

4-23-2016

P. George Bird and Reinhard Wittke Oral History Interview, 2016 April 23

Alexis Braun Marks

Eastern Michigan University, abraunma@emich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.emich.edu/oral_histories

Recommended Citation

Braun Marks, Alexis, "P. George Bird and Reinhard Wittke Oral History Interview, 2016 April 23" (2016). *Oral Histories*. 1.
http://commons.emich.edu/oral_histories/1

This oral history is brought to you for free by the Sound Recordings at DigitalCommons@EMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Oral Histories by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@EMU. For more information, please contact lib-ir@emich.edu.

Oral History Interview with P. George Bird [GB] and Reinhard Wittke [RW]

Interview conducted by Alexis Braun Marks, University Archivist

Also present Laura Bird [LB]

Recorded 2016 April 23

Third in a three part series of interviews

Laura Bird (LB): Yes please, I want one of Reinhard's famous jokes...

George Bird (GB): There ain't no coffee left...

Alexis Braun Marks (ABM): Would you like some?

LB: I think that's my cue...

[all laugh]

GB: Well you have a friend here...

Reinhard Wittke (RW): Well let's see ...the early part, you started with John Sattler right?

GB: John Sattler, you bet.

RW: Yeah, yeah...

GB: Well John was a great guy

RW: He was, yeah

GB: He really was, a great department head. He really pushed that department [English and Speech] hard I thought.

RW: Well you had a very good department really...your productions in that theatre always had been first class.

GB: Well we tried...

RW: Well...

GB: Well John was the perfect department head in many, many ways...

RW: Well he was resilient

GB: Yes.

LB: Reinhard, would you like some water, coffee, tea.

RW: Maybe a little water, maybe

LB: Wild water...okay

RW: Because Coffee, Tea, reminds me of Coffee, Tea or Me...

[all laugh]

ABM: Thank you

RW: Well, we went through a number of president's didn't we?

GB: Pardon?

RW: We went through a number of presidents, we started with Eugene Elliott.

GB: Who was a very, very, very, good president...

RW: Yep. Remember we would have a meeting at the beginning of the year, and remember his famous line?

ABM: What was his famous line?

RW: We have a tight budget...we have a tight budget

ABM: George and I were just saying, or talking the other day that that's Eastern's problem, has always been...never enough money.

GB: Never enough money.

RW: Well that's not only Eastern.

GB: And I never thought that we got our share from the State either...

ABM: No

GB: I never did, I always felt we got jipped there...Central got more, Western got more...Western should get more, Central should not.

ABM: Why should Western get more but Central not?

GB: Because they've been there longer and they are a bigger University and they've got a hospital and...

RW: Well with all the schools....

GB: You may not believe that about Central....

RW: Well with all the schools, Eastern's salary scale was the lowest of the lot.

GB: That's right...and their football team is the worst too.

RW: Well...yeah, that's too bad. It wasn't always that way though. Remember when Fred Trosco coached?

GB: That's true...

RW: and he was coach of the year? And I think we did very well until we signed up to play Southern Illinois and then I think the score was 85 to nothing. Not in favor of Eastern.

LB: Did you hear that George?

ABM: Can you hear Reinhard okay? [GB nodding] Okay?

GB: I can hear all that, and can remember a lot of that extremely well... unfortunately.

RW: Well we had that big stadium at Briggs Field

GB: Talk about embarrassing

RW: Yeah, well you know, when we got there in '56 there were only about 2,000 students.

GB: That's right.

RW: So...

ABM: Did you ever have the big lectures like, Reinhard has told me about having 300, 400 students

RW: 450 at once...

ABM: Did you ever teach classes that big?

GB: How big?

ABM: 400, big lectures?

GB: I never taught classes that big. I had taught classes of 200.

RW: I think I was the only one at Eastern that had the class that size. Yeah.

ABM: I wanted to ask you both, when you first came in the 50's. Where were your offices?

GB: Offices?

ABM: Didn't you have an office?

RW: Yeah, my office was in Welch Hall.

ABM: Yours was in Welch?

RW: Welch Hall

ABM: [directed at GB] Where was yours?

GB: My first class was to teach in Welch hall in the basement. I went in there, opened the door the room was empty, not a chair, not a table...not anything.

RW: Except...

GB: My office was that classroom...

RW: Yeah

GB: So what do we do? We went through the entire University and took a chair here, a chair there, a table here a table there and dragged them all back down there and set them up.

ABM: So that means Reinhard, if you ever were missing a chair in your class, it was George's fault.

GB: That's right!

RW: Darn, I learn that now.

[all laugh]

GB: Well that is very true, that is exactly what happened...

RW: Well I shared an office with Haywood Pierce, remember him?

GB: Yeah, that's true

ABM: Do you remember Haywood Pierce?

GB: Who?

ABM: Haywood Pierce?

RW: He was a professor, he was about 5 foot 4, shock of white hair...

GB: Yes, I do remember him, yes

RW: And uh, Don Disbrow, was in that office too. I don't know if you remember Don Disbrow...

ABM: Don Disrow [Donald Disbrow], did I get that right?

RW: Yeah

ABM: Don Disbrow, what did he teach?

RW: He taught American History, yeah

ABM: Okay.

RW: And so did Hayword, he taught the early period in American History. Revolution and so forth. I remember a story...

GB: We had some darn good faculty in those years...

