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Roy Wilbanks Oral History Interview, 1998 April 7

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EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
HISTORY

INTERVIEW
WITH
Roy Wilbanks
April 7, 1998. Roy Wilbanks and Larry Smith. Roy Wilbanks is President of the Eastern Michigan University Foundation, Former Executive Vice President of Eastern Michigan University and having held many other titles at the University prior to that.

LNS: So, you came to Eastern. What was it, 1985?

RW: I actually started work at Eastern Michigan University July 1, 1983.


RW: Came under kind of a cloud of controversy, as you know on a five-to-three vote. The Board of Regents say I came as Assistant to President John W. Porter and Secretary to the Board of Regents in 1983.

LNS: What was the controversy over?

RW: The controversy was I believe was kind of a political call in that I had good support of the Democratic Legislature and particularly, Gary Owen who was Speaker at the time. And I think that the Republicans on the Board, namely two or three of the Republicans had a problem with that and that created difficulty and controversy.

LNS: You were able to overcome it I guess.

RW: Well we were able to overcome it eventually. I feel like it worked out pretty well. But it was difficult and there's the Democrats at the time in Lansing began to get control under Governor Blanchard and Gary Owen. They changed some Regents and the Democrats took over the Board of Regents and being Secretary to the Board of Regents, I obviously had to have the approval of the Board of Regents, so we were able to overcome that over a period of time.

LNS: Who was Chairman of the Board when you came?

RW: Dick Robb was the Board Chairman and had been Chairman at that time for several years and then Chaired it for actually one or two years after I was there before Bill Simmons became Board Chairman.

LNS: And then you were a student at Eastern?

RW: I did not go to Eastern Michigan University Undergraduate, I went to school at Colorado State University and then when I came back and began my teaching career, I got my Master's Degree from Eastern Michigan University and got a Master's in Education in 1970.
LNS: But you knew a lot of the people, you grew up in Ypsilanti, right?

RW: Well being from Ypsilanti, I probably had a fairly unique perspective of Eastern Michigan University because obviously, being a high school student in Ypsilanti and the University and the communities pretty much tie-barred to one another. So there were a lot of activities and yes, I did know a lot of people and I knew not much of the politics at Eastern Michigan University or not much at the leadership level. But a lot of the instructors and the professors and a lot of students and a lot of my high school friends went to Eastern Michigan University.

LNS: So when you were a little kid growing up, how did you see Eastern? What did your friends think of it?

RW: Well it's interesting because I never had probably positive perceptions of Eastern Michigan University and very candidly upon my graduation from high school in 1960, I was offered a scholarship at Eastern Michigan University to go there and Wrestle. I really did not consider it much because it did not have a very good perception of a very good athletic team and really had the perception of a teacher's college. Which was fine for me because I wanted to go into teaching anyway into teaching and coaching and I really considered Michigan State or Colorado State were the two that I was looking at and ended up at Colorado State University. So my perceptions of Eastern as a kid growing up was not that it was a first rate institution that I believe it is today.

LNS: When you were growing up you lived near the campus?

RW: Well I lived on the East Side of town, on Maple Street which is probably about a mile from campus, maybe a mile and a half would be almost straight up Forest Street heading west on Forest so, yeah, I grew up around campus. I used to go up to Field when it was down where the dormitories currently are and the Detroit Lions used to practice there. So that's how far back I go in what memories I have of Eastern Michigan University.

LNS: What was it like living in Ypsilanti in those days?

RW: Ypsilanti was you know a pretty nice community, small, people knew each other it was definitely segregated in many ways. There was the west side of town, which was kind of the wealthy the more intellectual community that housed a lot of Eastern Michigan University people as well as those people from Ypsilanti that had some money. And then we had the South Side, which was predominantly Black and was segregated from the West Side and then we had the East Side of town, which is where I grew up, and that was the poorer side of town. A lot of folks that lived on the east
side came up from the south to work in the Automobile Plants. And so Ypsilanti at that time really showed those three diverse communities very well.

LNS: There was no north side?

