

Mitchell Pearlstein

- Variety of positions at the University of Minnesota, 1974-1984 1
 - director of Public Information 2
 - SUNY-Binghamton 2-3
- Pearlstein comes to University of Minnesota as assistant to Magrath, C. Peter - 1974-77 4
 - speech writer 6
- Magrath's managerial style 7-
 - Regents - a first priority 8
 - retrenchments 8-9
 - Magrath anticipates "Commitment to Focus" 9
 - Magrath sensitive to rural mission of University of Minnesota 10
- Pearlstein - graduate work in College of Education 13-
 - Sam Popper - Pearlstein's adviser 13
- Pearlstein works for Affirmative Action office 15
 - Williams, Lillian 15
- Pearlstein joins Governor Quie's staff 19
 - relations with Magrath 21
- Reception of Campbell Committee Report, 1984 23
- Center for the American Experiment 24
- Lupton, Jeanne - her role 27-
- Popular campus hostility to Kirkpatrick, 1984 27
- Popular campus hostility to Bush, George, 1988 27
- National Association of Scholars 28-29

Interview with Mitchell B. Pearlstein

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

Interviewed on July 27, 1994

Mitchell Pearlstein - MP
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers. I'm in the office of Mitchell B. Pearlstein who is president of the Center of the American Experiment. Mitch was here with the [President C. Peter] Magrath Administration in Central Administration. He also did graduate work at the University of Minnesota in the College of Education and received his degree there and, then, worked in the office of Equal Opportunity.

MP: That overlapped while I was doing doctoral work. I also wound up, for a short period in 1981, the first five months of the year, doing some consulting with the office of Physical Planning—I think that was the title—working on a study of intramural facility needs on the coordinate campuses . . . something I was terrifically well-suited to do. [laughter]

CAC: You're a general practitioner.

MP: I was very general. Then, I went to work for Al Quie for the final twenty months of his administration, his tenure as governor.

CAC: Oh.

MP: Then, I wound up working with Harlan Cleveland for about the first nine months of 1983 at the Humphrey Institute.

CAC: You were really here a decade, from 1974 to 1984?

MP: That's right, on and off . . . mostly on.

CAC: As we've talked informally beforehand, my interest is kind of the informal history of how these things were put together, how offices function, how a person like yourself, who was young and relatively inexperienced with that kind of work, worked in. We're certainly interested in Mr. Magrath's working, managerial style. Why don't we start with a brief kind of autobiography of where you came from and how you got attached to President Magrath and came to Minnesota and, then, it will run along very smoothly from there.

MP: I had done my undergraduate work at the State University of New York [SUNY] at Binghamton, Class of 1970, though technically I finished off in 1971. I had been very much involved in anti-war activities while I was at Binghamton in the late 1960s, particularly into 1970. I went off to be a reporter at the *Sun Bulletin*, which was the morning newspaper in Binghamton in April of 1971. In May of 1972, people will recall, President [Richard] Nixon one night announced the mining of Haiphong and the bombing of Hanoi. Being the good anti-war activist I was at the time, I submitted my resignation about five hours later and was arrested about seven hours after that doing civil disobedience—all peaceful, of course—in front of the federal building in Binghamton; so, I needed a job and wound up working part-time, at least on a temporary basis, to start in the public information office at the SUNY-Binghamton, where I had gone to school.

It was just about this time that Peter Magrath was arriving as president at Binghamton. He had been at the University of Nebraska for four years prior. We hit it off nicely even though I misspelled his name in the very first news release I ever wrote about him. Everybody misspells his name.

CAC: They either misspell it or mispronounce it.

MP: That's right, both generally. We were getting along just fine; but, I was also being recruited for a job in Newark, New Jersey, at a community college there, the Essex County College. The job offer was made and it was for more money than I was getting paid at Binghamton and I accepted. I remember Peter and I were coming back from some speech he gave and he talked me into staying at Binghamton. It was one of the all-time great choices I have ever made; though, it was pretty easy as I recall. I didn't really want to go to New Jersey. I was, as I say, very impressed with this guy and we were doing very well together. My whole life—at no risk of overstatement—was changed forever by accepting his invitation.

CAC: Many good careers have chance intervention.

MP: Do you ever read Christopher Jencks from Harvard? I think back to his book [*Inequality: a Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*] on equality where he writes about luck as a [unclear]. He refers to it again in his new book [*The Homeless*], an excellent book on the homeless problem. My wife runs homeless programs; so, I have an interest. I'm Peter's acting director of public information at age twenty-four at this significant university. He went around looking for a permanent director, but, for one reason or another, couldn't find one.

About a year later, he made me permanent director; so, I was now twenty-five and I was very, very fortunate. About the same time, the fall of 1973, I was having lunch one day with a faculty friend at Binghamton, a guy who had done his doctorate here at Minnesota in political science. He waited for everybody else to leave the table and then he asked, "What can you tell me about Minnesota and Magrath?" I had no idea what he was talking about. Someone had called this faculty friend of mine sizing up Peter because Peter was now a candidate for the presidency and I didn't know anything about that. This was only, literally, something like fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen months after he had arrived at Binghamton to be president. I made an appointment to see him that afternoon. I asked, "Peter, what can you tell me about the University of Minnesota?"

CAC: [laughter]

MP: He said something like, "Oh, shoot! It's happening too fast." Without getting into all the details, not that I can remember them—this is no hyperbole; it is absolutely true—from that moment on, I was absolutely confident as I've never been as confident about anything in my life that he would be named president of the University of Minnesota. I was that impressed with the guy. I just assumed that he would get it. I figured any institution, group of people, who would interview him at length and study him at length would be equally impressed and he would get the job. Here was a guy who had gone from instructor to full professor at Brown in six years, for heavens sakes, and had this real appreciation, I came to learn, for the Midwest. The process went on, as you know, until the spring, about the first week of April of 1974. The only time I wavered in my perfect confidence, and I mean it was perfect confidence, was that final weekend. As I recall the Regents were going to be meeting on Friday and we didn't know who the other candidates were. Peter was vacationing or visiting his brother, I think, in New Hampshire and he had some other business in Boston. I was the one who found out first that the other two candidates were David Saxon from UCLA and Richard Ciard from Carnegie-Mellon. These were two major names at two major institutions.

CAC: They were three down from 100.

MP: At one time, there were 400 and some odd candidates. I was the one who informed Peter by phone on that Friday that these were the other two candidates and it was sort of "Oooh! this is big time stuff." The plan was he was going to be floating around New England for the weekend, and I was exhausted, and I was going to just stick by the phone, and I would be the contact from him if something happened. The rest of Friday, nothing happened. The rest of Saturday, nothing happened. So now, I'm beginning to think, they've made an offer to somebody else and they were just considering it before letting Peter know that someone else had gotten the job. Finally, I was pessimistic. All day Sunday, there was still nothing. They hadn't called Peter. Peter hadn't called me. I go to sleep reasonably early Sunday night and the phone rang maybe it was ten-thirty, eleven o'clock, maybe later. It was Peter. He gets on the phone and says something like, "Say 'Hello' to the new president of the University of Minnesota." I was

just ecstatic for him. At that point, we had never talked about my coming out to Minnesota with him if he got the job . . . absolutely.

CAC: You didn't know, of course, anything about the controversy surrounding Saxon?

MP: At that stage, absolutely not a word.

CAC: These things are done pretty discreetly.

