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Sally McCracken, Oral History Interview, 2018

Matt Jones
Eastern Michigan University

Rachel Burns
Eastern Michigan University

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Oral History Interview with Sally McCracken (SM)

Conducted by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Matt Jones, (MJ) and Rachel Burns (RB)

Transcribed by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Rachel Burns

Recorded 2018 March 19th at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, Michigan

MJ: I'm gonna give a little introduction here. And then we'll start in with some questions.

SM: Alrighty.

MJ: This is Matt Jones -grad student here at EMU- at Eastern Michigan University. I am here with fellow Historic Preservation grad Rachel Burns. It's Wednesday March 19th and we're here in Halle Library talking with Dr. Sally McCracken, Professor Emeritus with the Communication, Media, and Theatre Arts Department. McCracken taught at the university from 1968 to 2012 when she retired and gained Emeritus status. In addition to teaching at EMU, McCracken has negotiated several contracts on behalf of the American Association of University Professors, an institution in which she played many roles: chief negotiator and president until 1968- From 1968 till 1994 and continued to function as regional council member. McCracken served on the faculty council, reader of names for commencement and president of the Emeritus Faculty Council/ Association. So- before we get to your time here, let's- can we start way back from the beginning? Where you're from? And who you're from? And when?

SM: Sure

MJ: You're from Southern Ohio

SM: Yes, Cambridge Ohio. Now all of the expressways cross around it going east and west. It's about 50 miles east of Wheeling, West Virginia. Born there in 1942, during the war years. Grew up with- I'm an only child. My parents actually owned a candy store called "Sally O' Sweets". So I grew up- first they had it in their basement in a small house where they had a little showroom out on the front porch. Then we had a building built, a nice little- well rectangle with two floors. Bottom floor was a factory showroom. Upstairs was our apartment. So then every morning I smelled what was cooking in the candy store. I had an unusual upbringing where lots of other playmates, friends, and kids would come over because of the candy.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: So- Cambridge, Ohio. Very conservative. Very kind of southern. Very few minorities. So it was kind of an upbringing where I was looking forward to going to college. So I picked a very

conservative... actually, it was- it was a Presbyterian college. Muskingum College. And they weren't *that* conservative. It was a whole eight miles from home. I thought 'I'm going to do this right so, I'm not going to go home till Thanksgiving.' Eight miles away. Actually Muskingum was a really good experience for me. Good basic education. Then I became interested in Communications Theater Arts.

MJ: Okay

SM: I was an orator forensicator. I did okay there, I came in third in the nation in the oratory contest.

MJ: Wow.

SM: Made me a nervous wreck though! Doing those presentations. But I love theater so I was sort of half and half speech and theater. Then I went on to Bowling Green, but I went on to the theater at Bowling Green oddly- I had been really attracted to that. They brought me in as a customer. I had very few costuming courses before that. So it was very interesting. I learned from the ground up with *My Fair Lady*, pulling things out of the cage, and putting together some shows. I was really helping the costume assistant who was in charge because the director was on leave for sabbatical. Boy, that was a year! A whole year of true immersion in theater. And there was a Huron playhouse up at Huron, Ohio. I did that in my first summer of my masters. Then I thought 'well I've been going to school so long, I ought to continue' so I was looking for Ph.D positions. I, of course, had the theater background so I was getting theater offers from Michigan State, Iowa, and then I got an interesting, unusual offer from Wayne State University and it was offered to me as a communication position. Never really thought about that. But Raymond Ross, who wrote multiple textbooks, was my advisor there. He brought me in not just the doctoral fellowship but the Wolfram graduate assistantship as well. So I had these two; I thought I was rich. So I could live off that. I came to Detroit, and switched into the communication field. He was on the experimental end of it so I went right with him. Best decision I ever made. Turned out to be a really good decision overall. I finished my degree in '68, so I was in school from -I finished- I graduated high school in '64 and then I went on 64-65 for my masters and I finished in 68 with my Ph.D.

MJ: Okay, well to go all the way back to the candy store (laughs). I have to go back there for a second.

SM: Okay go ahead.

MJ: Okay, because it seems like if you lived in this candy store -that would automatically give you some power over all the other kids in the neighborhood.

SM: Oh, some. (laughs)

MJ: I want to know when the theater came in. What drew you to the theater? Because you said giving oratory is terrifying and made you a nervous wreck. I know that about certain people but I always wonder 'why do you do it everyday?'

SM: My mother and my friends always said 'if it scared me that's what I wanted to do!' So when I felt challenged by something I'd jump in. Well, I think, when I was younger in that little apartment. It was a good sized apartment over the candy store. I used to direct my own plays with the kids in the neighborhood. I think I sort of started there, that whole play acting stuff. And I liked it in high school. But the oratory part- interestingly there are a number of us who appear very outgoing. But if you took the Meyer Briggs you'd find I was slightly in the introverted category. But I can do it-if it scares me, then I'll get right over there. You won't find me the life of the party, dancing on the table. That's not me!

MJ: The sort of the stereotypical theater student...

SM: Yeah, that's not me. I'm more of a-I'm a little this side of introvert but I can come over here to pretend to be extroverted. And I always encourage my students to do that too. If it scares you just try it. And if you feel really nervous, you'll get through it. And if you can get through it a couple times, then you'll get through it another time.

MJ: Did you ever think that maybe for students that are afraid of acting, or afraid of being on stage, that it is better for them to play a role because the thought of being themselves is really scary?

SM: Yes

MJ: Is that true?

SM: Yes. If you see yourself in a character and you can really be that character, you'll be far less nervous if you're out there by yourself. Although if you ask character actors, they'll still tell you they get nervous too. But once you do it enough, it doesn't keep you from doing it. I would even suggest to some of my speech students here, communication course 'get up there and see yourself as Oprah Winfrey giving the speech' Be her! Take her mannerism, try it. I said 'try being a little different' when you do it.' I know you're supposed to be yourself and relax, but that's difficult for some people. You know, theater, I really enjoyed it. It was fun. I played the character roles, which I enjoyed. Wayne State, I was with the Hillberry Company. They're an acting training company in Detroit.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: Big company. I took my minor in theater there. Even though they were excellent, I wasn't at least at the bottom of the class -some of their people were- in terms of levels, so I thought 'I must do okay.' So I was happy enough with that.

MJ: What was-say it for me one more time Muskingum

SM: Muskingum

MJ: Muskingum, okay. That's down near Zanesville.

SM: Yes. It's in between Cambridge and Zanesville.

MJ: So what was the campus culture like? Small town college, Ohio-

SM: A whole thousand students. Very hilly, if you ever been in Southern Ohio, when you say downtown, you mean it. It is straight downhill. In Cambridge, the downtown goes down. Everybody either lives on an uphill slant or a downhill slant. And the campus was like that. There were a lot of valleys in between. You had women's residence up on this hill and then you had the men's up here. Then you had this really interesting valley in between. And then over here on another hill you had the main campus area. So we were constantly walking up and down. We would joke that you could tell someone who graduated from Muskingum by the size of their calves. All the time going up and down the hills the entire time! But it was a really very good basic education, can't say enough about that. And there's still about over a thousand. And everyone had to go from calling themselves colleges to universities. So they've become a university now.

