

Nancy MacKenzie

- Early interest in art and fabrics 1-3
- MacKenzie - assistant, Studio Art Department, University of Minnesota, 1977-1980 3-4
- CLA, 1980-92, Fred Lukermann, Craig Swan, Julia Davis 5-9
 - increased demands for planning 5
 - Rajender business 5-7
 - MacKenzie becomes assistant to Benjamin, Roger 10
 - assumes grievance responsibilities 10
- Decanal styles 10-15
 - Lukermann 10
 - middle management 13
 - budget management 13
- Democratization of department, 1970s 15
 - department "culture" 16
- Closing of Library School 18
- Evaluation of Swan and Davis 19
- CLA curriculum 20-23
 - competing interests 20
- MacKenzie returns to art 24

Interview with Nancy MacKenzie

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

**Interviewed on December 8, 1994
At the Home of Warren and Nancy MacKenzie**

Nancy MacKenzie - NM
Warren MacKenzie - WM
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers, your friendly oral interviewer. This morning, which is December 8, 1994, a Thursday, a lovely winter morning, I'm interviewing Nancy and Warren MacKenzie in their beautiful farm house near Stillwater. As I suggested to both of you before we turned on this dreadful machine, I'm kind of interested, because I think posterity will be interested, in careers, life, how you got into what you got into. Nancy—we'll begin with Nancy first—you got into interesting, offbeat, to a lay person, art work. Then, you end up in the dean's office for eleven years. It's not your eleven years with the deanship alone that posterity will be interested in but in the whole affair. We'll get to the college; but, introduce us. Were you of artistic talent? When did you know that? Did someone bring it out in you, etcetera?

NM: I was always interested in art. In fact, my first job was as a high school art teacher. I taught high school art for five years. Shortly after I began teaching art, I married a sociologist; so, I became very interested in social science. Let me back up a minute. When I was teaching high school art, a history teacher became pregnant and in those days they didn't let people teach who were pregnant; so, she had to leave. They asked me if I could teach journalism and world history and I had some background in those areas; so, I started taking classes at the University of Washington in those areas.

CAC: You lived in the state of Washington then?

NM: That's right. The art teacher, who I had replaced, came back from his two years in the Army and there wasn't so much art to teach; so, I started teaching history and journalism. Then, when I got to the point where I could go back to the university to get a master's degree—this is a good academic story—I took a class one summer in Russian history. It was taught by a man from Harvard who was visiting. His standards were different than the University of Washington apparently. He gave one test at the end of the five-hour class and then he flunked most of the class.

CAC: [laughter]

NM: I got a *D* by his grading. Everybody went and protested to the history department. A man named [Donald W.] Treadgold, who was their Russian historian . . .

CAC: Oh, I know Treadgode.

NM: . . . regraded the papers. He moved me from a *D* to a *C*. That was enough to ruin my grade point average in the College of Education. They threw me out because it put below 3-point. I went over to journalism where I'd been taking classes and they said, "You've done well in our classes and we think you're okay." They let me in. I started working on a master's in Mass Communication Research.

CAC: What were you doing with your artistic talents all that time?

NM: Not much at that point.

CAC: Were you working at home on Saturdays and nights?

NM: Oh, yes, I did things but nothing saleable or serious. I always had my own little creative projects. I got sort of subsumed in this activity. Incidentally, all my professors at Washington that I worked with substantially were from the University of Minnesota Journalism School. I got my master's degree at the same time my first husband got his Ph.D. and then we went to the University of Iowa where he taught. I had my children there and became very interested and involved in the League of Women Voters and an urban renewal project down there. In 1968, I moved to Minnesota because my first husband got a position here. As my children grew up, I became very involved in the schools. There, I was a PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] president and so forth. I also costumed community theater productions.

CAC: Did that get you into fabrics or had you . . . ?

NM: I'd always been in fabrics. I had always made my own clothes because the commercial clothes weren't made to fit me. I was too tall. Making clothing interested me and I'd always been a painter as I could find time for it. I'll put those two things together eventually.

CAC: I'm going to push you when you get to that point of putting them together of how early this started. When is talent recognized consciously by a child, by a youth?

NM: I've always been a divided person.

CAC: Many of us are.

NM: I always was interested in words, and persuasion, and other things besides the visual arts. When my children were young, I was working in the DFL [Democratic Farmer Labor] as a volunteer and, then, I went to work for John Brandl as a volunteer in his office.

CAC: Oh, for heaven's sakes. I had a nice interview with John.

NM: It was a wonderful experience. This all played a part then when I got to the point where my children were in school and I was looking for a position. My old friend, Judy Bennett, came to me—she was at that time working in the College of Liberal Arts—and said, "They're looking for somebody in the Art Department. They want an administrator. It's a half-time job and it's just the right thing for you. You ought to go and apply for it."

CAC: This is about what year?

NM: This is 1977. I had been looking for part-time jobs at the university.

CAC: This is when [Frank] Sorauf was still dean?

NM: Sorauf is dean. As a matter of fact—this is something I want to talk about—I believe this was the first administrative position at the department level. It was an *E* appointment and it was half-time.

WM: I can add to that. I think Frank Sorauf recognized the fact that the Studio Art Department really, while they might have talent to teach, had no administrative talent. [laughter] He said, "We'd better get somebody who can keep that department online." That was the creation of this position which Nancy got.

CAC: You said, "half-time and *E*." What does *E* mean?

NM: *E* was an administrative appointment.

CAC: Such as P&A [Professional and Administrative] later?

NM: Yes, later subsumed in P&A.

CAC: Okay. But your portfolio was to take care of Studio Arts?

NM: Right. I want to say that, up to this point, I had been shopping for a part-time job at the university, something I could do while my kids were in school. Nothing had come to fruition. I had been interviewed a number of times. I feel very fortunate that I didn't get some of those jobs. [pause] I don't know if I want to talk about that on the tape.

