

Marvel "Kay" Mansfield

*Marvel Mansfield: Reflections on James C. Scott and
the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University*

The Yale Agrarian Studies Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by
Todd Holmes
in 2019

This project was generously supported by the following organizations at Yale University:

Dean's Office, Faculty of Arts and Sciences
The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies
The InterAsia Initiative
Council on Southeast Asia Studies
Program in Agrarian Studies

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Marvel "Kay" Mansfield, "Marvel Mansfield: Reflections on James C. Scott and the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University" conducted by Todd Holmes in 2019, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2021.



Marvel "Kay" Mansfield

Abstract

Marvel "Kay" Mansfield was the founding program coordinator for the Agrarian Studies Program at Yale University. For nearly two decades, she served as the program's chief administrator, in-house editor, and mother hen to the postdoctoral fellows who called Agrarian Studies home each year. Ultimately, this fraternity of *agraristas* came to number 158 and hail from 38 countries during her tenure. In this interview, Mansfield discusses meeting James C. Scott and working with him at the Southeast Asia Council; the creation and setup of the Agrarian Studies Program; memorable events in the program's history; and reflections on her experience with Scott and program fellows over the years.

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Project history

By Todd Holmes
November 25, 2020
Berkeley, California

Since its inception in 1953, the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley has been responsible for compiling one of the largest and most widely used oral history collections in the country. The interviewees within this vast collection include many of the nation's high-profile citizens, ranging from senators and governors to artists, actors, and industrialists. And standing among this distinguished list is an equally impressive group of scholars. As a research unit based at UC Berkeley, the Oral History Center (OHC) has long gained rare access to the academy and ultimately built one of the richest oral history collections on higher education and intellectual history. Interviews with Nobel laureates and university presidents fill this collection, as do those with leading scientists and pioneering faculty of color. In recent years, the OHC has sought to further expand this interview collection with ambitious projects on University of Chicago economists and the founding generation of Chicana/o studies. Thus, a project on the famed Yale University political scientist, James C. Scott, and his equally renowned Program in Agrarian Studies stood as an obvious choice in these efforts and a fitting addition to the Bancroft collection. The result was the Yale Agrarian Studies Oral History Project, a two-part series featuring the life history of Jim Scott and short interviews with nearly twenty affiliates of the Yale Agrarian Studies Program.

Part I of the series, "James C. Scott: Agrarian Studies and Over 50 Years of Pioneering Work in the Social Sciences," was released in September 2020, marking Jim's final year at Yale and the thirtieth year of the Program in Agrarian Studies. This collection of interviews with program affiliates represents Part II of the project, aptly titled, "Reflections on James C. Scott and the Agrarian Studies Program." Here affiliates relate their experience with Jim and the program, helping to document the history and impact of Agrarian Studies, as well as offer future generations a glimpse at the scholar who shaped it. As Scott himself described their approach:

This is a sort of sermon I give actually, which is, you know how the health food people say, "You are what you eat"? Well, you are what you read. And if we can encourage students to read things broadly in several disciplines bearing on their interests, and force them, as we do in the Agrarian Studies Program, to make sense across disciplinary boundaries and leave behind their esoteric vocabularies of their own little discipline; if you're reading across disciplines, if you have friends across disciplines, you're going to be an interdisciplinary scholar. . . . So, you are what you read and you are who your intellectual companions are, and if we can change that . . . we can at least make a step toward real interdisciplinary work.

For the last three decades, this interdisciplinary spirit has made the rooms of the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University one of the most exciting intellectual ecosystems in the academy. For both the humanities and social sciences, the program has served as a haven for heterodoxy, where casting aside boundaries and going against the grain not only proved to be the norm but a rite of passage. Officially founded by Jim Scott and collaborators in the fall of 1991,

the program brought a critical and interdisciplinary lens to the everyday experience of rural societies. With the world as its intellectual playground and the sweep of history as its scope, the Program in Agrarian Studies became *the* place for cutting-edge research. Anthropologists, historians, and political scientists filled the rooms of the weekly colloquium, as did sociologists, activists, and real-life farmers. The topics of discussion stood just as diverse. From peasant revolts in France and ancient Roman cuisine to dam-building in India and the industrial foodways of American agribusiness, nearly any topic of interest found a place within the big tent of Agrarian Studies. Few could have realized in the fall of 1991 that the newly minted program would not only last thirty years but also come to shape over two generations of scholarship and redefine the notion of interdisciplinary work.

The interviews included in this volume take stock of the program's history and achievements. They discuss how the team-taught graduate seminar, Agrarian Societies, proved the springboard for the program when first offered in 1990. The unprecedented student turnout for the course revealed an unfeigned appetite for such topics to Jim and collaborating faculty. To this day, the course continues to consistently boast the largest student enrollment of any graduate seminar at Yale. The interviews also offer highlights of the program's renowned Friday colloquium, a weekly forum that for over three decades has hosted leading scholars from around the world. Here cutting-edge research is presented to the group in a format that would become as famed as the program's founder. Unlike the typical academic lecture series, presenters at Agrarian Studies were asked to pre-circulate their papers, and after a brief framing and introduction, sit silently while the group discussed. After an hour, the author would then be "ungagged" and join the discussion, directing their responses to whatever they deemed most interesting and relevant. To be sure, it was a format that fostered vibrant intellectual exchange, one that often proved to be fruitful for authors and attendees alike. In his oral history, Jim Scott recounts how his adoption of the colloquium format was based on the Women's Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin, where he taught between 1967 and 1976. And if imitation is the best flattery, it should be noted that it was a format well-copied by other colloquia and programs around the world.

