CAC: This is December 1, 1997. It's been two years and a couple of months since we finished the last tape. Now, we're here to complete our interview. This is Clarke Chambers speaking. The interview is being conducted in my office in 1152 Social Science Tower.

Both of us, Ken, can look back at the transcript of the earlier two sessions we had; so, we know what we've been covering. There was some unfinished business with the vice-presidency before we go on from there. You had mentioned in your memorandum here that you wanted to say something about the "T" appointments and its complications later on. I think that would be a good entering point. Then, I want to spend ten or twelve minutes reflecting on the systemic nature of that office. Why don't you go ahead?

KK: Good, Clarke. I thought that we ought to touch on this in view of the recent controversy over tenure and the tenure code last year which many people saw as, at least in part, precipitated by the financial crisis in the health sciences that led to the regents and the legislature fearing that the university had overcommitted to tenured positions and led others to feel quite resentful that this seemed to have come about largely because the health sciences found themselves in a bind with respect to having more tenured people than they could support on hard money. All of that was true; but, the origins are interesting and are one of the consequences of our own system and our own inability to make the university system fit the health sciences in any very direct way. What it relates to is what are called "T" appointments—obviously "T" for temporary—that existed in the Medical School for many years for its faculty to cover those faculty who were not supported by state money but supported, primarily, by either clinical income or by grant money. There had been a couple of things that had developed in the health sciences that were not healthy because of that but, also, not easy to see through in any different way. One was the development
of eleven-month appointments which exist only in certain parts of this campus and exist only for historical reasons rather than for any rational basis of arguing that some people should be on eleven-month appointments and others nine. The areas of agriculture and the health sciences had always been on eleven-month appointments largely because they had a lot of money and it allowed them to make those kinds of appointments.

CAC: But they had other people's money?

KK: They had other people's money. So, they developed a culture, not merely here but all over the country, of eleven-month appointments. If you look for a rational basis for it, there was none. It was just that historical basis. They're now paying a heavy price for it because, now, as the monies are being reduced, I think there is a greater pressure on the culture of the health sciences than there is on any other part of the university. We're all being stressed by reduction of the money but the change, in a pattern in which people were used to small teaching loads and large amounts of support more than in any other part of the university, I think is going to hit them hardest in the next decade. But, at the time—this was the early 1980s—the issue arose in a different way. It arose because most of the rest of the faculty—faculty, mind you, not the administration—looking at the situation in the health sciences said, "Here is a non-conforming unit that is misusing temporary appointments for long term appointments." In accordance with the tenure code, these people either had to be given permanent tenured slots or they had to be fired. Those were the two choices and it was up to the system to make a judgment in each one of those cases. That faced us with a very difficult decision in which there was no right decision in the following sense. In my view, most of those people should not have been made tenure faculty in the sense that, if you looked at their academic records and thought in terms of applying the same standards that you would have applied to someone in the Institute of Technology [IT] or the College of Liberal Arts [CLA], theirs were not CVs [Curriculum Vitae] or bios [biographies] that looked like tenured bios. On the other hand, these were people that were vital to the clinical operation of the university and to have them leave the university was even more preposterous because we needed them, in fact. What happened is a number of these came forward, going through the Medical School faculty review, with recommendations to be tenured permanently. That was a faculty recommendation coming forward that arrived in my office and, I must say, faced with that issue, I approved those. Now, do I regret it? Certainly, in some sense, I regret it. Why did I give in to that? I think I gave in to it in large part because I didn't see an alternative. I didn't have available the possibility of continuing them in those "T" appointments. I think in retrospect that we probably should have left well enough alone on that issue and that we probably should have left them in "T" appointments with the recognition that these were people that we were not taking advantage of in the same way that we would have with non-tenured appointments that are misused, I think, oftentimes and more so in today's university; but, we were living with a reality that we had no way of providing them with a guarantee of permanent employment because of the nature of their support, the nature of that system.

CAC: A P & A appointment wasn't available at that time?
KK: I don't think we had a P & A appointment.

CAC: It was talked of in the library at much the same time.

KK: That's right.

CAC: So, it must have been there.

KK: It was there and I'm not sure why that didn't come up.

CAC: Excuse me, for posterity, P & A is professional and administrative.

KK: We did have it in the library and we used it and it was a very good way. In an earlier conversation, we discussed why I thought that ought to be used more extensively for people in the library system.

CAC: Right.

