Q. I’m William J. Studer, the Director of Libraries Emeritus here at Ohio State University. I’m about to interview Albert J. Kuhn, a long time faculty member and administrator at Ohio State, who came in 1954, and retired in 1988. Dr. Kuhn, you are a native of Illinois. You did your undergraduate work at the University of Illinois, receiving a B.A. in English in 1950. And received a Ph.D. in English from Johns Hopkins in 1954. You were appointed at OSU as instructor in the English Department in that same year. You also did two years in the military, serving with the Navy in the Pacific during 1944 to 1946. Please give us a brief sketch of your years before joining OSU and tell us what attracted you to Ohio State.

A. Well, I’m a farm boy from central Illinois. I went to a very small high school that graduated normally 20 students a year. I was a pretty good basketball player then. And we played only basketball, football having been canceled for war reasons. I went into the Navy at the end of my high school career. And therefore I was a beneficiary of the G.I. Bill, which was, I think, one of the most wonderful social programs of the 20th century. I think it is second only to the Land Grant Act or equal. I was reading recently the Geertz Memoirs, Clifford Geertz, wonderful sociologist. And his opening chapter is about the G.I. Bill and what it did for him. It turned out he came to Antioch before he went on to Harvard, and then a spectacular career in Anthropology. But that was a wonderful democratic
innovation, gave opportunity to people like myself who couldn’t have otherwise gone to college. I came from a poor family, although I might have worked my way in some way or another. Nevertheless, this was an enhancer and a facilitator and Geertz points out not only did it provide opportunities, it created certain enthusiasms in a generation of teachers. And I believe that is true of me as well.

Q. How many students at the University of Illinois during your time under the G.I. Bill?
A. They were virtually all, except for the women. My classes were all mainly male and most were older. And they had nothing to do with fraternities, nothing to do with going to football games. They were all above that. They were career oriented. And it wasn’t just in things. It was a sense of wanting to really do well, to be a professional in something. And I believe that that carried over as teachers. That influenced the generation of the students in the 60’s in the greening of America. I graduated from the University of Illinois. Illinois then had an old boy network with Johns Hopkins. It was a network that would call and say, “Hey, you got any good students that look right for us?” Or, Illinois would say, “Hey, you got a new young professor there. How about talking him into coming to Urbana?” And so Hopkins had sent a couple of faculty members to Illinois, Illinois in turn would then send some of its best students. And one of my teachers, Gwyn Evans, now well known editor of Shakespeare, said to me as I was graduating, “We’ll give you a scholarship here. But so will Johns Hopkins. And you ought to go to another university than this one, although we’d love to have you.” So I got a president’s scholarship to Johns Hopkins for four years and finished my Ph.D.
And I wanted to come back to the Big Ten because I’m an Illinois boy and parochial enough to know that I thought that I knew Midwesterners.

Q. What small town in Illinois were you?
A. Blue Mound. Population 800 or so.

Q. I see why the high school class was …
A. “Blue Mound” because actually the glaciers, 15 or 16,000 years ago left two great mounds of gravel out on the prairie which you could see for six or seven miles away. And there they were, frankly rather like soft breasts lying off in the distance. And that’s Blue Mound.

Q. Did Ohio State find you or did you find Ohio State?
A. The boy network. A Johns Hopkins Ph.D. was teaching here at the time, Roy Harvey Pearce. And he would come east every year before the job market conventions. And it was settled, like arranged marriages. And so he came back and told the chairman of the department here, “I think there’s a guy there that would be interested in us and I think we might be interested in him.” It worked. Whether it worked well or not, it happened. There was no “Hey, have you gone through all the affirmative action processes here? Did any females compete for that position?”

Q. There wouldn’t have been any statistically speaking.
A. Statistically, no. As a matter of fact, I believe that at Johns Hopkins there was only one female graduate student.

Q. Even in English.
A. Yes, it was a very small department. They took in only four or five new graduate students a year. My seminars were all four and five people.

Q. Was it standard then to be appointed as instructor versus assistant professor?

A. Yes, yes it was.

Q. When did that change?

A. Well it changed very shortly after. It changed in the early 60’s. By the time I had become chairman it had changed so that we had to hire at the assistant professor level. The instructor position was just relegated out of the ranking system. In 1954, instructors in the humanities were making $4,000 a year. In Engineering, I believe it was 4,400. Market value we hear a lot about now, although market was then less an issue than it now is.

Q. What was the focus of your teaching research over your many years as a faculty member?

A. Well, I did a Ph.D. on changing conceptions of mythology in England in the 18th and early 19th centuries. So it really spanned two different historical periods of literature - the 18th century, neo-classicism, and the early 19th century romanticism. I rather saw myself, I arrogated to myself, the competence in both and I was very competent in neither. But in any case, Johns Hopkins at that time had an interest in the notion of the history of ideas: how ideas change and how they’re received and further changed, and the relationship between history and literature, between the social and intellectual context of a work and how that work is modified or changed by ideas. Take for example, the idea of evolution, that didn’t come in until the late 1840’s and 50’s, but there were notions about how
this happened, how there was a kind of great chain of being. That emphasis at
Johns Hopkins on ideas made me equally interested in theology, mythology,
intellectual history, politics, and how they impacted upon literature. And my small
collection of books I think that you’ve seen reflect that interest of mine in
intellectual history.

Q. Are there one or two authors that you have focused on?
A. Yes. William Blake was one, a great mythological and a prophetic poet who was
wonderfully influential: who turned out to be one of the great prophets of our
1960’s and 1970’s. Blake was the prophet of the flower children and the
peaceniks. Blake was one of the most important writers for young radicals like
Allen Ginsberg. He was a Blakeian, wrote in a prophetic mode about the nature
of human life and beauty and truth. William Blake and Shelley I’ve written on.
The publications that made me a professor were published in the technical
journals of the time and were read by colleagues, by scholars in those fields, as
the Journal of History of Ideas, for example, or in the Publications of the Modern
Language Association. My promotions were on the basis of those publications.
Not many, but they were significant then, anyway.

Q. Did you aspire to become Chairman of the English Department?
A. No. No, I did not.

Q. Were you encouraged or drafted by your colleagues?
A. I was really quite surprised when I’d even heard that my name had been broached.
First of all, I was succeeding Robert Estrich, who had been chairman of the
department for 12 or 14 years. I now recognize that Bob Estrich belonged to a
generation of teacher-scholars-administrators that we no longer have. This was a group of people that came out of the 20’s and the 30’s and the 40’s; I was not only displacing a man, I was displacing a kind of tradition. This was when chairmen of departments were more important than deans. In this University in the 1950’s, the chairmen were the powerhouses. They ran the department like a college. And there was a good deal of power and autocracy simply because that was the way you did things. They were called chairmen but you know the difference between the chairman and the head. A head was less constrained according to the policies. He wasn’t primus inter pares. He was primus. Later the chairman was the primus inter pares when things became more democratized. Such were Bob Estrich and Warner Rice at Michigan. Who was at Indiana then? Gosh, I’ve forgotten the name now. Was it Barber?

Q. Jim ______?

A. It was, it was. He was one of those kinds of chairs that had enormous influence - well they were very good at what they did. They were the key level of administration. Deans didn’t count for much. Then you jumped on up in our University to the Academic Vice President. And we had really a first rate one in Fred Heimberger, who was for about 11 years the Academic Vice President of the University. I believe its very best. I’ll just say that flat out. He puts the rest of us in the shake.

Q. As I might have told you, he was interviewed much earlier before his demise for which we are grateful. How would you assess the evolutionary quality or just the quality of the English Department faculty, their teaching and research, their
productivity, as well as the overall program quality and the department’s national standing over your 34 years as a faculty member?

A. Well, professions change. And the status of a department changes more frequently than it knows or thinks it does - because every department is really competing against a modern department someplace. And so you’re never stable - I don’t care how great you were in the 20’s and 30’s - that doesn’t do you much good for the 90’s and the 2000’s. The reputations of a department within a university change a good deal. Departments wax and wane in terms of their influence within a university as well. So that’s kind of a hard question to answer. When I came to the department, English was a first rate department. And in my view, it’s gone down hill ever since. Except that that’s taking a narrow view about what departments do. But it was a very, very strong department. I knew when Bill Charvat died, for example, that we could not really replace him. We could bring somebody into that slot, but that would be a different kind of a strength. But this department was a very strong department in the 40’s and the 50’s. And the early 60’s. And then it began to, how shall I say, its image was diffused or diluted a bit in terms of its strength, simply because of what happened in the 60’s with all the new universities opening up. Of course, we were raided. Our good people had opportunities to go to the golden enterprise in California. Several good people would have added to our reputation had they stayed, Andy Wright, for example, and Howard Babb and Leonard Newmark. But when the California system opened up, then practically all the other states that didn’t have state universities got universities within the next ten years. What you did was to dilute the quality
of all departments, except a few like Harvard, Princeton, Yale - that’s an old story.

Q. A very interesting one.

A. It is. But as I said, in retrospect, I see the department at a peak, at a moment when our profession had a certain kind of integrity and wholeness. So comparisons are very hard to make. And departments have just changed a lot. If we lost some, we had great strength in American literature. We had great strength in the medieval periods. We had great strength in Renaissance. Those were areas then, but areas have changed in disciplinary ways. But if we lost some major people, we were able to build some new strengths and one of the things that I think that happened in the years I was chairman was that we built a new creative writing program.

Bob Canzoneri built a new and a flexible writing program because that was about the time that novelists moved into the University, short story writers, poets.

Before that, you had very, very few - John Crowe Ransom’s teaching at Kenyon, that kind of thing. It was more like the old days when Robert Frost would lecture at the University of Michigan or he would be poet in residence someplace. But in the late 50’s and the 60’s, the University started developing writing programs - for example, the one at Iowa, and the one by Wally Stegner in Stanford. Bob Canzoneri was one of Stegner’s students. So he built an analogous program here. That was one of the new strengths of the department. Another new strength was in rhetoric, with our hiring Edward Patrick Joseph Corbett from Creighton. Now here we had found a man somewhat in the backwater of colleges - well they’d be offended if … but it did seem a back water then, Nebraska did. But it was a
professional promotion for him. And I remember I even involved Dr. Fawcett in that search telling him. I’m bringing this man, we want him very much. I got him to see Armitage - the graduate dean. I took Ed Corbett to the top of the library, to the top of Thompson Tower, and we looked out the four windows at the whole world around us. And I think that Ed Corbett sort of felt like Adam at the end of “Paradise Lost.” The whole world is here before us, where to choose the way.

Q. Since you didn’t give a whole lot of though to becoming Department Chair, it sort of happened, what would you say about any agenda you might have developed as you did work your way into the departmental chair and what would you say your major accomplishments, many of which you just mentioned were maybe a particular appointment or you weren’t able to achieve?

