

INTERVIEW WITH DR. CHARLES HENRY SUMMERSON

JANUARY 22, 2003

- Q. This is Reggie Brown and today is January 22, 2003. I'm in the University Archives. And I have the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Charles Henry Summerson, whose birth date is November 15, 1914. Dr. Summerson, it is a real pleasure to talk with you and to reminisce about university life, since you certainly have been an observer of the scene since 1943. Let's talk a little bit about your first visit to the campus in 1943.
- A. Well, I came as a member of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and I was doing essentially library research during the bad weather until spring broke in the mountains out west. I came here and was allowed to have keys to the Orton Library and set up a desk where I could work at night. I was given all kinds of privileges, and got acquainted with a number of the faculty at that time at the so-called bachelor's table at The Ohio State University Faculty Club. I met some very interesting and charming individuals, and some that were really faculty characters. One of the most charming was probably Ralph Fanning, who was noted on the faculty for his work in art and for the many paintings he left to the University. There were others also; the chairmen of several departments regularly sat at that table. I became quite widely acquainted with the faculty. Most of my effort was digging up past geological work in Ohio for a project that was centered in New Philadelphia. Thus, most of my time was spent in assembling a past record of research in Ohio geology. Most of the students were gone in those days

because of the war. Things were relatively quiet. The campus looked quite different. There was a “castle,” the armory at the High Street entrance to the University (where the Wexner Center is now) and the lawn of the quadrangle made me think more of a cow pasture. It had a series of foot paths going across it that are replaced now with the sidewalks. They didn’t do too much in the way of landscape care in those days. The University was working with a small budget and smaller yet manpower. But Orton Hall still looked like Orton Hall, except that it had a very dark façade from all the accumulation of soot, which was removed some years later. Those are my memories at the moment. The opportunity to meet the people at the Faculty Club was a very rewarding period in my life. I later came to campus as a regular member and continued my association with faculty at the Club all through my years here. In fact, down to the present day.

Q. So you joined the faculty of the Department of Geology in 1947?

A. Yes.

Q. And who was the Chair of the Department at that time?

A. When I came it was Edmund Spieker. In fact, he hired me and invited me to come. I might add one more comment about my first visit. At that time, President Bevis reigned and he made an effort to invite visitors to the campus, particularly those with various official purposes. I remember having dinner at the President’s home. Later, I was again invited to his place when there was a visitor I was invited to meet. So I became a little acquainted with him (Bevis), even in those days, which was quite a while ago.

Q. What kind of a person was he?

A. Well he was rather reserved, but quite friendly. He opened up to people and was quite hospitable. But I never had an opportunity to get to know him in terms of easy conversation. These were mostly formal events. He was a pleasant person who made one feel quite welcome. I never had any official business with Bevis that I recall. So I never had much contact with him beyond those first few visits to the campus.

Q. Certainly later on you had a lot of contact with the University Presidents.

A. I tried to stay out of trouble!

Q. We would be interested in hearing your thoughts about some of the other Presidents with whom you had contact over the years.

A. Well, in the immediate years after my arrival, the President at that time was Novice Fawcett; he tended to delegate most of his efforts. For physical things he went through men like the Vice President, Jake Taylor. But he had his fingers in all aspects of the running of the University. So there was some contact with him relative to obtaining cars for our field camp out west and problems of getting equipment and so on. We had to get new equipment for the field camp that was being established, and that was one of my first responsibilities. I also got to know Fawcett at the Bachelor's Table at the Faculty Club. He used to eat lunch regularly with us. So, we got fairly well acquainted there. He tended to be a fairly sober and rather quiet type of person, who didn't seem to let loose very easily. But he was pleasant enough, with the table conversation. I never had much in the way of dealing with him directly, except in the development of the

mapping and charting laboratory, the Geodetic Science Program that we developed.

Q. I believe it was Dr. Fawcett who was the center of a rather humorous situation, a story that you told me some time ago. Do you recall what I'm referring to?

A. Oh yes. We had a very lively young lady that regularly waited on our table at the Faculty Club. She would really return quips with the faculty, with ease. And one day, Fawcett had written out his check (you wrote your own checks in those days). He had written his out and she had served him what he had written. He claimed that it wasn't what he had ordered. So she said, "Oh yes it was," and wasn't ready to yield the point at all. But he was insistent that it wasn't what he had ordered. She went back and picked up his order blank, brought it to him, and showed him that she was correct. And she addressed him with the remark, "You haven't a leg to stand on, have you?" At that point, the table exploded.

Q. Oh the courage of youth. There were some other colorful figures who used to eat at the Bachelor's Table through the years.