MP: I found out later the wonderful stories about that. I was just very excited with bittersweet in the sense that he might be going, he would be going, and I would be staying back, and I would miss him; but, I was the director of public information for SUNY-Binghamton, which is a very, very good institution but it is essentially not well-known . . . especially, it wasn't twenty some odd years ago. The idea of having its young president go off to the University of Minnesota . . . just in terms of PR [public relations] for Binghamton, though it would disrupt the place, it was a major feather. I also, at the same time, had this sense, if I recall correctly, that I would wind up in Minnesota with him. Without getting into the details of how I went back to the office that night to start writing news releases and that kind of stuff . . . the announcement was made by Minnesota that Monday afternoon. We did all the interviews, and the day was finally coming to a close, and as was often the case, late in the afternoon, or early in the evening, or on a Saturday morning, there would just be the two of us in his office, and I'd be leaning against the radiator. After a pause and a smile, he said, "There may be a spot open in Minnesota for a bright young guy like you." I accepted within a nanosecond before I could even get the whole sense of it, I suspect. It was understood that I would be coming out, and it was understood that I'd be coming out as his speech writer, and that I would work part-time, half-time, and go back to graduate school part-time. Actually, I got here two weeks before he did in August of 1974. I learned quickly thereafter about the Saxon affair. Putting that aside, it was very quickly clear to me that there was more than enough work to do to justify a full-time job. I didn't want to live impoverished with only a 50 percent time salary; so, we put off graduate school for awhile.

CAC: Were you married at that time?

MP: No. I wound up getting married about a year later to someone I met out there, and married too quickly, and it came to a close too quickly. I was single at the time. I was with Peter full-time from essentially August of 1974 until I did leave to go back to graduate school at the end of June 1977.

CAC: But doing a variety of tasks other than PR?

MP: There was a whole PR operation, which was University Relations with Rust Hall, Liz Petrangelo, Dick Sheehan, and those folks. Thinking back—I hadn't thought about this in awhile—one of the nuances was to divvy up the responsibilities and prerogatives of the folks

down in University Relations as opposed to me. They were the principal PR people; but, I was the president's guy, and I was his speech writer, and sometimes I would muck it up by overstepping; but, we all got along pretty well.

CAC: It was a larger and more complex operation?

MP: Oh, much, much. We were talking about Hal Chase before . . . as Hal Chase would say, "You're in the big leagues now." Sure, much different.

CAC: What kind of assignments did you pick up in addition to being kind of inside PR?

MP: I don't know if I would describe it as inside PR. I was the speech writer and speech writing is a portion of PR certainly. It can be defined that way. My main responsibility clearly was as his speech writer and there was a lot of writing to do, an enormous amount to do.

CAC: Chief executives go about this in different ways. One can outline ideas that are presented . . . often do a rough draft. What was . . . ?

MP: It depended on the situation. If I had one skill—I like to think I have a couple—it is that I'm intellectually empathetic. If I spend enough time with a person, if I hear him speak enough, if I read enough of his work, I can pretty much predict where he's going to come out on something and the flavor of it all.

CAC: And the style and the rhythm . . . ?

MP: The style and the rhythm and all of that. I wound up being Al Quie's speech writer later on down the road. Sometimes, Peter would dictate a draft of something if I didn't know very much about the topic. Other times, I would take the lead in pulling something together. We would send drafts back and forth a lot. Of course, he was—this is true with most good speakers—better when he just worked from notes as opposed to a prepared text.

CAC: Did he share drafts with others on staff?

MP: Yes, absolutely . . . a lot of Central Administration folks like Stan Kegler, Jeanne Lupton, George Robb, the [acting] academic vice-president at the time, [Shirley] Clarke . . . depending on the topic, depending on the audience. When I think about it, I'm sure there were other things I did but what stands out in terms of other assignments was being his representative on the Board of Student Publications that publishes the *Minnesota Daily*, which I'm fond of saying was the worst administrative assignment I've ever had in my entire life.

CAC: Say a bit about that then.

MP: Oh, I learned how, in almost good cheer, to be accused of being a racist from one side and a communist and a Nazi from another two or three sides because everyone's always beating up on the *Daily* from different directions. I was one of the publishers, but I was the president's representative on the board so I was the main evil person in some ways. I don't want to overstate it; it was just a pain in the rear.

CAC: Having that responsibility for drafting and seeing speeches through, it opened up a wide area of policy because the president has to be informed and address many different issues so that you had to be a general practitioner yourself.

MP: I'm a generalist by instinct and by training. I was very fortunate. I was the first one to recognize exactly how fortunate I was and remain in that. Here I was—again going back to age; I've been very focused on questions of age throughout my career, particularly earlier on because I was able to do interesting things quickly—twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight when I was with Peter here and I only had a B.A. at the time; but, I was inside the presidency of one of the world's great universities. Now, when I say I was on the inside, I was. I don't want to claim though that I was inside with the same kinds of responsibilities and in the same fashion as the vice-presidents or Jeanne Lupton, who was the other assistant. That simply wasn't the case; nor did I ever expect it to be the case. I played by the rules. I was a young guy with a B.A.

CAC: But, by the same token, you had to be present many times and to listen carefully?

MP: Absolutely, sure. It was just great, great training and it was great fun. I think back and I made these comments at Jeanne Lupton's retirement, which was about . . .

CAC: A year and a half ago.

MP: No, no, much more. I'm trying to remember if I was already back here . . . let's say, four or five years ago.

CAC: I'm interviewing Jeanne Lupton in August.

MP: She'll be able to tell you. That was the best professional period of my life; though, what I'm doing now is magnificent . . . let's put it this way, save from what I'm doing now, which is the signature professional event of my life being the founder and the president of a think-tank. Up until this most recent period, it was simply the best job I've ever had, the most comfortable working relationship I've ever had. I've been very, very fortunate. I have worked for Peter, a university president in two places and for a governor. I've been in the U.S. Department of Education working for an assistant secretary whom I view as the best education critic in the United States, Chester Finn [Jr.]. This was during the Bill Bennett years in part. I have worked for an absolutely first-rate editor. That was more than twenty years ago in Binghamton, New York. I've been mentored very well, to use the jargon. But, in terms of working for someone who is smart as can be, who is as hardworking as can be, who had a remarkable—this is one of

his great gifts—gift of being able to see both forest and trees wonderfully well and having some substantial responsibility at a young age, it was perfectly and consistently enjoyable. There was never any undo pressure. He was a wonderful guy to work for. I think back with great, great fondness . . . part of it had to do with age and the folks I was working with. These things just combined very, very nicely and it was a great time in my life.

CAC: You have worked with persons who are public figures and of great responsibility. We had talked earlier, when first we met four or five weeks ago, that Mr. Magrath had a managerial style which you found appealing, and effective, and efficient. Can you fill in some of the details on what that means? He treated you generously—I don't mean financially—as another human being and that's certainly one sign of management.

MP: I'm a good couple of years older now than what Peter was when he befriended me and I think about how he took me on, in a fashion. I wasn't an apprentice in the way that you can be an apprentice in other fields in other circumstances because I wasn't in training to be a university president; but, the amount of confidence he showed in me and the personal relationship that we had, inviting me to his home and various things, was very special and very much appreciated. His style . . . hitting it at different levels of abstraction. I mentioned one of the more abstract notions of being able to understand forest and trees. He always had a sense of the whole, as far as I was concerned, and a sense of history, and a sense of what needed to be done over a longer period, a sense of strategy. At the same time, if there would be one aspect of his style that would stand out to someone who would work with him most immediately, it seems to me, it would be the correspondence. He corresponded feverishly. If someone would burp in his direction, he would write him a thank you note. That is an example, it seems to me, not only of grace and just being politically smart but it's a sense of having a sense of the trees, of the individuals involved . . . a great compassion, great empathy, great attention to detail demonstrated in the correspondence. I've learned from that. I don't do it as well as he did and presumably still does; but, I try to correspond regularly. That's an example.

CAC: CEOs [chief executive officer] frequently depend upon the spoken word, which doesn't consume as much time and frequently is [unclear].

