenever there was a project, I tried to get involved in it and found that by working with people on projects outside the meetings, I really got to know them a lot better and got a lot closer to them than I would just in the meetings. And then I had a chance to get involved in the exchange student program, and at that time, I think both—I had a daughter and she's substantially younger obviously than the two boys, and the boys were out of the house. They were grown and on their own. So Katie was an only child and we said "I don't know that it's a particularly good thing." So we said, Let's try an exchange student. Let's make her share some space; give her the opportunity to work out a bathroom schedule and chores and what-not with somebody who's like a sibling for a period of time. And the first one we had was a boy from Germany, phenomenal kid who's now a medical doctor. Then we had a girl from Mexico, very privileged family; a girl from Turkey, sort of middle-class family; a girl from Argentina who was a—in part of that very narrow middle-class there in Argentina; and a girl from Brazil, who was definitely upper-level economically; and each one of them was just marvelous. They would come in and they would have to be—we would keep them here. Most of them we kept the full year because it was hard to recruit anybody else to do it and we were happy to do it. And they had to come in and they had to be the kid. They were not a guest and like the young lady from Brazil had never done a chore in her life. She would tell stories about sitting in a parlor area next to her kitchen and calling for the maid to come from upstairs to downstairs to

fetch her a glass of water, and she had to clean our bathroom—just like my daughter had to clean our bathroom—and she'd be in there [squealing sound] and just squeal and squeal, but she liked it. We stay in touch with all of them. We've been to just a phenomenal wedding on a ranch in the middle of Mexico where the husband was a caballero, and he and his friends came in on horses that just snorted fire. And a couple of years ago, we went to a wedding in Turkey with our Turkish student who she and my daughter really, really, really bonded. They are really like sisters. And that was the most phenomenal thing I've ever seen in my life because the husband's from a very wealthy family—nice family, good guy—but he went to boarding school in England, and all of his boarding school friends were getting married at the same time so there had been weddings in Argentina, Brazil, Washington, DC, London, Australia. And they would just go kind of wedding to wedding, and whoever was hosting it, had to take care of everybody and their pet duck and so we got tours of Turkey, all kinds of experiences, went on a cruise after the wedding. He had to go back because he had taken off so much time. He was in a financial house in Geneva, and so she and her parents chartered a boat and—because I loved to sail. My wife and I are very passionate sailors, and they didn't like it as much. We loved it; they liked more activity and in-town life, and we liked the solitude, but they were very, very, very gracious and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

KS: Gosh, I can't imagine; what a great experience.

KK: Just unbelievable, and then toured part of Turkey and everywhere we went—the exchange student's name is Deniz, D e n i z—would arrange for a guide and they would explain, you know, what you're looking at; its significance; where it fits on the historical timeline, that sort of thing.

KS: Now did your daughter reciprocate—did she go to school in Europe at all or did you all just have people in.

KK: No, no. We would just have people in. Katie has visited in Mexico, in Brazil, and then of course all the time we spent—we spent probably ten days in Turkey—but Katie went to State and then got a biology degree; wants to be a PA [physician's assistant] and you have to get some clinical experience. She got her CMA degree at Wake Tech, worked for a weight-loss—physician's weight loss program, and then a small family practice, and now a corporate—a large—Cornerstone Family Practice, and so has been accepted to PA school starting in August. She had been living in Raleigh. She's been accepted at Wingate [College] down outside of Charlotte, so she is now—when her lease ran out, she left Raleigh, and is living with us until she goes off to PA school.

KS: That's a great plan.

KK: It's working out well for us. We love to have her back. She is a dear and she helps with the Grandma and she helps her mom, so what's not to like.

KS: Well, that's a great experience with the exchange students and it's, of course, a world-renowned Rotarian project.

KK: Yes, exactly.

KS: Have you been involved in any other projects that you liked for the Rotary.