As the interviews in this volume also attest, Agrarian Studies was more than just a seminar and colloquium; it was an intellectual community. From Friday lunches to evening potlucks at his farm, Jim Scott understood the bonds that could be built over a good meal and conversation. He not only built this understanding into the program but would also generously open his home to guests and affiliates throughout the year. Longtime affiliates such as Bob Harms, Helen Siu, Michael Dove, Peter Purdue, and Paul Freedman (just to name a few) also played vital roles in the Agrarian Studies community, creating an environment of friendship that transcended disciplines, generations, and one's academic ranking. So too did the program's ever-growing family of postdoctoral fellows. Cared for by program coordinator—and designated "mother hen"—Kay Mansfield, the fellows created a new group of scholars-in-residence each year that offered both a freshness and stability to the program. This fraternity of *Agraristas* also added to the program's diverse and cosmopolitan nature, with the list of fellows representing nearly 40 countries.

Moreover, it is hoped that these interviews with affiliates provide some measure of the program's impact. In the university environment, where academic programs come and go with the changing seasons of disciplinary trends, Agrarian Studies celebrating thirty years of operation is a clear

testament to its continued contribution and importance. These interviews help bring such attributes into clearer focus, as affiliates detail the program's influence on their own work and careers. In some cases, they even discuss efforts to replicate Agrarian Studies in one form or another at their home institutions. Above all, many affiliates offer their observations on the success of Agrarian Studies, namely how a program on rural societies has remained adaptable, relevant, and popular in an ever-changing academic environment. To do so for a decade is an achievement; to do so for thirty years is nothing short of remarkable.

As a graduate student at Yale, I had the privilege of working for the Agrarian Studies Program for four years. That experience left an indelible mark on me, both intellectually and professionally. It also inspired the idea of using oral history to document and capture intellectual history. Reading the works of James C. Scott is much different than having Jim Scott discuss the aims and struggles of writing those works. Thus, the same could be said for capturing the history and importance of programs like Agrarian Studies. I hope the interviews conducted for the project do justice to that intended goal.

Interview 1: October 31, 2019

01-00:00:02

Holmes:

This is Todd Holmes with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley. Today's date is October 31, 2019, and I have the privilege of sitting down with Kay Mansfield, the longtime program coordinator for the Agrarian Studies Program here at Yale University, and we are here at the Agrarian Studies office on the Yale campus. Kay, thank you so much for taking the time and coming down from Maine. You had worked with the Agrarian Studies Program since its inception, and we definitely want to get all your stories and observations. But before we do, why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you came to work here at Yale.

01-00:00:54

Mansfield:

Okay. I grew up on a dairy farm in upstate New York, one of six children, and, in high school, I was fortunate enough to be selected as an American Field Service exchange student. I spent eight weeks in Germany and was determined to learn German and be able to go back someday and really speak German with my German family. And so, I spent four years in college majoring in German, minoring in Latin, and did go back and actually was able to speak with them. I subsequently taught German in high school in, of all places, Valhalla, New York. I taught Latin also. I stopped teaching when I was pregnant with my son, and moved to New Haven, Connecticut. I did a lot of childcare when my kids were little, so I was not working outside the home. I went back to work when my daughter was in seventh grade.

I was working for YCIAS. At that time it was called the Yale Center for International and Area Studies, or YCIAS. I think it's now the MacMillan Center [Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies]. I worked in the Southeast Asia Council, and that's how I first met Jim Scott. A friend of mine had said, "There's an opening in the Southeast Asia Council. Are you interested?" So Jim interviewed me in the summer of 1983. It was in July, and he came to the interview dressed in barn boots and blue jeans and a denim shirt. I thought, "Hmm, this is familiar. I think I could work for this man." And he said, "How long are you going to stick around? I don't want to train you and have you leave." The job then was running the Southeast Asia Council, which also published a series of monographs on Southeast Asia, and so I became the editor of that series of monographs.

So that was 1983. At that time, I was still working on a typewriter. We didn't yet have computers. We got them at the center—I think there was one that everybody could use and a printer that everybody could use. Jim had gone to a conference in Lake Como, I guess, and came back and wrote a proposal for a program in agrarian studies, which he originally wanted to call "peasant studies." I think Yale convinced him that it should be "agrarian studies." I typed the thing, and I said to myself, "This is going to fly." So I said to Jim, "You're going to get this. What about me?" Because it was a big grant, he

would leave the Council to run it, and I would stay with the Southeast Asia Council. And he said, "Well, you can have any part of it you want." I said, "Oh, goody, I'll take the director's salary, thank you." [laughter]

01-00:04:16

But anyway, I was right, and it did fly. Originally, we were funded by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. I think, if I remember correctly, Ford said they would do—maybe it was Rockefeller—said, "We'll do this big part of it," and whatever was left over, Ford said they would do. The funding came in 1990, and the first seminar was in the fall of 1990. But then I think Jim got his grant from the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, and off he went. And we had all this money, and the program was going to begin, and I'm sitting back here with this first-time computer—I was convinced I could type better on my typewriter than I could on that silly machine—and he's in Berlin. It was a very crude system of sending things. You'd type it and hit send—it was not anywhere near like sending an email these days; it was a big process.

