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Interview with Cheryl Dickson

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on July 3, 1995
University of Minnesota Campus**

Cheryl Dickson - CD
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers, the interviewer for this program to understand the University of Minnesota in its last half century of life. I'm interviewing this morning, which is July 3, 1995, Cheryl Dickson. She has been, for twenty years, associated with the Minnesota Humanities Commission and probably knows as much about the higher education in the state of Minnesota and how it relates to the community than anyone I know, certainly. The interview is being conducted in my office at 833 [Social Science Tower]. Cheryl kindly came over on her first day of a week's vacation.

As I was suggesting, Cheryl, before we turned the machine on, it's always helpful to whomever is listening to know a bit about your autobiography, your career . . . coming at a reasonable pace to your association with the Minnesota Humanities Commission. Perhaps, we'll say a few things about the state-based programs and, then, we'll be off and running. So, where do you come from other than South Dakota? I know that.

CD: I come from Betty Friedan and the *Feminine Mystique*.

CAC: [laughter]

CD: It had the most profound affect on me of any book that I've read in my entire life, I think. I was a very happy, contented housewife, mother of three children, and my husband brought the book from the library and said, "I know you'll be interested in this. It looks wonderful." I read it and I didn't ever see anything the same way again. What it made me do is begin to think about my life after children or, at least, after small children at home; so, I started looking for things to do. I took some courses at the university.

CAC: You'd had some higher education before then?

CD: I had gone to college at the University of South Dakota for two years. I came over here and did some things in Continuing Ed and they were satisfying; but, I'm not very patient.

CAC: Were you part of the CEW [Continuing Education for Women] program?

CD: No, I wasn't in CEW. I was just in ordinary Continuing Education and Extension. The first course I took was from Jim Jernberg.

CAC: Ohhh.

CD: He's now at the Humphrey School. It was a course on the American presidency. He was an absolutely brilliant teacher. I've been grateful to him ever since because I had been gone long enough—this was about in 1971 or 1972—and older students weren't feeling real confident about coming back, even in Continuing Ed. Jim was so kind and welcoming. He made me feel smart and a valuable member of his class. It was exactly what I needed. But, as I said, I got impatient so I went over to Metro[politan State] "U" where they could grease the skids and get me through quicker. They also promised me that they would find me an internship of some kind which would get me into the work world sooner, which is where I wanted to be. I looked around at the world and it had changed considerable since I was in college in the late 1950s. I discovered the not-for-profit world which really had been one that I think had had an incredibly low profile at the time that I was in college. I discovered the Humanities Commission by attending a program the Humanities Commission had funded and it took my breath away. I was so excited by the idea of bringing scholars to the public.

CAC: You remember Jim Jernberg. Do you remember that first program . . . what its substance was?

CD: I remember the first program. It was a program on peace and justice. It was sponsored by the Clergy and Laity Concerned. The executive director, at the time, was Judy Healey. The program was in a hotel ballroom. There were 250 people, and people were excited and engaged, and I thought, this is the best we can do. This is the most wonderful thing we can do . . . bring citizens and scholars together over important issues of our time and really try to engage ourselves in public discussion of ideas. I called Metro "U" and said, "Could you help me get into the Humanities Commission?" A very nice man over there said, "I'd be happy to walk over there with you and we'll see what they'll do." We went over to the tiny little office . . . a tiny little office. It had two very young women working there. Both were much younger than I. They were a little amused at this suburban housewife/mother who wanted to come work for them. They said, "Of course, you can work for us. We can't pay you, but you can come work for us."

CAC: Who was the director then?

CD: Lynn Smith is her name, a really remarkable young woman who got the job when she was twenty-three years old . . .

CAC: Heavens.

CD: . . . I think because most people thought those state programs of the National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH] wouldn't last. People thought they were kind of silly idea. Remember . . .

CAC: They were very experimental.

CD: . . . think back about the whole idea of the public humanities. All it was is a phrase. Nobody knew what they were doing, or how to do it, or what to do, or who would do it. It was not a highly desirable job; so, they hired this very young woman as executive secretary. The program itself is, I think, really interesting because . . .

CAC: This was in the mid 1970s?

CD: This was in 1975. In 1965, Phi Beta Kappa and ACLS [American Council of Learned Societies] and, I assume, the Organization of American Historians and the Philosophy Society, all of the learned societies got together and said, "There should be federal support for the arts and humanities." They began to lobby . . . actually, this is before 1965. I think Phi Beta Kappa and ACLS paid for the report. It was chaired by the president of Yale, I think it was, Barnaby Keene. The report called upon the Congress to fund the arts and humanities and, certainly, told them about the support in Europe for culture, and education, and scholarship. In 1965, finally, the Congress did pass that law. Shortly thereafter, the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] said, "Of course, there shall be programs in all of the states." The NEA went to all of the states and said, "If you'll create a state arts board and give them a minimum contribution of \$250,000"—think about it, \$250,000 is a lot of money in 1965 dollars—"we then, from the NEA, will give that agency a block grant every year." All of the states did it.

The National Endowment for the Humanities didn't do anything, and it didn't do anything, and it didn't do anything. I've talked with people at the Endowment for a long time about this to try to figure out why nothing happened there. I think that the real problem was the man who was put in charge of starting the programs in the states . . . a man named John Barcroft. I can't remember John's background. I think he's a political scientist. John had a basic belief—he has denied this ever since, but I think it's pretty clear to those of us who know him—that if it was good scholarship, the public couldn't understand it and if the public understood, it wasn't good scholarship.

CAC: That's an abiding . . .

CD: There was a real basic reluctance to begin anything in the states.

CAC: Whereas, in the arts, the communication had been there forever.

CD: The arts are for everybody. There's been the idea that anybody can call himself or herself an artist. I just said the weekend before last to my western states' colleagues, "Would that we would ever reach the day that we would say, 'Everybody is a humanist.'" Why haven't we done this? Why haven't we invited everybody in, instead of insisting that the only way the humanities can be enjoyed by the public is if we bring in the priests to give the poor unbeknited the wisdom of their learning? It's very sad to me when I think that we have not been allowed to try to get the public doing the humanities.

CAC: The state-based program for the humanities came substantially later?

