

Interview with Stanley Sahlstrom

**Interviewed by Associate Dean Ann M. Pflaum
University of Minnesota**

Interviewed on April 7, 1999

Stanley Sahlstrom - SS
Ann Pflaum - AP

AP: This is an interview with Provost, Chancellor, and Regent Emeritus Stanley Sahlstrom who is the founding provost of the University of Minnesota-Crookston [UM-C]. It is April 7, 1999, and this is Ann Pflaum.

I have done a lot of research on Regent Sahlstrom and the praise and gratitude of the citizens of this part of the state... Anyone who hadn't met him would expect him walk on the water. He is a wonderful person, so I'm delighted with this interview.

Stan, let's start with the first football game.

SS: It's interesting that, as we began the college a Crookston... If I might, Ann, let me go back just a moment.

AP: Absolutely.

SS: There were some things we did by accident that turned out very, very well and some things we planned. One of the things I had asked [O. Meredith] Met Wilson to do—he appointed me—was to appoint an advisory committee from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities to advise me as we began the institution at the University of Minnesota-Crookston. It was a wonderful way to start. It included people from the College of Education, from the Institute of Technology, from the School of Business, as it was called then, as well as people from the St. Paul campus—because of our strong land-grant tradition that we followed—from Agriculture, Home Economics, and Forestry as the beginning. I brought proposals to that group and I suspect that committee lasted for about a year as we were studying what the state of Minnesota needed in the way of post secondary education. It was those studies that led to the start of the divisions, as we called them there, the Division of Agriculture, Division of Business, Division of HRI, Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Foods Management, which later became really Hotel, Restaurant, Resort, and Institutional Foods. I treasure the friendships with Dutch Cragun and Jim Arnold of Madden's and Curt Carlson and the Rutger's people, all of whom helped me at great length.

AP: I want to make sure I've got these names spelled... Let's go through them again. Someone will transcribe this and we want to make sure that they have every name spelled correctly.

SS: Cragun, C-r-a-g-u-n, of Cragun's Resort.

AP: His first name was Dick?

SS: No, Dutch. That's his nickname.

AP: What was his real name?

SS: I don't know. He always had interns from the Hotel, Restaurant, Resort Management program at Crookston at Cragun's, as they did at Madden's with Arnold, and as they did at Rutger's

AP: Madden's is...?

SS: Jim Arnold.

AP: He was the owner?

SS: No. I don't know what he is...vice-president probably. There was a Madden there, too.

AP: The other one was...?

SS: The Radisson...Curt Carlson and his vice-presidents whom he designated to our advisory committee, Ann.

That's what led to our various divisions at Crookston as we began planning in 1965. I might add, I wrote the first bulletin and, of course, did a lot of work publicly from 1965 to 1966 when we started the classes, but it was a great labor of love. I was both lucky, had good planning, and lots of support; that made the difference. We used advisory committees to every division, as well as what I called an over all advisory committee to the administration of the college. That included everyone from production agriculture to bankers to hotel and restaurant owners to people in the social sciences for our Home Ec[onomics] Division and, of course, people in the foods industry. Much of that early exploration throughout the state was to determine what niche we could fill at Crookston, with approximately eighty miles to Moorhead, ninety miles to Bemidji, and thirty-five miles to the University of North Dakota. I owe a great deal not only to all of the people from the university here, but to the people at the University of North Dakota, who I worked closely with when we were still employing part-time faculty, before we were fully on our way at Crookston. The vice-presidents there and the president were extremely helpful as we began our work, including, incidentally, an ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] branch of the University of North Dakota, because of my own background. I was still a colonel in the Reserves at that time.

The planning led to the closing out, as you know, Ann, of the Northwest School of Agriculture, which we tried to do in a way that would maintain a close relationship with the alumni of the old school. We were successful. We converted the old superintendent's residence into an alumni center. That building was just moved.

AP: The white...yes.

SS: [laughter] *The White House*. We turned that over to the alums so that they'd have a home on the campus, of both the Northwest School and of UM-C, as part of the developing program. I'm very proud of the good relationship that we founded with the alums of the Northwest School. Their reunions continue to this day in the summer with some 400 in attendance every year, declining, of course, over the years as numbers pass away. With the help of that advisory committee from the university and the good relationship with the St. Paul campus.... If I might, I would like to mention one name of tremendous significance in all of this: Keith McFarland.

AP: Good. Keith is the kind of person that is so modest that it's easy...

SS: He was then the dean of the Institute of Ag, Forestry, and Home Economics. You know what that is?

AP: Certainly.

SS: Before they split the colleges...

AP: Right.

SS: He became, then, dean of Home Ec.

I mentioned [President Meredith] "Met" Wilson and his appointment of that advisory committee, a wonderful man, but also, I must mention the gentleman that had been my competitor while I was still at St. Cloud Teachers College: Stan Wenberg. Were you around when he was still the vice-president?

AP: No, I don't think I ever met him.

SS: We competed all the time because at St. Cloud Teachers College I started their, then we called it, Field Services, but actually, it was their external relations.

