

Bill [William A.] Brock, PhD

Interview 99

Interview Session One: December 4, 2018

Chapter 00A

Interview Identifier

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:00]

Okay, our counter is moving, and I'm saying for the record that the time is about two minutes after 11:00 on the fourth of December, 2018. And I am in the Ombuds Office in the Duncan Building on the main campus of MD Anderson, interviewing Dr. Bill Brock. And you prefer Bill to William, is that true, or...?

[00:00:22]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:22]

I use William when I'm signing my name.

[00:00:25]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:25]

When you're signing your name. [laughter]

[00:00:26]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:26]

But I prefer people address me as Bill, yes.

[00:00:29]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:29]

Okay, Dr. Bill Brock, who was Head of the Ombuds Office for a number of years. And so I wanted to say thanks for taking the time today.

[00:00:42]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:44]

You're welcome. [laughs]

[00:00:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:46]

And I guess a couple other details, and we'll get to some of these, that you actually had come to MD Anderson in 1978. That's correct? Is...?

[00:00:54]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:54]

No, 1976.

[00:00:55]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:55]

Nineteen seventy-six, okay.

[00:00:57]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:57]

I started as a faculty member in 1978.

[00:01:00]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:00]

Oh, okay, but you were a Fellow?

[00:01:01]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:01]

Yes, I was a postdoc here, starting in July of 1976, with Dr. Marvin Meistrich [oral history interview].

[00:01:10]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:10]

Oh, yeah, okay. I interviewed Dr. Meistrich. And I noticed on your publications list—I got a publications list—that you'd worked with him—

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:01:17]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:17]

Yes.

[00:01:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:18]

—on various projects, too. Okay, cool. And then, when you became faculty, it was in the Division of Radiation Oncology, in the section of Experimental Radiation Oncology, correct?

[00:01:29]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:29]

That's correct.

[00:01:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:30]

Okay. And then in two—

[00:01:32]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:32]

The department actually had a different name back then.

[00:01:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:34]

Oh, it did?

[00:01:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:34]

Yes, they changed it. Used to be Experimental Radiotherapy. [] And it is now [Experimental Radiation Oncology].

[00:01:44]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:44]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Oh, okay. And, actually, I looked on the—
[00:01:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:48]

ERT was how we referred to it.

[00:01:50]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:50]

Oh, that's funny. [laughs]

[00:01:51]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:01:51]

Now it's ERO. [laughs]

[00:01:52]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:01:52]

ERO. Well, actually, I went on the Department website and saw that Experimental Radiation Oncology as a name has actually been sunsetted, so I don't know what they're calling it now.

That's to be determined, I guess. It says "NA" after Experimental Radiation Oncology. [laughs]

[00:02:11]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:02:11]

That's interesting.

[00:02:11]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:02:11]

Isn't that crazy?

[00:02:12]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:02:12]

Yes.

[00:02:12]

Making Cancer History®

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:02:13]

So, in this, another important date, in 2000, it was when you established the Faculty Ombuds Office, and then we will tell the story from there. I think so.

[00:02:26]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:02:26]

Okay. [My main reason for doing this interview is to talk about the Ombuds Office, its origin, development and current status.]

[00:02:26]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 01

Setting Sights High in Chemistry and Concerns about the Draft

A: Educational Path;

Codes

A: Personal Background;

D: Ethics;

A: Inspirations to Practice Science/Medicine;

A: Influences from People and Life Experiences

A: Military Experience;

A: Character, Values, Beliefs, Talents;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:02:26]

Okay. But let me just start kind of in the traditional place that I start, which is let me ask you where you were born, and when, and tell me a little bit about your family background.

[00:02:40]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:02:40]

Oh. Well, I was born on November 21st, 1944, in Akron, Ohio, where I grew up, in Akron, Ohio. [] [I have three siblings.]

[00:02:59]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:02:58]

Yeah, what did your parents do, and...?

[00:03:00]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:03:01]

Okay. Well, my mother didn't work until we had all graduated from college. My father was a businessman, in sales. He started out as a milkman for the Borden Company []. He was born in 1910. [] He was born in San Angelo, Texas.

[00:03:21]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:03:21]

Oh, okay. And what were your parents' names?

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:03:24]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:03:24]

My dad's name was William, but a different middle name; Conerly was his middle name.

[00:03:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:03:30]

What is it?

[00:03:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:03:31]

Conerly. C-O-N-E-R-L-Y is the way he spelled it.

[00:03:35]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:03:36]

And your mother's name?

[00:03:37]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:03:37]

Ramona Virginia [Brock]. Her maiden name was Anderson, spelled like MD Anderson, but of course it was Brock after she got married. [] My dad was born in San Angelo. His mother had tuberculosis, and she needed to move out to dry climate in order to help her recover from the tuberculosis. [] That was 1910 when he was born. In 1917, the family moved back to [their home in Jackson,] Mississippi. []

[00:04:23]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:04:23]

Wow, wow.

[00:04:23]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:04:24]

And he was proud to be a Texan. [] [laughter]

[00:04:32]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:04:33]

Oh, okay, yeah. It's—

[00:04:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:04:34]

[After I moved to Texas in 1976, I could] just say, “Oh, my dad’s from Texas.” It made me halfway acceptable [to “real” Texans].

[00:04:38]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:04:38]

That’s right, yeah, because that’s a big transition, that North/South. So what did your dad end up doing? You said he was a businessman.

[00:04:45]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:04:44]

So he ended up being the general manager of the Borden Company in Akron, Ohio. My father was an extremely hard worker, set goals, and he usually achieved them. So he ended up doing very well for himself, and for his family. Good man.

[00:05:03]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:05:03]

So, sounds like he had a big impact on you when you were growing up.

[00:05:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:05:08]

Yeah he was. [] [He was my most important mentor.]

[00:05:26]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:05:26]

So you said some of them was hard work. Were there some other things that you learned from your dad?

[00:05:31]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:05:32]

[] He was an ethical, honest person who didn't ever want to treat anyone wrong [and he always did what he said he would do.] []

[00:05:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:05:45]

Can you think of an example that really brought that home for you when you were young?

[00:05:49]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:05:50]

Well, I remember one thing that always comes to mind is—so he became the boss, right? And so he had all these other people working for him who did the labor. And I grew up thinking, well, he's the boss, so he's in a more important position, but the way he treated the people he worked with was wonderful. [] And one time I remember going out on a boat ride with my dad, and we stopped at this new home built by one of his employees. We went into the house and took a tour of it. We lived in a modest home. My dad didn't like to spend money very much, and he was very frugal, because he went through the Depression. And this house was really nice, and I remember thinking, look at the house we live in and look at the palace this guy is living in, and my dad's a boss. It just doesn't make sense. As we were leaving my dad looked at him and shook his hand and said, "You have a nice house. You really deserve it, you've worked hard and earned it." And that was a lesson I didn't forget. [] He didn't know how to be jealous of someone else, [he was always proud of his friends' accomplishments]. That [may not seem like much but it made an important impact on me. There were many] examples like that.

[00:07:21]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:07:22]

That's a wonderful story. Yeah.

[00:07:25]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:07:25]

It's amazing how something that seems so trivial [and I'm sure he wouldn't remember it, but he set a powerful example.]

[00:07:33]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:07:33]

Yeah. So as you were growing up, and in school, how did you find yourself coming together as a person? What were your interests, and how did you start learning what you were good at and interested in?

[00:07:50]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:07:51]

[] [When I was young,] I was always building things. I think I probably would have gone into some electrical engineering major if I'd have been better at math, but my math background wasn't really strong enough for [for the school of engineering] [] so I majored in biology.

[00:08:22]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:22]

Okay, okay.

[00:08:23]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:23]

Yeah.

[00:08:23]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:24]

What about other things that you were doing in—

[00:08:26]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:26]

Let me add to that a little bit.

[00:08:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:27]

Oh, sure, I'm sorry.

[00:08:28]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:28]

My sister, who's eight years older than me, was married to an extremely brilliant man who ended up becoming a very well-known physician, a gynecologist. He was a very strong motivator for me, as far as choosing science and setting goals []. He was one of my most important mentors. My father was probably the most important, but he was my academic career mentor.

[00:08:59]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:59]

And your sister's name, and her husband's name?

[00:09:01]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:01]

Her name is Betty Ann. It is Betty Ann Levitin now, L-E-V-I-T... Wait. L-E-V-I-T-E-N, or T-I-N.

[00:09:12]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:14]

And her husband's...?

[00:09:15]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:15]

Her husband's name is Leon Speroff, S-P-E-R-O-F-F. And they're divorced. []

[00:09:35]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:35]

That's cool.

[00:09:36]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:36]

Yeah.

[00:09:36]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:36]

So how did he mentor you with those...? I mean, at what age did he start becoming important to you?

[00:09:41]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:41]

[] [It started when I was in] high school. He helped me set goals, and he helped me set goals that were goals that [were more ambitious than I would have set alone].

[00:09:51]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:51]

Like what?

[00:09:53]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:53]

And... Well, graduate school, mainly. [] He encouraged me to apply to Yale Graduate School, which had a program [] [where I got a degree in] biology. []

[00:10:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:10:31]

That's very cool.

[00:10:32]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:10:32]

Yeah.

[00:10:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:10:32]

So you grew up in Akron, so you went to your high school years in Akron, as well.

[00:10:37]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:10:37]

Yes, I did.

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:10:37]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:10:37]

Okay. And then to college? Where did you go—

[00:10:39]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:10:39]

I went to Ohio State University.

[00:10:40]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:10:40]

Okay. And when did you start and finish?

[00:10:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:10:44]

I started in 1962, and I finished in—with a bachelor's degree in Microbiology '67, and got a second degree in Education in '68.

[00:10:56]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:10:56]

Okay. And your first degree was in bio?

[00:10:58]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:10:58]

Yeah, microbiology was my major.

[00:11:01]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:11:02]

And then education. How come you did the second in education?

[00:11:05]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:11:05]

[I taught school to stay out of the] Vietnam War.