CD: Substantially later. In fact, finally, in 1970, which is five years after the Endowment legislation, the Congress threatened the NEA and said, "If you don't get the state-based programs going, we're going to cut your funds. You've promised for too long and nothing has happened." By then, a number of very smart arts directors in the states had spotted that pot of money sitting over there in the Humanities Endowment, knowing that it had to go to the states. They thought, why should I let another organization get started when I can get my hands on that money? Massachusetts, North Dakota, states all over the country started calling themselves the State Arts and Humanities Board . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

CD: . . . so that when those state-based humanities would start, they'd be there to receive the money. This is one place where I think the humanities people, the people at the NEH, were very smart. They know that not only are the arts seductive, the arts are greedy. If the arts had gotten their hands on that humanities money, there would have been no public humanities. They decided that they couldn't start state humanities boards, at least state programs that were state agencies because the inclination of state legislators, of course, would be to combine them and, then, the humanities would be lost. So, instead, they went around the country and they formed state humanities councils in all different ways. In some states, they lodged it in Continuing Ed at the major universities and in some places, they put it in private colleges. In Minnesota, we were very lucky because we happen to be one of the truly public agencies they started. They came here and I always like to say, "They anointed four white guys." That's really not fair. They anointed four prominent people whose positions really made them the kind of people who would be interested in a program like this.

CAC: Starting with Russell Fridley from . . .

CD: Russell Fridley, who was the director of the [Minnesota] Historical Society, and John Schwarzwald, who was director of KTCA public television in the area, and Robert Rolf, who was president of Hennepin County Public Library, one of the finest county libraries systems in the country . . . I don't know if they invited the dean of Continuing Ed, at the time, but the

University of Minnesota sent Don Woods, the associate dean of Continuing Ed. Four nicer, more able men of goodwill, I think, couldn't have been found. They were really fine gentleman.

CAC: They were shooting in the dark? They didn't know what to do?

CD: They didn't have the foggiest idea. All they knew is that they were going to be recipients of a block of money, which they, in turn, were to regrant.

CAC: That's clear . . . that is was a regrant?

CD: It was clear that NEH had decided that it would be a regranting of federal funds and that the grants would go to not-for-profit groups and organizations. The groups didn't have to be 501-c3s. All they had to do is be a group of people who could prove that they could be fiscally responsible. Any kind of an ad hoc group could be formed to conduct a program. The funniest thing of all of this is that once the Endowment people started to make the program, they got more, and more, and more directive. They decided that the funds had to be matched one for one by whoever got them and that it could only fund public programs for the out-of-school adult that would bring the humanities to bear on issues of public policy.

CAC: That's several criteria rolled into one.

CD: That is really narrow. It rules out any kind of an interpretive program for a museum, for example. It rules out anything that libraries naturally do. It rules out any kinds of groups of citizens getting together to talk about community and local history, unless it's focused on public policy. Then, they said, "But you can't fund advocacy groups."

CAC: As you remind me of this, I'm reminded for the first time of the Land-Grant mission idea, which, after all, has an implied, if not a directly explicit, public policy criterion.

CD: I sometimes wonder if the two aren't related, if the idea for the Humanities program's focus didn't come out of that old Land-Grant legislation. It could well have. Then, the Endowment staff in their inimitable wisdom said that every state humanities council should have a theme. This is where Minnesota really got handicapped. I think all of the programs were handicapped in the beginning. I think if Minnesota's program had been something like Looking for the Common Good or something very broad, and easy, and inviting, it wouldn't have been so difficult to get started. The committee decided that the Minnesota theme would be Regionalism—colon—the State We Are In. Regionalism, at the time, was a really hot topic in Minnesota. That was right at the time when the legislature was forming the Regional Development Commissions around the state . . . if you remember?

CAC: It's also rebuilding and strengthening the state university system and the community colleges.

CD: Absolutely, and the Metropolitan Council had recently been formed . . . the nation's first and most exciting regional government. So, it's not surprising that this seemed to be an interesting topic to them. I think they just didn't take it a step further and say to themselves, "How would that work? What would programs like that look like?"

CAC: Yes.

CD: I think that their very young, very able and, it seems to me, energetic director was really handicapped because had she been a scholar, I think she could have had some ideas about how that might work . . . had she been the right kind of scholar, let me say.

CAC: These four gentlemen whose names you mentioned are learned and experienced and men of good judgment, but not a one is a scholar in the sense that we would use it in the academy.

CD: That's right, not a single one of them is a humanist. When the Endowment . . .

CAC: I suppose Fridley is an historian? In that sense, he is . . .

CD: That's true. Russell is an historian and he's a very public historian.

CAC: Yes.

CD: As it turned out, the early programs of the Humanities Commission . . . the humanities component of those early programs was almost always to have an historian come on, give the historical perspective, and, then, be trotted off to go back to his library carrell while the program about public policy continued.

CAC: I call that the *call to worship historians*.

CD: [laughter] It really is a bit like at St. Ben's [College of St. Benedict?] where the nuns do the Mass, except right in the middle of Mass, they bring in the priest to do the consecration . . .

CAC: The magical stuff.

CD: . . . and, then, he leaves and the nuns carry on again. It's very much the same. I think it really handicapped the program because it didn't allow for a lot of imagination and it didn't invite a lot of people in.

CAC: Was the Minnesota Commission established in 1965 quickly?

CD: No. In 1970, the Congress threatened the Endowment, so in 1971, the first state programs, eight of them, were started around the country and Minnesota was one of those first eight. Minnesota's first grant from NEH came in the fall of 1971.

CAC: Was there any motion at that time—you would know it secondhand but you know the whole history—to establish linkages with the liberal arts colleges, the private colleges, the other state universities, and the University of Minnesota?

CD: The director, as I say, was really a remarkable and courageous young woman. She had a B.A. in English from the University of Minnesota. She had worked one year for a foundation and that was really the extent of her life experience. When she got the job—I've laughed since—she bought a brand new Toyota and in 1971 Toyota was not a familiar brand in Minnesota.

CAC: It wasn't regionally either.

CD: [laughter] She put a lot of miles on that little car visiting every college, every community college.

CAC: I see.

CD: She talked with college presidents, with deans. She did a remarkable job at making the program known. She was really working blindly, as you can imagine. Nobody had an idea of how this might work. I remember the first year, the gentlemen involved just divvied up the grant money, a quarter of it came to the University of Minnesota, a quarter of it went to Hennepin County libraries, a quarter to KTCA, and a quarter to the Historical Society. To its credit and Don Woods' credit, the only memorable thing that happened with the money happened at the University of Minnesota. It supported, to a large extent, some wonderful public programs on KUOM [Radio] and it also supported some wonderful programs at the Snoose Boulevard Festival . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

CD: . . . which I think is a terrific use of the money. Instead of creating something and trying to draw people there, why not go to where people are and provide them with something that relates to the festivities, and is part of the festivities, and enriches the festivities? That's what Don Woods did with share of the money, to his everlasting credit.

CAC: We call him Wood and Woods. Which was it?

CD: It's Wood. I'm quite sure he's Wood.

CAC: We'll look it up. [The name was Donald Woods.]

CD: By, the way he's still around.

CAC: You knew him personally?