CAC: [laughter]

NM: What the Art Department wanted was somebody who could write, and somebody who had some political savvy, and somebody who understood art. These were all things that interested me. Fortunately, they offered me the job. Incidentally, Warren was on the committee that interviewed me. Karl Bethke was chair then. Hank [Herman] Rowan was on the committee and Warren. I had never met any of these people before. I was married to somebody else. I never envisioned I'd end up married to Warren; but, that was the first time I met Warren. They hired me and I went to work there in the fall of 1977. I stayed there for almost three years.

CAC: You are really working in the Studio Art Department. You weren't working in Johnston Hall for the Studio Art Department?

NM: No, no.

CAC: You weren't in Central Administration?

NM: No, no. I was working for the Art Department. I was doing a lot of their writing in terms of planning documents. I put together the P&T [Promotion and Tenure] file and so forth. I did a lot of PR [Public Relations] for them because they've got this big building with all these things going on and a lot of people coming and going who need handling. I would, for instance, set up visits from the legislature. I would also be the person who was called on when somebody got their hair caught in the clay mixer and I'd call 911.

CAC: Did you have to assign courses and times?

NM: No, I didn't do that. I started dealing with grievances, even at that level, which became a speciality later. I was there almost three years and then Fred Lukermann began . . .

CAC: He is now dean?

NM: He became dean while . . .

CAC: You were really late Sorauf?

NM: Late Sorauf and Lukermann comes in. He hires Roger Benjamin as associate dean. At this time, they still had part-time graduate students as assistants to the dean. That's how Jim Garrity came to be there.

CAC: In American Studies, yes.

NM: At that time, they had associate deans for Social Sciences and for Humanities and Arts. Jim came from the Humanities and Arts program. Each associate dean had a graduate student as a part-time assistant. I think I'm sort of the beginning of hiring full-time professionals to assist deans. I'm a transition person there.

CAC: That's interesting.

NM: Roger said, "I need a full-time assistant." There was a search. It had an enormous number of applicants.

CAC: Excuse me, I'm going to interrupt here. Deans in the Arts College had handled tens of thousands of students and any number of faculty; so, it could not have been an increased burden of faculty or students that led to the need within Central Administration of the college to have . . . What factors operated? Is it that Benjamin wants to run it more efficiently?

NM: I think probably the most important factor is increased demands on the college from Central Administration.

CAC: Ah! Like what?

NM: For planning. With Roger became the beginning of the really complex planning process in which each department had to prioritize its needs and make elaborate requests.

CAC: And this because of retrenchment and reallocation?

NM: Yes.

WM: Wasn't this also the time at which the college was reorganized so that instead of having associate deans for the different areas, it was set up to have an associate dean who was going to be the executive officer?

NM: Roger became that, yes.

WM: There was certainly an increase in work with that sort of a change.

NM: It was just differently organized and Fred did make that change. I also think that other demands from Central Administration were put on the college. For instance, the whole business of the Rajender decree. We had a lot of Rajender cases in the College of Liberal Arts and I worked on those and on Affirmative Action. Hiring became more complex all the time. There was a great deal more demanded of the college.

CAC: You don't see that as a caprice of Morrill Hall?

NM: No. It's not a caprice. It was brought on by factors that were beyond their control, too. There are other people who disagree with me on this; but, I think that they had their needs and they needed more from the college in terms of paperwork.

CAC: It won't surprise you as I talk to so many people from different parts of this sprawling university that there are similar stories. These are parallel stories that suddenly in the mid 1970s and late 1970s, these things begin to move down. When you're in this position then . . . which becomes full-time?

NM: Yes.

CAC: You handle a lot of different portfolios?

NM: Oh, yes.

CAC: There's no job definition as such.

NM: It grew as time went on.

CAC: You slip into these portfolios?

NM: Yes, that's right. It grew.

CAC: What other portfolios did you pick up? You did Affirmative Action.

NM: In the end, I didn't do a lot of that either. Other people picked that up. When Fred reorganized and he had an associate dean for Faculty Affairs, such things as hiring and Affirmative Action procedures came under Faculty Affairs. I did stick with and develop a large portfolio in terms of faculty grievances.

CAC: These are faculty grievances against . . . ?

NM: The college.

CAC: What nature would those be? This is not through the Judicial Committee?

NM: Frequently through the Judicial Committee as well as what ever other channels existed and that changed over the years. The most frequent cause of a grievance was a faculty member who believed they should be promoted and who was not. I must have participated in about a dozen of those over the years that I worked in the college.

CAC: Most of those went to the Judicial Committee?

NM: Some did. Some went to other grievance structures, but usually they Judicial Committee. In the beginning, I would sit by Fred's side, and have all the paperwork prepared, and have it indexed, and be able to pull out the papers that he needed. The more and more I sat there, the more responsibility I got. I should say that I worked with three deans of the college. After Fred

Lukermann, then Craig Swan was interim dean for a couple of years and then Julia Davis. When Fred left and Craig was in charge, he had not done a grievance before; so, I knew more than he did about it.

CAC: Of course.

NM: I became more responsible. When Julia came, she had even less experience than Craig; so, I ended up primarily in charge.

CAC: It's known as the permanent under secretaries . . . the British condition . . . they have continuity and the professors and deans come and go.

NM: That's right. Other portfolios . . . I became, for instance, the major manager of the college's committees. I would help to nominate people to committees, and I would have lists and find out who hadn't served and who deserved to be tapped for different jobs, and make proposals to the dean, most of which would be accepted. Then, I would write the letters for him, which he would sign, asking people to serve on committees.

CAC: How did you go about finding out about who would be an appropriate person?

NM: Again, you have to know the history. You have to know the faculty.

CAC: How did you get to know the faculty . . . largely through grievance, but that's not a very good answer.

NM: No, that's not true. How did I get to know them? Because I sat in on everything the dean did. Craig Swan once said, "We do everything together except go to the bathroom."

CAC: [laughter]

NM: I sat in on all the dean's meetings. I sat in on all the college councils. I heard what everybody had to say. I heard everything about the faculty.