RW: Not really to speak of. It was, really as you know, as you look up even today out to the north side there's not much to the north side of Ypsilanti. It's all kind of east, west and south and the growth, as you know today in the community is on the south side.

LNS: Have the patterns changed much since you were a kid as you look at it?

RW: I certainly and I look at it from the K-12 System and I've seen the K-12 System change a great deal. We have a higher minority population; we still have kind of a blue-collar population. And a lot of what I would consider the west side of the White Collar population now is sending their kids to private schools and that's had a dramatic impact I think on the quality of education delivered in the K-12 system.

LNS: Is there a vicious cycle?

RW: It's very difficult to overturn. As a community person I've often thought just if all of the people from Eastern Michigan University that worked there lived in the Ypsilanti community, sent their kids to Ypsilanti schools it would have a dramatic impact on the quality of education. And the peer pressure that would be exerted in the High School. So being from the community I've always thought that Eastern Michigan University could have a larger impact on the community if there were more some type of residency rule or something that required those people to live in the community.

LNS: Impossible to enforce, but it would have been nice to have.

RW: Well it's impossible to enforce. As you know I sat on the Township Board for ten years and we always struggled with Residency Requirements of our Fireman, for instance and you just can't enforce it but it would be nice, because they could've had such a positive impact I believe on the Ypsilanti Schools.

LNS: In terms of your sitting on the Township Board, which is a nice flow into a series of questions I want to ask. How do you see the politics between the City and the Township and how were they ten years ago or twenty years ago? You sat on it some twenty years ago.

RW: Yeah. I was on...
LNS: We're all getting older. And for those who sometime might listen to the tape, I'm bald and Roy's got gray hair, so, we must both be getting older.

RW: And the community does that to us. I was on the Township Board from 1974-1984 to give you a timeframe. And it was at a time when the township was growing rapidly, the township eventually surrounded the City. The City is about four square miles surrounded by Ypsilanti Township that is about thirty-eight square miles. The population in the city was about twenty to twenty-five thousand people with really no room to grow. So they couldn't get any bigger, they had no tax base, they had no industrial base to speak of so the City as always had financial problems along with the very high tax rate for the assessed valuations that are on the houses in the community. They pay very high taxes. They have very high per capita price in both their fire and police protection so it was always a struggling community and they were always looking for their place if you will, in the sun and in this community. The Township grew, had much bigger tax base, had a bigger industrial base, had more room to grow and consequently, the politics in the Township, they became kind of the power broker on the eastern side of the County and influenced many of the not only the local elections, but often the elections for the state and also the elections for national office.

LNS: You certainly influence the East Side county elections.

RW: Yes, the east side county elections as I said it was very political and because of the size and population of Ypsilanti Township was always a little more powerful in the decision making process as in the eastern half.

LNS: Was there ever a time when the Township and the City considered becoming one as you recall?

RW: Yeah, I can't recall, it wasn't during the time I was on the Board, but shortly there before there were two different times that they had valid issues about consolidations and both times they failed in the Township and failed by a fairly significant margin. And the big issue was that the Township people were afraid that they would be higher taxed on their properties to offset the shortage in the City and the assessed evaluation as well as the high per capita cost of the police and the fire department.

LNS: From your own position of having a lot of allies during your tenure on the Township Board, do you think that was a fair assessment of what the problem was?

RW: I think it's a fair assessment of what the problem is but I think that the Ypsilanti community at large would be much better off if they were
consolidated under one government. But working out the political peculiarities that go with that are fairly difficult.

LNS: It's been a long time since you started on a Board and I don't see any movement towards that do you?

RW: These days, no. None.

LNS: I see some signs of better collaboration but I don't see any signs of.

RW: Well there are some. The library as you know is a joint Library Board between the city and Township. You have the joint Ypsilanti recreation organization put together for the city and Township for development around Ford Lake and you also have the Ypsilanti Community Utilities Authority is made up of a combination of City and Township residents for that. So those three areas of collaboration are what I think have worked relatively well and been to the betterment of our community.

LNS: Going back to you coming to Eastern in 1983 and here you are, what kind of institution did you come to? What was going on at the Institution that you can recall?