CD: Ohhh, yes. I knew him personally. His field is theater. I have an idea he was a brilliant teacher. I didn't know him as a teacher. I knew him as an administrator.

CAC: In Extension, his reputation—I think well-founded—was a person of imagination and even a little bit strange in that definition. As long as he was the associate dean there, he never became a bureaucrat.

CD: On, no.

CAC: That's a very rare thing in my academy.

CD: He's something else that's rare in the academy and that is that he's a very loving man. He was very warm and staff supportive.

CAC: He also thinks that some things are funny.

CD: [laughter] He's still in touch.

CAC: That's wonderful.

CD: He's been retired for a long time. I hear from him at least once a year. He contributes to the agency.

CAC: Good.

CD: He's a lovely man. I'm looking forward to seeing him at the grand opening of the Humanities Commission's building.

CAC: Ahhh.

CD: We can't get them all back. John Schwarzwald is dead but the other three men are all alive. Robert Rolf just retired. Mr. Fridley is still teaching history at Hennepin Community College. Don was very active on behalf of the Minnesota Historical Society's capital campaign a few years ago.

CAC: Now, we're in the mid 1970s and you're an intern.

CD: We've started and I've come in the door. Lynn Smith had hired, in the meantime, a young woman who graduated from the Northwestern University School of Journalism, to start a

newsletter. Her job, right then, was to try to get the word out to let people know that this money was there and people could apply for it. That was very difficult because nobody knew that there was money and they didn't know how to apply for it. The story I like to tell—NEH doesn't think it's very funny—and my colleagues like to have me tell it every few years to the new directors is that if the Humanities were General Mills and they created a new product, they'd have given their representatives lots of free samples, and sent them out, and they could have given people free samples, and let people try them, and taste them, and get a real desire to purchase. The National Endowment for the Humanities created, first of all, this strange thing that nobody knew about, the public humanities. Since humanism doesn't have a real good name in this country—there's always the specter of secular humanism—and since there is, as you know, this latent anti-intellectualism in this country, they gave us this kind of product that, I always say, is something like the Devil's Knee Soap or something that people certainly didn't want . . .

CAC: [laughter]

CD: . . . and they didn't think they needed. Instead of saying that we could give them free samples so that they'd see how much better their knees felt after they used it, they made people compete for it and they made people not only compete to get it, but to contribute some of their own resources. So, it couldn't have been more difficult. I've always said it's to the public's credit that the public humanities thrived in this country because we made it as difficult for the public as we possibly could have and, nevertheless, the public embraced this program, and took it as their own, and contributed millions and millions of dollars over the years, and have celebrated having the Humanities in their midst. Hurray! for the American public.

CAC: Good!

CD: [laughter]

CAC: Now, it's April 1975 and you're an intern. In the meantime, you're getting your baccalaureate at Metro State?

CD: Yes, I got my baccalaureate at Metro "U", actually, in the spring of 1976. I really used some of the experiences I had at the Humanities Commission to get credit at Metro "U", which was very helpful to me because I didn't even know what the numbers and letters 501-c3 meant. I certainly didn't know what it meant to work with a board of directors. The whole world of not-for-profits was one that, as I said, I was aware of and interested but a total mystery and, certainly, the world of grantsmanship was one that I needed to learn about and wanted to learn about. I needed to find a place to practice those skills. I get to practice them, unfortunately, from the wrong end in giving money away, instead of trying to get it because I think it takes a lot more talent to get it. It was very good experience for me.

CAC: You became assistant director when Lynn Smith was still director?

CD: Yes. Kathy Lynch was the other young woman's name and, in the summer of 1976, she was offered a job as director of membership at the Walker [Art Center] . . . the same building . . . a different institution. She was really eager to try that, so she left. Lynn Smith offered me the job. I was there for a year with Lynn. We were struggling along. We had no secretary. We had no benefits. Lynn was very young. By the time I got there, she was still only about twenty-six and she didn't believe in things like benefits. [laughter] I think at twenty-six, maybe I didn't either. By the time I got there—in 1975, I was thirty-nine—I was beginning to think that benefits and, certainly, some kind of retirement plan wouldn't be too bad an idea. We quarreled about that a few times, but I let it drop.

In the summer of 1977, Lynn was invited by the National Endowment for the Humanities to come in as director of special projects. I've mentioned that this is a very young woman, very inexperienced; but, I also want to make sure that whoever hears this knows that she was also very intelligent, energetic, and really tried to do as much with this program as she possibly could. Her biggest failure, it seems to me, was in the actual programmatic area. She really didn't understand how the Humanities could work; but, she did a wonderful job in public relations and in setting up, I think, a very fair grant application system and getting the word out.

CAC: As you say, she visited [unclear]?

CD: She went everywhere. She was just remarkable. She was everywhere in this state. Year, after year, after year, she was out on the road visiting every college and university in the state.

CAC: She was here only four years?

CD: Yes. When she went to Washington [D.C.], I really wanted the job; but, I had no idea whether or not the board would allow me to do it because I wasn't terribly experienced. I'd come out of my kitchen to join the agency two and a half years before.

CAC: In many places, I'm guessing, directors must have been certified by advanced humanistic degrees?

CD: In every state, except maybe five, the director had a Ph.D. in the humanities and had some experience in continuing ed or something. The fact that the board was willing to take a chance on me then, I think, is one of the best things that's ever happened to me. I give Russell Fridley a lot of credit. Russell Fridley deserves the thanks of so many Minnesota women. He really gave so many of us women—some would say so many unqualified women—our start. Jean Brookins is still the director of publications at the Historical Society and Russell gave both Jean and her predecessor their start. Nina [Archabal], the director, does have a Ph.D. but Nina had very little experience doing anything until Russell brought her on, and promoted her, and promoted her until she was ready to take his place. I think the only thing Nina had ever done is she was in charge of the traveling exhibits at the University of Minnesota Gallery for awhile.

CAC: I'm interviewing her next Wednesday.

CD: Russell really had faith in women. He liked women. He liked working with women and he gave us a chance. By that time, as you know, the board had grown beyond the four men. The first woman brought on was, at the time, the acting director of the Duluth Public Library, Janet Schrayner. Then, the second woman who came was the former president of the Minnesota League Women Voters, Ann Thomas . . .

CAC: Oh, yes.

CD: . . . and the third woman was just a delightful, charming little gadfly from Luverne named Ruth O'Karsky.

CAC: I remember her.

CD: The women brought something very different and important, I think, to the board.

CAC: And Betty Kane about the same time.

CD: Oh, pardon me! Yes. How can I forget because every time I walked up to the legislature with Betty Kane, I felt as if I were walking in with a queen. She got us entre into more offices . . . Betty is a former state chairwoman of the Democratic Party. She likes to say she gave Bill Frenzel his start in politics because she was his opponent when he ran for Congress.