But anyway, he was in Berlin. I was here. We had to set up a search program for fellows. But my biggest job was to find a place on campus for the program. We needed a seminar room that was big enough, and we needed office space for me and office space for all the fellows. So the first place that I was shown was on Hill House Avenue. It wasn't this building, but it was in the lower-level basement, and so my office window looked out on car tires in a parking lot. I just said, "Nope, I'm not going to do that. I want an office where I can see out the window, at least." And so, bless his heart, Joe LaPalombara, professor of political science, who was a buddy of Jim's, said he would give us space in the building, which we subsequently got. That first year, we had five fellows. Do you want me to name names?

01-00:06:48

Holmes:

Sure, if you want, yeah.

01-00:06:52

Mansfield:

The first five fellows were Sugata Bose; Linda Seligmann; Jane Gray, who was from Ireland; Kamal Sheel, who was from Banaras Hindu University in India; and Michael Dove, who was at the East-West Center in Hawaii.

But I have to go back a little bit. We did get the funding, of course, and the whole program began in the fall of 1991. To celebrate all that funding, Jim had a huge party—the first of many—at his farm. I remember, someone had strung lights around the front lawn. There were a lot of people there, and that's the first time that I met Shivi [K. Sivaramakrishnan] and his wife Bala, and their little girls, who were probably five and six. Jim said, "I've got a wonderful assistant for you," and it was Shivi. Shivi was a graduate student in the anthropology department at that point. He was super efficient, helping me set up my files and getting the processes set. Shivi, who started out with me as a graduate student, and, after he got his degree, came back as a program

fellow, and then he came back as a Yale professor. And now he's the co-director of the program, so he's done all parts of the program. He's hugely responsible for the success of it, I would say, and was a huge, huge help to me.

01-00:08:59

You asked about the people, the faculty at Yale who were affiliated with the program. I remember the ones at the beginning who were really super important were Bob Harms, who filled in for Jim when he was on leave a couple of times, he became the director; Bill Kelly; and Helen Siu were the ones that I remember initially. I'm sure that there were others, and there were certainly others who have come in subsequently, but they're the ones that I remember.

Let's see. Oh, you asked me to talk about my role in the program. The program, as you know, has three components: the postdoc program, the colloquium series, and graduate students. For graduate students, whom I dearly loved, and I think for many of them, the program was like a little oasis where they could meet up with people outside of their own departments but who had very similar interests. I think that was highly, highly beneficial to them and also to the program. I can remember many a graduate student sitting in my office saying, "I can't write this thing [the dissertation]." And I would say, "Yes, you can. You never start with the beginning. You start in the middle with a chapter, something that you really know and love, that you've probably already written. Start with that, and you see that you've produced something. Leave the beginning and the end to the end." I remember saying that over and over again. I don't know if that's the way they did it or not, but that to me was letting them know that they really could write that dissertation, and they did.

01-00:11:00

Holmes: Many of them did, yes.

01-00:11:01

Mansfield: Many of them did.

01-00:11:02

Holmes: Let's talk a little bit about the first colloquium, because that's also what is so unique about this program. What do you remember about the first year or two—

01-00:11:17

Mansfield: That first series?

01-00:11:17

Holmes: Yeah.

01-00:11:21

Mansfield: I don't remember the speakers. If I saw the list, I could.

01-00:11:29

Holmes: But does anything stand out in your memory? Was there a buzz on campus, there was a new colloquium starting?

01-00:11:36

Mansfield: I don't remember that at all. There may well have been. There certainly was later on, as we became more and more successful, but I don't remember in the beginning. Could well have been.

Anyway, there are three components—the graduate students, the colloquium series, and the postdocs—the colloquium series was set up by Jim and Shivi. They invited speakers, and my job for that part of it was to make all the arrangements for the speakers coming in, their honoraria, their travel, and their accommodations. We always had a dinner after the colloquium; my responsibility was to make the arrangements with a restaurant and invite the guests who were going to be there. That was my part in the colloquium itself.

I went to all of the colloquia. Maybe once I said something, but I really didn't. I used to tell the graduate students, "Speak up in the colloquium. It's good for you," and they did. But the best part for them was that Jim very, very often chose a graduate student to be the commentator for the colloquium, which was a really nice job for them to do because they could really shine. Some of them did it more than once. Faculty members also served as commentators, but graduate students really relished being chosen for that job, and they did very, very well at it.

