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Don Pearson, Oral History Interview, 1998

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EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
HISTORY

INTERVIEW
WITH
DR. DON PEARSON
LNS: Today's July 2nd and I'm talking with Don Pearson who is a member of the university faculty since 1969. And Don, you came into what department and under what conditions?

DP: I came in the Fall of 1969 and the situation, which was probably one that will never repeat itself for academics. It was very much a seller's market, and so there you practically in your field at least could have your pick of jobs and I came to Eastern because of the connection with a friend at the university of Michigan and I joined the History and Social Sciences department where economics was sort of a subdivision a

LNS: And who was chair of the dept in those days?

DP: Neal McClarky was the chair of the dept he was a historian.

LNS: And how long later would it become an Economics department?

DP: Two years later it became an Economics Department. I was one of six people in the Economics Department at that point. So it was the second year assistant professor when it became an independent department, I suddenly found myself with all sorts of opportunities and committee slots and governments roles that would have never fallen my way had it not been for that particular development.

LNS: Now in '69 the university was growing or was it?

DP: '69 the university was just stabilizing after a very rapid period of growth as I understand it from '65. Starting about 1965.

LNS: What pushed the concept of developing individual departments, what were the forces to develop that department?

DP: I got the impression there were several factors. One, was the sense of self-identity, this place had, in those days much more than even today, a very strong perception in the community that this was a teacher's college. And in the 60's been re-designated as a university rather than Eastern Michigan College. And I think one move was there was a great deal of effort to try to become structured like a university to have departments that were discipline-oriented rather than this huge departments. History, and Philosophy, History and Social Sciences had previously been a Social Sciences Department by the time I arrived, Sociology had already been spun-off, Political Science had already been spun-off, Economics was the next to go. I think that was part of it and part of it was the growth. The fact that history was very popular and very large by itself and so even the powers that be were concerned that it was too big a department in addition to these factors of having departmental structures.
LNS: Also I mentioned that people were looking at how other major universities U of M and how others were structured and its divisional approach that we had was something that was going to be reserved more for community college and Sponberg was president?

DP: Yes.

LND: Who was the Dean of...was there a College of Arts and Sciences at that point?

DP: Yes there was I don't know how long it had been in existence but Don Drummond was the Dean.

LNS: Oh so he was the Dean. And that was a long time ago.

DP: Yes.

LNS: And?

DP: And he was a Historian, I think somehow also was interested in having History Department stand alone as an entity.

LNS: What was the campus like? Did you live in Ypsilanti at that point?

DP: No I lived in Ann Arbor at that point.

LNS: Where did you do your graduate work?

DP: University of Texas in Austin.

LNS: Up to Ann Arbor, and then from Ann Arbor, did you come up here for this job?

DP: Yes. I came up here for this job. My graduate school, one of my graduate school colleagues, who I shared an office with had taken a job here at the University of Michigan and then the year prior to my coming here, I had gone to Chili to do my dissertation during that same year. Upon completion of that I came back and this fellow said, you know an old buddy, an office mate of mine said that there is a place down the road that has a job, would you be interested in calling and this was in July. And so between July and the end of August, I made all of the arrangements and then moved here.

LNS: That was pretty fast.
DP: Yeah. It was a very tight market. Even by today standards, it was a very tight market in those days.

LNS: That's great. And you came then this was your first academic, real formal academic,

DP: Yes, with the intention of staying on until my wife completed her Ph.D. Cause she was a Graduate student and then we were going to move on to interesting and challenging places and of course, typical of all sorts of people in that situation, we didn't.

LNS: You still here.

DP: Still here thirty years later.

LNS: What do you think is the glue that keeps people here this long?

DP: Well among faculty colleagues at least I think the glue that keeps them here is people who came about the time I did seem to have a long staying period. I think part of it's being involved in all of the changes and the developments that were going on. I for example as I said was really very, very intimately involved in all the process of making the Economics Department a department. Setting up the procedures, setting up all the hiring lots of people so as a second year assistant professor I founded that most search committees and going out and hiring more people. At that point you have commitment to the place kind of commitment to the department not necessarily to the institution as a whole.

LNS: Do you feel that holds true that your commitment would be at this point and thirty years later it's more departmentally focused than the institution was?

DP: Yes.

LNS: Would you say that's true of most faculty?

DP: Yes. At least in my opinion of those that I know. Yeah.

LNS: Later on in case I forget come back to why that's so and is this an anomaly? When you came here the campus was very different. Can you describe the school when you came here at all?

DP: Pray-Harrold had just opened. I was one of the first. I came in September. I think the people who were in Pray-Harrold had moved in the previous Spring into the building. So the building was brand new, state-of-
the-art for 1969. All the other major buildings were still as they are now except there was a major street going through the middle of campus.

LNS: Forest.

DP: Forest Avenue went through the campus and sort of divided the campus very inconveniently.

LNS: Old campus, new campus?

DP: Yeah. And we were sort of out on the fringe at Pray-Harrold building over there. Mark Jefferson had not been constructed then.

LNS: Had not?

DP: Had not been constructed, it didn’t exist.

LNS: Were the Residence Halls all there?

DP: The Residence Halls were all there. The Tower Residence Hall had just recently been completed. Maybe they were. This building was

LNS: Welch Hall.

DP: Welch Hall was being used but only sort of marginally and soon thereafter it was abandoned. It was closed up and left idle for a while. And I think of the building structure that’s all that really existed. All of the dormitory building King and Goodison were actually used as dormitories. And Brown Munson was used as a dormitory. And there was a baseball stadium over where the Oakwood parking lot is.

LNS: And McKenney had its addition already built?

DP: The McKenney addition was already built. There was an actual cafeteria there.

LNS: Snack bar, cafeteria...

DP: Open for lunch in a regular cafeteria line. The bookstore was in the basement and much smaller than it later became. And so if I think about it there’s relatively little net building increase since then.

LNS: College of Business, Quirk expansion, you have the IM Rec. You had the Music building.
DP: Oh the Alexander Building was not there. The Music building. Quirk was the Quirk expansion the filling in of that conversion of that open space because the rest of Quirk had been built.

LNS: And the Library was built. It took some thirty years later for the next major, major push. Well I guess the College of Business.

DP: Twenty, Twenty-five years yeah.

LNS: What was the campus like? How did it differ from today?

DP: I knew everybody.

LNS: That's not so easy to think back thirty years.

DP: That's right. There's certain things you think of, I knew, I went to the new faculty orientation meetings and I sort of got to meet everybody and even though campus must've been fifteen, sixteen thousand students by then I got to know people then. I was, I'm still very impressed with the accidental factor of getting so involved in so much governance stuff right away. I was on the Dean's Advisory Committees and other things and so I met people. At one time I knew virtually everyone on campus and today I know very few folks. It was much more much smaller in the sense of getting to know people in the community. Knew all the administrators, cause they were so few. There was a Vice President for Academic Affairs there was a Vice President.

LNS: Who was the VP was that Bruce Nelson?

