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William Shelton, Oral History Interview, 2021

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Eastern Michigan University, Oral Histories

The EMU Logo Oral History Project: Interview with William E. Shelton (WS)

Interview conducted by Susan Wentz (SW) and Matt Jones (MJ)

Wednesday March 24th, 2021

Transcribed by Susan Wentz

The recording begins just after Mr. Shelton picks up the phone and continues into the formal oral history interview.

WS: To the board when they said what kind of arrangements do you want, I said, well, I, I want to teach in the doctoral program in education. I don't know why that's like that...

SW: You know, I... because you were talking about this and it's, it's just a profound thing to hear. I put the "record" button on.

WS: Oh.

SW: I hope that's okay with you.

WS: Oh. Okay, so I can't get it off.

SW: Please go ahead.

WS: Okay, so anyway, so in that year I was finishing up 11 years as President and Presidents always in higher education seem to know when to come, but seldom when to go. [laughs] And I felt after 11 years that the things, in terms of leadership, I could provide... We'd had a very good decade of the 90s; the State of Michigan sold a lot of cars and trucks, the library where Matt is, we built that, we had about \$237 million dollars worth of new construction, so it had been a good time. Even with the logo decision, we had the highest enrollment in the history of the institution during those years. We got up to 26,000 which we rapidly understood we were not capable of handling, so I put a limit of 24.5 on it. We just didn't have the classes, we didn't have the parking, we didn't have all the things. So, anyway, my time. I said "okay," to the board, "this is the right time" and I still had I think two or three years on my contract. I'd had five-year contracts with them and so I said "I'm going to spend three years teaching, I would like to spend three years teaching in the higher ed program over in the College of Education." And that's what I was doing and enjoying life and realizing that there were some advantages to being faculty members. And, then, I had a friend who had been the President at Akron University, Dr. Bill Muse, when I was Vice President over at Kent State and then later President at Eastern Michigan, so we were in the same conference. I've known Bill for quite a period of time.

He left Akron and took the job, President of Auburn, and he was at Auburn for nine years and then he and the Board had some disagreements on some athletics-related issues so he left there, and he came to East Carolina University as the Chancellor there. North Carolina has a president- it's a different system from the autonomy of Michigan, it has a President for the UNC System and then each of the various campuses has a Chancellor. So he called me in one of those beautiful snowy winters that we had in Detroit and Ann Arbor and Ypsi. And he called me and he said, "Bill I know you really don't want to be a president or a chancellor anymore but would you come down here and lead, and as a Vice Chancellor of University Advancement," which is kind of in my background, "and you know you, you can run the whole show a \$200 million dollar campaign." And at first, I said "No," you know, I'm thinking "I'm going to get tenure here and all..." But, anyway, he called back a few days later, and we hadn't seen the sun, I think, in 45 days, and said, "At least come down here and talk to me." So I did. And so I went to East Carolina and I went there, like, in June, maybe the 28th of June or something. And I had asked him before, I said, "Are you sure you're planning to stay here at least five years? Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." So I came and I was on my way to a football game and East Carolina was playing Wake Forest in September, I think, maybe our opening game of the season. And I received a call from Molly Broad, who was the President of the University of North Carolina System, and she said, "I need you to..." she had been told from my office that I was en route there, and she said, "I need you to stop by my home in Chapel Hill." That's where her home was for the President. I did. Dr. Muse had resigned and suddenly I became the Chancellor of East Carolina unexpectedly, and I said I would do it for one year. I guess for you to get to have time to get searching and get things done, etc., etc. So I did that and then I stayed on another year with the new Chancellor. I went back and served as Vice President just to help him, or Vice Chancellor, to help him get settled, and then I taught a few years there. And then other than that, I did quite a bit of consulting for the Association of Governing Boards. So that's kind of where it all came together and, finally, then, about 2010, 2012, basically, I said "This is enough. I'll play golf and rest for the rest of my life and that's what I've been doing basically.

SW: Well, that sounds like a big bit of heaven.

WS: It is, it is! We're here in Pinehurst – beautiful, beautiful place; we both play golf and we enjoy it very much.

SW: What a wonderful way to start and I'm going to rewind a little bit to some of the things that you had mentioned, because, just to set the frame for the people that I know are going to be really, really interested in hearing your thoughts. I got a little bit of an introduction.

WS: mm hmm.

SW: And, and then we'll dive into some questions. Does that sound good?

WS: Yes

SW: Fine, okay, wonderful. It's Wednesday, March 24, 2021. This is [EMU student] Susan Wentz and I'm with [EMU lecturer] Matt Jones from Eastern Michigan University and we're talking today with William E. Shelton, President of Eastern [Michigan University] from 1989 to 2000. With a background as teacher and principal, President Shelton had continually advancing university leadership positions before coming to Eastern. Even in those roles, he continued to teach, bringing the heart of an educator to campus. At EMU, you significantly strengthened fundraising, launching vital building projects while enhancing long term fiscal stability. While President he served in multiple national roles, including an appointment to the National Education Commission on Time and Learning by George H.W. Bush.

SW: So, President Shelton, Bill...

WS: Yes, Yes.

SW: You've had quite a journey from your childhood till now. When you think about those early days, what first comes to mind?

WS: Well, you know, I grew up in the less than affluent era in Memphis, Tennessee over by the river in something called Ford Pickering. And you know, from those early days, the likelihood of any of us going to college in my classes was very small. But, through a long series of things, I did that, and I really had planned to be a lawyer. I wanted to be a trial lawyer. I don't know why that was kind of attractive to me, but after I graduated from the University, now University of Memphis, Memphis State, I had a bachelor's degree in history and I quickly learned that a bachelor's degree in history. you're qualified to do absolutely nothing. So, I said well I'm going to do something [else]. So an insurance company decided that I could sell insurance. I did that for a few months, and, long story short, one of the people I worked with, with the insurance company, was a principal of an elementary school in Mississippi, just south of the Memphis border and said, "Hey there's such a shortage of teachers here." I said, "Well I haven't had a single class in education." "Well," he said, "Doesn't matter; (laughs) we're so desperate down here, we'll take anything." So I got a temporary teaching certificate. Fell in love with it! Fell in love with it! But at that time, I said "This is going to be my career, but I want to see if I can become a University President." Now that's... most people don't have that sense but I don't know why. So I knew there had to be a series of steps and as you've looked at my resume, vita, you probably noticed that, after that I became an elementary school principal in Tennessee under a temporary permit and finished a master's degree in history, and then on to a junior college, was director of student activities, and after about five or six years there, I went to a small University in Arkansas- Henderson State University, as, originally, the Dean of Students and later, a vice presidential role and then up to Kent State University as a vice president, then Eastern Michigan. So career wise, I guess, I am one of those few people that did set out at specific time and say, "This is the time. I've got to do this, this is the time, I've got to do this, this is the time I get to do that." So, I come into Eastern Michigan and I'll never forget [Associate Vice President for University

Relations] Kathy Tinny who was our public relations person there at Eastern Michigan, came to the office, and she said, “You know,” said, “We need to arrange a 100 day press interview [for] your 100th day in office.” “And I...” (laughs) “Well I haven’t done anything, what can I (unintelligible)... but I said “Okay, fine.” So we went in there and I’ll never forget the reporter from Ann Arbor, the Ann Arbor newspaper at that time, among others, that were there from different places, but he asked this question, he said, “What has been your biggest surprise of being President of Eastern Michigan University?” And I answered without hesitation, because it really was the truth, I said “I thought I knew what it meant to be a university president.” I felt like I read every book. I mean, I had great mentors. I had been close to every President. I work with all of those things, but once in that role, I realized that you are going to learn on the job as a president, there was just no other way.

SW: Once you assumed that role, was it different from any other leadership position that you had?

WS: It really is, I think it’s one of those situations, and I would still, after some years, of course, during my tenure as President, I lived right there on campus, I, there’s a new home now, but the president’s home was right on campus during those years. Often in the evening I would walk around on campus for various things to see students or whatever. Every once in a while I’d just say, “I’m the President of this,” you know, it was still an unbelievable situation through all those years. The combination of the responsibility as well as the privilege of being in that role was something that I never, and to this day, I still feel so strongly that it was just something that you’d never felt before and I, you know, I guess I would never feel again the uniqueness of that role.