A. The next most colorful figure I suppose you could say would have been Woody Hayes. He came in quite often. In the early days, I think one of the previous coaches Dr. Wilkes was still around, and then there were a variety of other characters, such as Maynard King in Ceramics. Then there was the Chairman of Mechanical Engineering, whose name doesn't come to mind right now. There were a group of people. Ralph Fanning (professor of Art History) was a regular member. They were all of the older faculty. They've all been gone now for quite a few years. There was one, of course, who maintained the characteristics of the

faculty by being somewhat eccentric: Olen Moore in Romance Languages. He had several habitual patterns that he followed very rigorously. One was always to eat lunch at a certain spot. And one day there was a young man who came into the dining room not knowing Moore's habitual location and sat down there. Moore came in with his paper under his arm and stood looking down upon him, with an obvious expression of irritation. Finally, the young fellow said, "Would you like to join me?" And Moore informed him that he was sitting in his chair. The young fellow finished his lunch as rapidly as possible and skedaddled.

Professor Moore was something of a character. When the radio was on and some people were listening but it was time for Fulton Lewis Jr.'s news report, he would come in and change stations saying only that it was time for Fulton Lewis, Jr; that settled that! He was also a regular chess player after lunch. There was one member of the faculty of Mechanical Engineering, who to the best of my knowledge, had one order that he ate regularly every day, an open-faced roast beef sandwich with potatoes and gravy. And on a good day he would have apple pie. His name was Sam Foltz. And over the years I don't think he ever varied the order. One of the faculty whose name was Charles Folk, was a specialist in water chemistry. He had a table that he regularly sat at in the northwest corner of the dining room; a large round table. He conducted it as the reigning patriarch.

People that came to sit at that table had to tell a story. And he delighted in being a raconteur himself, so the stories were always interesting. I had a soft spot in my heart for that man because one of his favorite stories was the account of Miller in the Testimony of the Rocks, written in the middle 1800's in Britain, in which was

recorded the arguments between the naturalists and theologians. At one point it was brought up that some of the fossils were fossil excrement. And the theologians were hard put to explain this as practices of the Creator, the standard explanation for fossils at that time. The naturalists felt they had the point in this argument. And this was one of Folk's favorite stories. Shortly before he stopped coming to campus he presented me with a copy of one of the early English books recording these events, which I still treasure now. There are a number of other folks, if I thought about it for a while, I could think of.

Q. You were a very good friend to Professors Keenan and Ludden. Tell us a little bit about them.

A. Well, Professor Keenan was a member of the Astronomy Department and probably became about as well recognized as any we've had. He was a bachelor and we became acquainted with him, both my wife and myself, before we had children. Professor Keenan was a very enthusiastic bridge player. And so before long we entered a bridge playing group with astronomers and others. He delighted in playing duplicate bridge, which was an involved, unnecessarily painful way of going back and re-living your mistakes! But, he delighted in doing this. And we enjoyed it until we became parents and had no more free time. In the course of the years, we became well acquainted with Phillip, and he became a member of the family, and spending many of his Sunday suppers with us. He was a very interesting person. He got along extremely well with the children, even when they were very small. And at Christmastime, the presents that the children liked most, it seemed, were the ones that Phillip picked out. We always felt that

was an incongruous talent for a bachelor to have, and so felt a little bit chagrined sometimes. He could pick them out better than we could. Over the years, he maintained the position of a member of the family and our youngest child is named for him. He achieved considerable fame in that he was the co-author of the MK star evolutionary system, which is still in vogue. It is unusual for anything to last 50 years in science. He had quite a reputation. He received a number of awards. There was a symposium in Toronto commemorating the existence or continued usage of their classification. The "M" was Morgan, a man in the Yerkes Observatory of the University of Chicago. Phillip was also a stamp collector, a hobby which we shared. In fact, the agreement between us was that whoever died first would get the collection of the other. And with it would go all the things that we accumulated over the years and never got rid of in buying up collections and so on. Keenan died a couple of years ago, and to this day, I'm faced with the problem of getting rid of all those excess stamps. Literally, they crowd my living room at home. So I'm still living with Phillip, whether his physical presence is there or not.

Q. Dr. Ludden (Chairman of Art History).

A. Well, Frank I'd known for a number of years. I perhaps got acquainted with him originally meeting him at the Faculty Club. But when it came time to renovate Orton Hall, one of the problems was the art collection that's there in the library. So, we got him to take advantage of this by closing the library down and so on, to clean the art up and take care of any repairs. Also any restoration that needed to be made of the paintings due to time and accidents. Frank was the person I turned

to for technical advice. And so I got pretty well acquainted with him; that acquaintance lasted for the rest of his life. Frank was the one I turned to for evaluation of paintings, the paintings that we had to have repaired and so on. This ended up as a very pleasant and a very interesting association over the years. However, I failed him in one respect. A few years ago, I found a copy of “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” six volumes. He was immediately interested. I told him I had picked it up as a nice bargain. It was an excellent printing. He said he’d give me a dollar more than I paid for it. Well, I didn’t really want the profit right at the moment, so I told him I’d let him have it as soon as I finished reading it. And unfortunately, I still haven’t read it all and Frank’s no longer with us. So I’m not sure what I should do. My conscience bothers me a little bit about that.