DP: And there was a Vice President for Business and that was it.

LNS: Well there was Lou Profitt.

DP: Yeah.

LNS: Vice President of Student Affairs at that time I think. Lawrence? Trying to think who it was.

DP: There was some kind of Dean of the Graduate School but no Vice President. Graduate School and Summer.

LNS: That was Homer Robbins.

DP: Homer Robbins, yeah. Very few people so you got to know and see people a lot more and President Sponberg and certainly the VP's were out
and about on the campus and you saw them. You actually knew when they were...

LNS: Ypsilanti a different kind of community in those days? Sensitive kinds of issues?

DP: It was a bedroom, Ypsi-Tucky, blue-collar town.

LNS: Now there was a big student demonstration or something in the late 60's early 70's. Black students, all the students.

DP: Kent State, war protestors, black students, Washtenaw County Sheriff was here there was some sort of a series of nightly demonstrations. Sort of, yeah. In the early 70's.

LNS: In your hazy recollection of those things, teaching on the campus, did those things interfere with teaching?

DP: No. Those particular things always happened outside of the classroom. They were at night. I remember a series of nightly, sort of demonstrations and so forth and you could come in the next morning and there was broken windows in Pray-Harrold. Windows that in their efforts to try to protect their long-term liability were replaced with plastic clouded to obscure things.

LNS: Do we still have the plastic?

DP: They finally moved them within the last year and a half.

LNS: That was pretty much an eyesore.

DP: Now students were very, very activists in those days. They weren't, they even a place like Eastern where we had mostly blue-collar students, first generation at least the ones I saw. First generation college students in their family who I think were largely motivated by education as a training process whereas an education is education. Still they were very, very interested in academia and their rights as students and so forth.

LNS: That was '69 - '70 that was the big war activism years too. A lot of this was war related. Some things that I keep reading about and people are talking about are related to black stuff that they were not fully enfranchised on the campus.

DP: Yes. But that black action movement stuff came a little bit later as I recall. The earlier ones were all related to Vietnam, I think the war protest. There was a lot of flare up around Kent State. Kent State was in '71.
LNS: May 4th. What happened, was John Norman Collins thing took place around there too?

DP: No. John Norman Collins thing took place in the months preceding September of ‘69. He had been arrested in the trial. In fact his name turned up on the class list of my very first Intro to Economics class. He had been registered in the previous Spring to take my class.

LNS: So this was 68?

DP: So that was ‘68.

LNS: Was that a pall over the campus? Was that noticeable to you coming in?

DP: No as an outsider coming in I was aware of it but I didn’t see any reaction by the students or the staff to it. I think the fact that he had been arrested and even though the trial hadn’t been completed it sort of changed people’s attitudes. They must’ve reacted as if they thought he was the guy.

LNS: So you came the campus wasn’t under a cloud of fear and _______ and faculty were pretty attuned to the university at that point? What was going on in the faculty?

DP: It was a very young faculty, as I remember and you might have more details on this than I can remember. The enrollment in the institution was about five thousand in 1965, by ‘69 it had become about fifteen thousand so there was a very large number of new young assistant professors. People fresh out of graduate schools, people completing Ph.D.’s and a lot of orientations for people getting started getting organized getting families and so forth. There wasn’t so much internal strife for organization until maybe a couple three years after I arrived.

LNS: Now the faculty wasn’t unionized then was it?

DP: No, but president Sponberg, apparently before I came even there was a history of recurring actions by him that sort of caused flare ups.

LNS: Do you remember what they were?

DP: Well there was one. I know the ones that caused the real flare-ups. I remember in one case in a particular department when appointments came out one year the department discovered that one of their members had been given tenure.
LNS: Do you know what department that was?

DP: History.

LNS: Who had been given tenure?

DP: I'll say that in confidence at this point, because I don't want, the person's still alive. Don Vricks who apparently had not applied or gone through any kind of process. Well that set people off quite up in arms and then there was the case of the guy in the Political Science Department who Sponberg unilaterally terminated his name was Cahill, he's now an Attorney in the area too. Apparently, there were a series of little similar kinds of events of ignoring traditions and so forth. That tends to sort of gel in the process of ultimately led to the unionizing effort.

LNS: What were, those were some of the predisposing factors, were there other predisposing factors?

DP: One, it was the thing to do that was clearly.

LNS: Sort of the rage across the country.

DP: The rage across the country at that time. Particularly in the state.

LNS: And we were a labor organized

DP: It was a labor state. It wasn't over benefits and so forth cause we certainly had benefits. There were among these newer faculty vs. the older people who had been here from back when it was the teacher's college. There was a great resentment in the way salaries got allocated. They were, the new young folks were unhappy that the old farts were seemed to have control a lot in getting stuff and they couldn't figure out how to deal with that. And they saw the department Chairs, the Heads as being sort of the collaborators in this process. I think that created, added to the mode. And the fact that salaries were being adjusted in what was being perceived as arbitrary ways and its strange times and without any consultation.

LNS: And in secret.

DP: And in secret.

LNS: So these were some of the conditions that were predisposing?

DP: Yeah I think so.

LNS: And was anybody else on the campus unionized at this point?
DP: Yes. At that point I believe the ASCME people the custodial and the maintenance people were unionized. That was the only one. They were unionized when I arrived. So they must've, the Enabling Law was in 1965 so they must've unionized right away.

LNS: What was the precipitating? What caused the faculty, when was the first faculty?

DP: The election campaign and organizing was in the 1974, '73, '74. And then the establishment and certification of the union was in 1974, '75 year.

LNS: And then there was a strike in '75 or '76?

DP: '76 I believe.

LNS: Contract was up. Brickley was president then.

DP: Contract was up. Brickley was president then. Brickley was president...

LNS: '75 to '78.

DP: '75 and there was sort of a vacancy in the presidency during the when the union was actually the faculty union was actually certified,

LNS: Sponberg was gone, Ralph Gilden was in. Let's back up. You were very active in the union?

DP: Not at the beginning.

LNS: You were still being a good assistant professor when the organizing was going on?

DP: I was teaching because I had come out of a program at the University of Texas, which was the labor program. Was very interested in teaching Collective Bargaining, Labor Relations, Labor Economics kind of place and doing a lot of that. And not typical assistant you know young assistant professor those aren't the kind of people who lead these kind of things. But once the union was organized and the thing was moving toward the election, I got very interested in it because I saw hey, this is a lab, this is how I get hands-on experience for all the stuff that I've got all this textbook knowledge about.

LNS: Who were some of the first who were some of the patriarchs or matriarchs of the union?
Well there was a struggle, as you may know between the AAUP and the Michigan Federation of Teachers to be the union. Michigan Federation of Teachers was filled with a lot of activists, typical union types who frightened some of the old traditionalist faculty and they looked around and saw the AAUP as the lesser of two evils.

Who were some of the people who were doing the frightening?