I really think that I saw my part of the program as being the "mother hen" to the postdocs. I soon learned that if they were happy, if they had a nice office with the facilities that they needed—a working computer, a printer, quiet—they could produce. And the more comfortable I could make it for them, the better. I mean, they were there to write a book. I saw it as my job to make it so they could do that. That was in the office during the day, but I also very often invited them to my home for a dinner. Vegetarian chili was often on the menu, and a fire in the fireplace and just sitting around. It was a home away from home for them. So I did that, and also, I was known to take them shopping. I remember one year there were two young men who needed bedsheets. I can't remember where I took them, but one of them bought low-thread-count, cheap cotton sheets. The other one bought satin sheets, and we knew what he was preparing for. I chuckled about that.

01-00:15:08

One year I found a home for one family—a husband and wife and two children. They rented a house actually quite near me. They were able to spend Thanksgiving with me. One other fellow came from Africa, and I guess midsemester, mid-term, his wife and family were coming, too—I think three children. He was in a one-room apartment, and so we scrambled and we found an apartment for his entire family. We all got together, we got dishes, we got

bed linens, towels, a crib for the baby; we furnished this whole apartment for this African family when they arrived.

Some of the post docs came as single people, but some of them came with children, so then there was the problem of getting the children into the New Haven school system. So we'd go to the board of education and make sure that they had all their paperwork and could get their kids into a school nearby. My biggest success was getting a young girl from Bangladesh into Hopkins, which is where my kids had gone to school. I went to the headmaster, and I said, "When was the last time you had a Bangladeshi student in this school?" Well, of course, never. So I convinced him that he should take this young woman; they gave her a full scholarship, and she went to Hopkins during her father's fellowship year here. So I was very proud of being able to do that.

When Jim and Shivi were setting up the colloquia series, I would often say, "Bring in more women. You don't want a whole series of men." There were usually a lot of women in the series. Also, in the beginning, there were more men postdocs than women, and I remember one year one of them said, "Wouldn't it be nice if instead of five men and one woman, we had five women and one man?" Toward the end of my tenure, that was exactly what happened; we had one man and all the rest were women. So that was a little success story too.

01-00:17:48
Holmes:

Kay, how did you view the fellows program here at Yale? You worked here on campus for a number of decades—how did you see the postdocs of Agrarian Studies differ from other postdoc programs on campus?

01-00:18:09
Mansfield:

Well, I know that the other programs that were affiliated with the MacMillan Center and had postdocs would say to me, "Oh, you baby your postdocs too much. You do too much for them. You treat them too well. They're spoiled." I think that our fellows were happy and I think that I was a part of that, because if they had what they needed, they could write and they could do what they came to Yale to do. So I think there was a bit of jealousy with our program because others said I babied the fellows too much, but that's what I thought I was there to do, and that's what I did.

As I said, there were—how many years?—twenty years we're talking, I counted 158 postdocs and fellows, and I can't name all of them because I would surely leave somebody out. But I will say that I think every single year we had at least one postdoc from South Asia, and some years we had more than one, and what was fun for me was that they would have contests to see who could cook the best Indian meal for me. So I became very accustomed to fabulous Indian home cooking—so spoiled that I couldn't go to a restaurant and get the same tastes that I got from these fellows. There was never really a winner in the competition; I just let them all think that they had done the best.

We had one couple who came when the wife was pregnant, and the baby was born at Yale New Haven Hospital. I was slipped in after hours. They told the nurses that I was the grandmother of the baby, except this was a South Asian couple, so I don't think I looked like the grandmother! But anyway, that baby slept in the cherry, spindle cradle that my kids had slept in. And she's now in college, graduated.

01-00:20:28

Another fellow came to me soon after the term had begun and told me that his mother had had a stroke back in Moscow, and what should he do? I said, "Well, of course you're going to go see your mom." So I made the arrangements for the plane tickets and everything and he went home to see his mother. So it's sort of a jack-of-all trades kind of job; you did whatever needed to be done.

Early on, when we were still in this first building that Joe LaPalombara had given us, one of the postdoc offices was in the lower level, and two people had to share an office. One left after the first semester. At that time, each person had a toll authorization number for making long-distance calls so I could tell who made the calls and how much they cost. After this fellow left, there continued to be long-distance calls on his number. I thought, that's really bizarre. Why is this happening? So I asked his officemate, "Why are we still getting calls on this number?" Well, the first fellow had given the toll authorization number to the second one so he wouldn't have to spend his telephone allotment. [laughter] So I said, "Okay, guys, that's going to go down in my memoirs of you trying to cheat the system." But I found them out and we laughed heartily about that.

There was another fellow—who shall remain nameless—who took a siesta every afternoon after lunch, so I knew never to go to his office after lunch because he was having his siesta.

01-00:22:21

Another fellow who was an emerita professor of English became a good friend. She told me, "Of course I knew I would get a fellowship; I knew I would get into your program, because I know how to write a grant that's successful." And she did, of course; she was very successful with that.

Every year there were people who came to Yale with their own funding, and they would ask Jim if they could affiliate and bring their own money. And Yale permitted that. They had a different title. But I really didn't like it because it meant more work for me. Sometimes they didn't speak the language, and that was also more work for me. I would say to Jim, "You know, make sure they speak the language before you tell them that they can come." Well, anyway, one man affiliated, and his wife had a baby while they were here. The little boy was born, and the father asked Jim to suggest a name for the baby. So Jim said, "Name him Hector." So the man said, "I'm naming the baby Hector. He was a warrior. It's a good name. And his middle name is Kay!"