MP: I'm far happier to just take care of something on the phone and he would, in all likelihood, do both or, at the very least, do the written correspondence.

CAC: I should think that would crowd a person's schedule. He has many constituencies.

MP: That's another part of the equation. He would dictate, even when he was sick with the Guilain-Barré, once he was well enough to dictate which I suspect was pretty early on, he would be sending back these little microcassettes to Diana Fisher, his assistant, just driving her nuts all the time. She probably had to work harder during the time he was sick because he had more time to dictate. That raises another point. He worked exceedingly hard. He would get up very early in the morning. I was always impressed on those occasions when I would be over there

for some kind of dinner or party some evening, he would send people on their way at nine, ten o'clock, whatever it might have been and he would tell me he would go back and work for another hour or two. I would be exhausted and want to go to sleep; he would go back and do more work. If there's one surprise common denominator among people whom I've worked for and with who have accomplished a great deal, it is that they work exceedingly hard and Peter certainly worked exceedingly hard.

CAC: To do that, you have to set priorities. The constituency demands include the legislature, Regents, faculty, students, the public generally. How on earth does a person with limited time, whatever his talent, set those priorities?

MP: I don't want to speak . . . I can't speak definitively about exactly how he rank-ordered them, if in fact he precisely rank-ordered; but, I can tell you Regents were right at the top of the list, and legislators were right at the top of the list, and I think journalists were right at the top of the list. But, I would also argue—since, for instance, I didn't mention the faculty right now—that faculty members would be hard pressed to argue that they weren't sufficiently attended to during that period. I think this speaks to a larger point that I wrote briefly about in an editorial at the *Pioneer Press* when I was there, when he left to go to Missouri in 1984, I guess it was. I don't think people, particularly at the university, ever gave him sufficient credit for having a sense of priority, strategy. More precisely, Ken Keller, to his great credit and I like Ken a lot, until his fall . . . As an aside, I've always felt badly that I was in Washington during the demise of his administration and I wasn't at the *Pioneer Press* at the time. I would like to think if I were still here . . . I don't know if I would have changed anything and I fully recognize he made some mistakes; but, he didn't have anybody defending him in town and I would have defended him. I thought he was treated just shabbily during that period. Putting that aside, Ken was viewed with, whatever the term was, Commitment to Focus and there was almost this implicit sense, I sensed, that Ken was finally setting priorities after Magrath was all over the place or the university historically had been all over the place. Yes and no and I would say mostly, "No." No, in the sense that if you read people like—not my professor here, Bob Keller—a guy by the name of [George] Keller who is a hire as a professor out of Maryland, who came out with a book, I'd say almost ten years ago now, maybe a bit more, talking about priority setting in American higher education. Peter was recognized in this book for one of the guys who really had moved in this direction in the 1970s. Going back to Binghamton, he started a process there where there would be real priority setting, which displeased some faculty no end who were in programs and departments that were highly ranked by some criteria.

CAC: We were into what we called retrenchment and reallocation with Magrath and it may be that that's not as attractive a phrase from their point of view.

MP: The point that I would make is that it wasn't simply a matter of getting a biennial budget and recognizing that you had to cut a couple of bucks or a lot of bucks. It was a matter of having a broader sense of what would be the criteria used to do this and for what ultimate purposes. What are the fundamental purposes of this institution? What does it do best? What

should it do less frequently because there are other institutions doing it? The fact of the matter is that Peter started thinking along those lines and doing things along those lines in Binghamton in 1972 to 1974. When we got out here, at the risk of reducing the argument unfairly, I interpreted it this way that there were any number of faculty who said, "If only the administration would make the case better. If only it would be more vigorous and eloquent. If only . . . "

CAC: Having in mind the public and legislature primarily?

MP: Particularly where the legislature was concerned. Only if you spoke to enough legislators and did it well enough, then we would be in great shape. Essentially, Peter's argument, it seemed to me, was, "No, it doesn't work that easily. We're in a period and we'll continue to be in a period where we're going to have set priorities and make hard decisions. If we don't do it ourselves, if we don't take the lead within the university doing it, somebody else is going to do it." So, Peter got that dynamic in motion at Minnesota, it seems to me. Without taking anything away from Ken, Ken did, in fact—I think he would be the first one to admit it—build on the foundation that Peter left. Now, having said that, I think what complicated things a bit was the fact that Peter was so intellectually, and emotionally, and viscerally committed to the idea of a Land-Grant university in the sense that everything, if it's done well, just about is worth doing. Here was this guy who had grown up in New York and in occupied Germany, who had gone to the Ivies—at least he did his doctorate at Cornell and taught at Brown—who all of a sudden finds himself in 1968 at Nebraska and winds up just loving the Land-Grant, loving the Midwest.

CAC: He was dean of the graduate school [unclear]?

MP: He started off as dean, if I recall correctly, of Arts and Sciences and, then, just moved and by the time he'd finished off, he had been acting chancellor. He had been the academic vice-president in the same way that he had moved with just extraordinary speed at Brown. He had instructed . . . full professor in six years. He had done, I think, about four different jobs at Nebraska. The point being while it seemed to me to be, at the very least, a subtle contradiction, he was very much committed to setting priorities and being strategically rigorous and at the same time having just a great respect for the great smorgasbord of things that a Land-Grant does and particularly this one, Minnesota, given the fact that essentially the only doctoral degree granting institution in the state is in the population center of the state. It's in the political capitol of the state. When you add up all of those kinds of factors, it's the most complicated university in the United States.

CAC: When one adds outreach to the state or region generally, that particular mission is very difficult to define.

MP: Sure it is. If you go to Iowa, there's Iowa and Iowa State. In Kansas, it's Kansas and Kansas State. In terms of that kind of identification, it is only the University of Minnesota; so, he was very much aware and fascinated, it seems to me, with that history, with that place.

CAC: I would interject very briefly because it supports your point of view.

MP: Sure.

CAC: I interviewed a director of the Experiment Station in Crookston which then became the . . .

MP: Who was it, by the way.

CAC: Bernie Youngquist.

MP: Yes, yes, I remember the name.

CAC: Of course, he saw the university from that point of view, of sugar beets, wheat, sunflowers and if had he requests to make of Morrill Hall, Morrill Hall had to respond. Those of us on the Twin Cities campus don't always appreciate . . .

MP: There's a parallel it seems to me . . .

CAC: A lot of things come into Morrill Hall that most persons don't know about.

MP: Not a clue, of course. A parallel . . . I hadn't thought about it exactly in these terms until just now but the fact that I've been in state government as well . . . the idea of what state representatives and senators do, and who they are, and what they deliver . . . that is a much more greater Minnesota notion, it seems to me, than an urban notion. I've always been fascinated by all of these political conversations about how the legislature will turn over or not turn over, how individual politicians will fare because I think much of those conversations are based on an outstate conceptualization. People know exactly who their representatives are. They know if they're delivering for some highway or bringing in bucks for sugar beets in Crookston.

CAC: You bet, [unclear] the university.

MP: It gets all clouded in the Twin Cities. Newspapers are not focusing on individual legislators in the same way that rural newspapers focus on rural legislators. I would argue now that the parallel is really very strong with people like Experiment Station directors in Crookston, and what they expect of the university, and how the university is being defined in terms of that station.

CAC: You're suggesting that Peter Magrath was quickly sensitive to the larger mission?

MP: Absolutely . . . oh, better than that, I would argue, he got the job to begin with because he made it clear to the board that he appreciated that full-bodied mission and that rural mission more than David Saxon appreciated it. David Saxon—thinking back and not having been in on any of

those conversations, of course, but reading the press accounts and hearing the stories—was viewed as the Twin Cities guy. He would really focus on the Twin Cities campus in the eyes of some at the expense of the rest of the institution. Peter certainly wasn't going to deny the Twin Cities campus; but, he liked the whole thing. That, again, speaks to the fact that he was viewed . . .

