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Robert England, Oral History Interview, 2019

Matt Jones

Eastern Michigan University Archives, Oral Histories

Oral History Interview with Robert England (RE)

Conducted by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Matt Jones (MJ) and University Archivist Alexis Braun Marks (ABM).

Transcribed by Matt Jones

Recorded 2018 April 12 at Halle Library, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI

MJ: Okay. It is Friday, April 12, 2019. This is EMU Historic Preservation graduate student Matt Jones along with EMU Archivist Alexis Braun Marks, and today we are in Halle Library speaking with Robert England, longtime Director of Intramurals and Recreation. Also in the room is Michelle Owens, Assistant Director of Student Personnel and Front Counter Operations, who worked with England for almost two decades. Since his arrival at EMU in 1968 and credited for his "selflessness and service to EMU," England has developed the Intramurals and Recreations Program into one of record attendance and has played a large part in the design, development, and operating of the Olds Recreation Center on the EMU campus, as well as the Campus Lake House and pond. England received the John Porter Distinguished Service Award in 2014 and retired in in 2011 after 43 years with Eastern Michigan University. Does everything sound accurate?

RE: Yep.

MJ: Can you tell us about your upbringing? When and where you were born, who your parents were>?

RE: Actually I was born and raised here in Ypsilanti. Born in Byer Hospital. Went to Ypsi High, and I graduated from Ypsi High in and went to the University of Michigan. So I have been, and my wife is from Ypsilanti also, went to Roosevelt. Went to Michigan, has a PhD from Michigan and so I have never left this area. Been in Ypsilanti all my life.

MJ: What was the Ypsilanti of your youth like?

RE: The bomber plant was Willow Run and where they were producing all those bombers for the Second World War and sop Ypsilanti was a real bustling place. You couldn't find a parking place uptown on, in the evenings. Restaurants, there was in Ypsilanti proper there were three hardware stores, two men's stores, and I don't know how many women's stores, shoe stores, jewelry. It was packed. There were no empty stores there. It was a very busy place.

MJ: I've been here for about 15 years, and I've always wondered about the Depot Town of the 60s, 70s.

RE: I used to live on River Street right there by Depot Town. Depot Town was bad at that time. It was dirty because there were steam engines, so there was soot everywhere. So it was not nearly as nice as it is now. The Sidetrack was an old bar that, you know, you just didn't want to go in. The Aubree's was the Alibi Bar, I remember similar, you know- being a real transient kind of place that not nearly like it is right now. All, most of the other places- there was nothing yet. There were a few little stores in there but not much.

Do you know the history of the Thompson Block building?

MJ: I know it was a Civil War barracks.

RE: Correct. Civil War barracks. The soldiers would write their names when they weren't sure they were coming home. On the beams inside the buildings they would carve their names and where they were from. If you look out in Michigan Avenue, there are some plaques. All of the soldiers from the state of Michigan would come there and they would wait for the train to go to Baltimore. So, you know, there are some pictures there of them doing the workout stuff down along the river bank.

MJ: Wow. I know that US 12 is called "Iron Brigade Memorial Highway."

RE: Right. They would come there to wait to go. There's pictures down there of the Sidetrack and Aubree's has gotten of the soldiers marching around and through their drills and all that.

MJ: I wonder what has happened to those beams now since there has been so much renovation.

RE: I don't know what they've done to it but it's going to be a very nice place when it's done. My understanding is on the other side, let's see, on the north side of that complex, where Aubree's is, if you go on down- one of the ladder parks down there was a hotel. In the ballroom of the hotel, my understanding is that Eastern Michigan played their first basketball game in that ballroom there. Famous people came there and stayed in that hotel, you know, old cowboy kind of guys and all that stayed in that hotel. Now they've switched it to be apartments.

MJ: they focused so much on that part that is right on the corner that you never know what was in those other businesses that are just north.

RE: Yeah. You go across there, and you look back at it, and you can kind of picture how the hotel would have happened. In downtown Ypsi there was another theater there too- the

Worth Theater. No one would know where that is either but if you're told where it was, and go across the street and look at it, you can kind of see where that would have taken place.

MJ: Were students from EMU hanging out downtown more than they do now?

RE: No- it was a lot smaller when I was in high school, you hardly, it was 6-8,000, something like that. It wasn't really a big place to have a major impact on the city.

MJ: I know you're in the Ypsi High Athletic Hall of Fame.

RE: Yes

MJ: How did that come about?

RE: Ypsilanti High School now is very small actually- 400, 500. But when I was there it was about a thousand people or so. It was a class-A high school in Michigan. I ended up, I was the captain of the football team and I was on the high school wrestling team- that's what Ypsilanti was noted for, wrestling. We were state champions when I was a junior and when I was a senior. Then, getting into that Hall of Fame thing- when I was thinking about what I had done since I was here, I was in that athletic department two different times. Michelle wouldn't even know this one part. I was the intramural director, well, first I was an assistant professor of physical education- they didn't know where to put me. So then I went from that to being the Associate Director of Athletics. And then I went from being the Associate Director of Athletics to the Intramural Director when the Rec Center was built. And then I became the Interim Athletic Director. Then for about a year, and then back to the intramural stuff. So two different times I was in the Athletic Department.

MJ: We're definitely going to get into that. I'll probably skip around a lot. We'll go back and forth a lot. But was there anybody in your secondary education who kind of encourage you to go to the field that you did- education?

RE: No. You know, as is true of most football people, you know, my thing was that I was a football player. So I went to Michigan- I didn't know what I was going to do. I wanted to see the counselor and they said "well you don't know what you're going to do- you're not going to get through Michigan medical school. We're going to put you in education and hopefully you'll be able to get classes...what ended up happening is that I got a shoulder injury just before my junior season. So I ended up spending a lot of time at the intramural building over there in rehab stuff. I got to know the intramural director and that's what led me on. I was an athlete- I was a good paddleball player and people would never follow up on how they were doing their tournaments. I'd call and get it all- get everything all done just because I wanted to finish the tournament- I wanted to win the tournament.

So then I...let me go back a little bit. My freshman year, once again I was a football player, not a student. Just barely got through it. Got through my freshman year with a two-point. If I would have been under that I would've lost my scholarship because I wouldn't have been eligible. That kind of scared me into thinking "God- can't just be a football player." And those were all the easy classes I was taking. None of the -ology stuff would have been in that first freshman stuff year. I then had to start getting more and more serious about going to school and so when it came time for me to be thinking about getting out of Michigan, being done, the intramural guy said to me "If you can get into Michigan as at the Masters level, I'll give you a grad assistantship. So my grade point average went up to by that time to 2.7 or 2.75 I guess it was. So I did decide to be a student after I got kind of scared.

ABM: Can I ask a question?

MJ: Sure

ABM: Do you think that if you didn't have the athletic ability that you had in high school, would you have gone to college? Was there an expectation in your family for you to go to college?

RE: Not really. My father owned a plumbing and heating business here. I think I wouldn't probably been a plumber. Not sure if I would have been financially better off today. That's probably what would have happened, but as it happened, you know, I was not as big a football as I thought I was going to be as most aren't. The thing that happened is that I was just bigger than everybody else. I had never played cross from anybody in high school that I wasn't bigger than. We were playing, at this time we weren't playing little schools. We were playing Jackson and Ann Arbor Pioneer before there were any of those other schools in Ann Arbor except St. Thomas. There was no Huron or Skyline it was just Pioneer. They were like, four times as big as Ypsi was and we beat them my senior year. The only time we ever beat Ann Arbor was when I was a senior. That was kind of, became an awakening after I got out. There were lots of people bigger than me and that was an awakening.

MJ: Once you got into intramural sports, how did that compare to intercollegiate sports like the Michigan football team? Did you end up liking one better than the other?

RE: You mean after I got here?

MJ: You said you injured your shoulder...