SW: That’s, that’s quite a powerful sentiment, because you felt the responsibility of that level of leadership; it was the burden, the blessing and the burden.

WW: Yes, yes.

SW: You had said you knew really early on, and I think that’s wonderful. When you first became a teacher you were grounded in that, but [then] you knew about being president. When was it, in your life, that you knew you had a gift as a speaker and as a leader?

WS: Well, I don’t know, I don’t know even to this day if I believe I have a gift. I did an awful lot of speaking as both a youngster and in my early, early days in college and all on a variety of things. I was in various plays and all of these kinds of things and I did a little humor, stand-up comedy stuff and things like that. On the other hand, what I did learn, and I think much of it... well, each institution provided a different set of challenges. If you think back to the time of, for example, the one year as the high school teacher, the two years as a principal I was involved, I was principal or small school in West Tennessee, Somerville Elementary School, had grades one through eight. The system still operated with a dual system. You had white schools and schools for African Americans. During those two years I was principal, we received three federal court orders and the

first of those was just a freedom of choice. Across the highway from the little school I was the principal of, down a gravel road about 800 yards, was the African American elementary school in this county. Fayette County, Tennessee, at that time, was the second-poorest county or parish in the United States, so it was a situation of a very poor county. Well, as you can imagine, with the first court order a few African American children came to my school, but no Caucasian children went to any of the historically black institutions. And so, then they come up with a second federal court order, about, I don't know, maybe six months later. [That was for] the desegregation of the faculty there. Then two or three of the teachers, well, I shouldn't say two or three based on the number, but the faculties were integrated. Probably the greatest first grade teacher I have ever seen in my life came to me during that time, her name was Miss Booze, and she was the most gentle, warm and every child, they didn't care what her color was- she was their teacher, she was just their substitute mother, she was just a sweetheart and she had a great job, she just loved children. Well, so we went through that and then the third court order came and [in] that, they just drew a line and they said, "If you live on this side of the line, you'll go to this school." And as you then probably know, the private school, private academy initiative in the state of Tennessee just took off. You know, there were people starting schools in old abandoned houses and stuff like that. So I had, through all of that, even in the one, I had to go to the courts, because there was a mandatory school attendance law in Tennessee and many of the white parents chose during this time to just pull their kids out of school. They just weren't sending them [to] school. And, so I had to go get a court order that, after a certain period of time, the parents would be fined for this. So that was the first challenge of leadership. From that experience I was selected by a department of the federal government to come to North Carolina State to actually add to a study in a summer program of human relations with the goal in mind to go back to Tennessee and to assist schools in the desegregation process. So that was my leadership, that suddenly I was in a new kind of situation there, trying to help others understand that we could do this, this was not something that couldn't be done. Then I go to the University, Henderson State University, no I'm sorry, then I go to the junior college and, again, there was quite a lot of tension between the races at that time as more and more African American students become... started coming to the traditionally white community colleges now called junior... or they were called junior colleges, now community colleges, in Mississippi. And there I served as a Dean of Students and trying to do a variety of things, assistant to the president, try to help in keeping things somewhat under control and at the same time, finding ways that we could bridge some of the gaps. From there, and I think because of some of the challenges maybe that I have seen there, I was offered an opportunity to go to Henderson State University, where the race issue, as you would imagine during those years, the race issue was the dominant issue, I mean, certainly we had Vietnam, but in a lot of ways, it really had been more of the race issue. So I go to Henderson State University and assist. And there was a situation there, where, totally unintentionally, at that time we still had a Dean of Men and a Dean of Women in the university. And the legislature in the State of Arkansas, they met once every two years for 60 days, which is probably more than they needed. But they met, and if you wanted certain pieces of equipment, you had to go before various senate committees to make the request, especially as it related to law enforcement. Now we had four or five police officers

campus security. They did not carry weapons. They really didn't, you know, they didn't have mace, they wore uniforms, they had radios and all. But anyway, our Dean of Men, a very good gentleman, went up to speak at the legislature, to the Senate Committee and during that time, he was going up to ask for some new radios for our campus security. And one Senator, I never forget this, one Senator there, obviously one whom perhaps was not as open-minded as you might think he should be, but he said the question, "So you are saying, Dean," and he called his name which I won't but he said "You're saying Dean that the amount of crime on your campus has increased." Well, crime meant somebody going into somebody's room and getting, getting something of theirs or something, it wasn't vicious acts of, of anything, you know, but the Dean said, "Yes, Sir that's true." And he... then the Senator had set him up and he said, "And Dean isn't it also true that the number of people of color," and he used another term, "has increased at your institution?" Well it had, and so he, of course, said, "Yes sir, it has." That connection came out in the newspapers as that one related to the other, and the next thing you know we experienced in a relatively short period of time white flight and black flight. I mean, my role in that was to work to help turn that around. We lost almost 30% of our students, I think, over the period of time. And so, then the President moved me to a different position to literally put together an external team to turn things around and I'm glad to say at this time that that institution is functioning beautifully and I think the enrollment's excellent. That was a long time ago. From there to Kent State I don't need to tell you about the challenges there... (laughs) But it turned out that that became a part of the challenge which I'll talk about some other time. And so, each one of those times, I accepted the fact that those roles were not necessarily popularity positions, nor was the president of a university- it should not be a popularity... I mean, you have to make difficult decisions. And so I had learned from those things, if I wanted to be popular there were a lot of, there were many, many things I could have done in all of those other institutions to deal with being a more popular person. But I think there I said, you know, leadership, you've got to be willing to pay the price and so that brings us up to Eastern Michigan University I suppose.

SW: Wow, it sure does in the most amazing way and what you just shared with us- you know I, I knew a lot about the chronology in the broad sweep, but what I learned from you today- it's really good to hear is how much each position prepared you for the next and even as a principal...

WS: mmmhmm

SW: You dealt with racial issues.

WS: Oh.

SW: And right straight through.

WS: Yes, yeah. I think it was a wonderful lesson... Do I suggest everybody should go through it? No. I think not, I think we don't need a lot of people to go through it. But in that sense,

I guess I had gotten to Eastern Michigan realizing... Now, I did not know this particular issue was going to come up, but through all of that, I still had a good basis of support among the communities in each of those places, although, at a time... Well, when I took the position to go to the community college, many of the white parents who had been rather vocal, and I mean we had to have the state bureau...we had a gas line loosen at the school, I mean this is the 60s or the 70s... This was really a difficult time, but I mean, I had kids standing out in the middle of the playground, you know, while we had people having to come in to secure the building. Once the bus was empty I had to lock all the doors. They all had panic bars to get out, but because we had some parents, angry, angry parents who would stay out in the, just off the school grounds, so we had to bring the TBI. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation had to come in and help us a little bit with that control. But, then, when that time came and, and the offering, I took the position to leave, many, many of those same parents came by and said, "You know Bill, we understand that the Federal Government- those were decisions made by the Federal Government. But you were the representative, you were the one closest there so, you know, and we apologize for it." Because I had bought a car, a newer car, and one day they got out there and they started rocking my car up and down outside the school, you know just, just taunting and things like that. So I guess I thought I was probably finally getting to the point that I wasn't gonna have to deal with controversy, but whoops...

SW: You know, one of the things that was striking just as an interesting point in dealing with controversy that I read about was very early in your presidency when the AAUP decided to stage a protest at Welch Hall with 200 faculty protesting, something that you weren't involved in.

WS: Yeah.

SW: What was that, like?

WS: We had some kind of shadow unions at Kent State so I knew a little bit about it, but, as you well know, and as Matt well knows, unions at Eastern Michigan were powerful. I think there were seven when I was there. And the AAUP at that time was much more of a union than a professional association. I mean they were the bargaining agent, etc, etc, etc, So during the search process for president, I think the faculty felt they were not given enough voice in the process and, consequently, that was going to be their opportunity to express their discontent. In fact they literally came outside [Welch Hall] the admin building, one day, and you know they were out there with their signs and all, and I just went out with them. I visited with them and it ended up that the most of the presidency there during my time and the union, we got along fine. What I did learn... Here's something I learned that is just fascinating... I had a housekeeper, a very good housekeeper. And she would, I mean, she was just very good. She just took care of the house, a very wonderful person and all. This was in my first year. So one day we're in union negotiations with the faculty. No, we were with some of the AFSCME unions. And as you may remember, or may probably still be the case, over by the [Ypsilanti] water tower or across the street is where the parking for the Welch Hall people. So my parking

space was right across the street right there at the red light to cross right into Welch Hall. So I had to go somewhere that day, so instead of walking to the office I took my car to carry it up there, because I think I was going to luncheon somewhere. I get out of my car and I've got my briefcase and you know, here I am, new president and all that good stuff you know... And there's an informational picket line walking up and down in front of Welch Hall and they had signs, you know, so let's see, "Honk your Horn," etc. One of them had my salary on it, another one had the car I was driving on it, you know. They had all these various things but you know I said okay that's life. And then I hear somebody yelling from over there "Dr. Shelton, Dr Shelton!" I look over, somebody's just waving. That was my housekeeper! And she was carrying a sign!