CAC: Nebraska might be a good model there because there's only one central university in the state of Nebraska.

MP: That's true, too.

CAC: How does a person get himself up to speed learning enough when being interviewed about a strange place—not entirely strange because he had the Midwest experience? Then, once on the scene . . . that just staggers me to think of the variety . . .

MP: Smart as hell. Smart as hell when you get down to it.

CAC: Most of them must be.

MP: And he prepared—I'm thinking of things now I haven't thought of in a long, long time—for the Minnesota interviews.

CAC: President [Woodrow] Wilson learned from the written word and Franklin Roosevelt from the spoken word. That's the way they gained their information, one with print and the other with oral. Do you have any sense with Mr. Magrath?

MP: I don't know if I would make a distinction.

CAC: So you've got to do both?

MP: He was a good listener who read a lot. I was perpetually struck by how well he thought on his feet. I don't know if I'm speaking too far out of school . . . When he came back from one of the rounds of interviews, maybe the second round, whatever kinds of conversations he had with the Minnesota folk when he was still at Binghamton, I remember his coming back and telling me at some point in the process after a period, someone said to him, "You haven't made a mistake yet." He hadn't stepped in anything yet. He knew his stuff.

CAC: To set priorities, to direct one's own calendar, to be a quick listener are all important. Also with a large complex operation, there is the matter of delegation of responsibility but also following up, monitoring to see that things are done. Could you comment on that with Mr. Magrath?

MP: He had some very, very strong people as his vice-presidents and he relied a lot on the vice-presidents. Hal Chase had been the acting Academic [Affairs vice-president] and then Henry

Koffler came aboard. On the Finance side, it was Jim Brinkerhoff who left after awhile to go back to Michigan. Jim was viewed, as I understand it, in national circles in his field as one of the very, very best.

CAC: There's a high turnover in the Finance vice-presidency all through not only Magrath's Administration but quite consistently.

MP: I've lost complete touch about who is in and out now.

CAC: In Academic Affairs, they have longer tenure it seems.

MP: I can't speak to that. I know Brinkerhoff left, as I understand it again, principally because he had a chance to go home. He had a chance to go back to the state of Michigan and to the University of Michigan; so, he did that. I don't think there were any particular irritations. I can't speak to the situation afterwards with Don Brown. He essentially brought two people in from the outside: Walt Bruning as vice-president for Administration or as I described it the vice-presidency for all the things that nobody else wanted to do, and he brought me in, though you really can't equate the two. Walt was brought in the senior position. I was brought in at a junior [position]. Walter was strong. Walter left after about two years.

CAC: You know that in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, there are two areas of the university which had their own constituency, which bring great political pressure [unclear]: Agriculture and Health Sciences. I get a sense that many presidents really postponed and evaded the Health Science . . . just let them do their business and facilitate and get out of the way. Do you have any sense of that?

MP: Hindsight suggests now, certainly, that over the last period, there were problems. Back then, Lyle French was very strong and they got along very well. I remember George Robb saying something about how the rest of us show up at a meeting at nine o'clock in the morning and we've just got out of bed. Lyle shows up . . .

[interruption in interview]

MP: . . . and Lyle had already been in somebody's brain for a couple of hours. This is an area where I am at a loss.

CAC: Sure, that's all right. I don't want to press you then.

MP: I really don't know when you get right down to it when Peter would sit down with Lyle French or with Bill Hueg what truly went on. I can say that I think particularly Lyle and Peter enjoyed each other quite a bit.

CAC: Down the line, I'll get the opportunity to interview them as well. You were then full-time for about three years?

MP: Three years almost.

CAC: Then, you decided to go half-time and pick up your degree?

MP: And half-time with Lillian Williams in the Equal Opportunity Office. It would not have been fair to Peter if I had stuck around on a half-time basis.

CAC: Sure. Let's talk about those two things then. I'm interested in the experience of graduate students and undergraduate students and we're doing some of that. What was your experience as a graduate student in the College of Education and, then, we'll take about Lillian Anthony.

MP: Lillian Williams.

CAC: Williams, I'm sorry.

MP: Wasn't there a Lillian Anthony?

CAC: You're right.

MP: Actually, I just got a call the other day from a young woman at the Humphrey Institute by the name of *something* Williams working for Sam Myers [Jr.] and they're putting together a conference. One thing led to another and I found out it's Lillian's daughter. When I first came out in 1974, the expectation was that I would do the doctorate in journalism and mass comm[unication]. But, all those courses were offered during the day; whereas, educational administration courses were offered at the end of the day and into the evening. Again, for greater and lesser reasons careers are built. I'll add to that, anecdotally, a true story. I hope no one gets upset. During the period after Peter was named president at Minnesota but before he actually got out here—he officially started, I think, the first week of September in 1974—a couple of the vice-presidents would come out to Binghamton to meet. Hal Chase, who was the acting Academic vice-president at the time came out once and we wound up, just Hal and myself, having lunch. We were talking about my academic plans and he when got back to Minnesota and immediately spoke to his good friend, Sam Popper. Most people, I don't think, knew that Hal Chase was Jewish . . . maybe they did, maybe they didn't know it. There was this group of folks, Hal Chase, Sam Krislov . . . Everyone knew that Krislov was Jewish. Everyone knew Sam Popper was Jewish, but I don't know if they knew that about Hal Chase. This little group of Jewish friends, [unclear] and Hal spoke to Sam saying, "This guy Pearlstein coming out with Magrath has some academic interests similar to yours. You should give him a call." Sam said, as I understand the story, "He doesn't know me. I don't know him." Hal said, "Call him. Call him." So, Sam called one day while I was in my office. I had no idea who he was. It took him about a minute or two to warm up; but all of a sudden, I was his student. He would do this for

me and that for me. I came out here and he immediately went on sabbatical for a year. He gave me some Talcott Parsons to read. I read about a paragraph and I told him, "What in the world is this?" [laughter] "No, I think I'll stay with mass comm." Then, over time, for intellectual reasons as well as scheduling reasons, I decided to do education; so, Sam became my graduate adviser. I had a choice to make . . .

CAC: Most of the seminars were late afternoon or evening?

MP: Yes, educational administration starts at four or five o'clock. At least that was the case fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years ago.

CAC: I'm sure it is because they have principals [unclear].

MP: That's the whole idea.

CAC: You had to study with a good number of others than your adviser.

MP: Sam was excellent. Sam was very attentive. The main dynamics of my being in graduate school here was I was the president's guy. I was the president's boy. That didn't affect faculty, it seemed to me, as much as it affected me. I wanted to be good! I remember Sam telling me a couple of years later when I was going into my prelim[inary] orals, "The idea is to get in and get out." I said, "No, the idea is to show them that I know what in the world I'm talking about."

CAC: That you knew something.

MP: "I'm the president's guy and I have to be worthy of that." He was an excellent adviser, turning back things that I wrote with great speed. Of the folks on that faculty, as you might recall and might imagine, he was one of the more intellectually challenging and broad people. I don't know if this is appropriate at all . . . there wasn't a great connection between the rest of the students and myself for the most part. They were elementary and secondary people who wanted certification. Excuse me for a second.

[interruption in the interview]

MP: I was more of a higher ed person and they were more hands on than I. I always use the analogy that if the question, let's say, was school busing, they would be interested in, how do you get the buses to do it right and I would be interested in the larger question such as, is this a good idea to begin with?" I don't want to focus too much on that. I worked with some very good people in addition to Sam. Tim Mazzoni [Jr.] was first-rate. Shirley Clark was first-rate. Bob Keller, Russ Thornton . . . some very good people.