RW: Yeah, I could name everyone of the faculty in history when I arrived there...there were a number of people who arrived, Disbrow, Hefley [S. Theodore Hefley] arrived in the history department, and Bob McWilliams [Robert O. McWilliams] arrived in poli sci and you arrived in the theatre...

LB: And then the place went to hell...

GB: Pardon?

LB: I don't think he can hear...

ABM: Are you blaming them Laura for the place going down hill, because they all came in together?

LB: No just George...

ABM: Just George...

LB: I don't think he can hear Reinhard very well, I think he is pretending to...

RW: Well Bob McWilliams came in '56 too...

ABM: Do you remember Bob McWilliams?

RW: He was in Poli Sci...

GB: Of course I do, I remember. Not well, but I remember...

ABM: Do you remember how many faculty came in '55, 56?

RW: Well I don't remember '55 but I...

ABM: '56?

RW: '56? I don't know...I named what five or six. Oh, Don Brown, Don Brown [Donald F.M. Brown, Natural Science Faculty] arrived in '56 too...

ABM: Okay...

RW: Don Brown was a student in my history class at the U of M.

ABM: Oh...okay...

RW: In 1947 or 46

ABM: and then came over...

RW: and he came in '56

ABM: Don Brown, that's not the same as Bingo Brown?

GB/RW: No.

GB: No, Bingo, was quite a different person. Did you know Bingo?

ABM: I have only heard stories...never met him...

RW: Well he was unique.

ABM: What made him unique?

RW: Well, huh? He was a...

GB: [chuckles] What are you going to say? Be careful...

RW: What's the word...what's the one word that would describe Bingo?

GB: He was an athlete's athlete.

RW: Yeah, he was that. But he was more than that too...

GB: Oh yeah, he was a mentor too, to many of those kids...

RW: He was a mentor.

ABM: He was Dean of Men, right?

RW: For a while. The Dean of Men that I remember most was Brown...

GB: Yeah, well when Brown came, uh, Bingo said to me, I have no more to say about anything...it's all up to Brown.

RW: Bingo was kind of Earthy as well.

ABM: What do you mean by earthy?

RW: Just what it implies...

ABM: I don't know what that implies, did he smell like dirt?

RW: No, no. In speech and so forth...

ABM: Oh I see...okay. Earthy, I have never heard that as a descriptive...

RW: Well it isn't a dirty word.

ABM: Well I didn't think it was...

[all laugh]

LB: But he was known to say a few dirty words, huh, Mr. Bingo...

RW: Yeah he would do that. But Bingo would take care of students too...

GB: Yes he did. Yes he did. He didn't always take care of the right ones but he did take care of some of the right ones

RW: yeah...

GB: But I never got to know him well. He was never interested in me and I was never particularly interested in him...

RW: Well, I guess I, I met with him a number of times actually.

ABM: [directed at RW] Well, cause you were on the athletic committee, right?

RW: Yeah, I was on the board and control. I don't know if you knew that or not George?

GB: yeah I did...

RW: That I was on the board of control at one time for about three years...

GB: Yes I did know that, but I didn't see that there was very much control...

RW: Well I tell you, we had control in those days. We had to sign everything. We signed the checks and so forth...

ABM: So are you the reason why George never got a new glue pot?

RW: [chuckles] I don't know...I won't take the blame for everything.

ABM: Okay...

RW: But uh, I can't remember the track coach now...

GB: mumbles....

ABM: Lloyd Olds? Are you talking about Olds or Marshall?

RW: yes Olds, right, Olds. He preceded Marshall...

ABM: Yes, and Olds taught in Physical Education.

GB/RW: Yes, right.

RW: Well Olds of course was a big name on campus.

GB: Yes indeed, important name.

RW: Yeah, and so important that when he came to our Board of Control, he had to tone it down. He used language, my first meeting there he used language I couldn't believe and I had to say 'I didn't come on this committee to listen to this' and when he left they all applauded. But we signed the checks you know, for the budget...

GB: You had to do that?

RW: Yeah, we had to do that...

TIME STAMP 11:58

GB: And of course we had to sign our allegiance to the United States of America...if you remember

RW: [chuckles] yeah, yeah...

ABM: What did that mean...

GB: Before you could be signed to the University you had to sign a pledge to the United States...

ABM: really?

LB: Well it was the time of the red scare...

ABM: Yeah I know the time. Yeah, no I understand why, it is just interesting, I have never seen anything in the record about that.

GB: Well you have to remember what had happened, it happened with all the riots in Detroit...

ABM: Well a little bit...

LB: A little before then...

ABM: Well because there was the 68, but then there was one that was in 54 that happened in Detroit, but it is also post world war II...that you think that had something to do with it? Making sure you weren't a communist and a socialist?

RW: Oh, I don't think so.

ABM: You don't think so?

RW: Not where we were anyway, not at Eastern. Of course it wasn't Eastern at that time...

ABM: Nope. The Normal College

GB: Michigan Normal...

ABM: yep

GB: sub-normal

ABM: sub-normal [chuckles]

GB: That's what they called it in Ann Arbor

ABM: Well sure, they have opinions of their own...don't they

RW: George, do you remember...there was that gymnasium where the parking lot is now next to the water tower?

ABM: The red gym. Do you remember the Red Gymnasium?

GB: Of course I remember

RW: And we took registration there?

GB: Yes

RW: Well, in front of Welch Hall there was a sign which gave the football schedule for that year and uh and they got down Northern Illinois...N-O-I-S-E

LB: Oh no...