RW: Some of my earliest memories of the political situation at Eastern Michigan University date back to the very late '70's early 80's when I used to spend a fair amount of time in Lansing politically trying to obtain money for the vocational education program that I was principal of. Share type program with Ypsi, Willow Run and Lincoln and there was always Vocational Educational funds and I had a fair amount of friends up there. So I went to Lansing fairly regularly in those days. And I remember that there was pretty good declining enrollment in the late seventies they were having a difficult time with the Legislatures. I actually heard conversations with talking about closing down Eastern Michigan University and distributing the money among the other fourteen institutions. Those kinds of conversations went on I think at that time also. I was pretty aware that Eastern had a reputation for not being able to win at football, not being able to win at basketball. While the quality of the Academic Program, I couldn't make an evaluation on cause I wasn't familiar with that but those two aspects, I think the declining enrollment and the poor athletic program were perceptions that I had just prior to going into Eastern Michigan University in 1983. And I think that it was substantiated then in the early part of my career at Eastern when they had the conversations and the means to kick Eastern Michigan University out of the Mid-American Conference for failure to qualify as a Division IA Institution in football.

LNS: What was the issue? How did we fail to qualify in terms of your experience?
RW: Well in qualifying for Division 1-A, as you know Larry you have to do one of two things. If you have a 30,000-seat stadium then you have to average seventeen thousand paid home attendance every four years. If you do not have a thirty thousand-seat stadium, then you have to average for four years in a row, seventeen thousand paid home attendance. The Mid-American Conference was concerned about being kicked out of Division 1-A. The presidents wanted to be a Division 1-A football school. And for them to qualify for Division 1-A, they had to have more than fifty percent of the schools in the Mid-American Conference qualify for Division 1-A standings and the conference schools and they were right on the bubble of five and five. So if they kicked Eastern out, they would have five to qualify and four that didn't. So I think that was basically the issue in terms of moving eastern out of the Mid-American Conference among the Presidents.

LNS: What kept us from moving out?

RW: Well as you'll recall, it was the threat of a lawsuit against the Mid-American Conference and meetings with the NCAA that the Mid-American Conference then went back and rethought their position.

LNS: Who brought the lawsuit?

RW: Well I don't know that there was a lawsuit, there was a threat of a lawsuit?

LNS: Who was it?

RW: Eastern Michigan University and you'll recall that John Porter I think sent Ron Collins and John Fountain down to the Mid-American Conference to threaten a lawsuit. And then sent them shortly thereafter to Kansas City to look at the issues and I think the NCAA intervened at that time and a compromise was reached.

LNS: And the compromise was?

RW: The compromise was that Eastern Michigan University could stay in the Mid-American Conference and that they had to make efforts to qualify and you'll recall that's where we came up with Eastern Energy in 1984 where we were able to qualify for Division 1-A standings.

LNS: Now one of the things, was it the MAC that said that we could stay in the MAC but had to give up football or could you stay in the MAC if you gave up football?
RW: That's a good point. Evidently, The MAC did want us to give up football but the Board of Regents in consultation with President Porter, did not want to drop football and wanted to stay in Division 1-A. And I think that's when we began to think about the stadium expansion to thirty thousand seats.

LNS: Which we did.

RW: Which we did, as you know, you were a part of that. Was a very interesting proposition that came out of our facilities plan where we expanded the stadium and $12.5 million to go to thirty thousand seats and we generated $2 million in private support towards that $12 million.

LNS: We're gonna come back to this in just a few minutes. Before we get to that. This occurred a little bit later, this occurred more toward 1989 now right?

RW: Well yeah I think we started the facilities plan in 1988 there was a window in there between President Porter and President Shelton and you may recall the retreat in Weber's where we presented the poor deterioration of the facilities at Eastern Michigan University. And I think we at that time came up with a $90 million plan to expand or renovate facilities and a part of that expansion and renovation was the expansion of Rynearson Stadium for thirty thousand seats yes, you're absolutely right.

LNS: While we're talking about buildings. You were very instrumental in the creation of the Corporate Education Center and hotel complex along with the golf course and the golf club house, there were other things that you had a hand in, the Owens College of Business building, what else was going on at that time?