CAC: Is there informal information in Johnston Hall about faculty?

NM: Of course there is!

CAC: Where does that come from? How does the grapevine work in a large institution?

NM: I don't know that I can answer that. There are comings and goings of faculty. You get to know the agenda of every department. You get to know the agenda of every faculty member who has an ax to grind about all sorts of topics. You know who they are and what they've done

professionally because you hear all of the promotion and tenure stuff. You know who has made transgressions of various sorts and who has been complained about by students.

CAC: So it's a great deal of information that never gets on paper?

NM: Absolutely.

CAC: That's why I'm doing oral interviews.

NM: Yes.

CAC: I'm not going to press you for names. It's the function of the office that intrigues me. In the Arts College office in later Lukermann and then in Swan and Davis, does the size of the staff increase significantly? You're half-time in Studio Arts and then you become . . .

NM: I should say that was gradually upgraded. First, I was half-time. Then, I became three-quarter time and by the time I left Studio Arts, I was full-time. They saw the need for increasing me and also I was going through a divorce at that time and it was very helpful for me to become full-time and have my own insurance. There were a lot of factors operating.

I want to go back and tell one story about how I came to be in the college in the first place. I had done three things in the Art Department that had called Fred's attention to me. One was that I found an error in the salary schedule; so, I called the college and said. "There's an error here." Another one was that there was a dispute . . .

CAC: Do you mean someone was getting paid . . .

NM: It had been computed wrong. I just observed that. I took the initiative and called up. The second one had to do with a dispute between models and professors that looked like it was going to escalate into something embarrassing. I can't remember what all the models were complaining about. I just sort of took the initiative and wrote down a proposal, before Hank and I came to see Fred, about what I thought the solution to this problem was and spelled it out. Then there was a third thing, which I can't remember. I know there were three things that I had done that he had seen that initiative.

CAC: Were these legitimate grievances that the models had?

NM: Yes, I think there were.

CAC: Authentic.

NM: Like any grievance, some things were legitimate and some things were probably out of proportion. There was a resolution that would satisfy people.

CAC: It involved the way they were being treated rather than being paid?

NM: Yes, probably. Those were things that made Fred see that I was the kind of person he needed in his office.

CAC: I'm just gathering wool for the moment and that is that it's only in the Art Department where that kind of problem would come out. There aren't models in that sense that one would use any other performing arts?

NM: I think there are parallels to that in the college, maybe not models but different kinds of groups that feel they're not being treated right. I could think of some examples that I saw from the dean's office.

CAC: Are there examples—I'm not going to push you beyond what you want to share—that you would be helpful for people understanding this strange place?

NM: I can give you a number of examples. One that occurs to me is—I like this one because it's not expected and it's not usual—a number of women came to complain to the dean about a woman professor in Women's Studies. We normally hear about men oppressing women and this was a case where the women students felt they were being oppressed by a professor. There were always issues, for instance, about dancers needing the right kind of floor . . . the kind of work that we had to go through to get them a floor that wouldn't be injurious to their ankles and knees and so forth.

CAC: Wouldn't get slivers in their feet.

NM: That's right.

CAC: They are conditions of labor really?

NM: Those are issues as . . .

CAC: You bet! It's a workplace.

NM: With your background, I can see how you're sensitive to that. There are issues of perception, too.

CAC: Staff increased over the three deans?

NM: I think staff increased. I think much of that was brought upon by the demands of Central Administration. It did increase more so even after I left the college. I can't speak to the legitimacy of that.

CAC: You left when?

NM: I left at the end of 1991, formally. I came back to continue working on a grievance quite a bit in 1992.

CAC: A grievance that had started when you were there?

NM: Yes, a longstanding hangover.

CAC: Can you say something about the different managerial, administrative, political styles of these three deans?

NM: Certainly. They were certainly different styles, different approaches. I also have to say that I liked all three of the deans that I worked with very much. I felt very loyal to them. In practically every case, I felt that they were doing the right thing from all the information that I had. Frequently, I felt that they were being unjustly treated by Central Administration for one reason or another.

CAC: But, their style of management differed?

NM: Yes, it did. Fred is the only one who I could characterize as being able to talk an issue to death. [laughter]

WM: [laughter]

NM: He could go before the councils of the college and talk until everybody was exhausted and finally they would give up because they wanted to go home. They might come back and fight another day.

CAC: Are you suggesting that was a deliberate stylistic tactic?

NM: I think so. I also think—other people have said this—that Fred could use his bulk, if you will, to intimidate people. I think frequently he was effective in that. It was just hard to stand up to him—some people did, of course and, when they were really angry with him, would frequently would break out in various kinds of furor. All three of these people were good listeners, too, and would reason with people. Fred had an interesting style of responding to requests. He would say, "Yes, we want to be helpful. We want to help you solve this problem." People would get the idea that that meant he was going to give them all the money they were asking for.

CAC: [laughter]

NM: He would say, "We want to be supportive." They would read that as, "Oh, yes, I'm going to get all the money I want."

CAC: Was that an unreasonable expectation on the part of some of these people? Many of them are just turnover chairpersons, right, who don't know what language is being used with them? I'm speaking as a former chair.

NM: Yes, I understand and it probably happened to you. All I can say is, if you're going to be a chair of the department, you'd better learn pretty quick to get things down in writing.

CAC: [laughter]

NM: Don't make these assumptions. If you do, you're going to learn the hard way. It certainly is a problem in the college and probably the university, too, that people aren't trained administrators.

CAC: This is your interview not mine; but, I learned rather quickly—I don't know where I got the idea—after a conversation with *zip*, it wasn't only deans, to write a memorandum that afternoon, "It's my understanding from our conversation that . . ." one, two, three.

NM: That's exactly right.

CAC: If they said, "Oh, no! that wasn't it," then you knew. If they didn't say anything, then it's not a contract but, at least, I had something in writing. How many chairs do that in your experience?