I remember right off the top of my head, there was a fellow in the Library named Troy Brizelle who I think at the moment actually works for the Federation in California. Stu Carabinic was a big, very visible person and supporter of that. That's all I remember, just a general atmosphere.

So then the AAUP forms?

AAUP formed by a little old lady in tennis shoes from the Library. Jean Henley.

She had faculty status?

She had faculty status and she was a Librarian. Her husband had been a University of Michigan Professor of some renown and so she was familiar with and apparently comfortable with the AAUP as a professional organization which also sort of held its nose and got involved in collective bargaining too.

Were you a member of AAUP in those days?

Not prior to this. So but the central group of people like Jean Henley who were older people who were members of AAUP.

What precipitated all of this? Why all of a sudden all of this? We have all of these predisposing factors? What was the spark, there must've been something there.

I think the spark was the firing of the guy in Political Science, Cahill. He was just summarily terminated.

Does anybody to this day know why?

Maybe some people in Political Science who were around might know. I don't know. There was a personal, as I recall some kind of personal bad blood argument between him and Sponberg. And of course I know he was party to this thing it's not that this guy Cahill was set upon and terribly maltreated. There were extenuating, so he contributed to the fire I'm sure but I have vague recollections of that. But I believe as I recall and the rest
of it I was just unaware of it but here it is suddenly before us. That's how it stands out in my mind as sort of the precipitating factor.

LNS: And so we now have people went out on strike? Or of course, you first had a vote on it?

DP: First of all we had this incredibly time-consuming and annoying campaign with people coming around to visit offices ask for your vote on this and this literature flood that came. And it's too bad that there's not much of that left in archives I think that AAUP maybe has some of this enormous flood of information about why you should join this or that organization and vote for them. And then there was a vote and I believe some disputes on the outcome of that vote and then there was a second vote. Ultimately not a run-off but a re-do of the vote ultimately the AAUP was certified by MERC? the issue was and what I kept saying to people at that point was the AAUP, the national organization didn't give any support to this at all. It wasn't in the business of doing it. The question was, ok now we've got this union, what the hell are we going to do? How do you go about doing this? Did anybody ever think about this? Having asked that question too loudly too many times in meetings because after the certification of the AUP there was a series of meetings very well attended lots of interest lots of people at these things. Today the AAUP can have a meeting and six people will show up. In those days you regularly got a hundred people or more at these things. Having asked that question one too many times, I found myself on the bargaining team because one of the original members of the team sort of had a mental breakdown or something, I can't take this anymore. So I wound up sort of jumping into the middle of it but it was very much sort of a self-help do-it-yourself kind of process.

LNS: What were the issues? Early day issues.

DP: Early day issues were defining workload because there was a perception that some people were teaching very little and some other people were overburdened teaching way too much. So a lot of the early debate was over some method of coming up with defining workload. And lots of discussion and arguments over what constitutes workload and where's all this hours fit in and where does that fit in. That was one of the big issues. There was a lot of bickering back and forth, testing back and forth over budgets at the beginning. My opinion the people on the university side were out-classed by the people on the faculty-side at that point in terms of having an understanding of what budgets were all about. And so there was a lot of walking through budgets asking questions because the university's stance was always we can't afford this. So there was a lot of that testing. Which also from my perspective gave some very frightening, not frightening sort of uneasy views of who's in charge and who's calling the shots and on what basis are they doing that. And it sort of galvanized
us for a long time a sense of the fact that hey we can do this thing cause we can ask questions we know the answers to and those guys don't. Whether this is true or not that was the perception that came down.

LNS: Were there old issues of loyalty and faculty gone unionized, were those one of the issues?

DP: No, well the issue was that professionals don't unionize and if you were really professionals, you wouldn't have done this and so obviously, we're going to treat you just like automobile workers. You wanted a union so let's have it.

LNS: We're gonna stick it to you.

DP: We're gonna stick it to you. Right.

LNS: Now the College of Business people as I recall even when I came some of them there, they were still a pocket a considerable pocket of college of business people that felt very uncomfortable with being part of the union.

DP: Yeah I think so. But interestingly enough, there were also some College of Business folks who were really right in there from the very beginning. The very first negotiating team had two people from the College of Business oddly.

LNS: Do you remember who was on that first negotiating team?

DP: Yes. Sally McCracken. Sally and I are the only ones who are still around. No I'm sorry, Sally was on it. Joe Braden, Sergio Antiochia, do you remember him?

LNS: I didn't remember him but he was in Sociology?

DP: No he was in Business.

LNS: Oh Business? Ok

DP: Right. Jean Henley the little old lady in tennis shoes. And Mary McCorkey and then I, Sergio was the one who sort of said I can't take it anymore, I'm quitting it. And so I wound up replacing him. And the administration side was Ray LeBounty, Wayne Douglas who was really a little gopher at that time.

LNS: A. Wayne Douglas.
DP: A. Wayne Douglas who later rose to greater things but at that time, he was sort of a gopher in the process. Gary Hawks and

LNS: Was Hawks a Vice President?

DP: Yes. I think he was a Vice President.

LNS: Or was he Director of Personnel, I think.

DP: He might have been Director of Personnel. I don't remember at what point.

LNS: I don't think he was Vice President then.

DP: I think he was never Vice President till he went away and then came back. He did go away and come back. And a guy from Business and Finance. I don't remember. It wasn't George Johnson or anybody like that but the academic there was no Dean on the process - as I recall. The academic area was represented by Stubi, Lebounty having previously been a department head. Lebounty might have been what would be, what was the equivalent of Human Resources or personnel or whatever it was in those days.

LNS: Now the first contract gets negotiated, anything major change as a result of it? Hostilities, people's attitudes, you said that people, ok you wanted it and now we're gonna make you live by it that kind of thing?

DP: Yeah there was that kind of thing. There was also a little bit of testing that went on right away. A couple of efforts were things had been negotiated to change stuff that ended up being arbitration cases and grievances and that stuff.

LNS: And so now the union gets more entrenched, we have the faculty council? Did we have a faculty council?

DP: You know I don't think we had a faculty council. No, there was a faculty senate of some sort when I first came here. And I believe it got eliminated and for what reason, I don't recall if it was a result of negotiations or if the administration said and the faculty or the union said hey we got this other organization and this other relationship we don't need that. And also part of the attitude of the administrative folks was hey you wanted a collective bargaining process that means you want an adversarial relationship so this business of collaboration through a senate can't exist you've opted one of the other, you can't have them both. So that may have been the conditions of what and it didn't exist for a number of years and then was recreated by a specific contract clause later on.
LNS: Now you played an active role for a number of years in the union?

DP: Yep.

LNS: And that was probably your major contribution to campus outside of teaching would you say?

DP: Probably. Yeah.

LNS: And so you saw it coming. Who was president of the union at that time? Did they have a president or how did they?

DP: Yeah they had a series of folks.

LNS: One was Sally in the early.

DP: Sally was president for a while, a guy in Fred Anderson, do you remember him?

LNS: Philosophy?

DP: History or Philosophy.