RW: Well as you recall once again the university feeling that they needed to improve the environment that the university was located in. To improve its reputation, looked at, in addition to the expansion and renovation of facilities on campus, under President Porter's leadership, we were looking at a way to expand the sphere of influence within the Ypsilanti community and create our corridor of development that would move the campus in going from a north and west projection back into a south and east and trying to broaden the sphere of influence within the Ypsilanti community. That's why we located the Gary Owen College of Business in downtown Ypsilanti. It was to try to create more of a model of the University of Michigan campus where the campus and the community are intertwined. We were looking at ways to enhance the image of the Ypsilanti community that's what really came up with what is what is now known as Eagle Crest Conference Resort originally started out as a hotel golf course, and Conference center. Those perspectives of putting the funding together, putting the plan together for those things. You're right, I was involved in
but only under the guise that it really was trying to expand and enhance the image of the Ypsilanti community which ultimately expanded and enhanced the image of Eastern Michigan University because Eastern Michigan University is located in Ypsilanti. Those were interesting times. I certainly recall the conversations what most people don't know on the College of Business being located downtown is. That State Capitol Outlay Bill was moving Eastern Michigan University at that time had no program statement that was sent to Lansing and approved by the Capitol Outlay Committee. The Speaker of the House held the bill up until Eastern Michigan University got its program statement in on the College of Business. And approved by the Capital Outlay Committee and once that was approved then we got our $17.5 million for the College of Business in the same bill we got $4.5 million as you recall for the renovation of Pierce Hall which was in bad need of renovation and we also got $1.5 million in that same Capital Outlay bill for the construction of the Corporate Education Center. So that was a good capital outlay bill for the university and for the community that was in 1989.

LNS: Gary Owen was a pretty good friend of the university as well as the Speaker of the House, wasn't he?

RW: Gary was a good friend to the university in my view even though he's a University of Michigan graduate and his main affinity is to the University of Michigan. Gary was the kind of person that wanted to do a great job for the community which elected him and it was more of a pride of doing that job in my view than it was really his love for Eastern Michigan University. What people didn't realize is probably had we not put the College of Business in downtown Ypsilanti, we probably wouldn't have gotten the $17.5 million to fund it. The push / pull made great impact on the community, certainly downtown Ypsilanti and I think where we came up short, anytime people change, leaders change, positions change, when those positions changed, we lost the commitment to downtown. We lost the Speaker of the House resigned went into business for himself, President Porter left the University, you had new leadership in Lansing, new leadership at the university and we changed our commitment to the community and I think in my view we fell a little short had we been able to do one or two more facilities down there we could've certainly dramatically increased the impact to the community by more than two-fold.

LNS: Even though we have the hotel, Corporate Ed. Center, golf course, sort of in the community, certainly in the township community, we have the College of Business building, you feel it would've been more successful located another facility or two?

RW: There's no doubt in my mind had we been able to move the College of Education say down in there somewhere or move some facilities so we
moved our students off campus and towards the downtown community, you might've been able to have some spin-off benefits of restaurants and some of the service industry businesses being able to survive in the downtown community but as you know, that just doesn't happen unless you kind of force it to happen.

LNS: There's still a long future ahead of us, interesting to see what happens. Look at the University, you came during the Porter Administration you said in 1983, you left in the Shelton Administration in 1996?

RW: 1996, I've been gone for two years now.

LNS: Head up the Foundation, before we get to the Foundation. What's the difference between the Institution you came to in '83 and the one you left in '96?