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:11:06]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:11:07]

Oh, tell me about that.

[00:11:08]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:11:08]

Well, if you taught, okay, you got a deferment, and I was definitely very antiwar, like most kids in college. So I had attitudes that nowadays I'm not so proud of them, right? But back then it was a terrible war, and... So I got a degree. It didn't take long to get the second degree, and so I taught school.

[00:11:38]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:11:38]

And it was at what level?

[00:11:41]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:11:42]

High school, chemistry.

[00:11:44]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:11:46]

How did you like teaching?

[00:11:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:11:49]

I liked it. I liked it a lot. I wasn't as good at it as I thought I'd be. It's hard, and you have to teach a few years in order to get really good at it. I did it only for two years, because teacher deferments were taken away at that time.

[00:12:08]

[Redacted]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:13:22]

How did that affect you? I mean, when you look back, the teaching, the war, [redacted] did that kind of change you in certain ways, or shape decisions you made?

[00:13:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:13:35]

Oh, it definitely shaped decisions. It shaped every decision. [] I [was reclassified] 1-A for the draft and was told to report for a physical. And so I went down to the Board, and [was shocked to find some of my high school] students, (pause) with suitcases [ready to leave for basic training. I was only there for a physical and then I was going home.] [] I couldn't believe my students [were on their way to the war.]

[00:14:24]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:14:24]

And why did...? I mean, why did that affect you so much, just kind of seeing them?

[00:14:28]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:14:28]

Oh, I just—I felt guilty, in a sense. I just felt so sorry for them, and I knew them, and I knew they were just young kids, and some of them [may not have come back].

[00:14:42]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:14:42]

Going to die, yeah.

[00:14:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:14:43]

[]

[00:14:51]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:14:52]

Yeah. Now, and was this '68? I'm sorry, I glitched on the date there. Sixty-seven? Sixty-eight?

[00:14:58]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:15:00]
Oh, I'd say that was probably about 1970.
[00:15:02]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:15:02]
Oh, 1970, okay.
[00:15:03]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:15:03]
Yeah, yeah. Because I got out of school in '68, taught, so it was probably about 1970, I would guess, somewhere around there.
[00:15:12]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:15:12]
Now, were you shipped overseas?
[00:15:13]

[Redacted]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:16:34]
[] Finally President Nixon did one of the few things that I approved of: he ruled that anybody who is 26 years or older is a potential threat to their fellow soldiers. [] I turned 26 before I was drafted.
[00:17:08]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:17:10]
So you aged out. [laughs]
[00:17:11]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:17:11]
Aged out. [The president's decision seemed like] a miracle. [].
[00:17:32]

[Redacted]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:19:40]

[Redacted] So what was the next step? You had your brother-in-law telling you to mail in—helping you understand what your next step would be. So tell me about getting into graduate school at Yale.

[00:19:57]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 02

Graduate School, Immersion in Developmental Biology, and Transition to Radiation Oncology at MD Anderson

A: Educational Path;

Codes

A: Joining MD Anderson;

A: Overview;

A: The Researcher;

A: Definitions, Explanations, Translations;

D: Understanding Cancer, the History of Science, Cancer Research;

[Redacted]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:20:47]

Yeah. Who was the person who was your...?

[00:20:50]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:20:50]

Clement Markert, C-L-E-M-E-R-T. Clement Markert, M-A-R-K-E-R-T. He was [well known for his discovery of isozymes. At the time his laboratory was working in reproductive biology.]

[]

[00:21:01]

Redacted

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:21:25]

I liked the laboratory work, but the problems were really interesting back in those days. In the '70s [little was known about how] genes were regulated, but [the mechanisms of how hormones were regulating gene expression was a hot topic, and reproductive hormone biology was an important part of that issue.] [] So that was the area I wanted to work in.

[00:22:14]

[redacted]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:23:30]

[] So what did you...? Did you have a specific research project you were working on from the beginning, or how did that all evolve?

[00:23:41]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:23:41]

[The program is designed such that you don't work with your] professor right away. You first go to other laboratories to broaden your experience in biology research. I went to [spend a few months in] a laboratory that studied insect [endocrinology].

[00:23:54]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:23:54]

Oh, interesting.

[00:23:55]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:23:55]

And they were interested in particularly the Monarch butterfly. I didn't really enjoy working with insects. [laughter]

[00:24:03]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:24:03]

I was going to say! Like, I hadn't heard about that pathway!

[00:24:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:24:09]

But in the lab were several postdocs and students. There were all these insect nerds, and they loved insects, and they particularly loved monarch butterflies. And the first assignment that he gave someone in the fall was to take a monarch larva and stay up all night watching it emerge into a butterfly, and then come back the next day and give a play-by-play report on it [in a lab meeting]. Now, I remember that the first time I saw that happen was a postdoc from Japan had spent the whole night watching this, and had the most beautiful descriptions of everything that happened during that emergence, and I think that's how he got his students turned on [to study insects].

[00:24:47]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:24:47]
That's very cool.
[00:24:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:24:48]
Yes, that was interesting.
[00:24:50]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:24:50]
Yeah. A little moment of art and science together there, beauty of science.
[00:24:55]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:24:54]
[]
[00:25:04]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:25:04]
Yeah. Very cool.
[00:25:06]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:25:06]
[] [It was very interesting, but] I was only in that lab for a few months. I did a study on hormones, though. See, that's the reason I kind of liked it. Insects have a sex hormone called ecdysone.
[00:25:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:25:17]
What is it?
[00:25:18]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:25:18]
[laughs] [] It's a steroid [hormone that has something to do with molting.] []
[00:25:25]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:25:24]
D-Y-S-O-N. Okay, I'll look it up online, yeah.
[00:25:27]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:25:26]
[] They also studied pheromones, which are sex attractants []. I didn't do any work on pheromones, but I did work on developing an assay for measuring ecdysone in insects.
[00:25:49]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:25:49]
That's cool. [laughter] So when did you transition to what you really wanted to focus on? How long did that take?
[00:25:57]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:25:58]
After the first year, I moved into Professor Markert's laboratory. [] [He had just build a new laboratory with a grant from the Ford Foundation.] [] The Ford Foundation funded a lot of work in reproductive biology. []
[00:27:44]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:27:44]
[]
[00:27:45]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:27:45]
[]
[00:27:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:27:45]
[]
[00:27:46]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:27:46]

[]

[00:28:27]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:28:27]

[]

[00:28:28]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:28:29]

[]

[00:28:56]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:28:57]

[]

[00:28:57]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:28:58]

[]

[00:29:07]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:29:08]

[]

[00:29:12]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:29:12]

[]

[00:29:13]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:29:13]

[]

[00:29:16]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:29:14]

[]

[00:29:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:29:31]

[]

[00:29:35]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:29:35]

[]

[00:29:36]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:29:37]

[]

[00:29:38]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:29:37]

[]

[00:29:38]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:29:39]

[]

[00:29:46]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:29:45]

[]

[00:30:20]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:30:20]

[]

[00:30:22]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:30:22]

[]

[00:30:23]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:30:24]

[]

[00:30:24]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:30:24]

[]

[00:30:25]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:30:25]

[]

[00:30:26]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:30:26]

[]

[00:31:43]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:31:43]

[]

[00:31:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:31:45]

[]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:32:07]

[]

[00:32:16]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:32:16]

[]

[00:32:48]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:32:48]

[]

[00:32:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:32:49]

[]

[00:33:13]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:33:13]

[]

[00:33:13]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:33:14]

[]

[00:33:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:33:47]

[]

[00:33:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:33:48]

[]

[00:33:48]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:33:48]

[]

[00:33:50]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:33:50]

[]

[00:34:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:34:33]

[]

[00:34:41]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:34:40]

[]

[00:35:01]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:35:02]

[] ?

[00:35:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:35:08]

I got interested in isozymes []. [] I was doing experiments on isozyme development in mice and had read some papers about some work in the male reproductive system. [] and made a proposal [to Professor Markert] and started a study on isozyme expression during the development of the mouse reproductive system and spermatogenesis. [In particular, I was interested in whether or not genes were expressed in late stages of spermatogenesis when the developing sperm had a haploid level of DNA. In 1976, when that work was completed, I began to search for a post-doctoral position. I was familiar with the work of Marvin Meistrich [oral history interview], at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital and Tumor Institute, who was an expert in spermatogenesis and had developed methodology for separating the many different types of spermatogenic cells into separate populations. He offered me a position and so I planned to go to Texas for a couple of years and then look for a faculty position. Marvin turned out to be a brilliant scientist who made many important contributions to the understanding of the male reproductive system from both a clinical and basic science perspective (see his interview on this website). I worked with Marvin for two years on the developmental biology of proteins that are found only in developing spermatocytes. During this time, I developed an interest in Radiation Biology. As it turned out, the Department of Experimental Radiotherapy, as it was then known, was well known worldwide for outstanding research in basic and clinical radiation biology. When I started interviewing for a faculty position, the department chair, Rodney

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Withers, offered me a job as Assistant Professor. I accepted and spent the rest of my career there.] []
[00:38:05]

[] My main research [interest in radiation biology was in individual differences in the sensitivity of tumor and normal cells to radiation and the development of assays that could be used to predict] the radiation effects on normal cells—in other words, side effects, and could would predict which patients are most likely to have these catastrophic reactions to radiation. Because there must be a genetic difference in people’s sensitivity. [] [To develop a method to determine] who is most likely to be sensitive to that [] and steer them to a different treatment. []
[00:39:16]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD
[00:39:16]
Oh, interesting.
[00:39:17]

Bill Brock, PhD
[00:39:17]
Yeah.
[00:39:18]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD
[00:39:18]
Huh. So what was that shift like? I mean, tell me how you contacted Marvin Meistrich.
[00:39:25]

Bill Brock, PhD
[00:39:25]
Well, I was study... Yeah. Oh, I—
[00:39:27]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD
[00:39:27]
Oh, all of that, and—
[00:39:28]

Bill Brock, PhD
[00:39:28]
I wrote him a letter.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:39:29]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:39:29]

Yeah, you did. It reminds you of different days, huh?