CAC: Bravo. What did you do your dissertation on?

MP: Jewish attitudes toward Affirmative Action in higher education admissions.

CAC: That would be interesting. Did you ever publish out of that?

MP: I had a chance to rewrite it for the Schocken Press; but, by that time, I was so exhausted and I was already working for Al Quie that I didn't pursue that. I'm very proud of that. It was a good thesis. It was nominated by the College of Education for the Association for the Study of Higher Education, ASHE—didn't win. The woman I was seeing at the time won the following year, by the way. Did you know Katherine Marino, former director of University Without Walls? She won a year later. My prelims were called about the strongest in the department in ten years, which was nice, and the dissertation was strong. I'm very proud of that. The point I was making earlier on . . . I had a choice to make about whether to go to the University of Chicago, or to Northwestern, or to stay at Minnesota for the doctorate after I'd finished off with . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

MP: . . . sound unkind at all.

CAC: Historians are used to unkindness.

MP: When there's a Ph.D. program or an Ed.D. [Doctor of Education] program or people who were there for certification reasons, in a large measure, you'll have this. One of the final courses was, in that sense, a dissertation preparation course, a research methods and that kind of thing and I remember one student asking either Neal Nickerson [Jr.] or Gary Alkire, one of the two professors, "Does this mean we're going to have to spend time in the library?"

CAC: [laughter]

MP: I'm sitting there and I'm saying, "I'm doing a doctorate. This is absurd." I would like to think that was the exception.

Affirmative Action office . . . I had started developing a real interest in Affirmative Action in the mid 1970s, if not earlier, an intellectual interest. It grows, in part, out of the fact that I'm Jewish and from New York. I would read these kinds of pieces, these kinds of magazines, this kind of research, this kind of scholarship, the philosophical, conceptually rich, thematically rich kind of pieces one would find—I'm thinking about publications now as well as then—commentary, and the public interests, and the new republic. It's in many respects an east coast, it seems to me, intellectual emphasis. I grew up with that . . . not that I grew up in a terrifically intellectually enriched environment—I didn't—but, I was struck, just struck by how Affirmative Action took the conceptual building blocks of the Civil Rights period, and turned so many of them upside down by 180 degrees, and, more specifically, in talking about questions of equality,

and definitions of discrimination, and the degree to which society should be conscious of questions of race, and ethnicity, and sex; whereas, the Civil Rights period aimed at a situation where there would be very little, if any, emphasis ideally placed on these things.

CAC: Yes.

MP: So, Affirmative Action was turning things upside down. Where Jews and Jewish organizations were concerned, what was it about Affirmative Action that took practiced social progressives, committed social progressives who were actively members of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s as well as before and now, all of a sudden, they were some of the most outspoken opponents of this kind of civil rights, of Affirmative Action? What was it about Affirmative Action that provoked this, putting aside an equally interesting question, what was it about the Jewish organizations that provoked them to change internal to those organizations? I was very fortunate in graduate school in that I knew from day one essentially—I define day one as 1977 when I went back full-time; I think I had completed a grand total of maybe five courses beyond the B.A. at that point—exactly what I wanted to write about. I constructed many of my courses, and many of the papers in those courses, and much of the reading and thinking in those courses aimed it all at the dissertation.

CAC: And while you were doing that, you were half-time in the office and you could get the practical side, too?

MP: That's right. It was a wonderful melding of theory and practice. I was able to do about the fastest doctorate I know, to be frank. As I say, I went back full-time in the summer of 1977. I think I had a grand total of 15 credits beyond the B.A. completed at that time and I was finished thirty-five months later. I did the program and finished 4.0. It was frustrating, in hindsight, being in that office, not because of the personalities; there were lovely people there. Thinking back, I don't know if it was entirely fair for me to be there when I was increasingly skeptical about what that office was attempting to do in the first place. I'm more skeptical now about what offices like that are attempting to do. My level of doubt, at the time, was not severe. It's reasonable severe now; though, I also part company with a lot of folks on the right when it comes to Affirmative Action because I think they misread reality and they're hypocritical and the rest. We can talk about that if you want.

CAC: What kind of an assignment did you have in the office then?

MP: This is clouded. It sounds like a hedge. I was going through a divorce at the time and it was a very difficult one.

CAC: That's not a hedge. That's part of reality.

MP: Yes. Meaning . . . I have a hard time remembering this stuff. [laughter]

CAC: Of course.

MP: On the positive side, if I'm proud of anything in this life—and there are a couple of things—it's that I went through a very difficult divorce while I was in graduate school and I never gave into the depression. I never went for more than seventy-two hours without doing some serious academic work. I made a vow to myself, and I remember mentioning it to Sam when I went back full-time, that I would finish off a straight A. He said, "You're nuts. Don't do that to yourself." I said, "No, I've got to do it." And I did it! though, suffice it to say, without a couple of pass/fails in statistics, this wouldn't have happened.

My assignment was I would do a fair amount of writing, if I recall correctly. I was a professional writer so I could do some writing for Lillian. I wound up being a lead person on the implementation of 503, 504, the federal provisions for the handicapped. This was before the ADA [American with Disabilities Act]. Assignments here. Assignments there. Again, a generalist. In truth, I also cheated a lot. I don't know if Arne Carlson was the auditor then or whoever would come back to get me know; but, while on company time, I would do a little academic work. It's been known to happen. Lillian was very supportive where my academic work was concerned.

CAC: Did you do any outreach to departments or colleges in trying to define with them what proper procedures were?

MP: Not really. Not really. Pat Mullen came aboard . . .

CAC: And did that?

MP: . . . during that period. She and others did much more than . . .

CAC: Did you have anything to do with complaints or grievances?

MP: Yes, in the area of disability, number one. I think I had some hands-on work with a couple of others discovering that these things were very difficult to do. How in the world, if you can't look within someone's head, heart, and soul and you don't have subpoena power, how in the hell do you know who's telling the truth in these kinds of things. [laughter]

CAC: Of course, just thinking of what we used to call the handicapped, disabled, the university was not very disabled friendly at that time. There was hardly a building you could get into.

MP: Yes. I suspect that's true.

CAC: That doesn't require being in anybody's head.

MP: In terms of that stuff . . . the university, as a recipient of federal funds, had a certain obligation. I don't, again, want to make light of any of this; but, you can end of with some remarkable complaints. One woman, I remember, complained that she was denied a job wheeling patients in and out of surgery on gurneys. She was denied the job because she was blind. The solution to that one, by the way—I suspect you wouldn't be thrilled if you're coming out of surgery with little tubes coming out of you and you find out someone blind is trying to wheel you back to your room—was that University Hospital didn't have a job specifically for someone to wheel people in and out of surgery. [laughter] She essentially applied for a job that didn't exist. Admittedly, that was not the most representative case of all time.

CAC: Did you work with the black community, or the other minorities communities, or with the gender issue at all at that time?

MP: Did I personally get involved? Not a whole lot. To be perfectly frank, I'm having a hard time remembering that period, in part because of the divorce . . .

CAC: I understand.

MP: . . . and the focus on the dissertation. The best way of describing it is it was a little of this and a little of that. After having a very powerful professional experience with Peter both at Minnesota and at Binghamton before then, after having been a reporter and that concentrated my mind for those thirteen months, having not ever assumed that I would write professionally, particularly on deadline like that . . .

CAC: You didn't get into the Rajender business at all?

MP: I would up with Rajender . . . I didn't help write the ad. I helped place the public notices in newspapers around the country. That was my job with Rajender. In terms of the policy side of Rajender, I had nothing to do with that. In truth, I wanted to know a whole lot more about what was going on, and just no one said anything to me, and it wasn't necessarily my business. At that point professionally, I was very much a junior.