RE: Back when I was thinking I was going rehab and go back and play, and I did- my senior year I was still out there. Essentially I had a little meeting with the coach and he said you're not going to ply if we can put somebody in, were going to put a younger guy in to

get experience. I'm not going to put a senior in. And when I decided to go to Michigan, I had an opportunity to go to a number of schools. One of the factors was that they weren't any good. They were terrible. My freshman year, they only won one game and tied whatever the record was. They weren't any good. Minnesota and Michigan State were the teams that were much more dominant in the Big Ten than Michigan had been for a number of years. But evidently several people made that same conclusion. So that at position was Bill (?), an All-American defensive tackle and Tom Mack was a one-time ALL American and Tom Mack ended up playing for the Los Angeles Rams and is in the Pro Football Hall of Fame. So you know, other people decided the same thing I did- that they were better off going someplace else.

MJ: So you got your masters from U of M as well. Did you have to write a thesis?

RE: No. you could take a number of classes as I recall and I actually- when I got done, I was looking at going on and getting a PhD and they said I did all the tests and they said, "No. You aren't going to get a PhD from Michigan. If you go out and get a job and come back, you can get a PhD. But you're not going to go out representing the University of Michigan as a graduate or a doctor." Oddly enough, my wife goes there and she's a doctor now.

MJ: After you came here and did everything you did here, do you ever consider getting that PhD?

RE: No. I really hadn't. My wife had gone through it and did the typical tough things. We ended up having a son and she was working part time and it was a real struggle for us for probably four years that she was going to school and we were putting the kid into child care and all that sort of thing. Being really poor and penny-pinching for that period of time and all of a sudden she gets done and she's Doctor England and she gets a job- Associate Director of Washtenaw Intermediate School District and making a salary that was bigger than mine. A light went on. We were thinking of going back in and doing that again- that wasn't in the cards.

MJ: Moving on to EMU. You got here in 68. Had you applied to other positions elsewhere?

RE: Yeah. Oh yeah. The typical thing- apply all over the place. It was, once again, being very naïve as a kid getting out of college, all of my predecessors- one went to University of Iowa, and the other one went to University of Minnesota. The guys that were ahead of me in the pipeline. There were three guys that were my age. The other two weren't interested in going into rec sports. I just thought I was going to Big Ten- I was going to Indiana or one of those places. I get done and there are no jobs and at this point there isn't nearly as many jobs as there is now. Like at Michigan, our only two full-time jobs. There other ones- there were two or three typical of how many were there. SO it wasn't like right now at the University of Minnesota there are 60 people in the Rec/IM Department. At Ohio State there are 60. The rec sports stuff has just blossomed. At that

point there wasn't a need so there were no jobs there. I was applying for these jobs in Texas and all these places and this one was available and I applied for it and got it and thought "you know- my folks are here, my wife's folks are here." There are too many things about this that were good.

MJ: DO you remember anybody responsible for your hiring?

RE: Jack Shearer- he was the primary one. Shearer is now out at the Villages- he's 89. He's Associate Director of PE. I got hired in the PE Department.

MJ: Was there a department of intramurals and recreation then?

RE: No. I was the first Intramural Director. That was my only job. Everybody else to that point had been the trainer for athletics and intramurals- they were part time in athletics. Intramurals- they were doing nothing. Pretty much no program. The job was really being a trainer, it wasn't being Intramural Director. I was really the first one to actually be an Intramural Director.

ABM: You mentioned that they didn't really know where to put you in the structure so they kind of shoved you into the Department of Physical Education?

RE: That's where I was hired into but even though it was within the PE Department, they didn't know where to put me or to make me an administrator. I ended up making Assistant Professor and I actually was up for tenure at one point. They approved all my stuff, because I had done a good job and it went all the way to this guy, Nelson, who was the Vice President of Education at that time. I guess he decided that I shouldn't be getting tenure as the Intramural Director. They put it off. At the time I wasn't really that concerned about it.

MJ: You jumped into the Associate Athletic Director the first time?

RE: It was little-known here at Eastern, there was a guy named Al Smith that they hired as the Athletic director. Was only here for one year. He came in and part of his plan was that he was going to incorporate intramurals into the Athletic Department. Part of that was because he wanted some of our athletic facilities. So what he said was "you're going to be in charge of all of the athletic facilities," which was pretty good for me because I wanted to get into Bowen Field House and that sort of thing for our teams. I didn't really have anything to say about it anyway, but you know, I got into that and they start talking about having the Rec Center be built. At that time, Larry Smith was the Vice President. He got ahold of me and getting ahold of me became a more popular thing. We said we're going to get a lot more staff members and a bunch of money. They then got me in from Student Affairs.

MJ: Your thoughts on Larry Smith?

RE: He was a visionary and he really had just unbelievably good ideas of things to do. Hard man to work for, but his end product was always, you know, good. He really had a lot of good people working for him. That he hired. A few weren't, but most were really good people.

MO: You have that pencil drawing in your office of everyone around the people. Betty...

RE: Betty White. Courtney McAnuff.

MO: I think McAnuff is in that picture. He's a Rutgers now. Everyone around the table.

RE: Yeah, everybody got a picture.

ABM: We were able to do an interview with Courtney last fall and also sat down with Greg Peoples and Glenna to talk about their work.

RE: The other one that you might call- the Executive Vice President at Syracuse. The guy that hired me. Anyway, he left here and went to Connecticut and went to Ohio State. He was the Director of Admissions at Ohio State and went to Executive Vice President at Syracuse. He was the admissions person in that picture. And he ended up hiring me a year ago to come to Syracuse because they had fired their Intramural Director and he said he wanted me to come. I said no. He called me back and he said "I really need you to come and help me out with this." So, I went to Syracuse and they got me an apartment and paid me well and the guy had three violations from the health department in the pools and they were building a rec center which will open in the fall. They had no one to champion that rec center. Dolan (??) Novanovich (??) is who talked to me. He knew that I had done this stuff- building stuff. So he wanted me to go to construction meetings and represent them as well as get that program running again. I had three charges- one was to get the program running again, the intramural program. Two was to go to all the, you know, represent the department and construction. Three was to hire a new person to com there- a new director, which I did. I did have an effect on the new building. They were going to build the swimming pool- it was like a 1950s pool and they were building a leisure pool now. They were in a long process. So, I had an effect on that building.

ABM: That's the building...

RE: The rec center at Syracuse.

MJ: I know you taught for a short time here?

RE: I did only golf and stuff like that. When PE got where there was nobody- something happened, someone left, and they needed somebody last minute, and they said "will you do this?"

MJ: I know that when you got here in 68, it was kind of a turbulent time for EMU here on campus. What was campus culture like when you got here?

RE: Some of it- the John Norman Collins and all that was going on. He was actually in my office and I did not know who he was and didn't have any real interaction with him other than what other people told me after they figured out who it was. Told me that he was in my office with the Theta Chi fraternity, people arguing about intramural stuff. So, yeah that was a crazy time because the women- it was not uncommon at all to see women hitchhiking to Ann Arbor. Standing out here on Washtenaw with a thumb out to get a ride to Ann Arbor. You never see that now. Then it did and even after some of the kids were killed, they still would be out there.

MJ: Did they enforce any kind of curfew on campus?

RE: No, they just have all kinds of notices. It took a while, you know. After one person got killed, they started doing something. Eventually, it was a very kind of scary time.

MJ: We had somebody in here last week, Jean Bush Bacelis, who went on a ski trip with John Norman Collins, and just never knew.

RE: I think Jim Streeter, who was the Sports Information guy- his wife at one time, he asked John Collins (they were in the same frat, Theta Chi) to walk her home. As I recall, he went through her apartment, looked under the bed and in the closets and all that. He was the guy that was...

MJ: Oh my gosh.

RE: You know Tony Martin [Eastern Michigan Department of Safety officer]- talk to him about that. I think he would know some stuff about Collins from the police department. What's the other guy that was with the case. . . Skip Lawver. He was a policeman, he was one of the ones that was working on that case. He would have some real inside info. I think he was one of the ones that was really on that. There were some interesting things happening then, and they got a mystic guy, or whatever they call it...

