

**Elmer Learn, Ph.D.**

Narrator

**Dominique A. Tobbell, Ph.D.**

Interviewer

**ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTER  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

## **ACADEMIC HEALTH CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

In 1970, the University of Minnesota's previously autonomous College of Pharmacy and School of Dentistry were reorganized, together with the Schools of Nursing, Medicine, and Public Health, and the University Hospitals, into a centrally organized and administered Academic Health Center (AHC). The university's College of Veterinary Medicine was also closely aligned with the AHC at this time, becoming formally incorporated into the AHC in 1985.

The development of the AHC made possible the coordination and integration of the education and training of the health care professions and was part of a national trend which saw academic health centers emerge as the dominant institution in American health care in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. AHCs became not only the primary sites of health care education, but also critical sites of health sciences research and health care delivery.

The University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center Oral History Project preserves the personal stories of key individuals who were involved with the formation of the university's Academic Health Center, served in leadership roles, or have specific insights into the institution's history. By bringing together a representative group of figures in the history of the University of Minnesota's AHC, this project provides compelling documentation of recent developments in the history of American health care education, practice, and policy.

## **Biographical Sketch**

Elmer Learn was born in Syre, Pennsylvania, on January 19, 1929. He attended Penn State University and received his BS in 1950, his MS in 1951, and his Ph.D. in agricultural economics in 1957. Learn joined the University of Minnesota in 1956. He worked as Assistant Professor (1956-60), Associate Professor (1960-62), and Professor (1962-69) in the Department of Agricultural Economics. From 1963-64, he was head of the Department of Agricultural Economics. In September 1964, he was appointed Assistant to the President (under President O. Meredith Wilson) and Coordinator of Planning, and he remained in this position until 1968. In October 1964, President Wilson appointed him chair of the Committee for the Study of Physical Facilities for the Health Sciences. From 1968-69, he was the Director of Planning and Executive Assistant to the President. In 1969, he left the UMN and became the Vice Chancellor and Executive Assistant at the University of California, Davis. He resigned as Vice Chancellor in 1984 and returned to teaching agriculture. In 1993, he retired permanently. He is an agricultural economist with specializations in areas of agricultural prices, policy, and foreign trade. He served in the US Army from 1951-53.

## **Interview Abstract**

Elmer Learn begins by describing his background and providing a brief summary of his career. He explains why he went into agricultural economics. He discusses his appointment as assistant to President O. Meredith Wilson in 1964 and his work in this position, including his work planning parking, as the coordinator of planning, as chair of the Committee for the Study of Physical Facilities for the Health Sciences, and working with the Regents. He discusses Communiversities and the Committee for the Study of Physical Facilities, including the subcommittee evaluations of the different health units, the influence of John Westerman, and the power structure and hierarchy within the committee. He describes the community attitudes toward the UMN president, the merging of the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses into the "Twin Cities campus", dealing with the Minnesota Legislature, the influence of the Mayo brothers, William G. "Jerry" Shephard, Don Smith, and Laurence Lundeen. He discusses Presidents Wilson and Malcolm Moos, including President Moos' appointment. He describes his reasons for leaving the UMN and his work at University of California, Davis, particularly the financial problems Davis' Medical School faced and its loss of accreditation.

**Interview with Elmer Learn**

**Interviewed by Dominique Tobbell, Oral Historian**

**Interviewed for the Academic Health Center, University of Minnesota  
Oral History Project**

**Interviewed on August 15, 2009**

Elmer Learn - EL  
Dominique Tobbell - DT

DT: This is Dominique Tobbell. I'm here with Doctor Elmer Learn. It is August 15, 2009. I'm interviewing Doctor Learn at his home at 1702 Sycamore Lane, Davis, California.

Thank you, Doctor Learn, for agreeing to be interviewed.

EL: I'm happy to be here.

[chuckles]

EL: It's been forty years since I was involved in that, so my memory is not as good as it once was.

DT: We'll see what we can do to jog it.

EL: Okay.

DT: Why don't we start with a little bit of your background?

EL: Okay.

DT: Tell me where you were born and where you did your studies.

EL: I was born in Sayre, Pennsylvania. I did all my degrees at Penn State [Pennsylvania State University], but I spent a year at [the University of] Minnesota. Among other things, I spent seven hours a week with Leo Horowitz in economics. I did econometrics and theory of statistics. It was primarily to get the theory of statistics and so forth for my Ph.D. I, then, went back to Penn State and returned to Minnesota in the fall of 1956 as a

research analyst and, then, became assistant professor in 1957. I progressed through the ranks and became head of the Department of Agricultural Economics in 1963. Then, I became assistant to the president [O. Meredith Wilson] in 1964, and coordinator and, later, director of planning until 1969 when I came to [University of California] Davis, California, as executive vice chancellor. I did that for fifteen years, and, then, went back teaching for seven years, and, then, I retired.

DT: What led you to agricultural economics?

EL: My father was a county agent. Originally, I enrolled in education, and I was very unhappy with education. My father died in 1956. So I wanted to come into agriculture and I wanted to get a degree as quickly as possible, and agricultural economics was the field. I wound up spending ten years getting a degree. I'm very happy with it.

DT: You mentioned that you were appointed as assistant to President Wilson in 1964. How did that come about?

EL: I was on a committee that appointed the director of Cooperative Extension, Luther Pickrel. He had previously been assistant to the president. He told me—in fact, it was him and the dean of Agriculture [Sherwood O. Berg]—that President Wilson wanted me as his assistant. I said I couldn't believe that, but if that was what he insisted was best for the University, I would agree. I'm not sure that I would do that today. Anyhow, it was a good three years with President Wilson and two years with President [Malcolm] Moos.

DT: What do you think it was about your experience that you brought to that position? Why did Wilson want you in particular?