LNS: History or Philosophy, they were combining those things.

DP: And Sally and Mori Legney from Music, there was a whole series of folks along there who were presidents of the thing and for a while it was sort of an operate out of your shoebox kind of thing. Russell Ogden was the treasurer in the very early days and it had no staff, no paid staff all sort of volunteer structure going along.

LNS: And so that's how it is. Now it's early 70s' and the war ends.

DP: No this was '75 I was talking.

LNS: Yeah '70 – '74 this happens. Enrollment has slipped pretty badly in the institution.

DP: Yes.

LNS: The Board, we now have a Board of our own that came in '63. They hired Sponberg as the first president after Elliott with them, things start coming apart I guess. It's a new idea called "Plan C", do you remember that?

DP: Right. Right.
LNS: And that says that we don't have enough money so you teach Spring / Summer as a regular term as I recall, right? Does that sound right?

DP: Right.

LNS: And, union's getting a little bit more active, the faculty...

DP: Union pats itself on the back for protecting faculty jobs while coming up with this "Plan C" which prevents people from being laid-off or terminated for lack of something to do, feels very good to itself about that. Administration is scrambling to try to come up with the issues of what's happening as we seemed to be going down the drain.

LNS: The faculty didn't play any role in this. The Faculty pretty removed from being involved in the university at this point? As I read, I don't see any faculty involvement.

DP: You see at this time there was no, this decision which I really don't know who actually made it to eliminate faculty council, faculty senate means that there is nothing at the top to debate these issues, to talk about them so the administrative folk are sort of left to do as they choose and yet the level of faculty debate stops at the college level.

LNS: So the faculty are really employees now.

DP: To a large extent.

LNS: And they're all mimes?. I don't want to put any words in your mouth but is that a fair description?

DP: Right I think and once again, there's a sense of you know, look out for yourself. Scramble around your own department and not look around for otherwise. Faculty are largely employees at least at the university level because there's this void up there at the top.

LNS: Enrollments had declined dramatically what was twenty-two thousand has now dropped to sixteen or seventeen thousand.

DP: Close to that.

LNS: The Board's getting very nervous. Board meetings keep asking for reports and reports and reports. A guy named Dick Robb is appointed he's now playing a more active role. McCormick has been on the Board since the very first days.
DP: Timothy Dyer.

LNS: Timothy Dyer gets on the Board.

DP: Little bantam rooster who had the unique ability to alienate virtually anybody he interacted with who was faculty.

LNS: And why was that?

DP: I, he was, I don't know, but he was very good at it. He was very assertive, very aggressive, very opinionated.

LNS: Very articulate.

DP: Very articulate. He always had the right answer and the rest of these people were sort of boobs.

LNS: Didn't want to listen.

DP: Didn't want to listen. Right.

LNS: And now you start seeing pressures on the administration and all of a sudden one day Sponberg comes to the Board Meeting and resigns in '74.

DP: Is that '74? Well Sponberg is actually gone before the union is actually active and all this other stuff we are going over so you're moving back three years from where I am in in my mind.

LNS: Ok so you're still in '71?

DP: No I'm in '77, '78.

LNS: Oh see I want to go back to the Sponberg period.

DP: Ok.

LNS: Which is Dyer gets on the Board. And there's all those things you said.

DP: I thought Dyer was a bit later than that.

LNS: Couldn't be much later.

DP: Dyer I thought was on the Board when Brickley is... no, he's gone by then or he comes later?

LNS: Brickley comes after Dyer.
DP: He does?

LNS: Oh yeah.

DP: Ok.

LNS: Sponberg goes. What did Sponberg, what happened with Sponberg? What was the rumor around campus?

DP: He was an alcoholic who had made one too many blunders and maybe three or four too many blunders.

LNS: What kind of blunders? Anything that comes to your mind?

DP: Well presiding over the unionization of the faculty for example. Public, there was rumors about him being drunk and incoherent at public gatherings, places where students were, public events that kind of thing. I never saw any of that stuff but there were rumors about that.

LNS: So one was drinking the other is people feel that the university is out of control a little bit. Did the faculty______

DP: Well not really, well the declining enrollments that I'm aware of are the ones that come later.

LNS: No that came in ’75. Enrollments went pretty far south.

DP: By then they had? Late 70’s. Ok.

LNS: The ’71, ’72, ’73 enrollments are going every Board Meeting there is screaming according to the Board Minutes what is happening to enrollment let’s have a report on enrollment. There’s these kinds of feelings, “Plan C” is invented because of the enrollment decline. Listen to these tapes twenty-five years from now and they’ll say what is that guy doing wrecking history.

DP: You think of it because you have the benefit of having read all of [the] stuff. I’m just sort of remembering it in thirty-year increments.

LNS: So Sponberg goes and Brickley ends up being appointed. There’s a big search and Brickley ends up being president. There is an incident before Brickley becomes president that is rather interesting to me, you don’t remember but apparently the faculty are very upset over the Honorary Doctorates. Do you remember this at all? Mori Lane brings a group of faculty to a Board Meeting. Do you remember that? I’ll have to talk with
him. It's a fascinating little episode and George Strip is Head of the Student Affairs Committee of the Board. He comes out with some very eloquent criticisms of the university both its administration and its faculty, student discontent a very impassioned. Faculty comes to a meeting over this and Dick Robb is sent to work things out with Mori Lane and then there's all these letters. It seems to me it was a pretty sour period. I don't want to put words in your mouth or ideas if you don't recall those.

DP: No I don't recall that event.

LNS: Absolutely unintelligible Brickley comes and the faculties are really upset.

DP: Yes.

LNS: Big time upset.

DP: Big time upset.

LNS: Why are they so upset?

DP: Typical kind of things. It was wired from the beginning.

LNS: You felt the Governor wired it?

DP: The Governor wired it. It was a collaboration

LNS: Purpose of the tape ______ Lt. Gov. of the State.

DP: Right. Who at the time the Lt. Governor was paid very little, Brickley had a family, a rather large family and the conventional wisdom was or the scuttle butt was that the Governor and Tim Dyer somehow think was coming up in this, collaborated in order to find this guy some place to have a job for a while so that he could make some money. His claim to fame was, his academic claim to fame or claim of a job was that he had taught part-time in the Law School at the University of Detroit and he was an FBI Agent before becoming Lt. Governor. Faculty were just enraged by the fact that this Board, which was supposed to be looking out for the interests of the university and its mission is, has the audacity to appoint somebody who is not an academic to be the president of the institution. There was enormous reaction to that. Very great upset. The fact that this is just a political lackey and people are using this to farm-off and find places for people who they need to reward on the State Level. And his being followed by John Porter, similar kind of circumstances, sort of created a little bubble of that kind of effect. [later on.]
LNS: We'll come to that in a minute. So Brickley is now the president, the faculty are upset. The faculty takes a vote for Brickley on the account of no confidence or something. Is that correct?

DP: Yeah.