A. One tends to think primarily in terms of losing people or people who didn’t stay, that kind of thing. But those were very good years in the profession. Those were boom years. We used to hire four and five new people very year, four and five new assistant professors. We’d go to MLA and we would interview 35 or 40 people to try to get about five people. Everybody was doing it. You had a sense then of really running hard to keep up. Competition was fierce and the young men - they were mainly men - although by this time some women had gotten into the graduate programs. But I remember interviewing young men from Yale who especially were arrogant about Columbus, Ohio. I remember one young man interrupting me as I was talking about something in Columbus and he said, “Would you close that window please?” This chap, all of 23 years old, brilliant you know, but his … But you had a sense of competing, you had a sense of what
are they doing at Indiana, what are they doing at Northwestern, what are they
doing at Chicago? The yardstick that I used was the quality of the Big Ten
departments. So that the demands put upon us were generated regionally, more
regionally than nationally. Let me put it that way.

Q. Okay. How would you assess the nature and quality of the OSU faculty in
general and the derivative quality of teaching and research over your long
association with the University and do you perceive significant changes there over
time? It’s a tough one to answer.

A. It is and one can reflect upon that. Ohio State in the 50’s had some key areas of
strength and everybody knew about those. But then it had some areas that nobody
knew anything about. And over time, it seems to me the institution has grown
stronger across the board. The programs it developed (I don’t know how many
hundreds there are now), have been consistent. Again, in my association with the
University I can’t ever remember the time when the University hasn’t been
concerned about where it ranked nationally. My sense is that where’s it’s ranked
nationally is about where its libraries ranked. I think those two figures are
correlative. To be honest, it really didn’t bother Harold or me that we were
somewhere down among the top 20 or 25 major universities. We thought that was
pretty much an honor and that what we wanted to do was to maintain its strength
and to affect quality across the board, rather than picking out a single place. Of
course you do have to make priorities. You just can’t say that we’re going to do it
for everybody. But it’s important to keep a sense of a whole university; you’ve
got to have a sense that everybody participates, and you’ve got to sense that some aren’t participating and some aren’t worth nurturing. You pay for that.

Q. You said on one occasion that you went into teaching for some of the same reasons that clerics go into their vocation. That is, it was a calling. Did many of your OSU contemporaries share that missionary zeal and do many present day OSU faculty share or reflect that same motivation?

A. I think all good faculty, all good administrators, really good people have a sense of vocation and a sense of calling. But I think that the people, again to come back - not to overdo the G.I. Bill - I think that the people who were of that generation had a special sense of urgency. And maybe in the long run somebody will do an in-depth study of that. A sense of vocation is key to having effective teachers, the key to having an effective university. One of the things that one hears frequently about institutions today is there isn’t the same kind of sense of vocation to the whole University or to a sense of an institution. That has become more partial, more specialized. And that may be the big change. But then when I think about the 50’s and 60’s now, that’s nearly 50 years ago - not really a long time when you come to think about it. Our whole educational system isn’t that old either.

Q. The Ph.D. system originated only in the 19th century.

A. Well, Johns Hopkins was one of the first places where it developed.

Q. In the December, 1981 Alumni Magazine, you discussed the pros and cons of tenure. Did you observe that there is unfortunately a small cadre of disgruntled, unproductive and ineffective faculty who should not have been tenured and therefore really had job security. And you go to say that if OSU had done
anything wrong over the past decade, meaning I believe the 70’s in particular, it had failed to hire the best and brightest faculty. Is that a fair assessment of your reflection today and what do you think of these issues over the past 20 years?

A. Well, that was in 1981, when the graying of America, not the greening of American faculty was in the news. I remember being called by the Wall Street Journal relative to that. And that we had tenured ourselves in as it were and now had very few choices. One of the things I worked hard at when I was Provost at the University was the whole tenure and promotion process itself. First of all, to rationalize it – to make sure that there was a process that people understood and that the process was fairly and rigorously instituted. So that the colleagues chosen was not a matter of cronyism. It wasn’t a matter of the old boy network or buddyism, but of professional rigor and choice. This was one of the things that I tried to instill. It made me seem at the time to be some kind of a purist and a rigorist, but I really don’t believe I was. I was actually looking at the realities. I’ll give you an instance. When I first began as Provost, one dean submitted something like 11 promotions, all approved with the most generalized kinds of evaluation. “Joe said this fellow is okay,” so the Dean says I’m recommending him for promotion.

Q. So a very high percentage of faculty in the college?

A. Yes. So I turned down the College’s whole list of promotions. I did it in part to make a little noise, and of course I was called right over to a faculty meeting. So I said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve never seen such a lousy evaluation process. Absolutely sloppy. It’s an old boy kind of thing.” And so I rejected these. And I
got one or two claps, somebody said, “Yea.” But the colleges did begin getting new processes and that carried around the University. So, putting rigor and rationality into the process was one of the chief things I worked at for several years. When I first came into the office of academic affairs, I couldn’t have told you who was tenured and who wasn’t across the University - in all the departments.

Q. No general data base?

A. No general data base. Or it was a data base that was not reliable. So, this was certainly making evaluation a qualitative part of the University. It worked well when you had strong chairmen, who with their own committees could make the process work better. One thing the Office of Academic Affairs did achieve in my time was to regularize procedures across the University, so that if somebody did appeal a decision, there was some way in which you could address that appeal. When people would say, “I’ve been unfairly held at this rank,” I could look into the process and say, “Well, you have been fairly judged according to the process.”

Q. So it really worked to the benefit of not only the institution but to the individual, if the individual had been unfairly judged.

A. Right. And some had been unfairly judged. And I came down on their side. I’m pleased about my reputation in my years as Provost for a sense of fairness that I brought to the position – across the whole University.

Q. It’s a major issue at Ohio State. We’re just about at the end of this tape. Why don’t we take a break?

A. All right.
Q. Well you have observed on several occasions that OSU had the brightest students in the 60’s that you had seen in your entire career. Energetic students, eager to learn, eager to be challenged. What do you think accounted for these golden years of student quality and how would you contrast the nature and quality of students who have come after this period?

A. I was a member of the Woodrow Wilson interview committee for this region - Region 8, which is Michigan and Ohio, and we used to interview the brightest students from all the colleges, private as well as the public colleges. The Woodrow Wilson fellowship, if you will remember, was a four year free ride from BA to Ph.D. and it was intended to pick out prospective, bright teachers. It was a wonderful program. We used to interview students from Antioch and Oberlin and Kenyon and from Ohio State and from Michigan. And I did that with Dick Armitage for five or six years in the 60’s. It was a wonderful program, students from the arts and sciences, in physics, they were English majors, or art majors, or political science majors, history majors. What was impressive about them was their idealism. This was the part of the greening of America that we spoke of the kind of golden years of idealism in America, when the world had a beautiful horizon to look upon. Students were like that; I remember the equivalent of those from the 60’s here. They were questioning, challenging, they believed. They believed in old fashioned humanitarianism, that things are possible and things are changeable. And it can be done through teaching and learning. Their faith in teaching and learning was wonderful.

Q. Are you speaking of both graduate and undergraduate level?
A. I’m speaking of the undergraduate looking toward a graduate career. These people knew they were going to graduate school. All wanted to be teachers of one kind or another. We talked a moment go about those teachers and people who had benefited from the G.I. Bill, who brought the same sense of belief to the democratic enterprise. Many of these students we would call them radicals but were no less firm believers in the democratic enterprise. It’s a wonderful Americanism.

Q. Do you see that kind of student today?

A. There are some without question. These are the ones that tend to have two or three majors and to work to relate learning to actual practice. It’s the equivalent of the old Peace Corp. But they were, let me put it this way, opposite of me-too-ism. Exact opposite of that. That was again where the sense of vocation came in. There is an enterprise larger than one’s self. And so these people were fun to teach. They were argumentative. They were very Blakeian. They would say, “I think that’s nonsense.”

Q. Many of these students would be tending toward the end of their professional careers, wouldn’t they?

A. Yes, they would. Those were very good years and I remember any number of names of students who are now in University Administration somewhere or doing something at the University who fit that category.

Q. It must be gratifying.

A. It is gratifying.
Q. The Board of Trustees adopted Speakers Rules, which was in effect during the
50’s into the mid-60’s, whereby it was necessary to obtain presidential clearance
before any outsiders could make an address or presentation on campus. What was
the genesis and rationale for this rule and how difficult was it to live with? How
controversial was it? And what led to it being rescinded? And last but not least,
were you personally involved?

A. The Speakers Rule was a spin-off of the excessive chauvinism of the 1950’s. It
was a product of the Cold War.

Q. Anything to do with McCarthyism?

A. It was directly related to that. It was a direct result of the McCarthy hearings,
which in itself was part of the Cold War, what I would call Jingloism or
Chauvinism. There’s a little of that in the air today frankly, a kind of excessive
reaction to, a visceral reaction to enemies. And it’s understandable but I think it’s
a kind of excessive flag waving. People say, “How can there be excessive flag
waving?” Well, when you are blind to the principle of why you are waving the
flag, that is excessive. So the Speakers Rule was. Remember now, the Board of
Trustees was made up of people like John Bricker, who were enormously loyal
Americans of course. But “American” in the excessive sense that you can be
loyal to it only if you sign a loyalty oath. You’ve probably read “Catch 22,”
where there is a wonderful spoof on loyalty oaths. There’s a Major who outdoes
everybody by having his company sign loyalty oaths. You sign a loyalty oath that
you’ve signed a loyalty oath. It was a spoof upon this. We had them here, a little
yellow card, and I’ve always wondered what ever happened to those. As
Chairman of the Department, I had to collect them and pass them on to the administration. And I hoped somebody over there threw them into an incinerator. But my guess is that they are somewhere around on a tape. They’re probably here in the archives.

Q. At least examples of them.

A. Well, probably. But it was an excessive reaction against subversion, the subversion specifically that McCarthyism brought out. But in the larger sense it was “Don’t challenge the flag,” what I think about the flag. How could anybody defend a Speakers Rule in which there wasn’t freedom of speech on a University campus? But that’s what we had. There was a big deal at the time that involved the English Department and some graduate students, inviting somebody who couldn’t speak on campus. So this person spoke in his backyard, and that person paid for that for the rest of his life. He was fired from a small college because he had been discovered to have broken the OSU rule and allowed somebody to speak that wasn’t allowed on campus. A terrible sort of vindictive witch hunting.

Q. When the rule was rescinded, was there a total mind shift? A philosophical shift?

A. No. There never is on such matters. You just finally see that maybe it’s not worth the effort to defend this. And Ohio State got into big trouble on this Speakers Rule. We were put on probation by the National AAUP then. Our Board of Trustees was censured, not the University. Fred Heimberger, bless his heart, worked very hard trying to get our University off censure the last two or three years he was Academic Vice President. He wrote eloquent letters about what freedom of speech is and about how Ohio State stood for that.
Q. So the Board did officially rescind it?