EL: I don't know. My guess is that it was Luther Pickrel more than anything else. I think I was conscientious and I could handle the correspondence. That was it. I felt *very* comfortable with President Wilson. He gave me a lot of authority. He created the coordinator of planning shortly after I came, which I was very interested in. That was it.

DT: So you had some experience with Luther Pickrel before?

EL: Yes. In fact, when he had been in Agriculture Extension, I did a *lot* of speaking for him, public speaking, primarily on agricultural policy and national policy. We became very good friends.

[chuckles]

DT: What were your responsibilities as assistant to the president?

EL: I think to do whatever the president required. As I said, in the first year, he assigned me as the coordinator of planning, and that became very appealing to me. I handled his correspondence. I worked through his secretary of correspondence. My responsibilities were whatever he required.

DT: Presumably, you had a fair amount of interaction with the faculty then on his behalf?

EL: Yes. I served as his replacement on most of the faculty senate committees. So I had a great deal of conversation with the faculty. I spoke for the president in these various committees.

DT: Were you still teaching at this point or did you...?

EL: No. I tried one time to teach the course, a graduate seminar in agricultural policy. I decided that I could do so little reading that I was behind the graduate students, so I did not continue... In fact, I took it as a policy not to try to do any teaching as long as I had an administration position.

DT: It seems that the administrative position is more than a full time position.

EL: Yes, it was a full time position. We became involved in the community a great deal, and I was the president's representative in the community organizations. That took a *lot* of nighttime activity. No, it was a full time job.

[chuckles]

DT: How were the faculty attitudes? Then, you mentioned the community. How were community attitudes towards the president and your role?

EL: I think very favorable. The Southeast Minneapolis Planning and Action Committee (SEMPAC) was a very active organization then.

Then, we formed an association with [John S.] Pillsbury, Jr. as chairman—I'm trying to think of his first name—and it was all of the various hospitals and educational institutions in the area, along with the community. We called it the Communiversity.

It became very effective. For example, I met one time with the various agencies that were involved in the community on traffic circulation. I think we had maybe twelve or fifteen representatives there from the State Department of Highways, to the city departments, and so forth. Parking and circulation was the first thing I took on, because we had then, and I suspect that it is no better today, maybe seventy-five percent of the parking spaces we needed. We lost some of them in the snow in the winter time, so it was a very difficult situation. Parking and circulation was my first job as planner.

DT: [chuckles] I can imagine that might raise some concern among the local residents if they're losing space.

EL Oh! terrible, yes. I became a villain in my former community, Saint Anthony Park, because I said we were going to have pay parking on the Saint Paul Campus, and we had

never had that before. Since then, I think they've expanded into the parking areas beyond the State Fairgrounds, and, then, run shuttle buses.

DT: Yes. The shuttle buses are very good. [laughter]

EL: Good!

DT: Were there any other issues in those early years as assistant that you recall being particularly contentious?

EL: Yes. As I said, the original meeting with Luther Pickrel and the dean... The dean was very supportive of my role. I, then, became involved in the proposed cooperation of Cooperative Extension and University Extension, and the dean was very opposed to that. So I was not considered a fair-haired boy in the administration from then on.

As I remember, we coined the phrase "The Twin Cities Campus" during President Wilson's tenure. We, then, became a single campus. Before, you could call from the Saint Paul Campus to the Minneapolis Campus without changing prefix, but you couldn't call from the Minneapolis Campus to the Saint Paul Campus. That was typical of the problems. The Saint Paul Campus was considered *a branch* rather than a free floating part of the Twin Cities Campus. We got the telephone system changed. I think it's become the Twin Cities Campus now where it wasn't at the time I came.

DT: That's very interesting. As you say, it's very much united now.

EL: Yes. You could ride the bus free from Saint Paul to Minneapolis, but you couldn't ride the bus from Minneapolis to Saint Paul.

DT: Interesting. So they were assuming that anyone already on the Minneapolis Campus doesn't have a need to go...?

EL: That's right.

DT: That's funny, because a lot of the faculty in my department have offices on the Saint Paul Campus but the department is based on the Minneapolis Campus. [chuckles] It's very different now.

EL: Yes, that's good! [chuckles]

DT: Can you tell me a little more about the Communiversity? What was that supposed to do?

EL: It was supposed to involve itself in making the area around the campuses a true cooperative adventure. We, for example, included the [Lutheran] Seminary in Saint Paul in that. We included the Fairview...the hospital on the West Bank.

DT: Fairview.

EL: Fairview. We were to promote the development of a true Communiversity. I don't think we succeeded effectively; although, I do remember one planning committee [meeting] that involved the West Bank that went until five in the morning, and the University didn't get a chance to speak.

DT: Wow.

EL: We, finally, adjourned with the idea that we would get together very soon and the University, among others, was the first to speak.

We hired [B.] Warner Shippee as the first staff member of the Communiversity, and he was to be sort of the conscience of the individual members. For example, I conflicted with him on several issues relating to parking and circulation. He was to represent *all* of the University, all of areas surrounding the University, including the University.

DT: Was he a faculty member or a member of the community?

EL: A member of the community. I don't know whether he's been replaced or not. I suspect not. [B. Warner Shippee died July 7, 2005]

DT: How do you spell his name?

EL: S-h-i-p-p-e-e. Warner...I think it was Warner. W-a-r-n-e-r. It could have been Werner.

DT: You mentioned that President Wilson created the position of coordinator of planning. Why did he feel the need to create that position?

EL: He felt there needed to be advanced planning of the various parts of the University. We began with parking and circulation because it was a very hot topic. We felt if we could solve that, then we could get on to other things. That was where the health sciences came in.

DT: You were appointed to chair of the Committee for the Study of Physical Facilities for the health sciences in 1964.