01-00:23:57

Holmes: Oh, wow. [laughter]

01-00:23:58

Mansfield: So we have Hector Kay, who is a Chinese baby. [laughter] My daughter thinks that's a very good story. What else? I mean, there are so many stories because there are so many postdocs.

01-00:24:28

Holmes: Maybe some memorable events throughout the program.

01-00:24:30

Mansfield: Events that happened. The first ones that I think of have to do with the colloquia. And of course we had many, many, many wonderful speakers, but there were some standouts. One in particular: Teodor Shanin from Russia. He either came into DC or he came into New York, I don't remember which, but Teodor got on the wrong flight and he ended up in Burlington, Vermont, instead of New Haven, Connecticut. So we had to figure out how to get him down here. He took a cab from Vermont to New Haven for his colloquium, but he showed up on time and gave his colloquium.

01-00:25:16

Holmes: Oh, wow. [laughter]

01-00:25:17

Mansfield: Yes. And then there was Alice Waters, she of Chez Panisse. I think her daughter was in Berkeley College here, and Jim got to know her through that. So Alice Waters was invited to give a colloquium. Well, of course, because everybody knew Alice Waters, we had to change the venue because we knew we would get people other than our regulars who came to our colloquium room. So we scrambled and found a bigger venue so that people could bask in reflected glory of being with Alice Waters. And for the dinner after Alice Waters' colloquium, we did not go to a restaurant as we usually did, because Professor Scott was going to cook for her, of course. I was hoping he would make his famous leg of lamb, which is fabulous. He didn't. I don't remember what he served, but he didn't serve the leg of lamb. She praised his cooking and said it was great. And not to be outdone by having invited Alice Waters, he then invited René Redzepi of Noma, the best restaurant in the world, in Copenhagen. Jim had eaten there. So Redzepi comes, and I'm thinking, "Oh, here again is this big name; we have to get another venue, all of this." And is Professor Scott going to cook for Redzepi? Uh-uh. He didn't. We went to—it was a Japanese restaurant. Do you know what it would have been?

01-00:27:10

Holmes: It may have been Miya's, Miya's Sushi?

01-00:27:15

Mansfield: I can't remember, but the chef there foraged for food for his menus, just the way Redzepi does. He is a forager, and he would go out to the shore and forage. So I thought, "Oh God, this is going to be another one where all these

people are going to be there who have no idea what we do?" And there was a big crowd and he was very interesting and a very nice guy.

Oh, another one of the things that set the colloquium series apart is that at the end we gave each speaker a pewter keychain with a tractor on it. That had been recommended very, very early on, at the first or second colloquium, by Bill Kelly. The pewter tractors came from a place in Vermont that his wife was familiar with. We started doing it, and then it became a thing. Everybody wanted a tractor keychain, but you couldn't get one unless you gave a colloquium or worked for the program or were a postdoc here. And it was like a little club of who had a tractor—

01-00:28:30

Holmes:

Shivi calls it the Tractor Club.

01-00:28:33

Mansfield:

Yeah, it was like a fraternity of "agraristas" with their keychains. You asked me to talk about conferences, particularly the chicken conference. Conferences for me, of course, meant more work—a lot more work—so I wasn't totally in favor of them. When I heard we were doing the chicken conference, Jim said, "Well, don't worry. I've got a fabulous assistant for you to help you out." So he sends me this little sweetie undergraduate who had never done a conference, didn't know the first thing about anything. And I just said, "No. I'm not going to do this." Got rid of her and hired Pam McElwee [Pamela McElwee], who had been a Rhodes Scholar. She was a fabulous organizer. This could well have been a chicken that she gave me. I have several chickens at home from Pam. But it was a huge success and lots of fun.

I can't remember other—oh, I do remember one other. I think it was a graduate student colloquium series, because the graduate students got together and did their own series. This was after Jim had gotten rid of all of his sheep. For some unknown reason, the graduate students decided that Professor Scott should have a sheep, and so they bought one. And they bathed it and brushed it and cleaned it up beautifully, put it in the elevator in whatever building we were in on Hill House Avenue, brought it up to the conference room, and presented it with a bow around its neck. Sad but true, they hadn't dried the sheep enough after its bath, and it got pneumonia and died.

01-00:30:39

Holmes:

Oh, no!

01-00:30:44

Mansfield:

Yeah. Lesser-known story. I guess I should say something about the dinners at Jim's farm. He often had dinners for the colloquium speakers, which were not as large, but he also had wonderful dinners for the postdocs and graduate students. They were potluck affairs where there was just so much food you couldn't begin to eat it all—very, very bountiful. Early on, when the program first started, and he would have a dinner and invite a bunch of graduate

students out. He still had the sheep, and before dinner, he would send the graduate students out to round up the sheep and bring them into the barn because he was going to do the shearing and show them how to shear. And he would say, "The one thing that you don't want to do is run after the sheep." So he sends the graduate students out into the pasture, and what is the first thing they do but run after the sheep? And the sheep just run and run and run and run. I mean, it was very silly to see these graduate students chasing the sheep. But the postdocs loved to come out to the farm, and graduate students too. They would always go and look at the chickens in the henhouse and his two Highland cattle, Fife and Dundee, and then of course all the sheep.

