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I was born in Ashland, Kentucky, and probably my greatest claim to surrogate fame is that I attended high school with Diana Judd, also known as Naomi Judd of “the Judds,” the very famous and many-Grammy-Award winning country music duo. Having visited with Diana a few times in recent years (usually on her bus when she and her daughter, Wynona, perform locally), I can say that she has not changed, and is still the same genuine, funny, smart, and talented person she was in junior high and high school!

Aside from producing the Judds, Ashland was and is a rather undistinguished town situated alongside the Ohio River near where Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky (the “Tri-State Area”) come together. I grew up there, attended the local community college, and then, after graduating from the University of Kentucky and teaching for some years in Lexington, I returned to Ashland to teach in my former high school. At first, it was strange to teach in the same high school I had attended, but I got used to it. For two of those years, I had five preparations a day-- French II, French III, drama, speech and speech II. I also coached the debate team, individual events, and directed the Thespian society and all the high school plays. During this same period, I completed my Master’s degree at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia. These heavy commitments must not have been good for my first marriage because, after six years, he and I split up and I moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan where my mother was living and began a doctoral program in speech at the University of Michigan, finishing in 1977. I’d call this period, prior to entry into my doctoral program, the “first half of my life.” It includes a lot of growing up, a lot of schooling, and some professional experience, and it all took place in Kentucky, my home state. It seems to me that my departure from there and my decision to enter the University of Michigan was a watershed in my life. Everything after that was different--my personal life, my intellectual interests, and my career.

My childhood was unusual--very unusual. My father was a hotel and restaurant manager, and we lived “on site” which means in the hotel. During my childhood up to age five when I entered kindergarten, I had no playmates and pretty much entertained myself. My brother, who was six years older than I, was not really a companion because the age gap was too great. In any case, my isolation had some advantages. I became a voracious reader as I grew up. (I remember that I read *Gone with the Wind* in two days, all the Nancy Drew books, and 1984.) I enjoyed reading aloud to myself, which perhaps presaged my later interest in oral interpretation. I had a lot of childhood fantasies and lived in my own world, so to speak. But I was not very well socialized, unfortunately. As the “manager’s daughter” who had free run of the hotel, I was pretty much a spoiled brat. When I entered school, my “center of attention” habits and poor socialization did not serve me very well. Elementary school was rough, as my classmates soon let me know that they were unimpressed with my persona and my interpersonal style. Although I learned rapidly to change my ways, I still have some bad habits. I tend to be too critical of others, too judgmental, and a poor listener. I am still trying to correct those bad habits that were formed so thoroughly so early!

Like so many others in the discipline, I was very active in speech and forensics as a high school student. I was on the debate team and acted in the school plays. I loved it! It appealed to that “center of the stage” need, and it also gave me a context in which to develop my social skills and make good friends. To select speech and drama as a major when I went to college, and then to teach and coach in these same activities later, seemed natural to me. Many of my teachers were major influences on me. I remember in particular Mrs. DeVecchio, my English teacher during my senior year in high school. She was a taskmistress. She made us go back

through all the English grammar we had been exposed to but never learned--and learn it. We memorized all the spelling rules, and our spelling improved dramatically. And, as the more fortunate among you may have done, we diagrammed sentences throughout the year. Most of us emerged from her class greatly improved as writers and with a better sense of the English language. I will always be in her debt!

Another woman who had a strong influence on me in much the same way was Elaine Novak, a professor at Marshall University. During my Master's program there, Dr. Novak taught us so many valuable research skills, including the conventions of documentation, research, and scholarly writing. I recall that her careful proofreading of my Master's thesis turned up over 200 errors (many of them made by my typist, but others by me, unfortunately). I was mortified. I resolved from that point to take greater care with my work and to carefully check and proofread everything. This served me well in my Ph.D program where my advisor, Richard Enos, once told me that I seemed to be better prepared as a writer than many of the other students were when they entered the program. If that was the case, it was due to the work of Mrs. DeVecchio and Dr. Novak. In my own teaching, research, and graduate supervision, I have always tried to emulate these strong, positive role models for my professional development.

My time at Michigan was very good. My father had passed away and I lived with my mother, with whom I was very close. My professors, particularly Rich Enos and Howard H. Martin, were wonderful. Dr. Martin has won the Distinguished Teaching Award at Michigan twice, and with good reason. Rich (not Dr. Enos now to me) has had a distinguished career, mostly in English since he moved to Carnegie Mellon and then to Texas Christian University. There are former students throughout the United States who remember these men as strong role models and wonderful teachers, and I am one of them!

Shortly after I left Michigan, the department there was reorganized and the "speech" part of it was cut back. The faculty in that area who had so strongly influenced me all either retired or moved on. This was in the late 1970s and, since then, the same thing has happened at the University of Oregon, Ohio State University and other places. This has affected me strongly on a personal and a professional level. I continue to be committed to teaching and research in rhetoric and the oral arts of speech. To this day, a good deal of my work and energy are oriented to research in these areas, but more about that later on.