CAC: I understand. Okay. I'm just going to share something with you. You can respond to it and maybe it will be reasonably uninformed. That's all right. At a large institution of higher education, a lot of the hands-on policy is worked out in the provinces and the colleges.

MP: Oh, sure, absolutely.

CAC: It's complicated. It takes a long time to work its way out. I think there's more bottom up than top down and I don't know, whether in the office you had, your experience would confirm that?

MP: In terms of working the numbers, coming up with the bureaucratic procedures and schemes, it seems to me with Rajender specifically and with the work of that office more generally, much of the stuff, when you say perks up from below . . . it's the feds for the most part coming up, the Department of Labor particularly, the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] particularly, coming up with all these bureaucratic notions and gizmos.

CAC: But they introduce that at the top of the system.

MP: I would have a bit of a semantic disagreement about top/bottom. Yes, it comes through the president; but, it's the poor folks in the departments and the Equal Opportunity Office who have to fill in the blanks and work that stuff out.

CAC: Yes.

MP: Lillian, obviously, was in a lot of conversation with people like . . . I think Bruning had already left by that point. I tried to hide a whole lot in that office, to be frank about it. I tried to stay clear of any significant responsibility because I was focusing so much on my academic work. It wasn't, thinking back, a full-fledged professional effort.

CAC: When you received your degree, then was it with Mr. Quie that you went next?

MP: A little while later. I defended on May 9, 1980, and my assignment with Lillian ended at the end of 1980. I stuck around. I think they may have made me full-time for the latter portion; but, the job ran out. Actually, I came within, literally, a minute or two of being unemployed. During that period, let's say, from six months before I finished the degree until a long time after I was in the market, that was a very difficult time again in that I had played by the rules I thought. I went off, and did a doctorate, and did it well, and wound up, over a period of a year, turned down, literally, either for 99 or 100 jobs. So, I needed work and Lillian's money for me ran out at, I think, the end of 1980.

CAC: Then, you went to the *Pioneer Press*?

MP: No. The schedule was . . . I needed a job quickly and I got hired on, it turned out, for about a five month period in the Physical Planning office. They took me on there . . . Clin[ton] Hewitt's operation, though Clint wasn't the hands-on person hiring me. I did that for about five months and that's when Quie happened . . .

CAC: Is this when Quie is governor?

MP: Yes. I had actually interviewed with the Quie people a couple of years earlier, first to be the press secretary. Then, I removed my name from consideration—this was during the campaign in 1978—because I was too early in graduate school. Then, they interviewed me again about a year to be director communications. This time they turned me down. I got caught up in some

political intrigue, and there was a senior legislator who wanted somebody else, and he got him; so, I lost out on that. Then, they called me about April of 1981 after he'd been governor for about twenty-seven, twenty-eight months; and I came aboard as his speech writer in May.

CAC: How long were in that position?

MP: For the final twenty-two months or so of the administration.

CAC: That gave you an opportunity to see the university from the outside, from the governor's point of view?

MP: Yes, yes.

CAC: That's a shift of perspective.

MP: Yes, then, the university just becomes one of the many petitioners, particularly during that period when the state was going through some real economic troubles.

CAC: And the university therefore, also.

MP: And the university but everybody, everybody . . . everybody was clamoring for more money. Where the governor is concerned, it's not only the constituencies outside but all the commissioners inside whose constituencies are beating the hell out of them. It was not a happy time for Al Quie.

CAC: But Magrath is still president?

MP: Peter is still president. Peter wanted to come pay a visit, I remember, to the governor along with a vice-president or two to make their case so that they wouldn't be cut so dreadfully.

CAC: Sure.

MP: I wound up, as a relevant aside, writing the Quie speeches on two occasions—I'm forgetting the exact dates—when it was clear that the state was running out of money. I came aboard and I was writing these voice of doom speeches all the time and trying to put them in an optimistic frames, but on two occasions announcing that we really had to do a whole lot of cutting back, which was true in many other states around the country. The country was in a recession.

CAC: There were competing petitioners; but, within in higher education, did you have a sense of the competition of the state university system?

MP: I can't speak exactly to that. I do recall my having a sense that while one would like to think that people would recognize that the university was unusually important but everybody if

everybody is upset and everybody is trying to protect their rear ends and their bank accounts, there is a kind of blurring and the university does become just one more petitioner. Peter did want to come down once and he did make the appointment. I think I may have been useful in setting up that meeting with the governor and I sat in on it. I remember just instinctively making a terrible mistake. Here I am working for the governor and Peter walks in and I say, "Hi, boss. How are you doing?" It didn't serve me well probably with some of the other staff members. I think I was all right with Quie; but, I suspect some of the other people looked at me strangely.

CAC: I'm sure you remember the climate. Was Quie . . . after all, his kid brother was highly placed in the Medical School. Did he know much about the university? Do governors have to know even more than presidents of the university about competing demands and budget . . . do you have any general sense of that?

MP: Quie liked Magrath . . . certainly has an appreciation. [unclear] just do this on faith for the university. I'm sure his brother had his ear a bit. I don't remember the governor's office or Quie in particular—I could be wrong on this—truly placing the university first among equals in any kind of order. [unclear] remember how badly or not so badly the university got hurt during that time. I can speak to the general climate in the governor's office. It was really, really tough. These were some of the really bad economic times of the generation for the state. This was a matter of Quie giving these two speeches, particularly the first one, with live television coverage of these things. These weren't state of the state addresses or anything. These were speeches saying, "Look, the budget projections are dreadful. We're going to have to make a whole lot of changes, and we'll come back next month, and we'll announce what those proposals are."

CAC: You had to help in the drafting of those?

MP: Oh, god, yes! I was intimately involved with that. That's one of the good things . . . if a speech writer is doing his or her job right, if they have sufficient responsibility, they become the focal point for so much that goes on because all this stuff has to be thrown into the speech. Someone has to serve as the focus. Backing up again, I was the fifth speech writer he had in the first twenty-two months of his administration because it simply wasn't working out with the other four. I worked with him far, far better, [unclear], than anybody else; so, what had been by the nature of its history not a terrifically senior position, became over time not one of the truly senior positions in the office but more senior and the fact that I came in with some experience and with a doctorate certainly helped.

CAC: I press on this point a bit because as a congressmen, Mr. Quie was known as having a deep interest in the educational policy [unclear]. It's very difficult to have that commitment and then come back when the money runs out.

MP: Oh, it wasn't fun a lot of that time being governor. You may want to talk to Quie about this. If he has a visceral commitment to education, as he indeed does . . .

CAC: He did at that time.

MP: . . . and still does, it's more of a K[indergarten] through 12, I would say, interest.

CAC: I see.

MP: Where Quie's speech making is concerned, most people view him as an absolutely dull, boring, clumsy speaker. If you have him read a prepared text, he is not the most scintillating speaker in the world; but, under the right circumstances, he moves right from being a mediocre speaker, through middling, through good, to absolutely stunning. People don't know that because it will never, never show up on television. If he is speaking about something that really moves him—by that there are essentially three things and they're combined: families, something spiritual, and education—and if he's speaking without notes or at least without a prepared text, and if he has good eye contact, and if he feels comfortable with the audience, and if he likes his physical surroundings, if it gets very sensitive . . . if you have all those things work, he is absolutely great! You have this big guy with big hands who speaks . . . the King's English isn't exactly perfect. He's one of us. He's country. He has this big smile. He can be absolutely magnificent.

CAC: It's interesting the three issues you enumerate are those that are pretty lively in 1994.

MP: Yes.

CAC: Quite up front.

MP: You went on to work at the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*?

MP: Yes, after, again, about a seven or nine month period at the Humphrey Institute. Quie's term came to an end at the end of 1982. I think I took about a six-week intellectual break, kind of a sabbatical for the first couple of weeks of 1983.