EL: Right.

DT: How did that come about?

EL: I guess before then it was pretty much an individual school responsibility. The Medical School which included Nursing and included Community [Public] Health, did its thing. The Dental School did its thing. Pharmacy was more or less a division of Chemistry rather than the health sciences. I think Wilson wanted to consolidate those

because (a) we needed more doctors, and we needed more nurses, and we needed more dentists, and (b) we were *very* constricted in space. He wanted to bring all of them together. I don't remember whether he asked me to put together a program. John Westerman was director of the hospitals, and he was secretary to the committee. I think he was very influential in the makeup of this. It was partly to force the committee and faculty members to communicate with one another. One of the things I find remarkable in the various subcommittees that we created... We created all members of the faculty regardless of the school. In fact, Vet Med [Veterinary Medicine] is included; although it was never included in the discussion of the facilities. It was included in the original discussion in the original committee.

DT: Why was that?

EL: Because we wanted *all* of the health sciences. I was struck by the fact that we had cradle to the grave because we had a training program for funeral directors in the Extension. I never could get that included, but I think it should have been included because we covered the whole spectrum of health sciences, including public health, nursing, dentistry, and pharmacy. The dean of Dentistry [Erwin Schaffer], I remember, said, "The physician of the oral cavity was the dentist." We also felt, in the physical facilities, that if we could consolidate the basic sciences component of dentistry with the basic sciences component of medicine, we could get both in the same space. I don't know whether that's ever been allowed to happen or not.

DT: I'm not sure. [chuckles]

You said President Wilson was responding to the need for more doctors and nurses and dentists and not having enough space. Do you know why he came to this realization?

EL: I don't know whether he came to that conclusion or not. You see, at Oregon, he did not have a medical school. At Minnesota, he had a medical school, but there was, clearly, a pecking order, and it began with the doctors. The doctors were *preeminent* in these decisions. Whether or not he felt the need for getting the medical and dentistry and pharmacy together, I don't know—but he didn't object to it.

DT: It certainly seemed that there was a lot of agitation from the state and there was a Hill Family Foundation Study.

EL: Right.

DT: Do you recall them playing a role?

EL: I don't remember. They may have, but I don't remember.

DT: How did you feel about your appointment as chair of the committee?

EL: Well, first of all, John Westerman was a *very* influential member of the committee. I took very much his suggestions to heart. I think the deans all really respected the committee, at least they didn't object to serving. Getting Pharmacy in was very important. There were pharmacists in the hospital, but they were *clearly* subordinate to the physicians. Medicine and Surgery were the two principal departments. I'm trying to remember whether I learned this before or after I became chairman of the committee. Even the president was nervous when he got a phone call from the head of Surgery. I remember the surgeons—it was reported to me—said they would participate in this Planning Committee, but they would get what they wanted when the time came. They tried to get the number of surgeries increased from twenty-four to thirty-six, as I remember, and they didn't succeed. Again, my memory of that is weak. I do know that the head of the Department of Surgery and the head of Medicine were two powerful individuals. My guess is they even overrode the dean.

DT: This is Doctor Owen Wangenstein and C.J. Watson?

EL: Right.

DT: Wangenstein was trying to get an increase in number of surgery facilities? Is that what you were saying?

EL: I think Wangenstein, by the time I completed my work, was retired. Oh, god, the guy from Berkeley came.

DT: [John] Najarian.

EL: Najarian. He was much more cooperative. In fact, I was surprised when I read about his problems with the Department of HEW [Health, Education, & Welfare].

Wangenstein and Watson, the head of Medicine, were clearly the leading thinkers in the School.

DT: How did that hierarchy play out within the committee discussions?

EL: Well, first of all, the hierarchy did not show up in the committees. We had lower members of the Department of Surgery and Medicine in, and they were pleased to have their say. The deans were all cooperative; the deans were extremely cooperative. I remember Bob Howard; I knew him very well. I knew the new head of Surgery [John Najarian] very well. I did not know the head of Pharmacy that well. Pharmacy was happy to be included.

DT: That's interesting that even though there were surgeons and people from the Department of Medicine, it wasn't their discipline so much that perpetuated the hierarchy. But the personalities, do you feel?

EL: They were *forced* to talk to one another in the committees, and I think the biggest single change we made was the faculty participated in the committees and the faculty talked as individuals rather than as representatives of Medicine or Surgery.

DT: How interesting. So pretty early on in the committee work, it seems you divided into these seven subcommittees. Then, those subcommittees went out and evaluated the different health units?

EL: Yes. The emphasis from the beginning was on the physical facilities, but they couldn't deal with the physical facilities without talking about instruction. So the various subcommittees were intended to come out with their instructional needs rather than with the physical facilities.

DT: Did they manage to achieve that?

EL: I think so, fairly well. Again, I don't know what happened. I received a hard hat for the first facility.

DT: [chuckles]

EL: I do know the first facility got up. Whether or not that continued, I don't know, because I left as the first facility was being approved. In fact, I think the final approval came after I left.

I think Don Smith became chairman of the committees. I don't know. As I recall, he was going to take on the committees. What happened since then, I don't know. I've lost all contact. I used to get... In fact, when I came across those pictures, I realized the Architects Collaborative talked to me periodically after I came to Davis. John Westerman used to periodically converse with me. My guess is he might be able to tell you more of what's happened since then. They appointed a vice president for health sciences some time after I left. I don't remember when that occurred.

DT: In 1970.

EL: It was 1970. Again, I don't know what his role... He was a physician, as I remember. Whether the Dentistry component continued after I left, I don't know.

DT: Sure.

Let's focus then a little more on the work of the committee. How exactly did the committee and the subcommittees do their work?