KK: I've pretty much enjoyed, you know, all the stuff. I typically will do—we do joint projects here in town: Big Sweep, when I was with Greensboro Power Squadron we would clean up waterways and this is just an extension of that on the ground and doing it with high school students. And I've got an old, beat-up pickup truck so we throw the trash in that. We do Project Rebuild which is rehabbing a house. Through the Bar Association, I do Habitat for Humanity, and we maintain Sussman's Park, and we serve at Potter's House. It's been a lot of fun. I've done—served on the Rotary Board; I was president for a year; I'm now doing assistant governor stuff starting—it's really started now but it officially starts in July, and that's a three-year assignment.

KS: So explain a little bit more about that. What is that?

KK: Rotary is a club-level-up organization, in that the stuff that gets done—in my view—the stuff that gets done locally, is done by the club, and the stuff that gets done internationally is done by funding provided by the club; however, the clubs are organized by districts, and the districts receive a return of a portion of the funding that is sent in by that district, and then the district then distributes that out for various grants. The district has a district governor, which is a fulltime job, and they go around—like there are fifty-two clubs in our district—7690—and the district governor visits each one of the clubs and through assistant governors that are assigned to the various clubs. Then there is a liaison and a district governor will have a program: we'd like to see this, this, this and this emphasized, and then the assistant governor is trying to work with the clubs and help the clubs meet their goals. Like a club will have a passion, and there are some district funds available. Well, we will help them put together a grant request, and then get funding to fund that passion. And we're just trying to help. Like in Greensboro, we've got eight clubs, and we've two assistant governors; so we've got area five and area eleven in Greensboro, so there are four clubs under each assistant governor but we run them like all eight are under a single, and we have a meeting every month with all the presidents of all eight clubs; we do the joint projects. It just is very, very cooperative; very collaborative. It's not a competition thing at all; it's a, you know, a rising tide raises all boats.

KS: So each individual club can have its own projects, and then you can have collaborative, inter-city projects, and then does it go as far as inter-state projects?

KK: It goes really more to international and there are—well, I'm sure people have talked to you about the polio eradication program that Rotary's been involved in. It started back in, I guess, '85, '86, and then really got serious with Bill Gates signing on, and now we've knocked polio out of all but three countries, and from thousands of cases every year, we're down to hundreds and moving on toward trying to eradicate that. What Rotary has done is they have shifted emphasis through what's called future vision and area 7690

which Greensboro is a part of, was part of that future vision. And what they're doing now is more of the big, impactful from an international standpoint, and are collaborating with certain partners to do a big deal. Before, maybe we would have done a \$5,000 well somewhere; now the minimum level for funding is \$30,000, fifteen of which is provided at the club level, and fifteen of which is from Rotary International, and that way you're able to multiply the effect of your funds and you get additional clubs in different areas involved, and push something really big. It has to be in a given area of emphasis: water, peace resolution, education, stuff like that, and it's got to be sustainable. You can't put a well in the ground; you've got to be able to provide training on maintenance, so it goes year after year after year.

KS: So who prioritizes these projects, the international board?

KK: International approves. First they have approved the partners, and they have switched the division. Now they've got a whole board and we've got delegates that go in, but that is the big shift that's been made.

KS: So what are some of the big international projects you all are working with, and what are your favorites?

KK: The district governor that's leaving, Rick Snyder of Lexington, for years was with Mercy Ships, and it turns out that Mercy Ships is one of the partners. There are four or five strategic partners and the only one that I'm that familiar with is Mercy Ships and it's because, you know, I've heard Rick talk about it so much. And that's—in fact we had a presentation at district conference just this last weekend from the fellow that started it. He started it when he was thirty years old, in his early thirties, and he had been doing some charitable work in India. He made a comment about Mother Teresa and the people he was working with said, "Sure, we can arrange for you to meet her."

So he had a whole ton of questions, and she wouldn't let him ask any of the questions. She asked him questions. Let's see it was, "Why are you here in life? Why are you on earth?" And then basically "What is your pain? What's your passion? What are you doing about it?" So it focused him and he put together financing, bought an old cruise ship, got volunteer docs and nurses, and went to right offshore on blighted areas, and they would take kids in. And there were a number of operations they could do that were very efficient, and that they could monitor and make sure they got the care and what-not, and that has just grown and grown and grown. It's just amazing. They had a video presentation of some of the work they had done; just stunning.