NM: I'd say they learned it. Whenever I talked to new chairs and as I was there we developed more and more educational materials for new chairs telling them from the college viewpoint what they needed to know when you're a chair.

CAC: Desperately needed.

NM: That developed all the time I was there. The handbook increased; so, we were handing out more and more stuff to new chairs.

WM: When I became chair of Studio Arts, I benefitted from having Nancy to refer to.

CAC: Ah.

WM: I could say, "Thus and thus has happened. Is this likely to be the case?" She would clarify it because she knew it from the dean's standpoint.

CAC: [laughter] You became chair after Nancy left?

WM: I became chair just as she left.

NM: Left the department, that is.

CAC: Yes.

WM: If I had known she was going to leave, I'm not sure I would have accepted the job. In fact, it was kept a secret from me until after I had already agreed to stand as the chair. Then, they said, "By the way, Nancy is going to the dean's office." [laughter] I said, "Ohhh!"

CAC: Did you get anybody else?

NM: Oh, yes, he got a good replacement. Suzanne Bardouche became Warren's assistant and then later became assistant to the associate dean for Faculty Affairs in the college. She's now Harrison Fraker's assistant in the School of Architecture.

CAC: That raises another question. Sometimes these conversations go sideways for awhile. Did there come to be a cadre of persons, then—I'm guessing mostly female—who were office managers who went that way, drifted to different kinds of jobs in different places? Was that a career kind of development in the 1970s and 1980s?

NM: There was some of that, yes.

CAC: You cite one example. Is that usual or is that normal?

WM: What was skipped in that instance of Suzanne Bardouche was the fact that she moved from the Studio Art Department assistantship to the college and then saw herself in a dead end position; so, she quit the university and went to work for WCCO [radio]. From WCCO, she was then hired back into the university at a higher position, which she felt was not possible if she'd stayed within the [unclear].

CAC: I see.

WM: I'm not sure how true her perception was.

CAC: But she did those things, right.

NM: I'm not sure I can make a generalization about that. Some people were pursuing advanced degrees while they were in these positions. Some people stayed where they were. Some migrated. There were different patterns, I think. I wanted to go back and talk a little bit about the chairs.

CAC: I was thinking of Miss Murray, for example.

NM: Karen Murray?

CAC: She did an awful lot of jobs around about.

NM: And she's still there.

CAC: Yes. I wonder whether that came to be a norm in the 1970s and 1980s for developing a middle management kind of P&A job?

NM: I'd have to think about that more. I can't generalize right now.

CAC: All right. You wanted to go back.

NM: You were talking about the chairs and what they know when they become chairs. I think one of the functions that I served for all three deans was to be a link with the chairs. I would talk to them when they couldn't talk to the dean. I would be much more accessible so they could call me, and ask about strategies, and ask about what would be the most effective way to go about something. I could advise them about things like, "get it in writing."

CAC: You could afford to be candid with them?

NM: Oh, yes. Yes. This helped the dean.

CAC: The dean knew you were being candid?

NM: Absolutely. The more knowledge I had, the more I could save the dean time by letting the chairs know things they needed to know. They would call up and they would say, "What are the odds that I can succeed in this thing I want to do?" They would ask me, "Where does Fred stand on this?" I could tell them. All the deans encouraged me to do that . . . I think partially because they believed I was reading it right and would tell it straight. I think I was an interpreter.

CAC: I should share with posterity that this what you're describing was really late 1970s and early 1980s.

NM: After you were chair.

CAC: When I became chair in 1971, I couldn't even get access to the college budget.

WM: [laughter]

CAC: I hired a half-time research associate, a graduate student in American Studies, who went over to the State Capitol and xeroxed the college's budgets so I would know what was going on. From 1971 to 1979, let us say, it's a pretty big jump.

NM: Oh, yes. By the time I came to the college in January of 1980, Mary Bilek had been established in a separate office.

CAC: Separate from Betty Jo Pointe's?

NM: That's right. She was making information accessible. All this budget information had to be accessible to the departments for the planning process that Roger instituted.

CAC: Yes.

NM: Betty Jo was on her way out. It was Roger who deposed Betty Jo, as you know.

CAC: Posterity doesn't know. That's whom we're talking to.

NM: Do you want me to talk about that?

CAC: If you wish, sure.

NM: I think it was clear that we needed a new kind of budget management, a much more open style of communication. When I was in the Art Department, she would call up like a drill sergeant and say, "Is he there?" speaking of Hank Rowan. I would say, "No, he isn't here. What can I do for you?" Then, she would issue some edict without any explanation or without treating the person at the other end like a professional. I think that worked at a certain time; but, it wasn't working anymore and we needed a much more open and democratic process. We also needed a lot more sophistication with computers and statistics.

CAC: Ah!

NM: Betty Jo was essentially an accountant. That wasn't sufficient anymore. We began to develop a very complex planning process and she was not up to coping with that.

CAC: Mary Bilek proves so good that she ends up in Morrill Hall.

NM: She ends up in the state finance office now.

CAC: She's moved out of the university?

NM: Yes.

CAC: Her talents were such that Morrill Hall recognized it?

NM: Absolutely. When she went on to Central Administration, Mary Blomquist replaced her. Mary Blomquist had a Ph.D. in statistics, too, and was extremely competent. Both Marys were very competent and very good colleagues.

CAC: I'm wondering—this is the first time I've thought of it—if the process of planning required an opening up at every level? Departments began to open up pretty much at the same time, the late 1970s and 1980s.

NM: Yes.

CAC: Is that what drove what we think of as the democratization of the provinces?

NM: I think a lot of things operated in that direction and one of them was the Rajender decree. I think a lot of things that had been secret before Rajender could not be in the future.

CAC: I see.

NM: There was a great pressure toward developing Affirmative Action procedures, sexual harassment procedures, hiring procedures. Warren will talk about how, in the old days, the chair hired who he wanted without any discussion with the faculty even. After Rajender, that couldn't . . .

CAC: And paid them what he had in the budget?

NM: Nobody knew who got what.