CAC: [laughter]

CD: A wonderful woman . . . just wonderful. The board had enlarged.

CAC: Say something about the composition of the board. Didn't half have to be public, so to speak? The four women you named were all public . . .

CD: That's right. Which, incidentally, was a real problem. One of the first things I spotted when I got there was that there was this division on the board that the public had one role and the scholars had another role and all the women were public and all the men were scholars.

CAC: Ahhh.

CD: That really disturbed me because I thought, immediately, we've got to get women scholars on this board and we've got to get more public men. We've got to change this balance.

CAC: This was a requirement out of the NEH itself of a balance of public and academic? Is that right?

[telephone rings - break in the interview]

CD: The enabling legislation just said that there shall be a broad variety of people on the board and among them should be some people from the academic community. The Endowment staff, in their really overbearing and directive way, interpreted that to mean that there should be a half and half balance of scholars and public. That has been another thing, I think, that has been a real problem for state humanities programs.

CAC: They still kind of hold to it?

CD: Most states ignore it, but the Endowment still fusses about it. This is as good a time as any to say that one of the biggest problems, as you know, is that humanists, by and large, are not active in civic affairs. So many of them get their first board of directors' experience in a state humanities council. They don't know how to do it. It is not easy to be a good board member because a good board member gives, and gives, and gives and doesn't get much. I don't think a lot of people who come for the first time to a not-for-profit board understand that. They govern; they don't manage. A lot of them don't understand that distinction.

CAC: That's true of a lot of boards.

CD: As you know, my early years were rocky and I came to you for help occasionally. I knew a lot of things instinctively, but I didn't have the experience or the knowledge to fight. There was a lot of meddling in the early years that, I think, a more experienced director wouldn't have allowed. Of course, I never allow that kind of thing to go on now.

CAC: In welfare, when I interview so many people who were agency directors in the non-profit sphere, often they get around to saying, "The most important thing an executive director does is get a good board and educate them to their role and function."

CD: Absolutely.

CAC: I don't know how widely that's appreciated but that's what you're saying right now.

CD: Ohhh, absolutely.

CAC: In your case, you were coming in and learning on the job?

CD: That's right. I knew that the agency was confused and that it had no identity of its own. I also knew that the agency had never really elected a board chair. I knew that there was an executive committee on paper, but that it had never met. I knew that the board of directors had never seen an agency budget. The board didn't know what its director was making. It was a very interesting agency that Russell Fridley was running out of his breast pocket. I don't attribute

any malice to Russell or any wrongdoing. I just think that it seemed like pretty small potatoes to him so he just ran it like he would run any other program of the Historical Society.

In 1978, the Endowment suddenly informed all of the state humanities programs that each of them could have \$30,000 to do a management study. I was appalled . . . a management study of how two people worked or at most three. [laughter] It was absurd. I have to tell you that one of my colleagues went to Boos Allen Hamilton, the big management people, and said, "I have \$30,000 to spend on a management study." They did one. Guess what it cost? [laughter] It was just amazing.

CAC: Management involves the board and that was an important aspect. Did you get advice then from outside?

CD: I got wonderful help. One of my best mentors was John Taylor who was, at the time, executive director of the Northwest Area Foundation. John was an old friend of Lynn Smith's and she kind of bequeathed him to me. He was so good to me. He really helped me in so many ways. Another help was Marlowe Burt who was, at the time, the director of the St. Paul Arts and Sciences Council and, later, became United Arts. It was a united fund for the arts in the St. Paul area. Those two men were just terrific. Certainly, when you came on, you helped.

I decided kind of quietly and on my own that it was time for the Humanities Commission to break away from the Historical Society. It seemed to me that we would never have an identity if we didn't and that it would be really foolish for us to stay under the Historical Society's aegis. I proposed to the board that we have legal study done of the Humanities Commission's status, which sounded very innocent. Of course, Mr. Fridley knew exactly what I was up to; but, either he didn't feel that he could stop or he didn't want to stop it. The result of it—it cost about \$6,000 . . . done by a really interesting young man at Metro "U", a lawyer who specialized in not-for-profits—was that the Humanities Commission was nothing more than a program of the Minnesota Historical Society and that if it wanted to accomplish anything, it should strike out.

In the fall of 1979, the first elections ever for office were held. You, Clarke Chambers, were elected chair. You were the first chair. Russell had had it for eight years. Just a few months later, we got our 501-c3 status. Your name and Betty Kane's are on those documents.

CAC: Oh! that makes me happy.

CD: That's very nice.

CAC: My recollection of that board—I was as innocent of it as you were when you came in in 1975—was that, by then, you had managed to have representations from the academy, and different private colleges, church colleges, state universities, etcetera, so that you had picked up that network into higher education and created it.

CD: We had a much broader group by then. We had some wonderful people. Do you remember Howard Bellows who was the absolute charming former president of Southwest State University?

CAC: Oh, yes.

CD: He was a business man, then, out at Olivia. He was killed in a plane crash. He was a wonderful charming fellow. Roland Dille who is the president at Moorhead State . . . Gary Hayes . . .

CAC: With the state university system.

CD: We've really had some wonderful people on the board and really helpful people and some strange ones as well. That's pretty much been the story of my life at the Humanities Commission. [laughter]

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: We're talking about the board and the management and that means program. Lynn Smith had started it and, then, you certainly had to persist with it . . . to curry networks within higher education throughout the state and that means Carleton, Macalester, Hamline, the church schools, Gustavus [Adolphus], and St. Catherine, and St. Thomas, and so forth, and the university, and the state university system. There are lots of us and by the time you're moving, in the late 1970s, the state university system has six campuses?

CD: Yes.

CAC: And how many community colleges?

CD: Twenty-two.

CAC: It's a pretty big universe. Can you say something about trying to elicit support from these different kinds of institutions and which ones were more forthcoming and imaginative, etcetera?

CD: We really moved pretty sheep-like in those early years . . . the state humanities programs because there was no design, no template. We were all, as I said, kind of operating in the dark so we learned from one another. We all tried currying favor with the administrations of the academic institutions in our state.

CAC: You entered through administrative officers rather than through faculty in the first instance?

CD: Yes, we usually tried presidents, academic vice-presidents, and academic deans and found them to be, in most cases, very welcoming and interested—but that was it. I've often thought, since then, if I were the president of a private liberal arts college, I hope I wouldn't have been so shortsighted as to not realize the importance of having this agency out there doing like chamber of commerce work for me. We got no support from the institutions themselves. We got wonderful support from some faculty.

CAC: How did you find them?