AP: Stan had legislative relations? What did he have at St. Cloud?

SS: Here.

AP: Oh, at Minnesota. Oh, I see.

SS: So, we'd meet in the legislature. Stan was a great eater—he'd forgive me if I say this—and a great drinker. I recall getting the chamber at St. Cloud to sponsor a special dinner for legislators down at the old Criterion in St. Paul and Stan came in and ate two of my steaks and drank vigorously and we had a great time together.

AP: [laughter]

SS: He, of course, lobbied for the University of Minnesota.

AP: At your party?

SS: At my party.

AP: Oh, dear, and on your dollar?

[laughter]

SS: Yes. As an aside, I think one of the reasons I was picked to go to Crookston to start the college...

AP: Is because you did such a good job.

SS: ...is because of Stan and I and McFarland...the relationship there led to my appointment long before there were such things as search committees, Ann.

AP: Yes.

SS: It provided such an opportunity to build a new campus and a new college.

Organizationally, I should say that I looked at a number of other institutions that were branch campuses of universities. As a matter of fact—I don't know whether you knew this—along the way we built a branch campus organization as a result of all of this.

AP: I did not know that.

SS: I was the instigator of that.

While I think of it, Ann, I should tell you, also, that we started right away exchange programs with Canada, since we're only 100 miles from Canada at Crookston, and exchange programs with colleges in England, Scotland, and Wales, of both faculty and students with similar programs, and that led to the formation of an organization called PIN. Have you heard of it?

AP: No.

SS: The Post High School International Network... with the help of Professor Don Morgan, here in the College of Education at the "U". That's an active, going organization to this day and, of course, it's much larger now. It started because we were anxious to give our rural students, primarily rural, at Crookston, an opportunity to participate in international programs and that, I think, continues to this day as well.

Ann, I must inject something else here, too, because I'm reminded of it. Another organization I started was the North Central Morgan Horse Association. At the time I started at Crookston, I was on their national board. As a result, when we started our Light Horse Management Program, now Equine Science, we were able to obtain donations of purebred horses from my friends across the county who were active in Morgan horses. I had acquired a number of them when the government closed their breeding farm in Vermont. It had been an institution that provided stallions to the farmers and rancher of the Midwest and West and bought back the geldings for the Calvary. That was closed up, so they had sale and I bought a number of their horses. As a result, you end up, then, on the board. I started the North Central Morgan Association with a guy named Earle Brown...

AP: Sure.

SS: [laughter] ...and three or four others that were breeding Morgans at that time, a small group. It's interesting now that that group is about 500 and going strong and, of course, we kept in touch, but once I was building a new campus at Crookston, I participated very little in the activities of the organization. I was the first president, the same as with PIN; I was the first chairman of PIN. It continues to this day as a great vehicle for association with colleges in Canada. Now, it's expanded to New Zealand and Australia as well as England, Scotland, and Wales—the English speaking countries.

AP: Sure.

SS: Back to the beginnings again, we looked at the organizations across the country—there were similar institutions in New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, and California—for the one that we thought would fit in northwestern Minnesota in the heart of the [Red River] Valley with some of the greatest soil in the world and great opportunities for agriculture. So that, necessarily, had to be a major emphasis, but with all of the rest.

Another program that we started that first year within the Ag Division was Ag Aviation in order to prepare people for pesticide/herbicide application by airplane. That became a very successful program, as did the Light Horse Management, as did the Hotel, Restaurant Management Program. We were known as the college with the best food in the state because of HRI. As a matter of fact, I remember the legislators always wanted to meet in Crookston at lunch or dinner because they knew the food from our students in Restaurant Management would give a great feast.

AP: I can remember visiting and—the first time I came out to see you, Stan, was in 1976 for the Title IX—I always watch my weight very carefully and if I could plan an out-of-state visit to Morris and Crookston in the same week, I would gain two pounds at Crookston and lose them at Morris, so then I'd be neutral. I always liked that.

[laughter]

AP: You had wonderful food.

SS: Those were fun times.

AP: Your hospitality was so exceptional.

SS: Yes, we really believed in that.

AP: And you practiced it, absolutely. That's so true.

SS: Everybody was to greet everybody, whoever they met.

When I retired, the students presented me with a plastic bag full of old cans and papers because they remember my setting the example around the campus of always picking up any stray litter that I found anywhere so that it would be attractive and clean and enjoyable as a wonderful public place.

AP: We have done—I'm going to give this to you, Stan—a very first cut at the Crookston part of the history. There's a lot about you in it, so I want you to go back and read it and see whether you think that we've got it half way right. The stories of how hard you and Hershel [Lysaker] and Richard Christianson worked to get ready are just phenomenal. It's a wonderful story.

SS: You should add Carl Bornhoft.

AP: Who was the business manager?

SS: Yes. He came from Morris.

AP: That's B-o-r-n-h-o-f-t?

SS: Yes.

AP: This is for the transcriber.

