

Interview with Gretchen Schampel

Interviewed by Ann Pflaum

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Gretchen Schampel - GS
Ann Pflaum - AP

AP: This is Ann Pflaum and I am interviewing Gretchen Schampel. I want to spell it for the transcriber. It's S-c-h-a-m-p-e-l. You are the sister of President Malcolm Moos.

GS: Correct.

AP: One of the reasons I wanted to interview you is that I knew you would have memories of the period, and of your family, and of the university. My first question would be, how did you first become aware of the University of Minnesota?

GS: I went to high school there, but I was aware of it, of course, before because my father talked about state affairs and national affairs and so forth. Yes, I was aware of it before that. When it came to going to high school, they thought it would be nice for me to be there and I was and I liked it.

AP: You went to the University High School? Is that what you mean?

GS: Yes. It was not Marshall then. It was, I suppose you would call it, a training institution for the College of Education for the university. It was near the campus. It was not a city school at that time. My brother went there, too.

AP: Did you then enter the university as a student?

GS: Yes.

AP: What college?

GS: First of all, it was education.

AP: Did you specialize in K-12 or secondary education?

GS: Basically, music and English. It was secondary level.

AP: What year did you get your degree?

GS: I got my bachelor's in 1929 and my master's in 1930.

AP: Then, did you teach?

GS: Yes. I worked with the St. Paul schools first as a visiting teacher, which is a school social worker. I hadn't planned that, but that's what happened. Then, I worked after that in the high schools teaching English. And I worked with physically handicapped children at one time as a counselor.

AP: If we fast-forward to 1967 when your brother became president of the university...

GS: I was still teaching then.

AP: He had been in another state, I believe, and was recruited back to his alma mater. He was the first university graduate to be president, I believe.

GS: As far as I know, yes. I think that is true.

AP: Do you have any memories of this period, how it affected your family or how it affected him?

GS: Of course, we were happy that he was doing something he wanted to do and liked to do. We felt he had a lot to contribute.

AP: Do you think he enjoyed it?

GS: Oh, yes. Yes. I'll answer your questions first and then I'll get back to some of these a little bit.

AP: One of the things that he is credited with is a very smooth handling of the era of demonstrations.

GS: Yes, and I have very vivid memories of that.

AP: Would you like to share some of them?

GS: Oh, yes, I would. I think he related well to people. I was at the dinner at the Union before his installation and we were suddenly asked to leave, before the dinner was finished, and go over to Northrop Auditorium. When we got there, the demonstration was on and we were not allowed to go in the front door. We had to go in the back door. It was a very frightening experience for me, personally, to see him there on the stage with all of these demonstrators.

AP: This would have been at the inauguration itself?

GS: Part of it. There were some protests to his speaking and he said, "I promised you you could speak and I ask for that privilege myself." It was that sort thing. I don't know how much of this you want to hear.

AP: This is helpful.

GS: It's for your awareness. I think he handled it very well. He was quiet about it and contained.

AP: He was also very interested in the evolution of the university. He wrote about the multi-versity and its potential to help society. Did he talk much about those kinds of themes?

GS: Yes, he did. The word communiversity was used to the effect that the university should relate to the community that it existed in, too. I was aware of that because I knew Louise Stedman, head of the Home Economics Department, who was having her young students relate to the community to do what they could to help. It was an ongoing thing.

AP: You're right; the correct word was communiversity.

GS: That's the word that I think maybe he coined.

AP: I think so. He obviously spent a lot of time on his speeches. That's one of the things we've read and they certainly read very well, too. They are very articulate defenses of universities.

GS: That's right. I would say, right now, that he really loved the university. He loved Minnesota, all of it. The university was very close to him, even such personal things as a band and so forth.

AP: I know that he was a member of the band as a student.

GS: Yes, he was. He was president of it. He was close to it. He loved it.

AP: One of the other interviews I had was from a professor—I can't remember which one now—who knew your brother in the band and he recalls the band master saying, "Get in step! Get in step, Moos."

GS: He played trumpet. I think he was president at one time. Of course, that was a fun thing.

AP: Do you have any comments about your brother's career after the university, running for the senate or out in California?

GS: Maybe this is the time to say what I want to say.

AP: Sure, absolutely.

GS: I think he brought a very broad spectrum of experience. Before he left the university, after he had got his bachelor's degree, he worked for the Minnesota League of Municipalities. You may not have that information. This is a league of towns, mostly smaller but some fair size. I suppose it's still in existence, I don't know. They pooled their information, their sources, of assistance and so forth. He worked for that at the university. Then, he got his Ph.D. at the University of California-Los Angeles. You may know that.

AP: Yes.

GS: While he was getting his Ph.D., he did his research at the University of Alabama and taught there. He taught briefly at the University of Wyoming because he wanted to get some different information for his Ph.D. After he got that degree, he taught at Johns Hopkins, when Milton Eisenhower was president. That connection... When [Dwight] Ike Eisenhower wanted a speechwriter, Milton recommended my brother, so my brother had a national/international background, too. Do you have all of this?