MJ: Right. Well, your education, your moment through academia- you kept going north.

SM: Yeah, I did.

MJ: You got to Wayne State. What year did you enter Wayne State ?

SM: '68. No, no- the fall of '67.

MJ: Okay. Did you have any prior experience with the city?

SM: No! This was the first big introduction to a big metropolitan city and that was also the summer they burned down the west side. If you remember the Detroit Riots. So I got there- I think it was my second summer there, so I got there a little earlier. And that's when they decided to have that huge riot. I lived in the Kentmore Arms, which is now gone. Big parking area now. But it is near the Fisher Building. So that's where several of us as grad students lived. And we had a big parking lot in the back of the building. They brought in the national guard and tanks getting ready to go over to the west side. And we go up on the roof and we can see all of these fires. I was terrified! I could not understand how anybody and groups of people could be that angry with each other. I was very naive, came out of Southern Ohio, didn't make sense to me.

MJ: Did you call home?

SM: My parents were traveling in Oregon and just panicked (laughs). Because the phone lines would be up and then they'd be down and then be up. They got through to me and then I went out and stayed at the home of my major professor, Raymond Ross. His wife put me to work weeding her back patio. I remember that. (Laughs) Yes, I remember well. We were crawling up and down our halls because there was a bullet hole in the front window. And one in the back. So we would crawl along the hallways to see each other. My window overlooked Dittrich Furs, if you know that area down there at all. It's near the Fisher building on Second and Saks Fifth avenue. And I literally, through my kitchen window, watched people taking furs out of Dittrich Furs and breaking into everything. And I was really horrified. I thought 'what on earth is going on?' Didn't make any sense to me why people were that angry. But again, I had barely known any minorities when I was in Ohio. And I went to these schools and I was so grateful to go to Wayne because then I was introduced to all different minorities. And I loved it that they were in my classes. Boy, it opened up my world. Fortunately, I came to Eastern which again has continued that. And I'm so glad because if all you did was live your life in Southern Ohio, you'd get some pretty narrow ideas.

MJ: As you traveled through academia as a student, were there any kind of movements in the communication field that were happening? Probably were, I'm sure, but how did that change as you were moving along?

SM: Well, when I first started Muskingum it was called Speech and Theatre. As I was going through school between Muskingum and the other end, they were beginning to say Communication. Much bigger than Speech, Communication. Then there was always the tension between Michigan State which was highly technical in Communication versus giving speeches and all of that. And they were more into Media Communication. So there was always that sort of tension and you go to these conferences and you would hear people saying 'no we *have* to go in this direction'. Fortunately what happened was it all sort of melted. We ended up I think the best of both parts of it so it wasn't strictly technological. Now we're really technological (laughs) at this point! So I've seen that whole turn around.

MJ: Is there anything else you'd like to say about Wayne?

SM: Great experience at Wayne. Raymond Ross, I loved that man. He passed away just a year ago, two years ago. He was 17 years older than I was. And thought the world of him. And it was a good learning experience for me. I felt really like I had all the subject matter I needed for when I was job shopping.

MJ: His last name was Ross? Do you think he was used to people like you who maybe hadn't seen a place like that?

SM: He was a little protective but he also had me just doing things. Saying 'go do that' and I had no idea what that was. He allowed me to learn. He even, I was doing my doctoral dissertation on, it was at the time called "time compressed speech" it's where they would take these big reels of tape about this big (stretches thumb and index fingers about three to four inches). And you could just sample that tape so instead of something taking three minutes you could compress it to a minute and a half, and still understand it. So it was a new technology at that time. And they were experimenting with that at the University of Louisville.

MJ: Okay.

SM: So Ray said 'why don't you go down there and see how that's done and you can come back and we can do a study about that.' So I went down and I met the professor, they were in the psychology department and they were non-sighted. These professors were non sighted. So I arrived and told this story but it was true. I was met by a blind a professor and a priest who was sighted, so between the two of them, they introduced me to a whole new technology at the time. Both of them really enjoyed- I forget what drink it was at the airport (laughs). The psychologist had said 'we probably ought to leave before the good priest starts seeing pink elephants!' and I said 'okay!' Funny story there. So I came back and did that study and Ray was the one who inspired me to do that. Yeah, we used all kinds of electronic equipment to measure how the speeded up text affected people.

MJ: Wow! I think I remembered hearing about that in your interview with Larry Smith back in the nineties.

SM: Oh yeah, a long time ago.

MJ: And I was really intrigued with that technology you were talking about.

SM: Oh it was really cool at the time. Now they have very small little players that you can use. Usually a tape is better, but you can take a normal cassette tape and play it back at twice the speed. It's a technology they use for non-sighted people because they listen to *War and Peace* for days and months when you can hear in half the time (laughs). And I used to read for the blind too, you know those kinds of things. So it was fascinating

MJ: Wow. Well, did you have any opinions or associations with EMU before you got here?

SM: You know, I really didn't. Being from Ohio, I knew it was here, but I didn't know much about it. So when I was job shopping, I looked at the University of Hawaii, I looked- It came down to two interestingly. Eastern Michigan and the University of California at Long Beach, which was a great place, I'll tell you. And I thought 'oh this is where I'm going to be!'. And then we got to dealing with money and how much money there would be. And Eastern bought me. See, Long Beach offered \$9,000 and Eastern offered \$9,300. (Laughs) I went 'Oh boy! Yeah sure, I know where I'm going.' So I came to Eastern.

MJ: Okay. Today, given that offer, would you go to Long Beach? (Laughs)

SM: (Laughs) In hindsight! You know, when I first came here I thought 'I'll go to Long beach in about five years or four years' and 43 years later I'm still at Eastern.

MJ: Were you hired to teach graduate courses here?

SM: Oh grad and undergrad. But I was hired to do Communication Education so how do you teach in the high schools- the large lecture section. And they were televised. They were just beginning the whole televised part of it when I got here. And so I saw how they did it. Everyone stood in front of a camera and just lectured. And I thought 'well I'd rather just, I don't like it but I'll stand in front of the students to lecture.' If you're going to televise, make it just a little more interesting. So I got together a group of students, a group of tech guys up in Ford Hall who did the televised stuff and taping. And I said 'let's do little hour dramas. Let's put together different things.' At the time *Laugh In* had been in so we did one on a speak-in for communication. We literally built a little set where they would open doors and look out. I could lecture and they came out with some comments. They were very corny. Wish I could find those things.

MJ: I'd love to see it.

SM: We did one on Speech Trek which was again the *Star Trek* theme. We did a soap opera. We did a cooking show where at the end I got the pie in the face. They had all planned that for my ending (laughs). This is embarrassing.

MJ: Were you doing this (prior to coming to EMU) at Wayne? Or Muskingum?

SM: No I just thought 'boy that was a fun idea'. We had such a good time, the people who did the camera work. We even would beam people up, you know, cut the tape. We were having a good old time.