[00:39:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:39:29]

I wrote him a letter [] [describing my background and interests and asking him for a post-doc position] [laughter]

[00:39:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:39:35]

“Hey, by the way, love your work.”

[00:39:36]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:39:36]

He liked that. And, no, he wrote back right away and offered me a job. []

[00:39:54]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:39:55]

That’s very cool.

[00:39:56]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:39:56]

[]

[00:40:22]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:40:22]

Oh. In experimental—

[00:40:23]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:40:23]

[]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:40:33]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:40:34]

Now, tell me—

[00:40:37]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:40:37]

[]

[00:40:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:40:45]

[]

[00:40:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:40:47]

Yeah, I think he was fine with that. Yeah.

[00:40:50]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 03

Research on Fibroblasts and the Decision to Transition to a New Role

A: The Researcher;

Codes

A: The Researcher;

C: Discovery and Success;

A: Obstacles, Challenges;

C: Collaborations;

C: Formative Experiences;

A: Definitions, Explanations, Translations;

A: Overview;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:40:52]

So, I mean, I kind of want to ask you about your impressions of the institution at that time. That was just before the '80s. And then I also want to ask how your research evolved. So which would you like to talk about? [laughs]

[00:41:06]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:41:07]

Well, let's start with the impressions of the institution. First of all, as a postdoc, I was pretty much isolated from most of the institution, so I had no exposure to clinical activities, just the laboratories. And how was the institution different back then? Well, most of the current institution wasn't even built at that time, [laughs] right? []

[00:41:51]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:41:51]

Oh, really?

[00:41:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:41:52]

[] The department had about 25 people, and [everyone was very friendly.] People socialized together, and collaborated a lot. [] The chair of the department was Rod Withers. []

[00:42:47]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:42:47]
I have, but... Yeah.
[00:42:49]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:42:49]
[] [He was an interesting character as well as a] brilliant scientist, and physician. [] He was very openminded, liberal-minded, and let people do their thing. [The magic was his ability to give everyone good ideas.] [] The department [was very well known] in terms of the Radiation Biology, and still is. []
[00:43:46]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:43:47]
Interesting.
[00:43:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:43:47]
[]
[00:44:08]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:44:08]
Well, you were talking about being isolated from the clinical side, as a fellow, and then how vital it was in terms of socially and scientifically. And I'm wondering how your impression changed when you became—when you joined faculty. I mean, and I guess maybe you began to have more insight into the clinical side of the institution, or...?
[00:44:29]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:44:29]
Yeah, because—
[00:44:29]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:44:29]
What did you see differently?
[00:44:30]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:44:30]

As a faculty member, you [gain other responsibilities. You expand your activities to other part of the institution by committee membership and you meet a lot of other people.] [] One of the people that had a big impression on me was Lester Peters, who was the Division Head of Radiation Oncology for several years. He was actually on the faculty when I came to Experimental Radiation Oncology. [] [He encouraged me to work in areas that were more clinically relevant.] So much of the work we were doing in looking at the sensitivity of tumor and] normal tissue [cells made use of samples from patients.]

[00:45:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:45:29]

Yeah, I noticed that your research began to take that direction, looking at the reaction of normal cells.

[00:45:35]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:45:36]

Yeah. Yeah.

[00:45:38]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:45:38]

What—[coughs] excuse me, goodness. What were some of the findings of those studies? I mean, because you guys did a lot of publishing on that subject together.

[00:45:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:45:47]

[]

[00:47:50]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:47:50]

That's amazing.

[00:47:51]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:47:51]

[]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:48:05]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:48:04]

[]

[00:48:05]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:06]

[]

[00:48:06]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:48:06]

[]

[00:48:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:07]

[]

[00:48:13]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:48:14]

[]

[00:48:15]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:16]

[]

[00:48:54]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:48:55]

[]

[00:48:59]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:59]

[]

[00:49:40]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:49:40]

[]

[00:50:01]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:50:01]

[]

[00:51:04]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:51:04]

[]

[00:51:19]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:51:19]

[]

[00:51:38]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:51:38]

Now—

[00:51:38]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:51:38]

So that's a whole different story. We'll start from the beginning on that.

[00:51:41]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:51:41]

[]

[00:51:56]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:51:57]

[]

[00:52:41]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:52:41]

[]

[00:52:42]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:52:42]

[]

[00:52:42]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:52:42]

[]

[00:52:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:52:43]

[]

[00:53:11]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:53:11]

[]

[00:53:16]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:53:16]

[]

[00:53:19]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:53:19]

[]

[00:53:19]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:53:19]

[]

[00:53:21]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:53:21]

[]

[00:53:24]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:53:25]

The Ombuds Office started in 2000. I was still a faculty member then. And... Yeah, well, that's what the timing was.

[00:53:34]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 04

Discovering the Need for an Ombuds Office

B: Building the Institution;

Codes

A: Professional Values, Ethics, Purpose;
A: Character, Values, Beliefs, Talents;
A: Personal Background;
A: Professional Path; C: Evolution of Career;
A: Overview;
A: Definitions, Explanations, Translations;
B: Institutional Processes;
B: Working Environment;
B: MD Anderson Culture;
C: Understanding the Institution;
D: On Research and Researchers;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:53:38]

So tell me about transitioning to the Ombuds Office.

[00:53:42]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:53:43]

[]

[00:54:19]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:54:19]

Oh, right. I have that someplace.

[00:54:20]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:54:20]

[] maybe After Dr. Mendelsohn had been at MD Anderson for a few years, there were some developing problems with faculty dissatisfaction. In particular, some faculty were unhappy with our system of dispute resolution. This including dissatisfaction with how a couple of faculty members were fired and lack of trust in the tribunal mechanism.

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:55:04]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:55:04]

Right. Can you share why they were fired? Were the reasons controversial?

[00:55:11]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:55:13]

[] [The reasons given were that they were fired for cause, breaking institutional rules or possibly worse. They disagreed and some, maybe many, faculty thought they were not treated fairly. I don't know what was true, but Dr. Mendelsohn wanted to revise the mechanisms for faculty grievance and to have the faculty recommend policy. He formed an ad hoc committee, chaired by William Plunkett, to study mechanisms from other institutions and to make recommendations. The committee developed a Faculty Appeals Policy. Briefly, the policy consisted of a mechanism for choosing creating a pool of faculty members who would be trained in hearing faculty grievances and from this pool would be chosen three members to hear a faculty grievance and make recommendations for resolution to the president. Having a mechanism for faculty appeals works well, but it runs the risk of creating bad feelings and destroying the potential for collaboration among participants, even if the issues might have been more easily solved informally. As a member of that committee, I suggested we include a mechanism for early dispute resolution, including an Ombuds Office and the possibility of mediation as a first step or alternative to Appeals.]

[00:55:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:55:28]

[]

[00:55:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:55:31]

[]

[00:56:38]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:56:38]

I've interviewed him.

[00:56:39]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:56:39]

[]

[00:56:51]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:56:51]

And what was your final product?

[00:56:53]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:56:53]

The final product [of the committee, which was approved and scheduled for implementation in 2000 was a] Faculty Appeals Policy [] [along with an early dispute resolution mechanism in the form of an Ombuds Office staffed by professional Ombuds and trained mediators.]

[00:58:27]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:58:26]

[]

[00:58:36]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:58:36]

[]

[01:00:12]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:00:13]

[]

[01:00:43]

[Redacted]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:03:08]

[]

[01:03:29]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:03:29]

[]

[01:03:31]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:03:31]

[]

[Redacted]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:07:15]

[]

[01:07:22]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:07:23]

[]

[01:08:07]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:08:07]

[]

[01:08:09]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:08:09]

[]

[01:08:16]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:08:18]

[]

[01:08:50]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:08:50]

[]

[01:09:07]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 05

The Ombuds Office: Early Challenges and Faculty Concerns

B: Building the Institution;

Codes

A: Overview;
A: Definitions, Explanations, Translations;
B: Institutional Processes;
B: Working Environment;
B: MD Anderson Culture;
C: Understanding the Institution;
A: Personal Background;
C: Professional Practice; C: The Professional at Work;
A: Professional Values, Ethics, Purpose;
A: Critical Perspectives; C: Critical Perspectives;
D: Ethics;
C: Leadership; D: On Leadership;
B: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religion;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:09:08]

Well, tell me about... So you are hired into this position, and I always like to ask: what was your mandate in setting up the office? And then what did you want to achieve [laughs] in setting up the office? Because those can sometimes be—nuance each other, so...

[01:09:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:09:31]

Well, the reason I applied for the job, aside from the fact, as I suggested, that we have this program [] is that I had been thinking about retiring. I thought, this would be a great thing to do in retirement if I like it, but in the meantime I could set it up and someone else could take it over. [] I went for training in [how to set up an Ombuds Office and how to be an Ombuds. I was also trained in mediation at the South Texas College of Law, but I was far from] being an expert. [] I found out that there's a lot of skills behind [being competent in this job.]

[01:10:15]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:10:15]

What are the skills involved?

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[01:10:16]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:10:16]

Well, neutrality is the most important. You not only have to be neutral, you have to project neutrality, and you have to constantly remind the employees you are speaking with about your neutrality. This is because when you have two people with issues, you talk with them individually at first [and each person seems to] always try and convince you that they're correct. [They need to be reminded that you are not judging the situation, just helping them discover options for the best possible outcome.] And when you have them together in the same room, in a mediation, say, you have to tell them, "Talk to each other, not to me. I'm not going to make any decisions here." So that's certainly one thing. [In addition to neutrality], confidentiality is [extremely important. The office would not continue to exist without extreme confidentiality. I believe we do a great job with confidentiality and] we have a very good track record. [Redacted]

[01:11:47]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:11:49]

So how did you go about setting up the office? I mean, because this was from scratch, right?