LNS: And it was based over the whole fact that we don't have confidence in person who _______ the institution.

DP: Right.

LNS: The union now becomes much stronger over this issue. Stays the same?

DP: Probably. It's difficult to know because these events are occurring and there is a learning curve going on in the university and in the union of both learning more and more about how you play this game, what this thing collective bargaining is all about. So this process, we were both pitiful if you look back it now, both the administration and the union were both

LNS: Real amateurs. Now Brickley's president. We'll come to the end of Brickley's presidency in a minute. Things as bad as everybody thought they would be?

DP: He was very much a hands-off type of person. So it weren't as bad as people thought it would be because he didn't do anything. He just sort of let the ship drift as it were. From the faculty perspective at least.

LNS: Do you remember he formed a commission to study the future of the university?

DP: That's right.

LNS: Were you on that commission at all?

DP: No. I was sort of peripherally on that.

LNS: Do you have any recollection of that?

DP: Oh yes.

LNS: What's your recollection?

DP: It was a lot of time and effort committed by a lot of people to no-end. That is there were always reports generated, there were all of these bits of information generated. Lots of people did a lot of work and then nothing happened to it. At the time that it was going on there were people around
saying that and once again to fast forward twenty-five years, the learning university initiative was sort of a déjà vu process is exactly the same kind of thing.

LNS: Now this one had a lot of people involved in it.

DP: Yes.

LNS: And the learning university also grew out of a whole year of discussion with faculty and staff.

DP: Yes.

LNS: So it wasn't as if they grew out of the head of the president. It really grew out of comments and thoughts, etcetera.

DP: Yeah.

LNS: They were. Ok, we'll come to this thing too. But so actually Don Drummond is the one who delivered the eulogy for this thing at an administrative retreat ___ he gave the university's rebuttal to this report. Which had become a highly political document, shady words everything________. It died, in my interpretation under its own weight. It just was everybody got, the people who worked on it were more those with agendas vs. the agenda being the future of the university. I don't know if that's true or not.

DP: Well my perception of it was that it

LNS: We were just talking about the Brickley appointment I think and we took a break here and talking about how upset the faculty were and we were talking about how livid I guess they were. And we were talking about all those kinds of things. Brickley stays for a few years. Not much happens. Talked about the big report that was issued. We saw reminiscences of what happens later with the learning university. Two more presidents. Brickley gets ready to leave, Tony Evans is appointed the Interim President. You recall that. And do you have any thoughts on that?

DP: No not really and he was, it was an interesting process where he happened to be at the right place at the right time cause he was Provost.

LNS: Now he wasn't Provost at that time.

DP: Wasn't he?
LNS: No he was Assistant to the President. Well maybe he was...No Porter makes the provost. I think Porter made the Provost.

DP: I don't remember exactly.

LNS: We'll come back to that. Tony comes sort of as Interim President but during the time Brickley was president there is an actual faculty strike.

DP: Yes.

LNS: And classes are either late in starting or its right after a couple of weeks of classes or something I remember. Was that '77 or something the strike?

DP: '78.

LNS: '78.

DP: '78 there was a strike for about 10 days.

LNS: It settled but it doesn't do anything to enhance the way people feel about the schools. It divides the administration and the faculty a little bit more.

DP: Right.

LNS: A lot of us have friends on both sides. It seems the world goes on and things function. Now we have an appointment, we're looking for a new president. And Tim Dyer's name surfaces.

DP: This is where it surfaces.

LNS: As a possible presidential candidate. Something very unusual to me as a writer and as a historian but even more as a university administrator. The faculty, which has never been very united on a lot of things other than wages, takes a big ad out in the newspaper. Do you remember that at all?

DP: No I don't. I just remember that it was very they spoke in one voice, at least, the faculty.

LNS: Very upset with the Dyer. And it's interesting.

DP: He was very good at alienating people.

LNS: Yeah. So the faculty are very fearful that he might get to be president.

DP: Yes.
LNS: He pulls out. He never pulls out cause he never says he in. See the faculty first become upset, I'm telling, you are not asking about it, but the faculty become upset because Dyer gets on a committee to work on the criteria for the new president.

DP: Correct.

LNS: And he eliminates the requirement that the president has to have experience in Higher Ed.

DP: Correct.

LNS: And then the faculty, that's when the faculty first start to become. Then come the suspicions that he is a candidate, which he disavows. And but is a candidate and then comes the advertisement in the newspaper. Is any of this coming to you?

DP: Yeah, it also was both in the Brickley search and in this search as I recall a great deal of mistrust and concern about the composition of the Search Committee. Right. What was the role of the faculty going to be in the decision-making process?

LNS: Yeah. And not a little bit a pretty consequential amount. And now we get to the point, so Dyer doesn't get to be president for the record though, he makes a statement at one of the Board Meetings but there's some feelings that the reason that Beth Milford was re-appointed was that she would not support this candidacy and she doesn't have enough votes. Porter has applied and his name, he pulled out and then he puts it back, he said he will be a candidate but only if the faculty are more involved and there is a more open process. So Porter gets to be president. Do you recall any of this?

DP: Yeah. There was a bit of the same kind of atmosphere surrounding when Brickley became president. Once again, but this time, this time it wasn't as far the taste. It was on the one hand there was affection among the faculty to say hey this guy, he's got a Doctorate, he's been involved even though it's not higher education he's sort of been involved all these years in the State Department of Education. On the other hand, hey here we go again, they are finding someplace for yet another state official to have a life after state employment and this is just the guy that they're trying to find some position for and that was the gist of it. You know interestingly enough I never heard anybody say this is an affirmative action kind of thing or they're just finding this guy he's gonna get this job because he's this qualified Ph.D. black guy. Never heard any of that but it was all political oriented. Why do we need another political appointee who's just somebody those folks in Lansing are trying to find a position for.
LNS: Now how do you view the Porter Presidency? Either personalized or generalized.

DP: Well he had an interesting honeymoon kind of period, which Brickley didn't have. Brickley was he was persona non-grata from the beginning. Porter was a very mixed it was a lot of mixed reaction to him. On the one hand people thought he was going to be this terrible, terrible person who didn't know anything other than how to organize bureaucrats and on the other hand there were people saying hey, this guy's not bad. Sort of understands what the university is. And very much he talked the talk but he didn't, the perception was he knows how to talk the talk but when he doesn't actually know how to implement it. He asks for criticism, he asked for people to have an in-put but if it's in-put that he doesn't like or doesn't agree with he doesn't listen to it he just dismisses it right away.

LNS: The way he did move Tony into the Associate or to the Provost role the faculty came unglued on that too. There was this upsurge...

DP: Ok yeah that was true.

LNS: Then he opened it and said well we'll let you interview him and review it and the faculty agreed that he is a good candidate he stays in the job. So the faculty was cooperative at least. But they asserted themselves this is the thing that we have to involved in.

DP: Right.