A. The Board did but by this time it was a matter that you yawned over. And that’s generally how rages die. With a yawn.

Q. You were Department Chair during the height of student unrest related to the Vietnam era in the later 60’s and culminating in the volatile student demonstrations in the spring of 1970, when the University was closed from May 6 to 18. OSU, fortunately, avoided the tragedy of Kent State. What is your view of this period, the causal factors and how well the University dealt with it all. And should OSU be credited with taking overt action to avoid what happened at Kent State or was this more a matter of circumstance or good fortune?

A. I think it was just good luck, Bill. So much of this got out of the University’s hands very quickly, and it suddenly became a state battle for the governor, where he and the National Guard took over. The University had to bear with however the National Guard comported itself. It came very close, closer than any of us know to the Kent State violence here.

Q. Was the Guard invited on to campus or did the Governor sent them?

A. Actually, the Governor sent them, although there was never a confrontation. I don’t think President Fawcett ever said to the governor, “You can’t do that.” By this time things had gotten so serious and once they were here, then they become a problem themselves about how they comport themselves and all. There was provocation, I saw some of it myself, there was some provocation of the troops by the students. Some weren’t students of course. They were people off High Street who were sometimes vagrants and wanted excitement. I think that we were just
lucky. People who lived through it remember it. It makes one physically ill. It’s like the image of the planes crashing into the Trade Towers.

Q. You served on a Faculty Advisory Committee which met intensively during that period with the purpose of getting meaningful discussions underway and to restore calm to the campus. In retrospect, was the Committee and the University successful? Did you personally talk with student leaders of the period and can you tell us something of the activist-students’ frame of mind?

A. I sat on a committee. The Faculty Committee on the David Green case. Do you remember hearing about the David Green case?

Q. I know he was one of the students arrested.

A. Not a student, a faculty member. He was an Assistant Professor in History; I believe he was Stanford trained. He was a young liberal who burnt his draft card in his classroom before his students, as an act of defiance to the climate of opinion then. An element of the campus radicalism here. Minorities were not given programs, they protested. David Green, among other things, promised to give money in support of a black organization, to buy guns for that organization. Radicalism got mixed up with terrorism. He was fired.

Q. He was untenured?

A. He was untenured. I was one of the Appeal Committees that listened to all that. I was a member also of the President’s Advisory Committee to the Board of Trustees. Was the Committee effective? Not very. But then most committees are hardly dramatic in anything. Getting meaningful discussions where passions ran high was enormously difficult, especially with angry black students. First of all,
you had to try to soothe the anger so you could get to the issues. And when you
got to the issues, then you had to say, “Well, that’s an over simplification.
Nobody can do that. Even Nov Fawcett can’t do that. The students had a sense,
“Well you’re a Chairman, you’re a Dean, you’re a President. Why the hell can’t
you do that?” One can’t. It’s physically impossible that such a problem be
solved by a single person. I remember the enormous sense of frustration, and I
remember too feeling that if democratic institutions can’t resolve matters like this,
we’re in deep trouble. We had a real crisis on campus.

Q. What’s your estimate of the number of totality of students at Ohio State who were
captured up in this? Was it very small?

A. Yes, it was a small group, but there was a good deal of passive sympathy. Had
push come to shove, they would have become actively sympathetic. But it was a
small group. You ask in retrospect was the Committee and the University
successful? No. Not in any kind of way in which one would want to congratulate
oneself. Well, we are in deep trouble.

Q. In 1971, you were appointed to serve as Acting Provost for one year under
President Fawcett and then President Enarson asked you to remain in this position
during his administration, which you did until stepping down in 1979 to return to
teaching and research. I now want to explore issues and events during that second
half of your formal career at Ohio State. The decision to raise University Hall
together with plans to rebuild a semi replica was approved at the same Board of
Trustees meeting at which you were appointed as Acting Provost. Did you
personally concur on this decision to raise University Hall? Was the decision
controversial? Was renovation of the original building seriously considered as opposed to demolition? I understand there was some sort of committee to save U Hall. Can you tell us something about that committee and any impact it had?

A. Did I personally concur in the decision? Frankly, I didn’t care. It was a non-issue to me. Was the decision controversial? You bet. But it was controversial in a, how shall I say, in a way that’s not easily understandable. Why the fuss and a furor? What got involved were issues larger than University Hall itself. Who is for this? We’re against them. Is Nov Fawcett for it? Well, I’m not having anything to do with that decision. Well of course he is for it. He’s the President and he had to prove it. But he, poor man, was trying to negotiate the white water too. There’s a rock, look out there’s a wave. So the decision was enormously controversial but it was almost silly the lengths to which people went in this. And I would have myself preferred the old bricks. They did use some of the old bricks for the façade of the entry. Harold Enarson always liked that. I always said to Harold, “I don’t know. I’d like more of the old bricks.” But then I said, “I’m prejudiced. I remember reading things from the history of the University or from Joe Denney’s file about what meetings used to go on University Hall,” and such. So I have a romantic view about it. But this too passed. And now it’s only a historical matter.

Q. To put an end to that discussion, the reason I asked was because when I arrived in 1977 it was still being talked about.

A. Is that so?

Q. And I found that rather interesting.
A. Is that so? I didn’t know that.

Q. I took it to be an event that happened virtually yesterday. And then I learned it was six or seven years prior. And it still hadn’t worn out as an issue.

A. To come back, the Alumni Association somehow got deeply involved in this. It got politicized because the Alumni Association and Nov Fawcett were at loggerheads during his last years. University Hall got to be a symbol of something else. Well, that’s it.

Q. During your time as Provost, the percentage of incoming freshmen who required remedial English and/or Math was a serious concern and difficulty. What did the Office of Academic Affairs do to address this problem? Was there a significant improvement during your time? And was selective versus open admission considered as remedial during your tenure as Provost?

A. No, let me take that last first. Selective versus open admissions is an issue that has come more into the front since 1981. It came in actually with the Jennings presidency. The University has had some of its own processes which are “selective.” There were people who had been turned down from entering this institution, so that the selective, non-selective matter is not absolutely clear cut. We have been an open admissions place, and I think in many ways that served Ohio State well up through most of this century. I myself feel that Ohio State ought, if it’s going to be The Ohio State University, the University for the State of Ohio, in some ways its got to not only have the appearance of accommodating the State must in fact that. I have been leery of the “high selectivity” sort of thing: you can’t take anybody who is under a 25 ACT. There are real dangers in that
simplistic sort of thing. The question of an open versus a selective university is a complicated one. I think Ohio State has done a pretty good job really of negotiating that rapid. I still hear former trustees say, “Well, I couldn’t have gotten in that place today. I couldn’t have gotten in there.” I say, “Oh yes you could have. There have been enlightened administrators. There would have been enlightened processes that would have recognized in you something or that the opportunity was there.” The question is now about how opportunity is limited, you see, not just talent but opportunity itself and where to develop talent. We had other major issues and we weren’t concerned about the numbers of students. We weren’t growing too fast. We weren’t growing too slow. We didn’t have to scramble on High Street to hire teachers at the last minute for the freshmen class for remedial English and remedial Math, although there have been times we have had to do that. What concerned us was how you bridge the gap between high school and college. There are no simple solutions like, “We’re not going to teach remedial Math or remedial English.”

Q. The issue is certainly still to a degree that the high school system in this country is not delivering.

A. It isn’t.

Q. The amount of improvements is almost glacial.

A. It is. Glacial is the word and while that continues, the colleges are going to take these students and they’re going to put another name upon the product, disadvantaged or unchallenged. The word “challenge” gets a good deal of play these days. They were “unchallenged.”
Q. This next question you’ve answered to some degree already, but you may have further comments. Was OSU’s ranking and quality a significant concern during your time as Provost and if so, what was done to make improvements and coupled with this, was the image of OSU as a football factory a problem to be reckoned with reputationally or was that more of a peripheral nuisance?

A. Well, it is a national problem when you had saints around like Woody Hayes; it was a problem when he was fired. Nobody likes to see the University caricatured. Indiana has had similar problems recently. If basketball is going to be throwing chairs and stuff, hooliganism will seem to be more important than creativity. So of course we’re concerned. But there isn’t much that one can do. You can make big splashes of one kind of another and say, “There shall be no more tailgate parties. Try to get away with that! That’s a part of a national cultural issue - national predilection for sports has grown exponentially. It’s far outstripped the media prowess of the universities to make academics look favorable. It’s a national problem that one is dealing with. I understand that even the little private universities in the east, like Amhurst and Williams, now have to sort of bend to certain athletic scholarship pressures and field two teams in hockey, two teams in volleyball, two teams in that. I read recently that Williams offers more athletic scholarships than the University of Michigan does. That gets us right back to the issue about national image and all.

Q. The question about the focus on academic ranking and quality was really meant to contrast to what I perceive now to be a true fixation. Because every
ranking in OSU or U.S. News and World Report gets headlines, not only in the _____ but in the local papers.

A. It’s become part of the fixation. The same fixation that there is on who is really number one in the bowls. And this gets very complicated. How are you going to rate a university in general then? But we have become so fixated on ranking. And once it’s achieved, would you dare to swear to St. Peter that we are third or fourth or seventeenth. Not if you had sense you wouldn’t.

Q. In 1973, you reported on behalf of the Council on Academic Affairs on the state of the 1967 reorganization which dissolved the collective College of Arts of Sciences and creates several independent Colleges of Arts of Sciences. For example, College of Humanities and College of Biological Sciences. In general, the Council and you concluded that the new structure was working reasonably well and offered better flexibility and adaptability. What was the rationale that drove this reorganization? And was the decision to reorganize controversial? Do you still believe that this reorganization was the right way to have moved or would you do it differently with hindsight?

A. The reorganization was the right way to move because the University had grown irrationally but accretively. Certain incremental decisions were made about whether departments were in the College of Education or the College of Arts and Sciences, so that you suddenly look at an organization and say, “What’s the College of Music doing in the College of Education? Is Music an art? Could be.” Well, over the years, the College grew like topsy, just grew. Then there were departments like Economics over the Business School. Economics in Business.
Well, yes, I can see that. But isn’t Economics an undergraduate Social Science? Part of it was the fact that the University developed very rapidly during and after World War II. So a plan was put forward to make the Colleges of the Arts and Sciences five colleges. And then departments belonged where was argued in committee after committee, and layer after layer of committees. It made sense then to have sort of a Dean of the College of Humanities, the College of Physical Sciences, The College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, etc. And so that’s the way we went in 1967. Since then, the problem with those five colleges - and I’ll just mention those five Arts and Sciences Colleges - is how to get them to do things together. How to see them in an Arts and Sciences mode in the old liberal arts tradition? That’s been the real problem that’s never been solved. How do you put the Arts and Sciences together and get them to work in creative ways.

Some of this no doubt is romanticized and idealized of how the Arts and Sciences have worked together before. And I suppose that all of have in our minds the small ideal college which is a College of Arts and Sciences, the core and center of the University. We all think of Oberlin or we think of places like Kenyon or something like that. But the fact is, that this administrative separation enhanced or made easier the actual separation of the Arts and Sciences which have been conspicuous in the last 30 years. Everywhere. Everywhere.