RB: Was this the predecessor to ETV? Public Access television-

SM: Oh way before that.

RB: Okay.

SM: This was '68, '69. I still have the scripts, I can find those. But the tapes probably have disintegrated by now. Wish I could remember Jim's last name. He had the whole set at one time. I don't know where they went, but boy were they unique. I mean, there weren't too many people doing that corny stuff. But I mean the students got a hoot out of it.

MJ: I'm sure, did you ever run that by somebody before you did it?

SM: Well my department head's eyebrows went up a few times wondering what I was doing.

MJ: Who was that?

SM: Started off with John Sattler, I think John didn't care. He said 'whatever you want to do, do it.' And then he wasn't there very long. Then it was Tom Murray. So occasionally I'd get blowback like 'what are you doing?' because it may be over here somewhere. But maybe we had too much fun. But we still had the content, and we'd test them on the content.

MJ: Yeah, so did that program continue after you went on to something else?

SM: That went about three years when I first got here. Two, three years.

MJ: That sounds like such a great time.

SM: Oh we had a great time (laughs).

MJ: I couldn't imagine *not* doing it.

SM: And then finally you know, I rolled out of that into more conflict resolution stuff and listening behavior and then I came up with the assertive class. So I put together a sort of package of things. All the techniques and communication approaches to how you deal with conflict. So that was sort of what carried me through the negotiation.

MJ: You were hired at EMU in '67.

SM: Yeah started in '68, fall of '68

MJ: Just prior to student demonstrations and-

SM: John Norman Collins

MJ: Oh yeah, the murders. The administrators, the actions they took to the demonstrations and Sponberg resigned. I know that was in the seventies

SM: He hired me. He interviewed all the faculty.

MJ: Yeah, yeah!

SM: You would go up to Pierce Hall and he'd interview you to hire.

MJ: Well you got hired right before there was a lot of turbulence.

SM: Oh, absolutely

MJ: When you got here, could you see it coming?

SM: Maybe I brought it, I don't know! (Laughs)

MJ: Maybe you did! (Laughs)

SM: I don't think I did! Of course Vietnam, and we were coming out of the sixties. And that was kind of turbulent in itself with all movements for "free everything." Lots of drugs and lots of marijuana. Everywhere all parts of the student body-it didn't matter if you were laying here it was everywhere. So yeah, I guess I was in it so I felt it. It really blossomed big time.

MJ: You say it kind of manifested itself here on campus. I mean, in drug use?

SM: It was probably no more than any other campus. But there was a lot of it.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: Yes there was. Well I can in too there was still smoking on campus. You could smoke everywhere. Unless you knew the scent of it maybe that was going on too (laughs). For some professors they would notice, but they felt better. It was one of those things.

MJ: Did it also permeate faculty and administration too?

SM: Oh yeah

MJ: Okay, these manifestations of-

SM: Oh faculty, sure. I mean in every department.

MJ: I don't doubt it.

SM: Yeah, it wasn't to the point where you couldn't teach or do anything because you were smart because you were the teacher. If anyone did, you certainly didn't come into class like that. But yes, there were a lot more drugs that were noticeable then. All over the place in Ypsilanti and Detroit there were these things called "head shops" where you would go in and you'd see all of the paraphernalia whether it was illegal or not. But that was a big era for that kind of stuff.

MJ: Lots of turbulence.

SM: Yeah, well the college students caught fire with this whole Vietnam thing and the draft. And that's what really accelerated that. Because they would be starting their college career and then they would be drafted. There used to be the draft lottery here so there used to be a lot of tension the few days before they drew a number and everyone would sit around in the residence halls and wait and see if their number came up.

MJ: Birthday?

SM: Huh?

MJ: Was it their birthday? (students' draft numbers corresponded with their birthdays)

SM: I think so. But still it was very trying.

MJ: So then when they called the numbers the tension had to go somewhere.

SM: Well the tension went with the students becoming very unhappy with the war itself. And they'd hear people coming back and telling you what to them over there and what it was like. And then too I had students come back who were wounded and they were very different from when they left. I was there long enough to see someone get drafted and then they come back to pick up their college education. It was very turbulent.

MJ: With those students who came back from Vietnam- would you describe them as different? Would they take part in the demonstrations?

SM: They were kind of- a lot they would stand apart from it because they couldn't understand why everyone was so mad at them. And so they- it was turned the wrong way. It was turned against them a lot, and so, they were sensitive to that as anybody would be. So I found them sort of not really engaging in that very much. But they were different when they came back. A lot of heroin with our soldiers. We had a lot of PTSD.

MJ: PTSD

SM: We had a lot of those cases but no one was treating it very properly at that point. It was kind of like a pot that was being constantly stirred. This 'got to get out of this war. Got to get out. Can't get out of the war.' Of course it was the Nixon era in there too in the seventies. So it was like a pot that wouldn't stop stirring. If you think it through, that was the last time college students became really active. They had their SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) students -STAR was another one. All these student groups were all pretty radical. And that was, it was a short lived period, but that was the last time you saw it. You don't see it in the eighties and nineties, or clear up to now. I'm just fascinated while they were ignited then now it's these school kids who are ignited.

MJ: Yeah

RB: Yeah

SM: For good reason, yes. Their lives, they're talking about in this country. I don't know, I think this is the next one. And they're very much younger, they're what Generation Z?

MJ: Yeah, Gen Z.

SM: They're the ones who are coming out now and maybe it will be a bigger movement than we think. There's a lot of things. Here, just put this all in the pressure cooker of the seventies. You have the Vietnam War-big enough, you have the students all up in the air about that. You have the women's movement starting. You have the Civil Rights Movement just really beginning, even though you had the passing legislation in '64 it's now just finally getting around taking hold in some form or other. It was just a pressure- then you had the Nixon stuff that went on. Everything just-it was a real pressure cooker. And then you had unionism, throw that in, the unions were just growing right and left through the country.

RB: Did the environment make you nervous as a young professor? Like jumping into something that was so chaotic, I guess?

SM: Yeah, it made us all nervous in a way. We had students come back not quite right and they'd end up in your classroom and they were a little off, they weren't ready to be there. They kind of scared you. We had a couple of our students who walked into our office and they were kind of odd and different and were playing with what looked like a toy hand grenade. But we didn't know if it was or not. We were in an enclosed office. Talked him into 'we ought to do another kind of, we ought to do your course of action, why don't you get some papers and come back.' And then police searched his car and there were weapons in the back. A lot of us were a little nervous about what was happening. Because it was all happening at the same time. So it did make you nervous. It wasn't the most peaceful period.

MJ: It doesn't sound like it. The way that-when the demonstrations happened here in '69 from our research we've kind of gathered that the president, Sponberg, interviewed everyone, he had a hands-on approach to the way that he led the university, but then when the demonstrations rolled around, it didn't seem like he was so hands-on. I remember reading about the students surrounding his house and him not addressing the problem.

SM: Right

MJ: Where was the change?