SS: His wife has passed away, but he still lives up there. He was also a key in that beginning because he had a wonderful relationship already established with the vice-president of Finance here and all of the folks in the business office here.

AP: The v.p. [vice-president] for Finance at that time would have been [James] Brinkerhoff?

SS: No, before Brinkerhoff. It was London.

AP: Right, Lowell Lunden.

SS: Yes. Lowell and, then, Brinkerhoff and you've got the rest from then on?

AP: Yes.

SS: I should add, as we look back at that period, one of the things that I thought was crucial was that link with the Northwest School as we closed it out. A lot of people were really threatened by that, that they were losing their school. It was called, if you remember, the AC, the Agricultural College. It had always been known as the AC, even though it was a high school...six months duration.

AP: Yes, that's interesting. It was called the Agricultural...

SS: AC. For a number of years, it offered a fifth year as well as the regular high school curriculum. It was the first school started by the university out state and it was before school buses so the kids lived there for six months.

AP: It was fascinating that part of the reason was that the roads were impassable because it was so wet. So, the combination of no school buses and wet seemed to be the reason. I've found some interviews with some of the early members of the school looking back on their experiences there and how close it was, the preceptors who were the dorm proctors that kind of looked after these students. It's a very touching story and we hope we've gotten it very well.

SS: It really served a wonderful purpose. I must add that at Morris, St. Paul, Crookston, Grand Rapids, Ag...I don't know if the right word is outlived their usefulness. They were wonderful, but they took students from the public schools of the area and once school buses came, the schools added their own high school Ag programs, Vocational Agriculture...the Smith-Hughes Act, Ann, if you followed that?

AP: Yes, indeed.

SS: The need, therefore, for a high school of agriculture in rural areas was not felt necessary, so it was a natural transition for them. Morris, of course, became University of Minnesota-Morris. St. Paul just closed their school.

AP: Right. That was J.O. Christianson. Did you know J.O.?

SS: Did I know J.O.! [laughter] He tried to recruit me. When I came back as a faculty member in Ag Ed from Milaca in 1951, J.O. wanted me to start working for the School of Agriculture.

AP: In St. Paul?

SS: In St. Paul. We became dear friends.

There's another point in history here that needs to be a part of this: my second year, I was asked to chair the fund drive for the St. Paul Campus Student Union.

SS: This is as a student at the university?

SS: Yes, as a doctoral student and as a faculty member in Ag Ed. Walter Coffey was my honorary chair.

AP: Yes, he was the president.

SS: Our former president, retired, a wonderful gentleman. Why I took up golf is because he had to play golf every morning. We'd go out at six in the morning and play a little golf wherever we were before going on with our business of raising funds for the St. Paul Campus Student Center. Involved with that was Gordon Starr, who was then head of the Union in St. Paul and Bob Provost, who was with Development here at the university. Do you recognize the names?

AP: I don't recognize the name Bob Provost; I do, of course, Starr.

SS: He became, later, the head of the insurance agencies of Minnesota. I forget his title. When I became a regent, Ann, I had a special ceremony where we gave awards to both Starr and Provost for their great contributions to student life here at the "U".

AP: How wonderful.

SS: That led to campaigning across the state, with alumni of the St. Paul campus, to raise funds for the St. Paul Campus Student Union. It was one of the wonderful periods in my life where I met so many great people, very generous people, and of course, was working with Walter Coffey. J.O. was also on that committee and, as I said, he was anxious for me to join him with the School of Ag, but as I went on through my doctoral work and working as an instructor, I looked to other venues.

AP: Was your doctorate in Vo-Ed, Ed-Ad, or Ag?

SS: Ed-Ad, Educational Administration.

AP: Of Agriculture?

SS: Basically, it was Ed-Ad, you know.

AP: Oh, Ed-Ad, so it was a College of Education degree?

SS: Right.

AP: Was it an Ed. D.?

SS: No, Ph.D. Oh, boy! I should tell you...

AP: What was your dissertation on?

SS: How did I entitle that? College Attendance of the Upper Half of High School Classes in Rural Minnesota.

AP: Interesting.

SS: Yes, it was. I did a study on the upper half and, interestingly enough, Ann, at that time I found that most of them would love to come back to a town of the same size and stay there once they finished their college, but of course, most of them couldn't. They went on from there.

Ann, about that time, my mother-in-law came to live with us. We were on the St. Paul campus. I was in the tin huts. [laughter]

AP: What year is this that you were in the tin huts?

SS: Oh, 1951 to 1954.

AP: You were a veteran, of course, so you would have had the GI Bill and the housing.

SS: The works. Here's a guy that struggled to get through college, 1938 to 1942. I worked my way entirely through and, suddenly, I had the opportunity to go to the symphony, to go to the ball games, to enjoy life as a college student, even though I had three children and my wife. You knew I married my translator at the trials? You're aware of that?

AP: Yes, I have heard that story, but we should get it down.

SS: Ludmilla...[laughter]

AP: Yes, indeed! Her origin is?

SS: She's Russian, a displaced Russian, white Russian. You're familiar with the red and white?

