

**Oral History Interview with Dr. Kathleen Tudor**  
**Conducted by Angela Baker, June 21, 1993**  
Transcription by Curtis Dray, February 19, 2000

Position: Assistant Professor, English (1971-75), Associate Professor, English (1975-86), Professor, English (1986-90), Professor Emeritus, English (1991-01); Board of Governors (1974-76), Senate (1979-81, 1986-87).

Dates associated with Saint Mary's: 1970-2005

Scope and Content: Major topics include: changes in the English Department, changes in student enrollment and population, unionization of Faculty.

Transcript:

AB: Let's start with just a little bit of background information. Could you state your full name?

KT: Kathleen Kinsman Richardson Tudor.

AB: And your date and place of birth?

KT: I was born right here in Shelburne County, Pleasant Point, this house, on February 7, 1925.

AB: Could you describe your educational background?

KT: Yeah. First ten years in a one-room school, two miles away from here. And then I went to high school, grade 11 in Lockport. Then I went into the service for 2 years, 1943 to 45. That's how I got money enough to go to university 'cause I'm a fisherman's daughter...one of a family of ten. And in the forty's when you come from a middle-class family, the chances of going to university are pretty slim. But that gave me the opportunity. They had a system whereby people when they came out of the service could choose to go to university if they wanted to. So I did. So I went up to Montreal and went to Sir George Williams, which is now Concordia. Got my BA and an honours in English. Then my husband and I went to teacher's college at Macdonald College, which is a college of McGill University out in Saint Anne-de-Beau...I was going to say Saint Anne-de-Beaupre...Saint Anne-de-Bellevue. And then I taught...Bruce and I taught for, I think it added up to thirteen or fourteen years - a lot of it outside Montreal - on the south shore of Montreal. I spent two years in England with the family and taught in a school in [ ] in England, came back and taught some more, had some kids and taught some more and then got my MA, by studying part-time at the University of Montreal. I got my MA in '66, I think it was. And then we all moved to Toronto 'cause I had a daughter at the National

Ballet School. So I enrolled for a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto and got it in 1972. In the meantime, in 1970, I was appointed as an assistant professor at St. Mary's in the English Department. So that's it.

AB: O.K. So, you were assistant professor at St. Mary's in 1970.

KT: Yeah.

AB: How did your position change over the years?

KT: How did my position change? Well, there's a sort of method of moving people along as long as you meet the various criteria, and I did, barely, along the way...they were never very happy about me, I think. So, I came as an assistant professor and so the first thing is to...that's probationary, I think. Seems to me it was a two-year period. And then you go for tenure and then you go for promotion to associate professor and then you go...and I'm not sure if I've got the order absolutely correct there. And after you're associate professor for a certain period of time then you try for full professor and I got them all. And, then when I retired I was made professor emeritus. So that...I was actually the first female professor emeritus at St. Mary's. And I sort of think now I was the first non-Catholic professor emeritus too. No, you sort of begin to think when you look at the list, they're all men and they're all good members of the Catholic Church and Catholic community and this atheistic female had suddenly been made professor emeritus. So that's a bit of history right there. And...that was it. I can't remember what I was going to say [] but...

AB: So what have your research interests been over the years?

KT: Well, I think that was one of the reasons they didn't like me very much sometimes; that is the review committees. I think people generally liked me well enough but review committees for professors are very peculiar things, where they check off your at-least number of articles and you've-got-it-in lists, in this magazine and you've got this speech that you've given and you've got this talk and the talk has been given at this prestigious university and so on. I was not interested in most of that sort of thing at all. I did the very minimum of that sort of thing. However, my main research area, my main interests tended to be around the...especially one person that I did my Ph.D. research thesis on. Her name was Dorothy Richardson. She was an obscure British writer, publishing in the first part of the twentieth century, very, very popular somewhere around 1915 to 1925 or so. And she was one of three people on whom I did my Ph.D., the title of which was "The Androgynous Mind in the Works of [Lois] Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson. So I continue to do a fair amount of research on Dorothy Richardson. I went down to Yale University, which handles her papers, a couple of times and looked

through her papers and wrote up articles and stuff of that sort. And I went to Wyoming University to give a talk on Introductory English. I was usually involved with people who were trying to improve the way in which Introductory English was taught or the way in which it was presented or things of this sort. So there was a quite well known annual conference that was held at the University of Wyoming for that kind of subject. So I presented a paper there and in the meantime [I did] daytime travelling around the United States at that time. But generally my research interests were there.