CD: We found them almost by accident. Someone would say, "There's an historian down at Carleton who is always out working in the public sphere. You might want to approach him and see if he'd be interested in doing something," or "There's this crazy philosopher out in Morris . . ." So, we started really working much more with individual academics and, to this day, I think those are the connections we have that are the good connections. There are colleges that really encourage their faculty to be out among the people.

CAC: Like, for example?

CD: I shouldn't say there are colleges. I should say there are administrations because when Bob Edwards was at Carleton, Carleton was just one of the most remarkable places in the United States for work in the public humanities. Bob Edwards was not, by the way, an academic. He's a lawyer. He really valued teaching; he believed in teaching. He supported his faculty in ways that very few college presidents do. He loved them and he honored them. He thought having them out in the community was the most wonderful thing that could happen to Carleton. Anybody who wanted to do anything in the public sphere with Humanities Commission money got wonderful backup support from the college when Bob was there. He saw that they had secretarial support and that the college's printing facilities were made available. Anything that the college could do to support that person's work in the public humanities was offered.

CAC: Finally, as you know, there had to be other rewards, that is, of recognition and merit. I'm talking about salary.

CD: Absolutely.

CAC: There is a real suspicion by many deans, and vice-presidents, and presidents of persons who play this game with the public? There is a real resistance to recognizing and rewarding it?

CD: And not just, Clarke, with administrators.

CAC: Oh, yes.

CD: There's a great deal of mistrust among the person's own colleagues.

CAC: Ohhh, you bet.

CD: I remember one wonderful young philosopher out at Morris, who was just really busy. He got philosophy for children going in the public schools in the area. He started a Midwest philosophy journal. He brought famous philosophers from all over the world to Morris.

CAC: This person has a name.

CD: Peter French is his name.

CAC: Of course.

CD: Young, ambitious, aggressive, imaginative . . . Everybody didn't think that was so wonderful. Who is this guy who comes in here, and gets all these grants, and makes all these things happen, and makes us look like we've been doing nothing for fifteen years?—which we have.

CAC: I'm sure it was perceived as lesser work.

CD: It's not only perceived as lesser work; but, I think that people get lots of attention for it in the community and they get lots of strokes for it in other ways. I think there's jealousy involved as well. Peter played his public humanities card right into the deanship of Trinity College of San Antonio. [laughter] That has always amused me and pleased me. One of the reasons Trinity wanted him is because he had this incredible record of connecting that little institution with the countryside. He just brought them in. I'll never forget . . . one night, I was in the fine arts building at Morris with probably 100 Dutch Reformed farmers from the area. The place was jammed. We heard the philosopher, Alvin Plantigut, from Calvin College speak on possible worlds.

CAC: Oh, my.

CD: There wasn't a one of us in the audience who had the foggiest notion what he was talking about; but, here was a learned man from a Dutch Reformed college who came clear out to Morris and by golly! we honored him. They came and it was wonderful!

CAC: Then, some of them knew what he was saying, too.

CD: Some of them probably knew. He did all kinds of things with mathematical equations on the blackboard.

CAC: I see.

CD: It was pretty esoteric stuff, but it was absolutely wonderful. There was a feeling in the audience that scholarship is something to be honored by the public and even if we didn't understand him, by golly! it was good for us to sit there, and listen to him, and to applaud when he was done. I think there's something really wonderful and valuable about that and I think that every philosopher in this state should have said, "Hurray! for Peter French for doing this kind of thing." That didn't happen.

CAC: Yes.

CD: In all those years that Peter did his work, there were a couple of people from here who went out to hear people occasionally.

CAC: From here . . . the University of Minnesota?

CD: The University of Minnesota. I remember a delightful graduate student named Ernie LaPorie who ended up at Rutgers. Ernie used to go out and was really interested in the work Peter was doing out there. Another graduate student, Peter Shay, was out there a lot. I'm trying to think of the faculty who went. I know that Gary Eiseminger from Carleton was very, very supportive of Peter and his work out at Morris and drove out there many times to hear public presentations.

CAC: Say something more about the University of Minnesota because it's not only philosophy, it is all the other disciplines that are legally considered part of the humanities for the NEH.

CD: I can single out many, many individuals at the University of Minnesota who have been wonderful, and helpful, and supportive in the things that the Minnesota Humanities Commission have done. I don't recall that any of them got institutional support. I don't think the university stood in their way. What you did, for example, was on your own time.

CAC: Oh, yes.

CD: You weren't honored for it. You certainly weren't compensated for it. You weren't encouraged in any way. It was just one of those things Clarke Chambers does. I think the same is true with other people over here who have served on our board.

CAC: Served on the board or served in a programmatic way.

CD: Yes, and worked in programs. Many, many people from over here have been in programs. I remember one of the guys was my real enemy and why am I blanking on his name?

CAC: Because he was. [laughter]

CD: Probably. He was so mean and mean spirited. He was in the English Department. He's a Shakespearean, handsome, dapper, charming, gifted teacher, very full of himself.

CAC: Why was he hostile?

CD: He just immediately took a dislike to the idea of it. When I first came to work for the Humanities Commission, there were letters to the editor from this gentleman saying what a stupid idea it all was and how it was doomed to fail.

CAC: Because it was not scholarly enough?

CD: It was not scholarly enough.

CAC: It was popularizing.

CD: Yes, and it was an absolute disgrace.

CAC: I think you're referring to Thomas Clayton.

CD: Thomas Clayton, that's the man. Then, a few years later, Thomas Clayton was one of the people who was on the Guthrie [Theater] stage leading an after-play discussion with Minnesota Humanities Commission support and he was compensated by the Humanities Commission. He was so true to form. I remember I went to that program with a program officer from the NEH and Professor Clayton stood up and began by kind of sneering and saying, "I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't know why I'm here."

CAC: [laughter]

CD: Then, he was brilliant. He was exactly the kind of humanities scholar who should be on a stage leading an after-play discussion. His knowledge, his ability as a teacher . . . he was a natural and he was wonderful; but, he couldn't do it without sneering at the idea. I wanted to break his knees, I was so angry at him. [laughter]

CAC: We had a natural program here . . . the humanities program.

CD: That's right.

CAC: Some individuals were helpful and did participate.

CD: There were many individuals.

CAC: Certainly, by the early 1980s—I don't know when all of these things take place; chronology is difficult—the kind of abstract, academic theories, deconstructionism, post-

modernism, etcetera, which were so strong in the English departments and humanity departments, are really catching hold?

CD: That's right.

CAC: I'm wondering . . . was that not an esoteric enough thrust within humanities scholarship that it didn't inherently cut itself off from a larger audience?

CD: You're absolutely right. I remember coming over here for many discussions with faculty and they truly believed that there was no place for them in the public sphere, given what they were doing right now.