AP: Yes.

SS: They had to leave Russia. That's a long story in itself. Her mother is from Kiev and the only one in her family to escape. We still have the deed to property on the Black Sea that they owned for vacation. Her dad was with the only white Russian army that escaped through the Black Sea. Both went to Belgrade because, at that time after World War I, Belgrade would accept young well-educated white Russians. Each started a business there and, then, met and married and raised a family. [unclear] to be on the wrong side in World War II against Tito and for [Draža] Mihailovich. That's a whole story in itself. What it led me up to, Ann, is...

AP: How do I spell Mihailovich?

SS: I think it's M-i-h-i-l-o-v-i-c-h or something close to that [correctly Mihailovich]. He was hung by Tito when he came to power. Mihailovich had rescued a lot of our airmen who had gone down in that area, particularly when they were bombing in the [unclear] oil fields.

What I wanted to mention is that I heard from the superintendent in my home town of Milaca asking if I wouldn't come back to start the G.I. Bill for farmers. Were you familiar with that, Ann?

AP: No.

SS: The G.I. Bill was applied to farmers; they called in On-the-Job Training. So, Mill and I came back to Milaca in 1946 and I started the G.I. Bill. I knew the school board, of course, and people of the community and they still had all the rural schools then. I convinced the school board... It's an interesting story because they were sure Ag would not go at Milaca. They had tried it before. I said, "It will." Frankly, what they didn't know is that I went around to all the eighth grade schools in the spring of 1947 to give a tree planting demonstration to the teachers. They all invited me to come and, then, I'd talk about the new Ag Department next year at Milaca High School.

AP: Good for you; that's wonderful! That's a great story.

SS: [laughter] We got off to a great start. We started a school for us the next year. The school was talking about having a big celebration last year, fifty years later to celebrate the school [unclear], but we never got back there. I had marvelous students at Milaca that I'm still in touch with. When I was invited down to become a faculty member in St. Paul in Ag-Ed, I think twelve of those students that I had in Milaca followed me.

AP: Oh, wonderful.

SS: They became Ag teachers.

AP: You came down to St. Paul about 1952?

SS: Yes, 1951, 1952. I was there until the fall of 1954 when I went up to St. Cloud.

AP: You were in St. Cloud just about ten years and, then, you went on to Crookston?

SS: Right, ten years at St. Cloud.

It's interesting, Ann, that wherever I went I had the opportunity to start a new office. At St. Cloud, I started the Office of Institutional Relations. I was called, for lack of a better term, assistant to the president and director of field services.

Can I give you a little aside here?

AP: Sure.

SS: At Milaca, I ran the veterans' program and also the high school program, so I was salaried half way between the principal and the superintendent. When I was finishing my graduate work and looking to go to work, I interviewed at Cornell and I had opportunities at Corvallis [Oregon] and Colorado State, all for less, quite a bit less, than I'd been making at Milaca when I started my graduate school.

AP: That's interesting.

SS: At St. Cloud, I got exactly what I had been...

AP: That was [unclear].

SS: ...getting at Milaca. In addition, I stayed in Minnesota. I love this state and it's people and the university has always been a very valued part because it gave me my start. If I hadn't gotten into 4-H and FFA [Future Farmers of America] and heard about the university, I would never have known of a career in agriculture. Remember, Ann, I was living through the 1920s when we had that tremendous crash in 1929 and in the drought of the early 1930s and I vowed if ever I could do anything to improve life for rural people, that I was going to do, never realizing that the opportunity would come later to go to the St. Paul campus and study agriculture. I'm just so grateful that the university gave me that opportunity. I think tuition then was twenty-five dollars a quarter.

An interesting little sidelight here... I'd been working for a farmer with a big dairy herd near my home, so I'd walk there and milk about eight cows morning and night—hand milking, mind you...

AP: Wow!

SS: ...for a dollar a day. When I left to go down and start at the "U", he gave me, literally, a month's salary in addition, twenty-five dollars! It paid my tuition for the first quarter.

AP: That was a very generous thing, isn't it?

SS: Wasn't it!

AP: Was it eight cows or eighty cows?

SS: We were milking about eighty but there were ten of us.

AP: So, you had eight cows, afternoon and morning.

SS: Morning and night, and then work all day on the farm. He had a great Holstein herd.

AP: I want to be sure to ask you about the Experiment Station at Crookston. If you were to summarize its distinctive contributions to Minnesota agriculture, what would you say they would have been?

SS: Its distinct contribution would be primarily in the area of agronomy: work with sugar beets, wheat, barley, sunflowers, the whole area of agronomy. Although, when I was there, they had a fine dairy herd and may still have.

AP: When you say agronomy... I looked up agronomy and agronomy is the study of crops and their growth. Was it principally yield enhancement? Was it pest reduction? Was it crossbreeding?

SS: All of those and in the early years, the development of hybrids. That, now, is primarily in the hands of the private sector.

AP: When you say early years, you mean what period?