KK: I don't remember now why that was not an opportunity. I suspect that it had to do with status consciousness in the Medical School; that is, their faculty did not believe that that was a reasonable way to go. It seems to me, in thinking about it now, that it would have been a good way.

CAC: [laughter] The passing of years bring hindsight that's often pretty accurate.

KK: Yes.

CAC: I'm glad you added that. Last evening, as I was reflecting on what we might do, I thought this might be a good point to reflect on the office of the vice-president for academic administration. Let me be up front for the record. It's striking that—I've done 125 of these things now, Ken—ever since the days of Gerry Shepherd how difficult it is to keep someone online in that office. The rotation is high in many administrative offices but, I think, that particularly deans tend to stay longer and even presidents stay longer for the most part. The lines of authority, the variety of assignments, the work processes... almost everyone who has lived in Morrill Hall—this includes faculty who would go over as associate vice-provost or something like that—all report that was an impossible office and, now, we're back to it again, as I see it. That's a big agenda; but, could you comment on your perception of that office? Let me say one more thing. I had one gentleman who was a provost in the last years of the [Nils] Hasselmo Administration who said, "The only happy position he had was as dean." They had real lever. He could manage that job and once you got above that in the vice-presidencies, it was gone.

KK: Yes. It's interesting. I think my perspective is a little different. Actually, the happiest job I ever had in the university was the academic vice-presidency.
CAC: [laughter]

KK: I think what made it happy for me might not apply more generally in a number of ways. For one thing, personally, the range of interests of that job, the academic breadth, was terribly stimulating. I would have hated being a dean of the Institute of Technology. I'd rather do science than administer science. The challenge of looking at all of the areas of the university was so much at one with the reason one is at a university, being able to think about all of its different parts, that I found that the most stimulating administrative assignment I ever had. Secondly, because I had spent almost twenty years at the university before that, I had the illusion of being able to know all of those parts and to be connected to them and to do that job.

CAC: Ken, wouldn't it be the case that more than most persons who go through that line, you sampled things in . . . You were acting dean of the Graduate School. You were associate dean before that. You were high on the Faculty Consultative Committee [FCC]. You had that broad vision.

KK: That's right, I had all of this internal experience, Clarke. You're right.

CAC: Including your research in the Medical School.

KK: I'd touched on the Medical School. I'd taught Honors courses in the College of Liberal Arts. I'd audited courses in the College of Liberal Arts. I knew so much of it and I knew so many people that I had the illusion that I could do the job because I had all of these pieces in place. I think that made for something unusual and probably the only person who had a similar background was Gerry Shepherd.

CAC: Yes.

KK: Gerry had done that job.

CAC: And longer than anybody.

KK: Longer than anybody and was very much part of the university. The one exceptional aspect of my having it—not an exceptional aspect of me but exceptional aspect—was my set of circumstances in terms of a long connection with lots of parts of the university that made it possible. Secondly, as we had discussed earlier, so much of the authority was delegated by Peter Magrath to me in that office that, in effect, I didn't have many of the constraints that have often gone with that office at different times which place you in the impossible position of a huge responsibility and narrow authority that I think has been a burden in that position. In that respect, too, there seemed to me to be a possibility of doing that job which made that more natural for me. On the other hand, even with those circumstances, it became an impossible job with lots of ambiguities that you could not overcome. You couldn't overcome the ambiguity of being essentially the provost of the Twin Cities campus and the vice-president for Academic
Affairs for the whole system. The very fact of your representing and coming from the Twin Cities made you suspect on the other campuses. Even when you tried to do that job fairly, I think, they were right to be slightly suspicious. You did have some conflict. At the same time, I felt very strongly that a full central administration, as it were a system's administration for a university of this sort, was a bad idea. The reason I didn't like it—it's important to discuss this because we'll come back to the alternatives—was I felt that a system's administration became a bureaucracy.

CAC: When you're talking about systems, you mean system-wide to include all campuses and all colleges?

KK: That's right. As you begin to think of the alternatives which make an academic vice-president what the academic vice-president was in the last year of the Hasselmo Administration, it was essentially a system's office rather than a campus office. It was separated from the activities of the campus and from the line responsibilities of the campus and, therefore, it looked, in many ways, like a small version of the system's administration you have in Wisconsin or you have in the University of California system.

CAC: I see.

KK: That struck me as creating a bureaucracy that separated the leadership of the institution from the activities of the institution as it does in the University of California system and as it does in Wisconsin. In fact, if you look at Wisconsin, which in many ways as a system would look more like our system were we to go to a system . . . that is, you have one major research university campus and a second one striving to be a university campus . . .