RW: Yeah, I took a photograph of that...Northern Illinois

ABM: So when they did registration for the students, you weren't responsible for that they didn't call the faculty to sit behind the tables?

RW: Oh yes they did...

ABM: Really?

RW: Oh yes. And we would...

GB: we sat there all day in the wet

RW: And we still were doing it when the president was assassinated.

GB: That's right, that is exactly right.

RW: We were in Bowen Field House at the time. But uh...Kennedy...

LB: Wow

RW: Well, we didn't know what a computer was.

ABM: How did they make the announcement? That Kennedy had been shot?

RW: Well, we were all in there and uh, it came it was a general PA announcement as I recall, public...at the field house. And...

GB: I do not remember...

RW: Everything stopped

GB: That I remember

RW: There was complete silence.

GB: That I do remember...

RW: Don Drummond [Donald F. Drummond]

ABM: Do you remember Don Drummond?

RW: He had tears...

GB: Do I remember Don Drummond? Of course I remember Don Drummond...

RW: He had tears in his eyes

GB: I liked Don Drummond...

RW: Well he, he and Neil McCarty were my best friends...

GB: Really?

RW: Yeah

ABM: Neil McLarty [R. Neil McLarty, Eastern Michigan College alum and professor of History]?

RW: He was department head for a while

GB: Oh, you didn't say Joe McCarthy did you?

[laughter]

GB: Oh, I miss understood you...

RW: He had his innings too. I was just thinking too...remember when we had committee meetings of the faculty? We had the committee meeting of the whole. It meant that the entire faculty met in one session.

GB: Yes.

RW: and uh, I remember John Virtue and Notley Maddox [Professor of English] would get up there and they would argue over a preposition...they would stand up and argue over the use of a preposition in the meeting...

ABM: Do you remember John Virtue?

GB: Beg your pardon?

ABM: Do you remember John Virtue? And...what was Maddox's first name?

RW: Notley

ABM: Notley Maddox...

GB: Yes.

ABM: arguing in faculty meetings...

GB: Well he lived right around the corner from me

ABM: Oh did he?

GB: Yep.

RW: Nobody could understand Notley.

GB: Notley, Snotly o' Notley. A good teacher...

RW: And he smoked a pipe, when he talked

GB: He did.

ABM: Is that why you couldn't understand him?

RW: You couldn't understand him when he didn't have a pipe in his mouth...[chuckles]

ABM: What did he teach?

GB: English

RW: He was in the English Department, Virtue too

ABM: Okay

GB: Jack Virtue, good guy

RW: Yeah, Oh god yes.

GB: And his wife as well...she was a sweetie, [undecipherable] though she was a sweetie after that...Yeah, yeah. It is interesting to think back on all those days...Yep. Notley Maddox used to sit in his window there, on the north side of the house, south side of the house, south side. Sit in the window, smoke his pipe and read...day after day, after day after day after day...

RW: Well he taught the Bible I think.

GB: Yes he did and apparently it was a very, very good course. People who took it were quite impressed with it.

RW: yeah...yeah

LB: Was that the Bible as literature?

GB: What's that?

ABM: The Bible as literature?

RW: I think that was probably the thrust

ABM: Interesting

LB: I took that course many years later....

RW He taught it for years...I mean...

ABM: So can I ask you both. In your opinions, who do you think the most underrated faculty were. Either at the Normal College or at Eastern? That never got their, I don't know...

RW: Due.

ABM: Due...

GB: Okay, there is a question I don't understand. Unravel it for me...

ABM: So let me ask you...so we talked um...during our first visit about Jinny, Koste. Jinny Koste

GB: Oh yeah...

ABM: and how you were saying she should have gotten an honorary degree and just was never given the accolades she deserved because the department head didn't like her...

GB: No, no...

ABM: So that is my question to you both. Who were the faculty that you knew that you think never got their due? Were never recognized for the work that they did for the University?

RW: Gosh...

ABM: Its loaded I know...but...

GB: That's a hard question...

RW: Yeah it is...I

LB: I think two of them are in the room...

ABM: I agree.

GB: What?

LB: I think two of them are in the room right now.

RW: Well, I received, I can't say that for me...I...

GB: What about Bill Work?

RW: Because I won that senior teaching award, I won the regents award, I won the state award, so...I don't qualify for that.

ABM: [directed at GB] So, you would say Bill Work never got his due?

GB: Bill Work had stayed here...if his wife hadn't dragged him away, which she definitely did...he would have been president of the university.

ABM: You think so?

GB: I don't think there is any doubt about it. He was president of student council, he was president of faculty council, he just moved right, up, up, up, up, up. He'd have gotten it eventually and it wouldn't have taken long. But she dragged him away cause she didn't want him here, she wanted him in New York where he ought to be, where he ought to be...well it killed him! It did kill him.

LB: I hadn't heard that...

RW: I can't really answer that question.

GB: What's that?

RW: I can't answer the question, really.

ABM: No?

Time Stamp 21:36

ABM: I think it's difficult cause Eastern lives in the dark cloud that is the University of Michigan and that there are so many incredibly talented faculty at the University [EMU] that are never really recognized as being great faculty because they chose to be at Eastern.

GB: I think you are right. And why did they choose to be at Eastern? Because they liked it!