CAC: Do you have a sense from being in Central Administration what departments were operating openly earlier? Is there a process? Is there a culture of openness or democratization within the college?

NM: There certainly is a difference in departments and how they operate. A lot of it is the personality of the chair and how long the chair has been in the position. We had, what we called, the old guard, such as [Lloyd] Lofquist in Psychology and [Norman James] Simler in Economics, who had been running things for twenty plus years, and who knew the ropes, and got ultimate effectiveness in their dealings with the college. Always there were some departments that were in disarray with internal squabbles and who found it harder to get their act together. But personalities are certainly a part of it and then there are cultures in departments.

CAC: Yes, that's what I'm . . . can you say anything more about diverse cultures within? How many department programs are there . . . in the forties in the Arts College?

NM: Not anymore.

CAC: But when you were there?

NM: There have been a number of consolidations. I think when I came to the college, we had like forty-three departments with separate budgets.

CAC: They didn't each have a separate culture but there were clusters, I'm guessing.

NM: Yes, and there were also overlaps. Fred was really good at shaking up organizational structures. He added the minority departments. He tried to set up some structures that were not departments but that were coalitions of interests like International Studies where it would draw faculty from a number of departments who wanted to cooperate together toward certain ends. He had sort of extra departmental structures. These kind of structures would sometimes facilitate things that couldn't be done within departments. I think International Studies is a good example of that. You want more examples about cultures?

CAC: I don't want to push beyond what you can [unclear].

NM: I'm willing to talk about it. There are certain departments which seem to be very collegial, in which there is a lot of respect for each other's opinion and things are discussed and voted on openly. Some departments are very proud of having that heritage.

CAC: Where do you think that heritage came from in those departments? Could you name for instances?

NM: I think it's a fortunate convergence of reasonable people in one department. There are other departments that have been more unfortunate in having convergence of unreasonable people and having a high incidence of renegades and Lone Rangers who are not susceptible to cooperation . . . without naming names.

WM: I would interject here . . .

CAC: Please, do.

WM: . . . that the Studio Art Department when it was established as a separate department, separate from Art History, was composed of a number of prima donnas. That's maybe why they're in the arts. They're convinced that what they're doing is absolutely right and everyone else is wrong. When you get this sort of a group together in a faculty meeting, you're in real trouble. We used to have incredible shouting matches with one person insulting another right there in the faculty meeting . . . "You don't know what you're talking about, and you're students all hate you," and things of that sort, which were not necessarily true but they were the perception of the individual who was speaking. Our case in Studio Arts went so far as to arrive

at a situation where we were put into receivership. Roger Page was associate dean and he was appointed as the acting chair of the department. He sat back and treated us very gently; but, he made sure that this sort of thing didn't happen. Eventually, we realized I think that you couldn't run a department in that manner and things calmed down a bit after while. Even when I was chair, there was the same sort of internal antagonism between the faculty members . . . not all of them but enough to make it a difficult situation sometimes.

CAC: I'll give you a for instance. Political Science was always perceived of as well-managed and collegial.

NM: Yes.

CAC: Not that they didn't have differences but it was another form of . . .

NM: The only problem was that they had so many people who became administrators that they sort of left their ranks barren at times. That is a good example. There was some suspicion that maybe these people knew something about political science that made it work. I don't know.

WM: [laughter]

CAC: I sometimes thought that different disciplines are self-selective. The people who are going to be anthropologists, or to become philosophers, or engineers or what have you have a certain personality, character, as well as an intellectual set.

NM: Oh, yes. From the dean's perspective, if you have a situation where everybody on a certain faculty is coming to the dean to complain about something and there are a lot of complaints that a certain chair is being dishonest with the faculty, or the faculty is rife with disruption, or they can't agree on anything, for instance, promotions, or they can't agree on how to spend the money, it becomes necessary for the dean to step in and not let the mission be ruined, not let the students be victimized.

CAC: Were you in Central Administration when that might have been said of Social Work, for example?

NM: I was in the college when Social Work was moved to the St. Paul campus. That was a big furor as was eliminating the Library School.

CAC: Is there a story on the Library School?

NM: Yes. [laughter]

CAC: What are its basic outlines? I know that there are formal memoranda; but, frequently those don't tell the whole story.

NM: It was a small faculty. Several people were willing to leave whose reputations were not stellar. It was not keeping pace with the Information Age. It was apparent that Minnesota students could go to Wisconsin, which had a much more progressive library school. We had to eliminate. The question becomes, in the planning process, What is the thing that's least important here and what can we get along without? What do we have to maintain? That was something that we could dispense with.

CAC: Why move Social Work to Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics. They fall under Home Economics. Was there a logic to that? Why did that happen as you see it?

NM: I think there was some willingness within the faculty to make that move. That was one of the things that made it possible.

CAC: Why?

NM: Probably because they thought they would get a better shake over there.

CAC: Was that a fair perception?

NM: I can't say because the details are not in my mind anymore.

CAC: Okay.

NM: At one time, I probably knew; I don't know now. There were some people at least who were willing to make that move and thought they would be better served by it. I also think that in the college there was the perception that is an applied field and that what we need to concentrate on here are the ground breaking disciplines rather than the applied.

[Warren excuses himself from the conversation]

NM: I know that those two things were going on in the same year and I think the bigger furor was over the Library School than Social Work, as I recall.

CAC: One was being disestablished and the other was being moved.

NM: Yes. At least some of the Social Work faculty were accepting of it.

CAC: The initiative came from the Arts College to move it or from Home Economics to receive it? How is that politically worked out?

NM: I think that there was a willingness to receive it or we couldn't have gone through with the deal. I suspect that the initiative came from the Liberal Arts [College]; but, I'm not on top of the details anymore.

CAC: You've talked about Mr. Lukermann's style.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: Your last remark was that all three of them were highly intelligent and quick learners.