KS: Now do you all—As a local chapter, do you all get to vote on what—do they present projects and then you can choose to participate.

KK: Yes, that's right. Each club and each area says—and what happens is this: You will have somebody in one of the clubs that has a tie somewhere, and there's some sort of personal connection and then that will lead to that person saying, "Come on, let's do something to help here." We've got a couple of folks that go to Kenya with their church, and are helping there and so their passion for doing that is infectious, and now our club is

contributing to what they're doing and making it better. Bob Newton with Moldova project; Hospice, you know we had—Pam Barrett, head of Hospice here in Greensboro before she transferred down to Charlotte, and we worked with getting a hospice organization off the ground in Moldova, and exchanged back and forth. I mean it's just always something. We've had two different groups of Russian attorneys come in to study our justice system, and so you get to keep them in your house, chat with them, you know, and have some drinks, and what not. It's just, you know, it's just a lot of opportunities to do stuff.

KS: Now are you interested in reciprocating; for example, going over to Russia as a representative attorney.

KK: No.

KS: No? [laughter]

KK: I'm just—I'm very happy to be here, be where I am. I was delighted to go to Turkey because of Deniz, but for the most part I don't particularly care for air travel. It's just—I get fidgety and it's—you know, three hours is about what I feel good doing. I can fly out and see my brother and that's it.

KS: So where is he living now?

KK: California.

KS: California. Do you all still ride bikes when you all get together.

KK: We do. He's not with Honda anymore so we have to ride our own bikes. It's just terrible, having to buy our own bikes.

KS: So does your wife bike, or do you all just sail?

KK: She will ride with me from time to time, but it is not a passion for her.

KS: So when did you all get involved in sailing?

KK: The firm—in fact I was racing Hobie Cats when I met her. And it's usually off-shore racing, and I had gotten into A fleet, and so it was fairly competitive and she was the perfect weight because you have to make minimum and you don't want to have too many over minimum. I had been sailing with guys, and we were just way too heavy. But when I proposed to her, she said that—I had two boys at the time—and she said, "I'm going to have to think about it. I'll take it under advisement. But, I'll tell you this, if I say yes, don't think it means I'm going to race with you again." Because apparently, I get fairly intense on the racing stuff.

So, anyway, after we got married, I didn't do that much more racing. But our firm gave us, then, a sabbatical: three months you can do anything you want. Do you have a

passion? You can follow it whether it's, you know, like further education or anything. And I said I'd always wanted to learn to sail big boats because the Hobie Cat is just a sixteen, and I said I'd like to learn to sail a big boat. And I'd never been able to take the time because the courses are usually at least a week, and I had never had a vacation more than a week, and so I said, I'm going to take a course and learn to sail a big boat. And I did. And she went with me to that, and she found that—her skill is more of a—she loves to sail, but she wants to have somebody else there that will be responsible for line handling and helping with the navigation. She likes to cook; she likes to help where she can, but she doesn't want to have number one responsibility, and so once we figured that out, we've always taken at least one other couple with us and sometimes two, sometimes three. But that same sabbatical, I went dirt biking in Baja with my brother. I did stay-at-home dad while my wife worked, which was a riot with the women in the neighborhood. I found out what it's like. You get up in the morning, go to the gym, come back or go by Chucky Cheese, you know, and bang a few things down the kid's mouth, maybe have a beer, piddle around the house, take the kids out to the trampoline, have a few beers, check your watch and say, "Oops, almost five o'clock. I need to get home and look busy." And so it was a riot because all the neighborhood kids played together, and all the women, you know, you spent the time—a very congenial group and a lot of fun to be part of that. And then my wife, I said, you know, "What's your passion? What do you want to do. You know we've got this time; you can do anything you want to do, too. She said, "We're not travelers"—and she said, "I want to go to Greece. I've always heard that Greece is the deal." So we went to Greece.

KS: And did you enjoy it?

KK: Loved it.

KS: Did you all do the cruise or did you all just stay on land?

KK: We did our own thing. We lined up hotels or B&Bs at different islands and set our own itinerary and got there and would check in and rent a car, explore, and just—you know.