Q. Did Dr. Ludden ever express his views about the ...

A. He used to express his views about everything.

Q. He was very open. What were his thoughts about the Wexner Center and the exhibits that have been there over the years?

A. Well, he pointed out some of the weaknesses in the architectural features of the building and he was quite correct. He recognized there were going to be problems of maintenance almost before it was finished. But I don’t think he had too much direct effect in the final say of things. I think he had retired by then. I hesitate to try and remember any of his quotes because my memory isn’t that good. I don’t think I ought to try and put words in his mouth. I don’t remember.

Q. He was certainly from a different era. I was going to say I bet he was quite vocal about some of the exhibits they've had there that are avante garde, but they're pretentious. Well I shouldn't be giving my ...

A. He was pretty Catholic in his overall view of art and so on. Although he was interested specifically in the Renaissance and the history of architecture, he was surprisingly knowledgeable about almost any direction that you go in art. We used to test him regularly. But I think the general direction and make-up of the Center was a little different from his general interest.

Q. Were you acquainted with Dr. Irvin Fry (Professor of Art)?

A. Yes, I knew Hoyt Sherman (Professor of Art) better I guess, but I had known Fry, again through eating at the Faculty Club.

Q. He had a studio behind Hayes Hall when I was in school.

A. Yes.

Q. And Fry created the statue of William Oxley Thompson that stands in front of the main library.

A. Well he tended to go for tall statues with flowing lower bodies. I think that was a quirk that he put in there; he developed it in many statues. In his words that I know of, many of them have that characteristic, although Thompson's statue is a little more realistic, probably. I don't really know much about Fry or know his work as intimately as I did some of the others.

Q. We will talk about the evolution of the Department of Geology later on, but I wanted to have you discuss your participation in other activities on campus. For

instance, geodetic science and the creation of that department, and mapping, and the history of science. You were involved with those.

A. Well in the first years that I came I was deeply involved in helping get our field camp in Utah started. In fact, I arrived in June of '47 and left three days later for Utah.

Q. Wow, you didn't stay long, did you?

A. For the next three years I went out in the field every summer right after classes finished. In the meantime I sort of got interested and involved in the mapping and charting laboratory. I also made the acquaintance of a man named George Harding in the civil engineering department, who had ambitions to set up a laboratory for this type of training. It was particularly appropriate because, as we were able to look ahead, we were going to need a new kind of mapping for satellites, ballistic missiles and things of that sort. Those required a type of mapping that had not been developed in the past. And Harding set it up because he had connections with the military and the Air Force. He set up a program of research involving military contracts, which allowed him to bring to the campus a number of Europeans specializing in the fields of geodesy and photogrammetry. This gave support to the development of an educational program. They started in the early fifties, '51 or '52. I was involved in the fashioning of the curriculum for this field. Members of the lab and those doing work with them all sat down and worked out an initial curriculum that they felt would be needed. The only trouble was that it would take between 13 and 17 years to complete it. So we had to whittle that down. When the whittling was finished, we had a somewhat idealized

program. It was my task to go around and sell this to the various faculty members of departments (civil engineering, geography, math, astronomy, etc.) who had a vested interest in these fields. The overall field was jumping from one area to another and included things in which there had been programs in the past, that would give them some interest, notably civil engineering who had courses in geodesy on their books that they hadn't taught for a number of years. Higher surveying or geodesy was known in some areas of the world, but it was virtually a dead duck in ordinary engineering training. So, this meant reviving it and we had to convince the people that we were not usurping their boundaries and so on. This was a real lesson, but it also was a chance to get acquainted with a number of folks across the campus. And Al Hynic in Astronomy worked with me closely on that. We finally got the curriculum designed and negotiated with the various departments. Then, I had to write a report for the dean, which probably involved as much theoretical prevarication as I have ever entered into in my life.

Q. Shame on you.

A. But we had to set up this curriculum and then make estimates of how many students were going to take it. Well, we had never had such a thing before. And so I had to convince students right and left and I wrote this all up and invented the numbers and so on. I got us through all the red tape involved in getting it approved. Then, they hired a photogrammatist by the name of Fred Doyle, who wasn't able to get to campus right at the beginning of the quarter. Of all the people it fell upon me to teach his course during the beginning weeks. Well, I

used up my knowledge of geometry in about one week. Fortunately he came in that weekend and my reputation was saved.