MJ: A psychic

RE: Yes, a psychic. One of the other officers picked him up and drove him around, and he didn't figure out anything. But the guy said that he really was convinced there was something about him that he really understood stuff that other people didn't understand. Like you're saying- there was the sheriff here whose name was Doug Harvey. He was under all kinds of pressure to do something- to get something. I think seven girls got killed. I mean, every time something would happen, the papers would just be full of stuff on that. He was under a lot of pressure. One story that I don't know if

you've heard, they decided that they- the next body that if they found another one, they were going to replace the body with a mannequin. Have you heard this story?

MJ: It rings a bell but please tell me.

RE: So between here and Ann Arbor on Geddes Road before you, just as you go past the expressway on the left hand side there's kind of a wooded area before you get to Huron Hills Golf Course. They discovered a body in those woods where somebody had come up in a car and dropped a body. And so they replaced it with a mannequin. And they put the police cars back behind on either side on Geddes and down by the expressway and toward the golf course they had another car and they had some people on the road. And it was the typical night like in a mystery movie- rainy, wet, cold night and all that. And one of the guys who was there all of a sudden there was somebody down looking at the mannequin. They go down there and the guy takes off but he doesn't go either direction- he went back up and down to where he parked his car behind Arborland and came over that hill in the back and they didn't get him. And when it made the papers it just killed them.

MJ: So they knew he would return to the scene?

RE: They didn't know, but just like you're saying- why haven't they found this body yet? Like maybe she wasn't dead yet. Where I live, I lived on the corner of Mansfield and Whittier. AS a youngster down on River Street and then up here on the west part of Ypsi and where he ended up killing the one girl in the basement of the police officer- that was a block away from me.

MJ: I think that was his uncle, right?

RE: Yeah. A policeman. But Skip was really...they were looking for- the killer had their jewelry and that, and they never could find it- they looked everywhere for it, towards Ballard Street where he was living, looked in the downspouts of houses and sewers and they could never find it. They knew it was him but they never could really pin it on him. And that guy was the prosecutor for Washtenaw County- his name was Duggin. He knew it was him and they put him away and every time it came time for cons to get out, Duggin would come out of retirement to say "no don't let him out." He tried here a few years ago- his mother was Canadian so he was trying to somehow get switched to a Canadian prison. He would've gotten out and Duggin found out about it and put the kibosh on it. He's up in Marquette.

ABM: I'm going to bring us back. You saw a lot of change physically on campus. When I first came to campus, what were the recreation facilities like? Where were most things happening?

RE: We had really terrible facilities. All we had was Warner. Bowen we didn't have because athletics were in there late into the evening. In Warner also. So, there were classes in Warner all day long and we had three racquetball courts in the back that had been switched into other things. Down under the pool, we had a weight room that would be condemned today. There was no air- it was a terrible place.

MO: The mirrors are still on the wall where the weight room used to be.

RE: Yeah. The guys did a lot of the work themselves, fixing that room up. They loved it, but it was terrible. We would get into the gyms at seven o' clock at night, and they keep the gyms open till two o' clock in the morning and at two we had to kick kids out. They were- there was no place to go. Nothing to do. The intramural teams that I had, there were so many- I had over 100 softball teams, football teams, basketball teams, volleyball teams. Over 100 in each of those categories. We had 128 softball teams. We were playing behind Sellers where the parking lot is. We had these raggedy-assed fields out there. I got from the Ann Arbor Recreation Department – get their fencing that they used in the winter time and put it up out there. Then we'd take the down and take them back to Ann Arbor. We would actually go out and put the fences up- Bob and I. There wasn't anything else. Kids got involved and all that.

ABM: So the fields that were where the upper Oak Street parking lot is now- adjacent to McKenny and Briggs...

RE: Those were all athletic fields.

ABM: Those were all athletic fields but not intramural fields

RE: No. That's where they played high school football- on that field up there. That's where Eastern's football team played for one or two years after I got here. There was a baseball field back there. Track around it. In Briggs hall there was a locker room. Briggs Hall was actually, when I was a kid here in Ypsi, the Detroit Lions used to practice here in the summer. They practiced down by Phelps/Sellers before Phelps/Sellers was built, which was just an open field there. I would go down with other kids and we would carry the Detroit Lions football helmets down, before practice, or after practice, carry them back up. I remember sitting in the back of Briggs Hall carrying the football helmets back up there. IN the evenings they used to bring cut-up oranges out and we'd have ice and oranges. The players would come out and sit around and cool off. So I would go over and get the pieces of oranges. They used to practice here. That was before they got paid anything. They actually had jobs working for car dealers and things like that around here in the off-season.

MJ: I read something about it in your file- the Lions coming over and playing basketball sometimes. Is that what you're talking about or did they actually practice here?

RE: They actually and their practices here.

MJ: Was it something about the Lions coming here to play basketball- kids could play against them if you wanted to? Is that something the intramurals could do? Play the Lions in basketball?

RE: No.

MJ: I must be making that up. I want to talk about Olds [Olds-Robb Recreation and Intramural Building]. Could you take us through that process from the beginning? How much were you involved from the very start? Was it totally you?

RE: Yeah. Dr. Robb was the chairman and he's from Ypsilanti. Dr. Robb was my dentist. He and Dr. Porter, I mean, they took a lot for them to make a decision because things were bad like they are now. All of the sudden they say, "We're going to spend all this money on recreation," there weren't that many at that time. Bowling Green had some things, but it was the only other one in this part of the country. So what we did is- the University would not like this stuff to be spread around but they did a slide show and we put it here on campus and you could vote if you want to have a rec center or if you didn't want the rec center to come in. If you did, it cost seventy-five cents per credit hour- that's what it would cost you. If you were a full time student, in spring and summer, it cost you about \$89.00 a year or something like that for each kid. There were a lot of people who come in, had two kids, came in, all they wanted were books and a cup of coffee and a place to park. They won't want a rec center- never going to use one. So there were people who were saying "I don't want to spend \$89.00." The thing ended up passing. I can't remember what the commons was, but, overwhelmingly it passed. We were looking at one of the things- Bowen. We were going to have twenty-two racquetball courts in Bowen, and six teams, and a bunch of other rooms, and somehow we decided we were going to actually just build another one and keep Bowen because I think the track team complained a lot and stuff like that. We ended up saying that we are going to build this rec center. It was built in a crazy way because right behind the rec center is the Owen Drain that drains the western part of Ypsilanti. If you go out the back door of the rec center, there on the first floor, there is a manhole and if you listen you can hear the water running in the manhole. Then there are a couple other places where manholes are. Back behind there, if you go up towards, you can hear them. In a lot of the historical stuff, that used to be called Sleepy Hollow, and there actually was a creek back there that wound around. It empties into the Huron River down right by the Forest Avenue Bridge there. There is a big culvert that runs there. That's the water that's coming from the western part of Ypsi. That's why the building was built this way instead of cheaper to build it out. And we were building it. We did the soil samples and the soil under the pool was clay so that's not stable enough to build, so we had to haul all that clay out of there and bring in gravel to build. So that Owen Drain goes right under the locker rooms of the pool and out into that, under the parking lot that's behind Sill Health Center to the Huron River. I had wanted to build that park, so I'm thinking, they did all the soil samples

and it's clay, so I said "all you gotta do is build a hole and it'll fill up with water and we can pump some water into it and we'll have a lake." Shit, the damn thing is gravel. You get out there and it's all gravel. You could pump the water into it forever. If they would've done it all at one time, we could've used the clay that we hauled away and as it was, we had to haul clay back in to fill in the bottom of the lake to have it hold water. Then they put a membrane in there. It was interesting.

MJ: How long did it take to build it?

RE: About 18 months.

MJ: Do you still have to try to keep people happy that have power to approve things or disapprove of things?