My first position was at Tulane University where I started teaching in 1977. Again, a major influence on my professional development was a woman--Milly Barranger who was Head of the Department of Theatre and Speech at that time. She was an astute administrator, devoted to the furtherance of her department and its faculty and savvy in negotiating the many hurdles in her way. When I arrived at Tulane, there were one and one-half faculty in the speech area, myself and a man who had a joint appointment as an administrator. Milly and I worked to modernize and build a curriculum in speech and communication there. I worked to convert an ad hoc major in the field to an official major in Newcomb College--the women's college. When I left in 1980, there were three faculty in the unit. My position was filled by Jim Aune, who was followed by Celeste Condit and then Kathleen J. Turner. There is now a whole department there, and I have always been pleased with the work that Milly and I, and after us Kittie Watson, did to develop that program. Incidentally, John H. Patton is there, and he and I were on the debate team together in high school back in Ashland, Kentucky. It's a small world, actually! In 1980, I accepted a position at the University of Washington and moved to Seattle. I made this move largely because of a desire to work with graduate students at a large public university. The transition was difficult. I still miss beignets, gumbo, and all the gustatory delights of New Orleans. I try to console myself with fresh salmon and clam chowder and to get back to New

Orleans whenever I can. Whenever the NCA convention meets there, you will find me in some local restaurant every noontime and every evening enjoying the local fare.

The move to Washington has turned out well on the whole, but life here has not exactly been a crystal stair. The worst time was when my mother was dying of breast cancer in 1985-86. She was still living in Ann Arbor and, after visiting me once, she returned home and finally, belatedly, went to the doctor about the lump in her breast. The news was not good, and after her surgery I went to stay with her for the summer. We had a good summer, but in Autumn after I returned to Seattle, her condition worsened. It is a long, sad story, and it surely was the worse year of my life. I was under a great deal of stress, because I was supposed to go up for tenure in the Fall of 1986, and I was very torn between caring for her and preparing for that. There are some things I would do differently if I had it to do over. There is no regret more profound than regret about a past one cannot change.

About a year after my mother died, I was introduced to Michael O'Connell by mutual friends. I knew almost right away that he was "Mr. Right" for me, but it took him a while to come to the same realization! We were married in 1992, and are each others' best friends. We share many interests, including music, hiking, biking, and traveling. We have been to Scotland, Greece, Israel, and many parts of the U.S. together. Michael is a computer center director at the University, and he has been very supportive of my current research on theories and practices of communication in new media environments.

In the meantime, my professional work has continued to develop. During my early years at Tulane and Washington, I was influenced by the work of prominent women rhetoricians such as Marie Huchmoth Nichols, Kathleen Jamieson, and Karlyn Campbell. During my time in graduate school and thereafter, these women set a standard for excellence in research and publication in the field. Nichols was a superb writer; she knew how to tell a scholarly story, and she was masterful at writing transitions. I continue to assign her work as a writing model in my graduate seminars. Jamieson is an amazing worker. She stayed at my home once when visiting to give a lecture in the department, and just watching her work exhausted me. I consider her to be a leader in bringing national prominence and recognition to our field, and every time I see her on the national news or working as a commentator, I'm proud to say "she's one of ours." Campbell's work in feminist rhetoric is groundbreaking, and her influence on her own students and readers continues to ripple through our scholarly circles. I look forward to seeing the fruits of her work as editor of *Quarterly Journal of Speech* beginning next year.

My own term as editor of that journal was relatively unproblematic. I rather stupidly agreed to chair my department at Washington beginning in the same year as my editorship, but at least I was able to leverage a full time research assistant for the three-year editorial term as part of my agreement to take on the administrative duties. I had some excellent editorial assistants, and they took care of all the tracking, reference checks, and paper pushing involved in the job. I'm still grateful to Martha Watson and Bob Ivie for coaching and advising me through the first year. Editing is a huge job, and NCA is fortunate to find people who are willing to do it as a service activity. Just reading, assigning, copyediting, and proofing manuscripts takes about ten hours a week--week after week--for the three-year period. I'm not complaining though. When I was done with my term, I felt a sense of accomplishment. I did not come to the job with any agenda other than publishing the very best work submitted to the journal that fit its mission. I also tried to consider and publish some nontraditional work and some that was innovative. Since I had gained so much from research in the field, I felt that appointment to editorship of *QJS* was the highest honor I could have received. I am still humbled by the realization that I had an opportunity to serve the discipline in this way.

The chairship of my department was a different matter. The term here is five years, and it was a long five years! As some of you may recall, our department was targeted for elimination in 1994-95 because of a budgetary crisis. After an impressive campaign to save ourselves and with the support of colleagues throughout the discipline and people in the Seattle community, we survived. Becoming chair after this experience, however, was a challenge. After realizing that their action to place our department on a "hit list" had been ill advised, the University administration moved to contain the harm it had caused. We were authorized to fill three positions, and we were granted other resources and support, but the damage that had been done to our graduate students and the task of restoring the confidence of undergraduates in our program made the situation difficult. I worked intensely and the department faculty was very supportive, but I surely made my share of mistakes and errors in judgment. Administration is hard work, and the room for error and missteps is large. I was relieved to turn the job over to Gerry Philipsen, who has done wonderfully well since I left it!

As I reflect on all this, I wonder what will happen next in the discipline. I do know that the study and understanding of communication is vital when there is so much at stake. The future holds so many challenges for our students and our society. These include the risk of global war, uncontrolled technological development, environmental degradation, and many other matters affecting public policy. As someone whose career has been devoted to the teaching and study of public argument, I hope that our discipline's contributions the study of communication's vital role in society will continue to be cultivated and developed. The humanities and social sciences stand in the shadow of the sciences when it comes to resource allocation and prestige. Whether it relates to the quality of our research and teaching or to institutional politics, we should, I think, all work to preserve and extend our discipline's work in the 21st century. I hope I have made some small contribution to that effort.