Q. Was Guy Harold Smith involved in this (Chair of Geography)?

A. Guy Harold was chair of one of the departments that was involved because they taught courses in cartography. But Guy Harold's cartography interests were primarily those of cartographic drawing; physiographic diagramming was his particular forte. They didn't do much in the way of cartography in the sense of mathematics for projections and so on. So, it was a matter of getting his cooperation, and I got fairly well acquainted with Guy Harold as a result. We got along very well. The courses in cartography that were needed in the Institute were essentially those that were related to space, ballistics problems and the vision of space vehicles, which was talked about at that time, as though we were readers of Flash Gordon or some far out science fiction. (It was hard to believe sometimes. What was implied in what we were trying to do at school during the day, I sometimes made one wonder if my night-time dreaming was taking place in the day time and really was hitting me at night.) Guy Harold did cooperate on the cartography aspect. The three main fields identified were geodesy, photogrammatry and cartography. As I said, the cartography was essentially a mathematical problem involving orbital mechanics and so on. We were really a mixture of cartography and astronomy. And these areas would ultimately be involved with the planning of the paths of satellites and missiles. Along with that was the study of the gravity field of the earth. For a while the largest amount of research in gravity was going on here at Ohio State, because they were gradually

accumulating patterns of gravity anomalies over the area of the earth. Those patterns would construct the model that would influence the paths of these various vehicles.

Q. Wasn't the Department of Geodetic Science the first in the U.S. in a university?

A. It was unique in that no one had brought these together in such an organized field before in any formal fashion. Bits and pieces of them were present on many campuses, but this was a new endeavor and this was the brain child of Professor Harding. He had wanted to bring together the many aspects of the problems in measurement of the earth. For a time it was very popular; many of the students from military and/or government organizations were involved in various aspects of these fields.

Q. You were also involved in the development of the history of science at the University. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

A. That was essentially a hobby. I had always been interested in reading it. A number of our faculty were interested in the history of Geology and so I didn't try to do anything with that. But Phillip Keenan and I were particularly interested in the history of Science. We used to be regular attendees in the basement of the Faculty Club for a cup of coffee in the morning at 10:00 and discuss it. Another person interested was Al Kuhn, who later became Provost, who was at the home of a professor of English, and whose interest was inspired as a result of a reading old English poetry in which there would be so many allusions to the science that was going on at the time. He became interested in understanding the references in the literature, going back and seeing what these references alluded to. Frank

Pagues in the History Department was also interested in it. We set about trying to interest people in formally entering into the History of Science on the faculty and gradually got some appointments made for faculty members in this field. W (Pagues, Keenan, Kuhn, & Summerson) became an ad hoc committee for the library, recommending materials for the History of Science subjects. Money was set aside in the graduate school for this purpose over a number of years to build up the collection. For a while we had a History of Science club among faculty members who were interested in it, but other duties overwhelmed them after a while, and the club sort of disappeared.

Q. Was it during that period that you became acquainted with Earl Manchester?

A. No, I became acquainted with him when I first came to campus.

Q. He was Director of Libraries.

A. There are two or three unwritten laws in life. One is when you go to a camp you make friends with the cook. It's survival that you have to keep in mind. Another is when you go to a campus you make friends with the librarian. (Even this one.) Early on I was given the chore of being Chairman of the Library Committee. The library had had some very eminent directors beforehand. George White, who later became Chairman of the Geology Department at Illinois was one. And John Wells, who went to Cornell. But at that time, in carrying on some of the library business, I became acquainted with Earl Manchester, who was Director of Libraries. He was sort of the last of the real bibliophiles. He was much more interested in books than he was in where to put them. He'd put them anywhere and everywhere. He had books stashed all over this campus. He was a pack rat

with books. And only he could remember where they had been stored in temporary storage. The running of the library in terms of administration and so on was done by his secretary, whose name escapes me now.

Q. Miss Buxton?

A. Miss Buxton, yes. That's right.

Q. The secretary who ran the library.

A. She ran it. She ran the physical side, bookkeeping and things like that, as near as one could tell.

Q. And then you were also acquainted with the rare books librarian?

A. Well, in those days, rare books was a rather loosely applied designation. It also included books that had somewhat erotic illustrations that would tend to disappear if they were left on the open shelf, and books that were older than so many years, and books that were just hard to come by. The rare books library was this collection of various kinds of problem books in a cage behind the office of the acquisitions librarian. Its present collection is considerably enlarged and much more formalized than it was in those days.

Q. And John Stevens was the rare books librarian?

A. John Stevens was the acquisitions librarian at that time and he acted also as the rare books librarian. Some things have changed on campus.

Q. We've had a lot of changes, haven't we? Would you like to comment about the University environment? It's been almost 60 years that you've observed the changes. Do you have some comments or feelings about this?