RW: I certainly think we all have our impressions and I know you've been involved at Eastern Michigan University longer than I have. But I really feel like that Eastern Michigan University is really positioned itself both internally and externally now that it has taken its rightful place as one the top regional institutions in the State of Michigan. I certainly know from my political background in Lansing, we are positioned very well in Lansing, people see us as a viable entity, we have had a tremendous amount of success in enrollment and we have great new facilities, a beautiful campus as you know we're very pedestrian oriented, user friendly now and I think that the improvement in our development efforts have really created a foundation and a base for the university that has significantly enhanced it. So I feel that during my fifteen years of involvement with the university it's probably as strong and complete right now as it probably ever has in the fifteen years. And I think that's due as you said, to a lot of people. And I think it's unfortunate that we aren't able to share the credit with those people who have been there and made this thing happen and I've always felt and always have looked at myself as kind of an outsider to the institution. But it's those internal people that make that university work it's the Coutney MacAnuffs, the Jim Vick's, the Bobby England's those people and many of them in your area that are so committed to whatever it takes to make us take our rightful place. There's no doubt in my mind externally and internally I think it's the university's the strongest its been in fifteen years that I've been associated with it.

LNS: As you look at the Porter Era and then the short period which you provided "glue" for the transition and then to the Shelton Era. What do you think the legacies are of each of those periods? Let's say Porter's legacy to the Institute?
RW: I think you hit it earlier, John Porter brought a sense of corporate management to the Institution that was needed, the goals and objectives were established strategies were accomplished for the goals and objectives. And measurement indicators of success were established that showed us where we were going and probably more than anything, he was able to stabilize the university to get away from the declining enrollment. Really didn't deal with the expansion as much as probably has happened from that short window to President Shelton. But my view, he brought a sense of corporateness to the institution and created a first rate management model for us follow.

LNS: There's some people who say, and I think I'm among them that Porter really saved the University. There was, you mentioned earlier in your comments that there was a lot of pressure from the Legislature and others to close the school, that was earlier and it carried into the early years of the Porter legacy. Without getting into the Brickley period which in its own way was very significant, though short, but that there was still a lack of confidence and one of the things that Porter did was make the university pull together towards his famous goals. Would you concur with that?

RW: I certainly respect and I know your opinion on the Brickley era as setting the foundation and that is one that I would certainly bow to, I don't know that because as you know I wasn't there. Yeah, I think Porter created a stabilized environment and a work ethic within the Institution and while somewhat controversial politically in Lansing, still respected and as an educator I think he was respected. And I think he set up a good corporate model for success that in many ways has contributed to the stability of the institution today.

LNS: What we did of course, during that period achieve the largest enrollments in the history of the institution. I think that was probably one, can you think of others that might be major importance as we look at the Porter legacy?

RW: I think like you said, the major enrollments, I would say, in my view Larry, that in terms of creating the impression once again to external environments as you know I'm much more familiar with the external than the internal. But I think the resurgence if you will or the credibility of the athletic program had a great deal to do with it. When you look at the 1987 Cal-bowl and the type of University exposure that we got when the Governor and the Legislator wanted to meet with Coach Harkma to convey their respects and in the same year we win our first MAC Championship go to our first ever NCAA Tournament of Basketball. So that was a banner year for the Institution in terms of news and media coverage I think around the state and certainly had activity in Lansing and I look at the Sweet Sixteen appearance in 1991 as kind of a carryover, very candidly, as you said, Brickley set the foundation for many things I
think that was a carryover in some of John Porter's theories and once again, the attention and the media that we brought from those things while it certainly is arguable where that's the most important way of an institution to be recognized I think we all would agree that it is one way that the institution is recognized. And the success of the Athletic Programs and the turnaround from having the longest losing streak in the nation were embarrassing days and embarrassing times I think for the institution. So I would say in addition to what you are talking about with enrollment stabilization, that and I think you know possibly the working through the process and staying the course on getting the first Doctorate in Education. Those are all significant issues, or significant accomplishments in the life of the institution.

LNS: What about your period. When you provided the glue for the transition?

RW: Well obviously, that was a period of breakdown and if I felt like I was able to if I really looked at what we were able to move in that time there were two significant pieces of two significant things that happened that only happened in that window of opportunity. One was that we created the Foundation and all of the activities that took place for the creation of the Foundation really started and the Genesis and plans were drawn during that window of opportunity. So I think the Foundation was very important.

LNS: When did the Foundation formally come into existence?

RW: 1990.

LNS: And it started out with how much in resources from the university?