Now, I began to switch in 1980 because I've always done a certain amount of writing and always been active in the writer's movements and writers' federation. I chaired a committee of a...universities that brought in speakers with the help of the Canada Council. So I met a lot of writers from across Canada. And somewhere about 1979, '80, I decided we needed a creative writing course at St. Mary's. None had been given as credit courses. It was possible perhaps to do it extramurally but not as a credit course. So I started out with just a special subject course which...and people wrote for me. I had two or three students. And then finally I got two half courses, credit courses, introduced into the department and that was a bit of a change because an English department tends to be quite conservative about the courses it accepts and if you don't have Medieval and Renaissance and Restoration and Victorian and, you don't have all these, you know, and how do you get them all in when you have a small department and so on and so on. So there was a certain resistance to having things like Creative Writing as a credit course and Women's Literature as a credit course. Even, we had a bit of a struggle, I think, to get Canadian Literature accepted and it was very much an English-oriented or even American-oriented department and so it was a bit special to be able to get a credit course in Creative Writing. So we had two half courses and then we went to another advanced full course; it was a 400 course. And then we went to a half course in writing plays and a half course in writing poetry and in the meantime, you could get your minor in Creative Writing. So essentially with a couple of colleagues who taught those courses or with professionals from the community...I pretty well ran...unofficially...there was no department of Creative Writing or anything of that sort but I was certainly in charge of that whole business. And one of the things that was perhaps a bit innovative in that way was that I felt that although we had...because we had an academic program that had to have a status as far as students were concerned...you know, going out into other universities and so on. Therefore, we had to have Ph.D.s teaching our creative writing courses.

At the same time, I thought it was important to have at least one course that would be taught by professionals who might not even have BAs because they were writers. So I did. The half course in poetry and the half course in drama were taught by people, I and the university agreed to, were invited in from the community. And they were always well known people from the writing community, like Harry Thurston, who was a well-known

publisher and George Elliot Clarke. I don't know, a whole number of them...and...I'm trying to think of Mary's name...Mary [Bigault]...that's not the right name. I hope you can scratch out mistakes and correct them...I've forgotten how she pronounced her last name. But, you know, well-known people either in playwriting, play producing, poetry writing, writing in general and so on and that was very exciting actually. And when I left, in 1990, they hired somebody specifically with a creative writing background, which would not have happened 10 years before. So Brian Bartlett who came to replace me, amusingly from Concordia University, was already a published poet and he has another book out now and so it seems to be safely established as a part of the English Department.

AB: So, what other changes did you see in the development of the English Department while you were there?

KT: Oh, I think the ones I've just mentioned perhaps in a way. I think when I came in 1970, it was a very orthodox department as far as the offerings were concerned: a sort of standard. English courses that I remembered as an undergraduate, anything I taught, Victorian novel for example and we each taught introductory English which was a little bit different from...now that's changed. That's changed mostly since I left. When I went, Introductory English...every one of us on the staff had to teach two sections of Introductory English and then we taught our specialty. And we worked hard over that course. We had a use-of-English exam which students had to pass; they might pass the course but they didn't pass the use-of-English exam...they couldn't...they had to pass it before they could graduate. Somebody...some of them would be in their fourth year and still hadn't passed their... Or their last year and we put an awful lot of time and effort into that. We were unique among universities in that we demanded an English course, no matter which faculty you were in, whether it was science or commerce or arts; arts obviously is required in any university but not necessarily commerce or science. We always had a struggle with it because two-thirds of each professor's work went to that course. So that meant it was very hard to offer as wide a number of courses because professors just didn't have the time, you know. And, so that was a worry and we were always working on it and always trying to figure it out. And then when computers came in, they introduced computer English courses and now perhaps a third of them are that way and that alleviated the load in some ways. But in addition to that now, they have changed the requirement or the descriptions of these Introductory English. I think it's still required but it's a different kind of course and the best thing for you to do there is to go to the people who are teaching it now. My last year was the last year in which we had the old English 200 so I haven't really taught under the new system. As I understand it, one half the year now is composition, the other half the year is literature.