A. It's interesting. It has changed but the core still seems the same. I'm still in the same building. I haven't gotten anywhere, I guess. So much of it that I view is very permanent. But, some things have been modernized. In the case of the "castle" armory, the Armory has been rebuilt completely (into the Wexner Center). But the overall impression is still pretty much the same. It's gotten tremendously larger. The building program right now, as I understand it, is probably pushing about a half a billion dollars. Every time there's a new disease or a new organ found, they build a new building for it. They've got a long list to go down though. The available space is going to be used up pretty rapidly. When they aren't building buildings for organs; they're building them for sports.

Q. There's a lot of building going on. I know that you have expressed an opinion about the closing of the Oval (to cars). That happened some years ago when I was in school here, the Oval was completely accessible. And during May week, we'd have things like bed races. It was wonderful. And you know, there would be the queen and king and their court and that kind of things. It was really a very festive thing. And then the University decided to build malls and to close off certain areas.

A. There were certain things that they weighted in that. One, they wanted to get rid of through traffic. It was too much of a danger. We were getting too crowded and the parking problems were increasing almost as fast as the enrollment went up. And so that was the main thought in trying to control that. I suspect in the long run, looking back on it, it was probably a fairly smart decision. While it changed one's patterns and so on because you had to go around it certainly

controlled the traffic and limited it in some fashion, where things were most heavy. Of course they also put walkways in the cow paths that were originally there.

Q. That has to be an improvement, right? Well let's talk about your long involvement with the Department of Geology. And of course now it's called the Department of Geological Sciences. There was a merger some years ago of the Department of Mineralogy and the Department of Geology. Do you recall?

A. Well, Mineralogy had an unusual history in that it was started out by a man who did a great deal of commercial applied mineralogy. As a result the department ended up being more heavily involved in fields like ceramics and engineering. For a long time they divided their efforts in training, teaching mineralogy for the science of geology, and for the other areas in ceramics and so on. After his demise, the interest in the Department swung more toward the geological area. Finally, because of the changes in the Engineering curriculum, there was less and less need for mineralogy as a separate subject. So, the Mineralogy Department voted to approach Geology to join up with them. That was done at their instigation, although Geology was happy to have them aboard. It was their own feeling that they were best equipped for that purpose, and that demands for their specialty were more in the Geology Department than they were in Engineering. They thought that was their best opportunity for the future. So that came about intelligently and was not imposed by anyone.

Q. By mutual agreement.

- A. Yes, and it was a much healthier arrangement than for an administrator or somebody else deciding to switch them.
- Q. I recall a very colorful professor of Mineralogy, Duncan McConnell. He was one of my favorite people. Do you have any recollections of him? Dr. McConnell was known for his very feisty nature and his opinions on various things.
- A. Dr. McConnell had a very picturesque record I'd guess you'd probably call it. I first became acquainted with him by reputation, not knowing the man, when I was working in the west before being at OSU. The Soil Conservation Service had a problem come up in the formation of an effervescent salt that occurred in the soils in the areas where they were doing reclamation projects. McConnell was the mineralogist associated with the reclamation service at that time. He found this and wrote reports of it and sent it to Washington to be analyzed. In his early professional days as a mineralogist with the Reclamation Service at the Department of Agriculture, he had started what turned into a controversy of studying and of trying to identify this mineral. Unfortunately, in this area it was very dry. The salts would solidify from the soil. But when that sample went into Washington where it was very humid the salt disappeared. And so there was a considerable problem trying to make sense out of what he was talking about. McConnell, being McConnell, did not accept criticism lightly nor give up a controversy. The upshot of this controversy was over an inch and a half file of correspondence back and forth between the Washington office and the field office, until they got to the point where the Director instructed that nothing more should be sent or written about on the subject of minerals. Well this was the man

that later became Chairman of the Mineralogy Department. He was actually a very prominent student of phosphate minerals and later developed a considerable research rapport with the College of Dentistry. He carried on cooperative research with them until his retirement. But, he had a personality that was one of the reasons they called faculty members eccentric.

Q. I thought he was quite colorful and I often mentioned to people about the mineral for which he was an expert. I thought that was rather funny in the College of Dentistry.

A. Well it's a well known mineral.

Q. You had a lot of involvement in the Department of Geological Sciences over the years. Your main course that you taught was sedimentology. Were there other courses that you taught besides sedimentology?

A. When I first came I taught mapping courses, surveying, map interpretation, and historical geology. And then also I shared stratigraphy with Professor Carman, because in those early days we had so many students, we'd have more than one section of the major courses. And then gradually I got more into graduate courses of sedimentation and stratigraphy. I taught a course on regional geology at one time involving national parks. I understand that they've revived a course of that nature. Any excuse to get out and travel! But I spent a good bit of time for a few years involved with the courses of mapping and charting areas. Geodetic science (S.G.). For the first five years of their existence, I was the advisor for the G.S. students. So I had to spend a fair amount of time involved with them.