EL: [chuckles] Again, I don't remember. As I recall, we received information from the various subcommittees. We hired the Architects Collaborative to coordinate the architectural development. They came up with the architectural development based upon

the work of the various subcommittees. The subcommittees were to take into account of the needs of the various—depending upon their title—programs.

DT: Do you have any particularly contentious issues that came up during the committee?

EL: The only one I remember is the surgeons and the number of surgeries that were to be included in the first phase. They lost. Whether or not they lost after I left, I don't know.

DT: [chuckles]

EL: They wanted more surgeries than the committee was willing to give.

DT: Why is it that John Westerman was so influential?

EL: I think because his role as director of [University] Hospitals. The previous director of Hospitals [Raymond Amberg], who had been *very* influential, was a physician. John Westerman was *very* skillful at maneuvering various things. He was very, I think, committed to the concepts of the health sciences rather than the pecking order that had been established. Again, I don't know. He was the mover and shaker of the committee, and I took his word for things. He would meet with the various deans and faculty members. He was very skillful.

DT: It kind of makes sense because as director of the Hospital, the Hospital employees and nurses and the physicians and there are, also, you said, also pharmacists, so he, presumably, had a perspective of the unity of these different departments.

EL: He did. I don't even know whether he's living. I had heard that he got a divorce from his wife. He was in Pittsburgh the last I heard.

DT: I believe he is still alive. So I hope to talk to him very soon.

EL: He was younger than I, which was surprising. I was under forty at the time. He was very good.

DT: You mentioned the health sciences concept and this is something that John Westerman was committed to. Do you recall where the idea of the health sciences came from?

EL: I don't recall. My guess it may have been the influence of the pecking order that existed in the Medical School and the desire to break that down. But I don't know. That would be my guess in reviewing the thing.

DT: You mention the pecking order. Do you have any recollections of how, say, the nurses felt about the pecking order?

EL: Oh! I think they were very opposed to it, but they couldn't do anything. They were without power. They looked upon the committee as the power, and the dentists looked upon the committee as the power. I think Erwin Schaffer was a superb dean. And I think Bob Howard was a superb dean, but he, obviously couldn't compete with Wangenstein, and the head of Medicine. He simply did not have the stature they had.

DT: Which is a funny thing to think about, that the head of the School of Medicine...

EL: That's the way Medicine at Minnesota developed. Quite frankly, it was true at Davis of the new School of Medicine. Family practice was at the bottom of the pecking order. Surgery was at the top of the pecking order. Whether or not that's true today, I don't know. I divorced myself of that. It was true when I came here, and it was certainly true at Minnesota. Wangenstein through his personality and his power was able to dictate to the dean what he wanted to do.

DT: I was fortunate enough to speak with Bob Howard back in March.

EL: Oh, did you?

DT: Yes, a wonderful interview. He had articulated very clearly some of the contentions that he'd had to deal with during his deanship. It seemed the family practice issue in particular was a real hot bed.

EL: That's right.

DT: Do you remember much about that?

EL: I don't. I know it was an issue, but I don't remember the details.

DT: An interesting thing that both Bob Howard and, then, Bob Mulhausen, who I recently spoke with, too, said was how the issue of space in the physical facilities is what gave them in the dean's office power, having the authority to distribute space. That was really important. Did you see that playing out in the committee at all?

EL: I didn't. I don't remember it playing out. I do remember a long debate over the basic sciences for the Medicine and Dental School, and it did not become an issue, where it could have been a very big issue at the beginning. Again, I don't remember the details. As I say, that's forty years ago. That was a long time ago.

DT: And it was just one element of your job. [chuckles]

EL: Right.

DT: One of the things that both Doctor Howard and Doctor Mulhausen had speculated on was... They had the sense maybe that Central Administration was trying to wrest some of that authority and the space away from them.

EL: Uhhh... My guess is that was true to a degree. One of the things that came up was the proprietary hospitals. There was a possibility of people getting approval and funding from the federal government for those without the dean's authority. So we accepted all of the existing proprietary facilities. I notice in the document that we talk about the prior hospitals being the Heart Hospital and so on, and not touching them. And I think the former director of Hospitals was able to go beyond the dean to the state or to the federal government and get approval. I think they were conscious of that. I think the idea of the committee was to get central authority over *all* the schools, *all* the health sciences, rather than usurping the power of the deans. As long as the dean was cooperative, then Central Administration was cooperative. Again, I think John Westerman played a major role in that.

DT: You had mentioned the ability of some units or individuals to secure money from the state or the federal government and that that could override whatever the dean wanted to happen. It seems that the state had a fairly big investment in the expansion of the health sciences in this period...

EL: Right.

DT: ...and that they were willing to fund, obviously, a fair amount of that expansion. Did you as chair of the committee have any interaction with the State Legislature?

EL: I went before them in the spring of 1969, and I got fairly positive comments from the State Legislature that we were doing the right job. We got fairly good comments from the HEW. But the details of that were spelled out in subsequent sessions, and I didn't have any feedback, so I don't know.

DT: But you didn't go before the state until 1969?

EL: That's right.

DT: Yes, that's quite late in the process.

When you were chairing the committee and you were looking at how to reorganize the physical facilities and expand them, were you looking at any other Academic Health institutions to model that on?

EL: No. We were pretty much concentrated on the University of Minnesota and the *very* limited amount of land they had for expansion. It was the desire to get all the health sciences in that area, including Pharmacy, for example. That was challenge enough.

Incidentally, I'm assuming that Washington Avenue has not been submerged.

DT: No.

[laughter]

EL: That was a major feature of the planning, the submersion of Washington Avenue up to the campus.

DT: What do you mean by that?

EL: Well, it was to be a tunnel.

DT: Oh, yes, it has been.

EL: Has it?