AB: Yes

KT: Yeah. Ok, so you see that that's different from when I was there. Now, I would say then, starting off with saying that it was a more orthodox department when I came in 1970. When I came, at the same time, Cyril Byrne came whom you may have met and Ken MacKinnon came, and in fact I think they were instrumental in getting me my job. We met doing our PhDs in Toronto and Ken was from Prince Edward Island and Cyril was from Newfoundland and I was from Nova Scotia and we immediately felt comfortable with each other. And so all of a sudden you had not only us three but three others who moved in. You had others with Canadian backgrounds who moved into the department because a fair amount of hiring took place in that early part when it changed from being a boy's college to becoming a coeducational college. And, so, people like Ken and Cyril and I were all keen on having English, Canadian courses; Janet Baker – did you get to know Janet? Janet Baker...I don't know...there's no point in my trying to remember every name because when you do that you leave somebody out. But, there were enough of us who were keen to have Canadian courses that began. I know Janet Baker taught some, I taught some. I think people who were non-Canadians by birth like Margaret Harry, also taught Canadian courses. But we began to develop a genuine sort of history of Canadian Literature and then more particular courses in Canadian Literature and so on. So I think that was an important change. And then when Jillian Thomas and Wendy Katts and...yeah, we had a fairly good feminist group in the English Department. I think it was a little bit special perhaps. And that was Margaret Harry, Janet Baker, Wendy Katts, Kay Tudor, Jillian Thomas, Lillian Falk. That wasn't bad when you consider departments in Canadian universities. And, on the whole, a pretty outspoken, lively, determined crew of women. And so little by little, courses of particular interest to women had been introduced and again you can look through your college courses, calendars and you'll see which ones they are. But I think of courses that Jillian gave on...I think she gave one on women's diaries, on autobiography and biography, on...this kind of thing...I can't remember the names of all the courses but that's easy. I think that was an important development in the department. So I suppose in a way from the academic point of view, the development and changes in introductory English, the development of Canadian courses and the development of courses of particular interest perhaps to women and the development of Creative Writing are the four that I would say changed the department, substantially. Some others may think of others, for example, Irish studies, which was separate from the English department but has also been very closely attached to it. I don't know. I may be leaving out something else as important. Can't think of it at the moment.

AB: Ok. There was a large change in the size of the university from '70 to '90. What effect did that have on teaching there?

KT: Oh, well, I guess it had a lot of effects. We had very...we had larger classes...the obvious ones. Start out with classes of 20 and end up with classes of 35, 40, some even in Introductory English. So, sure, it's not good. It means you have less time to spend with the individual students. It means weak students don't get nearly as much help as they need, as much attention as they need. It means you feel frustrated a lot of the time because you know you can't handle that kind of marking and the difference between the way you mark a paper for a class of 20 and where you mark one when you've got 50 or 60 to mark is quite obvious. You simply can't spend that amount of time on it; you can't interview students to the same extent. And very often the facilities were designed for classes of 30 or 40 and suddenly... I remember hearing students, perhaps the English department wasn't as badly affected as some like Introductory Psychology in which the students often told me that in theatre A or theatre B they would be sitting down in the walkways and the aisles, you know. And the students, of course, feel marginalized, the professors don't get to know them, they can leave class or skip class and nobody notices and there's a tendency, not in English I don't think, but in some courses to turn out objective exams instead of written ones. And, you know, I think there are all sorts of negative results and it's a pity in a way because one of the really attractive things about St. Mary's as compared with, say Dalhousie, is that we did have small classes and that we did get to know many of our students quite well and so on and so on. Yeah, yeah, that's not good. That's when you've got a government and series of governments that don't give a goddamn about education and they spend their money on high tech industries that pull out within 6 months of giving them 10 million.

AB: Yeah.

KT: So, there's no question to me that there's a connection between what is seen as a priority in our society and what isn't. And what's happening is less and less money is being spent on universities, the overcrowding is getting worse and worse, the tuition is getting higher and higher and more and more they will become elitist institutions because only people who have money will be able to afford to go to them. And this whole period which was quite exciting, beginning somewhere in the 70's, I guess, in which a lot of kids from places like Lockport could go to university from the 70's and then into the 80's, you know, that'll be cut off. You can't go to university if your parents are on unemployment insurance or on welfare and that's what's happening. So it's rotten.