Q. Were there protesters?

A. Yes, it was controversial. But again personalities got in the way here and many saw the former dean of Arts and Sciences.

Q. Oz Fuller?
A. Yes, Oz Fuller. Many saw the former dean who spoke on behalf of the College of Arts and Sciences as merely trying to preserve his own power. Or of something like that. But the fact is that the division, while it looked good on paper, I think has set up boundaries between the Arts and the Sciences - in the creation of honors programs, and the creation of interdisciplinary kinds of activities, and just in thinking of Arts and Sciences cohesively in the old way. But again, there’s romanticism involved in my point of view here because I’m remembering that there was a merit in the old liberal arts tradition.

Q. Perhaps that merit has to be related to scale and scope.

A. Yes in part. In part. But our best students we want to come out with that sense. You want our best students to have a liberal arts attitude - whether they are from the sciences or whether they are from the humanities. And our best teachers somehow, our best professors, Oscar Slidlin, Harold Grimm - and I’m being invidious in just naming those two - were ones who taught in that tradition. So, I’ve always felt that, well we’re larger than Indiana, we’re larger then Illinois, we’re larger than Northwestern, we’re larger than Iowa. But in many ways I have always looked to those institutions as somewhat more filling of the aspirations of a Bachelors of Arts and the Bachelor of Science.

Q. University College was created in the mid-60’s as a lower division portal of entry and central locus for advising freshmen. Some 35 years later, University College has been eliminated by provostial decision, without much if any, open discussion. Did University College successfully fulfill its mission and purpose in your view?
What do you think led to its elimination and was closing it down and presumably decentralizing its function a good decision in your judgment?

A. Well, University College rose to meet a need. It rose to meet a counseling need. It rose to meet a societal demand. Students coming in weren’t quite sure what they wanted to do. And so we had to develop a mechanism, having no arts and sciences unit. University Colleges became an arts and sciences unit for counseling. That then was the portal of entry and since it also fit our regional campus model, it made sense. The Dick Zimmerman report in the 60’s, I believe, was the key report here and so it did meet a need and apparently now it’s not serving its purpose anymore because students know what college they want to go to, with few exceptions. Those colleges now have their own counseling staff, but you’ve got to have the counselors somewhere. So it fulfilled its mission in a way. How we’re going to accommodate the results of that decision is, I think, the crucial thing there. And right now we’re in a mode where specialisms and specialties are the compelling kinds of decisions made by students. And it’s not the “uni” in the “versity” that matters, it’s the versity including diversity that is now riding high. Hence, wholeness of the University. The integrity of the University at large and what’s its purpose is: one doesn’t here much about that today. No one challenges the president these days. “Well, Dr, Kirwin, tell us what a University really does. Why should a University be 5th or 15th?” First you have to come back and have some discussions about what you think a University is. More and more the University has become the Department of Economics, Department of Psychology has become the library. The interrelations of the
functions seem now administrative matters. They once weren’t, although that sounds excessively romantic.

Q. I understand that the Deans Council was established early in Harold Enarson’s presidency. What were the intended purposes of that? Did it prove to be an effective forum during your time as Provost and how did it evolve and did you chair it or did President Enarson chair it?

A. One of the first things when Harold Enarson was named president, he said “What’s the president’s advisory council here?” And I said, “It’s vice presidents” - Vice President of Business, Vice President of Students, Vice President of whatever. There were several of them then. He says “That seems pretty hierarchical, doesn’t it?” I said, “Well that’s what Nov was comfortable with.” He said, “I think that I want to move that President’s Advisory Council down a level right into the academic heart of the University. And I’ll make the deans the President’s Advisory Council?” And I said, “Well, Nov also did that and Nov used the deans on calling __________ on decisions made rather than to involve them in it.” So that’s how the Deans Council was set up. Nov as a matter of fact called his a cabinet. Harold would have nothing to do with that. That was too presidential and an analogy, too political. It turned out that I usually set the agenda for this Council. And I chaired it more than he did, simply because he came to have implicit trust in my values, my academic values. We thought alike on significant issues. Then, too, he saw in his first couple years he needed to do a good deal of work outside the University as a spokesman for higher education. He did a lot of commencement talks. He did some other talks at national
organizations. Harold had quite a national reputation in his first two or three years here, not unlike Father Hesburgh of Notre Dame. Harold and Hesburgh and Clark Kerr were some presidents called upon for an insightful phrase, a thoughtful look into higher education in general in this country. He was on the speaking circuit quite a bit and since we met on the Saturday morning, it turned out that then I was the one who chaired the Dean’s Advisory Council. Some things I passed along or I would send up trial balloons on salary increases, for example. Well, Roy Kottman would always speak up. There were 18 or 19 deans in the room. We used to meet over at the Fawcett Center back in the Alumni Room, meetings would go two hours. There was question and answer, but sometimes it was pro forma, where I brought things in as matters of information. So it was an Advisory Council, but not always. Sometimes it was only a way of communication. When we’d run into emergencies like gasoline crisis in the 70’s, how to cut back the heating in this institution, we were going to get cooperation and all that – then I’d bring in the relevant people.

Q. Well the Deans Council has continued to function through all the Presidents since. So it apparently does serve a purpose.

A. Well, it’s been partly the passing on of the information and of course the deans are now at a level but you know, if Nov Fawcett, when he wanted input on the reorganization of the University in the 60’s, the Chairman would have been in a key group to involve there as well.

Q. You spent considerable time as Provost working on the medical practice plan, which was controversial and very unpopular with the target community. What
was your role in developing this plan which was somehow to devise a policy and procedure, as I understand it, for medical faculty to return a fair share of income generated from conducting private practice utilizing University space and resources. What were the major issues and problems involved and how do you judge the acceptability and success of the plan adopted? And was there significant fall-out?

A. I think the last two years I was Provost, I probably spent, I probably spent 80% of my time on that single problem. And in part I did it as a kind of a mediator, facilitator, peacemaker, listener, in which the two sides were now locked in a court battle and could not talk. You can’t talk in public, “No comment, that’s in litigation.” But there had to be somebody doing some talking on campus. And so I was the President’s emissary; I had many a lonely walk over to the College of Medicine, not to solve the problem so much as facilitate the resolution when it did come. The issue was dollars and University space; taxpayer money had built the space and private dollars were being earned in that space; what was the fair share of return. It’s the same question that you could ask the College of Music if somebody were using taxpayer piano lessons for which they paid. Which is the same question you could ask a professor who had published a book at the University Press: Was the University sufficiently reimbursed? It’s a private property versus the public support. So it wasn’t just the medical school, but it was principle which went a good deal farther than that about what is fair and equitable. It just looks like it applied only to the College of Medicine. There were glaring examples of abuse. Some departments, however, had developed an
equitable beginning of a practice plan in which they returned a portion of their fees to a central budgeting office which hired secretaries, etc. All the practice plan fight was about was to make that a general plan across the College of Medicine, to make the College of Medicine a part of the University. When you drive up to the hospital from the south you see the large sign there that says The Ohio State University on a hospital building. I once said to the president, “That sign didn’t used to be there. The Ohio State University apparently didn’t used to be there. Why weren’t we smart enough to put that sign up there a long time ago?”

Q. When the dust had settled and the angst was a little in retreat, did it prove to be workable?
A. It is proving workable. It is. But also, we were anachronism. We were troglodytes in our backwardness. We were one of the few major medical centers of the world that didn’t have something like that. It would have come eventually. But yes, it is working and I’m also sure that there is some dissatisfaction with it. Now you negotiate what this percentage of return is. If you had published a book, for example, about the OSU library and somehow that had become a best seller at Nortons, and you had used University typists – and University time – what is fair? What is the quid pro quo? It’s an ethical issue.

Q. In that respect the issue is still alive relative to the entire University.
A. Yes, it is. You read everyday about who owns some idea?
Q. Were there any significant number of the clinical physicians involved who decided to disaffiliate as a result of the plan?
A. No. A few did and those who did mostly dramatized the rightness of the plan.

Q. The issue of affirmative action came to the fore during your provostship. Did affirmative action encompass women as well as minorities at that time? That is to say ethnic minorities. Was this a major focus for you?

A. Affirmative action became a national issue even before the Lyndon Johnson administration. But the Johnson administration really put the affirmative action up front. Already there were federal laws affecting the disbursement of federal grants relative to affirmative action. Everybody’s attention was caught by that. The hiring of females, and minority issues, became national social and ethical issues. It was a major focus. One of the first things that Harold and I tried to do was to get women into the administration. Kathy Schoen was one of our first Vice Presidents. She of course was head of the libraries when you were appointed.

Q. John Bonner was actually still there. She followed that.

A. That was part of the change. We tried to see what women on campus were interested in going into administrative responsibilities. We supported American Council of Education Fellowships for them, several took that opportunity. We did appoint a woman as the Director of School of Physical Education early on. I remember because a male faculty member peeled my hide about, saying that was the most chauvinistic decision he had ever seen, that it was absolutely silly. Actually, she was a good appointment.

Q. The Office of Minority Affairs was established under your watch and OSU was cited as one of the leading universities for achievement in meeting affirmative
action goals. Please elucidate to a degree that you care to and also I’d like, for the record, you received a United Negro College Fund Distinguished Service Award for your efforts. So Ohio State was well known for activity and action in this arena.

A. I am convinced that William Holloway was a national leader.

Q. Was he the director of the Office of Minority Affairs?

A. Yes, he was. And he put our program on the map nationally. He asked me recently to write a letter on his behalf for the College of Education Hall of Fame. I said, ”That’s very easy to do for you belong there.” I spoke of his achievement in the recruitment of minority students, and support, and all of this with integrity: education first and foremost in mind. That is a wonderful story and Ohio State has reason to be real proud of Bill Holloway.

Q. How do you assess progress in the area of affirmative action, diversity as it is now called, since you have left the Provost office and insofar as you have been an observer?

A. Oh, we’ve come a long way. I think we began by talking about an old boy network. That’s gone fortunately. Or mainly gone. Many, many gains have been made here and in my own discipline of English now, there are more women teaching than men.

Q. The disciplines that seem intractable are the physical sciences.

A. Yes. It’s the same. It remains the same and I don’t see how you change that. You lament the fact that there are very few women chemists. But how are you going to
change that? Well somebody is going to say, “The only thing you can do is by cloning.”

Q. The issue of greatly inadequate state funding for OSU has seemingly been a major persisting intractable problem for decades and decades, with the 70’s being no exception. President Enarson spoke loudly and often about this problem. How were you involved in attempting to address this issue and in what categorical ways did four state subsidy hamper the University?