DT: There are extensive tunnels underneath that connect all the units of the health sciences.

EL: Across Washington Avenue?

DT: But not across Washington Avenue, no...all to one side. So they had intended initially to go across?

EL: Right.

DT: That would be nice in the winter to have a tunnel across Washington, that's for sure. [laughter] But, no, it remained above ground.

EL: Okay. That's what I assumed, but I hadn't heard.

I know the A facility. I don't know of any others that have been constructed.

DT: B, C was constructed in the 1970s and Unit F, but there was a lot of trouble over, particularly, Unit F, which became the Nursing and Pharmacy units.

EL: That figures.

DT: Yes. The state kind of pulled out a lot of their funding toward the late 1970s. There was a sense from several in the State Legislature that the health sciences already had sufficient space. Why do they need more? There was a lot of back and forth, I think, and reluctance on the part of the state to continue funding.

EL: Yes, that figures.

DT: It figures because of the hierarchy, do you think?

EL: Yes. We satisfied the needs of Medicine and Dentistry and the others were left to shift. I think the original work of the committee was to get all of them approved so that

the original pecking order would not exist, but, again, I don't know. I have been so far removed from it that I don't know.

DT: You had mentioned earlier about when your committee began its work and realized that in order to understand the physical facility needs, you needed to understand the instructional needs. It seems that a lot of the money that the U was getting from the state was contingent on the size of the incoming classes of students.

EL: Right.

DT: You've mentioned the connection, obviously, between the physical space and instructional needs, but did you see anything really specific regarding the expansion of the sizes of the classes, the incoming student, and the physical needs?

EL: Again, I don't remember all of the details. But I do know that the concept of a school in Rochester was being discussed and the concept of a school in Duluth was being discussed. I think there was objection to both of those. Again, I don't remember.

DT: There's, actually, in this period as well, a lot of discussion from the local Saint Paul physicians to try and build another medical school in Saint Paul. Do you remember anything about that?

EL: No. That was after I left, I think.

DT: On your committee, you had heard from the subcommittees and you put together your final report, how do you think the final report was received?

EL: I think it was received fairly well, but, again, I'm probably not the person to ask. As I remember, we got tentative funding of \$45 million or something like that from the state. We were to get from HEW matching funds or something like that. I think it was favorably received, but I don't know what happened to the committee after that. I don't know. John Westerman stayed there; he was there for several years after I left. He may know. Without talking to him, you don't know.

DT: That is definitely something that I will ask him.

You delivered the report was it in 1967?

EL: I think we delivered it in 1968 and it became the basis for the presentation to the Legislature in 1969.

DT: And, then, you left?

EL: I left in the summer of 1969. I immediately got involved in the negotiations with the county in Sacramento, and I couldn't possibly keep up with Minnesota.

DT: That makes absolute sense.

It's interesting... When I asked Bob Howard about the influence of your committee on the expansion and reorganization, he felt that, in the end, the impact of the report and your committee's work was less important than I had assumed it was or how it looked to be in the archives.

EL: It may have been. As I recall, [Don] Smith, the vice president, assumed my responsibilities. Whether he followed up with the committee or dealt with individual deans, I don't know.

DT: You had mentioned a little while ago, in reference to when you came to Davis, the low position of family practice on this hierarchy. While you were still at Minnesota, the Department of Family Practice was created. Do you remember anything about that?

EL: I don't remember, other than their desire to be recognized as important. I don't remember.

DT: [pause] How would you say your experience on the Committee for the Physical Facilities interacted with your other work in charge of planning?

EL: Again, the important thing in the Committee for the Physical Facilities was we had an executive secretary, John Westerman, who was *very* important. Hugh Peacock was the planner, the architect planner, who was *very* important in that, and the Architects Collaborative was very important. I guess I was more than a figurehead, but I was, essentially, a figurehead to whom all of those people reported. I think I was more a respondent to the various committees than I was a spokesman for the activities on the committee. I did not feel that I had the same power, for example, that I had in California because I was executive vice chancellor, and I had control of the budget and so forth. I did not have that at Minnesota. On the other hand, I had the committee, and I had the deans, and I had John Westerman, and I had the Architects Collaborative who were very important and very influential.

DT: What other responsibilities did you have or what other planning projects were undertaken during your time there?

EL: There were no other specifics, because the health sciences and the parking and circulation and the Commiversity took all my time. I don't know what would have happened after that. As I recall, we didn't have any specific plans for the social sciences, for example. Oh! the merging of the Saint Paul/Minneapolis campuses was an important factor in that. Beyond that, I don't know.

DT: As you say, those are pretty big projects in and of themselves.

EL: Yes.

I was surprised that the committee for the health sciences was appointed in 1964. I did not get there until September of 1964, so it would have been in the early stages. I think it was 1965, but I may be wrong.

DT: In your position, did you have any interaction with the Regents?

EL: I attended all the Regents' meetings. I did not have specific reactions to the committee. I think that, for example, the report of a planning committee would have gone through the president rather than through me directly. So I don't recall any specifics.

DT: From reading in the archival material and, actually, in conversations with Bob Howard and others, it seems that one of the Regents, Herb Huffington, who was a physician, a local general practitioner, kind of mobilized some quite vocal frustration with the expansion of the health sciences, or, maybe, it was just more folks in the Medical School. But you don't recall any of that?

EL: No.

DT: Some of that was in the early 1970s after your time there anyway.

EL: Yes, it would have been after my time.

DT: During your time in planning and as assistant to the president, President Wilson left the U, and he was replaced by President Malcolm Moos. How did your responsibilities—or did they change—change with that change of leadership?

EL: I don't think they changed. If anything, I became more powerful because Moos was not the president that Wilson had been. Uhhh... I'm sure that report went to Moos, but I don't recall.