ABM: That's right

RW: We had a good program

GB: We did

RW: But, uh, we had people with degrees Duke and Wisconsin and Michigan and so forth and if the U of M snubbed up they were snubbing those of us who had degrees from the University teaching there.

ABM: Right, right...

RW: Donald Drummond was a Michigan man, McLarty [Neil McLarty] was Michigan, Fagerstrom who was Department Head, do you remember Si?

ABM: Si Fagerstrom? [Simon E. Fagerstrom]

GB: Of course...

RW: He was a Michigan Man, uh...

GB: Well that was his problem

[laughter]

ABM: That he was a Michigan Man?

GB: Yeah

RW: Well, he had different problems. He was a little swede

ABM: A little Swede...

RW: You know. I have a story I want to tell about that. We were in the office one day, Disbrow, Don Disbrow and I, we were in the office and he [Fagerstrom] came in one day and he said 'you know, when I got married we went to Switzerland on our Honeymoon' and he said 'I climbed the Yung Frau...' [chuckles]

GB: [laughs]

RW: Now in German the Yung Frau is a virgin...

[all laugh]

RW: I didn't know whether to laugh ...

[all laugh]

RW: and I don't think he ever got it...

GB: I had a student. And this is true and I am not going to tell you who it was because he is still around...who cried through his entire marriage ceremony. Stood and cried, wept...

ABM: With joy, or fear?

GB: Both. [laughs] I asked him that he said [shrugs shoulders] 'I don't know, I just did it.' You know who that is...[directed at LB]

LB: I do?

GB: Sure, cookie man...

LB: Oh,

GB: Typical?

LB: Yeah. I can supply that name.

RW: Well that's unique I never heard that one...

LB: Well, he is a very...he's an actor. He wears his heart on his sleeve.

GB: What's that?

LB Yeah...

ABM: Yeah...Do you, can I ask because you were both there when the University was small, like what we think of a small liberal arts school being...

RW: Yeah, it was a couple thousand

ABM: right, a couple thousand students. Do you think if it had either remained that small size, or had grown not at quite a rapid pace that it would have faired better as a university?

RW: perhaps...

GB: probably...

RW: perhaps...

GB: probably...

RW: But it was still a fairly small school for a decade and a half or two

ABM: Right. But there is something really interesting, I think about in that when it went from being a school of about 3,000 students to a school of about 20,000 students it happened in such a short period of time...

RW: it did

ABM: Where at least from the enrollment numbers that I see, it looked like everything just doubled. It went from 3,000 to 6,000 to 12,000 to....at least that is what I see from the numbers...

RW: yeah, but when you get to the 12 or 20 thousand you are getting into the 70s and 80s [1970s and 1980s]

ABM: Right.

RW: But one of the things that we had...the focus I think on a state scale was that we were a teacher training school

GB: That is correct

ABM: right

RW: But, I think the thing that helped make the teacher that they were was that we had a good liberal arts program. I think with...going from the theatre to the history department to the English department to the science departments and so forth....uh...we were turning out people that had good background in those areas.

ABM: right...

RW: that is not true today anymore...

GB: No.

ABM: no...

GB: When I came here...the purpose of our program was to train kids to direct plays in high schools. That is what we were to do. It isn't that way anymore.

RW: That was the true in the History Department too.

ABM: Right...

RW: Teach them the history so that they can go out and teach...today the have taken away all of the required courses and so forth, it uh, its...today it resembles more of that...uh...defunct female haberdashery, hit and miss.

ABM: Yeah, you can graduate with a teaching degree and go into school to teach history and only have ever taken one history class.

RW: Yep

LB: That's crazy...

ABM: yeah, yeah...George would you agree that one of the reasons Eastern was so strong was because it has a strong liberal arts background. That, that was why it turned out such great teachers?

GB: I think so, I do believe that to be true.

RW: Yeah, I'd go along with that. Yeah

GB: But there is something else involved here that might get mentioned just for the heck of it. We had two first-rate men's clothing stores, two men's clothing stores downtown, two of them, Mellencamp's and I can't think of the name of the other one....

LB: Okay? What's the point?

GB: What's the point?

LB: Yeah, why is that important?

GB: I don't know that it is...

ABM: You must have had very good looking students then, all very dapper.

GB: Well, it...what it meant was we didn't go else where to shop. We went downtown and I think that's important...maybe you don't but I do.

ABM: Well....

RW: We were more involved with the community I think?

ABM: Mmmhmmm. I think that's true I think you can, um, when you had more students living in Ypsilanti, because they couldn't live on campus so as commuters they weren't really commuting from all that far, um, not like today where you have students commuting from Brighton, and Toledo and Flint to take classes. So they are living in town and there seemed to be more faculty living in town...I think...I think there are far fewer faculty that live in Ypsilanti or Ann Arbor. Do you think that's true. Do you think there were more faculty living in Ypsilanti...[directed at RW] Well you never lived in Ypsilanti, right?

RW: No. Neither did Don Drummond or McLarty. But Heftly and Disbrow, and uh, Haywood Pierce..the rest of the faculty in History all lived in Ypsilanti.

ABM: How many of the Theatre faculty lived in Ypsilanti?

GB: Right now?

ABM: No. When you first started.

LB: Well it was just him and Bill

ABM: Well, we'll say Theatre and English?

RW: Well I think...

GB: Oh, probably half a dozen...

ABM: Mmhmm, I guess that isn't as many as I would have thought.