RE: The only thing that...Michelle and others are trying to defend it...you are always running out of money. One of the examples when this one was taking place was- we were running out of money, so they cut out all of the acoustical panels in the top of the pool. It was like a savings of \$70-something thousand dollars that he was cutting out. He cut a number of things but that was one of the things he cut out. Air conditioning was also cut out. He cuts this out, well, there is a story about that part. After the building was up, here's this building that's better than anyplace in the country and we had a swimming meet, and the pool is this fabulous pool. Dr. Porter has a friend who was a medical doctor of something- some bigwig kind of guy. He comes in to see his granddaughter swim in a swim meet. He goes over to see Dr. Porter later, and Dr. Porter is quite proud- he would take people on tours at the time of the rec center. He said, "what do you think of our pool? Isn't it pretty nice?" The guy says "Yes it's a great pool but you can't hear anything in there!" They had to bring a chalkboard out and write on it about the events that were taking place because you couldn't hear anybody because of the vibrations in the pool. I had been trying to tell him that I needed to...there's another part of the story: we had projections of how many people were going to come in and we had projections of how much money we would be able to make off the building- selling memberships and guest passes. I was supposed to make \$11,000 for the year. In the first month we had made \$30,000 dollars or something that first month. So I was saying to him that I needed to have a fund to replace all the equipment we had- everything was new but things were going to wear out and what I wanted to do was take the lifespan of the different equipment and put away some money so when I needed to replace something, we could. They hadn't approved that. This thing happened in the pool. He said "I'll tell you what- you take..." He was like my best buddy at the time. It was a big deal for him to do this- put up all this money and have it be such a success even after it opened. I could call him on the phone or walk into his office. He said "I'll tell you what- you can have the money you raised for that fund but the first thing you got to do is replace that stuff in that pool. You got to fix that." So it ended up- like a \$70,000 deduction, but when we started looking into replacing it, we had to drain the pool to let all the scaffolding in the pool and put the stuff back in again. It cost \$270,000 to replace

it. Not even costing the inconvenience of not having the pool open and the classes and whatever. So it was one of those things that wasn't really well thought out. And here you couldn't invest \$17,000,000 and then have this shitty pool like this. It was surely going to come to the surface that it wasn't done right. So anyway, we got that done and I got my little fund. The 5th floor of the rec center at that point was the nicest area on campus to have, you know, dinner or whatever. Down where the restrooms are now there was a full kitchen, washing machines and everything. Porter would have his VPs- he sent out this thing...he was very forceful in what he would say. He knew how to get what he wanted. He said "we're going to entertain up there every week," as I recall- every Thursday night. "You are going to invite people. We are going to need donors. They need to come to this thing." And then he asked me to go up there. I would take the people on the tour and I got free dinner every Thursday night. He was really quite proud of that. Until the corporate center, that was the primary place that people had their VIP-type meetings on campus.

ABM: So Porter was one of many administrators that you worked for right? You were hired under Sponberg, then Brickley, Porter, Shelton, and then the quick succession of interim presidents in the mid-2000s right?

RE: Yeah.

ABM: Can you talk about how administrators changed the focus on a program like the rec/IM...whether it's a pet project or whether it gets pushed to the side because you're not "generating credit hours," and credit hours are so important to the University and then you're bringing in some income but you still have to...

RE: It was built into the rec center that we were generating credit hours for all the PE classes. I used to know off the top of my head how many classes there were in there, but you know, all the swimming pool stuff, the classes up in the gyms, badminton, basketball, all these things every morning probably still are. We do generate a lot of credit hour production. So the rec center was a cash cow for the University. They were making a lot of money off of it.

ABM: Did you feel like they were actually investing it back into the rec center?

RE: Well, in some places, but as is typical here at Eastern, and you hit on it just a little bit, it is rare that someone is like Dr. Porter who was here for almost ten years. He really had a lot invested in the University. Typically this happens when they come here and they say "Eastern is the greatest place in the world," but their intent is that they are building up to leave and go someplace else. All of them want to be at Michigan or something like that. So they go at building something, whatever it might be, and they don't want to keep up the rec center or other buildings. The roof on the rec center hasn't been replaced. It's like, thirty-five years old. They shouldn't be letting that go. It's already ruined some of the floors because when it leaks, there are leaks in the pool. You can go

in the pool and see water dripping down into the pool. But they don't want to spend money on that. They don't want to do anything to the tunnels underneath the University here, or putting on new roofs or something because they want to build buildings so that they can say, "while I was at Eastern Michigan I did this." It's kind of like the guy that came in now. He said "I'm going to retire here." That's what they all say. But when you find someone who is like Dr. Porter, who really invested in the University, and then they stay here for the conclusion of their tenure, you find that they will keep up the rec center. Or if you go to Michigan, they have enough money that they do whatever, or Iowa, the MAC schools are pretty much the same. They took it kind of like Eastern until things got so bad that they really needed to replace a bunch of things. I know what they're doing to the one now, compared to what we have that's not anywhere near that kind of situation they were in. What they don't realize is that when we built the rec center for 17,000 students, just about what it is now, and we went up to 25,000, they didn't realize that that was one of the things that attracted students. They came on campus and that was one of the things- one of the obvious things. You know, Wayne State, and Central Michigan and Western Michigan didn't have anything that compared to it. So instead of trying to bring the rec center back or get it back to a point where it was going to be a recruiting tool, they kind of are patch-working it together. I have been involved in building 23 rec centers, and I was involved in one at Ohio State. 140,000,000 dollars rec center. That is a place where they realize that is a real positive thing about making the students want to come to your school. The other part is they made the build such a bond to being at a school that they are so proud of. If you ever go look out at the football stadium, the rec/IM tailgaters are always the biggest group. Homecoming, the rec/IM is always the largest group of people who come back. They are very loyal to the place. The typical people who are presidents, vice presidents, never participate in athletic things. They were active in other things. They don't really know and they don't all of a sudden decide "You know what I think I want to make it more pleasant on campus and for the students to do things while they are here." That isn't what they do. It's when it starts hitting the pocketbook and people start going to campus and saying "Central and Western are so much nicer now." That's where they start doing something about it. They typically don't do much until they have to.

MO: We were so successful in our homecoming because of our people at the facility and the experiences that they had while they were here. Bob offered some really great experiences even before we got into our new space. I wanted you to share with them when you found some of those old tapes that some of the...somewhere on campus they would have races on scooters, and we still have some of those scooters.

RE: That was because I would come into work and I couldn't do anything until late at night. You would finally get into something and use the gyms. I kind of got off into these other kinds of recreational. We did the Float-a-Thon for 4 or 5 years and out at Superior Bridge is where we did it. The last one we did, we had 43 entries. We had 2500 spectators. And we had 400 and some students that were involved and prizes for the best-looking hats and the "most on the craft," and different categories for fraternities

and whatever. The houses that were on the North Shore there weren't there. It was all woods-like. Students would go out there and spend the night if it was on a Wednesday. They would go out on Tuesday night and spend the night out there building their craft and getting ready for the race the next day. I did that, and then there was the Soapbox Derby thing. We would do "Best Looking Legs" on campus here in McKenny, in the union. We gave away a fur coat, \$1000 I think it was. The Corvette was a matchbox car, the fur coat was off a Barbie doll, and the money was Monopoly money. We had all these different musical acts and you could pick the music that they wanted to dance to. We would pull the thing up and you could only see the person's legs to do Best Looking Legs on campus. My Associate Director, Louie, we had a meter- applause-o-meter, and he would go with the applause-o-meter. Then we did the Gong Show in Pease. We did that for 4-5 years also until it kind of ran its course. The second or third one was probably the biggest one. WE outdrew the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. We charged a dollar per seat to get into the Gong Show. We would have about twelve acts that would be in it, of which a couple would be serious- people who were really good piano players, but most of them were crazy. We had our own Gene-Gene the Dancing Machine. Eastern has the debate team that's like, national caliber, so I always hired the guy that was the standup comedian for that, to be my Buck Farris kind of guy. Every one of those kids were so talented and funny. They were just funny as the show was going on. Then we do our own act that we would try to get people to come. One year I remember, we took this black refrigerator box and we put it over in McKenny. It was called the "Death Box." It said "23 Have Tried and 23 Have Died." One year we were going to do the thing where the guy was going to levitate. He was a magician. So we had these poles with shoes on them and I opened the curtains and the guy is levitating there and walks across the stage, but the guy steps on the sheet that's lying on the floor. Some of the kids' stuff was really creative. This guy, Dave Brunell, that she was saying is an attorney who runs things down in Detroit- very successful guy. They did the Blues Brothers. They start singing and all the kids get up and crowd and dance. It was great fun. And Lou, I got Hamm's beer out from Hamm's' Brewery- they did all kinds of things for free. So Lou had to go around in a bear costume and show people to their seats and all that. It was fun stuff.