DT: Why is it that President Wilson left?

EL: He had a better job. He went to the Advanced Center for Social Sciences at Stanford. My guess is he probably had enough of the presidency job also, but I don't know.

DT: Do you remember the process by which Malcolm Moos was appointed president, how he came to be appointed?

EL: Yes. [chuckles] I remember Larry Lundeen, secretary of the board and vice president for business and finance, and I went down to meet with the chairman of the board, Chuck [Doctor Charles W.] Mayo [son of Charles H. Mayo and nephew of William Mayo]. We met with him. They had, originally, apparently, settled on the present dean [given and surname?] of, I think, of Kansas, but when that became public, he cancelled out. Moos then was the second choice. Again, I don't know the specifics of

that. Our conversation with Chuck Mayo was mainly the process by which the committee would be formed and so forth.

DT: Moos was an outside candidate? He wasn't already at the U?

EL: No. He wasn't at the U.

DT: In what ways was he not as an effective president as Wilson?

EL: Uhhh... Well, I can give you an example because it is very firmly in my mind. For the first presentation of the budget that he did to the Regents (which then became the basis for the presentation to the state), I went through and notated various sections and what he should say and so forth. He had not reviewed any of that. His presentation of the budget was terrible. On the other hand, Wilson could give numbers down to the two decimal points before the Legislature. Wilson was too bright for many of the people in the Legislature; whereas, Moos was a fellow representative, at best. He would go for a drink afterwards and so on and so forth. Moos was, I think, not the president that Wilson was.

Had Wilson stayed there, I don't know whether I would have accepted the job at Davis or not. I had made up my mind that I had to get out. It was a question of whether I went back to the department or went someplace else.

DT: Your deciding you wanted to get out, was that because of the presidential change or were there other reasons, too?

EL: Primarily the presidential change, plus, the role was that of a staff officer, not a line officer. I did not have any—quote—responsibilities. I remember I went to Wilson one time and complained about a subordinate whom I was having trouble with. He said, "Work it out." So I was ready for a line position rather than a staff position. I didn't think one should stay in the staff position for an extended period of time, and five years was enough.

DT: You mentioned the different presentation styles, perhaps, of Wilson and Moos. I wonder, the fact that Wilson seemed too bright for the Legislature, did you think ever impacted his ability to get the support of the Legislature?

EL: [pause] I don't think it affected his support significantly, but I do think it affected his acceptance as a testifier before the Legislature. He was not... [pause] I don't know. I guess I have trouble responding to that, because I don't know. I don't think he was as effective as he might have been in the presentation of the budget. On the other hand, he was *so* knowledgeable that legislators couldn't afford to be in opposition. They may have wanted to be. I don't know. I think that's a hard question.

DT: Then I pose the same question for Moos. Do you think that his failure to present the budget material well had any...?

EL: Yes, I think it did. While they accepted him as an individual, they did not accept the numbers in the same way they did Wilson's. You had to be very secure in your position if you went in opposition to Wilson. I don't think the same is true of Moos.

DT: That's really a very important and interesting observation. I'm sure there were other factors playing a role, but certainly under Moos' tenure, it seems that the University had a lot harder time getting money from the state. I mean, it's not like it was receiving a windfall from the state during Wilson's time, and...but especially, around the health sciences expansion, there was a lot more resistance.

EL: Again, I don't know. We got very good acceptance in the initial version. I don't know what happened after that. My guess is it was not as well received, but I have no knowledge.

DT: Again, I will be able to ask John Westerman and others. But that's not an observation that I have heard before.

EL: My guess is there was a change in the state finances in the 1970s, and that may have affected the results.

DT: Yes, I'm sure it's multifaceted. For sure.

How was Moos received by the community, and how did the Communiversit develop then under this new leadership?

EL: I don't know. I think the Communiversit was a phrase coined for the initial speech that Moos gave. I don't think his heart was in it, but I don't know. Again, I left shortly after his inauguration, so I don't know. My guess is it was not as favorably received.

We had a change in the Board of Regents, too. Charlie Mayo, I think, stepped down as chair of the Board of Regents. See, I think Wilson ran the Board of Regents. While he was the figurehead, he was an important figurehead. I think Moos ran with the car salesman [Lester Malkerson]. Oh, god, I'll think of the name during the night.

DT: [chuckles]

EL: Anyhow, I think they did not have as effective a Board of Regents after Wilson left as they did before, but, again, I'm probably not the person to judge that.

DT: The fact that Charles Mayo was chairman of the board and, obviously, the Mayo Brothers have such an interesting and long history of involvement with the University... It's interesting that you say that Wilson really was in charge of the board for all intents and purposes. Did you feel the influence of the Mayo Brothers while you were at the University?

EL: I felt the influence of Charles Mayo. He was a *very* nice man. But he, clearly, took his lead from President Wilson, which I think was the proper position. You see, there was one Democrat on the board at the time. It was important that the contentious issues be resolved in advance of the board meeting rather than at the board meeting. For the most part, I think Wilson was very skillful at that.

DT: There was a need for the contentions to be resolved because of the Democrat? There being a Democrat, it would be harder to get consensus or...?

EL: Well, because the Republicans had the vote. I may be wrong, but I don't think so.

DT: There was a lot of behind the scenes...?

EL: Yes. There was a great deal. In fact, under Wilson, the board meetings were fundamentally agreements that had been reached in advance.

DT: Was Wilson doing his own work in the backroom scenes or, as his assistant, were you involved?

EL: No, I wasn't involved with the Regents at all. I think Larry Lundeen was involved as secretary of the board. Wilson spent a great deal of time with him. No. His relationships with the board were entirely his. I think that was true of Moos, as well.

DT: Do you remember much about "Jerry" [William G.] Shepherd?