CAC: It was very specialized and a very specialized language.

CD: I think that had it not been for the state humanities programs, women's studies would never have taken hold the way they did. Women's studies people were looking for a venue and they were looking for some kind of affirmation and a place to test their ideas. At the same time, state humanities councils were desperate for scholars to put out in the public. We came together in a wonderful marriage. I just can't tell you the millions of dollars across this country that went into creating audiences for those women who were doing, really, the ground breaking women's history. It was a wonderful time and it was so exciting because it was the kind of thing that the public was looking for and that they were hungry for. People were looking for their place in it all. The women's historians came in and you were there. Of course, the natural audiences for humanities programs were the generations of women who got passed by. They were educated. They were intelligent; but, there was no place for them in the world except as teachers, or nurses, or maybe secretaries. They were out there. They were bored housewives. They flocked to these programs. Then, to have these wonderful, accomplished young women saying, "Yes, indeed, women did contribute." It was, I think, some of the most wonderful times of my life that I spent at those programs and saw that joint affirmation. It was terrific.

CAC: Did the state university campuses and the private colleges have that thrust of feminism and women's studies programs?

CD: Absolutely. Yes. It came in waves. I think we had funded 100 different programs on women, women's history, and I remember Dean Woods saying at a grant review one time, "Don't women ever have any fun? There are all these problems."

CAC: [laughter]

CD: Everybody laughed, of course. The board was a really interesting thing in the cases of the state humanities councils. In all other foundations, the board just rubber stamps either what the staff wants to do or what a review panel wants to do. In the state humanities councils, the board actually reviewed grant applications and made the grants. So, that was very different. I've

always thought it was to Minnesota's board's credit that they recognized that the 101st women's history program was just as important as the first one if it was done for an audience that hadn't gotten to have it before. We did some wonderful things. The board was very good. In most states, the board wouldn't fund repeat projects. In Minnesota, the board said, "Why should we punish success? If it was good the first time and they're back a second time, why don't we celebrate and give them more money?" That was wonderful. In Minnesota, the board didn't say, "Let them find other money." In lots of cases, the board realized that there wasn't other money for the humanities or for public humanities projects, so they kept some things going in really bad times. That was good and important.

CAC: The one thing for this project that we're having the oral interview in the context of . . . it's important, for me at least, to understand the incentives, and the rewards, and the possibilities for different kinds of institutions of higher learning in the state of Minnesota and most particularly the University of Minnesota, with Duluth and Morris certainly part of that. I think I'm leading you to some other observations. You've been there twenty years. How would you describe the climate? I know you've had the cooperation of an awful lot of individual scholars and it would be Paul Murphy and Mulford Sibley . . . we could go on.

CD: Oh, yes!

CAC: But, I'm thinking of institutional relationships. Maybe the university is just too large so that a vice-president for Academic Affairs really can't engage at this level? That's a whole series of statements, but can you respond to them?

CD: I think that I expected something from the university as we began because it's a Land-Grant institution. I went back and read that enabling legislation not too long after I got this job. I had this nagging idea that the University of Minnesota had some kind of special responsibility to the public that other institutions of higher learning in this state don't have. The state university is just recycled normal schools. They train teachers and, then, they did something else. They wanted to expand. The private colleges have their own missions. But, the University of Minnesota has this legislation that started it. Because the legislation started it when it did, it gave the university a kind of autonomy from the state. The university always has seemed to me—certainly, that's borne out by recent stories in the [*Minneapolis*] *Tribune*—this incredibly large per student contribution by the Minnesota tax payers. I always thought there should be a give back responsibility on the part of its faculty. I, for many years, expected something from university faculty that we weren't getting that I was very disappointed in. You—that's certainly borne out by your being here and asking me to do this interview—were the only department chair with whom I was ever in contact who did more than give lip service to the whole idea of public teaching, civic responsibility, Land-Grant commitment, those kinds of things. I certainly was in contact with chairs for many years in many different departments. Again, I can say, that individuals in departments sought me out to try to help get their colleagues engaged. The only

other time I saw a chair, besides you, do something that I thought was in any way admirable—he didn't do it very well—was Stan Lemberg when he got behind the idea of History Day.

CAC: Yes.

CD: Stan didn't do a very good job of that but, at least, he supported the idea and he put his money where his mouth was. Compared to the kind of cooperation, support, assistance, invitations in every way that Minnesota Humanities has gotten from other institutions, the university has been just a continuing disappointment to me. Certainly—unless I'm very wrong—tenured faculty here has more discretionary time than any other group of faculty in the state.

CAC: It's a real sacrifice for . . .

CD: For a community college faculty person, for example, who is teaching five and six classes . . .

CAC: Even at the good private colleges, the teaching load is very demanding.

CD: The teaching load is much, much more demanding. It continues to be a disappointment to me. This place should be so rich for us. There should be so many people over there who are taking advantage of us and we should be able to mine this place. It should have been a mutual love affair. Again, Clarke, part of it could be that I'm not an academic. Perhaps, had the director had a Ph.D., there might have been a different relationship.

The first thing I did, by the way . . . my first hire was a Ph.D. because I really believe that it is important to have a humanist . . .

CAC: Was this Newell Searle?

CD: Newell Searle . . . University of Minnesota Ph.D. in Minnesota history.

CAC: Yes.

CD: A fresh Ph.D., but not a real young man. Newell was thirty-four when I hired him.

CAC: His father was speaker of the House, which didn't hurt.

CD: That's right . . . which didn't hurt us a bit because the Minnesota Humanities Commission in the spring of 1979 was the first state humanities commission to get a state appropriation.

CAC: That early?

CD: Yes.

CAC: I guess I knew that.

CD: That was quite wonderful and certainly Newell and his father were very helpful.

CAC: Let me go back just a second. I'm going to share a joke with you. It's a small joke. When I was chair . . . all chairs inherit a merit system which puts scholarship first in weight, teaching is second, and then what we call service, citizenship, outreach . . . a kind of a clutter under service is third. It struck me, a couple of years into the chair that people doing humanities work or other kinds of outreach—public television or public radio; there are other ways one can do this, although the Humanities Commission is certainly a major one—were listed under service and it was weighted per unit of performance at the lowest level. I suggested, "What this really is is public pedagogy." My department thought, what a nice . . . they knew it was kind of a joke but it was academic enough, public pedagogy, so that that service was no longer under the third category. It was rewarded under the second which was teaching. By that simple trick . . . it wasn't a lot of money involved, but it was a little recognition. I tell you, that's just absurd.

CD: You're one of the few people in the country who has ever done it. I've used that example all over the United States.

CAC: Really? [laughter] That's such an outrageous and quite comic thing to do.