LNS: Now so that happens, we have the faculty, Porter basically during his administration, the enrollment turns around significantly. But one of the things that Brickley was faced with that was kind of, he was there during an enormous difficult period in the state in terms of ________ so he was here during a real economic downturn. Massive downturn I remember we had to invade every one of the reserve funds in the university we moved things to the auxiliaries we took things off the auxiliaries _____________

DP: In that period when the state even changed its fiscal year in order to get three additional months in the same budget.

LNS: It was just a grim financial period and Porter, Porter was a pretty up period. Contracts gets renewed, accreditation becomes more, the university becomes stronger, would you agree with that or is that a faculty perception?
DP: Yeah I think so. Becomes, economic conditions are such that things are going well.

LNS: Gary Owen is

DP: Sugar Daddy is available for all the money that you possibly can squeeze out of the system it comes flowing our way. Yeah.

LNS: So he has his political periods. OK. And now, Porter after ten years leaves. We have a clean bill of health from our central accreditation. We have Doctorate for the first time at the university, we have several new buildings, we have the campus is fairly attractive, we have a very stable enrollment the biggest problem is we have more students than we have classes for. Those are not bad problems.

DP: Sure, my perception or one image I have of this whole process is that Porter I guess in adapting to the situation as he saw it. Was very much a numbers person. He focused on getting student enrollments and he focused on getting people in classrooms but he didn’t focus on some of the opportunity costs that that involved. He didn’t focus on, for example, he focused on one of things that I remember most importantly or most vividly about Porter period is the and it was not all prosperity as I recall during Porter’s times. Because typical in the State of Michigan these ups and downs and there was a bleeding of the Library budget whenever there’s priorities came along, seemed to me from the faculty perspective the Library budget got raided far more often than it should have. And there was a bleeding of maintenance budgets so we had all this physical plant that was falling apart. I remember in the late 70’s and the early 80’s being in classrooms at Pray-Harrold where the ceiling tiles fell down and when it rained, the water would drip down through the light fixtures onto the seats of students who were involved. But we had numbers. You know, there was this focus on students, bodies, but that tended to go with the expense of another number of other things to do.

LNS: Now Porter leaves we have the search process again, and a guy named S Shelton becomes president. Your take on the Shelton presidency?

DP: The same as in the first two. Sort of here we go again. It’s wired there’s a political fix in this guy’s position.

LNS: What was the political fix for Shelton?

DP: The strange political fix for Shelton, sort of the scuttle-butt was that this is the guy and he knows that a lot of people have contributed to his power. This is the guy who is the buddy of Roy Wilbanks and is going to get the job, because Wilbanks is the one who together with Gary Owen is sort of
the powers that be. So that’s the general perception. True or not, I won’t comment on. But that seems to be what happened. So then the other question is, the other issue is who is this guy, what’s he gonna do, why are they selecting him if it’s not politics, why are they selecting him, this guy because, I for example have very, very good friends who are on the faculty at Kent State and I’ve called them and said hey this guy’s a finalist. Who? Because at Kent he was never actually on campus he was out doing whatever it was that job _________. So there is this, at least on my part, this uneasy feeling that here we go again.

LNS: He spent his first Inauguration is met and he hasn’t even finished his Inaugural speech and there is a faculty demonstration outside of Welch Hall?

DP: Yeah.

LNS: Why?

DP: I don’t know. I wasn’t here. I was out of the country at that time. I don’t know what was.

LNS: No insight?

DP: No apparently it was something he did that impressed a lot of people to the point that they wanted to do this or must’ve been something in the interview process or something when he came and said I was not around at that time so I don’t know. I just know that it apparently made a great, lasting impression on him and his view of what faculty and the union are.

LNS: And here we have and a year later, he comes up with the learning university. What happened to that?

DP: He was the laughing stock from the view point of the faculty thought, my impression is the faculty thought what is this stupid guy doing? First of all the unfortunate name that he chose. The Learning University.

LNS: Which by the way is now the name that the League for Innovation has picked. That’s interesting.

DP: It’s interesting at the time.

LNS: So he was ahead of his time in some ways.

DP: Yeah. Among faculty, it made him sort of look like a lightweight, he didn’t know what else to do that this was the best he could come up with.
LNS: Was there more to it? Did that faculty feel that they weren't partners or is it a resentment other than the fact itself is like, I can't attack you, I'm going to attack what you are doing?

DP: Well, I don't know. Partly on the one hand there was this sense of how dare he presume that he as an outsider and he can come in and look around and he can determine what we need to do without asking.

LNS: We spent a whole year of going around.

DP: He spent a whole year going around but apparently that wasn't a very well, he didn't do a good job of coordinating it or something. There was this sense that there was this gathering information and taking it and he also spent a whole year going around on his, on his perception of who and what and where you should go and see, rather than using the traditional existing institutions.

LNS: He's still here and the learning university. Lots of the components are being implemented.

DP: Lots of the components are being implemented. I think there's a lot of positive that has come of it, I think, whether it was his fault or somebody else's fault, it got off to a very bad start and a whole bunch of circumstances that surrounded what happened. First of all his reaction to this demonstration, for whatever reason that demonstration occurred, I don't know but his reaction to that created an impression.

LNS: But you do know what occurred. You do know that it occurred. You knew the demonstration occurred.

DP: Yes I know it occurred.

LNS: Ok I don't want people listening to this tape 20 years from now thinking that I'm the one, that you weren't here. All you were saying.

DP: Right. I don't know what precipitated it but I know it occurred. Yes.

LNS: One of the things I look back over the presidencies. Each of them had their weaknesses and their strengths. Faculty's perceptions may not have always been accurate but certainly strong perceptions of all the presidents, Shelton is probably the most interested in having faculty support and doing more for the faculty and doing a lot for the faculty. My own feeling is there is a colossal misreading of this president. If the faculty had played it a different way they would have had the strongest ally probably since Charles McKenney if not even better then McKenney, the faculty growth and development. First thing he did is he separated out
personnel, he gave it back to the academic affairs division control totally but personnel for faculty. He put enormous amount of budget on the faculty side, put in millions of dollars for equipment, he did everything he could to stabilize, to reinvigorate the faculty side, the instructional side of the institution. But I sit here as a historian and as a participant, does the faculty see any of this?

DP: Yeah I guess you have to be a historian looking at hindsight. There’s obviously some accidental and serendipity kind of things going on.

LNS: It wasn’t serendipitous, it was certainly accidental. Cause things have been better.

DP: Ok they don’t end up being better. But there’s lots of misreadings I think going on here.

LNS: I don’t disagree. That’s what I was commenting on.

DP: On both sides I think of this. I think he, at least from what I hear and talking to the people who were involved in the union at that time. And I wasn’t, I was sort of out of it at that time, their reading is that he didn’t know how to deal with a faculty union and so therefore blundered into some things that he wouldn’t have had he known better how to interact.

LNS: There’s some who feel that the union somewhere along this time becomes professionalized and hires its own staff.

DP: It did that in the early 1970’s. Late 1970’s.

LNS: OK. It was the basically late 70’s, early 80’s.