SS: The Experiment Station of the "U", I suppose, goes back to the 1940s and 1950s when they were developing hybrid corn. That now is in the hands of Pioneer... the seed companies and the university is pretty much out of it.

AP: Why did we get out of it?

SS: Because it was picked up by private companies. The principles were developed at the university. As a matter of fact, I did some work with the Crop Improvement Association on the St. Paul campus one year as they worked to improve varieties. Have you heard of Minnesota #13?

AP: I'm not sure.

SS: It made great whiskey.

AP: What is it, a wheat or a barely?

SS: No, corn. Minnesota #13 was the standard corn variety when I was a kid, before hybrids. There was always kidding because during Prohibition...

AP: They made corn whiskey.

SS: [laughter]

AP: That's very good.

SS: You're getting more than you bargained for, Ann.

AP: Oh, this is wonderful! I'm delighted.

SS: I want to get on to [unclear] soccer.

AP: Yes, the football game.

SS: Ann, can we take something not on tape?

AP: Sure, I'll turn this off for a minute.

[break in the interview]

AP: We're going to hear about the first game.

SS: [laughter]

AP: Stan, can you give me the year? It would have been the fall of 1966?

SS: Right.

AP: It would have been September, the first football game.

SS: Probably October.

AP: Do you remember who you were playing?

SS: Yes, Itasca Community College and they beat us.

AP: Tell me about this first game.

SS: At the first kickoff to our team, a young named Clem Zach...

AP: John Zach?

SS: John Zach is a guy that worked for us.

AP: He's a photographer, that's right.

SS: His wife is head of Extension in Pennington County.

AP: Deb Zach, right.

SS: Oh, you know. Anyway, Clem Zach ran the first kickoff back for a touchdown.

AP: You called that an omen for the college?

SS: You bet! That was my message. [laughter] Ann, we made much of little omens. The second year, a great white swan landed in the middle of our mall as we were beginning our faculty orientation and, in those days, we were adding a lot of faculty each year. That became our great omen for that year.

I must add here that NWEIA—have you heard of it?—North West Educational Improvement Association, raised funds, as I did with East Cliff when I became chairman of that committee as a regent, Ann, for doing things that you couldn't use tax money for. We had great people involved with it. In the first years I was there, we had co-chairs: Marv Campbell and Tom Hagen, H-a-g-e-n, who helped me a great deal. That money was then used for the contact with legislators and governors and distinguished visitors that we could use to provide the kind of hospitality and attention that was needed in letting people know about our great institution. We called it the North West Educational Improvement Association and, basically, it was that, to educate the people about opportunities at UM-C.

Now, Ann, I want to mention one thing yet.

AP: Okay.

SS: Even though in those early years we were known as a technical college, we never lost sight of—quote—UM-C. It was always the University of Minnesota-Crookston. Thanks to my good wife, who was active in organizing the Faculty Women's Association...

AP: Yes, I've seen the files for that. It was a very active group.

SS: Yes. They maintained close contact with the faculty women down here. We were always the University of Minnesota at Crookston, even though were called a technical college.

Ann, this leads me to part of the challenge at Waseca, in my opinion, that they became a technical college and there were a lot of other technical colleges in southern Minnesota. That's an aside. I would not criticize them for the world! In other words, they were much more—quote—vocationally oriented.

AP: Right. They made a big point of the single mission.

SS: Right. Right from the start, we were deeply concerned—I was and I set the pattern—for a great, general education. An example, Ann, is that we formed right away a Young Democrats and a Young Republicans organization so people would recognize the critical importance of being a part of the political scene. My [unclear] of the [unclear] changed—quote—American institutions to understand not only the politics and the importance of being active because my point always was if you aren't, somebody else gets that benefit that you negated. The importance of being active in your community, participating in the caucuses and being a part of the scene wherever you are is your right and your

privilege as a citizen in our great democracy. So right from the beginning, the concept of a great, general education and having the critical mass of education in your particular field, whether it's light horse management or agricultural mechanics or one of the early majors with fashion merchandising, a very successful one in the Business Division, and Gerontology in the Home Ed area and, also the fact that we immediately set up an internship for one quarter, normally the summer between the two years, where they would go out on the job. The challenge, particularly in the HRI, was to get them back for a second year—the people who hired them wanted to keep them there even though they were there just for an internship—to finish their program.

By the time I retired in 1985—this is off the cuff...

[break in the interview]

AP: I'm asking Regent Sahlstrom what his hardest decision as regent was and what decision he's proudest of as a regent.

SS: I'm proudest of two decisions and, frankly, I really led the charge for both. That was the employment of Nils Hasselmo as president and, then, of Mark Yudof as president. The most important job of a regent is choosing your top administrative officer and I thought we did a great job in both.

The most difficult one was when we got into the tenure issue—unfortunately, very unfortunately. If you remember, Ann, the reason we got into the tenure issue was because the head of our Health Sciences, at that time, felt that it was necessary and working with a regent went to the legislature and talked about the critical nature of changing tenure.

AP: That was [William] Brody.

SS: Now, president of Johns Hopkins.