NM: Yes, they were, which is an important skill to have. I think Craig never got to his full potential because he never had a full term as dean. He knew he was working in a short time frame as an interim dean. I think he learned everything that he needed to know to be dean when he was associate dean under Fred and that he really had a command of the budget. He was focused on the work, as Fred was and as Julia, too. They all ate, drank, and slept the job, and took it home with them, and lost sleep. Craig didn't have time to develop his own policies and carry out a program. I think he has an excellent potential as an administrator. He certainly is doing a beautiful job of chairing Economics. I know about that because I've been involved in a long-running grievance in that department. Julia hasn't, of course, completed a term yet. People will evaluate her performance further down the line.

CAC: Sure.

NM: As she came into that job, I found her extremely astute and well-qualified to do all the things that had to be done. She has wonderful counseling skills because of her training in speech and hearing counseling. She, too, is very good at hearing people out. I think that's an important thing that deans need to do is to let people speak their piece. When they've been heard, then talk about what can be done. Julia operates under the additional problem of being a woman. Not everybody is yet willing to treat her as a full-sized human being. I think she handles that very well.

CAC: Do you refer to her own faculty or superiors across the mall?

NM: All over.

CAC: I'm not surprised by that, but could you flush it out?

NM: Yes, I can talk about it more. I've had an opportunity to listen to a lot of women's complaints in academia. Some feel very put upon and see victimization at every turn. Julia doesn't see victimization. She feels like she's progressed through the ranks and she's been rewarded appropriately for her work. She doesn't look for discrimination against her.

CAC: But she knows that . . .

NM: It happens.

CAC: . . . the grievance of others are not unfounded?

NM: Oh, certainly. Some grievances are more justified than others. If you work in those over time, you learn to tell a forest from the trees.

CAC: On the job, you pick up a kind of intuition?

NM: No, it's more than intuition. You learn to evaluate the information and you learn to check out other people's perceptions. If you find out that one woman in a department feels that she's been victimized excessively and the other women don't feel that way, then you look for an explanation for that. One person's perception may be out in left field, so to speak, or she may generate a different kind of response than her colleagues.

CAC: You know better than I if there are other things that you should share about this experience. Then, I want to turn really to your artistic . . . where you pick that up and got back in gear again.

NM: I wanted to talk a little bit about competing interests in the college.

CAC: Good.

NM: That's something I became very aware of and how factions would form and departments would sometimes develop coalitions to achieve certain ends. Frequently, for instance, the Arts would get together to try to raise salaries in the Arts. When they'd look at all this data, they'd say, "Hey, we're underpaid. We ought to be getting more. We're worth more." I remember a time, actually, when I was still working in Studio Arts and we were revising the curriculum and the group requirements and I remember you being there and lobbying for an additional History course. Do you remember that?

CAC: It was not a History course. It was a course that would be historical in any department.

NM: But, an additional history component.

CAC: Including Religious Studies, Philosophy, Art.

NM: I remember that there was a competing interest in that Warren who was going to be chair at that time, perhaps. Was I in the dean's office or was I in the Art Department? I'm not sure. I remember Warren lobbying for an additional Arts requirement. It seems to me that these two interests were competing. Maybe that's not accurate. There were competing interests here for the shape of the curriculum, and what should be included, and what was higher priority, and so forth.

CAC: I am going to interpose again here.

NM: Sure.

CAC: This was the committee that revised the group requirements in 1979, 1980, and 1981.

NM: You chaired it?

CAC: I chaired it. One of the things the committee came to—not me—was feeling that hands-on courses should be, if they met certain standards and criteria, included in ways to fulfill a group requirement. That meant to paint a picture, or to give a dance, or to give a recital on the piano, or whatever it might be . . . that was a committee position and it was opposed generally by the Humanities and Social Sciences. My memory is very clear because I was on the very exposed . . . It was carried by a couple of people from the Physics Department who played the oboe and the violin and they said, "Oh, well, performance is a way of learning and it's perfectly legitimate." The vote went that way. The committee, at least, was on the side of legitimizing Studio Arts and Music.

NM: A woman philosopher, who played the violin, also was on that side . . . Marcia Eaton.

CAC: I didn't realized she played the violin.

NM: Yes, yes. I remember that. You're just supporting my thesis about seeing these competing interests and the necessity for people to find allies and lobby for their causes.

CAC: It's a political process.

NM: That's right. That's what I'm saying.

CAC: I want to talk about the artistic part. You sent along your CV [Curriculum Vitae], which I was very grateful to have. It's not really until the late 1970s, if I read this correctly . . . your MA was School of Communications, Washington, Seattle, and then some fifteen to eighteen years you give the Life Drawing Workshop with Judith Rue and then the Surface Design Workshop, then Rokatsu. I want to know what that is.

NM: I'll tell you. In the 1970s, I was still very much involved in my first husband's career and I was involved in his research and editing his books. We co-wrote several articles and so forth. All that, I've left out now because it's not consequential.

CAC: He was in Sociology?

NM: That's right; he still is. Later, as I began to work in the Art Department, I was, again, exposed to more exhibitions, and techniques, and so forth. I was stimulated by that exposure.

CAC: But, you'd had this initial interest as a young person?

NM: Oh, yes.

CAC: Before we go farther, we may want to identify that better. I push everybody on this . . . how did they get interested in economics, or primitive societies, or what have you. Did you have a talent when you were a kid?

NM: Oh, yes.

CAC: How did it express itself?

NM: I could draw and I drew a lot. I was encouraged by my high school art teacher who remained a lifelong friend and who helped me to get a scholarship in college. My first degree was in art education. I was encouraged in college by professors who supported me and helped me get more scholarships.

CAC: You're trying out different media at that time?

NM: Sure. You know if you're going to get a degree in art-ed, you have to work in lots of different media and you have to be a jack-of-all trades, if master of none. You have to teach it all. Going back even further than that, both of my parents . . . and my sister is an art teacher, too—still is in California.

CAC: Was there something in the home?

NM: Yes, my parents.

CAC: With the genes?