One memorable evening before dinner I was in the kitchen, and all of a sudden Professor Scott goes marching by with a shotgun. I said, "Where are you going?" He goes out into the woods behind his house, and you hear the gun go off, and he comes back in with a wild turkey by the legs. Puts it into—well, you know, took the feathers out and put it there, and I eviscerated the turkey, much to the shock of many of the graduate students that I would know how to do this, but I grew up on a farm and I had done it many times before.

01-00:33:03

Holmes:

And didn't you pluck out the feathers?

01-00:33:04

Mansfield:

I think I probably did pluck the feathers and eviscerated the turkey. It was cooked, but it was not very good; it was kind of wild. I didn't like it.

Another dinner—this was, again, very early, maybe the second or third year that we were out there for a dinner. A group of people were coming who hadn't arrived yet, and we said, "Where are they? Where are they?" They had had a car accident before they ever got out of New Haven. They were going up the hill—I don't know the street. Goes up toward Prospect, and somebody was coming down, turned in front of them, and crashed. It broke the leg of one of the postdocs, and another fellow who was from Ethiopia, I think—his hair was all filled with glass shards from the windshield. The guy who broke his leg was due to give his colloquium in January, and this was I think at the end of November, beginning of December. He said, "Don't worry, I'm going to give my talk." And he did! In January he came in on his crutches, everybody applauded, and he gave his colloquium. But that was a scary dinner. I don't think we even had dinner that night because they never arrived.

Then you asked me to talk about working with Jim.

01-00:34:50

Holmes:

I mean, you've worked with him longer than probably anyone.

01-00:34:52

Mansfield:

Right. And what are some of my memorable stories and observations? Some of which, you know, I won't tell you. But I think the initial meeting with Jim,

as I told you, was very memorable, because he lived on a farm, I had grown up on a farm, and I just said to myself, "I can work with this man." And he said, "How long are you going to stay? I don't want to train you and have you leave." Well, thirty years later, [laughter] I left.

01-00:35:25

Holmes:

Well, and he was encouraging you to even stay and not retire, wasn't he, during that time?

01-00:35:30

Mansfield:

Yes. He was a great boss, although I never thought of him as a boss. He always treated me as an equal. He called me Chief, and I ran the program. He would say, "What do you think? Do what you think." And the thing for me was that he respected the fact that I had a brain and would use it, and if I didn't know something and needed to ask a question, I would, and I did. But he basically let me do my thing. But the thing for which I'm forever grateful to Jim happened before Agrarian Studies. I worked for him in the Southeast Asia Council and edited a series of monographs on Southeast Asia. He said to me one day, "I want you to go to the Asian Studies meeting and meet other editors, because you'll learn a lot from them." Okay. Well, it turned out I went to many, many AAS meetings all over the country, and I did meet a lot of editors. I always worked in the book booth selling our books. And because of that experience I learned to be an editor. Now in retirement, I'm a copyeditor. I have clients whom I've never met from all over the world. It spreads by word of mouth. And it all began back in the Southeast Asia Council.

01-00:37:02

Holmes:

Both Jim and Shivi also comment on how many postdocs who came through were able to have access to your great editing skills. Legendary proportions, by the way.

01-00:37:17

Mansfield:

Well, the one problem is, though, that I'm not permitted to work for anybody who is at Yale. And I was sitting at ISPS [Institute for Social and Policy Studies] with all of these junior political scientists who wanted me to work for them, but I couldn't get my pension check and be paid by them, by Yale. I don't know; I didn't understand it; it was annoying. But now it's by word of mouth, and honestly—I looked the other day—I haven't met any of my current clients. And I have Japanese, Chinese, Canadian, I have an Austrian. It's not all Asian studies by any means, but it does keep the old brain functioning. And I thank Jim for that.

I have to say that talking about Jim, it would be incomplete without talking about Louise, his wonderful wife. Louise and I were great friends. I remember first meeting her. I thought she was very stern, but she was lovely and warm. For all of these dinners they had at their house, Louise always made a gigantic pot of rice pilaf. She was right there. She was a wonderful artist, and she took care of midwifing the birth of all those lambs and taking care of the kids while

Jim was writing yet another book. But she finished her PhD, and he threw a huge party for her when she got the degree.

I also should mention that many, many times, I was seated at their big, round dining room table when I was the only non-faculty member. And that to me—I was an equal, which says a lot about Jim Scott, that there was not a distinction—you know, you're the underling, I'm the boss—ever, ever.

01-00:39:34

Holmes:

Well, a lot of people have also commented, you can see that kind of humility when you look at his bio line on the back of most books, right? It's not just "James C. Scott, Sterling Professor of Political Science," but it's also "James C. Scott, who's also a mediocre farmer and sheep breeder," as he would say, or "beekeeper."