RW: Well, Virtue lived in Ypsi and Maddox lived in Ypsi, Potter lived in Ypsi...

ABM: Potter?

RW: Ed Potter

ABM: Ed Potter?

RW: Um...

GB: Ed Potter was a darn good teacher.

RW: Yeah

GB: But he was impossible on Faculty Council

ABM: What made him impossible on faculty council?

GB: He talked all the time...he never stopped. Never, never, never stopped...

RW: You know...uh, Potter and I taught a night class a couple of times in Mt. Clemons.

ABM: A night class in Mt. Clemons.

RW: Yes. And he had a big vehicle. I don't know if it was a Lincoln or whatever it was...but we would be on Gratiot, that was before the express way and we had uh, this big car and he would say, we were on Gratiot, I'm gonna put it in drive [chuckles] and it had all these stop lights to go through...God, I was pale when I got to Mt. Clemons [chuckles] god...Well then we had Sponberg.

GB: Yes, I remember that...I have heard that name

ABM: George was telling me, and maybe you can confirm this. He was telling me that Sponberg, used to ride his motorcycle through campus.

RW: Well he may, I don't know that.

ABM: No?

RW: But that doesn't mean he didn't do it.

ABM: [laughs]

RW: But he, he...

GB: Sponberg was not my favorite person...

RW: Well, Sponberg and I got along quite well, but uh...one thing about Sponberg that the other couldn't...he could name every faculty member. He could walk across campus and he would be able to call the person's name. He had that ability.

ABM: Did Sponberg always remember your name? [directed at GB]

GB: Well, I think he did because, his daughter wanted to be an actor and he introduced me three times to her.

AMB: Hmmm. And his wife has quite a love of the performing arts too? Right

RW: She was involved mostly with music

ABM: Right, the music department? Was she an organist?

GB: What's that?

ABM: Was his wife an organist? Am I remembering that correctly

RW: Yes, she played the organ

GB: I think so...I do think so, but I am not sure.

RW: Well Sponberg and Grace came to my program in Munich twice

ABM: Oh, I didn't know that...

RW: Yeah...

GB: Okay, here's more. She bought the Organ for the building...

ABM: Pease auditorium? Or Alexander Music

GB: Yeah

AB/LB: Which one?

AB: Pease or Alexander or Sponberg

GB: Alexander Music

RW: Not Pease

ABM: No not Pease, that was a bequest by I think, it was a posthumous bequest by Frederick Alexander...is that right? The music director after Pease...He would have been there when you were there teaching music...so um...So we have mentioned Elliott and we have mentioned Sponberg. What were your thoughts on Porter?

RW: Well I was ambivalent. I thought that project over on the lake, that hotel and so forth, he, he uh started the thing and then dropped out. But I knew John, Porter...

LB: George?

ABM: What were your thoughts on John Porter? [directed at GB]

TIME STAMP 35:15

GB: Well, I want to tell you a couple of things that I shouldn't but I am going to tell you them anyway. When John Porter was elected President a department head who I knew very well said 'we have become a black university.'

ABM: Do you think he meant that in a positive way? Or...

GB: No, definitely not. Did I think we had become a black university? Heavens no. One person?

ABM: Right. Well they always say that University Presidents are there to serve a purpose...

GB: That's true.

ABM: You know, whether it is to be the first woman, or to raise money, or to be the first African-American president of the University...and he would have...he followed Brickley, right? [James H. Brickley] So it was Elliot, Sponberg, Brickley and he wasn't there that long.

RW: He was there five years.

ABM: Right

RW: He came to Europe.

GB: She dried out fast...

RW: He came to Europe to see my program too

ABM: Did he?

RW: Yeah uh, to Munich.

ABM: [directed at RW] Can you confirm that story? Reinhard, George told me a story that the reason Brickley came to Eastern was to help his wife dry out...

RW: Might be, because she spent a lot of time in Brighton.

GB: Well it was the GOP that brought her in, they wanted to get Brickley in the Supreme Court...and they did! They did get him in...

RW: Well at least one thing...

GB: He had no business being in it but he got in it...

RW: Yeah. But at least one thing he said after five year I am going to quite

ABM: Oh, did he?

RW: Yeah

LB: Well he was moving on...But uh, John Porter was very supportive of the theatre, right?

RW: Well he was I...

GB: That part, I always thought of John Porter as a very good friend of the theatre...uh...

LB: Although he always said the-ater...

GB: He came to every play that we did. He *hated* some of them and he told me he hated some of them but he was very, very honest. I liked John Porter all the way along except for his handling of...one of his colleagues

RW: Well I liked him too...I was invited to several dinners with John Porter and company...

ABM: Was he married?

RW: Oh yes, oh yeah. And he had a daughter and a son if I recall.

GB: His wife was very ill...

RW: She had lupus

ABM: Ohhh.

RW: Yeah, she had lupus. They finally divorced too I think

GB: Is that right?

RW: Yeah. But the daughter was a very pretty girl and she ended up at the U of M somewhere and I don't know what the son did.

GB: Well I did like John Porter and I thought he was a good President for us.

RW: Well the last time I saw John, was at the ophthalmologist, he was getting his eyes examined.

ABM: Who came in after Porter again?

RW: Oh god?

GB: Has there been anybody after Porter?

[all laugh]

ABM: In quick succession...

RW: Well we had so many...

ABM: Yeah, he was kind of the last...

RW: He was the last and after that it was...