SW: Oh my word!

WS: That's when I realized it wasn't personal. And in 11 years there we never had a strike, we never had a work stoppage in any single union and I think it's because I didn't take it personally. I understood that during those negotiations, but as soon as it was over, it was over. Sadly, as you probably know, the new President following me, there was a faculty strike, [it] closed down the school for two weeks, because we were a closed shop. We were not an open shop. So if the faculty went on strike there, we didn't have replacements. It was not like there were adjuncts and things like that to do it. I had learned some great lessons about unions and yet at the same time, I think, in a lot of ways, many of my colleagues at other institutions, knowing how heavily unionized we were, said, "You know Bill, that must be an extraordinarily difficult situation to deal with the faculty." And I said, "You know, in a lot of ways. As we all know, how do you define academic freedom? Well everybody defines academic freedom in their own way, as to what it [entails]. But I said "In our case, it's a very clear statement." And I want to say it was 63 pages [and] says exactly what the faculty rights are and what the administration rights are. So I said, in a lot of ways I have a better understanding of academic freedom and, of course, when the faculty would come from time to time and, [they would] like to say, "Well we'd like to do such and such and such and such," I would just have to use the document to remind them that, wait a minute, [what] you've agreed this is this, so if you want this [other thing], then I want this [other thing] and we got along fine for 11 years.

SW: Fantastic, well you know, this is such a great segue into talking about all the situation with the logo controversy. And what I was wondering about is, when did you first learn about the Michigan Civil Rights Commission report?

WS: I was not aware of it when I came there. And at that time there had been a committee appointed by the Board [of Regents]. I believe the athletics director was the chair of the committee. And so they were looking at this issue when I came there and they did not ask the new president for any input. They were doing whatever they did with hearings and things like this. So, with as many things as were already on my plate, that was fine with me. (laughs) You know, I wasn't going to just jump in there, because I assumed they were aware of all sides of it. So we would have Board meetings and probably, at one time, before the Board meetings, they would put out cinnamon rolls and cinnamon buns and

coffee. Well, my goodness, you do that [and] everybody in creation came to a Board meeting. (laughs) We finally gotta stop that folks, we're just inviting... because more people attended those Board meetings than any place I've ever been in my life, so anyway... But at those meetings, as I'm sure is still the case under the Michigan law, you had to provide a certain amount of time for anyone to speak on any issue at the front of the meeting. They had to turn in a form to the Secretary of the Board. Well, during that time, I began to hear young Native Americans would be there, you know, and they would speak about how they didn't want to be anybody's mascot etc, etc, etc. Remember, I said **young** Native Americans because this is really what I found the difference between the older Native Americans, who did not see this issue in any way close to where the young ones did. But anyway, so that was going on, and I was dealing with other issues. And it finally came that the committee presented its report. And I think you probably have what the report was, you know, "Okay, we're going to do some things to recognize etc., etc., but we're going to keep this etc." At that meeting, there were many young Native Americans, not just from our school because we didn't have that many, we had some, but University of Michigan- quite a few from there, and they were very upset etc. etc., and so the Board did not adopt the recommendation or the report, they basically just accepted it without making a decision: "Yes we're going to do this," or, "No we're not going to do this, etc.," I was called to the chairman's home – [former EMU Regent] Mr. [John] Burton, wonderful, wonderful gentleman Mr. Burton – and I was called to his home shortly thereafter. And he basically said, "Mr. President, we need you to look into this. We don't know what to do, we don't know which is really the way to go," and obviously that was (laughs) not something I really needed on my plate at that time, but, as president, and he said, "We need you to look at it, to study and to make a recommendation." And so, I did. I went and, of course, at that time Stanford was the most prominent, in fact the only major university that had gone from being the Indians to the Cardinal, single Cardinal, so Stanford University was one place. I did have some, and I don't know where it is now but I had some correspondence with the President from there just talking about it. And then I began to read and study and all of that. So all of a sudden, in that first year, the latter part of that first year, it was put in my lap that we need you to make a recommendation and I don't know if you've had a chance to read the article that I wrote...

SW: Oh yes, okay.

WS: But I went through this process. I felt as an institution of higher learning, if in any way we disenfranchised people by trivializing their culture, their heritage, their symbols, that was not where higher education should be. They'd say, "Well what about the Cleveland Indians?" Which, of course, now we know is changing, and "What about the Washington Redskins?" I said, you know, "I'm the President of Eastern Michigan. And I'm going to make a recommendation, based on what I believe for this institution. I have no control there." So I did, and frankly I think it just stunned people the day that I made that recommendation. I mean the room was filled at the Board meeting and I recommend it and for the reasons that I've shared in that article, I just recommend it. Not only did we do away with it, we should do away with the symbols, but we should also do away with the name and people will know what was wrong with the name. The problem was that the

name was associated so closely to Native Americans. Yes there's a Huron River. Yes there's a Huron this. Yes there's a Huron that, and I know there's another institution in your state that kept the name and did away with the symbols. But again, it would be impossible, in my opinion, to not visualize Native Americans and to keep everything from the tom toms to, when I first came there, they used to have a person that would dress up in Native American war paint and get out on the football field. And then the chops and all of those kinds of things and I just didn't think that you could keep that name and not have the symbols automatically continue to be associated. I made the recommendation, how many people say, "Well, you're the one that changed it." No, the Board, then, although that room that day there were some very stunned people I do remember that clearly... so I made that recommendation and the Board... I can't remember if it was, I think they said it was unanimous... or, I don't remember, I believe it was unanimous. And then they agreed to do it. From that, then of course it became a very precarious situation.

SW: Yeah.

WS: I mean it really... I learned then that symbols, more than substance, really are the difference. I used to tell the story of irony during that same period. We made a change in the graduation requirements, I don't remember exactly what it was, but we made a change in the graduation requirements: academic issue. I received one letter of concern. We change a symbol and I receive 5000 acknowledgments of how bad I was. (laughs) So, it is a matter of symbols versus substance sometimes and certainly we've seen that in pro sports and, here we are, that was 1990s and now this year we're seeing the Washington Redskins are now, you know, they're the Washington Football Team, the Cleveland Indians, they're not gonna have Chief Wahoo, etc. So the biggest anomaly to me is Florida State, but again that's, that's not my business, so I won't (unintelligible) So that's why I made that recommendation, but the decision was made by the Board, but of course the focus of the attack was on me, not the Board.

SW: Yes, and I wanted to clarify the timing. Reading the chronology, it sounded as if the Board gave you that responsibility deep into 1990. Was it earlier than that? Was it pretty soon after?

WS: You know I'm trying to, I think... I went there in '89... that... I can't remember... it seems like to me that I actually gave the Board the report in, in...

SW: '91 is when you gave the Board...

WS: Yeah, yeah... '91... So somewhere in there. We went through a period there. It took several months before I really made a decision as far as a recommendation and all. And, of course, from that, then, the next step was to ask "Okay well, what will we be? And I said, "I don't want any part of that. That can be someone else. I'm not..." And so I believe, Dr. Robb, who was on the Board, I think he chaired that committee, and they went through a series of names and came up with the Eagles. I never attended one

meeting there, and whatever that committee recommended through Dr. Robb was fine with me.

SW: It's very striking, the 5000 responses versus the one. And the reason that you gave. So I was thinking about the Kent State leadership you had, and you were the leader in bringing healing to the community after those tragic shootings. Say a little bit about that, and how it may have informed how you dealt with that level of controversy.