[01:11:55]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:11:55]

The office was, of course, started from scratch. [] Tina Rocha [joined me as the program coordinator] and she stayed with me as long as it was the Faculty Ombuds Office. We put together a policy for the office that we submitted to Dr. Mendelsohn, and it was approved. [] We then started contacting [Ombuds from other institutions for guidance] and any written material they had on their programs. [] [We used this material to construct our own program.]

[01:12:50]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:12:51]

Now, why was the choice made to limit the scope of services to—or offerings to faculty only at that point?

[01:13:01]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:13:01]

The mandate that Dr. Mendelsohn had given the committee [was to develop] a conflict resolution program for faculty. [The recommendation of the committee was a Faculty Appeals Policy and a Faculty Ombuds Office, because that was the mandate.] []

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[01:13:15]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:13:15]

And why is that?

[01:13:17]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:13:16]

[] n't thinking that broadly, either. [If you are talking about is why we didn't recommend that the Ombuds Office serve all employees from the beginning, we thought the faculty program would stand on its own. In other words, we didn't realize that somany conflicts involve both faculty and non-faculty employees.] [] So then after running that program for faculty for a couple of years, I had experienced more and more nonfaculty employees coming to the office, asking for help. And since we're an informal office, and off the record, we "assisted them mainly by providing information and referring them to HR.] [] In a meeting with Dr. Mendelsohn again, [I talked to him about the need for ombuds services for all employees and described ombuds offices throughout the country that serve all employees.] []

[01:14:24]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:14:28]

Make your boss happy. That's a good move.

[01:14:30]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:14:30]

[]

[01:14:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:14:33]

Absolutely, yeah. Let's just pause here.

[01:14:36]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:14:34]

—and then we can...

[01:14:36]

[The recorder is paused]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:14:36]

—make sure we’ve got our recorder going again. Yes, we are back, after a short break. Do you mind if I ask a couple of more context questions, just before we move forward, or...?

[01:14:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:14:49]

Yeah. Then we’ll come—then let’s come back to this, because I think this next step is kind of important, about expanding the program, so...

[01:14:58]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:14:57]

Right. What I guess I wanted to ask was what was already in place, because I know that today you are very clear with people what are the different services that HR offers that employee—I’m sorry, what is it? The EAP, Employee Advocates Program?

[01:15:20]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:15:20]

The Employee Assistance Program.

[01:15:22]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:15:21]

Assistance Program. Employee Assistance Program. And that the Ombuds Office are very different. Did HR offer services at the time, in 2000? Were there other conflict resolution or grievance processes in place? And then what made you different?

[01:15:37]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:15:37]

Yeah. First of all, [what made it difficult for me,] being a faculty member, I didn’t know much about HR. When this program started, it was good that I had Tina Rocha there with me. She understood HR. She [was in a position to teach me about how they operated and about employee policies.] I believe most faculty members don’t know much about HR [and are unaware of many HR services that are available to faculty such as] EAP. []

[01:16:39]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:16:39]

And was it...? You said as faculty you didn't know anything about HR. I mean, I think often these services are kind of under people's radar. I mean, it's a problem of ignorance, or marketing, or—I don't know.

[01:16:55]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:16:55]

Right, yeah.

[01:16:55]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:16:57]

So I'm curious how much of that was at work at the time, as well, that faculty were unaware.

[01:17:02]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:17:04]

Unaware of the services?

[01:17:05]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:17:05]

Of that there could be assistance via these other mechanisms.

[01:17:09]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:17:09]

Yes, you're right, and very few faculty, I think, used them. And I many faculty are surprised when they get become the subject of an HR investigation. For example, if they are the subject of a complaint by a classified employee, they ask me, "Why is HR coming to me?" That kind of thing. And a lot of other employees are unaware of a lot of the services. And that's one of the things we do is we steer people toward the appropriate services. That's one of the main things we do. []

[01:17:49]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:17:49]

[]

[01:17:50]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:17:50]

Yeah, because so many people come in with a complaint, and we'll tell them how they can file a grievance, and they'll say, "Well, I don't even know about that. What is that?" So we have those policies all printed out, and give them copies, help them start that process.

[01:18:07]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:18:07]

Now, how did you address that in 2000 and immediately after? Because obviously you're setting up a new service, it's needed, but then how do you create recognition and trust and awareness and all that?

[01:18:19]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:18:21]

Oh. Well, we did advertise it at the time, and I asked Dr. Mendelsohn to write memos to all the faculty announcing the program and did that once or twice a year for the first few years. [] We also provided faculty with an outline of how faculty should go about managing issues with other faculty, or their supervisors. The outline mentions the Ombuds Office as a first step, but also tells them about the Faculty Appeals Policy. []

[01:19:42]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:19:43]

How immediately did you find people actually taking advantage of the service? Because—

[01:19:49]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:19:50]

We had business within the first week.

[01:19:52]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:19:53]

Really?

[01:19:53]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:19:53]

One or two faculty members. During the first year we had 33 faculty cases, if I remember correctly.

[01:20:03]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:20:05]

And were you—how did you assess that number? What did that mean to you?

[01:20:09]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:20:09]

I kept a database that recorded the number of faculty, the types of issues, and other general information about cases, but of course no identifying information. [] [I needed some quantitative data to justify continuation of the program. The number of faculty involved in disputes is important to document, because of the loss of time and productivity.] Two individuals have a dispute and that costs time and threatens collaboration, and then you also involve other employees, the observers and the encouragers, for example. It gets very costly to the institution and that is an important justification for the program.

[01:20:46]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:20:45]

I don't—I'm not familiar with those terms. What—who are those people?

[01:20:48]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:20:48]

Well, okay, let's imagine that you and I were working in the same department and we are having a dispute. Well I tell my buddies about it, and now they're involved. And then the word gets out, and other employees are watching and they aren't working when they're watching. Still other people encourage it. [] Even a small dispute results in a tremendous amount of lost productivity. [] The institution loses productivity, loses employees, and replacing them, especially faculty, is very expensive.

[01:21:36]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:21:36]

Right. Well, I'm also thinking, too, it's—the conflict is limited in space and time, hopefully. Even if it's resolved, however, if it's gone on it has an impact on the culture, which endures.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[01:21:54]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:21:54]

That's a good argument for early conflict resolution, because poorly managed conflict is likely to hurt relationships and that has a negative impact on collaborations. To solve a conflict early can mean solving it in a way that is productive. For example, if two people have an argument over authorship, [there are often collegial ways to solve the issue, but by the time many faculty take action to solve the issue, the relationship has already been harmed.] []

[01:22:31]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:22:32]

Also, I mean, it—

[01:22:33]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:22:33]

Just solving it is the main thing. [laughs]

[01:22:35]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:22:35]

Just solving it, and also I think it's—and I'm thinking in today's contemporary culture where there are very few models of conflict being resolved. It's more we're at this place where there are heads yelling at one another. Having a situation in which a conflict is successfully resolved is a wonderful model. It's like, see, it can be done. And so it's sort of a beacon for people to keep in mind, which I think is very helpful.

[01:23:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:23:07]

When we first started the Faculty Ombuds Office, I went around to many departmental meetings and told them about the Ombuds Office, and the most important [point I tried to make was that] conflict can be managed, and if properly managed win/win outcomes can be achieved.

[01:23:26]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:23:28]

Are there people that you find could really, really use the services of the Ombuds Office, but for whatever reason they may be hesitant, or they choose not to come? I mean, what... What is that kind of psychology of coming to get help?

[01:23:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:23:47]

Admitting that you have a problem is not always easy. [] [Confronting issues between people requires skill and practice. The approach to manage conflict seems to differ by gender and ethnicity as well, but it is probably quite dependent on individual development.]

[01:24:44]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:24:45]

Well, a positive change.

[01:24:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:24:47]

[]

[01:25:13]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:25:14]

So what were some other strategies that you used in the beginning to raise awareness and kind of ease the pathway to the door for folks, encourage people to come and use the services?

[01:25:27]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:25:27]

Yeah. Well, like I said, [we advertised our office in a number of ways. Dr. Mendelsohn's memo was very useful because he expressed his support as well as increased awareness.] []

[01:26:04]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:26:04]

Till you need it.

[01:26:04]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:26:05]

[] think most of our business comes from word of mouth.

[01:26:13]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:26:14]

Now, how did you describe—in the beginning, how did you describe your services, and what the office actually provides?

[01:26:21]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:26:22]

[] I described our basic principles, which included confidentiality, neutrality, independence and informality. [] We stress how we're different and independent from HR, and why our office is the best first stop, because we do not create a record, and we do not start a formal process. []

[01:28:35]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:28:37]

I'm thinking, too: there's so many times when people have a very stressful situation in their lives, they got—they have a certain way of telling that story in their own heads, and I think when you sit down and tell it to someone else, that other person can help you come to a more effective way of telling that story, whether it's to other people, or—and then you can make better decisions about how you choose to act on those events.

[01:29:06]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:29:06]

[] [Yes, that is one of the most important things we do—we listen to their story and then often we reframe it in shorter and more understandable way. When we reframe their concerns, it shows them we understand their story and we give them a more concise version that leaves out inflammatory and misleading statements.]

[01:29:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:29:36]

I mean, it's just—it's a funny observation I've even made from the interview process, because often people come across something that they'll say, "Turn off the recorder," and they say "Turn off the recorder" because what's coming into their heads—they're angry; they're upset—what's coming into their heads is all the stuff they would never want to say on record. But through the

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

process of telling the story, they'll say, "Okay, turn on the recorder again," and then they've figured it out. They've calmed down, they've put things into perspective, and they can go ahead, and they can tell that story in a way that they feel comfortable with, and that makes more sense. And I can imagine that that happens all the time in here, when you've got a different perspective, and just hearing yourself put something into words that are out there in the marketplace, if you will.

[01:30:28]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:30:28]

Ye, exactly.

[01:30:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:30:29]

Yeah. I've also had the flipside happen, and I'm sure you have, too, where someone will say in an interview, "Oh, I'm not sure I'll want that on the record," and then they take a look at it in their transcript and they say, "You know, that was okay. It was okay to say that."