DP: Right.

LNS: And there’s some people who feel that the union had too much to lose to the president’s support of the faculty that people is there any validity on that?

DP: In his early days, I think there was a perception from some faculty people that some of the things he was doing were attempting to undercut the union. Reporting of this, using the non-traditional part, not, going outside of the established institutions going around sort of doing end-run stuff.

LNS: So the union became threatened?

DP: Asking individual faculty to do certain things or groups. I don’t know if the union became threatened, I think the union as an institution became very
insulted by the fact that this guy was trying to ignore a well-established legal institution that had been around for a long time and he was treating it as if it were enrollment.

LNS: In hindsight, could one conclude that they misread him misreading his intentions created a lose/lose situation?

DP: Well I don't know because there were, the union misread or didn't misread, I can't say. As a result of the things that happened early in his tenure here, he sort of gave up on his attempt to communicate with the union and let it go through his divisions alone and academic and human resources that created that provost office and sort of said, I get the impression he said, OK I'll wash my hands of it, but you folks take care of it.

LNS: I don't want to be rebuffed anymore.

DP: I don't want to be rebuffed anymore. Or I don't want to get involved in these arguments anymore or whatever. I don't know.

LNS: I personally feel that this is a great tragedy for the Shelton administration. I honestly, I'm not saying this to corroborate, I'm telling you that this misreading of each other.

DP: You know what I think, this misreading, I think another great tragedy of the Shelton administration is the present company not to be included in this necessarily, but the fact

LNS: Is that because I'm interviewing you?

DP: No I would say that to you even if you weren't in this process. I think it's a great tragedy that we can sit here seven years after he's been president and there's no, there's one new executive high profile person that he's brought. Everybody else, he's playing with somebody else's team and I think that says a lot about management skills.

LNS: So you're saying that the person he brought in was?

DP: Juanita.

LNS: She was here when I came here. She was in my division.

DP: She was here so there's really nobody that he's brought in from outside at the Vice President or high-level Director's level.
LNS: Are you saying that there was no change in Academic Affairs, is that what you are saying?

DP: Academic Affairs, from my perspective, is the primary one, but also just in general. I think I would, I'm not involved in this and have no intention of ever being involved in terms of trying to be an administrator of that sort but I find it very difficult to figure how I'm going to run an organization my way if I don't have a team.

LNS: That could be that maybe he thought that the administration was honest. That could be that's an interesting observation. It doesn't really answer the other issue though is it was a tragic misreading.

DP: I don't think he recognized just how bad the communication situation was in Academic Affairs. I don't think he realized just how weak the issue of structure the faculty received was available.

LNS: With the Provost Office, is that what you're saying?

DP: Yes. Well with the Provost's Office and with the internal conflicts going on. The Provost in this direction, and then you had the academic human resources going off in its own way. Because you've got a person in charge of that who is sort of his own prima donna kind of person who's not going to listen to anybody else. And so you've got this conflict going on there and this guy up above, the president, doesn't have the interest in or doesn't have the knowledge of correcting, how to correct that kind of problem.

LNS: Or doesn't see it as a problem.

DP: Or doesn't see it as a problem.

LNS: How about the in terms of the Colleges evolution, Don Drummond dies, retires and passes away, Barry Fish becomes the with Art Levy who was Interim Dean for two years doesn't get it.

DP: Right.

LNS: What did that signal?

DP: Well

LNS: Did he have popular support?

DP: Yes. I was on the search committee that was to replace the Dean. Very well organized, very active search committee led by a lot of old hands
people including the search chair of the committee who was Scott, former Dean of Education.

Westerment.

DP: Westerment. Scott Westerment. And people like that who spent an awful lot of time interviewing folks and that committee made a recommendation to the Provost that Wheatley was the preferred candidate of the people’s search and then nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened. Nothing happened.

LNS: How did they interpret that?

DP: It greatly undermined any kind of authority that and credibility that Ron had as Provost. Because that was not related to one college, that search committee was from across the whole division of academic affairs. I think it was terribly damaging to him.

LNS: And they perceived Collins as being supportive of what he did but being unable to bring it off.

DP: No they perceived Collins as not being supportive of Wheatley not wanting Wheatley, not being unable and unwilling to say no. Cause I don’t know if you’re familiar with the evolution that in the midst there but he simply did nothing.

LNS: No fill me in on that.

DP: He was given a recommendation by the search committee saying this is our preference, we recommend this person very highly of the other finalists. None of them are really acceptable but there is one marginal in here and he said thank you very much and then he never said anything else. Six weeks goes by, two months goes by, nothing is coming from his office. Search committee, Westerment, persistently saying what’s up, what do you want us to do, or we can disband and ultimately he says, I’m gonna reopen the search. And the perception was he spent all that time trying to figure out how he could avoid having Art be the permanent Dean. That was the perception. Whereas, I’ve heard many people say if he had just said, thank you very much for your good, hard work I feel though I can’t effectively work with this person as Dean and so therefore I’m going to ask you to come back and give me somebody else. Reopen this process.

LNS: So just slip it away. Barry’s appointment?
DP: Yeah, Barry's appointment was the Interim was it? I don't remember if there was a full-blown search. I don't remember under what conditions that came along. As typical with all those things. Lots of high hopes for Barry and then people would say well the honeymoon's over. Sort of disappointments All in all I'd say Barry's had a lot of support within the college.

LNS: As you look back over the whole thirty years or so, faculty have changed a lot, in a sense, less involved on campus, a lot of people feel unadvised organization there's not a strong feel of involvement, partnering with the University, faculty. Are these fair criticisms?

DP: No I think there is a lot of faculty involvement in those kinds of things but one of the things that has happened since I came and it's inevitable, it happens everywhere is that the Bar gets raised on promotion and tenure and as that Bar has been raised not just here but all across the country people spend much more of their time in their office with their computer doing their research or focusing on their publications, focusing on their career, number one rather than looking forward looking broader to the students and involvement and I thinks that's an expected outcome. And what it creates is a lot of scholars who are working on their own projects but aren't necessarily identifying with their departments or their colleagues so much.

LNS: Sort of the expectations have shifted do you believe our faculty are pretty involved on campus? We started out with departmental vs. university. Is there any love for university in a faculty?

DP: No. Not among the ones I know. Particularly among the younger faculty. The younger faculty are interested in their own agenda.

LNS: Do you think this is a national phenomenon or an Eastern phenomenon? What would one do, what would one have done what are what are the options missed., or what are the things that one could conclude that would make a difference?

DP: I don't know. One of the options is lost when you become a commuter institution. And when you have all of these people and when you have students. Students aren't interested either. Not only faculty, but students aren't involved. When you've got students who are coming to class between their job schedules or between their hours of work you're missing out on an opportunity at that point of focusing on survival.