ABM: ...long tenures

RW:...catch as catch can...

ABM: Right, right?

LB: I should know this...

ABM: I see their faces, so in the archives which is in Halle Library we are on the third floor and we have what we call the wall of shame outside the door which is all the University Presidents, so I see their faces and then sometimes I get close enough to see their names but...

RW: I have a photograph that was taken in 1989 with the President that we are talking about.

ABM: Was it Willits? Afterward as the interim?

RW: No. No, uh...

ABM: anyways...yeah. So Porter would have been there when they did the...they called it the Center for Corporate Education, or the Corporate Education Center. Right?

RW: Yeah, that, that was on the lake.

ABM: So you know, they moved, it used to house Alumni Relations and the Foundation? And they have moved them back to campus so there is nothing there anymore and I think they are trying to divest of their investment after all of that, building of the gold course and uh...

GB: You think they want to drop it?

ABM: Yeah, I think it is a big money pit for them and I don't think it was ever used the way they hoped it would be...

GB: I think that probably is true.

ABM: Right...I think they thought that big companies like the automotive companies...

GB: Exactly.

ABM...would come and do training sessions there and...

RW: it didn't materialize

ABM:...right. Too much...

GB: Well the food wasn't any good

ABM:...oh, is that why? [chuckles] Do you think?

GB: Well it wasn't very good...it was pretty bad

LB: Gildea

ABM: Oh...

LB: Shelton, that is who followed Sponberg, Shelton. That's why we can't remember.

ABM: Shelton.

RW: Yeah, Shelton. I had a picture taken with Shelton when I received the Regent's award.

ABM: mmhm

RW: That uh...they read a bunch of kudos. I think that maybe I told you this. They read the kudos and after it was all over the only response I had was 'I'm glad it wasn't an obit because I couldn't have heard it.'

[all laugh]

ABM: That was very nice.

RW: And everybody else that got up there was talking about mother's, father's, grandmother's...uh...children and all that stuff. But after that we had so many presidents, I can't, they were there when you were there George...I was gone for a while

GB: As many Presidents as football coaches...about the same number

RW: that too...

GB: And none of them succeeded

RW: You could say they were both winners [chuckles]

ABM: Or losers

RW: Yeah...

ABM: Winners when it came to scandals? Mmhhmm. They all kind of came in quick succession after Shelton.

GB: yeah

RW: Kirkpatrick, I...

GB: Well that was a knee kick reaction that shouldn't have happened I think. I think they should have sat down and talked about it for five minutes before they canned him.

ABM: Kirkpatrick?

GB: yeah.

ABM: Yeah.

GB: Because they lost one of their very, very best administrators, in fact they lost two of them.

ABM: Who else did they lose?

GB: They lost their um...director of athletics who was a super, super... And they lost their director of student activities. Who was city wide extremely important to the University because he was very much a part of Ypsilanti and city council and all of that stuff that they just threw away when they dropped him and it was just a knee kick, boom, he's gone, that's it we're done.

ABM: Yeah, there always seems to be a kind of trickle down impact on those upper administrators anytime you get a new president in, they put in place, kind of their henchmen around them...right? And then it kind of filters down to all the other levels.

GB: Well look what happened to Penn State...immediately Boom, boom gone. Just gone, that never should have happened, never should have happened. Maybe it should have happened in a year, or two years but it never should have happened Boom, like that.

ABM: right

GB: Tearing down his statue...for heaven's sakes, what kind of childish joke is this?

RW: yeah, well

GB: Well now you got my opinion.

[all laugh]

GB: which you didn't want, but you got it now anyway.

RW: Well,

LB: Have you told her about the time the monkey got loose?

GB: What's that..

LB: Have you...

ABM: No, I have never heard the story of when the monkey got loose...[directed at RW] Have you heard that story?

RW: I want to hear that story

ABM: We want to hear the story about when the monkey got loose

GB: We...we were doing a play in which there is a monkey that sits on one of the actor's shoulders...and uh, he sits there through the whole play, no problem, as long as you see the monkey. If you don't feed the monkey, the SOB bites ya. But uh, we fed the monkey and then one night the monkey is on stage and he is doing his thing, as usual...and by the way your favorite president is president now...

ABM: Elliot?

GB: ...and the monkey is on stage and all of a sudden the monkey jumps off the stage into the audience. Well Bill Work is standing at the back door and what does Bill Work do? He opens the door. So where did the monkey go? Outside! Where did he end up? On the President's front walk and the president looked out the window and said to his wife 'oh, Bird and Work have been up to this'...

[all laugh]

GB: and indeed we had not been. We had nothing to do with it...anyway the monkey was, made all the newspapers...made the TV...great publicity...we offered a hundred dollar reward for the monkey, we never got it.

ABM: You never got the monkey back?

GB: Yeah, we got the monkey back. A Year. Later. He had been living down by the river for a year. Yeah, we got him back and we got the hundred dollars back. But anyway...that's the monkey story...

ABM: Was that in...had Quirk been built by then?

GB: Had what?

ABM: Was Quirk...on campus then. Was that a production in Quirk or a production in Roosevelt.

GB: mmmhmm

ABM: Which one. Roosevelt or Quirk

GB: It was Quirk

ABM: Quirk

GB: I can't remember the name of the play, can you? [directed at LB]

ABM: Let me ask you both....what was the best student prank you ever saw on campus? Cause there had to have been some...

GB: The best student play?