A. Yes. That was a problem as it is a current problem. I noticed not long ago that the President had responded with a couple of newspaper articles on this. That brought back memories, resonances of the same complaints that we had about inadequate state support. I was involved in talks at the closest level to the President and the Board of Trustees. Is there anything we can do about this issue? It’s an enormously frustrating one. You have to worry that one has got too strident on the issue and started a backlash where one makes enemies instead of converts. If you look at the situation in 2001, you see the same old kinds of reluctance to support universities. It’s not just crises in the economy. It’s something larger than that. I think essentially it’s got to do with the ethos of Ohio – a disposition in Ohio about education not entirely favorable. If you make comparisons of, say, California or Massachusetts or states older, there’s a different kind of ethos there. There’s a willingness to tax themselves for something that’s really important. I don’t know what it is about Ohio, not a backwardness, yet it’s got something to do with our long rust belt tradition and blue collar tradition of work. Still, it’s really those working classes that desire higher education. There are lots of contradictory
forces but the fact is that Ohio just has not been very generous to higher
education. I don’t know how you affect something like that. You have to work
upon the local issues and you have to take the legislature as it is. Those
legislatures have been mainly Republican. But the paradox is that the
Republicans have supported higher education more than Democrats have in this
state.

Q. Something that occurs to me right now spontaneously is having heard that the
legislature for a long time, maybe up through the 40’s and certainly the 50’s was
dominated by agricultural power brokers. And there’s been almost a total
transition with agriculture representation not being the tail that wags the
legislative dog. And yet that seems not to have made any real difference in the
outcome for funding for higher ed.

A. That’s true. It’s a very puzzling matter. It’s deeper than simply a reluctance of the
legislature to support or not to raise taxes, not to spend more on higher education.
It’s got something to do with prizing education itself. And when one looks at the
wretched figure that Ohio ranks 40\textsuperscript{th} roughly in state support, but also ranks 40\textsuperscript{th}
in the number of high school graduates that go to college, you ask has there been
no improvement in that over these generations? Well not very much. You cannot
point your finger at any single thing. Say it’s the governor or the series of the
governors, it’s the legislature or the series of legislatures. It’s something bigger
and more profound and more frustrating.

Q. Was raising tuition a point of contention in seeking ways to enhance the budget?
A. Yes, it was and to raise the tuition by only $25 a quarter, because that hit students’ pocket books. That determined whether they worked more. Every time you raise tuition, you affect the student body. And Harold, as you know, was most popular with the students here. This may be a wild kind of historical generalization, but Harold was most popular with the students, then with his Board of Trustees, then with the faculty, and last maybe the downtown business types who perhaps had some view about Harold’s liberalism that was really mistaken I think. When the president favored the student body, he felt the pain as much of the students. He genuinely did, and the students knew it. Student intuited his honesty with them.

Q. Was faculty concentration an issue?
A. Well, it was because Bill, in retrospect, inflation was such a terrible problem. Inflation in those years was awful. I remember that one year we tried to address this with a 14% increase. Do you remember that? There was a 7% across the board increase and a 7% merit. That was after the local AAUP had let out several yelps of pain and were threatening to organize a union. You see this same kind of thing on campus now. When resources are scarce, equity becomes a greater issue. The year we were able to do that 14% was a God send, because in many ways it changed the atmosphere on campus from one of niggling and frustration.

Inflation was, as I remember, double digit then.

Q. Do you recall what year that was? I think 14% has never been done again.
A. No, no. I think it was the highest Harold later told me, we had been discussing the need to do something dramatic. He came in one morning and he said to me and the budget director, “Taking a shower this morning I had an idea. Let’s do
14%, 7% across the Board. Sounds great.” Well of course it was. It took a lot of pressures off. So 7 and 7 it was. Remember though, those years that the nobody on campus could make more than the governor, $55,000.

Q. As I recall, that was enforced when I arrived in ’77 and removed when Jennings became president.

A. That’s right. That was a retardant. That affected upper level salaries here, but about 1981 we began to get the corporate university. Not just here but elsewhere.

Q. Do you have a point of view about why higher education in general has been historically been so underfunded in Ohio and in particular why the Board of Regents and/or the state legislature have been and remain unwilling to treat and recognize OSU as Ohio’s flagship university and funded differentially in accord with that status. You’ve commented on the first part of that question. I wonder if you have an opinion about the second, the primacy of Ohio State within the higher education structure.

A. Well, that’s always been an issue. I’m not sure it’s a substantive issue as people have made it out to be. I do not think, for example, that spending a lot of effort on putting the “the” in Ohio State University has paid off. That’s semantical. That Ohio State should have primacy for a lot of things, that’s clear. But it’s also clear that we’re in a state system. There are equity issues that apply. And there is a Board of Regents appointed specifically for that purpose, to see that matters of equity in the state are observed. But of course such Board can become merely beauracric, where finite sum of money is doled out according to various
formulas by the Regents. The Board of Regents becomes then another protectorate in the structure.

Q. I’m reminded again spontaneously of a sub-question. The Board of Regents, as I recall, was created only around 1960. It was created after you came. How did the University seek and gain finding prior to the Regents existence with the formula of distribution.

A. That was which pig got its feet in the trough first. There was a good deal of politicking on such matters.

Q. Considerably more inter-institutional competition prior to the Regents.

A. Yes, yes, except that the institutions would have to get together to say “That’s enough.” You had to be careful that you didn’t wound the feelings of sister institutions by cutting them off at the pass, then say, “Hey, come back and help us. Lobby for the whole budget.”

Q. The University sponsored research enterprise grew considerably during your time during Provost, perhaps as never before. Since there was no vice presidential research at that time, what was the Provost’s role in encouraging, promoting and monitoring the sponsored research program?

A. I believe the job description of the Academic Vice President says that the Provost shall be the Chief Academic Officer, with responsibilities to promote teaching, research to provide leadership in those areas. If I recollect right, I probably spent more time with the Director of the Research Foundation, Ken Sloan, and his group than with any single dean. Or as much time certainly. And not just beauracratic things, but a sort of proactive mode of how we promote this, how we
energize that. I took the search seriously in the generic sense, knowing that the generation of knowledge is one of the primary functions of the institution. I didn’t travel on behalf of sponsored research or that kind of thing. It was also a way of helping to energize the whole graduate program. The Provost and the Graduate Dean worked closely together. This had much to do with the tone of the whole graduate enterprise.

Q. Fund raising through the Development Fund seems not to have had the emphasis or success during the Fawcett and Enarson years as it has had beginning with Jennings. What is your view of the state of development effort in your time? As Provost, you served on the Steering Committee of the Development Fund. Was that a strong and influential committee?

A. Well, no. It’s true that development and fund raising, the whole enterprise has radically changed during the late 70’s and 80’s and onward. Fund raising in our time was a more relaxed, a more decentralized small gifts kind of things, as encouraged by the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association was the center pretty much of gift giving, of scholarships. The Development Fund Steering Committee was primarily to apportion out monies for student scholarships, monies that were given as unrestricted gifts. That was what the Development Fund Board worked on. And it didn’t work with very much money. As I remember when we had something like a pool of half million dollars to divvy up. And we had a ground rule that half would go to scholarships, for student aide. The Development Fund also looked at the possibility of big gifts. Some of the names that have since contributed to the University were around then. Max Fisher, for
example, was a presence then, and a hope and an expectation. Now a lot of these are realized gifts. Some, however, were like the great white whale. They were absolutely elusive.

Q. In one interview conducted after you had decided to step down as Provost, you cited a special accomplishment of working on improving the sense of a whole University. I read that at the time that Ohio State could really be considered four universities. The University of Agriculture, the University of Medical Affairs, the University of Athletics, and the University of all the remainder. Did you have a sense of such mentality or compartmentalization? And what means and strategies and actions did you employ to try to make the University think and behave more as one integrated institution.

A. Well, I wish I had been bright enough to have lots of signs erected that said The Ohio State University. We were talking about that sign on the hospital, put up only long after that it might have been. But yes, for the whole University, that’s a more serious kind of thing. You’re going to have chiefdoms and we did have chiefdoms in agricultural and in medicine and in athletics, and the rest of it, pretty much. That was one thing that Harold Enarson was worried about when he came here. One of his first questions was, “Is this place really manageable?” Keep in mind not just chiefdoms, but its enormous size. “How many deans did you say there were?” “18, 18 colleges, 150 odd programs, 88 of them Ph.D. or something like that.” These are staggering statistics of course, but it’s an enormously complex place. My effort and I have the most pride in working toward this end, was to try to keep the academic mission at the heart of the
institution. This is why we’re here, for teaching and learning. And we’re here for
good teaching and learning, the best we can do, under whatever restraints that
we’ve got. For that sense of wholeness I worked especially hard during those
divisive years in the beginning of the 70’s, when the students were against the
faculty, the faculty were against the Board, and the Board seemed to be against
everybody. That was the nature of the turbulence in the University then, the
fragmentation of civil war. Vietnam was as close to civil war as we can have.
Working on the wholeness of the University was an ideal I brought to it from
Johns Hopkins, and ideas of Oxford, of Cambridge, of Harvard. It was an ideal
that a University could be a democratic institution, a leader in a democracy of this
sense of wholeness. Integrity means wholeness. That at the heart of the
University for me. I don’t think I ever said that explicitly; I don’t think I ever
made quite such a speech to the Senate. I’m sure that I did bring up some of these
issues, but I never quite spoke in this same kind of evangelical way I’m doing
right now. Those are deep convictions I’ve always had. I think that people
generally recognize that and even when they disagreed with me they said, “Well,
the guy’s got academic values.”

Q. Another accomplishment you cited was working on systemizing the promotion
and tenure process, including more rigorous evaluation of faculty. Please
comment on what you did on this arena and on successes and failures relative to
your goals. Now I know that yesterday, because something else reminded you of
this, you did say a good deal about it. Are there any further thoughts on that issue?
A. No, I think not, except that the whole business of tenure and promotion process was key in many ways to what a University is all about. As all of us know, the really good and the really competent people are least concerned about tenure. They’re concerned about their disciplines. Everybody makes more of tenure and promotion than probably it deserves. I know I’m struck by people from downtown who shake their head with great sadness when they hear the word tenure. They immediately associate it with entrenched log rolling, buddyism and stuff like that. But I cannot believe that there isn’t the same sense in law or in any profession about a sense of security and knowing who you are and being were you belong, and being recognized by your colleagues as such. That’s all tenure is. That’s all promotion is. That is a good thing for a University, it’s a good thing for any institution. Stability. Sure you’re going to get some dead wood. And sure, there are going to be abuses in the system, as there are in civil service or anything else. But if one is consistently vigilant about its importance, I think the system will work towards its end with tenure, with a sense of freedom, of the intellect, to speak out. I can’t imagine anybody working with ideas of any sort, in any profession, who can’t prize, who indeed must prize that. If one reads the Chronicle of Higher Education today, in a lot of places tenure is being replaced by term appointments. That’s partly a corporatization of the University today, part of the change. I read one of the local little universities in Columbus here, doesn’t even give tenure, Franklin. It sets itself up as a business. Well, that’s got certain limitations. You’re free to call yourself a University if you want to, but it takes more than the name “the University” to be a University.
Q. While Provost you initiated the process of academic program review and three since reviews were completed before you left office. However, program reviews continued well beyond your time. Tell us what your motivations and intended outcomes were and describe the process briefly. Were results commensurate with your expectations?