NM: Probably both. My parents both encouraged it. I'm the first college graduate in my family. Neither of them were highly educated; but, they appreciated art and both could draw and would draw for me when I was a child. My grandfather, who lived with us, who was German, had beautiful calligraphy and would draw me elaborate calligraphic writing, and birds, and stuff. I was tuned in to all of this. My sister followed me in getting the same art degree, and has taught, and still teaches.

CAC: If anybody listens to these tapes ten years from now, an interesting subject would be the number of persons who were first generation college-educated of those I'm interviewing. It's all over the university . . . their parents eighth grade—that's it.

NM: Yes. My parents were supportive of education and while they didn't fuss over it, our interests in becoming teachers was something that they supported. They thought it was a good

thing to do. They supported it over other possibilities and thought that that would make us independent and self-reliant.

CAC: Ah! Was there any thought in that parental system that women had to know how to take care of themselves, too?

NM: My mother—although I didn't know it until she was on her death bed—had had a divorce before she married my father; so, I think she appreciated self-reliance. She had supported herself for years in between marriages; so, I think she thought that was good insurance and that we couldn't take for granted being supported by a man. It turned out to be, certainly, good advice in both cases because both my sister and I were divorced and both have been remarried very happily. We went through times when we really needed it. Everything that I had done served me well when I needed it.

CAC: That's good commentary. Then, when you move into the Arts you see all these things that are going on.

NM: Yes, it was very stimulating. For instance, I could go and take the course with Judy Roode in the summer through Split Rock. I took several Split Rock classes without having to pay the tuition because of work that I had done for the program. I could be an assistant at Split Rock. I did several times later. After my divorce, after some time, when I began to associate with Warren and become involved with him, he would go and teach summer workshops, and I found out that a spouse could go along and take a course. It would give me something wonderful to do while he was teaching. These workshop locations not only offer instruction but they feed you well, and you're relieved of housekeeping, and what not; so, you can really concentrate on these short term workshops.

CAC: That includes North Carolina and Lake Placid, New York, etcetera.

NM: Yes. These places are like the Harvard and Yale of visual arts and crafts. They have the top people come in and teach in the summer programs—as for example, Warren does. For a short term, you can really concentrate. It's a wonderful thing.

CAC: So, this was a latent thing. You felt like you were going home?

NM: What was particularly wonderful for me was I'd always been interested in clothing construction and fashion. In fact, at one point, I wanted to be a fashion designer. My mother said, "No, don't do that. Look what happened to your cousin. She went and got trained for that at Parsons, and then she'd take her designs to those guys on Seventh Avenue, and they say, 'Leave your portfolio,' and they'd steal her designs. No, go become a teacher. That's better." So, I did. But, I maintained this interest in costume. As I said, I always made my own clothes and they were always unique.

Then, some place in this process, I began taking fiber arts courses. Fiber arts is something that didn't exist when I was an undergraduate.

CAC: Where does it come from as a subspecialty?

NM: A few schools, for instance Chicago and Cranbrook, have been teaching it back into the 1970s at least. I think it's a relatively new outgrowth of weaving, which was the original course that was taught historically.

CAC: I see.

NM: Then, people began to say, "What else can we do with fibers besides weave things on looms? Can we decorate the cloth in different ways? Can we get off the wall? Can we make sculpture with fiber?"

CAC: Ahhh.

NM: This really grew in the 1960s and 1970s and more and more courses were taught. A good example is Walt Nottingham at [University of Wisconsin]-River Falls who developed a program over there. We've never had it at the University of Minnesota; although, the department always wished, if they could expand, they could offer fiber.

CAC: Is there something in the 1960s in the art field that would set this loose?

NM: Oh, sure.

CAC: Like what?

NM: Things that were happening among individual artists . . . a lot of it inspired by the whole Hippie revolution and interest in things like macrame on a wider scale, a back to nature kind of interest in fibers.

CAC: Ah.

NM: Certain artists began to say, "What can I do here that's different?" in breaking out of the normal old patterns? Various individuals began to show things in New York and California that were large scale sculptures made out of fibers that weren't weaving. "How about if you took a whole wall of leather strips hanging down? Would it take on an interesting connotations? What if you built this great big thing out of gloves?"

CAC: [laughter]

NM: A lot of innovation took place.

CAC: Now, you're in your late forties and fifties then, right?

NM: Right.

CAC: Which can also be a time of experimentation? This was attractive to you?

NM: A lot of things were happening in my life as in anybody else's. You're reevaluation. I've had cancer. I've had a divorce. I'm thinking about what's really important in life. My children are growing up and they're not going to be around. Incidentally, they're both artists, too. In fact, we're going to be in a show in the Nash Gallery in January called *Family Creativity*.

CAC: Ah!

NM: My daughter took the impetus in organizing this. She's working on her MFA [Master of Fine Arts] in the Art Department now. My son is a writer, who is living in Paris. He's been translating Genêt's poetry. He's written his second novel. He's a painter, too, on the side. In this joint show, we're going to have my daughter's painting, my son-in-law's painting, my son's painting, and I have an interesting wall piece that is not a wearable, and Warren's going to have a pot.

CAC: But it's [unclear]?

NM: It's structured, Clarke, out of the binder twine that's used to bale hay. That's what gives this thing structure. I had so much fun with that last piece with the barbed wire . . .

CAC: Yes.

NM: . . . that I'm investigating other things.

CAC: It's a prize winner, sure.

NM: Let me back up a minute to when I first got acquainted with Warren and started going to these summer workshops. Eventually, I ran across this woman in upstate New York in the Parsons program who was Japanese and who taught this technique called rokatsuzome. What that means is wax resist dyeing in Japanese. You can lay down a drawing with a wax resist, and you can remove the wax, and you can add more color on top. It's different than dip dyeing. It's different than batik because usually in batik you dye successively by dipping the fabric in successively darker color. In this technique, in rokatsuzome, you apply your colors with a brush. I love having a brush in my hand. I love painting with a brush. I love the way the paint comes off the brush onto the surface. I see that my daughter has these same genes and I see that the movement of my arm is the same as hers. There's stuff in your head, but there's also stuff in your genes, it seems to me.