SM: I think the students were becoming more and more active in the seventies. He withdrew from that. When I first came here, they always told the first year faculty members 'you need

some committee service so why don't you be on the faculty senate?' It was a senate back then. And so I became the very green representative to the senate. And the senate at that time was the body that negotiated wages and other conditions of employment for the faculty. And that was starting to get dicey. They were starting to say 'no, we're not going to do this and we're not going to do that.' So as the administration became a little tighter in how they approached the faculty, the faculty, because it's pressure cooker time, started getting more and more disturbed by it. So in the very early seventies that's when they started their organizational attempts to bring in a union. So they had AFT [American Federation of Teachers] here, NEA [National Education Association] and AAUP [American Association of University Professors] all contending for faculty representation. I remember the leaders of the various groups and how we finally had a runoff election-I think it was between AFT, NEA and AUP and AUP won.

MJ: Okay

SM: And so, they were negotiating their first contract in '74 and they were looking for a negotiating team. So logically they thought since I had been somewhat involved in all the campaigning, I was in the AUP court then they thought 'well Sally teaches Persuasion, that ought to work, why don't make her Chief negotiator?' Good! Once you realize persuasion doesn't work in negotiation at all then you have a real learning experience ahead of you.

MJ: Can you remember anyone else who was on the faculty senate at that time?

SM: Yes. Maury Laney-Maurice Laney, I think he's gone now. He was president of it for a period of time, I remember him. I don't remember other faculty members with me, but he was one of the leaders. But it was all destined to end up with a union because as the administration closed down and down less willing to deal with faculty, you know concerns, of course unionism was blossoming all over the country in higher ed. This was it's growth spurt.

MJ: I wondered about that

SM: It was. It started in '64. That's when you had a lot of the teachers union already in place in New York. They were the first major teachers union. Then you had police and fire coming along. Then we had higher ed. Everyone started falling into place in the mid sixties. Just a few in the late sixties and then a whole group of schools came in the early seventies.

MJ: What did the faculty have to gain by unionization?

SM: Well at that point probably everything, because they didn't have anybody to negotiate with. It finally got down to the point where they would just tell what your increase would be or else it wasn't. Faculty were in turmoil as well. It was hard not to catch the bug. The first contract had to be everything negotiated.

MJ: Is it always faculty versus administration in these kinds of negotiations? Does it have to be?

SM: Well actually, no. That's my opinion and I'll explain that. It's if you set it up that way, that's what's going to happen. Gary Hawks was the chief negotiator for the administration. First contract, 1974. And Gary and I actually got along okay. We did- we could work out things. We both had attorneys, of course, sitting across the table. Of course, ours wasn't there all the time theirs was. But we learned everything on the ground. And I was so green, I never negotiated anything in my life. So I talked to a man by the name of Wally Webber down at TOPS, Technical Office Personnel Servicing at UAW (United Automobile Workers). And Wally was just at the verge of semi retirement himself-he was in his fifties I think. And he adopted us. He said 'okay here's how you negotiate, you don't get ahead of yourself because you negotiate up to here (gestures a piece of paper) and you don't know what's going to happen till you turn the page (laughs) and once you see the next the page you'll know where are you then.' So he taught us how to negotiate certain basic things that you do in contracts and how to approach it. Patience of Job- amazing man. So at the end, interestingly, we were able to settle a lot of things. Gary and I would talk about it and figure it out finally. Our teams didn't trust us, they thought we would be selling the other side. But I think we came up with a wonderful first contract here. Gary and I sent out a joint release saying 'here's what we have.' Now, one side says 'well here it is.' We introduced it together. To this day, Gary and I have lunch about every month or two. We're still good friends.

MJ: Good

SM: Since '74. We lost a few years in the middle when he was superintendent of schools. But now we meet every couple of months for lunch.

MJ: So, you said before their lawyer was always there and your's of course wasn't- why not?

SM: Too expensive, we couldn't afford that. So we would call him if we had issues and anyway what Wally had told me and it was every true, all of that isn't legal. Everything you're negotiating isn't legal. When you come to a legalistic point, then you ask your attorney. Or if you're on some issue that involves what we call "Boilerplate Language" ask your attorney. Like 'can you open this and zip it up again? Zipper clause-yes or no?' So you get the language when you need it. But everything -talking about promotional procedures- that's not legalistic.

MJ: Right. Well you said that schools were catching the bug... so what pushed Eastern to finally catch the bug and start negotiating?

SM: Well finally the AUP was elected bargaining representative. Then you have about a year to get your first contract. Once we were dubbed bargaining agents for EMU, we really began negotiating. It took about eight or nine months to finish it.

MJ: Okay.

SM: Well it took about seven months. But we finished sort of close to a big snow storm, I remember that week being in the middle of that.

MJ: What are the daily “nuts and bolts” of being a negotiator? You said you were really green and it just seems like such a nerve-wracking position to have if you’re green.

SM: Oh, it was.

MJ: So how long did it take you to get the hang of it?

SM: It took me two or three contracts until I felt like I knew where I was going and what I did. But what-your day would be. I was teaching 12 hours here, so I had all those courses. And I had to teach. We negotiated in the evenings so it wouldn’t interfere with the teaching day. So you would be dead on your feet by the time you started. Then we’d probably meet later, and I would stay over with a library friend of mine. No, not a library friend. She was in history. I’d stay in her daughter’s room because she was in college. I’d stay over because I had to teach early the next morning. And we did a lot of our writing during the sessions on caucus breaks. Or weekends, it was just time consuming and it was very nerve-wracking. Don Pearson negotiated the first contract with me. He was in economics. He’s still around. He lives in town. Karen Lydenburg was there for the first one. Jean Henley was the librarian, she’s passed now. There’s several of us. It was very nerve wracking. There was one fellow who had a nervous episode during it because there was so much pressure. Because none of us had a lot of background. Yeah, so it was pretty heavy.

MJ: You taught a course in Sexism and Communication.

SM: Yes.

MJ: Did you create that?

SM: I’m trying to remember if I did it or someone else did. I think I created that for Women’s Studies.

MJ: Was being a female negotiator to these contracts...would that have been different than two men negotiating?

SM: Oh yeah, 100%. I was the only chief negotiator who was a female for all of the contracts for higher ed around this area that I knew of. In fact, I hardly met another woman who was a chief negotiator in that whole- from ‘74 to ‘80, I met very few. Yeah, it made a difference. You had to work twice as hard, twice as long. Lots of pressure. People thought if they’d be really nice to you, you’d roll over and play dead. So there was a lot of that going on. But that was also the time that the women’s movement was coming and they were encouraging women-college professors to offer assertive training. It was mainly for women but I had as many men in my

courses through the years as I had women overtime. But that was also in play and listening behavior came in during the seventies. Now, you're right. To give you an idea, after that contract was concluded, three years later, so (counting) '76 so two years later, Wally formed his own consulting firm. Labor management consulting firm, mainly labor.

MJ: Okay.