AB: Yeah.

KT: Don't get me going on that one. I was the NDP candidate for Shelburne County in the most recent election so you can imagine what my view is on this kind of thing. But I don't [unclear] these kinds of problems are somehow or other magic. You know, they are

directly related to our industrial setup, our employment setup, our financial setup. I don't share with the present governments', even with Bob Ray's in Ontario, that the way to...that a) you have to cut down on the deficit or b) the way to do it is on the most vulnerable people in society. And it seems to me to prevent people from going to university is to perpetuate a system of unemployment or underemployment, of frustration, of ill-health, of all the things that attends when people aren't working to their fulfillment. So, it's a major problem. So you didn't expect a whole lecture, did you, from a simple question?

AB: No. Well, what other changes did you notice in the student populations over the 20 years, in terms of a ethnic origin or age?

KT: Well, I don't know. Twenty years is an awfully long time, in a sense, you know. It certainly seems to me that we had a lot of Chinese students, for example, through that whole period. Perhaps the numbers increased. I went to China and taught in '82-'83 and certainly when we started that special relationship with China, we had students who came in fairly large numbers, especially into the English Department to do English majors and honours and so on. I think that's a question I can't answer. It seems to me I was always aware of a fairly good ethnic mix at St. Mary's so I expect the only way to pin that down is to go to the Registrar, you know, and do it scientifically. It doesn't seem to me that there was a tremendous difference towards the end because it seemed to me, we always had a fair number of foreign students and so on. And in fact if anything it was lessening at the end because I think the fees were doubling or something like that for non-Canadian, foreign students. So I guess that's one of the things I always liked about St. Mary's and perhaps also because it was sort of smallish. If there were students from other countries, again you probably had some chance to get to know them and to talk to them and meet them and so on. So, I don't think I can answer that question very well. I think it was pretty good that way but...

AB: Right...

KT: It's a statistical question in a way I guess.

AB: Yeah, Yeah, just your perceptions.

KT: Yeah, just my perception.

AB: How 'bout the age of students? Do you have any...?

KT: The what?

AB: The age of students...do you think that changed at all?

KT: You mean did we have a whole spectrum as far as age was concerned? Or do...

AB: Or do you feel that the students get older or just more mature students or anything like that?

KT: At St. Mary's? Oh, I don't know. We certainly had a lot of students, what we called mature students and of course, mature students. I remember my last teaching year...yeah, I think it was...a guy who's really become a good friend of mine was sitting in the front row...now how in the hell did it come up, I can't remember and...Gordon...I said something about just out of high school or something like that, sort of addressing the general student population and he put up his hand and he said 'I'm a mature student!' and I laughed. I couldn't help laughing because he looked anything but a mature student, ya know. He looked very young and boyish. Well, he was I think 23, 24 years old but he was a mature student technically in that he had left school and I guess hadn't completed the requirements and registered at St. Mary's as a mature student. He turned out to be my best student, by the way. He's a great writer. He's doing his MA or Ph.D., I'm not sure which, at Concordia now and he's a great wri...he's a great kid and he's the joy of my last life and last year of working at St. Mary's. But that always amused me. So, you have some mature students, quote/unquote, who are you know, anything over, whatever it is, 21, 22, I forget what it is and some who are quite elderly. I had one one year I remember a man who was in his seventies - it seems to me that he died the year after or something like that - had a number of women in their 30s and 40s with children and so on. Still, predominantly, I would say we get a typical student body of 18-19 year olds, I think. Again that's a perception. I may be wrong about that.

AB: Ok. Now, around the time you got there, the school was becoming secular. What affect do you think that had on the institution?

KT: Well, it didn't have much of an effect on me. I remember very well that when I had the opportunity to go to St. Mary's, the first thing I said was 'look, I'm atheist. I'm a Protestant atheist, at the very worst, you know. In fact, I barely consider myself Christian, you know. I have no religious affiliations. I sort of had that cultural background 'cause I was brought up here, went to church, went to Sunday school when I was a kid and so on. This is a very Protestant part of Nova Scotia. There was small Catholic Church in Lockport. But it's very homogeneous in both ethnic and religious background. But anyway, I'm not anti any religion. I'm just not religious myself. Somewhere around 18, 19 when I was in college...no, before I went to college...I just...seemed meaningless to me...all this supernatural stuff. So I made that clear. I'm an atheist. I'm coming to a Catholic university. Do you think that's ok? Didn't bother whoever hired me. They didn't care.