AP: Yes.

SS: I don't want to mention names here, Ann, but it was Jean Keffeler and Brody that... We probably ought not get into that, but if you just want to say that that was the most difficult time in my years as a regent when we were trying to get off that kick, make tenure a critically important and challenging attainment so that we had tenured faculty that were truly dedicated to teaching, research, and service, but yet, make sure it had the protection that research done or teaching done that might be of a critical nature in the minds of many people... They were still protected and could do their independent research. Do I say that right?

AP: Right, you certainly do.

SS: Of course, because of my role initially as a faculty member in St. Paul, and, then, my work at St. Cloud, I have tremendous empathy with the marvelous faculty. It was one of my great joys at

Crookston to be able to employ people that were truly dedicated faculty and that had the goal of doing a great job in reaching students and helping students and counseling students and advising students for the greatest attainment. My philosophy, Ann, always was that I wanted to hire people that were smarter and better than I was if I possibly could—and I did! I'm very proud of the number of people that have gone on to be deans and college presidents from the faculty there.

AP: Do you want to mention some names?

SS: No, we better not. We might insult some of them that are still there, those that were willing to stay. There is one good example, Ann—this name I will mention—Rod Nelson, who is president of the Bremer Bank in Crookston. Rod was on our business faculty at the college and had his master's degree. I had hired him from the University of North Dakota. He decided not to go on for a doctorate and became a vice-president at the bank and, then, the president. He's performing a tremendous job for the area of Crookston. As a matter of fact, he was president of the Faculty Association one year at the college. I just have great respect for him. I might add, Ann, there was tremendous support from all the communities of northwestern Minnesota.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

SS: ... who was the first head of the Humphrey Institute.

AP: Who was that?

SS: A great speaker...

AP: Harlan Cleveland.

SS: Harlan Cleveland became a dear friend and was up on a number of occasions to Crookston. [G. Edward] Ed Schuh was up there many times, particularly dealing with farmer groups. The dean of the College of Education, all the way back, I'd have up at some time to talk to the superintendents. Now I'm laying down another secret: as we worked out our relationships, I worked with the superintendents. The next level worked with the high school principals and our admissions people worked with the counselors in their associations.

AP: That's very sensible.

SS: So we had a constant association. The superintendents throughout northwestern Minnesota would always get tickets to our football and basketball games and so forth and to special events on the campus. In those early years, Ann, we did a tremendous amount of entertaining at the house, too. The students that got their little trophies at the end of the quarter for straight A's were always entertained by the [unclear]. [laughter]

AP: Will you talk a little bit, Stan, about the Northwest Shows and the relationship of the superintendent? I think it was as late as the 1980s that the superintendent was no longer the superintendent of the Northwest Shows. If I understood it correctly, there was a Northwest School Day in connection with the show so that when people were in Crookston for the show, the alumni would come back to the school.

SS: Yes, and they also had Legislative Day, which we jumped on, of course. They'd have Legislative Day at the winter shows. Ann, a great deal of the work of the winter shows was done by the school.

AP: That's what I understand. They really managed it. It was a tremendous resource for the region.

SS: And the superintendent was always president of the board.

AP: That's what I thought.

SS: Until, it must have been the early 1980s, maybe late 1970s. It was when Bill Hueg was vice-president for Agriculture...

AP: Yes, that's right.

SS: ...that they decided that the superintendent should no longer be head of the winter shows. As you probably know, there are no winter shows anymore. A part of that is because it's no longer associated with the university. The superintendent and his faculty spent a great deal of time putting that together and putting it on, but then it was primarily agriculture. As with our State Fair here, Ann, there is still some agriculture, but there's a great deal more of other things going on, entertainment of all kinds, and the Midway, and all the rest. I think that the winter shows board decided not to go that route or they'd still be in existence. Our faculty, with the college supported, the winter shows during my time there inasmuch as we could and still continue our work. It was during the winter shows when I had the superintendents in and other educators. We always met with the principals of the area, of the principals' association, as I said. We allocated that among us so no one would be overburdened with those kinds of relationships.

The other thing that helped me a great deal, Ann... I think this should be mentioned somewhere in there. [General George] Patton had me convinced to stay in the Reserves after I retired from the Army, after active duty in 1946. I think he wanted—I shouldn't quote that and say he did—to take on the Russians. That was my feeling with George Patton. I decided to stay in the Reserves. I didn't want to go through basic training again. [laughter] So, I stayed in the Reserves for the next thirty-six years. I always had a great relationship with the National Guard, the Army Reserve, Navy Air Force Reserve, and with the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and American Legion, since I was one. I'd speak in every town at some time or another at some Legion event or some VFW event. Then, when I did finally retire in 1982 from the Reserves, I immediately became active with the state committee that supports the Guard and Reserve forces of Minnesota. I was state chairman of that for five years and, then, when I retired as a member of the Board of Regents, I also retired from the state support

committee, but still maintain close relationships with the generals that command the Reserves, the admirals... [Major General Eugene] Andreotti of the Guard Reserve forces... just because and I enjoy it.