MJ: I was looking yesterday at a program of activities from 1981 and I was never involved in IM activities, but just looking at that list of things to do- there was so much to do. I can definitely imagine there being 128 softball teams. It just seems like there were so many opportunities- different things too. I was wondering if men and women could participate in the Best Legs contest.

RE: Oh yeah.

MO: there was something you shared when you were in Warner- that men and women couldn't recreate together. Didn't you say you had to separate some of the activities?

RE: The women were barely involved at that point. Not that many. We did women's basketball, but...

MO: You said they had to be separate at certain times of the day or something?

RE: We had the rec center, which was maybe ten years old. At one point in the State of Michigan, the director at Grand Valley, the director at Ferris, the director at Western, director at Michigan State, Associate Director at Western- were all my grad students. I still hang out with the guy who is the director at Alabama, the director at Illinois, the director at San Francisco State, the guy at Alabama Birmingham, the guy at North Carolina- Greensboro. We're pumping them out, giving them fantastic jobs. At one point we had never had a grad student of which I had 3 or 4. I never had a grad student we haven't placed into a Rec Sports job. We pumped out a lot of them.

MJ: We know how Title IX affected collegiate athletics. Did it have an effect in the intramural?

RE: No. I think we were ahead of Title IX. I remember in Warner before Title IX had gone into effect. There was the Women's Athletic Association or whatever it was. The women were not nearly as involved as the men. It was difficult at that point because we had no, we had so few amounts of space for kids. If there was a space from 10-11 on Thursday, one of the gyms was not used for scheduling purposes in Warner, eventually guys would figure it out. They would go out there and many times they have to come get me to go. Once there was a woman who was going to have a class at 11:00. She had to come get me to get the guys off the court because they wouldn't get off. They'd just say "we're not leaving." I'd have to go out and get them off the court. Like I say- we'd kick people out at 2:00 in the morning. It was really kind of embarrassing to the University if ever that stuff was out. Tuition was not as high as it is, so students, I mean, they still had lots of them work, but there was still time that they could participate in the intramural stuff. And then oddly enough, I always thought, having had as many teams as we did, that when we opened the building we would have even more teams. I was always at capacity- I had to turn away people. But it wasn't the case at all. They just didn't have a place to play; that was the problem. When they could get into a racquetball court, although when we opened the rec center, we had 15 racquetball courts then. You had to make a reservation a week in advance to get on a racquetball court. Because the racquetball courts were available and dance studios and gyms were available all the time, they didn't participate in the intramurals nearly as much. And today they still don't. They'll go do the workout on their own. They'll lift weights or swim or whatever. We still have an intramural program but it didn't turn out exactly the way I thought it would.

ABM: Do you think that was an issue of the space or do you think there was some kind of cultural change that occurred that impacted that?

MJ: A lot of that was getting involved and student loans. Causing tuition to go through the roof. Anything that government gets in on is, you know, terrible. When you had to go to

a bank to get your loan you were a little more careful about what you were doing. You could go get a student loan and nobody was going to say to you "Are you alive?" You can get 25k dollars or whatever. Kids don't understand- they don't have enough of an understanding at that age that they have to pay that money back. You go to a bank, there is a lot more forceful about it- you can probably get your mother or father to be co-signers and things like that. They didn't do like they do now. I know I had one young lady was up at the front counter and she was saying she'd lived up in the towers, she said I'm not going to get a single, I'm going to get a double, or I'm not going to get a double I'm going to get a single. My sister wasn't in my bedroom so I'm going to be by myself. I'm thinking, it's like \$800 a semester difference and you have to pay that money back. Go to the library if you want some time alone. I'm just going to put it on my whatever.

MO: I'm going to excuse myself, but I just wanted to remind Bob to talk about how club sports started. I thought they'd enjoyed that. And I think you'd be remiss if you didn't talk about the Egg. I think they'd enjoy that.

RE: Good luck sweetie.

MO: Bye bye. I put your phone back in your pocket.

MJ: So nice meeting you.

RE: We'll have to have you back here- so many good stories.

MJ: I want to talk a little bit about your time as Interim AD, and the state of athletics here at that time. In 2005, John Fallon wrote about you, "He's an outstanding administrator who values people. He's able to engage people in the University, in a community that had abandoned the athletic program. I'd like to know how people abandoned the athletic program and why?"

RE: I think some of it is the University of Michigan next door. And some of it is the stupidity of our administration. I mean, if you think about the situation now, when I first started here, it was TGIF- that was the day the fraternities had their little parties and beer things and all that. Now it's Thursday night. Students started saying, "I don't really want to have a Saturday class or Friday class; I would rather take classes Monday through Thursday." Faculty said the same thing- "I don't want to work on Saturday, I don't want to work on Friday." Gradually, over years and years, what has now happened is people leave on Thursday night. Oh hell- when you're trying to run... I remember one of the regents saying to me, "why can't you get the kids out- you have 3,000 people in the dorms, why can't you get 3000 people to come to the games?" There aren't any kids in the dorms! They go home! They work at the Big Boy or some other place. So a combination of the tuition going up, the class scheduled at a time that you were trying to prevent an athletic program from being successful you would do, and you have the University of Michigan

next door. This makes it pretty tough to sell it. Trying to sell athletics, to get people to buy a ticket.

ABM: How much do you think moving the athletic facilities away from central campus impacted that?

RE: I was on that committee. At one point we were talking about where Pineview is, or was. Where the student center is now located. I was an advocate of putting the basketball arena there. They said, well, we can't do that because Oakwood wouldn't hold all the traffic and all that sort of thing. We had had some really successful basketball at that point. They just didn't want to do it but at one point there was actually talk about building an arena out by the golf course out there across from where BW3's is. It was going to hold 16,000 people. And the part that was brought up was we can never get the concerts to come here because we're kind of in-between. We're not big enough to get the big time ones where you can make a lot of money and when you're doing the smaller ones, you're taking a chance whether they can come. Essentially, what Eastern has done is gone out of the concert business and we just sell to the promoter and they take the chance. But once again, they can't get the biggest name people to come there. But anyway that's what they were talking about. "We'll do that maybe." Then they were looking at different places to put it and if they would have done what they were talking about- building another parking structure where the Bowen lot is, and then building a thing where you could stay inside without going out in the wintertime across to the basketball arena, new basketball arena, it would have been what I thought was a good solution to it. And they decided to build it out on West Campus. If our basketball coach had stayed, Ben Braun, that would have probably been just fine, at least for a period of time would have been more successful, but he was successful. That's why we built the basketball arena- because he was successful and we had never really had that kind of success since. The students- it's too far away. They have done a couple times where they have done volleyball games and basketball games in Bowen again, and when they've done that, they get a better attendance than when they go to the arena.

MJ: So it had a big effect on attendance.

RE: Yeah. Actually, University of Miami in Oxford- they used to have a football stadium on campus right in the middle of their campus but they needed it to build another kind of building. So they had unbelievable football at Miami. They had Woody Hayes and Bop Shembechler and Johnny Pont and all these great coaches- called the cradle of coaches, Miami University. They moved it off campus and they had good football sense, and they have terrible attendance. They used to be packed. So similar to Eastern.

MJ: I have a question about attendance. I read about you becoming Interim AD and David Giles, he resigned to work at Case Western. There was kind of a little situation about inflating attendance numbers. How did that go? What was the story there?