And so, in a sense, I have not been a part of the religious side of the university and it was never a problem for me. There were times when I...certainly I would prefer a completely secular university. It doesn't seem any good reason to me for the continued attachment to the Catholic Church. But because I am completely outside that Catholic community, it may be meaningful for some students. It may even be meaningful for some faculty. There's no question it must have had a fair effect on the university because when I first went there we had one priest in our department, Father Power who was a very sweet man who died of cancer in the mid-70s, I guess and there was a professor of Chemistry, a father and there was a... maybe there's still a father in the Physics department. You know, there were maybe 8 or 10 of them around. In fact, just before I came, the President was a priest: Father...oh, I've forgotten his name. So obviously, just the sort of disappearance of these religious figures...Jesuits...has had some influence. But to me it was always a secular college. I was never...it never mattered to me. I never had any...I mean we didn't have a situation where they demanded prayers or anything of that sort. So, from my point of view, it really didn't have much effect unless I looked at things like the Constitution or the financial setup where certain monies came from the community, the Catholic community and these things, as far as I was concerned. I'm not aware that it was anything but a secular university while I was teaching there.

AB: Ok, what effect did unionization of the faculty have on its []?

KT: Oh yeah, that was one of the most important things that happened and I was very involved in that being a socialist and what not. Well, it all began and you've probably heard the story before, have you?

AB: I'm not sure.

KT: You're not sure. You're being a crafty interviewer, are you? Well, it's just that I'm not sure how far back to go but the fact was that Carrigan became the President of St. Mary's, I think...

AB: 70.

KT: 1971? Or was it 70?

AB: 70, I believe.

KT: 70. Ok, the year I came there then. And, we had a lot of problems. There was a lot of unhappiness about his presidency. We felt that his management was arbitrary; people were appointed, people were fired, people were advanced, salaries were given out, these kinds of

things. All this business of dealing with the university, we felt, in spite of the various committees that there were and so on, were too arbitrary and that the professors should have more control over all these aspects of their careers. And there was a lot. It was a very, very political time. It came to a point where we were almost in agreement that he would consider the [faculty]...what'd they call it? Voluntary Association? Voluntary something. I forget what it's called but in a sense, it was a non-union situation. You weren't actually affiliated with any union but he would look at the faculty as being a unit with whom he'd have to deal. He turned that down and so the only move left open to the faculty then was to go for a union. The union that I and some of my friends and colleagues favoured was the Canadian Union of Public Employees, known as CUPE. The group that was less left wing went for the Canadian Association of University Teachers, C-A-U-T or CAUT. But then, there were a whole number...well, not a whole number, a fair number of professors who just loathed the idea of unionized faculty; 'we're not workers, we're not truck drivers.' They'd always bring in some extreme, American union as an example of what would happen. 'We'd all be carrying guns around and going out on strike every two minutes' and all this sort of thing. They just didn't want anything to do with it. So it settled down to CAUT bringing in its organizers and CUPE bringing in its organizers and each of them trying to get enough votes to become the bargaining unit for the university. You're probably aware of how all this works. It's a legal process. A vote has to be taken and you have to go before a legal committee and so on. So, it was a very interesting period with trying to recruit for your side and so on and so on: very, very interesting. And finally, the time came for the vote, which was supervised and CUPE lost out to CAUT by roughly 15 votes as I recall. And we figured that those 15 votes were the people who didn't want any union at all and they were so scared of having CUPE that they voted for CAUT. So CAUT became our bargaining unit. And it was, I think, a very good move whether it'd been CUPE or CAUT. The union brought peace to the community. Dr. Carrigan didn't continue as president; I forget how long he was with the union, whether it was any time at all. Who was the next president?

AB: I think the current Mr. Ozmon.

KT: Who?

AB: I think Dr. Ozmon, that's [currently there].