01-00:39:55

Mansfield:

Well, and the Sterling Professor thing, that's another story. When he was awarded that he said, "Pfft, what is that? I don't even want that." I said, "Wait a minute. Let me tell you who the other Sterling Professors at Yale University are. Yes, you do want that." And then he had it put on his letterhead stationery. But the humility was there.

I have to tell another story about when he and Louise were in Berlin. It must have been when they were at the Wissenschaftskolleg. My daughter was on a junior year in Paris, and she and her friends decided they were going to go to Berlin. I don't know, three or four friends. And so they stayed with Jim and Louise in Berlin. It was slushy and rainy and snowy, and, of course, college kids, none of them had any boots on, and so Louise fashioned boots out of plastic bags for them so their feet stayed dry, and off they went.

Then, while they were still there, in the spring of that year, I went to Berlin. I had been in Berlin right after the wall went up, because I had a German government grant after I graduated from college. And foolishly we went on May Day, after the wall went up; we were in Berlin. That was very interesting. But this time, when I visited, the wall had been taken down. I would spend one day with Louise, one day with Jim. Louise and I would go to wonderful art museums and that sort of thing, and with Jim, we trekked all around the eastern part of Berlin. Louise was taking German lessons to try to perfect her language. Jim just blapped it right out—he spoke to the bus driver, he spoke to the waitress. He just spoke German all the time. And it was terrible German—I mean, I was a German teacher! But at least he was trying. He said *du* to everybody, which is the familiar form, you know, like the *tu* in French. But that was Jim. We had a lot of fun on that trip.

Let's see. I also know all of their kids, Mia and Aaron and Noah, who are all moms and dads now, so they've all grown up.

You wanted me to talk about unique aspects of the program.

01-00:42:46

Holmes: Yes, the Agrarian Studies Program.

01-00:42:48

Mansfield: Jim was a firm believer that if you start an intellectual conversation, you continue it over a good meal, and so we always had lunch after the colloquium so you could continue talking after you'd heard the speaker. We had those lunches catered by Anna. We would give her the colloquium poster, and she would try to make the meal complement the speaker's talk—sometimes more successfully than others. But that was a unique thing. I don't know that other series on campus did that, but we always did it.

Another thing that really did distinguish the program, I think, was having the graduate students as commentators and pulling them in, as I said, so they met people out of their normal bailiwick who were working on similar topics. And part of our funding, a big part of our funding, went for graduate student grants at the end of each year. And as the hunt for money got tighter, that was one thing about which Jim always said, "That part of the program stays. We may cut other places, but we continue to fund graduate students." He was a very, very big believer in that part of it.

What were the keys to the program's success? I think I already told you. Jim and Shivi, the strong leadership and the longevity, that both of them believe very strongly in it. I've talked with Shivi very recently, and he loves it. He wants it to continue.

01-00:44:54

Holmes: Well, and also, it's still able to draw, as you were mentioning, the family kind of environment. So it's not just your postdocs, but the graduate students and other faculty members. It is a separate place outside of the normal routines, right, that people could come across disciplines and discuss. And then to think, Agrarian Studies is approaching thirty years.

01-00:45:18

Mansfield: Is that what it is? That's what I was trying to figure out. Thirty years. And we never thought when we first got those grants—I mean, I said we were funded by both Ford and Rockefeller. And that reminds me of another little story. Sheila Biddle came from Rockefeller; she would come to visit at least once a year. She'd call me up and she'd say, "Kay, I'm coming up to visit." And I'd say, "Oh, great." She said, "Now, listen, I don't want you tell any of the bigshots at Yale that I'm going to be on campus. I'm not coming to see them; I'm coming to see you and Jim and go to the colloquium." So she would come and she'd go to the colloquium, she'd go to lunch, and then she'd come into my office. Well, I have to back up a bit. I don't even know why we did it, but we had one postdoc who designed T-shirts. They were yellow, and in green letters, "Agrarian Studies" on the front, and on the back it said, "Agraristas do it in the dirt." So she said, "You got any of those T-shirts left?" And I said,

"Sure, I think I do." She said, "Well, I wear them as nighties." So that was Sheila.

But back to the keys to success: first were Jim and Shivi, and then that it was a unique program that became known all over the country, certainly, but all over the world. And the postdocs, I've counted up: they came from thirty-eight different countries.

01-00:46:57

Holmes:

Wow, thirty-eight different countries?

01-00:46:59

Mansfield:

Thirty-eight different countries over the years. So that was everywhere. We had many Africans; as I said, South Asians ever single year; Latin Americans; South Americans—just everywhere.

You asked about some of the challenges that we faced over the years, and I think the biggest problem was money. After the grants ran out—I mean, they were renewed multiple times, but getting Yale to pick up when the funding ran out was difficult. I think ISPS funded us for quite a while. And we of course moved down to 89 Trumbull St., and that was a really, really lovely facility because all of our offices were on the second floor. People shared offices still, but I had a very beautiful office. At one point they wanted to move us out. They wanted to have us all in this big room, and I would sit in the middle of it. I said, "I'm not a receptionist. I need an office. No, it's not going to work." So they moved us over here to Prospect Street. But it was always the scramble about who's going to give us the money. And do we cut postdocs? What do we cut? And I think initially they did cut maybe down to five postdocs. Didn't touch the graduate student money. I think that they didn't want to fund us taking people out for dinner, although people were always taken out for dinner at Yale. And we didn't go to—what's the high priced French restaurant down there?