CAC: In Milwaukee.

KK: . . . the one in Milwaukee, and then about fifty or sixty other small schools that look like our state university system. You naturally create a situation of conflict between the president of the institution, that is the system's head, and the chancellor of the main campus because the president of the institution, just in the politics of that, must try to balance the power of the principal research university campus and, therefore, take the role of representing all of the other campuses. You create, unavoidably I think, a conflict between the system's head and the chancellor of the principal campus, which I thought in this state would be particularly problematical because the politics of this state make it difficult for the Twin Cities campus anyway. The large campus happens to be the one with the smallest political constituency and that's because the Twin Cities are large enough and cosmopolitan enough that its legislators don't feel a proprietary concern for the Twin Cities; whereas, if you're in Morris or Duluth . . .

CAC: Ah! you bet.

KK: . . . the legislators know exactly what they stand for.
CAC: Or for the state system, Mankato, Moorhead, etcetera?

KK: That's right. All of those are connected to smaller communities where their legislators are clearly devoted to that aim. I'm going to come back to the academic vice-presidency in its present form; but, the alternatives have struck me as having flaws of one sort or another distancing the central group from the activities of the colleges and creating this change in the political balance which I think is problematical.

Now, that didn't mean, however, that the job was easily doable. I mentioned the first of the things that made it difficult which was the ambiguity of the role as, essentially, provost of the Twin Cities campus and vice-president for the system. Secondly, there was not merely the issue of the number of units because I think if you thought of the academic vice-president as functioning on just the large collegiate units that was almost doable. It was all of the other things—the library, the museum, the Continuing Education, the concerts and lectures, a host of support operations, computing—that added to the burden of having all of the collegiate units that resulted in the biggest problem.

CAC: Excuse me. When you were vice-president, these reported to you?

KK: Directly.

CAC: Oh, my god!

KK: All of these people reported to you. All of them wanted to report to you.

CAC: Sure.

KK: The result was you really didn't manage or administer them in any way. You could hardly even give any to them. That was a very big issue. If there's a compromise, it might be to take all of those support units, what I call support units, and have them report in a different relationship. That still leaves you with a lot of colleges. There are ambiguities in that because while we had a lot of colleges in principle . . . We did have a vice-president for Agriculture and the four colleges over there reported to that person as well as to the vice-president for Academic Affairs, which certainly created oddities and we had the health sciences with another five units. Depending on where you put Vet Med [Veterinary Medicine] it was five or six units. There too, you had a double reporting relationship. So, the academic vice-president was troubled in two respects, that is, not only was there a great breadth of the number of units that reported to the person, there was an ambiguity about authority, an ambiguity because of this double reporting relationship, an ambiguity about who these units really did report to.

CAC: Did the situation you describe lead, therefore, to a kind of semi-autonomy for Agriculture, for example, and the health sciences.

Kenneth Keller Interview
KK: Yes, it did.

CAC: They're caught, too.

KK: Yes. They have the same problem and the result is that, in decision making—something I mentioned in an earlier discussion we had—there was a kind of double negotiation that went on. There was the negotiation directly with the units but the units always had the alternative of talking to their representative who was the vice-president to whom they reported who would then come and negotiate with the academic vice-president. You had, I think, a great difficulty that came about because of that.

CAC: When it was a vice-president for Agriculture, for example, who had very strong political support outstate—I'm thinking of Bill Hueg, a person of enormous personal capacity—it compounded it.

KK: Yes, he was terrific. I think that Bill Hueg's happiest moment in life occurred after he retired when I bought a house on the St. Croix [River] and he, as a gesture of goodwill, dropped about a ton of manure in my yard.

CAC: [laughter] He'd been dumping it for a long time, Ken.

KK: That's right. [laughter]

CAC: Let me say also—you know this better than I—that all promotions and tenure appointments have to come through that office.

KK: All promotion and tenure came through the academic vice-president's office but, there, too...

CAC: That's a terrible burden.

KK: It was a very, very difficult task. There's no question that it was an enormous task if you took it seriously and I think all of the people who held that office took it seriously, which meant that you read everyone. You read them through.

CAC: This would be every April, May, and June and it would be of the order of how many, do you suppose, per year?

KK: Over 100.

CAC: I'm sure.

KK: I can't remember how many over 100 now... between 100 and 200, I would say.
CAC: That, in itself, I should think, would just be an impossible burden.