[01:30:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:30:45]

Yeah.

[01:30:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:30:45]

So there are different ways of putting things into perspective just by sharing it with someone else. Yeah.

[01:30:53]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:30:53]

[]

[01:31:00]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:31:00]

You are performing for everybody.

[01:31:01]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:31:01]

[]

[01:31:10]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:31:10]

Abs—and how emotions are interleaved, and do alter your own perception. You need to have those checks of other ears and eyes, what's going on.

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 06

The Ombuds Office: Early Lessons Learned and an Expansion of Services

B: Building the Institution;

Codes

A: Personal Background;
A: Overview;
A: Definitions, Explanations, Translations;
B: Institutional Processes;
B: Working Environment;
B: MD Anderson Culture;
C: Understanding the Institution;
A: Personal Background;
C: Professional Practice; C: The Professional at Work;
A: Professional Values, Ethics, Purpose;
A: Critical Perspectives; C: Critical Perspectives;
D: Ethics;
B: Institutional Politics;
B: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religion;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:31:10]+

I'm curious of what were the big themes that were coming up as faculty were coming. You mentioned authorship, suggestions—

[01:31:30]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:31:30]

Okay, back—still with the faculty?

[01:31:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:31:32]

Yeah, I'm thinking in those early years. Because this is an interesting time. You've said you're not an expert, you're—so you're kind of learning on the job—

[01:31:40]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:31:40]

Absolutely.

[01:31:41]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:31:41]

—what is this going to be in this institution.

[01:31:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:31:43]

Right. Yeah, exactly.

[01:31:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:31:45]

So what were you learning? [laughs]

[01:31:46]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:31:46]

I learned a lot from this endeavor. It changed my life in many ways. I really learned that there is a science behind managing conflict. And also about... I'm involved in more conflict than I think I am, right? I can now recognize it and know more than I did before. [] [laughs]

[01:32:53]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:32:53]

[]

[01:32:56]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:32:56]

[]

[01:33:05]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:33:05]

Well, just really about what were you learning during these initial years, the institution, and...

[01:33:11]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:33:08]

You asked what types of faculty conflicts were coming to the office, and you mentioned publications. That's a big one, but then I've had issues from sexual harassment, intellectual property, [salary, resources, clinical assignments, and so on.] About seventy percent of the issues were related to interpersonal issues between colleagues or direct supervisors.

[01:33:50]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:33:51]

And what do you mean by that?

[01:33:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:33:52]

Between two people. Most were between a faculty member and their supervisor, typically their chair. However many conflicts were between two faculty members --colleagues. And it could be over space. It could be over loud talking. It could be anything. [] There's all kinds of things like that. A lot of issues are about management by chairs. I think that that issue may be improving, but it's still a problem. []

[01:35:11]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:35:11]

Just—

[01:35:11]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:35:11]

Another common issue is promotion. Some faculty feel they haven't been put up for a promotion in a timely manner. []

[01:35:31]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:35:37]

What do they—what—they're afraid they'll lose their job?

[01:35:40]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:35:39]

[] [Yes, there are many faculty members who fear losing their job. Even some tenured faculty seem to fear that their contracts won't be renewed, even though term tenure provides good protection.]

[01:36:04]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:36:04]

I know Tom Burke [oral history interview] had mentioned that there was a particular period when there was kind of issues of—incivility was really coming forward as a problem, and so there were steps taken to address that, and...

[01:36:16]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:36:16]

Yeah.

[01:36:16]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:36:16]

But you feel that some of that is easing, and...?

[01:36:19]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:36:19]

I think it's easing, and I think it has to do with a lot of young people coming in that know better.

[01:36:23]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:36:23]

Interesting.

[01:36:24]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:36:24]

Yeah. []

[01:36:46]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:36:46]

[]

[01:36:46]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:36:48]

[]

[01:36:49]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:36:49]

[]

[01:36:51]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:36:50]

[]

[01:37:25]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:37:26]

[]

[01:37:27]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:37:27]

[]

[01:37:27]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:37:28]

And I know, too, that even sometimes not even within the scope of something that looks like harassment—I mean, other cultures have different conventions about how close you stand to someone, or just the proxemics thing, and it may have nothing to do with male/female but just people tend to position themselves—they don't need as much space as Americans do around them to feel psychologically comfortable. So there can be those issues, too.

[01:37:56]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:37:57]

I had a young woman come to me and say that her boss brought her into his office and said, “You have such beautiful blue eyes.” And she says, “Thank you.” Then he says, “Do you like your job here?” [laughs] Oh my God. I thought, how stupid can a person be? So, now, how do you prove that?

[01:38:19]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:38:19]

Exactly, yeah. Exactly. [laughs]

[01:38:24]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:38:28]

I’m no expert on this.

[01:38:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:38:32]

I wanted to just quickly ask you about the question of leaders not being taught to lead, and then there’s the Faculty Leadership Academy that came in and all that, and did you find that sort of addressing that pipeline and providing some of those skills, that that began to change issues that you were seeing here? Because it’s in—you’re providing an important set of services that are addressing the culture, and then there are other things going on. I’m interested in how they all start interacting with one another.

[01:39:05]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:39:06]

You know, I’ve had examples that were successes, right? But I must say, I have little measurable evidence that I’ve changed anything, when it comes to that, because we still have quite a few people who just ignore the rules. []

[01:39:37]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:39:38]

And what’s—

[01:39:38]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:39:38]

[] Our new president [Peter Pisters, MD], for example, certainly seems to be enlightened, [but cultural change is slow].

[01:39:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:39:46]

Yeah, totally different. The subject matter that he raises in his public presentations is different from other presidents.

[01:39:54]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:39:54]

Now, the question is [will behavior change?] []

[01:40:29]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:40:29]

What do you think those barriers are?

[01:40:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:40:32]

Well, if [a faculty member is very successful, gains a good reputation in the scientific community, and is] very good at bringing in money to the institution, [there may be a little hesitation before they become subject to disciplinary action.] They get away with more, even though they shouldn't. And it's—people can talk the talk, but when it comes to action, it's not so easy. It's not so easy. [This is part of the slowness of cultural change.] []

[01:41:27]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:41:27]

Wow.

[01:41:27]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:41:27]

That's the kind of advice I thought I would never give anyone.

[01:41:30]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:41:30]

Oh my gosh.

[01:41:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:41:31]

And I think I was right in that case. About two years later that situation was corrected. [] I don't know the details of it. I just know the outcome. []

[01:41:51]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:41:51]

Well, that's good. And what do—

[01:41:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:41:52]

[]

[01:41:55]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:41:55]

[]

[01:41:59]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:41:58]

[]

[01:42:27]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:42:32]

[]

[01:42:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:42:44]

[]

[01:42:51]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:42:51]

[]

[01:42:53]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:42:53]

Okay, [back to the] transition [of the Ombuds Office to serve all employees.] I told Dr. Mendelsohn that we were getting a lot of cases of conflict between faculty and nonfaculty. Many employees were saying, “We’ve heard about the Ombuds Office, we want to use it, can we.” [The problem was that I was perceived as being a representative of the faculty member. After all, this was the “Faculty Ombuds Office”.] I told Dr. Mendelsohn, “I really think it’s a good idea to look into expanding this program for all employees.” I talked to him about [the need for a confidential resource for all employees that was separate from the administration and Human Resources. We also discussed] the economic advantages of it. []

[01:43:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:43:32]

What were the arguments that you made for that, or the supports that you presented for the economic advantages?

[01:43:38]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:43:37]

Well, yeah, turnover is a big problem here, and so that was one of the arguments there. The loss of productivity there, and the need. And I told—I tried to convince him that people really trust the office, and he’d seen the results in the faculty. And so he was very openminded to it, and told me to write a proposal. And I’d already written one, so I gave it to him.

[01:44:08]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:44:08]

What year was this?

[01:44:09]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:44:10]

Probably 2004 or ’05, somewhere around there. He took the proposal to the President’s Advisory Committee [and I also presented the proposal to them.] [] [There was some opposition, but most of the committee seemed to like the idea.] []

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[01:44:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:44:34]

[]

[01:44:38]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:44:39]

[]

[01:44:40]

[Redacted]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:45:21]

[] Dr. Mendelsohn's committee approved the program expansion, but before we could implement the program, there was a big economic crunch, and it was shelved. [The proposal was resurrected in 2006 [with excellent support.] [] [I made it clear that I was not interested in being the director of the expended program because I didn't feel qualified to set up an institution wide program with my limited experience.] I had some success with the faculty, but we need an experienced professional to set up a program the right we. I said, "We need to do a national search [and find a highly qualified professional with lots of experience.]"

[01:46:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:46:17]

That's interesting, yeah.

[01:46:18]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:46:18]

[] [I am not sure that a faculty member would have been the best person for the job.]

[01:46:22]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:46:22]

[]

[01:46:23]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[Redacted]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:46:41]

[]

[01:46:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:46:43]

[]

[01:46:46]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:46:48]

[]

[01:46:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:46:52]

So, we did have a national search, and we found Anu Rao [] .

[01:47:00]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:47:00]

I've heard her name, but I haven't interviewed her, or... Yeah.

[01:47:04]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:47:04]

[]

[01:47:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:47:30]

Oh, interesting. Okay.

[01:47:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:47:31]

[]

[01:47:32]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:47:32]

Oh, all right.

[01:47:33]

\$\$

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:47:33]

Okay. Anu was trained at Penn. [She graduated from the Wharton MBA Program there], and she [] had a lot of experience running ombuds programs. [At the time we recruited her, she was working as an Ombuds for the Coca Cola Corporation in Atlanta.] [] [When she arrived at MDA she hit the ground running, organizing expanded space, developing a policy that covered all employees, writing a charter for office operations, prepared new literature, and made contact with much of the staff. We soon had an active training program, tailored for different employee groups and the doors opened with a large group of employees waiting.] [] [She even had a real “elevator talk” she used every day.]

[01:48:31]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:48:31]

Oh, wow.