RW: Well originally if you recall after the Foundation became into existence and they were incorporated in 1990, I've to those dates right here for you to take with you Larry. So you can you know if you want to go back and look at the dates. I also have funding for you on the Corporate Ed. Center. I think those are important pieces to know that they were funded outside the institution did not take away from academic dollars was my charge. I feel real good about the Foundation and what it's been able to do and that was created in that window of opportunity and the other thing that I felt was very good was the facility plan was created in there. And those in my view were two major impacts on the institution.

LNS: And the facilities plan was what?

RW: The facilities plan was about $90 million.

LNS: That are what you just referenced just earlier.
RW: You're aware of the document and that and it was $90 million and that's $90 million that did not include the College of Business, did not include the Huron Center or Eagle Crest project where we identified and as you know today, President Shelton likes to use the word that that plan has really resulted in a $200 million expansion and renovation of the campus and I think that showed us creative ways that we could do funding.

LNS: Is the $90 million part of the $200 million?

RW: Yes, we had in there I think the Library at $17 you know they actually spent $41 at the Library and they've been very fortunate in having a couple of real good Capital Outlay Bills for the university. But those two things I think during the transition. And then the third piece was that we were having problems you would recall this from our Cabinet days of keeping the funding for the instructional equipment purchases out of the recoup salaries. And we were able to go in and put that back in to place during that time so we were able to do a fair amount with instructional equipment, at least we had a plan to do it and we did that.

LNS: Now that the Shelton Era is about nine years into his decade. When the history is written in a sense what do you think Shelton's legacy to the Institution should be reported as?

RW: I think the thing is that he has created an expansion not in student enrollment but as you've indicated earlier I think he has been a very academic friend to the academic programs at the institution. It will have seen probably unprecedented expansion and renovation of facilities during the Shelton era. And I think the physical stability that he has brought to the university will be written as something that is special as I understand that situation in looking at the numbers and that our physical stability is there. So I think those two things would be my view as probably expansion and renovation of facilities and bringing a physical stability to the university.

LNS: When you look at the institution how would you look at our relationship as an institution with State government and Federal government how has that changed and evolved over the years that you've been associated with Eastern Michigan University?

RW: Well it's one of the things that surprises me the most and it's one of the things that once again I know that I'm a political person I don't feel like we did very well as far as garnering State and Federal resources for our facilities on campus prior to my arrival and it's an understanding. We all understand politics but being a part of the system as I was able to do was because I was an elected official who worked with the Bill Ford's when he ran for office, who worked with the Carl Purcell's and the Carl Levin's and
that we were able to go in and really pull out some real good money from them. It's also very difficult right now because each year there's more and more pressure on the pork barrel projects which we receive some for I think a great accomplishment in my mind, that I feel best about Larry is Welch Hall. The funding for Welch Hall putting that together when I went there it was all about tearing it down or leaving it stand and how you're gonna renovate it and getting the Federal money out of a pork barrel project I thought was great for the university, there are many the would disagree with me and so I think it is very difficult to get any special kinds of money, number one and very candidly I don't think we are positioned very well. I think there's a way that you can be a part of the process or you can expand the process to include and incorporate your needs and I don't think we are positioned real well to do that, to be honest with you.

LNS: Of all of the issues that took place, one of the most controversial if not the most controversial is the Huron Issue? Have any thoughts on that?

RW: Well I do, and obviously, you know that. And if you will recall it was very early in 1990, at a Board Meeting when I was Executive Vice President and we had put together a committee and a process to determine whether we should keep the name and the logo. And the committee had recommended on a very close vote just one vote majority that we should keep the name and logo and do a series of things to show the Huron Indians that we were supportive in terms of creating scholarships and areas in the Library and that was all part of the recommendation and I kind of stand by that recommendation. I kind of felt like if we treated the name and logo with respect that we should have done and basically after observing the fallout and the issues. I think we should've found a way to keep the name and drop the logo. Recognizing that that's not always possible and it's certainly not something that's unanimously supported. But I think that there is a defining issue that has pulled a certain core of our alumni away from the university not making an assessment or an observation, whether it's right or wrong. But I know being in the development business that we still get a lot of replies back on either a direct mail piece or a phone-a-thon piece that on no Huron's, no money. And I recognize that people use that as an excuse, not to give or participate but I do think it has been a defining moment that ultimately as you know it's probably not near as compassionate an issue in 1998 as it is, I believe 1991 or 1992, when we changed, and as each class goes through as Eagles, it becomes less and less. Tough issue but I guess I would stand by or modify my original recommendation to the Board of Regents that we keep the Huron name and drop the logo and try to figure out another way to go about it. So that's where I would stand on the issue.