CD: In 1981, I was the first state program director invited to address the ACLS national meeting. I decided I had nothing to lose so I scolded them. I said, "You should be ashamed of yourselves because you have an opportunity to create a place for scholarship, for learning, in this country that it has never had before. You've failed and you should be ashamed of yourselves." They gave me a standing ovation.

CAC: [laughter] Of course.

CD: But, they didn't follow through. [laughter] It was really disappointing. In years since, we've tried very hard as a national organization of state humanities programs to work with ACLS to try to get the various learned societies in the disciplines to recognize the importance of getting the public excited and interested. To this day, Clarke . . . last fall, after the election, I knew the day after election what was going to happen to the endowments, that there were terrible and serious threats. We sent out 3,000 letters to people around this state asking them to write to their congressmen and senators and say, "The National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities are really important." I also asked people to send me photocopies of their letters so that I could bundle them in case I needed to send them again or so we could have some record. We got probably 350 letters back and not a dozen of them were from Minnesota scholars. I sent a special letter to every dean or academic vice-president in the small colleges to not only ask their

faculty to write the letters, but really detail exactly what the National Endowment for the Humanities does for them because it occurred to me that there are people who don't know.

CAC: Of course.

CD: There are people who think that they get a scholarship from the Newberry Library . . . that the Newberry does that. They don't know that that's NEH money. Or they go to the National Humanities Center and they don't know that the NEH supports that place handsomely every year or that the ACLS gives them money for one thing or another. All of those things were detailed on the letter for the deans and vice-presidents to send out and not a dozen Minnesota scholars sent letters to our office. Now, that doesn't mean that they didn't send letters to their congressman.

CAC: What kind of folks did write . . . the other 338?

CD: The other 350 were K[indergarten]-12 teachers who have been in our programs.

CAC: For heavens sakes.

CD: They were directors of small historical societies and people who have taken training in our Motherread/[Fatheread] program.

CAC: Librarians?

CD: Librarians . . . all kinds of people from other agencies?

CAC: But, not scholars from the other colleges either?

CD: I'm certainly not faulting the University of Minnesota alone here. What I'm saying is that college faculty, for whatever reason, has not fought for these agencies.

CAC: You said the other week, when we had a brief conversation, that it was also the case that the university had not established successful relationships for other kinds of NEH grants, not the state-based but others as well. A certain number of us were senior NEH scholars and so on. Say something about that.

CD: I knew that the congressmen were going to want to know. There's an interesting thing going on in Minnesota. Our arts people are amazingly successful at getting NEH money or NEA money. I don't know if you know that Minnesota gets the third most NEA money of any state in the nation. We've got great grant writers among Minnesota arts people!

CAC: We've have great musical, arts, theater agencies, too.

CD: Some would say that. I would argue that we have great administrators. I don't think that Minnesota arts are nearly as wonderful as they should be given the amount of money that's invested. When the Congress talks of giving more money to the states, Minnesota congressmen have been taught to say, "No, no! That's a bad idea." If more money went to the states, then it would be proportionate and Minnesota would get far less. I knew that this would be an issue and we would either have to join in that or we would have to have our own argument. So, I got the figures from the National Endowment for the Humanities as to exactly what has gone into Minnesota in the last five years. What I find is that we will do just as well or, perhaps, better if all the money just comes to the State Humanities Council. There are two institutions that will suffer. One is the Minnesota Historical Society, which has been pretty successful in getting continuing, large, \$180,000, \$220,000, exhibit grants and the other is the Walker [Art Center] which has gotten some pretty large grants. Otherwise, Minnesota public institutions aren't doing very well at all. Minnesota colleges and universities . . . the interesting thing is that the big money is going to St. Olaf, Gustavus Adolphus, and St. Scholastica. The university is so low on the list—I can't tell you—in the last five years.

CAC: Yet, if we take total faculty in the humanities, we'd be the same as all the other put together.

CD: I would guess so. What it says to me is that either University of Minnesota aren't competing, or they aren't applying, or they can't compete . . . that their proposals aren't good enough. Either way, I think that's dismaying.

CAC: Yes.

CD: There should be big money. There should be research grants, for example, coming to University of Minnesota people. Why aren't there big research grants coming here? I'm reading the lists every . . .

CAC: But how do you account for that? You know us as well as anyone in a comparative sense.

CD: It's so hard for me to make generalizations. As I said, there are individuals I know over here and that I work with and I respect and others for whom I have contempt; but, I don't know the great body of people over here. My hunch is that there isn't enough inspiration here to do good work. There isn't enough pressure to do extra work. Somehow, we don't have a climate of exciting scholarship at this institution. This is one of the ways I can think of to explain it. I see some of the most interesting and exciting people leave. I thought Yi Fu Tuan was one of the most exciting people this institution ever had.

CAC: You bet.

CD: We lost him. Susan McCleary . . .

CAC: Now, she's a McArthur . . .

CD: She was doing breathtaking work here. In those years when I was really working with the humanities people, Susan was at most of those meetings. What a remarkable young scholar she was. Oh! she was great and she didn't stay here. Why don't we keep those really terrific exciting people? I don't know. Have we gotten into some kind of a rising tide of mediocrity or something? I read the *Chronicle of Higher Education* every week and I am so surprised at how seldom I read about something that I'm proud of at the University of Minnesota. I read about scandals, but it's not very often that . . . If you're interested in the life of the mind, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* is one of the best things . . . I think every lay person should get it. It's written in lay language and it tells us the wonderful discoveries people are making and the exciting things they are doing.

CAC: It would be an interesting little research project, simply done, to find out how many subscribers there were in different faculties.

CD: That would be very interesting. Somebody could easily just do a check over the last five years and see how many times scholarship from this institution has been featured.

CAC: I have a sense—to pose another complication here—that the university, particularly in crisis which has been true the last twenty years . . . that administrators have a difficult time creating an agenda of their own along any lines, let alone along the line you're suggesting here for example. It's just keeping the shop running. It's just overwhelming. If one starts at Morrill Hall . . . I've talked with so many people who have had a Morrill Hall experience. They go in for five years as an assistant to the such and so and they say that the place is so busy that no one has time to think. They can't possibly do that sort of thing. Then, you come to a large college with 15,000 students and 900 faculty and professional persons . . . the management is just so severe that to do what you're suggesting is extraordinarily difficult, particularly on the down slide.

CD: Why isn't that true in at the University of Wisconsin then?

CAC: Okay, go ahead, yes.