Q. Tell me a little bit about the Department Chair. What kind of person was Dr. Carman?

A. Dr. Carman was an interesting contrast. Around the department or in the official view, he was very stiff, very proper. A no nonsense type of persona. When he went on a field trip, we got to see the individual. By the time you hit the city limits, his eyes would develop a twinkle and he would just sort of relax. And before you knew it, he was telling jokes, which people that knew him only around the department would not think possible. But the department members were apparently conservative and often reflected his own tendency to be very conservative. He could be a very, very charming person. He would talk some about his travels and experiences in the war when we were off together. He had been in the medical corp. in the war and he would let down considerably. In his later years, he had lost the sight of one eye and to ride with him was an experience that was only for the stout hearted or completely foolish. He tended to hit things on the one side of the car because that eye didn't see things.

Q. The passenger side or the driver side?

A. Actually both sides of the car invariably had dents and bumps and so on. We had an unspoken agreement that somebody would always invite Dr. Carman to go on a field conference instead of letting him drive. He loved to go into the field. That was his forte. He would always want to go out and see the rocks. Oftentimes I chauffeured him and thus got acquainted with him better than others. He was a very charming man and a very interesting one. But around the Department he was very, very stern. He wouldn't give in to the rigors of the class and the duty,

even as a guest. I remember the time we invited several students and faculty to our home for dinner after the famous snowball game (late 1950's OSU football game held in blizzard). Most people called up and said they couldn't make it, but two people showed up – Professor Carman and Lois Campbell. Lois Campbell was a graduate student who became a very close friend of both my wife and I and lived with us for a time as a graduate student (and oftentimes since). So there I was. I had gotten home from this game, got the car into the garage, in spite of all the hazards of getting around the stalled motor cars on the street. The street cars that ran by motor with a trolley. They would stall right and left up and down High Street. It was a hazard getting around all of these things in bad weather. I had the car in the garage and I felt so proud that I hadn't gotten stalled. But then, I was faced with the problem of getting these people home. So I had to get the car back out and I took Professor Carman home. Then, I took Lois to her apartment, where she informed me that she was halfway moved to another place and didn't have enough of her belongings moved to stay at either place. She wondered if I could take a load of them. So there we were in the middle of a snowstorm moving Ms. Campbell from one apartment to the other. I got that done and I got home and back into the garage. And I was one of the few people who could say that, after that big snow.

Q. I guess that was quite a snowstorm.

A. It was indeed.

Q. But that was Dr. Carman. He would not let a little thing like a blizzard keep him from his social obligations.

- A. That's amazing.
- Q. Dr. Spieker. What are your recollections of Dr. Spieker (Chair of Geology)?
- A. Dr. Spieker was a very enthusiastic person. He would never suffer a middle ground. He was always extremely white or extremely black. There was never any in between. His heart was in the west country in Utah in the high plateaus and particularly the Wasatch Plateau. He had worked out in that general region for a number of years doing work with the USGS. It was his idea of heaven as a profession. He wanted to carry that over and expose the students to that kind of enthusiasm and experience. He was the spirit behind the field course development in Utah. I went along as his assistant for the first few years and helped him develop it, because I had been doing mapping in the western country for a few years before that.
- Q. So that field camp has been a very popular part of the curriculum in the Department.
- A. Since his day, they have had a field camp. Before that, before World War II, it was in the Sequatchie Valley. It was a valley in eastern Tennessee. It was the same area as the famous evolution courtroom location: (the Scopes trial). The trial of the geologist on teaching evolution. They had a field camp in that area, but they had to give it up, of course, with the war (WWII). After the war, Ed wanted to get out west so the students could "see" geology, not covered with forest and people. So, he designed a field camp that was pretty rigorous at first. His idea was that the students would work in the field six days a week, from seven in the morning until six at night. Then, on Sundays, he would take them on

field trips in the adjoining areas to see the geology. Well, finally the students said, “Dr. Spieker, could you give us a half a day? We’ve got to have a chance to wash our socks.” Eventually, he began to realize that there had to be something else occasionally other than geology. But they were pretty rigorous in those days. It was a wonderful experience because even though mapping was becoming a less dominant part of geological work, it still was the best way to really teach the students, to understand the units with which they were working. Even today, though they may never map anything again, they’re reading about and working with these units and seeing how they are recorded, what the problems are, and what kind of compromises have to be made in trying to depict the variations in the rocks and to understand them. There’s no equivalent for the experiences in trying to map them. Later, one can understand what one’s read with much more meaning than if one had never had this experience. And the students, I think, began to appreciate that as well. Many of those speak very well of their early experiences as you see them mature in their own careers. So it was a sound concept. But, Spieker was perhaps a little bit overly enthusiastic. Once in a while we’d have students get lost and I’d say, “Well, let’s give them until I finish my supper and then I’ll go out and look for them.” The reasoning was simple: if they weren’t facing an extreme hazard, having that extra time would give them time to get to the road, and then I would have a much easier chance of finding them. So, I would wait and eat and then go out and drive around to where I thought they would be. That was my standard operating procedure for those lost in the evening.