LNS: For the record, did not make any significant impact on our ability to raise funds has it?
RW: No, I think that's very accurate. I think two things have happened. One,
we've become better at it, we've become more sophisticated, we probably
right now my view Larry is we have the most experienced and best
focused development team that we've had during my fifteen years at the
University, located right across the hall. And so no, I don't necessarily
think certainly in the dollars in the door, would not show that but I think
we're working at it harder and we're more focused on fundraising than we
used to be.

LNS: Basically that's all focused in the Foundation now?

RW: It's focused in the Foundation. It's a significant change it came over, as
you know on July 1, 1998. I think that will be once again ten or twenty
years from now that may be one of those very important dates in the
history of the institution as we look at it. You know the foundation is trying
to do really three things for the institution. And it's focused on that way
and I think that's important because when you're doing development and it
goes in for priorities of funding for another person or another classroom
instructor or another person at the IM Facility, it doesn't hold up very well
in terms of the priorities. But here it's what we're focused on it's what our
priorities our so probably the development officer would get funded. So
it's a whole different deal and has allowed us to attract some very
experienced development people and only time will tell where that we
could make a significant impact on increasing private support.

LNS: How are we doing as a Foundation? What's been the Gross since we
created the Foundation?

RW: Well you know our fundraising over the years, if you look at averages, and
would take say the six years average since we've had the Foundation and
take a six year average before we would probably average about and I
don't know the exact numbers but we can deduce them here if it's
important we're probably averaging about $750 to $1 million a year or
more since we've had the Foundation. We've seen unprecedented
endowment growth. Our endowment has gone from the university transfer
at $7.3 million in 1992. If you put the numbers to that and then today this
year, actually I'm hoping that by June 30, 1998 we will hit our target of $30
million endowment and that to me is significant growth in that endowment.

LNS: The good times in the stock market notwithstanding. I mean this comes
pretty much from not reinvested but basically new dollars to the university.

RW: Absolutely Larry, you're absolutely right. We've had a great, great market.
But I want to point out to you also that in just six years, we have now
generated over $7 million in endowment private support, new money into
an endowments and as you know, in the previous hundred and something years we generated, we did that in six years now. So yes, the market is a big piece of it, new money is a big piece of it, but the most important piece of it is the spending policy. And the steady policy that we put into place, which mirrors what is happening around Endowments throughout the country. If you look at the Mcdougal reports, our spending policy mirrors it, it’s not conservative and it's not a real liberal policy either but it mirrors what is happening and that probably is as important a piece to the endowment growth as it the market or as is the new support.

LNS: When you think about the university in terms of political figures, who have had a real positive, major influence. Who are the heroes so to speak that you come across? State, Federal, Local?

RW: I think Bill Ford was obviously, and I can just speak of the probably of the fifteen to twenty years of my involvement.

LNS: That's all I'm asking.

RW: Certainly Bill Ford was a good friend to the university was a big help in the funding for Welch Hall which as you know I think was a very important. Carl Purcell is and was a big help during his term in there and we were able to create a bipartisan support at the Federal level. And as you know, we brought money for the renovation of Pease out of Federal government. Which I don't think people realize myself, we brought about $1 million for Pease, $1.5 million from Welch out of the Federal government once again they weren't totally funding it but they created such an impetuous for us, that the university matched the rest of the funding for it. So I think that they were very important in my view at the National level at the State level I certainly think Gary Owen was a part in doing a lot of things for us. We also had help from Levin and Riegel when we did the million-dollar Urban Development Action Grant for the Corporate Ed Center and the five Hundred Thousand Small Cities Block Grant. Federal money, once again going into the corporate Ed. Center that you wouldn't get without political support.