AP: Were there student demonstrations at Crookston during the 1960s?

SS: Yes, but I must tell you, Ann, that with our relationship with our students... Any day that I was on the campus, I was over in the Student Union having coffee with faculty and students. I remember the Student Senate came to see me about having a demonstration at Crookston. We had a lot of Vietnam veterans, I might add, and a great veterans' club. I don't want to take credit for it, but I told the Senate, "Yes, let's organize a demonstration. You guys go out and put some signs together and walk around the mall. You can even chant and sing a little bit. Then, come back and we'll go over and have coffee together and talk about what all this means." We lost some good students in the Vietnam War. [pause] I want to add, Ann, because of my relationship with the military, when we started Crookston, the mature students I had were vets. They ran the dormitories. You know what I mean, the resident advisers.

AP: Yes.

SS: I loved them. As an old World War II vet, I could empathize with all the veterans. We had a great organization. Two of the great people supporting my veterans that I'd like to mention were David Hoff, H-o-f-f, instructor in Agriculture and Economics, and... I'm missing her name. Her husband was a disabled World War II vet and she was in our registrar's office. I want to get that name in there.

AP: Yes, okay.

SS: You've met Berneil Nelson; she's Berneil Nelson's best friend.

AP: Tillie Gebhart?

SS: Gebhart, yes. How did you happen to know her?

AP: I met her.

SS: Oh, did you?

AP: Sure, I know Tillie and I had an interview with Tillie and Berneil.

SS: Incidentally, the great historian is, of course, Berneil Nelson.

AP: Absolutely, she's been wonderful. She's been feeding me materials and sending me pictures.

SS: She's just a great woman. Did you get a copy of my original bulletin?

AP: I've got the bulletin for the opening of the college.

SS: Ann, the reason I wanted to mention that... I did not realize the wonderful people at St. Cloud. The head of the choir and the orchestra...

AP: Oh, yes, came down. The program is wonderful.

SS: ...came out to help me start the place.

AP: I think the passing of the torch was a very fine symbolic... I'm hoping we can reproduce the picture. One of the technical questions is whether we can find an old original, an old glossy, because that picture of the Northwest School student handing the torch to the Crookston student...

SS: Ron Tobkin, T-o-b-k-i-n.

AP: I thought it was [Gerald] Moritz.

SS: Moritz was the first president.

AP: Oh, okay.

SS: I think the picture is of Ron Tobkin, who was vice-president—I'm not sure. Ron Tobkin went on to be a lieutenant in the Guard and has a big bean company at Perth [North Dakota]... a great family. But Moritz was the first president.

AP: He said some nice things...

SS: He went on to be head of the Department of Interior in Nevada or someplace.

AP: Interesting.

SS: That first class...

AP: You're right; a first class has a tremendous challenge.

SS: Do they ever! You know, their theme was—you would never do this today—"There's nothing like a dame." We had about 180 men and 20 women. [laughter] So, the theme song of the choir was "There's nothing like a dame." Crazy times and, of course, you could do things you couldn't now.

AP: One of the things I wanted to ask you about was Waseca. That must have been a hard decision for you. If I've got my facts right, you and Mary Page backed Hasselmo in that decision.

SS: And Chuck Casey.

AP: The people that opposed it were Dave Roe and Mary Schertler. Those were the two "no" votes and the rest of the regents were unanimous. That must have been a hard decision...

SS: Terrible.

AP: ...for all of you coming from the...

SS: The student regent from Owatonna.

AP: [Darrin] Rosha?

SS: Yes.

AP: He backed it, too, right?

SS: We figured that's why he lost the next election.

AP: That's probably right, yes. That must have been a hard decision.

SS: Terrible. But, as I said, the—quote—UWTC, University Waseca Technical College...when you've got them all around you at Owatonna, Austin, Mankato. It was very unfortunate because they served such a critical service to agriculture there. Ann, you mentioned it yourself, the one purpose.

AP: Yes.

SS: That was also part of it.

AP: It was a tough decision. I think Nils seemed to have handled it very well when he went down there and told them face-to-face.

SS: Right, he handled it beautifully. When I mentioned the tough times, that would be the second toughest.

AP: I would think so, yes.

SS: The first is the tenure thing and the second would be Waseca and it still hurts. I don't know whether you knew this: my brother was vice-president under E.F. Johnson.

AP: That's right; I did know that.

SS: His wife was on the school board there. They were very active in the community.

AP: I've also heard that the prison is doing good things for the economy, that it's hard to find a house; the real estate market has come back. It's not as wonderful as having a school, but, apparently, it's doing some nice things for the economic development.

SS: Can we shut this off?

AP: Sure.

[break in the interview]

AP: The question is...exceptional regent leaders.

SS: In my experience with the board, there are a number of people who could have been the chair and vice-chair that weren't elected, but there were political reasons as well as professional reasons that they weren't selected. Normally, the vice-chair becomes the chair.

AP: Right.