EL: Yes.

DT: I've read a lot of his materials collected from his office and reading the archival record, and it seems that he was a very influential leader.

EL: He was. In fact, Wilson *made* him an influential figure, and Don Smith came from that office and became executive vice president [unclear]. He [Mr. Shepherd] became an influential figure.

DT: How did Wilson make him an influential? Do you remember that?

EL: He relied, apparently, upon his academic vice president much more so than previous presidents.

DT: Yes, that's certainly the sense that I got from reading the documents, that Shepherd had his hand on everything. He just was very, very [unclear],

EL: Everything academic.

DT: Yes. I guess that makes sense given his title. [chuckles]

EL: Yes.

DT: Do you recall how the faculty and the deans responded to Shepherd? Did they feel favorably towards him?

EL: I think so. Certainly with Don Smith present, they responded favorably.

DT: What was Don Smith's responsibility then?

EL: He was assistant to the vice president. He was involved in very much the gamut of things that the office was involved in. Of course, under Moos, he became not executive but he was vice president over the vice presidents.

DT: Okay. It seems that Don Smith was Shepherd's point person?

EL: Right.

DT: In the same way that you were really the point person for Wilson among the faculty?

EL: Right.

DT: That's very interesting. It's so interesting to see how the dynamics of an office work.

EL: My replacement was chosen out of Vice President [Stanley] Wenberg's office. Whether he played the same role as I did, I don't know. I don't think he did.

DT: Who was the vice president of building...?

EL: Lundeen.

DT: That was Lundeen, okay.

EL: That was *the* vice president until Don Smith came.

DT: That's interesting. Is that because of Lundeen's personality or is it because of the office that he held?

EL: Because of (a) his contact with the Regents' as secretary and (b) the role of the vice president of business and finance had always been the major vice presidency. He had problems. [chuckles] How long he lasted, I don't know.

DT: I'm not entirely sure...

EL: Let's just say he had problems.

DT: [chuckles] Will you feel comfortable articulating, maybe, some of those problems?

EL: It was his drinking, alcohol.

DT: Oh. Interesting. So it was personal, so, presumably, that impacted his ability to do his...?

EL: Yes.

DT: You mentioned a little while ago that you had decided with the change in presidential leadership that you wanted to leave the staff position. Did you return to the Department of Agriculture?

EL: No, I took this job.

DT: Can you tell me how your job here came about?

EL: I was asked in a phone call, when the replacement for Lundeen was being interviewed, Hale Champion, if I would consider dean of Agriculture. I said, "Yes," immediately. [chuckles] I went through the various interviews as dean. When I was going to leave, the chancellor said, "We have two vice chancellorships available. One is academic affairs and the other is executive. You may feel you want to apply for one of those." I said, "I feel uneasy moving from agriculture in the Midwest to agriculture in California, but I think I can do it. My job has been much more equivalent to the executive vice chancellor position." That's what I wound up getting.

[chuckles]

DT: My question was going to be would you have been concerned about making the shift from working in like the administration back into agriculture?

EL: Uhhh... I don't think so, but I don't know. The job as vice chancellor came up, and the chancellor assigned me to the health sciences which fitted my desires. So I came that way.

DT: I'm fascinated that, here you are, you're trained as an agricultural economist, but, yet, you spent a significant part of your professional life working on health sciences issues. So, presumably then, it was your experience at Minnesota that led the chancellor to appoint you to health sciences expansion here at Davis. Can you talk a little bit about your work once you got to Davis in that area and were there any similarities to your time at Minnesota?

EL: Well, we didn't have a school of dentistry. We didn't have a school of nursing. We didn't have hospital administration and so forth. So, much of my time was spent dealing with the take over of a county hospital and making it a university hospital. In fact, I think

my resignation came as a result of the loss of accreditation and, then, regaining it the following year. I swore to my wife that I would never subject myself to that again. Obviously, I think I was a fairly decent vice chancellor for the health sciences, but we had many, many problems, first of all, with the County of Sacramento, and, then, later on, with the state.

DT: Can you articulate what some of those problems were, first with the county?

EL: With the county, it was getting them to pay their bills. For the first three years, they didn't pay a thing. They rejected all of our billings on the grounds of inadequate communication. Eventually, the regents then cancelled the contract. There were three years before either could cancel. We found a problem over the seismic relations of a hospital, and we said, "We cancel." Then, we entered into negotiations again for that. Then, they came around, and they gave us the hospital, essentially. They didn't admit to the seismic problems, but they essentially admitted it. We then settled. That was to take place, I think, in 1977, and I had left in 1974, after the negotiations.

DT: When UC-Davis began its relationship with the county hospital, this was very soon after you got here?

EL: Right.

DT: So for those first three years, it just wasn't paying its bills. That must have left Davis in a lot of budget problems.

EL: Terrible. Terrible.

[break in the interview]

EL: One of the problems we had was that the emergency room became, essentially, the family physician for the county. One of the things we negotiated in the contract in the subsequent years was that they would open a separate facility where they would see people who dropped in. How that's worked, I don't know. But they have, clearly, in the twenty years that I've been out, become much more a medical school hospital than they were before.

DT: With the budget problems that that early relationship caused, you must have had to do a lot of work in order to take account of those deficits.

EL: That's right. We also had to... [pause] Well, the requirement that we treat all people showing up at the emergency room and, thus, became the family physician for the County of Sacramento, and that was inconsistent with our goal as a university hospital. The state got involved, and we lost our accreditation. I look back on that... That was favorable. At the time, it was terrible. A good share of the problem related to the role of the hospital governing board. That was me. We, then, corrected that. We appointed a

physician as, essentially, responsible for the chief of staff's responsibilities, as opposed to an elected chief of staff. That made all the difference in the world.