A. This was simply a counterpart to the evaluation of faculty, to the evaluation of teaching. That’s simply a general piece of the University’s periodic effort for self renewal. Let’s take a look at what we’re doing, even though we’ve been doing it 20 years. Or precisely because we’ve been doing it 20 years. And program review was not just local to Ohio State. It was something that we learned from other institutions and everybody was involved and engaged in this naval gazing. But it was good to ask questions like that. It brought out some qualitative issues that one hadn’t recognized before, and why hadn’t this received attention before? In short, we started asking questions of ourselves. And learned something about ourselves.

Q. Were the faculty generally supportive or a little uneasy about this?

A. They were uneasy to begin with. They were uneasy first of all, because a typical faculty response was, “What? Another review? All this time that we’re spending on reviewing we could be spending on something better - which is true enough. We tried in our talks with Chairmen and Deans in small groups meeting to show why we’re doing it. This was not just an exercise. “We need help and we need advice, and we’re doing it together.” We tried to get people to sign on. How to
keep it a faculty matter, as opposed to just an administrative imposition was a
problem. I worked hard at that the eight years that I was Provost.

Q. The Library ultimately engaged in program review. There must have been a
couple of dozen that were done.

A. Yes, I’m sure.

Q. They are not ongoing so far as I know at this time.

A. Well, these things come and go actually. But in some ways they are, if you’re
going to get special funding for program excellence right now, you’re going to
review yourself as you’ve never done before. (And tell some wonderful lies about
yourself maybe.)

Q. You left the position of Provost in 1979 to return to the faculty, at which time
Harold Enarson praised your service as embodying the best of academic values,
combined with important skills of executive style. When asked the reasons for
your departure you cited the high pressure nature of the position and you strongly
felt the need to re-immerser in scholarship and to refresh your research. Were
there any other considerations and motivations which prompted you to step
down?

A. In retrospect, I recognized that my career turned on seven and eight year cycles.
That may be physiological. It may be as old as Shakespeare’s seven ages of man
and older. Every seven or eight years you need to turn the rudder in another
direction. I was Chairman for seven years, Provost for seven years, and then
served another seven years or so including the Directorship of Honors. But also
Bill, I felt a certain loss of enthusiasm for the position, as though I had kind of
exhausted, it and myself. I had a loss of enthusiasm. I had a sense, too, that I had to be careful I didn’t lose a sense of balance and judgment. The last couple of years I made a couple of decisions that were, in my view, pretty shaky personnel decisions that I felt had been peremptory, after the fact. I thought to myself, “Well, you’re losing balance …” These were personal assessments of myself. But also the loss of enthusiasm. “My goodness,” I thought, “here comes that same problem again. I saw that seven years ago.”

Q. A little burnout as they say.

A. Well, that’s what I guess burnout is. Then too, I would sometimes be frightened about the power that seemed to be associated with the position that actually was not there. Such power I had was mainly a negotiating power. It was certainly not, “Hey, I can just assign this whole portion of the budget to you.” Altogether, it was a need for renewal of a different kind. My sense of retiring early was I needed to do something more important than I’ve ever done before in my life. I need to re-read the classics, re-think basic classical texts. Since my retirement, I’ve re-read Shakespeare, re-read all Walter Scott, I re-read the Iliad and the Odyssey, I’ve re-read Greek tragedy and comedy. I don’t want to show off, but I read these reflectively. Not to prepare a course. Not to publish a paper. But I’ve read them as texts to understand myself and the world better.

Q. Good You served during most of Harold Enarson’s tenure as President and it’s clear from many things you said that you had great respect and admiration for him, referring to him at least on one occasion as one of the finest presidents in the
A. Well, I still think that he was one of the greatest Presidents of a public university then, and that he, along with Robin Flemming, Clark Kerr, and Father Hesburgh were among the best voices in higher education worth listening to. To me, Harold was a kind of Adlai Stevenson, that sort of mind and man. Adlai was one of my favorite, has been one of my favorite 20th century figures, in part because I campaigned for him when he ran for Governor of the State of Illinois. I was a student for Stevenson for Governor. He gave my commencement speech in 1950 when I graduated from the University of Illinois. He began that talk. “Sons and daughters of Illinois.” Then he laid a wonderful talk on us about the McCarthyism in the air and the irrational fears, and how it was up to us to protect freedoms. A wonderful talk! He was a man of integrity and of wit and of vision, and Harold was all of those. Harold was a fine, fine man, and integrity, just wholeness again, would characterize him. He was in his professional style easy to work with.

Q. The relationship between the Provost and the President is probably the most important on campus. How would you describe your administrative relationship?

A. It was very close. He had confidence and faith in me. He felt that I could run the University. I could Chair the University Senate when he was away, and we consulted on, well, I think everything that was germane to the University. Especially during the stressful times of the practice plan fight, when it was in litigation, we depended heavily upon each other for advice and solace. He was a wonderful man, he was a great leader of this institution, and the students loved
him. They loved him for not just his words, they intuited his values and his honesty and his being a genuine democrat as far as education is concerned. I don’t mean in politics, I mean the old Jeffersonian sense, of and for the people.

Q. I recall him very fondly myself. I share many of your views of him, although clearly from a much different perspective. In his history of the Enarson years, Paul Underwood speculates that Enarson lacked support and popularity downtown. With the power structure of the state, with many politicians, and even with OSU faculty, who believed at least at times he was not sufficiently concerned with their low salary levels. And that all this curtailed his effectiveness as president. Underwood also observed that his relations with the Board were often unharmonious. What is your take on these matters?

A. Well, I said a while ago and I believe it, that Harold was most popular with the students first. And then with his Board of Trustees who, for most of his years until towards the end - and in part that was exacerbated by the medical practice plan. Can you imagine how many people from the College of Medicine might have phoned the Board of Trustees on that issue? And how even the most rational board member might after a while say, “A plague on both your houses.” Harold sometimes was - I can understand some of the faculty distress with him. Harold could sometimes be flippant about faculty. Some faculty members don’t appreciate anything but solemnity on that issue. Harold had a way of sometimes making the wrong joke at the wrong time at the faculty’s expense. Or it was read that way. But one of the reasons that he prized me and, I think one of the reasons that I was fairly effective in working with him, was that I was a kind of counter-
balance to that. The faculty generally respected me. Generally. It was a counter-balance that well, “if somebody puts a word in Al’s ear, he’ll get the word in Harold’s ear.” Or something like that. That’s oversimplification and a trivialization. But in any case, I felt that our combination was a good one. I spent all my time on the inside of the University except where it was necessary for me to go to CIC meetings. Harold spent a lot of time outside the University the first two or three years here. He spent a lot of time doing that, giving commencement talks and what not, which was good for our institution. We had become kind of parochial, I think. Harold gave us a national presence in a special way. That was one of his great achievements.

Q. Please comment on other notable achievements and accomplishments and major issues with which you dealt during your Provostship and also give us your view of successes and failures as well as loose ends. That is, things on your agenda that you wanted to get done, but simply hadn’t the time.

A. Well, as I mentioned a little while ago, I spent a lot of time doing what I thought that Fred Heimberger had been enormously successful at. That is, working with committees at all levels of the faculty to involve them in the governance of the University, or to encourage the wholeness of University in making the decisions, being involved in the process that is our total welfare. I spent a lot of time on choosing committees carefully, not just the Council on Academic Affairs, but various Senate committees, committees that the administration still had a good deal of influence in appointing. And I spent a lot of time with search committees. I didn’t think you could spend too much time with the Chairman and the Deans of
the departments. One of the first things I did when I became Provost was to visit all the Deans and their executive committees, whatever that executive committee was. It was usually all their Chairmen. So I visited the 18 colleges, all of them, law, medicine, the whole bunch, agriculture. That was not just politicking, not just good will, but trying to get a sense of the University in its multi-diversity. And how to keep that “uni” in that “multi” was the real task. Now, as for failures they’re legion. Probably somebody else can talk more about that. But I was concerned about the effectiveness of the Senate. You remember that we used to have the Faculty Council that was the chief governance body, the faculty governance body. Then when we went through to the student revolution, that brought students into the University Senate. So now there was a student component, and a faculty component, and administrative component. How to get this thing so that it was not just some sort of a wild town hall meeting. And yet so as to have some town hall effect. I remember chairing some of those Senate meetings when the students were still concerned about the whole structure of the thing and about what their power was. Of course they thought well, we’ve got to have more votes. Invariably some student would reach in his back pocket in the middle of some other business and pull this out motion: “I move that ten more students be added to the membership.” I’m sorry, you’re out of order,” I had to say we chairs the students didn’t take kindly to that, whether out of order or not. What was Roberts Rules of Order to them? They thought that’s more administrative hogwash of not giving us any voice. I said to Harold once, “We’re getting really smacked around there by this kind of anarchy. We’ve got to do
something about that.” And he said, “Well let’s get a parliamentarian.” So we brought in a man from the speech department who knew all about it Roberts Rules. Anyway, he could deflect it, it would be him that would tell them they were out of order. That’s over-emphasizing an aspect of the Senate. But I remember that reaching in the pocket, and saying “Oh, oh, here comes an amendment. It’s an illegal amendment and I’m going to have to say so.” I remember once sitting there when all this was going on, and I thought of Matthew Arnold. Here we are now with this fledgling committee, this administrative body, as opposed to the old Faculty Council, where sedate professors sat around and discussed issues and discussed them with civility and in a kind of a senatorial fashion. “Well I disagree with the professor there, but I respect his view.” That versus the student, “I make an amendment.” I thought of those lines from Matthew Arnold, “caught between two worlds, the one dead and the other powerless to be born.”

Q. Well that will seg to a totally different topic and issue but one you lived through. Did the firing of the legendary football coach, Woody Hayes, cause any significant problems or backlash for the University? Did it undermine President Enarson in any way?

A. I think no to both of those actually. There were of course letters that came to the President about this. But it was such a flagrant provocation to begin with, that who would think that was unjustified? As a matter of fact, there was a good deal of sadness, that was received with sadness by a lot of people, including me. I felt sorry for the man who had just lost his cool. What a way to wind up a career!
Seeing him afterwards in the Faculty Club, you just knew that it was on those wild impulsive things or one of those impulsive things in which he lost his head for a moment, but it happened to be on television before millions of people. But no, there was not … I’m sure you know the national press of course picked this up just as they did the Bobby Knight stuff at Indiana University. There was no significant backlash there.

Q. Do you have any observations or comments you would share with us about the presidencies of Novice Fawcett, Ed Jennings, and Gordon Gee, including how they compared or contrasted with Harold Enarson?