AP: This is helpful to have it from your perspective.

GS: After the White House, he worked for the Ford Foundation, I think granting whatever funds they give to different universities around the country so that he had the knowledge of all of these situations. From there, he wrote speeches for a fairly short time, I think, for the four Rockefeller brothers. It wasn't just for Nelson; it was for all of them, John and David and I don't know the other one's name. Then, after he was out of office at the university, he still raised money for the Medical School, quite a substantial sum. His love was still there at the university. I think that's the sort of thing that I wasn't sure that you were aware of, how wide his experience was when he came here.

AP: Do you remember what he did his dissertation on, his Ph.D.?

GS: Yes. This is the surprising, but it was research that was wanted very much. It was on the states' relations to prison systems. Alabama, at that time of course, had a very horrible reputation, one of the worst in the country, outside of Florida maybe, for its prison system. When he got down there, he found it was not as bad as they thought. I witnessed this myself. Actually, the people who worked in that capitol of Alabama cutting grass, running the elevators and so forth, were largely murderers. They were on parole. There, the murders were largely a big slice with a razor, *crime passionée*. This sounds weird, but that was the sort of thing he found out. That's what he wrote his dissertation on. I think this sounds, probably, horrible to you and it doesn't sound related to university presidents. I do know that he had a very interesting experience as far as the university. My mother and I visited him there and saw what the University of Alabama was like.

AP: He certainly had a very, very interesting career. It's absolutely intriguing. I think that one of the pluses of Minnesota, in the era of the student demonstrations, is that Minnesota did not have the kind of violence that other places did.

GS: No. This is true. I have very vivid memories—I don't watch much TV—of [S.I.] Hayakawa jumping up on top of a car, with the crowd screaming after him at the other University of California.

AP: Yes, I remember that.

GS: I also remember Hayakawa. His field was language. He wrote a very interesting... His dissertation probably was on language itself. He was a brilliant person and, of course, the violence at Columbia was probably worse than ours.

AP: Yes.

GS: But ours was bad enough.

AP: At this point in the interview, I want to ask you, is there anything that I have not asked you that you would like to add?

GS: I guess I've added what I feel for... Again, I would like to emphasize the fact that he did love the university and he did love Minnesota as a whole. His lake home was very dear to him. He died there, of course, as you know.

AP: Yes.

GS: His children have been very loyal and very close to me. My son died last January, so I have closeness to the family. I don't think that relates...

I didn't know the other university presidents too well. I remember, when I was in high school, somebody pointing out Dr. [William Watts] Folwell and I saw the darling little man. I remember Lotus Coffman because he came to buy a Scottie dog from us. [laughter] As I say, those are the personal. I didn't know any of the university presidents.

AP: That's what we hope this book will do is give a little bit of profile. I think one of our target audiences for the book will be new faculty that are younger, of a completely different generation, to give them an idea of what the university was like, or new members of the business community who may not be from Minnesota and so, therefore, have no background. We're hoping to have very small sketches of the presidents and the faculty and the colleges and different kinds of student experience.

GS: I think this is true. I'm not sure that these men were that remote, as I say. At one time in my life, I thought it was fun to raise pups and I had these Scotties. It happened and somebody, when we wanted to sell them, came to the door and it turned out to be Lotus Delta Coffman, which, to me, I was surprised that he would take the time to come and do that.

AP: That's just remarkable. That is.

GS: I don't know about the others. You would hear things. You would hear about President [Cyrus] Northrop caning somebody down the stairs for discipline. You probably have heard that story, too.

AP: No, I have not.

GS: I think it's in James Gray's book [*University of Minnesota: 1851-1951*]. Somebody of prominence in Minneapolis misbehaved in some way that affected the university and President Northrop personally caned him down the steps in Folwell Hall.

AP: Oh, my gracious.

GS: You'd have to check that.

AP: Yes.

GS: That was just something that was in the back of my mind. I think there are personal things about these men that are very much, as you say, probably of some importance to the public—not the horrid things that happened, maybe the sad things. We're all sad that my brother died young, but that's just something that happened.

AP: I think that's true. We'll try to keep this as upbeat as we can as a history.

GS: If there is anything else, Mrs. Pflaum, that occurs to you or that you think I might verify, I'll be happy to help you. I do appreciate the fact that you're giving my brother a place in the...

AP: Of course, absolutely. This is only his due. I hope you'll enjoy the book and I appreciate your time. I'll send you the permission form.

GS: Okay. As I say, this is enough, but if there is something that occurs to you or that somebody else says that you want me to say, aye, yes, or no about, I'll be glad to help.

AP: I appreciate that. Very good. Have a nice day. Thank you very much. Take care.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by:

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