SM: And he had trained me and thought I had it in me. So he asked if I wanted to be an associate as a consultant on the side. And I said sure. So I became a part of Webber and Associates in '76. The first agreement he'd given me was in Mount Pleasant-the secretaries. He said 'oh, it's going to be a weekend negotiation. You're going to be up there Friday night and Saturday. You'll be home Sunday night. Just a few issues left. Why don't you go up there and settle that contract?' Well, those few issues were like 50 (laughs)! When I got there, I was buried in issues. I settled it, and I think it was a pretty good contract by the time when we did. It was almost like getting thrown in the pool every time, not knowing this pool versus that pool. Well after a couple of times into the pool as I told you, it was becoming clear to me some of things you had to do-labor law. So then I was an associate, boy, up through like '92. Then I had McCracken Associates, and I only dealt with independent unions. They don't belong to the big ones. I'm not going to mess with UAW. I'm going to mess with AUP. If they don't belong to a big one, and we call them independents, I'll be your consultant. So I had city workers, bus drivers-

MJ: You still do that now?

SM: No, not anymore. I finally thought 'I'm going to retire from that.'

MJ: Well to jump back to the strike in 1978. The ten day strike.

SM: (Groans) Oh Lordy!

MJ:.. We'll make our way back to some of your teaching.

SM: That's fine.

MJ: So we covered the climate on campus prior to the strike.

SM: Wasn't really good.

MJ: Yeah. And the cultural context, we've kind of hit that. What were the eleven agreements that caused the stalemate?

SM: Well, it was probably wages. Wages had to be one. I don't have it in front of me. And probably stuff about tenure and then probably agency fee, where everyone has to pay a little, pay their fair share, that was in there. I don't remember all 11, but some of them were really

important issues. What had happened is they were hooked together. We call it “a house of cards.” Once you decide this issue suddenly, it decides that issue which then decides this issue over here. You had to be careful so we were all hung up in one of it trying to figure out how we could just settle two or three of these at a time. So we don’t have all of them left. They’re going to fall if we pull one out. James Brickley was president. It’s pretty much a political thing. It was a good position for him, but where did he end up? State Supreme Court. It wasn’t long after that, that he ended up at the State Supreme Court. He really did not pay attention to what was going on campus. His mind was really not here and it (his mind) wasn’t in higher ed.

MJ: OK

SM: Well, I’ll tell you, we found ourselves totally without anyone to talk to you. You couldn’t even talk to him about the contracts. Normally, in negotiation, you have your negotiating team who stay away from executive officers. Maybe you have your human resources person in there, but you don’t have your VPs and your president. So that leaves both your presidents free to talk near the end, to help you. But we weren’t able to get to Brickley at all. We did 36 hour marathon sessions over in Ann Arbor. You would get up Tuesday morning, all Tuesday, Tuesday night into Wednesday morning and then you get a little sleep for a while.

MJ: Was he ever involved in any of this?

SM: No.

MJ: Should he have been, do you think?

SM: Yes. Your president should care what your unions are negotiating. Not that they should be right there in doing it with them but you should have reports coming in so they can say ‘you know, knowing the budget as we know it, I’d prefer if you can stay somewhere in here when you’re doing that.’

MJ: Was Sponberg different in that way?

SM: Sponberg didn’t realize unionization. He really never had the experience of that. He managed to weasel out of that one. He wasn’t around for it. And some were much better than others when dealing with it. One of the best presidents-actually there’s three I can tell you. I’ve been through like seven, maybe more.

MJ: Whatever you want.

SM: No it’s alright. There were three of them that were just wonderful to work with.

MJ: Which ones?

SM: John Porter. Loved the man, the Porter Building.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: Loved the man. He was a friend up till he passed on. And we were able to settle things. We could talk. He had pretty strict guidelines, but we could talk. And he would compromise and I would compromise. He was a very good man. We had Craig Willis in here just for a year to fill in before John Fallon and he was wonderful. You could talk to him about issues and negotiation. And I think the current president [James Smith] is very solid.

MJ: Okay. Porter-all the interviews I listened to with Porter, you mentioned strict guidelines.

SM: Oh yes (laughs).

MJ: He was all about strict guidelines. Very, very organized.

SM: Did they tell you the story about the administrative meeting where-they were all sitting there and they kept looking at the clock and all- it was ten after and Porter had never been late at all? He walked into the meeting and they were there. I guess he looked at the clock and said 'somebody outta reset that clock.' (Laughs) He was very-he was such a good man. You could deal with him. All through the eighties, I found it wonderful to work with him.

MJ: So in the September 18th 1978 edition of the *Echo*, you're quoted as saying the university had been employing some "strange tactics" while negotiating with you on those 11 contract agreements. Do you remember what you were talking about?

SM: Yeah, strange tactics where we would work on the thing for months and then they would come in and say 'well we can't do that.' It was just maddening. It was like scotching the agreement. We had an agreement here, and then it wasn't. We had something over here and then it went away. It was always pulled away after you spent a lot of time working on it. So, it was very frustrating. We weren't able to conclude anything.

MJ: Did they just want to deny everything?

SM: Anything, no. It was typical of human beings if it was something that made sense to them, they wanted it. If they didn't want to, they wouldn't agree to it. It was not a friendly negotiation. Very uncomfortable negotiation.

MJ: Do you think it was your most uncomfortable?

SM: Yeah, I would put that right among them.

MJ: Was that your first?

SM: No, because I renegotiated-I negotiated the re-opener for money, for wages two years after the first agreement, and that was after the third one.

MJ: Okay. But you said before that it took you three contracts to really find your footing.

SM: Oh, I knew what was going on then. But it was so frustrating!

MJ: Yeah

SM: Everybody was right up here the whole time (motions above head).

MJ: We found a newspaper article about a meeting-some sort of public forum regarding the contract and the strike and I think it was you who had just given some sort of address and someone stood up in the audience and yelled some profanity. And it was just so startling to read it.

SM: I wonder- well, I was in several meetings like that. Generally they were angry that we weren't able to conclude things. And weren't dishonest with them, we were telling them what was happening as best we could. You always have a few people like that. And if you get too bent out of shape, you'll lose track of where you are. There was one meeting where this one man was a little tilted to the right or left and he got out of his seat and started coming toward me.

MJ: Oh no.

SM: And that worried me a lot. I forget his name, but it was when I was teaching assertiveness too. I don't remember his name but I said 'here, have a seat right here!' (laughs) There was another chair there. He sat down and I went '(sighs) okay carry on.' He just sat down.

RB: Wow. What was the reaction of non-unionized professors to the '78 strike?

SM: We had a few who were not interested at all and they thought it was all insane.

MJ: Could you tell us who they were?

SM: You should take what you get. We had- I'll tell you the attitude was creating the problems. The negotiating team, the AUP, we were creating all these problems. And they just didn't believe in unionism. I mean we had whole colleges who had large percentages of people who didn't believe unions should exist. So you had that core everywhere in the country, because they thought 'I'm a professional. I'm not a part of a union.' They were offended by that concept. You would get a lot of hostility and they were the people who were people who could negotiate their own contract too.

MJ: Would that vary by department at all?

SM: Well, yeah.

MJ: I was wondering about that too.

SM: There were some departments that were far less interested in unionism than others.