KK: Yes, it meant just enormous, crazy work habits if you wanted to read that and if you were to do it in a proper way. I think that was not a good system. That was a bad system. In fact, the system was bad for a number of reasons, not the least of which is I don't think that that review, even when it was taken seriously, was rigorous enough. It was, in a sense, a little too far removed from the unit to exercise a greater rigidity. In other words, I think you felt more hesitant to reject a recommendation of tenure when you were so far removed from the unit and the intellectual field in which the judgment was being made. I think that that may be one of the reasons—not the only one—that the University of Minnesota has always tenured a larger fraction of the number of people who are proposed for tenure than most major universities.

CAC: Do you have any idea why that would be true in this culture?

KK: Other than this system . . . I don't; but, I do think that the data are clear that of those who come forward, who are recommended even by their department, we probably tenure ninety percent at this university. Now, when you compare that with other institutions, they're probably closer to, even in the public institutions, seventy percent and in the private institutions, fifty percent or forty percent. It's hard to argue that that's just because we have done better in selecting people. I think that it's partly the system. The reason I hesitated was that I'm not sure it's entirely the institutional structure. It may be just our culture.

CAC: Minnesota nice?

KK: Yes, that's the term I was thinking of, right. It might be that we are, in that respect, just less likely to take a hard-nosed view; but, I also think it's because of the huge centralization of the process in the office of the academic vice-president who, quite aside from the fact that it's an enormous burden to read it all, has to be a little more hesitant to make a judgment in a field remote from his or hers. Even trying to apply the same standard, it's a question of whether or not you're capable of applying the standards. You don't want to count publications. You don't know how particularly to interpret a recommendation in one field in comparison with the recommendation in another field. There are vastly different approaches that people had in terms of how public the review process is. We were in a transitional time when not every unit adopted . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: . . . the idea that every letter was public. So, some units had a more public process than other units. You did not feel comfortable in applying some discount factor to the ones that had been reviewed publicly. I didn't feel comfortable doing that. I didn't think that was consistent with the process.

CAC: Although it may have been, in fact, empirically the case?
KK: It may have been empirically the case but I think it would have been a mistake to try to apply that in an ad hoc way. So, it made it difficult to do. All of that was the problem of the breadth of the office. The office did have tremendous breadth.

CAC: May I mention one more thing?

KK: Sure.

CAC: All findings of the Judicial Committee had to go through you, too?

KK: That's right.

CAC: I'm guessing that by the 1980s, that's a pretty . . .

KK: Although, it was the Judicial Committee that you weren't involved in.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: I was sued a few times or I was charged in those. Anytime you had a tenure review, if the judicial complaint came as a result of action of the academic vice-president's office, which was frequently the case, then the judicial review would not go to the academic vice-president for review.

CAC: In that case, it would go to whom?

KK: Directly to the president—which was a difficulty.

CAC: I know from other interviews that that's an increasing burden in the late 1970s and 1980s by the time you're in that office.

KK: That's right. There were many.

CAC: It's more litigious.

KK: There's a great change in the litigiousness of the system, that's true. That is one of the reasons why centralization comes about more and more. As the system became more and more litigious, the way to deal with it was to maintain better control over process and the better control over process required that you have people who knew about it and, therefore, you tended to centralize functions. That exacerbated the situation.

CAC: That's interesting. Again, I'm going to repeat and say that many, many persons who have been close to the office and some who have occupied the office have said that, as defined as you're talking about it, it couldn't be done.
KK: I think without a lot of advantages, it couldn't be done and it's getting harder and harder to do. Yes. As I said, I had some special circumstances which made it easier but did not make it possible.

CAC: I understand.

KK: There still were the units that obviously got short-shrift. In our last discussion, we talked about the fact that a number of people had commented on the fact that the library was a situation that wasn't well-resolved in those years.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I think one could look at that as being one of the consequences of an academic vice-presidency that was so broad that you really couldn't spend that much time on the unit that needed it. There were other things that I couldn't spend enough time on. I felt that there was more to be done in the College of Liberal Arts that I was not able to accomplish either in the academic vice-presidency or the presidency. That may come up again in the course of the presidency. I was one of those who felt that the College of Liberal Arts was ungovernably large. What made it ungovernable in its being large was its heterogeneity, that is, not so much its size but that it was a unit that had three quite distinct parts to it. I think of the social sciences, and the humanities, and the creative and performing arts. You, Clarke, will have to put history where you want it to be.