KS: Now did you all rent a boat? Did you all do the sailing thing over there?

KK: No, we did not do that because of different waters; I hadn't studied the charting; and, if necessary, I couldn't speak Greek, and it's—the sailing is a lot of responsibility. If you mess it up, you can kill somebody, and I've always been very, very, very just anal about it. Anytime we do a cruise, months ahead of time I'll get all the charts; I'll have the GPS; I'll put in weigh points. This was back before you had charting GPS. I'll take off weigh points; I'll plan anchorages; I'll plan alternate anchorages just in case the wind is coming from a different direction; and so that by the time I get there, we're prepared and we're ready to go. And my wife's observation has been, like in a week-long cruise, she says, "It will really take you three days to be able to relax." Because you know when you're anchored, you want to make sure the anchor is set. Well, that the boat doesn't swing too far; that you are appropriately positioned; that you're not going to be exposed to bad weather. You just, you know, the whole drill.

KS: Do you all have your own boat?

KK: No, we just charter.

KS: So you don't want to get involved with having your own boat.

KK: No.

KS: Too much work.

KK: Exactly, for too little reward, because we would sail maybe once a year and you can't justify—I can't justify owning a boat and having that responsibility and exposure to hurricanes, the slip fees, and all the upkeep for one week a year.

SK: Well, how far have you all gotten? Where do you all like to go? Do you go down to—can you go to Bermuda from here?

KK: You can.

KS: Is that kind of sketchy?

KK: You can. Actually not, I have not made the crossing over to Bermuda. We've sailed in the Abacos. We've sailed in the Chesapeake. Obviously off—out of Oriental, Key West, and a bunch of times down in British Virgin Islands and the American Virgins. But again, my wife does not like the long sails. What she likes is, we'll hop over somewhere, put the anchor down, snorkel, relax, nap, eat, drink, get up in the morning, find another place, and repeat the above.

KS: Well, do you rent here or do you, for example, charter a boat down in Key West?

KK: Always there, always there.

KS: So then you're halfway to some of the islands.

KK: There are a ton of charter companies, and in any place that the waters are desirable to sail in, there will be a company there that will rent you a boat.

KS: But you like to be the captain, you don't want—

KK: I like to be the captain.

KS: You don't want to go, like, on a windjammer cruise.

KK: Right. I like—I do get a kick out of that.

KS: Well, that's great. Any other hobbies that you all enjoy.

KK: I did car track days for probably eight years.

KS: What are those?

KK: It's basically—it's not racing, but it's driving a car on a race track at race speeds. And I started off in the car I was running was sort of set up for that. I mean, it was a regular car but a BMW M coupe, and did it for awhile. You start off with a classroom instructor, an in-car instructor, and I'd done it for a couple of years and the in-car instructor said, "Look, you're running at a level now that if you're going to continue this, you are going to need to modify your car just for safety's sake. You're going to have to put in a roll bar because we're now running through these areas at speeds where if something goes wrong, it's not going to be fun, and you need to put in harnesses. And I didn't want to chop the car up so I bought an older car that had already been set up for track work. It has its own special suspension, interior gutted, roll bar, you know, five six-point harnesses, stuff like that and then I continued to run and met a whole new group of friends there, and did that probably eight or so years. That was a ton of fun. Now we're into clay pigeon shooting, and so we're doing traps, skeet, and sporting clays, so that's the entertainment du jour.

KS: So just clay; no real birds.

KK: I'm not a hunter; no, no, no. I just enjoy shooting the targets.

KS: Well, my goodness, you all are active. [laughter]

KK: Big time, big time.

KS: Well, that's great. I want to ask you about the car. Do you run it on like a NASCAR on a track?

KK: It is—they're what are called road courses. Now I have ridden on a NASCAR track. We went to Nashville and ran—we'd run through the infield and up on the high bank and then swoop through the infield and then up on the high bank, but for the most part we've got a world-class course just outside of Danville, Virginia. It's called Virginia International Raceway, world-class. It was a popular race track back in the '60s, then for some reason people stopped using it. Some investors out of New Jersey leased it under the condition that they spiff it up, and it is one of the nicest facilities you've ever seen. I mean, spotless restrooms, shower facilities, picnic facilities, excellent restaurant, grill, hotel accommodations, and a track that they can configure four different ways—everywhere from the what they call "grand east course" like four and a quarter miles; to the full course, three and a quarter miles; north course; south course; patriot course. And it's got uphill, downhill, lefts, rights, blind corners—you know, just everything. It is a driver's dream.