01-00:49:02

Holmes:

The Union—

01-00:49:03

Mansfield:

The Union League. We never took people to the Union League. Lots of times we went to Jim's place for dinner and he cooked. But money was a problem, and space, getting space for the program.

Oh, I thought of another thing that Jim did initially: he went to New York and he came back with little rugs, little Oriental rugs, and every single office had a pretty rug in it, including mine. Then he had artwork, agrarian artwork, and every office had a nice agrarian painting, the hallway did, the bathroom. We had wonderful artwork always. I don't know whatever happened—

01-00:49:54

Holmes:

It's still up there in the office.

01-00:49:55

Mansfield: Is it still?

01-00:49:56

Holmes: Yeah.

01-00:49:55

Mansfield: Yeah. And he said, that was, again, part of it. If you make their office inviting, pleasant, they want to work in their office. And they did. Instead of squirreling away in the library, they worked in their offices.

01-00:50:12

Holmes: Talk a little bit, if you would before we wrap up—Jim and Shivi take over as co-directors. And that relationship is also interesting because we went from student and mentor to then colleagues and co-directors of the program. And Shivi, as you were mentioning, was involved from the beginning. What were your observations on that relationship? And also, Shivi's really important role, particularly of dealing with the administration on the financial front.

01-00:50:39

Mansfield: Well, I don't know if you knew, but Shivi brought in a ton of money several years ago, into Yale. You know, when money is brought in like that, Yale usually agrees to pick up the pieces; when that funding runs out, then Yale will continue. But Shivi had fund-raising ability—well, I think it was both of them. I think that Jim got Don Green at ISPS to fund us and give us space. Don Green was a political scientist with Jim. A real hero was Ian Shapiro. Is he still the head of MacMillan?

01-00:51:36

Holmes: He actually just stepped down.

01-00:51:37

Mansfield: Oh, because he and Jim were very good friends. They go way, way back. And Ian picked up financial pieces along the way and was a big help. But I think now—well, Jim and Shivi, it was a match made in heaven. I never sensed any animosity or anything; they worked beautifully together, and still do.

01-00:52:17

Holmes: Very much so, yeah. Well, and it's such a complement, because they have their different styles.

01-00:52:23

Mansfield: Oh, absolutely different. Absolutely different.

01-00:52:28

Holmes: It's almost like *The Odd Couple* in some respects.

01-00:52:31

Mansfield: But very complementary too.

01-00:52:36

Holmes: Indeed, very much so.

01-00:52:38

Mansfield: Something else flew into my head, and now it's flown out. It's gone. I don't know.

01-00:52:54

Holmes: Well, do you have any final thoughts?

01-00:52:56

Mansfield: A final thought is that I'm amazed that it's still going. I know my friends at Yale have said, "You got out. You would have hated it now," and I would. Working with Jim, I had so much autonomy. I ran the program. He always asked my opinion. But the financial—paying things, doing all that—it's all centralized now at Yale. I don't even know how much I would be able to do if I were still here. I don't know that they have a real program director, do they?

01-00:53:41

Holmes: No.

01-00:53:41

Mansfield: You know, that they turned it over to a graduate student. Initially, I was really peeved, to think that they thought I wasn't really doing anything. But all the finances, everything is now centralized, so that part of the job was gone. And that was a pretty big part of it. I don't know, I think I got out when it was a good time to get out. So, long may it live. It was a fabulous job, I have to say. I loved it. And my kids would say to me, especially my daughter, when she left home, she said, "Oh, well, you don't need us, Mom, you've got your postdocs." I mean, I loved them all. In one year, you could become very close to them, and May was always a horribly sad time because they were leaving, and some of them I might see again; many of them I would never see again. It was like a big family.

01-00:54:51

Holmes: Well, you played a very important role in that, Kay.

01-00:54:52

Mansfield: Ah, well. Oh, I didn't mention all my graduate student assistants!

01-00:54:58

Holmes: Oh, yes.

01-00:55:00

Mansfield: I mean, again, wonderful, wonderful assistants. People who picked up the speakers at the airport. We learned that that was a big no-no at Yale because of insurance things. They called themselves the Marvelettes. I did have a long string of wonderful, wonderful graduate assistants, as well as Shivi.

01-00:55:32

Holmes: Well, Kay, thank you so much for your time and sharing these memories and experiences. You did such a great job with my—I didn't even have to ask the questions. You were all ready.

01-00:55:43

Mansfield: Well, I had your questions. [laughter]

01-00:55:45

Holmes: That's efficient. We like efficiency.

01-00:55:51

Mansfield: Well, yes. Do I miss it? I think I miss the people, because it was a real people job. Meeting somebody new every week for the colloquium, dealing with postdocs, and being a mother hen to graduate students.

01-00:56:17

Holmes: Well, you were surely missed.

01-00:56:18

Mansfield: Thank you, thank you.

01-00:56:19

Holmes: All right. Thanks so much, Kay.

[End of Interview]