RE: Well, I mean, you would go to a basketball game just like it is now, I'm sure they're probably inflating them again now gradually. It was terrible- you would go to a game and there would be 300 people, and the next day it would have the results of the game and say there were 3000 people there. It was so blatant that people started talking about it. His father was a sportscaster in Detroit. Kind of a famous one, and he kind of rode those coattails and he has rode coattails and he was not a great, people didn't hold him in very high esteem here. He essentially was going to be let go and he got out just in time before, you know, before the hammer was going to come down. He went to Case Western. That's why they asked me.

MJ: That does fall to the AD- giving the official numbers regardless of what they hear from the ticket management office?

RE: It falls to whatever is going on, good or bad, in the Athletic Department.

MJ: When you were named Interim AD, somebody said that they were looking forward to a new day for EMU Athletics. Was he talking about that numbers inflation or if his complaints went back further than that?

RE: I think they probably were referring to is the athletic stuff as the story I told you about the administration here. You get an athletic director or baseball coach or football coach- they don't, they're all saying the right stuff to get the job to come here. For example, the basketball coach. He says he's happy to be at Eastern, what a great opportunity, but he wants to be in Indiana or other bigger schools. So what tends to happen is the athletic directors and coaches are here for three-four years and then they go somewhere else. I think what they were referring to there is, they probably thought I would stay here, that I would get that job and retire from Eastern Michigan and give it some stability. But you turn your thing off, I'll tell you what happened.

RE: I was the interim and then what I did is, I was still the intramural director and because Eastern has no money and they didn't want to hire somebody. I would come in Tuesday and Thursday mornings I would spend at the rec center. I would talk to Michelle and my staff about what was going on there. Then they would contact me, ask me what I wanted to do about things.

ABM: Can ask if the circumstances had been different, do you think you would have wanted to stay in that AD role permanently?

RE: I would have stayed, yes. I had put in new turf and there's a plaque in my name for the baseball locker room that I redid. It was an old football locker room that I had taken care of, I had tried to sell beer- they said this was the first time they ever did that, but I had already done that before. I had been working with food service to do a chicken dinner out there for \$5, that I saw done at Notre Dame. They just served so many chicken dinners there it's unbelievable. Food service couldn't pay to do a chicken dinner for \$5,

so I subsidized that somewhat through the athletic budget. I got paid \$1.50 or something to get them to serve those. So anyhow, I was trying to do things and I think I was a little bit better about the facilities because I had done so many other rec things. I was working with Roger about the baseball stadium- making that a lot nicer, putting in a berm in the outfield, planting pine trees along there, and developing center field parts because some of the students go out there in center field and sit and watch the game. I was going to do a bonfire thing- have the stuff out there to have a fire during the games. Yeah- it was a thing that I was looking at as a challenge to do. I would have done that. I probably would have stayed there for another 5 or 6 years. One other part that you probably don't have in there- do you know there used to be a bowling alley in the bottom of McKenny?

MJ: I've seen photos, yes.

RE: Well, Dr. Porter- the people who ran McKenny didn't like the bowling alley because it didn't have anything to do with McKenny that they wanted to do. They were saying they told Dr. Porter it was going to come half a million dollars to bring that bowling alley back to where it could be used. They were going to put in some synthetic lanes and electronic scoreboards and all this stuff. Once again, Porter was my buddy at the time, so he called and he said "I want you to look into the bowling alley and see what you can do with that. What it would cost me to bring that thing back and get it running." So, I got this guy from Colonial Lanes- I brought in three people from different bowling alleys. I said "here's what I have, what can you help me with?" This guy from Colonial- Steve Sauter was his name. He ended up putting on his income tax that he was a professional gambler. He said "Your lanes are fine, they just need to be sanded. They look bad because they haven't been taken care of. You know, your pinsetters are ok, they just need some repairs and dress them up a little bit." So Brunswick- they are the ones that do pinsetters. They're located in Grand Rapids. I figured out how much it was going to cost to redo the bowling alley. As typical, I didn't have enough money. I wanted to spend more money on the stuff to make it look nice and so I rented a truck out of here and drove to Grand Rapids. I replaced all the seating with this blue plastic, and put a new front on all the pinsetters, we repainted it, we put some graphics up. We started selling popcorn and popped up at the front. We got all the pinsetters fixed and fixed up. This guy Steve, I ended up hiring him as my manager of my bowling alley. Had to fire the guy that was running it who was terrible. That was probably the reason why it wasn't very good. So I get a new guy in there and we ran a really nice bowling alley with lots of classes, PE class, we had leagues in there and all that for ten years or more. Then it was decided that the student government wanted a place to take over for student meetings and offices and all that and they ended up saying they were going to give them the bowling alley. So underneath all that stuff, there are bowling lanes.

MJ: There are still lanes down there?

RE: Yep.

MJ: I wonder, when I go to McKenny, where the lanes actually were located.

RE: When you go down the stairs from Welch Hall, those stairs there. It would be directly to your right, where the lanes were.

ABM: You can see the original plans for the union, where the pillars are and it was indicated to be a future recreation area, but no bowling alley specifically there. But when you look at photographs from the 60s and 70s, you can see exactly where the supporting columns are.

RE: We had a flood there one year, one summer. Springtime. My bowling alley guy, Steve, who was a gambler, ran a program for people in Las Vegas where he updated every horse that ran in every race in the world. And every month they would get a new little sheet of...he updated all of us so at night he'd be figuring these things out. If you go to the horse races, you see these guys sitting there with these notebooks with all the stuff. That's the kind of stuff he did. He would update that for these guys, these people out in Vegas and then they had the newsletter that they sent out all over. What he wanted to do when we had this flood, was he wanted to go to Las Vegas. He said "I don't want to be paid. Just let me go for the summer while they're doing this." We could do anything about him working anyway. He said I'm going to try to see if I can become a gambler. He couldn't do it. He couldn't make a living doing it.

Michelle asked me to do a couple things here...

MJ: She mentioned the Eagle. Is that the Eastern Eagle egg? I'd like to hear your side of that.

RE: Yeah. I ordered the original costume from the lady- she did the San Diego chicken and a bunch of the other ones. The damn costume cost us \$5000. So, I called down to her and she said, this was in the summertime, and she said "Well you know I've got other ones to do and I'll have that thing ready by December 1." So I said that's fine with me. We'll do our little build up thing to it. So we come up with this thing as we get into October and basketball season is going to start. We put an ad in the Eastern Echo that said "The Egg is Coming." With no explanation at all. There were several places in the paper. Every paper that was coming out for like, two or three weeks maybe. Maybe two or three weeks. "The Egg is Coming. The Egg is Coming." We might have made it bigger print as time went on, I can't remember. Then, when it came for the first game that we had down in Bowen, from that we had this place with this gold stanchions, we had velvet stuff in a place that says "Reserved for the Egg." Then we put in the paper that it was going to be coming at the next basketball game or whatever. The space is there for a couple of games. They're playing, guarding the place- we weren't in any MAC schools yet. So then we did that for a couple of weeks and on the third week, we had ROTC repel from the top of Bowen. Guy has a tuxedo on and delivers the egg down at I think halftime of the game. What we didn't count on was that it was hotter than hell up there

for this kid to be up there at the top of Bowen Fieldhouse. He's sweating like a pig. So he repels down and puts this egg on this velvet pillow in our little place. The next game, when the people come, the egg is this big, and then it grows and is this big. I'm calling down to talk to my lady in Atlanta, and she's saying she can't get the costume ready for you at such and such a time. So we start getting the egg bigger and bigger. We get the egg so big that our guy is going to come out of the egg- the eagle. She still doesn't have the costume. So we start putting cracks on the egg. Finally, we get the costume and I hire this kid, who's my aerobic dance instructor that I have. But he didn't know anything about basketball. We have all these props, like the pacifier that you have for dogs to chew on- the big ones. We have one of those and he's supposed to show this to the guy there. They're complaining about the basketball stuff. We had a big Playboy picture that we were going to go in there and show it to opposing players during foul shots, he was supposed to hold it out. The shooter was supposed to look at it and miss the shot. We were talking and I said "Now, the game starts at seven so you need to be there at 6:30." I have this black guy who works for me- Leroy Hackwood who became the director at Grand Valley. He was supposed to go over and get him and bring him through the back of Bowen Fieldhouse and get into the room. What we were going to do is we were going to put the egg on this wagon and pull it over on our three-wheeler that we had for our fields and employees out there. So he comes to see me up in the stands and he says, "Bob- he isn't there yet." And I said "Oh my gosh- it's like 6:30 and he isn't there." He's supposed to come out at half time. He isn't coming. So I'm kind of talking to my guys and they're going back and forth through the back of Bowen to my office there in the rec center. Finally, they come over and it's almost half time and he says "you got to come over there because he says he isn't coming out till he gets \$50. So I go back to thinking about him and go over there, and he has been drinking wine and he has spilled the wine all over my carpeting, and he is saying "I'm not going out there till I get \$50." I told him, "I'll try to get you \$50 from the athletic department but I can't do that, but I'll try to get it for you."