WS: Yes, since the shootings, and, of course, that was May 4th, 1970 and I went to Kent in '83. The dark clouds of that still hung over the institution. I mean, if you said "Kent State" everybody knew- one thing popped in. "Oh that's where they shot the students, that's where students were killed, that was where..." I went there in '83, the enrollment had dropped; we had a new President, an excellent academician, Michael Schwartz. I was Vice President for Institutional Advancement, and that was one of the areas we had to deal with and so many important things of the institution. While B'nai B'rith, B'nai B'rith and a few others had made some kind of acknowledgments, the university itself had never made an official acknowledgement of May 4th, 1970. Even though they come and do Nightline every May 4th from the campus and all those kinds of things, the University had never really determined, because the town was very angry, Kent, because of what had happened during that time. And then, of course, you had the ones that were anti-Vietnam. You had the ones that were pro-Vietnam. So anyway, you're talking about tensions in every direction already existing as opposed to Eastern where the tensions, other than a relatively few Native Americans, the tensions about the symbol of Native Americans wasn't really an issue there until the Michigan Civil Rights Commission began this process. So at Kent, it was always "We don't know which way to go." I mean, you know, because the reality was, while we had yes, four students killed and nine wounded, on the other side of those hundreds of National Guard that were bivouacked over in the Rubber Bowl, many of them were our students. They had been called up because there was a trucker strike, and so it was our students on both sides of this thing. No solution, but finally it came to the point where Dr. Schwartz was very open to taking the challenge and I said, "You know, I understand, and maybe I would have waited a length of time, but I think we've got to put this into a perspective. We've got to put it into a historical perspective, as emotional as it's going to be." And he was most willing. I said, "We can't talk about Liquid Crystals Institute, which is really, it was a phenomenal thing, the first liquid crystal display came out of there. But we couldn't talk about that. We couldn't talk about the Comp Math Program because there was a fear that she's going to ask us about May 4th, 1970. And so you weren't on Cleveland television. So I said we've got to do it. And he was willing to do it. I said, "You know, yes, they're going to ask you these questions about it. And you're going to have to go through that to get to talk about the strengths of the institution." So we went through that. Then it came time that we needed to put this into the historical perspective and what I did try to walk, what we did, to try to walk a fine line, neither glorifying one side or the other. Neither saying one was right and one was wrong, but simply saying that, in a time when confrontation replaces communication, the result is tragic.. So, long story short, and I told Susan about some of it... but we got the National Endowment for the Arts to put up a \$25,000 prize to design

this Memorial. And again, a memorial for reflection. Not accusation, but for reflection, for, for just thinking. Has a beautiful hill right outside the Journalism building there called Blanket Hill where the students would lay out in the sun. And you remember seeing pictures. You see the Jeeps of the National Guard driving back and forth and students out there. Before the events of May 4th like May 3rd, May 2nd. But so we went through that whole process, and that was another whole story about how that came out. But we did come up with this beautiful tranquil serene place there and there's to be no names on it so it was not a matter of, we're not honoring this group or this group. We're just saying, "Yes, let's take that moment. Let's take that breath, let's reflect, you know, could this have been avoided?" So when we finally announced that, you know, we're going to do it, and it ended up for a variety of reasons that I had to be the one that spoke at the Board meeting that day and I just basically... That room was filled, the good news was their boardroom wasn't nearly as big as Eastern Michigan's, but I just said, "This institution will no longer be held hostage to this, this dynamic that just kept it from being what it could be." And that brought an onslaught, I mean threats of suits by both sides, if you build this, this thing and so and so, if you build this, you know, so both sides and, and it went through that for a while. Never got personal in that, but anyway, we went through there and it has been built. Now, after I left, the decision was made and, and certainly that was the prerogative there, that the names of the students who were killed and wounded are on some things there. But on the other side, there are planted on Blanket Hill, what is it, a tulip I guess, what is it, a yellow flower, for every life lost in Vietnam, so that was a tradeoff. You'll have the names here, but just Blanket Hill will have that. So that decision was made after I left for whatever reasons.

SW: So, reflecting on that, it just seems that in that situation, you were calling on reflection, just like at Eastern, reading your remarks to the Regents. It's truly quite a testament to values, mission of university and role in society. We've heard about the reaction, identifying with the symbol.

WS: Yeah, I mean there were, but as you often know, those who agree are much less open than those who disagree. And so, from that standpoint, yes, clearly there were many people that believed that, as an institution of higher education, we had a higher responsibility. And again, you can go back and you can say so many things, but the portrayal of the Huron, what we were doing, we were "diminishing Native Americans" and to the then-Chief of the Huron tribe, who was out in Oklahoma, the way it was presented to them is that that we were embarrassed, as an institution, to have them as a logo and a mascot. Sadly, they accepted that version, even when I tried to talk to them, but they had been appropriately encouraged.

SW: Are you saying that advocates for not changing the logo got in touch with them and painted that picture?

WS: Yes, there was a Chief, I think it was Chief Bearskin, from the last of the Hurons that are out in Oklahoma, and then also there was a Chief in Canada, I forget his [name] but I met with both of them.

MJ: Was there a Chief Yellowhawk perhaps?

WS: Yellowhawk may have been one, on the other side. I can't remember. I had two, there were two Native Americans in the area that supported the decision, two of the older Native Americans, and then these two chiefs who were convinced that we did it out of embarrassment to be part of them. So, from that standpoint as much as I tried, it just didn't, it just wouldn't go through. They just never accepted that. And there was the formation of the Huron Alumni Chapter or the Huron Chapter and it's still there today I'm sure. And they were going to give scholarships every year for Native American student success. I don't know if they have or not and I'll be very honest- I don't know if [the university] they followed through with the things they were going to do to honor Native Americans and all. But clearly, once you take a symbol and that symbol is associated with it, I mean, some well-educated people I'm talking about, you know, certainly well-educated people, they just couldn't understand. I'll share one story. Do they have all the minutes... Do they keep all the minutes of every Board meeting?

SW: They do, but in one of the things I was talking with Matt about, for example, the minutes of the meeting when the committee first presented the report, as you were saying they tabled it. There's not even a mention of that happening. And so, on the one hand, we have minutes, on the other hand, I think there may be some edits going on.

WS: Yeah. Well, I can't remember, but we had one meeting, one Board meeting shortly thereafter and the Board meetings even became more interesting than they were before, after this decision, and it was a senior administrator, a senior administrator at the University, an African American gentleman who was very effective, I thought, in his job. But somehow or another he spoke during the 30 minutes, or whatever it was, of public speaking and he was speaking as an advocate for the Huron. Now, you know, for keeping the symbol. And he made the statement, and this truly just, you know, when you think you've heard it all you just haven't... but he made the statement that "I would be very, very proud if the mascots of this University were Zulus." Now, folks, that's just hard to believe. As hard as we've tried to deal with racism in our society and for someone now, this is a person of color that is saying this, it just shows you how, in certain situations, there seem to be... You would assume, for example, that African Americans could associate with some of these issues that were facing Native Americans and I'm sure many did, but here was a gentleman saying hey it's okay to make fun, not make fun, to trivialize, to stereotype, this culture. It's okay. But for me to say that, I'll tell you, it's okay to trivialize mine. It's okay to make us look like Zulus. To do all of these things. That's the intensity that was present during this period.

SW: What, what was the response in the room? Do you recall?

WS: Well, you know, some groaned, obviously those who supported the Hurons and the logo, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." They cheered etc, etc, But the decision that once the Board made the decision, it was the decision.

SW: Yeah, yeah.

WS: And I felt as President “Okay that's what we're gonna [have to deal with]. I heard everything from just the cost to change the athletic uniforms. So there would be a financial side. “You can't [do this]. It would cost thousands and thousands of dollars to do this, it would take it off here, it would take it off [there]” So, so many different approaches to say “Okay just give us something.” And yet the decision was made by the Board, and as the President, I felt that that's where we would go with it.

SW: Thinking about that article, “Higher Education, Higher Values,” you really do paint a very important picture that harkens back to your decision in the first place and you said after all, rhetorically-

WS: Mm hmm

SW: “What is the responsibility of an institution of higher learning?”

WS: Yeah, yeah.

SW: And in light of all that controversy, how would you speak to that, because you are, after all, the President?