KT: Did he come right after Carrigan? So he's been there a hell of a long time then. Anyway, what happened after that was that you had collective bargaining and things like promotion and tenure and all these kinds of things that effect faculty were handled by a collective bargaining committee made up of university professors who were elected and the people representing the administration. So, it became much more civilized and much fairer on the

whole and there were more ways of challenging the conclusions that were come to and in effect, St. Mary's was one of the first ones to unionize in Canada in that kind of very formal, legalistic way. There were sort of loose associations but this was under the Department of Labour. I think there were one or two other universities at that time who unionized but we were certainly right in the forefront of that movement which is become general since then. There's hardly a university now that doesn't have a union, usually through CAUT. In fact, maybe always through CAUT, I'm not sure. And the result was, as I say, a much more peaceful, well-regulated university and a much less arbitrary one as far as the power of the president were concerned. And I think it was a good thing. I would have preferred CUPE but it's not been a bad union; it's been a pretty good one, I think. Pretty democratic on the whole and pretty...it's handled things fairly well. A couple of times we took a strike vote because collective bargaining just seemed to be breaking down but at the last minute we always seemed to be able to pull it off so that unlike Mount St. Vincent, Dalhousie, Acadia, I think...or was it Mount Allison, Mount Allison maybe...they've all had short strikes and [merry] St. Mary's never did have to actually go out on strike. So I think it could say something for the fact that it was a good union and was fairly strong and so on. You'll hear lots of talk about that at the History of the University.

AB: Well, that's about all the areas I wanted to cover. Can you think of any other changes or events over time that stand out in your mind?

KT: Any other changes? Oh, I don't know, I suppose one of the important changes was a no smoking. That sounds like a strange thing to say but I was a smoker when I went in 1970 and...God, it's just horrifying to me now to think of it, you know. The students were smoking in classrooms, the teachers were smoking in the classroom and we had those new buildings; what we called Edmund's Erections. Have you heard them called that?

AB: No.

KT: You don't know that story, eh? Well, Edmund Morris was one of the vice presidents in charge of property I guess they call it. You've heard his name is in the paper a lot these days. And it was he who put up Loyola...I mean, he was responsible for getting Loyola Tower...of course it's this phallic building that was always known as Edmund's Erection. Where was I? What was I...oh, I was saying about smoking...and of course in that new building they put down carpets throughout and gosh it was just terrible. By the end of the school year, there were just burnt holes. It was like a polkadot carpets all over the place: all the filth of the smoking. And in the...I don't know at what point...I stopped smoking in 1978. So somewhere after that they began to change the rules and it's just a cleaner, better...it's just horrible to think of what it was like before, you know. It's so much nicer

without that. Ah, what else? Well, we had the new library, I think has been very important. I think the International Education Center has been a very important adjunct to the university. I could do without the Tower. I think the Tower and the artificial turf and all that stuff...I was against it because it cost millions of dollars and anytime now, I think it must be about time, maybe it's already been done because I was one of the faculty representatives on the committee at the time. The whole thing has to be taken up after 12 years or something.

AB: Last year they did it.

KT: That was another couple o' million dollars. Now somebody may somewhere along the line argue that because they get teams coming in there and all. I have my doubts. I'd rather see...you know, I don't see why you can't have a much more modest sports program. I think it's unfortunate that male sport is emphasized so much. You know, the big hockey teams, the big football teams. Female sport is very underrated, underfunded I'm sure. I mean, that's my feeling. I may be wrong but I don't think I am. What else? For me, it was very exciting having the exchange with China and I think there've been exchanges with other foreign countries that have been interesting as well for St. Mary's. I think those are some of the things. I loved teaching at St. Mary's. I was very, very happy there. Liked my work, liked the people I worked with on the whole. I think the English Department was a very good department. We got along pretty well. We had some hot and heavy quarrels but mostly we got along pretty well. I mean, some departments are really at each others...literally at each others throats. It's just amazing that educated men and women can behave this way. But the English Department was pretty good. There was a lot of very conscientious...we were the biggest department perhaps until very recently that are...when we had most people...then this business of attrition began somewhere in the 70s but at our...we had about 18 full time people as I recall in say the mid-70s and then as people left or retired, they weren't replaced and then we had a lot of part time people who were hired for Introductory English and things of that sort. But I think we had a very good, interesting, dedicated Department of English on the whole.

AB: Ok, that's great.