CAC: You're entitled . . . we're all entitled.

MP: Then, I went to work with Harlan Cleveland on a couple of projects. I helped put together two proposals for projects for him, one on information technology and communication—all this stuff that Harlan does—and another one on sunshine laws in higher education. I just helped put together the proposals not the studies themselves. The *Pioneer Press* hired me in October of 1983 and I was there for forty-seven months.

CAC: That's a long time. Did you have the university portfolio?

MP: No, no, that was one of the frustrations. Someone else had been hired to do education.

CAC: Who was doing education?

MP: Ann Goodwin.

CAC: Down the line, I want to interview some of the press who had the beat of the university.

MP: The first one you need to talk to is Greg[or] Pinney, of course, the *Strib* [*Star Tribune*] reporter who is still around. Actually, the guy who went out to interview Peter while we were still in Binghamton was Sam Newland who was in Winona with us. That's how I met Sam; he flew out right after Peter was named.

CAC: This didn't give you a chance to see the university from still another perspective?

MP: Oh, just a little bit. I did disagree some with my colleagues on the editorial board when they wrote about the university. Heck, I'd been there for a long time and I had a doctorate, in essence in higher education; so, I was personally offended on a halfway regular basis whenever they wrote something about the university. To give you an example . . . it was that frustration, in part, that led to my leaving the paper to go to the U.S. Department of Education. I remember there was a report. Ken had appointed some panel to *blue sky* cuts. I don't remember exactly how it worked; but, they came back with this report in 1987 that did away with the School of Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry.

CAC: Oh, yes. There was a Campbell Committee report in the fall of 1984.

MP: I was on vacation when it came out. Rather than my getting into personalities . . . the *Pioneer Press* wrote an editorial saying, "These are brave and interesting and people shouldn't jump to conclusions." When I got back, I read all the editorials for the previous two weeks and I said, "That's good being brave and audacious and all. We have to set priorities but this is a fundamental misreading of the University of Minnesota and the role it plays in the state. If for the sake of argument" and I think it was Dentistry and Veterinary . . .

CAC: You're right.

MP: I said, "If, by some crazy miracle, perverse miracle, the university would cut off Veterinary Medicine and Dentistry, given the role that these two programs play in rural Minnesota . . . number one it ain't going to happen because legislators aren't going to allow it and number two, going back to these perverse terrible miracle, if it would happen, the legislature would be so mad at the university that it would not take that extra money and fund other university programs. It would just slice it further away."

CAC: It would be worse than having a losing football program.

MP: Of course. It was that fundamental misreading of the university and the role it plays in the state, particularly the rural portions of the state, not to mention that when it comes to something like veterinary medicine where [there were] something like, when I was there, only nineteen or

twenty veterinary medicine colleges in the whole country. I think there are a couple more now. I had that frustration at the paper. Those frustrations were in addition to a couple of others; but, I don't want to overstate that. They were very good people to me. I give the *Pioneer Press* great credit for hiring me to be with because I was an unorthodox hire. I had been a reporter, at that point, for only thirteen months and that was about a dozen years earlier. It was time to move on. I wanted, at some point in my life, to do a Washington stint. I wanted to get back to education and I had a chance to do that for a couple of years.

CAC: And now you're back. How long have you been president of this organization?

MP: We've been up and running since March 1990, almost four and a half years, though I started working on it two years prior to that while I was still in Washington. I immediately learned, when I got to Washington in the fall of 1987, that I really wanted to be here. I wasn't cut out to be in a bureaucracy like the U.S. Department of Education. I much prefer Minnesota over the east coast. The idea hit to eventually return to do something like this in the fall of 1987 and I started working on it seriously in the spring of 1988.

CAC: As president of a think-tank, which is an inelegant term . . .

MP: I sort of like it.

CAC: You like the *tank* part?

MP: It's the best shorthand we can use because a fair number of people have sense of what this kind of place is. In truth, our conception of what this place is has changed over time. In some ways, we've held absolutely steady to what we originally wanted to do and the flavor we wanted to convey. In another way, the change has been significant; in that, when I was still in Washington when we were putting together a board of directors and all the rigmarole, I had this absolutely, as it turns out, naive notion that, on a regular basis, we would come out with these brand-new market driven ideas to make something better. About every week and a half, we would be seminal . . . overstating it a bit. I've come to the conclusion that there aren't that many seminal ideas out there to be had. What we do best anyway . . . what our real contribution is is less in coming up with brand-new ideas and new programs, it's more in restating old truths about families, for example. There's a wonderful metaphor . . . Barbara Defoe Whitehead—I don't know if you're familiar with her—a social historian. She was the one who wrote the piece in the *Atlantic Monthly*, a year ago in April, that Dan Quayle was right. She uses the distinction between conference table conversations and kitchen table conversations. Conference table conversations have politicians, and academics, and business folks, and foundation people, and journalists, and government types; and they sit around and they talk about programs, and budgets, and the responsibility of the feds and the state government and [unclear] institutional discrimination, and they'll beat up on [President Ronald] Reagan a bit. Now, all of that is important, for the most part . . . without beating up on Reagan, but that's just one part of the equation, it seems to me, if the topic is poverty, or education, or just about anything. Kitchen

table conversations have family and friends; and I would argue if it's a good kitchen table conversation, a really good one, it will, indeed, talk about responsibility of government. It will, indeed, talk about racism; but, it will also address the questions of personal responsibility, and families, and religion, and values, norms, culture, all this stuff. That to me, is at least half of the equation if we're talking about the nastiest problems facing this nation and they are the portions of the problems which are not necessarily treatable by government, fixable by government. What we do best—this is really our niche and this is our metaphor—is to take conference table conversations and go public with them.

CAC: Does that put you in contact regularly, occasionally, often with persons at the university?

MP: Not very much at all.

CAC: Why is that the case? I should think there would be all kinds of persons [unclear] to draw upon.

MP: You would imagine. I'm aware of how little it seems that we show up on our respective screens. Ian Maitland is our senior fellow. John Brandl is a member of the board of advisors. The number, when you get right down to it, of people at the university, faculty or otherwise, who come to our fifteen, sixteen public events a year is very small.

CAC: But you would find a large number of persons who were concerned in a variety of ways with the agenda items that you ticked off just a moment ago.

MP: I don't doubt for a moment . . . I know for a fact that one of the reasons there isn't more of a connection is that I haven't made it my business to have that happen.

CAC: I'm not saying you should.

MP: It would be good if I did. I haven't reached out enough. This institution hasn't. That's fair. I think beyond that, we're a conservative think-tank and that probably puts off a large number of people at the university on ideological ground. That's part of it.

CAC: Even those persons are willing and often eager to engage in a civilized, stage of ideas.

MP: Sure. I absolutely agree with that. It's not as if we have no contact. I hear nice things all the time from folks in and out of the university, who don't necessarily agree with us politically or ideologically, who thank us all the time for putting important topics on the table. To give you an example—I expect by the year 2000, we can have this cited—Sandy Keith, the chief justice comes to our events on a regular basis and he just sent me this little note the other day after a session we did on school desegregation two weeks ago. He doesn't want that in the annual report now given his current job; but, I figure by the year 2001, he can live with it. We have that. From another angle—I don't exactly how it plays out—the fact that I'm a generalist, that by

definition this institution is a generalist institution, and so much of the university, or more precisely, this great American research university, is premised on narrow disciplines and disciplines within disciplines.

CAC: Highly specialized.