WS: Yeah. I had a friend, again I'll not mention names, a colleague at another institution, who was experiencing somewhat of the same thing. And he called me during those days, and he said “Bill I know that's what we need to do. But I just can't do it.” I thought about that. He said “I just can't do it, I just can't take that, I can't take that, you know.” And I thought about it. Yes, you can do it. At what price you pay for it. You may not have a job, you may get phone calls, you may get threatening letters, you may know all those kinds of things, but that's where I think, as an institution of higher learning, it's got to be the step above. If we're not going to find it there- “Well, we'll find it in the churches.” I wish that were the case. Sometimes perhaps it is, but I think in a lot of ways that higher education has even a greater responsibility, and if you said “How do I feel things are going today in higher education? I certainly have mixed feelings.” I'll be honest, but that time is past.

SW: Sometimes that's a worthwhile second discussion actually, considering that. So your conversation with him reminds me of something else you said in that same article that is striking, which is that you point out that there's often a gap between mission as stated and the response when tested.

WS: Yeah, yeah. And I think we see that, sadly, I think we're seeing that very strongly in intercollegiate athletics today, unfortunately. Well, we talk about the great values in all of intercollegiate athletics. Today, the reality is that value has dollar signs all around it for these super big-time athletes and programs and you're paying. In fact, when I came to Eastern I made this unbelievably naive statement that I would never be President of the

university where the football coach makes more than the president. Well, it's good and I left. (laughs) There are very few places, now, that the president makes more than the football coach. And, I love athletics, it's not that, and certainly I spent a lot of years with the NCAA President's Commission working on stuff like that. I think that we as an institution, if we say that this is what we mean, I think we have to do it, we have to demonstrate something. We have to move it beyond there and, again, sometimes at a rather great cost. And you know, I often think of "Les Miz," [Les Miserables] which is one of my favorites, especially the Andrew Lloyd Webber edition of "Les Miz"... But when Jean Valjean sees the person who is being arrested for something that Jean Valjean actually had done, he says, to the effect "If I speak I am condemned," because he was going to be arrested. "If I stay silent, I am damned." And I think in so many ways that's [it]. We have to look at it like... I mean, yes. I could have come out and been Mr. Popularity, but, as I told you earlier, that's not [right]. I could have said, "Hey okay we're going to be really respectful to them. We're going to do this to Native Americans. We're gonna (unintelligible)... we'll give scholarships. We'll do all these things." But the reality is if I had not at least recommended what I did, I would have been in that second part. I would be damned because I would always know that either I didn't believe what we said, where the values are, or I wasn't willing to do it, didn't have the nerve to do it.

SW: It strikes me that it can be a pretty lonely place, sometimes, for a leader.

WS: I think the concern during those times was more from my family because I know one day, my wife came back and she'd been to a drugstore there in Ypsi. She had been waiting in line and people, not knowing who she was, but they were just ripping me, you know. And I had told her, I said, "You never, you don't speak. Don't defend me or anything like that." But she came back so distressed by that. And then we were playing in Auburn Hill, I think it was a basketball game in Auburn Hills. We were playing a special game, or it could have been a football thing over in the old Silver Dome, but my daughter-in-law, my son's wife, who was very pregnant, were coming up. They did not live in the area, they were coming up for this game, whatever it was and as they were coming in. As she was coming in, some of the supporters made some very derogatory remarks to her about me. And again, you know those things... that's what hurt. The fact of whether I get any accolades of any kind- that was not the point. I wasn't doing it for that purpose, so that was not the point. But what I was going to do, and what I believe we did during the rest of my tenure there, is that we were going to focus on education and try to build a university that would move it beyond where it had been to the next place. Of course, you know they always say that if you make decisions at least every year, you will make a decision that will offend 10% of the people, so in 10 years you haven't got anybody left. (laughs) Well, maybe that was the case, although that did not lead me to make my decision there in the year 2000. As I say, there were several things coming up: a new faculty contract, the decade was changing economically and then again you just need to recognize when your leadership may not be as effective. I don't think other than certainly some alums, many alums maybe, that were very upset and tried to do things... the next year, I think it was the next year, in fact, we had not come up with a new name, but I was watching. We were playing on television. I think we may have gone to the Sweet 16 that

year. I can't remember that. We went to NCAA basketball two times... but I remember the reporter or the broadcaster on the television making the statement, "Well, the *no-name-team* from Eastern Michigan." That's before we became the Eagles so, but even at that we were successful, so the bottom line is did it hurt us? No, when I came there, [you want to believe that] this will be a good one. When I came there as president... in 1988. Kent State University, where I was Vice President over athletics, among many other things. We had the longest losing streak in what then was Division 1-A football – longest losing streak. Okay. I come to Eastern Michigan, we play Kent that first season there, of course, they beat us. Guess who became the longest losing streak in Division 1-A? Eastern Michigan! (laughs) So the nickname was not particularly helping us during those times. And so, those who might say, "Oh you destroyed the university, you ruined the university," no! We got our first doctoral programs there, I think you have maybe three or four now but at that time we were working on getting a couple you know, because our role, if you looked at it, historically, we had plenty of institutions offering doctorate in various fields, including one about six miles from us that was a pretty, pretty nice institution. So I said, "If we are going to do that, because of the both the extra money and the unnecessary duplication," I said, "if we're going to add a doctorate, it must be either we can offer it in a unique way, it'd be a unique program, or there'd be some facets of it that the others are not." And that's why the clinical psychology degree from the University of Michigan... and I talked with Jim Duderstadt and others during this time; it was really focused on one dimension, kind of a research dimension. And what we were going to try to do was move the practical. So during this period of time, as I say, the building program was unreal, the highest enrollment ever, new doctoral programs and went to the Sweet 16... all of those things. So those who can say "Boy, that period ruined that institution," it's just not true. That institution not only survived, it thrived during that particular time, not because of Bill Shelton, but because of the people who were working to say, "This is what this institution is." And many, many of the faculty did not agree with the decision and many were gracious enough to tell me, you know, that they didn't but at the same time, they did not neglect the responsibilities they had and, consequently, you know we moved the institution forward.

SW: You know, I'd like to talk a little bit more [about this]. We can come back to the logo issue in a minute, but you, you had other really strong initiatives too at Eastern for education, like the Learning University, for example.

WS: Yes.

SW: Talk a little bit about that.

WS: You know, in trying to determine what should be the focus or something to get... And, this is one where I don't believe the faculty as a whole ever really understood what I was trying to say. I wanted us to become a Learning University where the focus was not on process but was on outcome. Not on teaching, not on research, but on what we learn from it, what we could take from it. And so, when I said I want us to become the Learning University, well let's try it... everybody... that learning... Yes, but learning has not

simply always been accepted. Some people think they've done their job, "Okay, it's my job to teach, your job to learn. If you don't learn that's not my problem." We didn't want that. And so what I could never convey is that I wanted, and I was willing to put money behind it, I wanted to see teachers from different disciplines join together to create classes where learning would go in several directions. One, teachers learning, faculty learning from each other. Students taking something related to science and putting it in a historical context to not make it a separate entity but a joint entity and somehow or another, the faculty, at least the union, presented it as if I were trying somehow to secretly undermine the faculty union which, of course, was not the case. I wanted the Learning University to be a place that all of us become learners rather than teachers and students and etc., etc., we all become learners, and that we, we expand because, as you know, and as Matt certainly knows, there's a tendency in the disciplines to take a very siloed approach and you know what goes on outside your discipline you don't really know, and you don't care. You go to coffee with this group. Yeah, so that was the goal of the Learning University.

SW: Well you were ahead of your time with that.

WS: Well, apparently too far ahead because it never caught on there. Well I shouldn't say that, I don't know if that's true now.

SW: Yeah that's the hard thing about having vision because it's usually... (phone rings)

WS: I got it. Thank you.

SW: Because you're seeing something that other people, they're still in the same place they've been and you're seeing something that points towards the future.