[01:48:31]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:48:31]

[]

[01:48:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:48:34]

Wow, wow.

[01:48:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:48:35]

And so she was great for the program, and got it off really on the right foot, and we had a really good working relationship, and hired more Ombuds staff.

[01:48:51]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:48:51]

Wow.

[01:48:51]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:48:52]

She was really good. []

[01:49:16]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:49:17]

Was this focusing on conflict management?

[01:49:18]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:49:19]

Yes. Everything was related to conflict management. [] Employees loved it, the classes were full. [] [Everyone is interested in conflict and they get very interested when we describe how it can be managed.]

[01:49:41]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:49:40]

Yeah. Well, I think you'd be hard pressed to find somebody who doesn't have it in their life.

[laughter] It's kind of the human problem, and particularly in institutions.

[01:49:53]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:49:53]

Yes, [] once you get at least two people in the room, need conflict management.

[01:50:03]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:50:03]

And you have conflict management, yeah.

[01:50:04]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:50:04]

Yes, it's true. When you're meeting with anyone, you're strategizing. You can't help it, and it's different depending on how many people are in the room, or who they are, and so forth.

[01:50:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:50:17]

Yeah. Absolutely true. Well, do you want to close off for today, and then we'll figure out another time, and then we'll kind of continue the story?

[01:50:26]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:50:26]

Let's do it after the first of the year.

[01:50:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:50:28]

Okay, that sounds good. Sounds like a plan. I will look at my calendar. All right, well, I will just—

[01:50:32]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:50:32]

Okay, send an email, and we'll do that, and I'll look around for a CV to send to you.

[01:50:36]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:50:36]

Sounds good. Well, I will—just want to say for the record that it is five minutes of 1:00, and I am turning off the recorder. And I want to say thank you again.

[01:50:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:50:45]

You're welcome, and thank you for doing this. I know that people in this office are looking forward to... [laughs]

[01:50:52]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:50:52]

Yeah, good.

[01:50:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:50:53]

And when they...

[01:50:53]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:50:53]

Yeah. No, I had a lovely chat with the team, and, yeah, they're thinking about really great uses for it, so... Yeah, thank you.

[01:51:03]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill [William A.] Brock, PhD

Interview Session Two: January 22, 2019

Chapter 00B
Interview Identifier

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:00]

I just want to say for the record that it is five minutes of 11:00 on—oh my gosh, did I check the date? January 22nd? Is it...?

[00:00:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:07]

Mm-hmm.

[00:00:07]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:07]

January 22nd, 2019. [laughs] Coming out of a long weekend, it's like, okay, getting back in gear. And I'm on the fourth floor of the Cancer Prevention Building in the Ombuds Office for my second session with Dr. William Brock. So thank you very much. And—

[00:00:24]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:24]

You're welcome.

[00:00:24]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 07

Developing the Ombudsman's Office: John Mendelsohn and Anu Rao

B: Building the Institution;

Codes

C: Leadership; D: On Leadership;

C: Portraits;

B: MD Anderson Culture;

B: Institutional Processes;

B: Working Environment;

C: Understanding the Institution;

A: Personal Background;

C: Professional Practice; C: The Professional at Work;

A: Critical Perspectives; C: Critical Perspectives;

D: Ethics;

B: Institutional Politics;

B: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religion;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:00:24]

Yeah! And so we were strategizing a little bit and we ended up last time with Anu Rao's arrival at the institution, and I was interested in kind of more of what she brought, and then how the department started to evolve, the office started to evolve underneath her direction.

[00:00:45]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:00:45]

Okay. As I said before, we started out as a Faculty Ombuds Office in 2000, and because that was working well, [] and there seemed to be a growing interest in having an Ombuds Office for all employees. [] And since we had many cases that involved faculty and nonfaculty employees, so the need was there, and the word that the Faculty Ombuds Office existed was getting out.

And so I went to Dr. Mendelsohn and talked to him about that. []

[00:02:00]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:02:00]

And it's quite striking, I mean, that he really provided a great deal of support for this new area. I found that interesting. Obviously, the institution was poised for a group of reasons. It was sort of in the wind that this was really needed, and—because getting that executive support is so key.

[00:02:16]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:02:17]

Right, and I think that Dr. Mendelsohn's personality was such that he had an interest in the development of fairness among employees. []

[00:02:41]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:02:41]

[]

[00:02:46]

[Redacted]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:06:42]

Well, I just thought he was a good leader, and I thought he did a great job of, number one, trying to improve the quality of the faculty. And [he made efforts to improve the culture of the institution.] []

[00:07:19]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:07:20]

[]

[00:07:20]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:07:20]

[]

[00:07:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:07:34]

[]

[00:07:35]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:07:35]

[]

[00:07:37]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:07:37]

[] And I'll just say for the record that kind of was hanging over this conversation about John Mendelsohn is he passed away about a week and a half ago [7 January 2019], and so the institution's been remembering and grieving him, so... Yeah, yeah. And his obit in the *Times* came out just a few days ago.

[00:07:58]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:07:59]

[].

[00:08:00]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:00]

[]

[00:08:13]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:13]

[]

[00:08:14]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:14]

[]

[00:08:19]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:19]

[]

[00:08:22]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:21]

[]

[00:08:29]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:29]

[]

[00:08:29]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:08:30]

[]

[00:08:32]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:08:32]

Okay, so to get back to where we were, with Anu Rao. Once it became clear that I didn't want the job of heading an ombuds program for the entire institution, because I really didn't have the experience or the training for it, we went on a national search for someone, and came up with Anu Rao, who was working for Coca-Cola at the time.

[00:09:00]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:00]

Yeah, you mentioned some of her work doing that, yeah.

[00:09:02]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:02]

Right. And she came here, and I think she turned out to be the perfect person to start a program, because she hit the ground running, and set up a charter and all of the necessary approvals from the institution, and made agreements with Legal and everything about how we were going to operate, and how we were going to keep records, and so forth. And—

[00:09:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:32]

What were those discussions like? Because I'm always curious with Legal—even with the oral history project, we have these conversations, because there's a sense, no, there's one way you do it, and you have to do it this way. Did you guys run into issues like that with Legal? I mean, not understanding kind of the specificity of a function area.

[00:09:51]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:52]

Yes, we—

[00:09:52]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:09:52]

Not that—

[00:09:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:09:52]

—we've run into one type of issue with the legal department [and it is not surprising]. []

[Conversation with an Ombudsperson are not privileged, like they are with an attorney.

Therefore, if there is a legal issue with an employee, the legal department is naturally interested if they discussed their issue with the Ombuds Office and if we have any records of the meeting.

So, they send the office a memo telling us to preserve any records of the individual. The

International Ombudsman Association recommends that we resist providing any records or information, although we have no legal right to withhold that information.] []

[00:10:18]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:10:18]

Right, like attorney-client privilege or something like that, yeah.

[00:10:21]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:10:20]

[] Over the years, [I would estimate that legal has asked for fewer than five files.] [] [Now, the question is: does the employee file contain useful information, and I would suggest that it does not contain much. An open case contains the employee's name, demographics, title and other similar information. It also contains documents given to us by the employee and any notes we take during the meeting(s). It may also contain a general description of the type of issue the employee brings to the office. After we are finished with the case, all identifying information is automatically deleted from our database, leaving only demographics, issue type, employee title, etc. If a case has been closed, there is no way we can link any specific person to that case.]

[00:11:41]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:11:41]

Do you keep your individual case notes?

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:11:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:11:45]

We keep case notes while the case is open but when we close a case, the folder and everything in it is shredded. [Database information is treated as I described above.] []

[00:12:39]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:12:39]

That's so important.

[00:12:40]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:12:40]

Yes. [] [Document destruction is written into our policy and charter and it was approved by legal, including the Attorney General's office. There are ongoing efforts to give Ombuds and their records privileged status in Texas, but that is something for the future.]

[00:13:11]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:13:11]

Do you have the sense, is it a time issue, or is there some resistance to doing that?

[00:13:14]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:13:15]

I think there's resistance.

[00:13:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:13:17]

What would there be? What resistance would there be?

[00:13:20]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:13:24]

I don't know. []

[00:13:36]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:13:36]
Yeah, interesting.
[00:13:37]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:13:37]
[]
[00:13:37]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:13:38]
So you were going through ways that Anu Rao kind of hit the ground running, and that was one of the areas. What were some of the other things that she—a big change she made?
[00:13:46]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:13:45]
I just can't imagine how she did this, but within a year she knew [hundreds of people] in the institution. [] She joined committees and increased the size of the program. []
[00:14:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:14:28]
Oh, interesting.
[00:14:28]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:14:28]
[]
[00:14:33]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:14:33]
Interesting. Now, I had noticed that there was a special ombudsperson who was dedicated to nursing. Is that the case?
[00:14:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:14:44]
Okay, so we'll go back in time now.

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:14:46]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:14:45]

And, I mean, this was part of the general question... Okay, so that actually happened earlier.

[00:14:49]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:14:49]

So my vision, when I first started the program, was to first have an ombudsperson for the faculty. Another area was the Division of Nursing that would benefit from Ombuds services, so I thought we should hire and train a part-time nurse for this purpose.] []

[00:15:28]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:15:28]

What were the issues coming up that were so specialized that they required that kind of expertise in intervention?

[00:15:36]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:15:36]

Well, my thought was that if you have expertise in a specific field—like I did as a faculty member—that you could be of more assistance to employees in that specialty, okay? [] As a result, Janice Freeman, [] [a highly experienced nurse at MD Anderson was trained as an ombudsperson] and worked part time with nursing issues, right? [] [Janice Freeman was very good and that arrangement worked very well. However, when Anu Rao took over leadership of the program, she said that all Ombuds should serve all employees, because it is better for their experience and because many conflicts won't necessarily be between employees of the same speciality. She was right!]

[00:16:32]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:16:32]

Interesting.