MJ: Would you mind saying which ones?

SM: Yeah, I do. I don't want to color them too much.

MJ: Okay. We can take it off the record too.

SM: Let's just say it's in a building that's not really on campus.

MJ: Okay.

SM: There were some departments there who were very strongly opposed to such shenanigans.

MJ: I see. Well, we've seen-we've read about students that filed lawsuits against the faculty.

SM: Mhm.

MJ: And I've kind of wondered how you balance that. Because it seems like on one hand you have people you work for could be the university or the administration. On the other hand it could be that you work for the students.

SM: Right.

MJ: How do you balance that?

SM: I have always viewed strike as the last thing you ever want to do. You don't want to go out. Number one, it's illegal in Michigan. You put everyone in jeopardy. The students are unhappy. So it should be your very last resort. In this case it was inevitable. We were gonna go, there was no way to settle the contract. I had great empathy for the students. The one reason I wanted to go sooner, try to get us back- and I was trying the whole time; it was ten days long one. I wanted to be sure that the seniors graduated even if we had to have longer class periods or whatever, you don't jeopardize that. I care about students. Here's the student point of view and I understand it. I'm paying for this education, where are you? What are you doing? Please take into account though, they were not paying as much for their education back then. In the early

days the state was paying 70, 75% of our operating expenses. Now we're down to 20 something or other, 28? So big difference. And the students filed lawsuits and we ended up in court in Ann Arbor for a show cause hearing. Show cause means you have to show the harm that it is causing you. So they were all witnesses. And I had to testify too. So, they were losing class time, maybe they couldn't graduate. I could understand all of that. But here's where I have some respect for some judges because this judge knew that this (situation) was very hostile. And if he ruled that they were correct, then we would be given only a couple days to come back to work, or all be fired. I mean that's the way that happens, legally. So what he did was, he said 'I'm going to rule on this two days from now. But both sides are going to negotiate the whole time before I rule.' So it was just enough pressure in both directions for us to finally settle this contract.

MJ: Hmmm.

SM: Yeah. But if they prove show cause, then you'll be just like the school district in Michigan where they fired all the teachers. And we don't want to be one of those.

MJ: Yeah. Did you ever have to try to explain it to students before you went to court for it?

SM: Oh, yes of course. I would talk to them and say 'it is not my personal intention to ever hurt you in any way. I'm your teacher. And I understand your reasons but you have to understand what has happened to our contracts too.' I said 'there are two sides to it. You don't have to agree with our side but please learn enough to understand it.'

MJ: Did you ever take anything that you learned from negotiating into the classroom?

SM: Oh yes. I created a negotiation course.

MJ: (Laughs)

SM: Which I taught from 1977 right up through my retirement. I taught it in undergrad and a grad course in it, and a weekend course in it. Yeah, I taught it liberally.

MJ: My next question, well, when a strike ends and you haven't gotten everything that you set out for.

SM: You never do.

MJ: Yeah. Do you regard that as over? Or is it just postponed?

SM: Well nothing's ever really over. With contracts, my philosophy is this contract takes you from here to here. Now you start here and you go up to here. So the only thing that you don't want to do is keep bringing up things and losing them because it makes it difficult to bring it up

in the next negotiation. So, I'd rather withdraw some things and not have them dealt with than negotiate at the end, rather than negotiate them to the end and then bitterly have to say 'oh, I didn't get it.' But you never get everything. But everyone's depressed anyway.

MJ: (Laughs)

SM: I always tell my classes. It's like postpartum there for a little while on the part of the men and the women. Kind of, have you thought 'oh I had all these things I wanted, and I couldn't get them.' Then you have to start and think- what did you get? And how far did you go? You always have time. It's like life-if you mess up here you can straighten up and go from here to here and be fine.

MJ: Sure. Do you think there was a legacy to that strike? It seems like a pretty big-

SM: It was really intense. It was really bad. And yes, we didn't have any more strikes for a long time. If you would follow the eighties, there weren't any. No strikes in the eighties. Then too, there was all this hassle in Michigan. They were thinking of eliminating some of the schools. And doing something different with them. Eastern was being targeted to become a residential prison or something like that.

MJ: I did not know that.

SM: That was before-and John Porter was the man who turned that around. But there were discussions about closing them because when John got here we had maybe eight to ten thousand students and he grew it. He made it a pretty impressive institution, but we were in jeopardy. We were one of them they were considering on the chopping block and he's the one who, I'm pretty sure it was John, who turned a lot of that stuff. I don't think the faculty had a lot of idea of how close they were.

MJ: Did you have any favorite course you were teaching?

SM: Of all of them that I taught?

MJ: Of all of them.

SM: Well there were four of them that I loved. I loved Negotiation and I liked it because my philosophy is: if you can't see both sides you shouldn't be sitting there either way, on either side of the table. So if I had some student who was really management bound- 'I'm going to be CEO and going to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars,' I'd put them on the union side. And they would have a big fit! I would say 'no, I want you to learn to negotiate union.' And then I'd take the really strong unionist and I'd make them be management.

MJ: They would call those strange tactics.

SM: Yes and I loved that course.

MJ: (Laughs)

SM: I love Assertiveness. Huge course over the years, I just loved it. I liked it more for me almost more than anybody else because every time I taught it, I reminded myself that I may not want to go in and do that but I need to so I would go to something that no one else would.

MJ: Are these classes still taught? Like Sexism and Communication?

SM: Some. I think they teach some version of it in Women's Studies, yes. They haven't been teaching Negotiation, which breaks my heart. They haven't done a Conflict Resolution. They still do Listening Behavior.

MJ: There's no conflict resolution?

SM: No, they're not teaching it. I had a course on that. I created two course, three courses. And they haven't taught that since I left.

MJ: I think that one needs to come back.

SM: That was a favorite of mine too. Because everything, Assertiveness, Negotiation, Mediation.

MJ: What happens when a course is canceled?

SM: It's just shelved.

MJ: Whether there's a need or not?

SM: I guess?

MJ: But if there is a need for a course, who determines it?

SM: The department, the area within the department and the department head. They need to decide. They probably decided that we don't have anyone to teach it and they haven't really hired anybody with at least Mediation skills. You don't have to negotiate for a hundred years. You don't have to do that.

MJ: It's breaking my heart a little bit.

SM: Oh, it was a great course.

MJ: You might have to come back (Laughs)

SM: Well I taught it for a long time. I haven't forgotten all of it.

MJ: What is it about Eastern that kept you here?

SM: I loved my colleagues in the department. And I enjoyed my students. That's home base to me. That's what you do. If you don't like that you'll be gone. But I love my students, I enjoyed the theater, and I got to know them so well over the years. I had that background in theater so that was just an important part to me. I was so involved in everything. I was involved in council, I was in the AUP, I was president negotiator. I knew how many people were in each department, I knew most of the people because I walked around the buildings! And most faculty don't do that much. I mean they may be a part of a council that draws a number of places and they may walk different places on the campus. But you really need-that'll really hook you in, if you just go to a lot of departments. You see a lot of people.