WS: Well, so much, so much of what we've done now, here I become a philosopher, so much of what we were doing, and especially higher education was becoming archaic. Well another example; again it just couldn't work there for some reason. I wanted to say to the faculty: "I want there to be different types of faculty." We had some great faculty in terms of some research things who couldn't teach worth a flip. I mean, they just, they... that was just not their strength. But they were tremendous in this. Others, who were really strong in teaching, could really identify and climb in with the students, but they really didn't like the research dimension. And, as you know, we use, still, the old, you know, publish or perish [rule]. If you want tenure, you're gonna publish so we're gonna find you a refereed journal. I did some studying. I don't know why I did this... did a study one time and I read some articles like that and 90 something percent of all published papers are never cited in any other so, (laughs) so, you know, apparently what we said was not that earth shaking because nobody else has ever mentioned it to us. So, I wanted to do that. I wanted to say "Let's talk about tenure in different tracks." But again that old thing, "No we got to publish, you gotta publish, you gotta have that," you know, "You gotta have the corner of the realm: publishing." But those were the kinds of things that I think, I mean Eastern had such a wonderful history. It had proven itself in the preparation of educators. It was a place where I felt it was very important that we not lose the focus of

that. We didn't need to be another University of Michigan, we didn't need to be all of those things. We were very good. In fact, the President at the University of Michigan one time, said to me, "You know Bill, we would be better off if we just didn't even have a college of education. You guys are the ones that can do that. We would, we would really, we're not in the same league with you guys." So I wanted us not to forget that we had a heritage and just keep trying to work towards making that part better.

SW: Did your early life- did those people that you knew influence your approach to education for a diverse group of students?

WS: I don't know. My father was a minister and certainly in a lot of valuable ways I learned a lot from him. I'm sure that he would be extraordinarily disappointed in me now. But, I think I saw that. I didn't really, because of coming from a rather slum part of town and etc., etc., I think my push was that I just wanted to make it. I just wanted to move beyond a position and to see. And I was the first member of my family to ever get an advanced degree. And so I think from that point, you had a few teachers and all that would have an influence on you. I don't know. I was driven, I don't know why. I really don't, but I really was.

SW: So did father's role, what else do you think you took into your work from him? Value certainly.

WS: I mean he genuinely cared about the people, he would go to hospital and visit 'em, he would drive the church bus to pick 'em up if he needed to. I think the greatest thing about him was his love of people. Certainly his focus on God and all was great, but his was just: you just don't mistreat people. My father... now I'm not going to say, I mean this was the 50s, so, I'm not going to say, "Oh, he was this great liberal" etc., etc., No, that's just not true. I mean in Memphis in the 50s, he was not, he was not. But we lived in this area of Fort Pickering over by the old Mississippi Arkansas Bridge which later the city, just through urban renewal, condemned our whole neighborhood, including my Dad's church. It was in it; they just took the whole neighborhood out with one whack. And it was a very rough neighborhood; it probably needed something. But I think that when I think about him and what he was trying to do, in all those places, he was trying to make sure, while you might not agree on certain things, what you did not [do was] diminish other people because of it. He was the first, to my knowledge and I could be wrong, but he was the first white pastor that preached in a Black church in South Memphis. He would go there and I would go with him – one the most amazing experiences I've ever had. Yeah, I mean it was a totally different style, you know, in there. But he was not a person that had causes for racism and stuff. I mean his was the soul, but at the same time he did not believe that any person, any people should be harmed in any way, so I think from him I took that.

SW: So...

MJ: May I jump in here for a sec.

SW: Please Matt.

MJ: Okay, I have one question for just a little follow up on that. We were talking to Dick Robb on Monday...

WS: Yes. Yes.

MJ: We also interviewed Larry Smith last week...

WS: Yeah. Yeah.

MJ: And they both said about you, Larry Smith called you “courageous” in this situation and Dick Robb said that you were the perfect person to be at the head of the university as the logo was going down. And I just wanted to say that while you were just talking about your Dad and describing him- it really reflected what they said about you.

WS: Wow.

MJ: Just that you were good with people, that you wanted to bridge people, but that makes me wonder about your feelings for the people who were involved with the Huron Restoration Incorporated group, people you couldn't bridge to.

WS: Yeah.

MJ: Did you try to find other ways to bridge those gaps?

WS: Yes, and to an extent. There were some that I knew that anything short of that, and I met with many of them and, and you know you'd go to alumni functions before ball games and stuff like that and there'd be some still wearing a Huron shirt and stuff and I never challenged them. I said “Look, there's a history. I mean we were the Normalites at one time, I mean Normalites, okay?” So I said “There's different eras of history and there's a historical perspective. Yes, we were called the Hurons for a group of years,” and I said “I as a history major, I have no desire to take that, to eliminate that from the record book; that's a historical perspective.” So I really never got into a situation where I felt the confrontation, at least from my side, was such that I wanted to retaliate. I kept saying “You know I respect your opinion, but this is where we are, this is where we're going to go forward, this is what we're going to do.” I tried. One of the things I suggested one time and I learned from some of the Native Americans during that period of time [was] that the Eagle is a very sacred bird for many Native American tribes and all. I think, then, after the fact, they might say, “Well, I wish we would have paid attention to that.” But I said, “If you want us to be called the Huron Eagles, that means we're not making any decision about anything but the animal, the Eagle, the beautiful stately Eagle.” You know, since we're going to be Eagles anyway, that would be okay. I could handle that because that was not a reflection of the Native Americans, that was this beautiful bird that they embraced, you know. So I tried to do some things like say, “You know, here's the way we

can try to get there.” And again I kept repeating over and over, “We're not wiping out history.” If you were here in 1983 or '72 or '65 and you were the Hurons, I understand that. I don't have a problem with that. We are now, what, almost 30 years after, we're the Eagles and then perhaps some years in the future, they will be something else, I don't know. One of the things that I really always believed was that I just could not take this job personally. I just had to accept that you're going to get them, they're going to come at you, or whatever the reason it didn't matter what it was, whatever the reason. And if you begin to try and react like that, you can't be effective. You just had to keep going, and one of the toughest things in this [were the] 30 minutes at the beginning of each Board meeting. Whereas I [would] say people could fill out a little thing and come talk about anything they want to. So the chairman of the Board sat in the middle there and that circular thing there and I sat on one side and the vice chair sat on the other, and then on down the Board meeting members and then my cabinet and all over there. And I would sit there and these people would come, some of the people would come, and I mean they would just rip into me. And you know, I wouldn't smile, I wouldn't frown, I wouldn't nod. And you're talking about an exercise that you're really gonna get good at because you wanna say well “You're lying that's not true.” And, again, during that time I kept telling the Board, and only at a later time, we had a Board member that started answering and we said “No, no, no, not during this, this is the public. They tell us stuff, you don't tell them. You don't respond to them.” But, I mean, sitting in those Board meetings with my hands like this, just looking straight ahead and listening to it, yeah it was tough, but that's the role that had to be played.

MJ: Just as a quick follow up to that and then I'll give it back to Susan: would you tell us off the record who that person was who started to answer back?

WS: No. It's not during that era, it was in a later part of the period. And, again, it wasn't even about that, it was about something else, but you know they just started trying to answer and we said “No, no, no, this is their time.”

MJ: Okay, all right, thank you I'm gonna turn it back over to Susan.

SW: So, 30 years like you say, thinking about the whole thing- the issue, the fact that it had so much with intrinsic values of the university, and what we're doing here as an institution, what did you learn from that whole experience- the controversy, everything, as a leader and as a person?

WS: I guess one of the things I would say I have learned was that change occurs. It may occur in a disruptive force, it may take a long time, but to not just accept that there is no option, that there's no there's no other thing, it's that. It's always going to be that. I think I realized then that you work with what you're able to do and that's why, as I say, with all due respect to the faculty union at Eastern Michigan, I learned that we could work together. We didn't have to see things the exact same way but we could work together. So even if you didn't have the same, and you know if you viewed things differently, there were still areas that you could come together and work. And I think that, as I looked at that, and

you know, those who said “Oh, this will be the end of the University of course,” as I said earlier, not true. The University moved forward. Now it may have moved forward in spite of rather than because of all we did, but the University continued and the strength of the university and even when I get a little bit stressed at some things today. But the university is much stronger than any of us can understand. You know, there may be parts of the university that can get out and get to a certain place etc., but how many universities, public universities, at least, do you know that shut the doors? There is a set of values though sometimes, we may forget them, there is a set of values, there are those teachers that really do believe in what they're doing, and really find great joy in doing it. And we're going to have that nucleus, and even in the darkest hours, whether it be May 4, 1970, whether it be in the transition from totally segregated to integrated facilities, or at least desegregated facilities in the south, whatever it is, even churches today, many of them have mixed new congregations. So, if institutions like that can find a way somehow or another, I think most other institutions can also.