- KS: Do you bring your own car? So this is your own car you're bringing to those places that you've modified. I've never heard anything like that. That's wonderful.
- KK: And you can take—anybody can do it like I did it, and start off just driving your street car, and you get instruction there. There are usually four different courses—four different classes: beginners, next, next, next, and instructors; so five, five altogether. And you progress through and you run by experience level, not by horsepower, so I was running, you know, open. Since I did it for awhile, I was running the open level. That's sort of a pattern: I get better than the average bear but not as good as the super guys, but good enough to get in the top group. So it would not be at all unusual for me to be running with Ferraris, Z06 Corvettes, race-prepped GT2 and GT3 Porsches; and so I was riding this little old-timey thing with hardly any horsepower, but through the real tight areas, it would run as fast as they would run. But I have to watch—I'm very conscious of the mirrors on straights because they'd be on you in a second.
- KS: So you're racing. It's not just you're out there with by yourself?
- KK: You're with a ton of people, and so you've got to work—the difference in racing is you're trying to keep somebody from passing you; you're trying to beat them. Well, we're trying to beat everybody, but if you get in a situation where somebody shows up behind you, well, they're obviously faster than you or they wouldn't have come up on you. So it then becomes your duty to work cooperatively with them to get them around you while still not slowing you up, and you don't have to stop for them. And so the trick is being able to run as fast as you can run while still getting them around you.
- KS: So you want to get them around you. You don't want to block them.
- KK: Correct. You want them around them as quick as you can get because they want to go as fast as they can go; I want to go as fast as I can go and if I fall in behind somebody that won't let me by, it is infuriating, and it's really a breach of etiquette. And the organizers will talk to him about it.
- KS: So bikes and boats and cars; so you like to race. Do you think this was all from racing bikes as a child?
- KK: Running bikes as a child, yes.
- KS: The fact that you like to race and you were kind of—I guess it developed a certain amount of fearlessness.
- KK: There's old and there's bold and I'm old—
- KS: And pretty bold!

KK: I would participate but not anywhere close to the top level. You have to be—I've got some friends who are exceptional and do compete at the top level and I just don't. I just enjoy it.

KS: Well, you'll live to fight another day!

KK: There you go. One of the kids who is so good, years ago, picked up a new bike and was going out—this is when we were riding down at Fayetteville when Texas Lake was still open, and there was a lot of sand and areas that are called whoops—they're jumps that you go over—and so the technique for doing those is you loft your front wheel and just ride through it on the back wheel and then lower the front wheel, and he was on a new bike that had been prepped and when he lofted the front wheel, the forks extended and it locked the front brake, and he did not know that because the bike had been assembled improperly. So when he put the front wheel down, of course it threw him on the ground, and he ended up with a fracture in his arm, and maybe a compression fracture in his neck, and he wanted me to—all he wanted was the shop that had put it together to pay his doctor bills. He said, "Just pay the bills." He said, "It's all part of the deal. Just pay the bills."

And initially they weren't going to do it, so I went ahead and got the medical records on him and said, "I think we can make this happen." And we got copies of the x-rays, and x-rays of both areas had not only those fractures but pre-existing fractures. He had beat himself up that badly over the years. And just kept doing it and loves it, and his wife's a nurse.

KS: Well, so you're doing some wonderful things. That's great. Anything else; anything else you want to talk about today?

KK: I'm just here to answer questions. [laughter]

KS: We'll have to do another one of these in a year or two and see what you're up to!

KK: Right, right. Wait a few years for me to do something else.

KS: That's right. Progressive interviews. Well, thank you so much for having me to your office today. I've really enjoyed this interview quite a bit.

KK: Well, good, good. It was a pleasure to talk to you.

KS: Thank you.

[End of Interview]