So Leroy, I had told him this guy hadn't shown up and that he has to be the chicken. He says "Please don't make me do this." The guy does come out of the egg at half time, but he didn't know anything about basketball- he was an aerobic dance teacher. So he's holding up the Playboy picture when our team is shooting foul shots. It's all kinds of things that are going wrong. The crowd doesn't know all this- they're laughing about all of it, and here's this dumb-looking guy. If you read one of the things, he DID look a lot like a duck. He looks like a goddamned duck!

MJ: I only have a couple more questions for you, and they are more broad. I wanted to ask you about what you think are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of EMU.

RE: The weaknesses have a lot to do with our location with Michigan. We always get through periods of that. And we shouldn't care. We are a regional institution and Michigan is an international worldly kind of place. I mean, as an example: my wife worked in the United Arab Emirates for seven years. One of the sheiks over there- they have ten different

states, one of them graduated from the University of Michigan. We are always compared to them. I think if we were located in Jackson it would be totally different. We would have a better feeling about ourselves and people comparing us to whatever. I think it has just been the big elephant in the room no matter what. I think as a regional institution we do a great job for the State of Michigan. We do all the things with some great people who work here. I've said about one of the weaknesses is that it's like a stepping stone for schools to get somebody from.

MJ: Another of your quotes that I read reminds me of this in a different way. When you were interim AD you told athletes to think about playing against U of M as not thinking about playing against all that tradition, but rather playing against the name on the uniform opposite of them on the field. Do administrators fall for that? Do they end up comparing EMU to U of M like that? Do they need to just start playing the name on the back of the uniform instead of thinking about the bigger picture?

RE: We played Michigan when I was AD. For me to go up in the press box after having been a player there was very nice. We could stay with them. We could play with them for a half or into the third quarter, but the trouble with Michigan is they have four strings of people. Six foot seven, three hundred pounds. We're lucky to have two. We can stay in the game for a while but after a while, wave after wave of people coming in, we're losing like, 40-10 or something. But it was like, twenty to ten at halftime.

MJ: I'm wondering if you ever thought they higher at EMU buy into the big brother, little brother thing a little too much in terms of the whole university.

RE: Yes. As I have said earlier, I think the majority of them... Our previous athletic director, not Derek Gregg, but the woman who was here- Heather. She put that grey field in. Now, I put the first turf in for Eastern. They didn't have turf, they had natural turf. Once again, I've been involved in building things, so I was out talking to the guy who's installing the stuff. The field I was saying- we're going to get a lot of people trying to use this field. Wear and tear is going to happen here. He said "you can't wear this thing out. The only thing that will affect this field is if we guarantee it for ten years." But after ten years, he said, "The warranty runs out because the sun - that's what ruins the fields." Jack Moffit, who worked for me- he had one at the University of Tennessee that had been down for twenty years. They were still using it. This was an intramural field at Tennessee. So I put this field in and they said it would be good for ten years, well, she took it out after seven. The reason she took it out was that she wanted to build her own thing that she had made in the factory because she didn't want to be at Eastern Michigan, she wanted another job. That's what I think is the crux of a lot of it. There's a lady that worked for me- her name was Kim something or other- the volleyball coach. She was a very good volleyball coach and had a lot of successful seasons and we got rid of her because she had applied for being the athletic director. She had applied for it. She was looking out for moving on and she did. She's at Pitt now. I think that's a lot of whether it's the president or the athletic director or the football coach- they're all pretty much... they say all the

things and what they really want is...when you see that Harbaughs making ten million a year. It's kind of hard not to say "I would like to do that."

ABM: It's been interesting to talk to other Emeritus faculty and staff, um, who were here the length of their career as you were. Thirty years, forty years, twenty years. There's something about our ability to retain that talent here at Eastern. People seem to stay as long. I would be interested to hear if you feel the same way and if you do, what you would attribute that to?

RE: it still has the same thing- I don't think that people who are administrators really have the same values. In my case, I was on the committee that built the basketball arena, did the addition of the football stadium, and built the money for this building. We built all the things for the rec center. I was on the committee that left Porter to be renovated. The committee that decided what buildings on campus were the ones we needed to keep and the ones we were going to tear down. Having been here for 43 years, there's so much of the stuff I think that I am aware of and know, that it's not being used at all. Now, I know that at Michigan they have an office for some of the retirees- they give them...not that if I had one I would be coming back here that much anyway, they seem to have any treasure of that- of some of those people. It's too bad. There is a lot of knowledge about things. The guy that I somewhat take care of- he was a physics professor- he wouldn't do this. He wouldn't come back and talk to you. But he was one of the ones who put Voyager up- that just went past Pluto after 30 years. He was one of the ones that did the mathematical calculations for how to do all that. Some really neat people.

MJ: That's not Jim Porter is it?

RE: No. There was something that just went up about Voyager going past Pluto and going out into the interim or whatever. Some guy did a report on it and it was on TV. They had to put his name on the footnotes. Neat people who worked.

MJ: What about some strengths of EMU? What kept you here so long?

RE: Well I guess probably a lot of it had to do with the fact that I had a family and I was never really looking around. The fact that I ended up getting...my buddies left, like I said. They didn't get nearly as nice a building as I have. I ended up with the best building in the country for ten years or so until a few more big ones got built. I was the consultant on Ohio State's 140 million dollar building. I did most of the MAC schools. So I got everything I really could have wanted- it was here. I'm not sure if I would've...if the University of Indiana would have said to me...well, actually Ohio State did talk to me about coming down there and I essentially said no. At that time my wife was back here and I would've had to sell my house and deal with all that and it didn't seem like the right thing to do. But they knew they were going to build this building and so they were talking to me and I said "No I'm not leaving. I can't do it."

I'm sure there are other people that are similar here, but in my case, I had a great experience- getting a rec center that was the envy of every intramural person in the country.

MJ: You say you got a great building out of it and you also got to build it. That's pretty nice.

RE: Being able to do that was what then people would come to me and say, if they were going to build a building and the person...the guys are competent guys but always changing schedules. To expect him to understand about building buildings and operating the buildings and the fact that he's going to all of a sudden be thrust into a situation where he's a businessman generating a million dollars a year of rentals and all that we were doing. They're not prepared for that. Just like this situation at Syracuse, they're just renovating a pool that was six lanes wide and twenty five yards long. The guy didn't know any different- he had a bunch of faculty that liked to swim in the mornings, up and down, they were happy with it and weren't going to say anything about it. Now they have screens that come down that you can show movies and all kinds of stuff.

MJ: That's about it. Do you have anything else you'd like to say?

RE: She put down about club sports. We started our club sports program and several of them have been quite successful. Had a lot of weird things; we tried to play cricket on our fields. Some of our teams have been very successful: hockey etc.

ABM: You were responsible for bringing the club hockey campus, is that correct?

RE: yes. Actually our club hockey team played against the University of Miami at the dedication of their new facility that they had down there. We beat them 3-2 and they became national champions. They then went on into the NCAA and they became national champions.