LB/ABM: Prank, prank

ABM: Cal lit a trick if you want to...

RW: I know mine...

ABM: I know yours...are you going to tell me about the stalker?

RW: Yeah

ABM: Have you heard that story George about the Stalker [GB nods no]...have you Laura? Okay, tell your one about the stalker...it's a good one.

RW: I remember the date was 1989, it was March the 15th, happens to be my birthday and it was 9:30 in the morning and I was in the lecture hall in 201 Pray-Harold. And I was standing, I never stood behind a lectern for very long, I didn't want to get hit, so I was in the front row doing something on the Revolution of 1848 when I heard all these screams...and uh, and I turned around and there were three stalkers...you know in Pray Harold you could come into 201 from the outside and uh, three stalkers ran across the platform to what they thought was an exit door on the other side of the platform...it was a storage room and it was locked, so they had to turn around and run back the other direction [chuckles] three stalkers

ABM: But tell them what you did afterwards....

RW: Well, I, lectured for a couple of minutes and then took off my jacket, and um took off my tie and started to walk out unbuttoning my shirt...[chuckles]

[all laugh]

ABM: George did you ever have any stalkers run through your class?

GB: Yeah. Yeah. Stagecraft class I had 150 people and uh yeah I did. I don't remember what I did and I don't remember how many or how streaky they were...

RW: Well the worst remark made was...it was said by a student 'do you recognize any of them?'

[all laugh]

GB: It was very much an in thing

ABM: Streaking?

GB: Yeah. Reminded me a lot of Pants, pants, pants, which was about the dumbest thing I ever heard.

Time Stamp 50:20

LB: did you talk to them about the...um...Norman Collins?

ABM: Ron Collins?

LB: John Norman Collins?

ABM: Oh, John Norman Collins...

RW: The Murder case...

ABM: Yeah, the murder cases

GB: Oh well that one...

RW: Yeah, that was

ABM: That had to have been a really scary time on campus...I mean it was, it all kind of happened...

GB: Pardon...

ABM: That would have been '72

LB: Somewhere in there...

ABM: '74 maybe so a few years after the riots and then nation guard coming on to campus

RW: That was in the late 60s

ABM: That was in the late 60s...right so a couple of years after that.

GB: Well you want to know about the Collins thing I can tell you an awful lot about it. But I shouldn't tell you but I will...I was a very, very good friend of captain of the police at Eastern and of course they were involved obviously and they had him caught and it was over on the other side of town I can't remember... Superior Township and they had him captured and all of the sudden this poor guy, this poor guy, the captain was allergic and sneezed...

LB: Startled him and he got away...

GB: That was the end of that...

LB: There were more murders after that...

GB: Oh yes, oh yes

LB Hate to have that on my conscious.

GB: Oh, yes, way more...

ABM: Did either of you have him in class?

GB: Pardon?

ABM: Do you remember having him in class?

RW: I didn't have him, but I knew the girl he murdered...she was a secretary. I knew her...

LB: He was in Children's Theatre for the Young.

ABM: Was he?

LB: Yeah. You had him in class... [directed at GB]

GB: I told my class, and I had a pretty big class at that point...probably about 25-30...uh, [undecipherable] this man is going to get caught and it is a man and he is going to get caught...you. Will. Know. him. And they did. He has been in class all the way through. Now here is the worst part of the whole thing. Here is a publicity shot for Quirk Theatre a bunch of people walking down the hill there...

LB: It was the next fall's catalog

ABM: Yeah, it's the, it's the, Course Catalog. Yep I know exactly what you are talking about because there he is in the group of students on the front cover of the course catalog.

GB: Yep

ABM: Somebody probably got called into an office for that one...right

GB: I would think.

ABM: Yeah

RW: Yeah. Well, it is a lot of water under the bridge

ABM: It is a lot of water under the bridge. Yeah, but there seems to be something about ever once in a while that dark cloud comes in over campus because there has

been others. Not quite to that degree to that quantity of murders...but there have been other murders on campus, associated with campus...

RW: Yeah

ABM: I mean just even in my short tenure there have been two...um and then Laura Dickenson she was the cover up for that is the reason that that President's departure [directed at GB] were you still on campus when that happened?

GB: Yeah

ABM: Mmhh...yeah its

LB: mmh

RW: Yeah.

GB: The big trouble that keeps coming is not enough money...

ABM: That is always, I don't know if Laura told you about the...or I don't know if you know [directed to LB]...there was just an HBO special. Um, about, they are calling it the Athletics Arms Race...and how much money is being spent on athletics at schools like Eastern whose athletic departments don't necessarily make money in the way that U of M or Penn State or even Wisconsin make...right? Last year the athletic department of Eastern lost \$52 million dollars.

RW: Lost?

ABM: Lost.

GB: Is that all?

RW: Yeah, and the faculty...that's been a sore spot.

LB: Oh, you bet

ABM: Yeah because at least right now we are being told there will be no new clerical, PT, administrative hires

RW: Or faculty either...

ABM: right, because they have paused any failed faculty searches wont go forward. I don't know if they will allow us, I haven't seen what they have approved for new faculty hires, but...yeah...its um, not pretty.

RW: Well the difference in the financial picture at U of M for example the athletic department is completely independent.

ABM: Right. And sometimes they actually loan the University money to balance its budget.

RW: But at Eastern it comes out of the general fund.

ABM: Right...

RW: That's a big difference...