CD: I can't say this as a fact but I do know that people out there say that we Minnesota taxpayers support this institution more handsomely per student than the other Big Ten institutions are supported. Yet, if one were to look at this place in comparison, it certainly doesn't give evidence of that. As I said before we turned on the recorder, "If Harvard's endowment had to produce the amount of money the state gives the University of Minnesota, nearly \$500 million this year, Harvard's endowment would have to be . . . think of the size it would have to be." This place is getting an incredible amount of financial support. When we look, there's something like \$270 million in research grants that came here in 1993-1994. Somebody's getting money for something.

CAC: That's [unclear] hard sciences and medical sciences, as you know.

CD: Yes, that's right. We don't really know where the money is going or what's going on here. Here's an interesting statistic: the Minnesota State University System has 21,000 employees; the University of Minnesota has 30,000 employees, excluding the hospital. Let's compare the number of students. The State University System has 163,000 students. The University of Minnesota has 65,000 students. Something is out of whack, don't you think?

CAC: Yes.

CD: It may just be too big a ship to drive; but, so is [University of Illinois] Champaign-Urbana and so is Ohio State. Those are huge institutions. It's interesting. I think that people over here think of themselves as being under continuing crisis. I've been saying for the nearly thirty years I've lived in Minnesota that I have never seen an institution that gets so much public money, but gets so little public scrutiny. I really feel that the newspapers and the university a disservice by focusing on Ken Keller's kitchen. I don't care about Ken Keller's kitchen. I want to know who is writing books over here; whose teaching is celebrated and why; what are students saying when they walk out of classes; are their hearts singing? . . . the kinds of things I still believe happens when minds are unlocked. It still happens to me in public programs in the humanities out in the state. I'm out there and I see people come away . . .

CAC: Yes.

CD: . . . saying, "I had no idea that was the case!" People are so excited.

CAC: You've been in this business so long, you have a comparative sense not only of different institutions within the state of Minnesota, but you have a sense also of different public programs throughout the country. Here in the Upper Midwest, not Minnesota alone but Wisconsin, Minnesota and the Dakotas, there is an informed and hungry public. If one is going to reach out, there is a public there which is well-tuned, informed, intelligent, and it's eager to participate, right?

CD: Yes.

CAC: Is that comparatively true? Is the Upper Midwest really just a little bit more that way than other regions?

CD: They're more receptive to some kinds of programs. I just spent a few days in Denver with my colleagues from the western part of the country . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: We're talking about the receptivity of the Upper Midwest in an informed, public way to the kinds of programs that the state-based programs provide. You were speaking of the mountain states where it's very vigorous.

CD: Very vigorous. None of us have ever had enough money so that we can really test because what little money has been out there to support programs attracts the people who are interested in them. If we had ever had enough money to try saturation, I don't know . . . I've often thought that it must be really challenging to do a program like this in Louisiana. My colleague in Louisiana said that only 53 percent of their students graduate from high school and that when they graduate the average graduate reads at a fifth grade reading level. You can imagine a program in Louisiana is very different from one here. I really think the mountain states, the Midwest . . . certainly New England . . . any of those is a relatively easy place for the public humanities.

We need to get more faculty out there. Most people go out, Clarke, and, after their first experience, they say, "This is the best teaching I've ever had. This was really fun. It was really exciting." We can't compensate them enough financially to make it worth their while, heavens knows. In a state like this, it's really asking something of someone to ask them to drive to Roseau, for example, to give an evening program. That's really a commitment on somebody's part. If they're not going to get any reward in their institution and they're not going to be honored in any way by their colleagues . . . look at the drag against making this happen. I'll say, forever, that the glory of it is that it has done so well and that those scholars who want to work in the public sphere have found us, and we've found them, and together, I think, we've done something wonderful for the American public.

CAC: I'm just thinking of regions now in terms of state historical societies that I would put at the very top. They run right down the great valley of democracy: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, right? Those are the premier . . . It's not California. It's not Massachusetts.

CD: California . . . do you know that that state historical society doesn't get a dime from the state legislature.

CAC: They don't do anything. It's interesting that this [unclear] runs right down.

CD: Do you know that the Indiana State Historical Society has like a \$200 million endowment? They have a huge, wonderful endowment and Oregon's Historical Society is terrific, too.

CAC: I frequently pause at this point to ask persons like yourself if there are other reflections that we have neglected to address?

CD: [pause] I think we've talked about everything . . .

CAC: That you had in mind when you came?

CD: . . . that I had in mind. The only thing we haven't talked about is young scholars.

CAC: Oh, please, do that.

CD: When I was first at the Humanities Commission, I found that young scholars were very responsive to me, to the idea of the humanities. I encouraged them to become involved and I don't do that anymore. I really think that, at least in one case the Humanities Commission was responsible for a wonderful young philosopher not getting tenure at St. Olaf because he got so caught up in public work. I don't think it helped him with his colleagues there; although, he went on to do wonderful things. He left St. Olaf to be the executive secretary of the American Philosophical Association and, now, he's the academic vice-president at Calvin College. I do think that he neglected those things that academic departments still want of young scholars. That makes me sad that . . . I feel hands-off toward them.

The other thing I'm really sad about is that there are so few young scholars. We know that there are lots of reasons for that. The state budgets are in bad shape all over the country so state supported institutions aren't hiring.

CAC: Younger folks are really running scared all around the country.

CD: Oh, it's a terrible time. It's a terrible time. My son will defend his dissertation in October and he has incredible credentials. I don't think he's going to find a job. I will be surprised if he finds a job. There are lots of reasons for that, but mainly because there aren't enough jobs and he's a white male. He holds no grudge, by the way, about that. He knew what he was getting into; but, I don't know a Ph.D. candidate anywhere who doesn't believe deep down that he or she is going to get that one rare job out there. We're losing this incredible—we've lost them now for twenty years—wonderful generation of scholars. Sooner or later, people are going to give up.

CAC: That's a sad note to conclude on.

CD: Well then, let's put it in perspective. There's a good part about it and the good part about it is that in public life today, we've got Ph.D.s in the humanities everywhere.

CAC: Ah!

CD: There's a Ph.D. in political science who is in the state auditor's office.

CAC: And Mr. [Newt] Gingrich is a [unclear] historian.

CD: Then, there's that side and there's Paul Wellstone. There's a sheep farmer out in southwestern Minnesota who has a Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies.

CAC: [laughter]

CD: Mr. Shendar, who runs the bookstores, has a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies from Princeton. He speaks seven languages. So, the fact that there haven't been academic positions, really does mean that we have gotten incredible people out into other institutions. It's also meant that the Peter Frenchs of the world have taught for awhile in Morris and that's great. Some institutions that never could have hoped for the best scholars from the best institutions have had them there and kept them. So, let's end on that note . . . that it's very positive.

CAC: I'd like to end on a positive note . . . that you're a good citizen and a great natural resource for the state. Thank you very much for coming in on a day off.

CD: Thank you.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[End of the Interview]

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