MJ: So when you first got here you didn't see that happening? You didn't expect to be negotiating?

SM: Oh no, not at all. I thought I'd be here for two, three years at first and I'd be gone.

RB: What were the broader changes through the Communication department? Like I know that it changed names.

SM: Yeah, a couple times now.

RB: Were there evolutions in Communications Theory and- oh yes? (McCracken shows off her jacket lapel embroidery reading EMU Department of Communication, Media & Theatre Arts)

SM: Yeah we went from Speech and Dramatic Arts and when I came here it was Speech and Theatre, I think. It was speech, no it was Speech and Dramatics arts here I came from Speech and Theatre from Muskingum or something. Then we went to Communication and Theatre Arts. And then we went to Communications, Media, and Theatre Arts. And it went from a department to a school in the time that I was here.

RB: Okay. Does it parallel the changes that you were talking about earlier where there's an addition of technology?

SM: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Yeah it did. It followed that. Plus it's always the nature of your department and we had a pretty good sized chunk of it with film and all that- television. So that just seemed logical to incorporate that. Well, I'll tell you the changes I saw. When I came to this campus it was half the size. There were 8,000 students. And at its height we had 23 or 24 and

all these buildings that weren't here when I first came to campus. We didn't have the convocation center. Quite a bit smaller than when I first arrived! Grew the most under Porter in terms of numbers increasing. He really increased the numbers of students who came here.

MJ: You said you loved the people in your department, you loved the students.

SM: Yes.

MJ: Do you think the students here are different from other places?

SM: I think we have more first time college students. I was with my family. I think we have a number of professors who were first time in college. That's a good survey to do. I didn't do it but I'd be curious. I wonder how many of us were the first in our family to go to school. Nobody in my family thought of a Ph.D. Never. So it was for me. And there's many students like that who come here. We give them an opportunity where a lot of schools will weed you out before you have a chance to come here. They'll just say 'skim them off the top here' and they won't even look to see if you have any talent beneath that surface. So I think we provide that. There are some students, they're your "B" students, sometimes your "C" students and they are still highly successful and good people. They do very well. And I've been so proud of mine.

MJ: Yeah, that's not the first time you've said-you've commented that someone was a good person regardless of what they've achieved academically. I wonder if that is unique to teaching in Communications?

SM: Well, I look for it perfectly. I made it a rule in my life. I may have to work with you but if I don't think you're a good person, that's all I'll do. I won't spend a lot of time with you. To me, if you have any ethical substance to you, any integrity, things like that. I hope you don't have a superiority issue because I really don't like that (laughs). I find that demeaning to too many people. Are you interested in a broad incorporation of different people? Because that's where we have to be right now. A segment of my career I forgot to tell you-back in '87 I worked with Skip Lauver -actually a couple years before that. I was working with arson investigators on child firesetters because I taught Assertiveness and I dealt a lot with the parent adult-child stuff which you deal with in Assertiveness. And so I would go to their conferences and talk with them. Then Skip said 'why don't you come, we're starting a police staff and command training. Why don't you negotiate for them?' And that blossomed into 'why don't you do labor relations for them' and then 'why don't you do organizational communication for them' and 'why don't you do conflict resolution for them.' And it kept growing over the years! They would have one long seminar a year at first. I think I did 300 and some days by the time I stopped counting. They were there all day. You'd start at eight in the morning and you finish at four. I would do four days with each nine month class. I've done the police department in Detroit, we did only Detroit for awhile. These classes are police from all over Michigan. We still have it. Staff and Command Training.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: It's over in Sill Hall. And then we added fire. Did those four sections for-what class was this 13? For 12, no-about nine years. Then I retired. I still do one day a year for them because I think they're afraid I'm their mascot (laughs). I'm beginning to worry about that! So I do interpersonal, about being a good person. That's what I did with police and fire. So that's why you hear it out of me 'it takes a lot to be a good person, you have integrity. If you tend to do the right thing even though it may be painful. You treat people on a very wide-spread intercultural basis, whatever.' I do those parts too. I said 'you can fight it all you want but unfortunately we are in a multicultural, multiracial environment and it's only going to intensify and there's going to be a lot more conflict.' Every time you have more differences, you have more conflicts.

MJ: Mhmm.

SM: In some ways I wish there was a base course in conflict resolution. Because conflict comes about because of differences. Doesn't matter who you are. And there's nobody like you so if there's four people in the room you could have conflicts over numbers of things. And you could have more interesting ones if they're from a different ethnicity or a different race. That only stirs the pot a little more. But there's a way to deal with that. And they don't have enough of that. See, they always view it as if you're different from me than there's something wrong with you. No, no,no! You have to back up a little.

MJ: Do you ever get into huge fights with people? (laughs)

SM: No I really don't. I get frustrated with people because the baseline is I will never change another human being unless they are ready to change. Spending a lot of time trying to be persuasive is not good. You have to create things that will cause things to happen instead of just talking to people.

MJ: Yeah. Do you have any favorite memorable students?

SM: Oh I had a lot of students. Ben Edmondson, who is the school superintendent here, is a wonderful student. Dan Florek.

MJ: Have you ever had to negotiate with any of your ex- students?

SM: No I haven't. Thank goodness. Not across the table; that's not happened. But they've done well. I'm very proud of them, the ones who have.

MJ: Can you talk about some strengths and weaknesses of Eastern?

SM: Oh yes, and I can tell you some perceptions because that has always interested me. One perception is that we are eight miles away from *the* school [University of Michigan] which makes you the younger brother or sister to that school. That's been around for sometime. There

was-and it still exists- this perception that floors me: if you live in Detroit, Eastern is a White school. But if you live somewhere outside Detroit, Eastern's a Black school.

RB: Yeah.

SM: It's very bizarre. It's a very odd perception. I thought 'okay, that's not- we have a lot of minorities, that's true.' But if you were gonna color us it would be-what would you call us if you mixed everybody together? (laughs) That's whatever we are! But we're not all white, we're not all black. Some people view us as, athletically, not as strong. These are the people who think athletics is everything for a university. So if you're not winning all the time they look down their nose at you. Big donors look at U of M to memorialize something for themselves and they look at smaller school- that's why we really have to go looking for people who really want to be memorialized- because we would really appreciate the support. Look at Halle, the name (of the EMU library). Faculty, this is what I used to become very frustrated by. They would go and do lectures and everything else and not mention they were from Eastern. And I would go out and I would almost have it written out in green on my forehead 'I'm from Eastern! It's a great school, send your kids here!'

MJ: Why do you think that is?

SM: Because they want to be- a lot of it personal for them. They want to be at U of M and they're at Eastern, and maybe they never figured out that maybe they are far more valuable here and could blossom so much better here anyway. But somehow there's always this longing in academia to be the very best in your field. But if you stop and think about it, there's a lot of very good people everywhere in every field. And so what?

MJ: Is that field never teaching for them?

SM: Well to me teaching is very important. Research is very important too. Sometimes a really good researcher isn't a good teacher. Sometimes a really great teacher isn't a good researcher and vice versa. Sometimes you'll have researchers who are great teachers. Sometimes you have a teacher who is a great researcher. But I think we need more flexibility that way.