Q. That's great.

A. We were very fortunate -- never had any serious accidents. Nobody was bitten by a rattlesnake.

Q. Yes, I understand there are a lot of snakes out there in the canyons.

A. Oh yeah, but they don't bother you if you leave them alone.

Q. That's good to know.

A. Our only hazard was, when we first went out, I insisted that we should have a Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever shot. And one year one of the boys turned out to have an extreme allergy to albumin, which was the basis of the shot. When he was given a shot, he went into a coma. That scared a number of people, including the health service people. So after that, I always found out whether anyone inquiring about being a student had any allergies, to prevent that happening in the future. That was the one really scary incident. We had a couple of boys get ill, temporarily, at the camp. But we had a young doctor who was very friendly with our group and went out of his way to help us, that was quite convenient.

Q. You have also been involved in the past with the Polar Studies program at the University. Tell us a little bit about what your experiences were.

A. Well one of our most active members on the faculty was Richard Goldthwait. Dick had developed this idea of having a Polar Institute, growing out from the geophysical year (1957?) that had emphasized this type of research in different parts of the world. Being interested in glaciology particularly, he wanted to set up a research unit. His was the concept of setting up the polar institute. And I had worked with him some, helped write the prospectus, put on the introductory

sheets for the proposals that went out of the Institute. At the time I was also doing some administrative work at the research foundation. So I was involved in some of the administration side of things as well as the issues in the other programs. It was Dick Goldthwait's program and his efforts that achieved the development of that unit, that organization.

Q. And the Polar Institute is going great nowadays.

A. Still is, it's doing very well.

Q. Marvelous. And did you go down to Antarctica?

A. I did one year because I had three students that wanted to do their dissertations down there. But already my back was freezing up with arthritis and I couldn't carry packs for very long!

Q. It's rugged down there, isn't it?

A. Oh, it's nice, beautiful.

Q. But I understand, at least in the past, that the scientists dined well. They flew in, flew to McMurdo Bay or the Sound.

A. In the group that I was working with the time I went down, one boy was Lebanese and he could cook Near Eastern dishes quite well. One boy was from Mississippi and he could cook some of the southern dishes. We had another boy who was a westerner, a professional guide and mountain climber, and he could cook Western dishes. And each of these had set aside their food requirements, so that our food supply was quite varied and it was easy enough to take care of foods when you got down there. You would just pile it in the corner of the hut and it was just the same as putting it in the freezer, because anything on the floor of the hut would

freeze. And we had, instead of, as in some field parties, a little half Jamesway hut that had been set up on a semi-permanent base. We worked out from there, so we had all this food piled in one corner. And it was quite rare because we had these varied cooks. I think in general the food got very tiresome down there with the repetition. So I immediately, when I came in, I made an offer. I said, "Fellows, I'm not much of a cook and I don't like to cook. But I'll do the dishes if you continue to do the cooking." And they grabbed that opportunity.

Q. They just signed on the dotted line.

A. My skill was as a dishwasher, which was not an easy task down there. You had to get your water by going out and sawing out a block of ice, and bringing it in to melt it. That was a small problem.

Q. I know that you have been so very much involved in the renovation of Orton Hall and Mendenhall Lab. I recall that you told me one time as a young man, you were not only interested in earth science but also architecture. You thought at one time maybe you might go into that field.

A. I was interested in it but I don't think I ever thought I was any good at it. When I graduated from high school, scholarships were very rare. And there was a -- what do you call the companies that sent you lessons at night -- correspondence school. There was a very well known correspondence school that offered a scholarship through the high school, and they gave it to me. And I said, "Well, yes, I'll take it." I signed up for a course in architectural drawing. So I actually had some formal training in architecture. And it had an appeal for me. But I never really thought of following it strictly. When I graduated from junior college, I had been

working as a stage manager for their dramatic group. I had probably raised the general sophistication of stage presentation a little bit, because the nuns at this Catholic junior college had arranged for me to go to a dramatic school on another scholarship and study stage design. Which again was fun to do while I was there, but I really hadn't contemplated that I would have it as a career. My interest had been in nature work and I settled on rocks, because you don't have to feed them; you don't have to clean up after them. All they do is gather dust and that never bothered me. Dust is not a problem if you don't disturb it. And so gradually my interest in geology became dominant. Once I started collecting rocks rather than snakes or bird nests and so on, my mother, I think, was somewhat relieved. The others usually had some problems that you had to contend with.

Q. But yours was a harmless pursuit. At least it didn't bite. I know that you have always had an interest in marble and your trips to Greece have always been ...