A. Well, I’ll just make a comment on the presidency of Nov Fawcett versus Harold or in relation to Harold, not versus Harold. Nov was simply - and I don’t use this in a derogatory sense - Nov was just a more beauracric man. He was brought up through the public school system in which he worked through hierarchies. Harold wasn’t hierarchical at all. Harold was more democratic, as I mentioned to you, he changed the word from cabinet to advisory committee. And that’s just a minor thing. But it was typical of the very different styles. Obviously President Fawcett was very good at a whole lot of things. He was. No question about it. And anybody who for 16 years - well he made this place a modern university actually. Harold merely continued that kind of nationalization of the institution. But their styles were really very different though “regal” isn’t the right word, for the Fawcett years. There was an element of ceremony of structure. Because Nov was so big and commanding, and a little formidable himself personally, that encouraged a certain kind of style. But Nov too, like Harold, was able to bring
great loyalty out of people and love. They were different kinds of style, very
different sorts of presidencies altogether. It was good for the University to move
from one to the other, to see that sort of flexibility. Nov interestingly enough,
when he asked me to be Academic Vice President had asked me once a couple of
years earlier. It was when Corbally left. He had sounded me out. “Would you
come over and be Acting Academic Vice President?” I said, “No,” I really didn’t
want to, and I remember writing him a thoughtful letter and citing some lines
from Robert Frost about this as the road not taken for me right now. Then he
asked me again when Jim Robinson went to McCallister as President. He said to
me, “I can’t promise you any future in the position because I shan’t be here.” But
he said, “I would like for you to be the Academic Vice President my last year.”
He simply said, “I like your values and I like your style. It’s a little unusual to ask
a Chairman of a Department who hasn’t been a Dean, but I’m confident you can
do it.” It was unusual for a Chairman to asked to be Academic Vice President of
this enormous institution. And when I walked over on that July 1, 1971, I said to
myself, “What in God’s name are you doing?”

Q. Then you discovered it over the next seven or eight years, right?
A. I did indeed. But in any case, my point is that Nov surmised that our politics were
probably different, that I probably took liberal stands for him that might have
seemed namby-pamby on certain issues. Probably the David Green case, for
example. Nevertheless, he was ready to recommend me to the Board of Trustees
and he must have said something like that to them.
Q. Edward Jennings and Gordon Gee of course, well you served during the Jennings administration as a faculty member and as Honors Director. Gee came after your retirement.

A. The University began to change into the corporate mode, right at that juncture, Bill, so it’s hard for me to really comment on that because I don’t want to cast any aspersions on the leadership of either of these men. The University gets what it wants and maybe deserves. Probably deserves, right at the time when these changes are made. And there’s always, the Board of Trustees recognizes, gamble involved in these things. And there’s always some power, somebody whose got the corner on power at some point and says, “Well, we’re going to go with this person.”

Q. Many OSU Provosts have gone on to be University Presidents. Did you ever aspire to be a University President and were their opportunities?

A. Oh I thought about it off and on. As a matter of fact, Nov Fawcett once asked me if I were interested, could he put my name in for the presidency at Kenyon. I thought about that and said, “No, I really wasn’t ready for that.” And then a couple of times my name came up for, once at the University of Illinois as Chancellor and I decided not to get into that. And once the Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. Finally, at the University of Colorado at Boulder. But I didn’t really aspire to a presidency at all during the Enarson years because Harold was such a wonderful man to work with. I just thought it’s better being number two or number four or whatever, working with a man like that. Also, I felt that I had roots here and that somehow Ohio State and the State of
Ohio meant a good deal to me. No, I never really seriously considered it and didn’t aspire to it. I saw my career as ending in the classroom. I pretty much had set on that. I came to be Director of Honors though. I never thought I’d do that. Haenicke asked me to chair a university wide committee to energize honors on campus. And I did that and we had a very good committee, a wonderful committee. Rick Hermann, in political science and I can’t remember all the names now, but Tom Minnick was on it and a man in law, Howard Fink? A very fine committee. We came up with about ten or twelve or fifteen recommendations and Ed Jennings were impressed. Among the first of the recommendations was we should bring honors to the center of attention on campus, which means a place at the center of the campus. How about the former President’s residence as Honors House? They liked those recommendations. One day called me and said, “We’re going to set up a search committee for a directorship. Would you be interested?” I said, “No, I’m pretty tired of administration really.” “Well, you just think about if it comes to that.” It came to that. The search process then gets political. It’s such a desirable job that several key people who are qualified for it and could have done it. I guess in a way that I was a compromise candidate. Not that I spent any money on campaigning for it. I had no political buttons at all.

Q. You anticipated the question after the next. So I think we’ll go ahead and finish that one. You did sort of a year as interim and then were appointed Director of the honors program. A major goal was certainly to promote and re-invigorate especially the program, as well as to greatly to increase the number of the best and
brightest at OSU. What were your personal hopes and aspirations in terms of moving the honors program forward and what accomplishments were achieved in your relatively short directorship?

A. Well one of the first things was that in the mid-70’s, I was a member of the Battelle Foundation Board of Trustees. You recollect that Battelle was obliged to divest itself of a good deal of money which had been ruled by the Attorney General to be really taxable monies. And a foundation was set up to disburse. I believe it was $18 then. It was to do it over a period of three years or four, and I was a member of that committee. This memorial foundation trust did a lot for the City of Columbus and for Franklin and adjacent counties. It bought some of the current metro parks, now gems for the city, the county. But one of the things that I am most proud of is that we devised a program for the Battelle Scholars, a four year scholarship, free ride scholarship for the best eligible students from Franklin and the five adjacent counties or the four adjacent counties. That was only a $2 million investment and endowment. But it gave OSU eight to ten Battelle scholars annually. In thinking about the university honors program, I wanted to expand that kind of program exponentially. But it was later, after I really left, that a lot of this funding actually came in. One of the original recommendations was that there be a whole series of presidential scholarships, free ride, for students like the old Woodrow Wilson students used to be. There’s the tie-in for my aspirations, simply to energize programs everywhere, to encourage agriculture to build its core of honors course, to encourage the biological sciences to do that, and this to be done, Bill, by just going over and asking them to use their own resources. I
had very little resources to give them. I could help with a course, buying a part of a faculty member for honors courses. But that’s how many interdisciplinary honors courses began or were developed. We had some in our arts and sciences many years ago.

Q. Are you pleased? Are you satisfied with the momentum and the progress that the honors program in the last decade has done?

A. I am indeed. I think it’s one of the gems of the University. And its current emphasis on excellence is right on, as they say.

Q. You remained as Director of Honors until the end of 1988. It was at the time you officially retired from the University. Would you in fact have stayed a little longer were it not for the serious illness of your wife, Roberta, who died of cancer in 1993?

A. No, probably not. As a matter of fact, it turned out to be a serendipitous decision because it was before Roberta’s illness was diagnosed that I had retired.

Q. I was mistaken.

A. It was about the same time. But it was a little before. I was pleased that I was able then to help her with her art gallery at this time. And she was at the top of her form as an art gallery director. She was really at the top of her career. I could then take my books and sit down in her gallery and I read “Coriolanus,” things like that, while waiting for the crowd to come in to look at art.

Q. I remember the gallery very well. I remember Roberta there and occasionally seeing you there.
A. Bless her heart. She had a wonderful local reputation as a person who was really doing a great public service. She would have school children to her gallery, she would explain why she was exhibiting art like that and why that was worth showing. She did a lot of public service that was not really connected with where her own income.

Q. In 1989, the Board of Trustees named the Honors House in tribute to you, the Albert J. Kuhn Honors House. You also received the University’s distinguished service award in 1991. Was the naming of Honors House for you the single recognition of your long career at OSU.

A. Yes, it was. And I was surprised by it. I was genuinely surprised. I remember that Mabel Freeman had planned some kind of reception. She was in on this secret and I wasn’t. And then an emissary came over from Ed Jennings’ office to announce to the group in the middle of our little reception there that the Board of Trustees was going to name this house for me. I was overwhelmed. Roberta and I were just enormously surprised. But I am pleased and proud of that distinction. It is the distinction of my whole career, and for me, it seems appropriate, although maybe I’m not really the one who ought to be talking about this. That house does symbolize the kind of high achievement that I have stressed in good teaching and good scholarship and being a good student and loving the University. So that I think its appropriateness is hardly arguable. Yes, it’s been a real distinction.

Q. How have you occupied yourself during 13 years of retirement? Have you stayed connected with the University? Have you taught? Have you been active in scholarship and continued to publish?
A. I’m giving a seminar next week to a group, to an ecumenical group of pastors, who have had a seminar for the past ten or twelve years. And I have now given it ten or twelve years in a row, or participated in it. The seminar is roughly on art, literature, the spirit and the arts. I have given several talks on that and I’m giving one next week entitled “Home Ruin, American Poetical Reflections.” And it looks at some poems by Robert Frost and Edward Arlington Robinson and Wallace Stevens on the image of home ruin in a country like ours which stresses newness, or stressed only newness because we are new. We’re only 200 hundred years old, Newfoundland, New York, New England. With Huck Finn, light out for the west and look for the new enterprise, California. I’ve enjoyed that kind of, how shall I say, interdisciplinary seminar and I’m looking at Robert Frost’s wonderful poem “Directive,” which is about visiting a house that is longer a house, a house that is no longer a home, in a town that is no longer a town, and what kind of reflections that brings up in America. Which is where the spirit comes in. I’ve done several of those. And I’ve been asked, I’ve talked several times to the University Womens Club. I belong to a downtown group where I’ve been asked to give a paper every three years or so. So I’ve given seven or eight. I’m giving a talk down there, how to read a poem and why.

Q. To people who perhaps don’t habitually read poetry.

A. No, no, but my real subject is reading. So as I mentioned before, I’ve re-read the classics. I re-read Shakespeare and I’ve re-read much of Charles Dickens. I’ve read most of Anthony Trollope. I have a wonderful collection, a Victorian collection, of novels. And while I do read contemporary novels, I tend to re-read
more than read new things. I would say that my years of retirement I have come to see myself as promoting nothing but serenity and sanity.

Q. Very good, very good. Counting the 34 years as faculty member and administrator and the 13 in retirement, your OSU affiliation and perspective encompass almost a half century. Please reflect broadly on significant changes that have occurred during this long period and also on what remains relatively steady, these both within the University context of course. Again, thinking very broadly and in terms of major elements, does the Ohio State University of 2001 bear much resemblance to the institution you came to in 1954? How would you rate its stature and reputation now versus 50 years ago?

A. Oh, it’s a very, very different institution 50 years later. And we’ve commented on some aspects of that difference. The major difference is that it’s now really a corporate rather than a collegial structure.