SS: Mary Schertler was vice-chair, I think, when Dave Lebedoff was chair. The nominating committee chaired by Dave Roe presented Mary Schertler to be chair and myself to be vice-chair. That's when Chuck Casey decided to run and at the last minute, the regent from Fairmont...

AP: Elton Kuderer?

SS: ...Elton Kuderer presented himself to be vice-chair and they were elected. I supported them, totally, both. They were excellent chairs. Chuck Casey was a great leader and so was Elton Kuderer. But I always felt badly that I didn't have the opportunity to serve because I had such great hopes for this great university. [laughter] I would love to have been a vice-chair and a chair at some time along the way. But, as a board member, as a regent, you gain support for your beliefs through your ability to relate to your fellow regents. So, I felt I had tremendous influence throughout my twelve years because of my relationships to the other regents.

AP: Did you become a regent in 1984 or 1985?

SS: In 1985.

AP: And you stayed until...?

SS: Until 1997, twelve years.

There's an interesting series of events there. I had resigned as provost and one of my first motions was to change the title to chancellor. I've been called chancellor often, but that's just because that's the term we use now. When [Kenneth] Keller was president, we changed the titles.

As with any board, you gain credibility through dedication to the role, through careful study of the issues, and through your ability to stand for what you believe in and to vote your convictions. The key, I think, to being a good regent is understanding it. I had a tremendous advantage having known all the deans when I was still at Crookston and being able to relate to the colleges and to the coordinating campuses as I could as a regent. I would hope, Ann, that history would record that I was a total regent interested in the total university. I worked closely with the people in the medical sciences on the St. Paul campus as well as those from Duluth, Morris, Waseca, and Crookston. In real honesty, that was kind of a concern of mine: to make sure I not only am but was perceived as being a regent for the total university. Naturally, I had a particular interest in agriculture and that led to interest in the Extension Service and the Experiment Stations; my own field was agriculture. I treasure those experiences because I became so well acquainted with the total university.

AP: How would you describe the Extension Service at Minnesota, say, compared to other states? What are we known for as an Extension Service?

SS: At least up until recent years, we were known as one of the most progressive and capable extension services in the nation. Now, Ann, we're talking about the cooperative extension service...

AP: Yes.

SS: ...federal, state, and county, the three entities. In recent years, as you know, the federal has really cut back and the load has come on the state and the county—unfortunately. There was an attempt—I don't think you were involved with the university at that time—to put our Continuing Education and Extension and Cooperative Extension, the Ag Extension under one.

AP: I don't think I was here then. Do you remember what year that was?

SS: It was way back.

AP: Like in the 1950s, the 1940s?

SS: The 1950s. I'm trying to think of the name of the director of Extension in St. Paul.

AP: Roland Abraham?

SS: Before him.

AP: I can check it out.

SS: He, of course, was denounced totally by the Ag people for even considering putting the two together. Politically, that was a big mistake on his personal part. I think, probably for the university as a whole, that might have been a good move, to put all of Extension—do you understand what I'm saying?—...

AP: Oh, yes.

SS: ...under one leadership, but it didn't happen and the Cooperative Extension movement, of course, has served the state well through the, now, quality Extension educators rather than county agents, as they were then. But there was that attempt to move it together and, as a result, that director lost his job over there.

AP: Norm Brown, was it?

SS: No, before him. Not Thompson. I got to know him well. You know the university does it then; he was off to some job here on the Minneapolis campus—he wasn't fired—because he had cooperated with the university in trying to move this forward into one service. That's not a part of my [unclear], but I think you ought to be aware of it as you look at the history of it.

AP: Sure. That's interesting to know. I think that the Extension Service, as I understood it, was one of the early ones that began clustering, for example, rather than county by county and it added some of the non-agricultural initiatives earlier than other states. Is that correct?

SS: Right, to the great dismay of farm leaders.

AP: That would have been a tense thing to manage, wouldn't it?

SS: Right. Even today, Ann, I'm constantly hearing from farm groups that think the Extension Service has gone to the dogs because they're doing more with pregnant girls than they are with agriculture. I'm using terms I shouldn't use here, but doing more with social services. Frankly, I think they're on the right track.

AP: It's a tough thing to manage politically. This is very helpful because you've got such good judgment.

I want to ask you another question. I've been doing some work on the Rosemount Experiment Station. What is very intriguing is the military use of that facility during World War II and the building of the armament factory. I was down there looking at it; it is absolutely fascinating. I bet you've been down there?

SS: Many times.

AP: To see those ruins just kind of in the landscape is like visiting a concentration camp and, then, it's like visiting a series of 1950s farms because they haven't changed either very much since the 1950s.

SS: Did you visit where bombs are disposed of?

AP: No.

SS: They built these enormous walls where the bomb department from St. Paul and Minneapolis, and I think Bloomington and surrounding...

AP: The bomb squads, yes.

SS: They dispose of their bombs from wherever they find them.

AP: I've seen that site and I didn't know what they used it for.

SS: I'm out of school again now, but...

[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 bhermes1@aol.com