A. The interest there was inspired by the fact that I'd always had been interested in reading archeology back when they had articles in the Sunday Supplement in the old newspapers before World War II. And in the course of my carrying on with the graduate studies, a friend in the mineralogy faculty, Ernie Ehlers, and I decided to offer a seminars on Science in Archeology and we offered a couple of years of that. And in learning something about that, I got interested in the problem, the origin of artifactual marble. And that's when I started going to Greece to follow both interests. I had always had an interest in archeology and as I learned something about the problems they had, my background in geology made it possible for me to pick up the story of the provenance of artifactual

marble -- trying to identify the quarries from which it came. In that way I helped to identify whether a particular statue was an original or whether it was a copy. And it helped in determining the origin or the worker, the artist, who did the sculpture. And that resulted in an excuse to go to Greece.

Q. And you worked with the Geological Survey over there.

A. Yes.

Q. And I know, did you have an interest in Santorini and ...

A. Well anywhere in Greece is interesting.

Q. Yes.

A. It's a fascinating place. As you walk around in the cornfield, you find a cornice of a sculpture, a bit of marble lying in the middle of a cornfield.

Q. I think that would be so interesting. That would be neat. Well certainly your knowledge of stone came in handy. Certainly in the renovation of Mendenhall Lab.

A. Well they first ask me to do it in Orton Hall. And I didn't make enough mistakes. So they asked me to do it again!

Q. You did a wonderful job with Orton Hall.

A. There's a story there -- I don't think many were vying for the job.

Q. The Mendenhall is such a beautiful building. The stonework there is just wonderful.

A. Well, the University has a policy of trying to keep the buildings of the Oval the same from a standpoint of tradition. When I first tackled the job, I was trying to envision recovering floor space by making the ceiling levels of the interior lower.

And pick up enough to add a floor. But that would have involved some pretty difficult structural problems -- mainly in the interim between ripping out the present floors or the original floors and putting in new ones. The walls probably wouldn't stand up. We had to try to figure out ways of holding them up. And it would have been much more costly. When the professional architect was assigned to the job, he took my drawings and he just took the one new floor and changed it in shape and so on, and filled in the E-pattern of the back of the building with a long addition. He was able to make judgments I couldn't in fact there could be done with no more cost than the other idea. I had no knowledge of the cost of these things and couldn't make such a decision at all. But that all worked out very nicely.

Q. Yes, it surely did. And the Department recognized your efforts by naming the auditorium in Mendenhall Lab after you. And of course the Summerson Library Fund is in your honor. And you have received other University awards, haven't you?

A. Not that I know of.

Q. Yes, the Centennial Award. During the Centennial.

A. Service I think it was.

Q. Yes, distinguished service, yes.

A. I don't understand, something in this last newsletter I got, my name is on two funds. I don't know what the second one is at all. I have no idea what that's all about.

Q. Oh okay. You're being honored but you don't know why. We all know why, Dr. Summerson.

A. I don't know what I've done.

Q. One thing that we haven't touched on. And I'm just curious. You have been around the University for 60 years. I know that you have been able to go right to the top. We've always laughed about that and said that it is because you had something on everybody. What is your impression of the students through the years? Their little antics from the 40's on. The quality of the students and what not.

A. Most of them were boys that came in the early days of geology. There are more girls in geology now I think, proportionately. When I first came here, most of the students were veterans. And many of them were as old as I was, and some of them older. By and large they were an excellent bunch. You told them something to do and what had to be done and they set about doing it, with their varying skills, but there was never any question about not doing it. Gradually that population was gone and the younger, less dedicated group began to take its place. There was a general breakdown in the late 60's and early 70's of discipline, of self-discipline mainly. Many of the student simply didn't want to make commitments to things or submit to the discipline of going to class and so on. In the early days it was necessary to keep attendance records because you had to be able to say that such and such a person had been attending class regularly to get his veteran's benefits. And that was a discipline. But later on those disciplines were lost and the students lacking them reacted in the same fashion as

most young people when they lack discipline. They fly off in different directions. There wasn't the dedication for it, we'll say in terms of the average behavior, that had been true earlier. In all groups there's a percentage that will do well under any circumstances. But there's a middle group and the group of less motivated students that can get into trouble under conditions of that sort. It takes a while for them to accept the need for self-discipline. I think it's gradually come back some. But of course I haven't had any contact with students, other than an individual or two now and then, for the last twenty years. So I can't really say what current conditions are.

Q. Certainly the student population is more mature from an age standpoint. There are a lot of older students.

A. Well it's a mix now. But there were definitely older students in the post-war period. Those people you see would have anywhere from one to four years older delay of starting to college than they would have had previously. But I really can't say much about things now. I don't have the contact -- and that's an unusual event in itself -- professor doesn't say that, even if he doesn't know anything about it.

Q. Well I've never known you to be short on words. This has been most enjoyable and I want to thank you very much for your time. And best of luck in the future and I hope you get those stamps sorted.