ABM: Can I ask what may be an ignorant question about that process of becoming a club sport to a varsity sport? What is it that differentiates and how does that happen?

RE: The thing that always holds it up is one- finances. Being able to financially do it. The other is Title IX. You have to stay in compliance with it. So, that's why we have a rowing team- because we have fifty girls on the rowing team and they were actually coming over there in front of our lobby, recruiting girls to be on the rowing team and giving them scholarships because this girl looks hefty, strong. They have to have girls on the rowing team. But it's the balance of the fact that you've got football and so many men who play. That's why we did the hockey team, because at that time we were trying to get into the MAC. We needed to add one men's sport to get in. So, we started a hockey program. I was hoping that it was going to be a sport we were going to add because I thought of the one thing around here that we could compete with Michigan in and all

those other places, it would be hockey. Detroit is a hotbed for hockey. We would have people that would walk on here that would be better, wouldn't have to give them a scholarship to go to Miami; we could have twenty kids who could walk on and try out for hockey and a couple of them might make it. We could have a good hockey program. Hockey costs a lot of money to do, when Title IX came online, they ended up adding men's soccer off of our club team. Then they dropped men's soccer after a few years.

ABM: Can I ask you a controversial question?

RE: Sure.

ABM: Do you think we should still be in the MAC?

RE: I mean, I have had this debate a bunch of times. The trouble was, back when we weren't in the MAC, it was costing us a lot of money anyway because we ended up having to play Louisiana State and Boise State and take these trips that took who knows where, and now we can go to Central and we can go to Western, and so it was still very expensive. If the women play Big Ten athletics, the question really is, to drop Division One and go to Division Two. I was in the meeting with a bunch of people from Eastern and other state schools and the guy from Grand Valley said- the Vice President or something, he said "One of the things that come up at their meetings that they are always afraid of is that Eastern is going to now drop to division two." Grand Valley was national champion in football and a couple other sports and they are dominating in division 2. But they said if Eastern went to Division two, we would beat them. So it comes up all the time- that they were hoping Eastern does not do this. The other part would be if you look at Louisville, fifteen years ago was somewhat like us. They just put all kinds of money into their athletic program- went to the next level essentially. Even with that they have a hard time making a lot of money. They have a great basketball team there. It's almost like you shit or get off the pot here because here if you win the MAC, what do you get? You don't get anything. You're going to be going to a bowl game that people don't really care that much about. We had good attendance back when we were not in the MAC. We would have good attendance to our games. We had some good football teams. Big basketball teams.

MJ: We had John Fountain here a few weeks ago and wish Alexis would have been here to ask him that. It would have been an interesting answer I think.

RE: He's a very knowledgeable guy.

MJ: He did Eastern Energy- I think he kind of kept us in the MAC.

RE: Yeah. Yes. I was one of the ones that was in the meeting where we had to vote.

MJ: That was, he took, what was his job to take it from 6,000 per game to 17,000 per game?

RE: Yeah. Ok. I was involved in all that stuff. What a fiasco that was. We had a program- the Iron Sheik, I think that's what it was called- the professional wrestler who was going to wrestle before the game. Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders. We had Loretta Lynn to sing "I Promised You a Rose Garden" or some hillbilly song. And something else. We were a typical Eastern Michigan- we don't have the money to do any of this stuff. The Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders come in and they come into Willow Run at the charter place at the far side of it. We picked those ladies up in Ypsilanti yellow school busses. They come in, we don't have any place to put them so they go into the towers. The towers- there's nothing in them anymore. They're standing around there waiting for the football and when they left they "would never come back to Eastern Michigan again." The Iron Sheik guy ended up being older than me, and then Loretta Lynn was a disaster also.

MJ: Loretta Lynn was in Ypsi?

RE: Yeah is that who sings "I Never Promised you A Rose garden?" Anyway- we have this stuff that says she's going to be performing at halftime. We had a big crowd of people and we have this hay wagon, you know, that's there. They go, once again with no money, so we go pick her up at the airport. We don't have any place to put her. So we put her in an apartment at Westview right there by the stadium, that this guy from the physical plant- it was his apartment. They have this thing where you put the drink in and push the button and the drink comes down- she empties his drink dispenser. When she goes out there, she is like, drunk out on the thing. She is not singing- it's a recording over the PA system. So here's these guys we have and they're going like music is playing. It was a whole nightmare. The people are booing up in the stands, you know, because she isn't singing any songs. It's over our PA system, you know. We had something for every game.

ABM: To boost attendance?

RE: Yeah. We did get good attendance, but I don't think we got 17,000 for any game. We did get better attendance.

MJ: When you said Loretta Lynn, I was thinking, "Wow they must have gotten a lot of people."

RE: Yeah John probably didn't tell you that part of it.

MJ: No.

ABM: You know, before we finish up here, and I know that there are going to be countless that we think of asking you as soon as you leave and so I think Michelle is right- this will probably be one of a few conversations. You mentioned being on a number of committees about decisions being made on campus of physical space and athletics etc. Were you involved in any way in the mascot conversation?

RE: Oh yeah. Yep.

ABM: Were you on the committees for those?

RE: Yes. Yes. I think that was Shelton who saw himself as...saw that as an opportunity as a way to become politically correct and enhance his opportunities to get another fancy job. I wanted to be a Green Hornet if we were going to change because I had been to places where they had neat little things to have on your shirt and that, and I thought that having a "buzz" and having the team come out buzzing would be cool. But this was like, no controversy to say the Eagles. Eagles are the most prominent thing there is out of all the mascots. As you would expect there was a lot of arguing over what things to do and people standing up saying we should be the Ospreys because they are in the Huron River and there won't be any soon and stuff like that. Finally, I think they just got tired of wanting to make a decision and Shelton was saying, "I want to be done with this and get rid of that Indian logo." What we wanted to do was we wanted to do an "E" and to have a place in McKenny that would be dedicated to the Huron Indians and have some stuff displayed there. And the Huron Indians from Oklahoma were going to provide this stuff. WE were going to just have the block "E" and no kind of things along with it. No more of the chief dancing around and that sort of thing, but still being called the Hurons. Like I said, they just decided that we were not going to fight that any longer and as it turned out, that same guy that was on TV just here recently, beating the drum for those kids down in Louisville- he's the same guy that was talking about our problem here. He's just a rabble rouser and causes trouble. You know, there's like three people who were boisterous about that- caused all that. He'd get up and say, or a lady would say "My son is an Indian and isn't proud of inheritance because you're depicting him as a bloodthirsty whatever." We were trying to do that and the thing was that, if you look at it, Central Michigan then, you know, I don't know how long afterwards, 1-2 years, they do exactly what we said and avoid all the controversy. They just do this "C" and that's what we had said we wanted to do. I knew about that stuff because Gene Smith was the AD and I was good friends with him. He's now down at Ohio State.

ABM: I was at an event with a number of alumni last weekend and it was interesting. Some of them were like "Once a Huron, always a Huron." It's such a palpable connection to the University.

RE: When I was the AD we would have our football coach come in and one of the assistants had been out recruiting. They would be recruiting a kid and his father played here and he would say "I'm never sending anybody back here because of that." I had a grad student who now teaches in the business school and when she started here she was a Huron and when she graduated, she was an Eagle. So they were saying to her "well you can't be a Huron," and she said "oh yes I can." She fought it and got her ring that said she was a Huron. I don't know if it's just that if you say you can't do this, why people want to do it, but there was obviously a big backlash of these people who wanted to be Hurons

forever. Gene Buttman out here, put it on his license plates- "Hurons Forever" or whatever. I got it a little. It was kind of dying down by the time I was AD but I still got a little bit on. They came in and gave me a t-shirt and a hat that said "Hurons Forever."

ABM: Anything else you want to share today?

RE: No, I've shared a lot.

MJ: You made it for almost two and half hours. You're almost our longest one.

RE: Well hopefully it gives you some insight.

MJ: This has been great. I am going to press stop now.