Q. Could you illustrate that by just a comparison or two?

A. Well, the collegial part of University governance was once a matter of the department, the College, the University - a matter of faculty concern and of care, so that the common welfare of the whole was everybody’s business. Since the corporate kind of model has come in, in which you have a CEO, and a hierarchal structure, decisions are frequently made at the top down, after consultation of some kind but not the kind that was typical 50 years ago. So that the bottom line (and I use a word that screams at you about the value system) corporate and everything is quantifiable. There’s much less talk about values in the University, much less talk. Why are you studying that for? Well, I’ve got to get a job, I’m
going to do this as a profession. I’m harping on nothing new. The whole concept of education and teaching and learning I believe has changed. We are now concerned more with product and how you identify what a product is. We used to be concerned about can you write a sentence. Can you put several sentences into a paragraph? There’s less concern about that than there’s ever been. While there are nods in that area about certain kinds of requirements of composition, the whole notion of literacy has changed. I don’t know what that bodes for the future. It’s not that we’re an unintelligent, not there there’s less intelligence around. People can manage computers and work in a high tech society in all kinds of creative interactive ways. But I think it’s a whole sense of values, is it important? – I think there’s where the change has come.

Q. In that same sense of change since we’re a couple of generations beyond your becoming a professor, there must be a change at that level as well.

A. Oh yes, no question about it. How would young people in the Department of Political Science, in the Department of Geography, in the Department of Pediatrics, how would they live and become comfortable in their professions?

Q. Again switching gears, you’ve built an excellent personal rare book library of English literature and intellectual history, emphasizing 18th and early 19th century materials. Tell us a little bit about your collecting passion, about parameters, about how you began, and how you developed a collection over time. And have you continued to add to it in retirement years? And something dear to my heart and interest, do you still intend to donate your collection to the OSU Librarians for its rare book collection?
A. Yes, I do. As a matter of fact, I’m having it appraised now for the purposes of giving it as a gift. And it’s a small but choice collection as you’ve seen. You saw it personally. I say “choice” because it was what I was interested in doing that I talked about earlier, about my interest in intellectual history. This is mainly a collection of 18th and early 19th century intellectual history - which involved mythology, theology, history, literature, and combinations thereof. These are all primarily leather bound, original leather bindings. Some have been rebound. Some of these have decorative bindings. But on the whole I collected them not as objects but as actual texts. I knew that some of these the library does not have. Some will be different editions of ones the library has, which brings their own uniqueness. I take pride in giving this. As I had mentioned to you, I was reading in the rare book room a book of 18th century travel. A big quarto volume with copper plates in it. The flyleaf said, in his own hand, “A gift of Edward Orton,” one of the early presidents. Orton Hall. He was one of the first. This wonderful old president-scholar gave his book, and I should like a little book plate which says, “A gift of A.J. Kuhn.” That’s all. Somebody 40 or 50 years from now will pick that up, and I don’t care whether they know who I was or not. They will see somebody cared about the University in giving such a gift. That’s how libraries are built, how good libraries are built.

Q. Exactly. Exactly. And we’ve had a share of that, not as big a share as some, such as Illinois and Indiana.

A. No, no, no. And some of that’s serendipitous, somebody being somewhere and having the money right at the time. We’ve often been there with our wish and our
will but not the resource to buy it with. As for my collection, it is not large. It’s about 300 volumes. But as I say, it belongs in a research library. Hopkins had a kind of tradition that graduate students were bookish - somebody collected editions of “Pilgrims Progress” or something like that. I know two or three of such colleagues, when they were brand new students, and listen we couldn’t afford books, but we found them. We were all on the GI Bill or minimal President’s Scholarships. My scholarship was for $1,000 a year plus tuition at Johns Hopkins for four years. But Roberta worked in the library - typing up the card catalogue.

Q. I didn’t know that.

A. Yes, she did. Sometimes we’d forego a hamburger and buy a book.

Q. Interesting trade off. The last of formal question I believe on our list here before we ask you for addenda, do you have any observations or comments that you would like to share with us about the stewardships of your predecessors and successors who served as Provost during your career at Ohio State? Frederick Heimberger, you have mentioned his name. John Weaver, John Corbally, whose name you have mentioned. James Robinson, whose name you have mentioned. Ann Reynolds, Deither Haenicke, Francille Firebaugh, and Myles Brand were Provosts when you retired in 1988.

A. Well I have a special place in my heart for Frederick Heimberger, who served longer than any other Academic Vice President since then. That was what his title actually was. I don’t believe it was until Jack Corbally that they actually added the name Provost. And if I’m not mistaken, the first year I served, my title
was Acting Academic Vice President. I don’t believe it was Provost. Harold then changed it in 1972, to Provost and Academic Vice President. In the early 70’s the title Provost started getting around - like CEO now is - and that sort of thing. But Academic Vice President used to be the Chief Academic Officer. Heimberger was a splendid, splendid man. In retrospect, it strikes me that he was of a sort like Bob Estrich as a Chairman. He was last of a breed of men. He was just right for. He was a man of high standards. He was passionately committed to academic freedom in a time when we needed spokesmen during those years following the Cold War, during which there were various reactions against all kinds of old values. He was a man of integrity, a man of directness. I read a good essay of his on the university published in Daedalus in about 1952, or a little later in ’56, because I remember telling him I had just read it when I met him in the Faculty Club. I was impressed by the general sweep of good sense in it. Fred was much appreciated by other major universities. He had close colleagues at Wisconsin, at Michigan, at good institutions, who recognized his merit. He was a stalwart spokesman for academic excellence at this University. And that - along with my own values I had got from Hopkins and from my teachers like Bob Estrich - was a good reinforcement for me. I felt very humble as I said walking over to that office for the first time knowing that Fred Heimberger had sat in that office for a long time, and that his secretary was still there, Eleanor Bayer. Wonderful lady! She would come in very quietly, not to alarm me, some day and she said,” Oh, Dr. Kuhn, there are thirteen chairmen out here that want to see you right away.”
Q. All at once?
A. All at once they had a large complaint about this college.

Q. Any of the other Chief Academic Officers?
A. I worked a while with John Weaver. Several people were here for two and three years. They all became Presidents.

Q. That’s what took them away.
A. John Weaver went to the University of Missouri as President. John Corbally went to Syracuse University. Jim Robinson went to McCallister College. And Ann Reynolds went somewhere.

Q. She went to California.
A. Yes, I think she did go to the state system. And Deither Haenicke went to Western Michigan. And Francille served for just one year, I think. And Myles served for three years and then went on to Indiana University.

Q. Oregon first.
A. Oregon first, right. I can’t help but feel that succession of two-year Provost was not a service to the University. This is merely speculation. For the Presidents whom I served under I don’t know whether it would be a relief you’re getting a new Provost or a pain in the neck. I would think the latter. It certainly doesn’t reflect very well finally on a University. I don’t think so anyway. Now I’m patting myself on the back for my eight years. But it suggests that you don’t need an Academic Vice President - which might have _____ to the Board of Trustees. Was this turnover unnecessary? But these were good people.

Q. Obviously were attracted to the next highest level of position.
A. Yes, they were. And maybe if you look at those 80’s, somebody will include that the 80’s were the most volatile time for movement in top administrative positions. This is just a part of a larger wave than that. But it does make you wonder, well, does this ship need that rudder?

Q. Good way to end that commentary. Finally, are there other issues and topics upon which you wish to comment or to round out this oral history interview?

A. Yes. One of the things that I was reflecting upon was the personal and the professional importance to me of the CIC relationship of the Big Ten Universities plus Chicago. That’s the CIC. I first learned about its importance and of giving you fresh views of standards and achievements was through the library and through the librarians of the Big Ten. I was on the Library Council early, and Lou Branscomb would take me occasionally to these meetings of the librarians. It opened my eyes about libraries as a resource and of its centrality to the University and what a resource this was for the whole region and the nation. I was much impressed. I was also really impressed by the quality, the astuteness, the shrewdness of the librarians. I got to appreciate some of the problems that they worked with. That was a very important learning for me. Then when I became Provost, all those years we would meet with the CIC regularly, and not just develop programs that were transferable across the Universities and credits; it was simply a good way to make a regional comparison. This was founded when Fred Heimberger was the Academic Vice President. That was on first venture into the CIC.

Q. I believe it was right around ’50 or ’51.
Okay. That would have been about Fred’s time. But as I say, I was enormously impressed. This was a special way of seeing what they were doing at Michigan, what they were doing at Chicago, what they were doing at Wisconsin, Indiana, Iowa, Purdue. It was a good learning resource, but a way also of reinforcing academic values. It was one way of our breaking the provinciality of a state university, any state university. You just put yourself in that league and boy, when you’d hear things like the University of Chicago is going to build Regenstein Library, a new library. What eye openers those were! For me, that was a way for us to aspire, compare ourselves with others, different and sometimes better. That was important to me. It was a force for qualitative comparison.

As a footnote I might add that these extraordinary libraries that make up the CIC, represent about 20% of the entire holdings of research libraries in these United States.

I’m not surprised at that.

Just incredible institutional resources.

Yea, yea, yea.

You mentioned you might have a comment or two on the University Press.

Yes. I think that was one of the fine things that Dick Armitage did - Everett Walters and Dick Armitage, particularly those two graduate deans. They developed the OSU Press and gave us a national presence among presses, with Weldom Kefauver, a wonderful director. He moved from virtually just a little in-
house press to a national press during those years. I don’t discern much besides silence right now from the press and no University support or very little.

Q. As you know, it was assigned to the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. And it somewhat languishes there.

A. I don’t know where my colleague Academic Vice Presidents have been on an issue like that. When you think of the greatness of Yale and Princeton and Harvard, you think of their presses. You think of their libraries. But you think also of their presses. So I don’t quite understand the neglect like that. It’s partly, I know, the competition in book publishing generally these days. But in any case, I felt pleased and proud of our press in the 70’s. And so did Harold Enarson. I mentioned one thing yesterday that I might elaborate on. I said something, maybe even a little flippantly, about rankings of universities and of libraries. It wasn’t that Harold and I were not concerned about the ranking of the library, if that really showed that we were out of bounds relative to other institutions. I don’t mean to say that we disregarded such things. My suspicion of rankings is frequently that they’re used more than not for political purposes. That they don’t really tell the truth. Nobody wants to lie about these things, but what does it tell you after you know that, assuming that is true? So it wasn’t that we weren’t concerned about library rankings. We felt really that we were not one of the New York Times neediest at Christmas. I think I said something about our University ranked nationally about where our library did. That’s probably a pretty good correlation.

Q. It is.
A. So I’m suspicious of rankings as such. But unfortunately I guess students, judging by what they read in U.S. World News and Time or something, see a program is 7th. Then they rush to it like lemmings, you know. I just wanted to add a note. I’ve been proud of our library system. One of the things that we don’t often recognize is the proliferation of this system across this campus. I can remember when we could have a serious argument about whether books should all be in one place. I had that with John Weaver.

Q That argument was laid to rest by the time I came.

A. I know, I know. But it was still a viable argument in the 60’s. I’m impressed by the way that the library system has not only just accommodated, but led the way in the development across the campus, with all its various strengths. The problem is when somebody generalizes about the library, they frequently are only talking about not even the tip of the iceberg – their own iceberg.

Q. A small fragment.

A. They’re talking about some fragment about which they are misinformed to begin with.

Q. Well, we’re at the end of the tape and the end of the interview. Thank you very much.