ABM: I think they said something like 12-1300 per student gets funneled to athletics from what they pay in tuition and fees.

RW: Yeah

ABM: Yeah. And that was part of our initial conversation [directed at GB] about Elliott's departure...right is that was all kind of at the time where athletics before while Elliot was there and before that time the athletics was part of the Physical Education program...

GB: That's right...

ABM:...so if you were a coach you were also teaching classes in the physical education department...

RW: That's right...

ABM: and that went into the late 50s early 60s and then they got there own athletic department and started hiring coaches. Who weren't also on the faculty...Do you think he [Eugene Elliot] was disappointed in that change? Elliot? Do you think he would have been if he was still on campus?

RW: Absolutely. I think so...

ABM: Do you think so George?

GB: He just wasn't going to give scholarships period. He just wasn't going to do it. At least when I talked to him he wasn't...and I talked to him a lot in his garden where he and I used to garden a lot...digging potatoes. Good guy

RW: Yes he was...

GB: Real gentleman in everyway

RW: Well it's interesting, his daughter...was his daughter's name Ellen?

ABM: What was Elliot's daughters name? Do you recall...

RW: Ellen

ABM: Ellen?

GB: Yes. It was Ellen

RW: Well she married a Wetherbee and the Weatherbee's had a number of...well Sigrid [Reinhard's daughter] knows Julie...some of the Weatherbees...

ABM: Oh okay...

RW: And I met Julie at Sigrid's house a couple of years ago

ABM: Oh really?

RW: Yeah. Yeah.

GB: Definitely Ellen. No question about that.

ABM: Is she still in town?

RW: I am not sure of that...But I know she was very active in things. I don't know whether she is up North somewhere or...

ABM: Yeah, so there is a conversation afoot about getting rid of Football at Eastern.

LB: Hmm.

GB: It should happen.

LS: Do you think it will happen?

RW: Well it could, but uh, you know...

GB: I think it depends and I don't know how this is going to rule out. If indeed we drop football does that mean we have to get out of the Mid American Conference? At the moment we don't have to but the talk in the past is yes we would have to. So I don't know.

ABM: Right and I think the only team that that would really impact is Track and Field which has always been very successful...

RW: And swimming...

ABM: Right and swimming too.

LB: And the conference would be happy to see them go.

[all laugh]

GB: Okay, so you are going to hire a coach...who do you go to? Well who are my successful coaches, where did they come from? Eastern Michigan.

ABM: That's right...

GB: That's where they all came from.

ABM: That's right. Did either of you know Coach Parks?

LB: Oh yeah.

GB: Of course

ABM: Yeah. So his daughter Sue, coaches now at the University. Even though she didn't go to Eastern...but he grew up in the Eastern family certainly.

GB: Swimming, baseball, track, cross country

RW: yep, yep.

GB: Do very well and all coached by Eastern kids and so we go hire somebody we go else where and don't bother with Eastern...cause they can't win anything. I think so dumb. I think so dumb. But what do I know? Nothing.

RW: They only have about 5,000 at a football game

ABM: Well they can't even give away tickets. They try to lure students in to basketball and football games and they can't bring anybody in. And some people say it is because they built the stadium so far from campus...

RW: Well they didn't build the stadium...

ABM: Who built the stadium?

RW: It was a semi-pro football club that built the stadium. EMU just added on to it.

ABM: Oh, okay.

RW: So there was a semi-pro football league and they built the new stadium and um, Rynearson, but then they did additional seat I think.

ABM: Do you remember it that way, a semi pro football team, did I get that right?

GB: Oh yeah, oh yeah...The Michigan Wheels

ABM: Michigan Wheels?

RW: That's well spoken

ABM: Rolled right out of town...Well I don't want to...we have been talking for quite a while and I want to be kind of...

GB: Well one more thing...

ABM: One more for the road?

GB: ...before we quit. When they announced that they were going to build the basketball stadium out...

ABM: The convocation center...

GB: I said...nobody is going to go out there to watch a basketball game. Nobody. It will be absolutely empty. About that I was absolutely right. On the other side of the coin I was absolutely wrong. The building has been a great success.

RW: Yes. For various functions.

LB: Yeah. It really filled a niche.

ABM: Yeah. It is uh, every convocation it is bursting at the seams...and the concerts they hold there and then the bubble...

RW: and then the high schools...

ABM:...high schools have their graduations there. Did uh, Laura tell you about when the bubble collapsed?

RW: Yeah, that

ABM: All the revenue they lost...

GB: It collapsed twice.

ABM: When was the first time?

GB: Well it was being rented by the New York Rangers I believe...yeah. It was being rented by New York Football team...I don't remember which one.

LB: Oh, you are talking about something else. We are talking about the one on Eastern's campus.

GB: I am talking about the one on Eastern's campus.

LB: Okay...

GB: That's right, it came down twice.

LB: Okay...

GB: It did

ABM: They are talking about building a second one, that is how much money they make off of the bubble and renting the bubble. Maybe they will put it in the football field. Who knows...

[laughter]

RW: Michigan has to go first

ABM: Yeah. I guess so...oh, well thank you both. Is everyone okay if I turn this off? No more goo stories after I hit the stop button...okay, George...

GB: What's that?

ABM: No more good stories.

GB: No more good stories. I quit.

ABM: Okay

RW: No more bad stories either.

ABM: Okay fine. No more bad stories either...thank you both.