SW: Matt, I think you have a question.

SW: I can't hear you.

MJ: Yeah, I wanted to jump in here again with one more question. I know that towards the end of the logo, or I guess not towards the end of it because it extended on beyond 1991, but I know that you traveled around with Regent [Anthony] Derezinski to talk to other universities and I was wondering what the response was from other universities. What were you hearing from other universities while you were going through that process, and then also can you just talk about those trips with Derezinski and also Derezinski himself?

WS: Tony and I, he was a lawyer and was a member of the Board. We went somewhere around Santa Fe, New Mexico and spoke at a national conference, talking really more about the procedural aspects of this. I think the key was that the Miami team was right there you know, in our own Conference and, of course, there was the Central Michigan group in there. I think at that time... I can't remember what, which was the next university across the nation. Of course Stanford had made that move, but people thought “Well, Stanford, you know yeah anything you know like that...” People were saying, you know that's something we probably want to do, but how bad was it? Well, I mean if you looked at the realities of how bad it [the logo change process] was, you might say “Maybe we'll wait a while.” And it was represented by those who didn't agree as saying that the Michigan Civil Rights Commission really didn't say that, but there was a document, and you know that they didn't really say you had to do that, you know as I suggested. And certainly, there are many high schools in the State of Michigan that had Native American logos and symbols and if you talked about the absurd kind of thing, for example, there was a high school in Illinois. They were, and this and this is horrible, but their logo was somewhat of a Chinese kind of look and they were called “The Chinks.” And you, you know, you say that to anybody and their response would be, “Oh my gosh how could that possibly be?” The amazing thing, as we tried to talk about this Native American logo, people just didn't understand, whereas if we were talking about

something related to African Americans and something that would be considered you know [racist]. But for Native Americans, it was like “Well, but that's a whole different story, that's a whole different story.” So I think it was a period where people first of all couldn't really understand that being a logo or being stereotyped as wearing feathers, or war paint, or tomtom drums etc.” People couldn't understand that those symbols might be seen as degrading to those people and somehow trivializing the culture. So it was really a situation where I think people were kind of figuring out that this was not a civil rights issue. I mean, “civil rights issues deal with African Americans.” It doesn't deal with [Native Americans]. We didn't bring a groundswell to the change, the change took place over a longer period of time, and certainly, as we even see now, the things that have happened to the Washington Football Team. I mean, I do believe that there is an acceptance, maybe a grudging acceptance that, yeah, that we probably should [do away with offensive logos]. Now, you could say, “Well there are some other things like the Notre Dame Fighting Irish.” Okay, is that offensive to the Irish? Well again, I'm not the president of that school. I'm glad I'm not dealing with that right now. (laughs) I'm sure that would be a real issue. But I just don't think that they viewed (the “they” being the other universities), you know, they just didn't understand. Or maybe I didn't understand. But the tremendous... at least among young Native Americans, not to senior Native Americans... Senior Native Americans- there were many other issues that Native Americans and there's a huge tribe right, right within 50 miles of here the Lumbee Indian tribe... and the poverty and the challenges that they face. And so from that standpoint, I just don't think that the others, I guess, as Susan said, “Look, maybe we're a little ahead of the time, but it just happened;” that's how it felt and then later, thankfully, people begin to see otherwise.

SW: For people that might be watching this on tape, it's impossible not to notice the beautiful picture behind you and you've been talking about values. Of university values, of Native American culture, would you like to share anything about that picture?

WS: Well, again, the home is filled with them. But you know what? I want to kind of remind people that certainly, while this issue came as my recommendation, for the reasons that I've written that you've seen and read, again, I probably worked as hard for African American children during my years in public education down South in trying to make sure that those children were given the same opportunity. So, while certainly Native Americans are what I'm going to be identified with there, I think I shed an equal number of tears, in a way, over the plight of African Americans in the South. And I'm no crus... I don't mean I'm a crusader, but boy, when I saw the difference in my school when I was a principal where I had a playground, even though it was a very poor country playground, all kinds of equipment that the parents had bought. And you know you oil the floors, you probably never heard that, you all are too young. But anyway you had wood floors, to keep the dust down they'd oil floors with mops. And then go across this highway, and down, maybe 600 yards on a gravel road and you pull up [to the African American school]. Not a bit of grass anywhere around it, they literally had no kitchen or lunch room. And during my time there, and again, I'm not looking for the honor; it was not that at all, but between that principal and myself (this is before the court order even got in) my

kitchen would prepare- our school kitchen would prepare lunch and Mr. Persons would come in his car every day up there, into the trunk... would put that food. He would take it to them and then he would bring the dirty pans and stuff back to us. So that those kids could have lunch. You know, that they could have lunch there. He and I put together a little basket... and of course we just had outdoor grounds, we had outdoor things with some pavement. So we put together three or four schools, a little basketball thing, and all of a sudden, it was Whites against African Americans playing basketball, all out there, we had kids out there. No, we didn't have any fights, we didn't have any trouble. What I'm trying to say is that African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans. Some socio-economic Caucasians, I mean, it's about people. And, while it just happened that that fell out to be an issue with Native Americans at Eastern Michigan, I would have, I think... I, well I know, I would have fought as hard if it were another group that our institution might unknowingly and certainly unintentionally, perhaps, be degrading or diminishing them.

SW: Reflecting on all we've talked about today, there's an unmistakable heroic dimension...

WS: mm mmm (shakes head no)

SW: Bear with me here, so you had named that first year, A Year of Coming Together.

WS: mm hmm.

SW: And in that year, you were given this...

WS: Yes, kind've tough there. (laughs)

SW: Yes, so my question for you is this: what would you tell then President Shelton about how he met that challenge?

WS: (exhales) Well, I guess, I would say I believed he did the best that he could and stayed true to what he believed in, and recognized... Again I had had no experience, for example, with unions, so in that sense, this was going to be a whole new dimension and so it was very much a learning experience on that, on that phase. As we started and I talked about it, I thought I knew what it meant to be a president. The more I realized... it didn't matter if I were in Detroit or if I were in Florida, or if I were in you know, wherever I was still the President and if something happened there... Mr. Smith was the Vice President for student affairs, yes, he was responsible for the resident halls, but the ultimate thing came back to me: if something bad happened there, it was Bill's fault, ultimately, I mean. I accepted from the very start that I couldn't say "Okay well that was Larry Smith's fault," or "that was so-and-so's fault for that." No. It came to that point that "Okay, it's yours and boy, if you blow it (laughs) you can't blame anybody but yourself." And as long as I could walk away, and as long as I could say to myself that "Okay I've done the best I can..." Would I have liked that not [to have] been the way that I'll probably always be remembered there? Yeah, but at the same time, I don't lose sleep over

it. I mean, I would do it again. But sure, everybody would like to have this nice wonderful time where you don't have that but that's just not how life is. I mean if you really are serious about trying to do something related to the values you believe in.

SW: Just beautifully said.

MJ: Yes.

SW: I know what I'm going to remember. So, thank you so much. I don't want to wrap up though without asking: do you have anything else that you'd like to share with us?

WS: It was a privilege to be the president there, and even though, to this day, if some harbor some ill feelings because of the decisions or the recommendations I made or the decisions at other times that I made, Eastern Michigan knew what it was about. I mean, we did. We had an understanding [of] where our strengths were. And I just think that it was one of the true pictures of what American higher education was supposed to be. I mean, if you look at the German system or any of the other systems of higher education or different levels of education, I think that what we were, an institution where we accepted the students, where they were with the intent of moving them where hopefully they could be. And, we weren't under any... well I don't think so, under any false illusions. We were really working under the belief or in the belief that we had a mission. And the faculty there did. They believed it. The administration believed it. The Board believed it. Guys like Dick Robb and, and all... those were great guys. And they were giving up their time. You know, you didn't get paid to do that, I mean they were giving of their time. They were taking some of the heat for things that were going on there, and having to make some hard decisions. But, you know, it's just a good university and that's what I hope and I know that after I left one of two things happened. I know there have been numerous transitions before there came a little bit of stability in the office. And you know, a friend asked me one time, "Bill, do you think that there was difficulty in replacing you because you've done such a great job or because you screwed things up so bad, nobody else could fix it?" (laughs) And I said I don't know but either one, I'm glad to see that there is some stability in the leadership there and that they're moving forward. That institution.... It started in 1849 and it's going to be there a long time and it's going to serve its purpose for a very long time. So, I can only say I wish we'd won a few more football games. (laughs) It would have been nice. You know, you talk about it being tough being a president, have people go up to your president's box on Saturday for the ball game and lose every game. That was a little bit tough. Those were some of those things you say, "Oh wow. Okay." I looked forward to basketball because I could just sit way over in the crowd and they couldn't find me. But anyway, all of that... It's a great place. I love the institution. I loved what we did in terms of education and all while I was there and I have no doubt that it will continue on.