CAC: Has she ever watched you?

NM: Oh, yes.

CAC: The way you move your arm?

NM: I'm the one that observed this. If you go in our bathroom and see my daughter's painting, you'd see what I'm talking about. There's movement that comes out of the genes, I think. There's an orientation that goes toward a looseness and not a fussy little tight kind of style, but one that is more interested in discovery and spontaneity.

CAC: At least in some of your work—I don't know the whole body obviously—there is social commentary.

NM: Oh, yes. That interests me, too.

CAC: This comes from?

NM: All my background, sure . . . all the things I've been exposed to.

CAC: Describe the piece . . . you had a prize winner at the fair this year.

NM: It's called *Tailhook, Flak Jacket, and Gauntlet Gauntlets*. It's sort of a commentary on the whole Tailhook scandal. It's something you can wear; although, you can't sit down in it because it's encased in the barbed wire.

CAC: [laughter]

NM: It's a piece that the jacket protects the sexual parts of the female who would be wearing it. It has insignia of crossed turkey skewers, and it has bottle openers on the epaulets, and the gauntlets would be for going down the gauntlet and defending yourself against the guys on either side. They are big heavy gloves with nutcrackers on them, and nut picks, and other hardware. That was a lot of fun.

CAC: You've done other works along the same . . . not the same thing but social commentary work?

NM: Yes, I did a piece for Nancy Kerrigan that has interesting padded knees that are very defensive looking.

CAC: [laughter]

NM: This is all a new venture for me because what I've been doing mainly is stuff that would really be wearable and that would make women feel attractive.

CAC: You do both?

NM: I do both; but, I'm suddenly interested in more of this, as you say, social commentary. I also have another piece that I'm working on that's called *Duck's Back* for Hillary [Clinton], which would help her shed some of the criticism that comes toward her. Let me go back to rokatsuzome for a minute.

CAC: Sure.

NM: This Japanese woman taught this technique in the first workshop that I went to. I liked it so much because it allowed me to put together the painting techniques that had always interested me with costume, and to make wearable art, and to think of a garment as a canvas that I paint on, and to calculate how the pieces would go together and how they would look when they're three-dimensional. I also do scarves, which I sell a lot of here and in galleries. The scarf also is like doing a painting that's two-dimensional and then when it's worn, it's three-dimensional. I think about how it will look when it's worn as well as how it looks when it's flat. That's an interesting challenge that I never get tired of. I first took this course and I liked it so much; so, they I arranged, through my connections with Split Rock, to have this woman come here and teach at Split Rock. Then, I could go and be her assistant the next summer and get another dose of this. Then, she came back the third summer and that time my daughter was her assistant and she got exposed to the technique. I continued to practice this and to learn about it when I could from other people—which are hard to find in the United States. This year, we went to Japan and I got to go to the source. The source of this tradition is in Kyoto. I met there, through connections, Betsy S. Benjamin, who has not written the definitive book on rokatsuzome, which features all the living rokatsuzome artists that are highly acclaimed in Japan. She was able to take me to visit their studios and see how they work, and what they do, and to talk with them, and take pictures.

CAC: Now, that you're home you can start thinking how you can use that?

NM: It's very interesting how that applies to my work. Now that I've been there and seen a great deal of it firsthand—it's different to see it firsthand than to see it reproduced in a magazine, for example—I have a greater understanding of what those skills are, what extensive discipline is involved in learning it, and how I don't want to do that. I want to do something that's different—and that's okay. I want to do something that's looser, that's more experimental.

CAC: Less controlled?

NM: Yes. I'm happy to have been to the source, and to have seen the finest examples of it, and to know how that relates to what I do; but, I will continue to do my own thing. There's an influence there and there's an tradition. It's like everything else in America that gets borrowed from Japan, we do things they would never think of. We break the rules. As my teacher said, "Japanese would never put avocado in sushi." That's what we do.

CAC: You and your husband still have your own studios and workshops here?

NM: Yes. I have a balcony overlooking where Warren works and I do my painting down there.

CAC: You still paint as well as doing this fiber work?

NM: I paint with dyes, you see, on the fiber. I have equipment down there . . . Japanese technology, which are bamboo stretchers that I stretch the fabric out on when I paint. I also do some things up here at the house. The rokatsuzome process is very labor intensive and I have to wash, and boil, and press and I do that up here at the house. Then, I construct up here, too. I move back and forth. Warren likes it best when I'm down there in the studio and when the spirit moves us, we can talk to each other. We're in proximity. He likes that. He also likes the fact that I'm not a potter. He's tried working arrangements with other potters and invariably there are conflicts over whose pots those were in the kiln, and what kind of glazes are used, and who messed up the glazes . . . all that kind of stuff. He once had an apprentice who was interested in gardening and the apprentice put a lot of black plastic out in the garden and I'm still digging up the black plastic. He's happy to work alone most of the time.

CAC: That's a very active retirement to have.

NM: He loves his retirement, yes. I'm just getting used to it. I've been through a transition process of turning my mind away from those things I was involved with in the university and more and more into my own work.

CAC: You certainly are physically removed, geographically removed, really out in the country and with beautiful views out all these wonderful windows. It's a wonderful place to do it.

NM: When you're here, it's a little different because you're looking out and you're seeing all the maintenance that needs to be done. [laughter] You're seeing when the lawn needs mowing and the gutters need cleaning and all those kinds of things.. You probably have a more tranquil view than I do.

CAC: One can see how beautiful early winter is. Isn't it?

NM: Yes. I was just watching the cardinal behind your head and there's a squirrel up there now.

CAC: Are there other things we should talk about? This has been an interesting and varied conversation.

NM: I'm willing to let Warren take over and if something crosses my mind, we can come back to it because here he is.

CAC: Nancy, I thank you very much. It will enrich our future understanding of you and of the university. Again, thank you very much.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by:

Hermes Transcribing and Research Service
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124
(612) 953-0730