LNS: We have at least probably 2/3's of our students who are not really commuters who live in this area. But work is a thing that has really been underestimated and that's partly I would assume attributed to the fact that
financial aid has dried up as we used to know it as gifts and grants and now it's more and more work therefore people, instead of borrowing money, they go out to work, that's an interesting point. What when you are teaching are students better are they any different today than they were a few years ago? They are no longer involved in the university either as commuters.

Right. They're not involved in the university. They are...it's interesting. On the one hand the younger ones, the traditional students are just now beginning to show signs of coming out of the period where they were totally apathetic, where they didn't care about anything, they didn't know about the rest of the world. They simply were sort of treating the great mass, I'm talking about the lower level students, the freshmen, sophomores. The people we are trying to get to become the scholars and stick around for a period of time. And the ones that have been coming out of high school are just now coming out of a period where they didn't care about anything. The viewed coming to the university because their parents were insisting they go and they viewed it very much like high school something you had to do, they weren't intellectually curious it was rare to see them the big light go on in the lecture hall, in the kids minds and you say yes. There are more and more of those they're beginning to be more involved and interested in learning. But what saves us I think as an institution is that we've got this wonderful mix of all of these older, returning students who have a world view, who recognize the benefits of education and not specifically for training but for.

LNS: Using it as undergraduates. You teach a lot of them in the classroom?

DP: There's a nice healthy sprinkling of them not only introductory classes these days.

LNS: Twenty-five percent of our undergraduate enrollment are adult learners. And you've seen that? I think they come back with a healthy attitude.

DP: They do and they certainly enliven classes.

LNS: They answer questions, they read the material.

DP: They read material, they ask questions, they know what they know they can make connections. This you know the thrust in scholarship these days and it's all about and critical thinking.

LNS: It's not there is it?
DP: A lot of students, a lot of students haven't the foggiest notion how to interpret or apply. They just know how to solve a problem because they've memorized the function.

LNS: And so they haven't learned critical thinking?

DP: Yeah.

LNS: They go in rote.

DP: Exactly.

LNS: Which is something we perpetuate as an educational system too. Any other? What is the influence of technology in education? See some massive changes coming?

DP: Yes. We as at least I think we're catching up rapidly around here but we lost a lot of initial the initial benefits by sort of lagging behind in the technology. I think personally I think that's one of the shortcomings of President Shelton I don't think he was very, my perception is that he wasn't very impressed by the need for technological innovation in the beginning in the very first years, why does everybody need a computer. There's no reason the faculty ____________. So we're rapidly catching up.

LNS: Do you use the computer a lot in your assignments in Economics right now?

DP: Yes.

LNS: You can't really take the course if you don't know the computer or have access to one.

DP: Right.

DP: And the Worldwide Web the Internet structure you can't really successfully get through a course in economics these days if you don't know any of that stuff.

LNS: So the world has changed?

DP: The world has changed.

LNS: It's gonna change.
DP: Interestingly since classes have just started we're now just in the first week of classes, I'm reminded once again as I started maybe two or three years ago having to include in my syllabus a warning on the first day of class was to turn off all pagers and cell phones during class. I never imagined that I would have that problem. People having their phone ring in the middle of class and what was so appalling about it is that people would have their phone ring in the middle of class and they'd answer it.

LNS: And start talking?

LNS: Yeah. Oh that's funny. That is great.

DP: So now the standard procedure is...

LNS: Do you communicate with students on the internet?

DP: Oh yes.

LNS: So if I wanted to write you as a student over a classroom assignment.

DP: Oh yes.

LNS: Office hours? Do you still have office hours? People come in? Students are interested in coming in?

DP: Most of the time students are coming in. 80% of them are the people who are doing poorly in class and they come in at the beginning of the third quarter of the class the calendar. You never see them before that. But the ones, more and more the ones who are the good students are the ones who come in and _________ - these days.

LNS: Just wanted to talk about the program?

DP: Or ask a question or hey you were talking about this the other day or what do you think about this?

LNS: Individual contact with any students?

DP: I'm sorry?

LNS: Do you get to know some students individually?

DP: I do. Because interesting change in students the in the past few years. When I was a student when you were a student, maybe up through the mid-70's early 80's students liked to be left alone. In terms of selecting their program and study, they was written on the catalog and they were
adults, we assumed they were adults, they could read and they would do that. These days that's not true. Students need and want a lot of personal guidance handholding. We have all instituted advising these days. We didn't advise students for twenty years in my department.

LNS: That's right, now they can't understand a catalog.

DP: And so we now have mandatory advising and I'm the coordinator of the undergraduate advising program. So I see a hundred students a year. I have a lot of personal contact with them.

LNS: You talk about things other than advising. Some want to talk about personal problems and that kind of stuff?

DP: Occasionally.

LNS: Faculty worried about all of the concerns over sexual harassment being misunderstood as political correctness? Are those issues that faculty are concerned about?

DP: I think somewhat. I know those are issues that the faculty union is very concerned about. But, individual faculty I think somewhat but I don't know.

LNS: You don't draw the standards you are teaching your concerns you're still the same old Don Pearson was around in 1969?

DP: Yeah because I don't in terms of political correctness or the nature of the subject matter that I teach doesn't make itself to that. I don't know how I'd feel if I were teaching English and interpreting the writings of this or that homosexual or other author I don't know how I'd react. To my kids he doesn't make a difference.

LNS: All is said and done did you make the right career choice?

DP: Yes I think so.

LNS: Of all of the things that you do as a teacher, been at it for a long time, you've seen a lot of university, what gives you the most satisfaction about teaching? About being a faculty member I should say.

DP: The most satisfying thing for me I guess by being a faculty member is to see the students become scholars that is the kids who major in my department's programs who actually become scholars rather than simply students.
LNS: People who really want to go into the profession so to speak?

DP: Not necessarily want to go into the profession but who get it.

LNS: I see. And what turns you off the most?

DP: Both my colleagues and the people in the administration who I see as vivid examples of the Peter Principal and there are lots of my colleagues who are terribly annoying I think who shouldn't be doing what they're doing. Interestingly enough, I don't tell you this. I was actively involved with the union as you know for a long number of years and then I decided to hell with this I've got to have a life that is different from this and I took about six years where I wasn't involved with at all and then a couple of years ago sort of was persuaded to get marginally back into it again. But not in a very high profile level. Interestingly enough Larry, I go to the meetings and there are names of people who are currently involved with grievances and disputes in various parts of the university and it's the same names that were there six years ago. The same faculty names, the same departments, the same department heads and Deans who were there all that time ago are still in the same kind of conflicts. Actually it's disappointing. Very disappointing.

LNS: People don't move on and get along. Interesting. The more things change, the less they change. Any words for posterity?

DP: No.

LNS: If we had a time capsule and you put something in it other than yourself what would you put in it?

DP: That's one that I couldn't think of right now. Something related to the university, what would I put in it maybe? Maybe I'd put my original letter of appointment, which had my starting salary.

LNS: What was it?

DP: $10,000.

LNS: $10,000. That's pretty good in those days. Thank you very much for your time.

DP: It was fun, thank you.

LNS: Thank you.