MJ: I wonder how that could come to be.

SM: Through a contract (laughs). That's what would need to happen. Through a contract. Someone who negotiated it. For example what if they negotiated if you love teaching you teach for 12 hours all time. If you love research we first give you a three hour release and you go out looking for grants and if you bring in your grant you are able to do your research. Maybe if you bring in a big enough grant you teach six hours you have all these students working with you in your grant. You're just a happy clam because you like that. But we don't do that. We don't have that. If I were negotiating, but I'm not going to do that anymore-don't get me in there. Those were just ideas you could refine. They're rough ideas, you'd have to refine them to be in a contract but-

MJ: You sure you don't want to?

SM: No (laughs). I've enough stress! I'm having a good time now. I've replaced the fifth wheel with a bus and I have a 34 foot bus!

MJ: Oh my gosh, wow!

SM: I love it!

MJ: Is there anything you'd like to see changed about EMU?

SM: What I'd like to see changed about EMU is we have a much more robust fundraising campaign. Something to support students and faculty and all of us. We need more revenue streams. And again, I don't have any magic ideas to do it but I'd love to see that change over time. I'd like to see the image change some.

MJ: How?

SM: I think it's through your students that it should change. They're the ones who should carry the message if they've had a good experience out. And I think we need to work more with our alums because I know some of them have had a great time here. And I know there are a lot of international students they're trying to cultivate to come now. And I think that's good because they will carry it further than Eastern. Around the world. But no, I would like to see that change as soon as possible but I know that it will be a long term thing. But if we were, financially, on a better grounding, you could see tons of things begin to grow.

MJ: Sure, yeah it's like you said before. It seems like another house of cards. Like if you get the funding other things will start falling.

SM: Yeah. But I love Eastern. I proudly bleed green like some other people. But not everybody's like me. Not everybody in the union. Oh that's what happened in unionization. Let me just say this last thing.

MJ: Sure

SM: When I started off we were adversaries but we didn't dislike each other. We may have been hostile to each other like that '78 one. We weren't very good friends. But generally with administration, we weren't enemies. We didn't hate each other. All through the nineties. Even as we came into the 2000s, that changed over the last 15 years or so. People aren't just adversaries, they really hate each other. Like the polarization that's happening in America

MJ: That's happening now?

SM: Yeah, labor management has polarized just the same. You asked how to negotiate. Well first of all, you have some decent respect and relationship with the person you are negotiating with. Name calling doesn't do it.

MJ: Is there anything else you'd like to say for the record? About anything you could go-

SM: For the record?

MJ: Yeah, or off the record. Whatever you want.

SM: This was the best career I could ever pick. I'm so happy I picked the career I did. Even though all the stress of the union and all the challenges with being a consultant, I really enjoyed my career. I thought it was very fulfilling.

MJ: It sounds exciting.

SM: Yeah. I retired in '12 but I still do staff and command, I was still doing a little teaching then. But now I am president of the emeritus faculty.

MJ: Yeah, I was going to ask about that.

SM: Yes, it seems like everytime I get out of one leadership position I think 'well, I don't have to get out in front of all these people all the time.' It turns around so (laughs). Emeritus faculty, there are 586 now out there. Most of them are in Michigan, a lot of them around the country retired having a good old time. So now my responsibility is that Eastern keeps them updated on their benefits and I'm a trouble shooter so I get all the calls of 'I don't know how to get into my.emich account.' They're an interesting group of people. For years the faculty had their own emeritus faculty association. The staff have had their own but they haven't been very well organized. So I hope come May we will be the same association. So if you spent 15, 20 years in the physical plant working your little heart out for Eastern, you can become an Emeritus staff member and come join us because we have a couple big parties a year which we should. You better honor your emeritus. But now, we'll be together.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: My argument is: everybody views everybody on some other level during their career. When you retire you're all standing at the same flat surface. So it doesn't matter where you were, you should be just as proud to be an emeritus. In Ypsilanti, I used to live in Huntington Woods and then I lived in Taylor. I've lived around Eastern my whole life. As of 2004, I now live down off Textile Road.

RB: Oh, wow!

MJ: Okay

SM: So I'm close to the campus. I come in for the theater productions and-

MJ: You still come to the plays?

SM: Oh all of them.

MJ: That's awesome

SM: Love my theater people. We still have the beginning parties for CMTA at my house. They all come there all 80 or 90 of them show up in the fall. Well, I never did get away from the theater. Have you heard of the Riverside Art Center in Ypsilanti?

MJ: Oh yeah. Are you on the board for that?

SM: Yeah, I am. I'm also a co-coordinator for scheduling all the plays and companies that we allow to use the theaters. So that happened. Don Lopnow, who has been interim president here two or three times, lives around the corner. The minute I retired he said 'oh, let's have a drink.' Well boy I ended up on the board. So it's been fun since '12.

MJ: You can't let go completely.

SM: No, well why should I? I'm in the area. I'm traveling internationally and coming back here.

RB: I think because you are a Communications expert-one perception that I've encountered with a lot of people who are uninformed with Communications and Communications Theory is that majoring in communications-it's like a catch all degree or its for. What do you say to people who think like that? And why should you study Communications and Communication Theory?

SM: Oh. Communication literally is the interconnectedness between human beings. You're going to study all aspects of that; the non verbal- the listening. Hopefully, there's a group and they still have a number of things over there that they teach basically. If you get a foundation of that, when you move into a company or wherever you get hired, if you are a fundamentally good communicator, then you can learn anything specific beyond that. So I've always told them 'yes- you will understand all of the communication theory, the practice and that should put you on a good footing in any kind of job.' Expect highly technical if you're not a technician type or science and you don't have the background. But business in general- I never train shysters. I once had a young man come up to me and say 'I want you to teach me how to sell refrigerators to Eskimos.' And I said 'you better find another teacher!' (laughs). That's not me. I won't do that. That's the one thing I don't train and if you're too slick, I'm suspicious of you.

MJ: Yeah.

SM: That's just the basis. But you look at yourself as much as the communication with other people. To me that's the key, really is. The people who are the most successful understand themselves first and then have more empathy for other people who understand themselves. And if you don't have that I don't have that, I don't care what field you go into. Those two things develop and you know the questions you can ask to do that, nobody asks these questions. Once you catch yourself in something and you have a reaction to something that is prejudicial or discriminatory you need to ask 'why am I having this reaction, why am I reacting like this?' Or 'why am I doing this', or what am I doing.' You never ask those questions of ourselves

MJ: These things are included in the Communications program?

SM: In my courses. Especially in Assertiveness.

MJ: The psychological approach to it?

SM: Yeah I have a doctoral minor in Psychology and it worked just perfect.

MJ: Okay (laughs)

SM: Loved that because it's practical Psychology. Not the real twisted stuff out there. But it's fascinating to me. That's sort of what I get into with the police. You probably haven't asked yourself 'why am I reacting like this to what my spouse just said' or 'why am I being so tough with my kids?' And you better start asking yourself those questions!