[00:16:33]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:16:33]

And she was absolutely right about that. []

[00:16:57]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:16:57]
What were you—
[00:16:58]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:16:58]
—no more...
[00:16:59]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:16:59]
I didn't mean to cut you off. Sorry.
[00:17:00]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:17:00]
[] And at that point I realized how little I knew about the rest of the institution, and how little I knew about HR, because the faculty have Academic Affairs to take care of most of their personnel issues. And so I didn't really know how HR operated. []
[00:17:26]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:17:27]
What were some of the things that you—kind of made you really change that perspective? Because that's a radical change of perspective.
[00:17:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:17:35]
What do you mean?
[00:17:36]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:17:36]
Well, in the sense... I mean, that was the question I was going to ask is what is it that opens your eyes to the fact that the activity of an ombudsperson doesn't have to be linked to a specialty, that it's a general issue.
[00:17:50]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:17:50]

The beginning of that came when I talked to [] [Judge Frank Evans at] the South Texas College of Law, where I took mediation training. Frank Evans [is considered to be the “father of mediation in Texas.”] He told me, “You can mediate any situation without knowing anything about the issues or the people [or their line of work. It’s all the same. It’s probably helpful, but you really don’t need to be an expert in the field.”] [] I have found over the years that he is right. Does that answer your question?

[00:18:50]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:18:50]

Yeah, I was just curious, because, I mean, I think the presumption—and part of it goes—I think goes along with a culture that says there’s this group we call the faculty that’s really special. I mean, we’re sort of having a conversation about that now, because leadership training is being combined with HR, and there’s a lot of, well, wait a minute, combined training can’t possibly acknowledge the special challenges of faculty members, and this kind of thing. There’s the idea that faculty somehow is special. And in the—as a subgroup they do have kind of characteristics, things that are unique to their experience. So that idea is part of the culture, and shifting away from it and getting people to embrace that there can be someone who’s a generalist who comes in and just helps with this focus problem of conflict, I think that’s like a paradigm shift for people. So I was curious how you had shifted over and changed your perspective from specialty needed to we don’t need a specialty focus.

[00:19:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:19:53]

Well, as it turns out, conflicts are all based on similar issues. Most issues are based on interpersonal relationships, and so faculty are not any better at handling conflict than any other person, right? [Helping faculty or other employees isn’t fundamentally different and faculty are not any better at managing conflict than any other employee.] []

[00:20:53]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:20:54]

So what happened with the ombuds for nursing, or for...? Was that kind of specialization kind of sunsetted, or...?

[00:21:03]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:21:04]

Well, Janice started playing a different kind of role. She was no longer a specialist, although we did make use of her specialized knowledge in nursing. We were all sort of generalists at that point. []

[00:21:51]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:21:51]

Why was that an issue?

[00:21:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:21:53]

Well, they just were different rules, and we had the faculty appeals process, which was the equivalent of a grievance, but it was a different process, with different steps, and different timetable, and so forth.

[00:22:10]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:22:11]

Now, you mentioned when your perspective is kind of changing, you were realizing how little you knew, A, about the institution, and, B, about HR. So tell me more about kind of the big learning moments in discovering—what were the landmark discoveries about the institution, and then about HR that helped you move forward in your own work as an ombudsperson?

[00:22:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:22:33]

Well, the main thing is I just had to find out what the processes were, and I did that by reading policies. And the big one at first was the grievance policy. I had to learn the process so I could tell employees about it because most employees who want help with grievance have never done it and have no idea what the process is, and you really can't—you can't tell them the wrong thing, [laughter] especially on the timetable. []

[00:23:11]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:23:11]

How so?

[00:23:11]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:23:12]

Well, you have so many days to file a grievance, and if you don't do within that time, you lose the opportunity to file. That's it. []

[00:24:15]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:24:17]

[]

[00:24:25]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:24:25]

[]

[00:25:09]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:25:09]

What were those?

[00:25:09]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:25:10]

Everything was conflict resolution, difficult conversations, [how to reframe issues, all related to conflict.] []

[00:25:48]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:25:48]

What were some of the things you discovered through that? I mean, was this...?

[00:25:53]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:25:55]

Well, [teaching is the best way to learn. I learned a lot about basic interview skills, may techniques for managing conflict,] and the science behind it. In other words, what is a conflict, how does it progress, and what types of conflicts are there, and personality types and strategies for dealing with them. []

[00:26:34]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:26:34]

It sounds like you must have had a really tight team feel.

[00:26:38]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:26:38]

Yes, it was and there was never any conflict amongst us [and everyone was willing to pitch in when needed.] We all worked so well together. It's probably the most unified group I've ever worked with. [The office functions in the same way now.]

[00:26:52]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:26:53]

Very interesting. So the impact of these training programs, did you kind of track what happened as a result of them? Did people say yeah, they felt were functional? I mean, all that kind of stuff.

[00:27:11]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:27:11]

Well, a lot of people who went to the training program then came to our office with the specific issues. The training programs always had a lot of participation in the groups, and they would act out different situations and conflicts. []

[00:27:40]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:27:40]

Yeah, if you did that at all.

[00:27:41]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:27:41]

Part of the results would be tracked by just people coming to the office and developing a relationship with us, so we could see what was going on. And, well, we got feedback from the people that were in the course. We gave them an evaluative questionnaire to fill out.

[00:28:02]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:28:04]

So what did you feel—what kind of impact did you feel you were making?

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:28:08]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:28:10]

Well, we were seeing every year probably three and four percent of all employees. [That is similar to Ombuds offices throughout the nation. It was difficult to evaluate individual cases, because of our confidentiality policy. Also, after a visitor leaves our office, most do not want to hear from us again. We assume if things aren't going well, they will come back.]

[00:28:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:28:17]

Really? Wow.

[00:28:17]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:28:18]

Yeah. And everybody says that seems like a small number, but it isn't a small number, yeah.

[00:28:23]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:28:24]

[laughs] Well, three percent of 20,000 people!

[00:28:27]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:28:27]

That would be the employees who would come here with an issue, and also the people that we would draw in to help solve that issue. [] Efforts have also been made to determine what is the economic impact of an ombuds office, and so—

[00:29:16]

[00:29:16]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:29:16]

Yeah, I was going to ask you about that.

[00:29:17]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:29:17]

A huge impact is the cost of losing an employee; what does it cost to hire a replacement. [] There have been estimates made by other offices, but it's really difficult to [measure]. Another part of the economic argument is what does it cost in terms of lost effort. As I mentioned before, when employees are involved in a conflict, they're not working effectively. And the people that are observing the conflict are not working effectively. They're watching and maybe even encouraging or getting involved. So that's another aspect of the economic cost of conflict. Collaborations, which are so important in this institution a lot, can be destroyed through conflict, but on the other hand, we have many examples where collaborations have been enhanced by [good conflict resolution], especially when it comes to issues like authorship [or experimental work].

[00:30:36]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:30:37]

Did you guys put together any—did you take a stab at putting numbers to all this? I mean, was there ever that—

[00:30:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:30:44]

Well, we produce a yearly report, in which we would include the number of contacts, [job titles and the general issues. The issues are divided into] [] nine general categories, and each general category had subcategories in it that would kind of explain what the conflict was all about. And usually a conflict will have two or three of those related issues.

[00:31:30]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:31:32]

But you never made an attempt to kind of put numbers to kind of push that financial argument a little farther?

[00:31:40]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:31:40]

No. [We have not tried to make those estimates.]

[00:31:40]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:31:40]

Yeah, that's a tough one.

[00:31:42]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:31:42]

That is very difficult to do, and I don't think anyone has been successful in [generating useful numbers. A number of years ago, the] American Express [Ombuds Office] made an estimate of the cost of conflict, and these estimates were astronomically high. []

[00:32:11]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 08

Thoughts on the Culture of MD Anderson

B: Overview;

Codes

B: MD Anderson Culture;
C: Leadership; D: On Leadership;
B: MD Anderson Culture;
B: Institutional Processes;
B: Working Environment;
C: Understanding the Institution;
A: Personal Background;
C: Professional Practice; C: The Professional at Work;
A: Professional Values, Ethics, Purpose;
A: Critical Perspectives; C: Critical Perspectives;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:32:13]

Yeah. I had some questions that I wanted to ask you about, really, the—exploring a little more this relationship with MD Anderson culture. And I guess I just wanted to ask you your observations. Do you feel, just thinking about MD Anderson culture in a kind of global way, does it have characteristics that you feel kind of distinguish it from other institutions? How would you describe that? And I have a reason for setting us on this little path, because...

[laughs] But how would you evaluate that?

[00:32:58]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:32:59]

The culture of MD Anderson?

[00:33:01]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:33:01]

Mm-hmm.

[00:33:01]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:33:03]

[MD Anderson is the only “real” job I have ever had, so it difficult to compare my direct experience with other institutions.] I started as a postdoc was a faculty member for many years, and so I saw that side of the MD Anderson culture. I find that the people here are very dedicated. They’re very serious about cancer. In the forty-some years I was here, I don’t think I heard a single joke about cancer. [] So [the mission] is taken very seriously. When I became an ombudsperson here, it [broadened my view of the institution. It appears to me that the non-faculty employees] are the people that really carry the culture. []

[00:33:57]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:33:57]

Really?

[00:33:58]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:33:58]

[] Most employees are very proud to be working here. They really feel like they’re part of something important. No matter what their job is, they feel that they’re contributing to cancer care. [Redacted

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:36:36]

Now, I wanted to kind of start this conversation, because there have been a lot of changes at the institution. There was John Mendelsohn, and then as—we have Ronald DePinho, and then we had a transition team, and now we have a new president [Peter Pisters, MD]. And so I’m curious what your observations have been about any changes in the culture over that time.

[00:37:02]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:37:04]

[I can’t say much about cultural change with presidents from Dr. Mendelsohn to Dr. Pisters. I knew Dr. Mendelsohn and he was very interested and supportive of our program. When Dr. DePinho arrived, I was no longer director of the program and had limited contact with him. [Cultural change happens much more slowly that the tenure of a president.] []

[00:37:49]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:37:48]

Remind me of the year that you retired, again? To part-time?