DT: Why is that?

EL: Because the chief of staff in an elected position is not able to get up to speed in the one-year appointment. So, for example, at the medical staff meetings, which I attended for a year after that, the medical staff then became responsible. Before that, they assumed that the responsibility for appointment in the School of Medicine became responsible for the performance of a physician in the hospital. That wasn't the case. It was only when we recognized that that we became a full-fledged university hospital.

DT: So the loss of accreditation forced you to reevaluate how everything was working?

EL: One of the proudest moments in the accreditation process was the physician who came to me afterwards and said he had never seen a medical staff change in one year's time as we did, and we deserved a lot of credit for that.

DT: That's fantastic.

What, specifically, caused you to lose the accreditation?

EL: Failure to review problems as they came up in the hospital. Here again, we recognized problems in the appointment of faculty but did not recognize problems in the review of the staff responsibilities.

DT: That's very interesting. Did you find at any time that your experience from your work at Minnesota and your involvement with the health sciences helped you solve some of these problems?

EL: I'm sure they did, but I don't know. The dean [Hibbar Williams], who was responsible at the time I left, gave me a gift of a year's subscription to the *New England Journal of Medicine*. I learned for the first time that the half-life of knowledge you gain in the hospital or in the medical school is very brief. In a year's time, I lost interest in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, but I could read most of it before that.

DT: You had mentioned that at Davis, there was just the medical school. There wasn't a nursing school?

EL: No. There was a nursing school being developed. They're going to admit students for the first time this fall.

DT: Oh, wow!

EL: One of the things that I was responsible for was the ancillary development. We had a committee, but we wound up in fiscal problems, so it never got off the ground.

DT: There were no hierarchical issues then that you would have seen?

EL: No...only surgery versus family practice, for example.

DT: Within the medical profession itself, but not with the other professions?

EL: Yes, and that created problems with the dean, I'm sure, but not for me.

DT: [laughter] You resigned as vice chancellor in 1975?

EL: In 1984.

DT: Oh, 1984. You stopped working on the health sciences in...?

EL: In 1984.

DT: Okay. Then you returned to teaching agriculture?

EL: Right, teaching and research. I then retired permanently in 1993, January 1, 1993.

DT: It sounds like, with your story about the *New England Journal of Medicine* that as soon as you retired, the vice chancellor position... You left health care aside and you returned full force to agricultural economics?

EL: Right.

DT: Do you have any final thoughts on the development of Minnesota's Academic Health Center and your experiences there?

EL: Well, I don't have final thoughts of my own. I do want to know how the development of the health sciences has progressed in Minnesota, but that's immaterial, and that's not your job to tell me.

DT: [chuckles]

EL: I think we had an influence in considering the expansion of medicine, of nursing, of dentistry, of pharmacy. Whether that has continued, I don't know. I do know had I stayed there, I think the committee would have continued its influence. Whether or not it would have been overcome by budgetary problems, I don't know.

DT: Most of my knowledge is focused on the early years of the Academic Health Center and the people I've interviewed so far and the archival material I've seen have all been from the Medical School side. So I have a very one-sided perspective. But, certainly, everyone that I've spoken to who were in the dean's office of the Medical School, they seem to have perceived the expansion and reorganization as a success and have, at least,

talked about the idea of the health sciences being more coordinated in the teaching approach. I'm very interested to speak to people from the Nursing School and [School of] Dentistry who were there at the time, and see what their perspective was.

EL: I think Edwin Schaffer has died.

DT: Yes.

EL: Whether or not that progress has influenced them, I don't know. I assume it did, but I don't know.

DT: My sense from reading the archival material is the expansion certainly did allow the University to enroll more students and to produce more doctors and dentists and nurses and that nationally, by the end of the 1970s, there were concerns about having a surplus of physicians anyway. But through the 1970s, there was this ongoing tension, it seemed, between the increased enrollment within the University of medical and dental students, and, then, the question of where those graduates were then going, whether they were staying in the state.

EL: They were going out of state, primarily.

DT: Right primarily.

EL: And that was a question, we asked even of Milton Eisenhower. He visited and I met with him. Too many of the graduates in the Medical School were going out of state for their internship, and they stayed out of state. Whether or not the increase in enrollment would have resulted in more of them staying in the state, I don't know.

DT: I actually think the development of the Duluth medical campus helped somewhat, particularly that campus' focus on family practice, and on the Twin Cities' campus, the development within the Family Practice Department of the role of the Physician Associate's Program, which sent medical students out into rural areas of the state for six months to a year. I think that was deemed a success—at least in the 1970s.

EL: Good.

DT: I think it was an ongoing tension, but there were certainly some strategies to get those. My sense is that the local practitioner community was heavily involved in forcing the University to graduate more people who would stay in the states.

EL: Yes.

DT: I'll be happy as my project develops to keep you [unclear].

EL: I would like to be informed.

I'm sorry. I would have remembered much more had you interviewed me at sixty and seventy [years of age]...

DT: Of course.

EL: ...than today.

DT: You've provided me with such wonderful insights, especially insights about President Wilson and Moos and the kind of the dynamics in that office.

EL: I hesitate to be critical of Moos, but he was not the man that Wilson was.

DT: You're also not the first person I've spoken to that has said that.

[laughter]

EL: I know the vice presidents were very unhappy, and I was unhappy.

DT: Thank you so much.

EL: Well, thank you! You've gotten me to reflect on things that I hadn't reflected on. Again, I apologize for the forty years of memory.

DT: You have absolutely nothing to apologize for. You were very informative. So thank you.

EL: Good.

[End of the Interview]

**H**ermes Transcribing & Research Service  
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota, 55124  
952-953-0730 [bhermes1@aol.com](mailto:bhermes1@aol.com)