SW: Thank you so much, this has just been wonderful.

WS: Thank you.

MJ: And yeah this week that the students are interviewing people, and especially this interview, is what makes me love this job, so thank you.

WS: Alright, great. Well, I enjoyed visiting and meeting both of you. Susan, you are an MD?

SW: Yes I am.

WS: Wow.

SW: So I started at Eastern Michigan in 1969 as a freshman.

WS: Uh huh.

SW: And I was in the humanities forever and ended up deciding to go into medicine, which was... science is not my first, second or third language. (laughs)

WS: Mmmhmm yes.

WS: Well. It's great. If I were king of all higher education, and I don't know what your degree's in Matt, but I could probably guess what it's in, I would have every undergraduate- you had to get a humanities degree. Then you'd go into the specialization after that. I had to be humanities because that way you could cover everything, you know...

SW: I agree and so I've spent, you know, my whole life as faculty in the university here in Cleveland and all those things you're talking about, about silos and you know students being narrowly focused. It's much, much more so now than even when I went to school, so funneled in one particular direction, and they don't have that broad-based awareness, you know.

WS: I was President at Eastern one story, and we can go, but we're having lunch with some of the bank executives from Detroit and Ann Arbor and all. It was about our College of Business and our students moving into there, and one of the bank presidents said, "You know, Bill" he said "there's absolutely no question that the universities are, for the most part, doing an excellent job in, say, accounting, etc., etc." But he said, "When we bring these graduates in and we put them in with our customers and we're trying to have them where they can talk about a variety of things, so they can (unintelligible)..." he said "that's [the problem], they can't do it" said "that's, that's what hurting us. With the actual accounting, they're good but as far as [interpersonal skills]" And that's why I think humanities- you get such a broad base, you can talk about it in so many different areas, and then go to... Because most of the corporations now I'm going to teach you their way as soon as you get out, regardless of what degree you have so you know.

SW: Well, and that's why I was so taken with your comments about the Learning University frankly, because what you were doing there, what you're proposing, would get some of that cross-dimensional input to the students and the teachers.

WS: Yeah.

SW: I mean, if it was a way of addressing exactly what you felt was missing.

WS: Well, one of my colleagues one time said- and I was even offering money to get teachers to put together and teach courses and all- one of my colleagues, in frustration one time, said to me, "Bill the faculty is the only group I know that won't take yes for an answer." (laughs) I guess, in a sense, that sometimes that happens, but anyway, well, I wish the best for you and for Eastern Michigan and I do love the place. Please tell all of the people from Dick, to Larry, all of them that you see, please give my regards, and tell 'em that somehow I'm living on golf and nice wine.

MJ: Did Larry give you a call because he was [going to].

WS: No, no, I saw one of the people here at the club at Pinehurst had been up there and they had seen Dick somewhere and said, "Tell Bill to call me." Well, I haven't called him yet, but I can do that. But no I haven't... so Larry is still living there, I suppose.

MJ: No, he lives in Seattle now.

WS: Oh, is that right?

MJ: Yup he runs a consulting business.

WS: Yeah, yeah.

MJ: In Seattle. We just got him on the line for an hour and a half or so last week. He was an interesting interview.

WS: Yeah Larry is a very unique guy.

MJ: He is.

WS: Very unique, and you know, each one of my cabinet members at that time brought something to the table that was really needed to make it work so, yeah, yeah.

MJ: Well, tomorrow, tomorrow is Glenna Frank Miller.

WS: Yes.

MJ: And Friday is Derezinski and Juanita Reid.

WS: Okay yeah. Juanita served as my assistant and also then later served as the Vice President. Glenna did a... oh she was just a human dynamo of student affairs.

MJ: Yeah.

WS: Yeah, and Tony and I, believe it or not, Tony and I were motorcycle riders. We have Harley Davidsons and...

SW: I was gonna ask.

WS: And we, oh yeah, we went up to New Hampshire. We rode out to Sturgis, you know... So yeah, Tony was... he liked motorcycles and I did too, and we had some other friends, and so we would ride some together but yeah I'm sure he's still in Ann Arbor isn't he?

MJ: Yes, he's in Ann Arbor, yup. So is that how you got to Santa Fe or wherever you went to talk about the logo?

WS: No, we flew there, but we did go all the way out to Sturgis on motorcycles, which is quite an experience. And there were, I think, seven of us. Some attorneys from over in Detroit and all. So we went out there, and we did a lot of good riding. But yeah I had a lot of fun with Tony and during those particular times. So who's the chairman of your board now, do you know.?

MJ: It is oh gosh, I can't think of it off the top of my head.

WS: I doubt I know anybody on your Board now.

MJ: We just lost a couple of members, I know Rich Baird I think just stepped down because of his involvement in the Flint water crisis.

WS: Oh yeah, yeah.

MJ: So, but yeah I'm not... I'm blanking on the Chair.

WS: Yeah I can look it up, but you know that was... Those appointments were always political so whichever, whichever party was in power was who got to put the board in, and in fact when Dr. Robb was on the board, he was the only Republican. I think all of the others were appointed by the Democrat, by the democratic governor. But he did a wonderful job working with them and then you know politics did not affect his job.

MJ: We loved talking to Dick on Monday, the Board Chair now is Jim Webb.

WS: Oh, of course, I know Jim, yeah. Jim. Jim was a great swimmer there at Eastern, well before my time, but then you of course he's the insurance executive and one of the joys

with Jim... Now he's a guy that probably didn't agree with me but he supported that institution and he treated me with respect, you know, all those things. And I remember one day he had me down for opening day of the Tigers back in the old stadium, and it must have been 22 degrees, it was so cold and I was dying, and here we were all sitting there right down close to the field. But yes, Jim's a good guy. Jim's a good guy and he loves the university, so I will say for that purpose you couldn't have a better Chair.

MJ: Yeah. So yeah we had the good fortune of also interviewing Dennis Beagen as well. Just a lovely guy.

WS: Yeah. He did a good job, yeah. Dennis was very effective in the Fine Arts and then he took on other leadership roles and would fill in a lot of time as interim. He never really wanted to be full time on those things but he'd fill in as interim for us on things, and then Dennis was a super guy. I'm trying to think of a former faculty president- she just retired and she taught Speech. I can't think of her name but she became, we became good friends, she was a faculty president I can't remember oh...

MJ: Was she in forensics?

WS: What's her name, give me a name.

MJ: I was thinking of Judy Sturgis Hill, but that...

WS: No, no. Well, anyway, I can't remember, but she was very effective in her teaching. And so, I'm sure they still have some fantastic faculty.

MJ: Oh yeah, yeah.

WS: So from that standpoint... Well, well, thank you for spending some time with me.

SW: Well, thank you and I will be in touch with the transcript.

WS: Okay well.

WS: I doubt I'll read it, because I, you know I even get tired of hearing myself and after a few...

SW: Understood. Just, if you don't want to read it just send it back saying A-okay.

WS: Oh, listen. I stand by whatever I said today, so I will certainly do that. I just shared what I believe and what I think and how I... the perspective that I had, and I understand people have your perspective but that's okay.

MJ: Yeah. This was wonderful. Thank you.

SW: It sure was.

WS: I'll have to get Paula to turn this off. I don't know how.

SW: Matt, can you just hit end?

MJ: Yes, he should just push the end on the screen there.

[Paula Shelton enters frame.]

MJ: Hi Paula.

SW: Hi Paula, thank you.

MJ: Alright, so you can stop recording now.

SW: Stop recording. Stop recording.