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:37:52]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:37:52]

Two thousand and six.

[00:37:53]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:37:53]

Two thousand and six, yeah, okay.

[00:37:55]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:38:00]

[]

[00:38:43]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:38:44]

[]

[00:38:44]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:38:44]

[]

[00:38:48]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:38:48]

[]

[00:39:12]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:39:12]

[]

[00:39:24]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:39:23]

Can you kind of—in general brushstrokes, what were some of the new things that were coming up?

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:39:28]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:39:33]

[I haven't been in the mainstream of faculty politics for many years. I heard a lot, but most of it falls into the category of rumor.] []

[00:39:53]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:39:53]

Yeah, and that's fine. No, no, no, that's fine. I really did mean general brushstrokes. And, I mean, another related question I was going to ask was about communication, and if it seemed that there were sort of new kind of communication challenges that people were having, different... That's a very vague question, I know, but...

[00:40:18]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:40:18]

With the change of leadership?

[00:40:19]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:40:19]

Yeah. Because there are norms of communication in a culture—this is the way we do things here—and I'm wondering if there were kind of new communication challenges that were coming up with this sort of shifted culture. Culture's hard to get a finger on, I know, but I wondered if you had impressions about that kind of thing.

[00:40:39]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:40:40]

[]

[00:41:08]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:41:09]

[]

[00:41:11]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:41:11]

[]

[00:41:24]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:41:24]

[]

[00:41:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:41:47]

Well, the fairness thing I'm talking about had to do with things like hiring, where the people came from, how—inequities in salaries, things like that, plus bullying, belligerent behavior. Because there were a lot of new people here.

[00:42:06]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:42:06]

Right, yep, who also came from very different cultures.

[00:42:10]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:42:10]

Yes.

[00:42:10]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:42:11]

Yep, yep. Academic and regional and all of that.

[00:42:15]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:42:16]

[]

[00:42:19]

Making Cancer History*

Interview Session: 02

Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:42:19]

Yeah. Interesting. Okay. And the elitism? I mean, obviously could be connected, but were there other kind of things that were connected with the elitism question that you were hearing? Again, not asking you to reveal anything.

[00:42:34]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:42:39]

Not that I can mention without being very specific.

[00:42:42]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:42:42]

Okay, that's fine.

[00:42:43]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:42:44]

[]

[00:43:03]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:43:03]

Yeah. No, he certainly had deep feeling about cancer.

[00:43:06]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:43:06]

Yeah, he did, and I thought some of his initiatives were very good. The Moon Shots was a great idea. At first I thought that is just way too ambitious, but it certainly attracted money, and one can't argue against that.

[00:43:26]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:43:26]

Right. I mean, John Mendelsohn would say you really do need to have what he called the "big, hairy goal," and that certainly qualifies as a big, hairy goal. [laughter] And it inspires people.

[00:43:35]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:43:35]

Yeah.

[00:43:36]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:43:36]

It can, yeah. Do you have any sense at all from even casual conversation about what's been going on since Dr. DePinho's resignation, and kind of the turbulence that the institution has been in?

[00:43:50]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:43:52]

No, I don't know much about that. [] there seems to be optimism with some of the initiatives, especially those about civility, and the promises that were made. []

[00:44:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:44:17]

Okay. Well, I wanted to ask you about that.

[00:44:20]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:44:20]

[]

[00:44:37]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:44:38]

I mean, certainly since when Marshall Hicks [oral history interview] took over and created the team to transition to the new president, there was suddenly a new attention to a lot of these. I mean, Marshall Hicks sort of describes it as a more intentional, quote, "care and feeding of the culture." And now that Peter Pisters has arrived, there's all this language of emotional intelligence and all that kind of thing. So you're saying, wait a minute; you're looking with a more jaded eye at this.

[00:45:08]

[Redacted]

Making Cancer History*
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:47:08]

Now, in your ideal world, what kinds of initiatives, and what kind of change process, must be put in place, or would you say put this in place in order to make changes in culture at this fundamental level to make a difference? And—

[00:47:35]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:47:35]

[]

[00:47:40]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:47:41]

[]

[00:48:08]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:10]

[]

[00:48:15]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:48:15]

[]

[00:48:15]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:16]

[]

[00:48:17]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:48:17]

[]

[00:48:17]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:48:17]

[]

[00:49:11]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:49:11]

[]

[00:49:11]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:49:11]

[]

[00:50:09]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:50:09]

[]

[00:50:10]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:50:10]

[]

[00:50:10]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:50:11]

And I haven't ... A lot of narratives I've collected from leaders who were basically self-taught leaders, that they decided this was important to them, but they had to figure it out on their own. And I get—I did interview Janis Apted Yadiny [oral history interview] with the Leadership Academy, and all—faculty development, and all that, at least on that side of the house.

[00:50:33]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:50:33]

That was at the beginning.

[00:50:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:50:34]

Yeah, exactly.

[00:50:35]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:50:36]

We started out with the Rice course, and I was in that first group, and that was terrific.

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[00:50:45]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:50:45]

Oh, really? You were in that group?

[00:50:46]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:50:46]

[]

[00:51:01]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:51:01]

Oh, really?

[00:51:02]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:51:02]

[] Before that, there was no training whatsoever. I mean, you go to medical school, you get your degree, and you practice medicine [or do research], and then suddenly you are in charge of a bunch of people, so you treat them the way you think you're supposed to treat them. [Some are very bad at supervision and some are very good. One of the big differences between leaders] are those who consider their position to be a privilege rather than a responsibility. If they would focus on their responsibilities as a leader, [the would help their employees develop and increase quality.] []

[00:52:08]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Chapter 09

On the Long-Term Relevance of the Ombudsman's Office and Retirement

A: Overview;

Codes

A: Post Retirement Activities;

A: Contributions;

B: Working Environment;

C: Leadership; D: On Leadership;

B: MD Anderson Culture;

B: Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religion;

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:52:10]

Now, as you look at the Ombuds Office's continued role as the institution evolves, what do you think is the impact that it can have? And are there additional things that the Ombuds Office can begin to do to have more of an impact as the institution goes on and continues to change?

[00:52:30]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:52:32]

Well, I've always been in favor of limiting what the Ombuds Office does. I think we should deal with conflict, and I don't think we ought to go very far beyond that, because [of the need for confidentiality.] [] [However the office should continue to do as much training as possible].

[00:53:24]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:53:24]

Well, tell me about the—because you're implying that there are maybe some advantages of conflict, if it's managed well. What about those strategic advantages?

[00:53:32]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:53:34]

Well, the idea of a win-win situation. And so you get people that are—let's say two researchers are conflicting over a research project. They may be competing with each other, trying to outdo each other, and they may be hiding information from each other. [] [This can lead to conflict and have a negative impact on both of them. This type of conflict, properly managed, can lead to a collaborative outcome and benefit both of them.]

[00:54:34]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

[Redacted]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[00:59:24]

So what have you been doing since your retirement?

[00:59:27]

Bill Brock, PhD

[00:59:28]

Well, we've been doing a lot—quite a bit of traveling. My last day was the last day at MD Anderson was August 31, 2018. We bought a motor home, and we immediately left on a two-month trip out West. [We went through Colorado, Utah and Nevada to Oregon, down the west coast and came back through Arizona and New Mexico as the weather started to get cool.] We decided to enjoy seeing the things in the United States we've never seen before, and we have covered most of it already. And so we're going to do that for another year or two, sell the motor home and then do something else.

[01:00:05]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:00:06]

Oh, cool.

[01:00:06]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:00:06]

Then we're going to sell it and do something else.

[01:00:08]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:00:08]

That's really cool. Do you have a special attachment to the West, or is that where you just went right after?

[01:00:14]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:00:14]

There was a lot out West we hadn't seen, especially in places like Arizona, Utah, and Wyoming. [The national parks in Utah are amazing.] []

[01:01:05]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:01:05]
I'm glad. So now that you've had—
[01:01:07]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:01:07]
The trip before took us up the East Coast and through Eastern Canada. Another great trip.
We're starting to repeat ourselves a little bit. [laughter]
[01:01:14]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:01:14]
Well, that's good. You don't want to—you always go back to a slightly different place, because
you see it with—the revisiting, you see it with new eyes.
[01:01:23]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:01:23]
Yeah, and you miss it.
[01:01:24]

[Redacted]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:03:59]

Is there anything else you'd like to add?
[01:04:01]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:04:07]
I can't think of it. If you think of something, we can have another meeting. [laughs]
[01:04:11]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:04:11]
Okay, that sounds like a plan.
[01:04:13]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:04:13]

Yeah. What time is it now?

[01:04:14]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:04:14]

It's just noon, so you've got plenty of time to get to your next meeting. Well, I want to say it's been a real pleasure talking to you, and...

[01:04:22]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:04:23]

Thank you, and same here. I'm glad you're doing this program. I don't know exactly how it's going to be used. Is it being used now by anyone?

[01:04:34]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:04:34]

People do access the collection pretty regularly. It's—the interviews are available in transcript and audio form online, and people search through it.

[01:04:47]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:04:47]

They want to hear what their buddies have said, right?

[01:04:48]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:04:48]

I don't know. Well, we don't track who uses it. We can't—don't have access to that. And then there are a number of uses—I've put material, too, and take excerpts, and it's used for training, all that kind of thing, so... Hopefully—

[01:05:00]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:05:00]

I assume you talked to Mendelsohn before he got sick.

[01:05:03]

Making Cancer History®
Interview Session: 02
Interview Date: January 22, 2019

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:05:03]

I did, yeah, have...

[01:05:05]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:05:05]

Yeah, that's good.

[01:05:06]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:05:06]

[]

[01:05:15]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:05:15]

[]

[01:05:33]

T.A. Rosolowski, PhD

[01:05:33]

Well, let me just say for the record, again, thank you, and I am turning off the recorder at about one minute after noon.

[01:05:42]

Bill Brock, PhD

[01:05:42]

Okay, thank you.

[01:05:44]