MP: I don't know if there isn't something about that that limits the connection. Then, you add to that American experiment, as other institutions like this, a parallel with the dynamics of being an academic in public life or in a position of advocacy . . . where does scholarship leave off? Where does advocacy begin . . . forgetting about whether or not that advocacy is left, right, or middle? It gets complicated in that sense. It's interesting that I'm never really pushed on that; but, I'm very much aware of the fact that I'm trained as a journalist. I'm trained as a kind of academic; but, I'm an advocate and I suspect I say things and write things in such a way sometimes that would make a journalist cringe or an academic cringe. It's this interesting amalgam. I don't know, maybe academics aren't terrifically comfortable in that kind of setting. I don't want to over think this. I think, in many respects, it comes down to most of the folks there aren't on the mailing list; so, we haven't reached out enough.

CAC: The same thing would be true of other institutions of higher learning?

MP: Sure.

CAC: You don't have the same contact with Carleton, or Hamline, or Macalester?

MP: No. There are only so many bucks in the bank account to buy stamps to mail things out. It would be nice if there was a bit more contact with folks across the river.

CAC: We've covered many things this hour and a half.

MP: I've enjoyed it a lot.

CAC: Do you have any other final observations about the university?

MP: When Jeanne [Lupton] retired, I spoke. It wasn't really a roast where Jeanne was concerned. The roasty parts were very general. It was an opportunity to say some nice things. We mentioned Jeanne earlier on. She did her doctorate in history. When she was going through or right before she was going through [unclear], she was told by the people in that department that they weren't too thrilled about a woman doing a Ph.D. in history at the university at that time.

CAC: I'll tell you about eight years later, there were 50 percent of our [graduate] students who were women.

MP: One of the great things about this country and one of the great things about the west is things happen fast, and generally for the right reasons, and in good ways one would hope where questions of equity and equality are concerned. In that room that night were any number of other women I suspect who weren't terribly thrilled with the University of Minnesota at various times. I suspect a number of them had litigated in various ways at various times and even where Jeanne is concerned, moderate Jeanne . . . This is a great story. She was head of the university CUWP, Committee for University Women's Progress. Do you remember that?

CAC: Yes.

MP: The way Peter got to meet Jeanne was that Peter had just announced, while we were still back in Binghamton, that Walt Bruning would be coming up from Nebraska to be the vice-president for Administration. There wasn't a search for this. Peter just said, "I want Walt Bruning, my friend from Nebraska." There were people on campus, particularly the members of CUWP, as I understood it, who weren't terribly happy about this; so, they wrote a letter and Jeanne was the one who signed the letter since she was the president. I remember being back in Binghamton and Peter getting this letter that day not knowing who the person was. As it turns out, when Peter needed the number one assistant in the office, someone suggested Jeanne Lupton. They hit it off just great and Peter named her. There were some people, at the time, who thought that this was a wonderful gesture on the part of the new president. I'm also sure there were any number of people who thought it was some Machiavellian plot to disarm, and preempt, and coopt. The university is so big, it bruises people. Any large organization can bruise people.

CAC: That's interesting . . . that's a nice comment.

MP: You run up against it and in various ways not just by being treated shabbily. In my case, I've always been treated very well; but, hell! here I had just finished a doctorate, and I'd like to think one of the really good students in the College of Education, and now I couldn't find a job. That wasn't exactly the university's fault; but, I had played by the damned rules. On top of that, I was now losing my job with Lillian because she was out of money. I wasn't entirely thrilled. There are other things since leaving. I think the university has not been a very good place when it comes to treating conservative speakers graciously, civilly. I was in Northrop Auditorium in 1983 when Jeanne Kirkpatrick spoke and the Nazi banner came down. I was with Harlan at the time; so, I had an office in the Humphrey Institute office on University Avenue and, purposely, still in a white-hot state of anger, wrote an op-ed [opinion editorial] for the *Minneapolis Star*, which ran. Then, five years later when George Bush spoke in 1988, also in a Carlson lecture, he was treated just about the same way, though this time without the Nazi banner. There was a little progress. I, again, wrote an editorial, this time in the *Pioneer Press*. I think in both instances, the university administration and the board responded but didn't respond nearly vigorously enough. If I have one criticism of Peter during that time, that would have been it. There's no question in my mind that if the person booed and vocally assaulted had been on the left, had been a woman, had been someone of color, the university community would have responded a lot more vigorously.

CAC: That's interesting.

MP: So, there was that ideological argument. All of which is to say, we can all point to things about the place that make us mad; but, I need moments such as the Jeanne retirement dinner to remember the really good things. I'm like a mass of goose bumps right now. This is one great institution. You've made your career there. You've made your life there. The commitment of a lot of people to the place is just stunning. It's not the only such institution in the country or the world by any stretch where people have that kind of devotion; but, it's wonderful to be associated with a university that commands that kind of affection and sometimes anger.

CAC: David Riesman once wrote an essay on two sorts, probably in the 1970s, of professors in the nation—he had Minnesota not in mind but similar institutions—that there were the home guard and there were the mercenaries who would fight for anybody. I think that Minnesota, in my experience, has had a large number of home guard of very high quality [unclear].

MP: Actually, I've never heard that metaphor. I read a certain amount of Riesman. He's one of the great ones.

CAC: When I look at the home guard from my own point of view at the university, they included the very most distinguished scholars and teachers that we had. It's not as though they're just working on home turf.

MP: Oh, no, of course.

CAC: Any institution gets a variety of loyalty. You speak of people being bruised, that also is true. I'm thinking of Jeanne Lupton; she was bruised, literally. She got kicked in the shins [unclear].

MP: That's right. Oh, I remember that. You update it now . . . not just Jeanne Kirkpatrick, not just George Bush, the Scandinavian Studies disaster . . .

CAC: Yes.

MP: . . . and the craziness of all of that. The university does now have a reputation, deserved or otherwise, when it comes to some of the looniness of Women's Studies programs—I'm not making a blanket comment about Women's Studies; I'm talking about some of the loony portions of it—that this place is one of the more unfortunate around the country. Those things bother me a great deal. The parallel with SUNY-Binghamton here is that they ran into the same kind of difficulty a couple of years ago. A representative of the National Association of Scholars spoke and he was equated with a Nazi. I'm a member of the Minnesota Association [of Scholars]. I've been involved with that and the National Association almost from the word go. I remember—this all fits together—I went to the first national meeting of the National Association of Scholars.

This was in New York about five years ago, I would say. The reputation that many of these folks have in some quarters is that they are a bunch of Reaganites and a bunch of conservatives. Well, no, not by any stretch.

CAC: I know a number of them. It's a pretty wide variety.

MP: Of course. Politically, they're all over the place. Academically, intellectually, they're conservative in some reasonable definition of the term, in the same way that in Israel, for example, politically, people can be all over the place . . .

CAC: Sure, right.

MP: . . . but, academically, they tend to be conservative. Economically, liberal and academically, conservative. The group in New York was . . . let's say there were about 300 people there and because it was New York it drew mostly from New York and because of that they drew a lot of Jewish academics. If I had to categorize them in any overly simple way, they would be men and women, mostly men, in their fifties, sixties, Jewish, politically liberal, who had made their commitments and devoted their lives to the life of the mind and their institution; and it seemed the more excessive forms of Affirmative Action, and racial consciousness, and quotas, and the isolation of different groups on campus just hurt them terribly. I remember with Sam—this was, again, back in the late 1970s or maybe early 1980 when I was finishing off—I think he might have been reading a draft of my dissertation, he talked about how some people were *expletive* doing *expletive* to the temple, the temple being higher education generally and the University of Minnesota specifically. Sam is a member of the Minnesota Association of Scholars. Sam, historically, has not been politically conservative.

CAC: I knew him well and served with him as an officer in the Minnesota chapter of AAUP [American Association of University Professors].

MP: Right.

CAC: I am part of that group really who has seen . . . I'm not of the same generation; but I did spend formative years in universities . . . two very good ones and that's the . . .

[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