LNS: As I recall, Carl Purcell helped us get the cooperative education money from Washington too. Is that correct?

RW: Yeah, I think you would probably know that a little better than I can. I think that was just about the time that I was coming to Eastern something and I remember you had a big grant from him at that time? Yes.

LNS: Who among the Regents during your tenure stands out in your mind as helping Gary move the university forward?
RW: In terms of some of the things I was working on, of course, it had great support from Bill Simmons who was the, you know, the Chair of the Board of Regents.

LNS: What was his major contribution was other than the arrangement of the Board in Welch Hall?

RW: When you look at Bill, Bill was very politically involved and Bill was very well respected in Washington and he facilitated some meetings in Washington for us and participated and was very close friends with Bill Ford. And politically that is the way things work which if you can take those friends and turn them into resources for the institution that you work.

LNS: Which he did.

RW: Which he did, yeah and you know Bill was very influential in starting the Overseas educational program, as you know he really liked international travel and international education and worked on that. So I felt Bill was at the time when the Democrats were in control, he was a political influence. And he knew Blanchard and he knew Gray Owen, he knew Bill Ford and he had some influence with those people and he utilized it I think in the best interest of the university. So Bill was really, if I looked at it from my view point externally, once again and looking at the politics and people who got in and gave their all or not their all but certainly played a part in making some things happen, you know Bill he did it. And I know as many things about Bill as you do but you know he was there and he would make the vote and he knew structurally in an organization how to do it. And when you think of the cheers Larry this is going on the record, I worked with Dick Robb, I worked with Bill Simmons, Jenny Titsworth, John Burton, Bob DiMattia Phil Incarnati and I believe that Bill Simmons was probably the best politically collective that brought some of those resources back to the institution.

LNS: How do you remember let's go through the list again. What was Jenny Titsworth's major contribution? Title nine?

RW: Well, as you know, Jenny I think her major contribution was the childcare program, which I appreciate cause she's a donor to that program. She has almost a twenty thousand dollar endowed scholarship over there for someone to pay for childcare so that's a significant contribution you know when donate in your own money to do that I think she obviously believed in that and supported that. From Jenny we went to John Burton. John as you know was a local person and politicized I think probably the Board as much as it's ever been politicized during his tenure and was always good to me personally was a local person but I have a hard time you know obviously, his cause was affirmative action.
LNS: Dick Robb was the first Chair that you came in under was he not?

RW: Dick you know was a nice guy provided those linkages we talked to earlier with his certain segment of our population and that but I don't know that during my short time

LNS: That was with Simmons, Titsworth, Burton, Robb.

RW: DiMattia.

LNS: DiMattia.

RW: Then Incarnati. Well Bob is as I said here and I try to think of the things and I know this happened after I left and evidently had a great deal to do with the design of the Convocation Arena in terms of the concept that the Board followed and the design and build concept and so I think that would be his contribution as he was a entrepreneur developer at heart and that certainly he had some contacts with Governor Engler and I think is somebody who has come to appreciate and truly enjoy the university after a period of time, I know he was not that way when he came. Phil Incarnati probably the most popular of the nicest of them in terms of fits in any situation but as you know he's mostly been Chair since I've been gone so I really can't define that. I think the history of the university as you are writing and somewhere in there you've got to incorporate Darrell Cooper. As the Chair of the Foundation, maybe the Chairs of the Foundation John DeMoos, Darrell Cooper, Peggy Campbell. And now Jim Webb if you look at what the Foundation is going to do in private support, and building the Endowment, they've had a role and certainly Darrell I think took us to a new level and the new credibility of the private support area in the institution because of his personality, his dramatic gift.

LNS: First major gift that we really received.

RW: First major gift that we received. First Million Dollar gift and then I think that made the academic community understand that hey there's some potential here for improving my college if I start participating in private support and I think, very candidly that the Deans are stepping up to this task.

LNS: I think so too. What about others, I don't want to get into the faculty or the students but if any of those comes to mind as outstanding contributors to the development of the university, your thought?

RW: As I said to you earlier, some of those people that I think participated in and were a help to me as I was looking externally to bring and I was