CAC: And the professional schools: social work and journalism.

KK: That's right . . . which I didn't think belonged. In one case, it didn't matter—journalism—because I thought it was doing well and the other, I was instrumental in getting it moved because I didn't think it belonged there. As I thought about those three units, it seemed to me that the social sciences were extremely strong, almost self-governing. They didn't need strong central direction. Those were among our strongest departments and they were doing quite well. They had scholarly standards that were clear. They had a role that was clear. I think they could have done with a certain kind of dean and management, which was more or less laissez faire, that organized it. The humanities had, by the time I came into the academic vice-presidency, faded to a point where they needed a great deal of help. Not only had they faded in terms of quality but they were filled with all sorts of quarreling and misery and, yet, no university can be great if you don't build the humanities. So, I thought they needed to be separately handled by someone who was sensitive to those particular issues and could be much more proactive in running it. Then, we had the performing and creative arts which have an entirely different role within an institution, where scholarship has a totally different meaning, where the nature of the undergraduate program is much more an internship than it is only an undergraduate education. That, too, I thought, needed a different kind of sensitivity and management to faculty development, to relations with the community which need to be very strong.
CAC: Such as the theater and music.

KK: Exactly. There was so much that needed to be done in connecting to what was going on at the Guthrie [Theater], in the case of theater, connecting to what was going on in the music community . . . building a dance program, which we were involved in doing at the time. It struck me that we needed to reorganize that. I add it because those ideas were important to me in the vice-presidency. When I got to the presidency, I tried to do something about it and did not succeed. My good friend, Fred Lukermann, was not going along with that—as you know, he's a good friend. But, he didn't think I was right. His argument, and it's an important argument, was that everything I said might be true but it was still important that the strength of the College of Liberal Arts was to promote the kind of interdisciplinary connection that required that all of those parts be part of the same whole, that that's what you wanted for students and that's what you wanted for faculty. I'm not so sure it worked well for faculty or that being within the same college produced more of that than being in separate colleges would. What I ultimately proposed was that the answer would be to create a vice-provost's position for the arts and sciences and engineering—I believed that it was equally a mistake to separate engineering—so that one would use that to reweave these rather than using the deanship of the College of Liberal Arts to do it. The funny thing is what we wound up with is not breaking up the College of Liberal Arts but creating the vice-provostship so that we got the bureaucracy but didn't get the benefit.

CAC: With Hasselmo, a provostship for the arts and sciences.

KK: Right. That was to be a vice-provost; he made it a provostship ultimately. We didn't gain the advantage of breaking up the units that I thought needed to be broken up. I think what we got was the bureaucracy, the extra level of administration without the gain that I would have liked to see. We were just not successful with that.

CAC: Listeners to this tape or readers of the transcript may want to refer, at this point, to Richard Cisek's interview. He saw all of this from the outside, just for the one, the music, and he had a clear picture of this from the outside. He is a very sophisticated, quick guy.

KK: Yes, he is. Good! Somebody will put that together, I hope.

CAC: God! there's so many things to put together. Let's return to the chronology then. Okay?

KK: Sure.

CAC: Mr. Magrath's—this story is on tape with many people so we don't need to go into detail—departure was rather sudden.

KK: Yes.
CAC: There are a number of tapes that comment on that and a lot of other records as well. It left, however, the regents with a real problem of not having a period in which to search for a president, which means that the interim . . . or were you an acting president?

KK: I think I was an acting president.

CAC: I think so. Let's pick up the chronology there. You're vice-president . . .

KK: I'm vice-president for Academic Affairs and, clearly, a chief lieutenant of Peter's, and the issue comes up of an acting president. I forget which regents came to talk with me about that. Let me try to recall . . . I guess at that time, Lauris Krenik was still the chair of the board. I'm not sure whether it was Lauris or it might have been Lauris and some others who came to see me. I don't have the sense it was Lauris. We had a discussion in which the gist of it was "You are a likely person to be made acting president. You're also a person who could be a candidate for president. If you were a candidate for president, it would be inappropriate for you to be acting president; therefore, you should make a choice and the choice is yours." My thinking about it was fairly straightforward. Was I interested in the presidency? Yes and no. As so many times earlier, it was not something I'd thought about and not something I had any time to think about. Peter's departure came as a great shock to me. I had, at that time, been considered for one other presidency at another place. That had piqued my interest but there were many others that had not interested me at all. The one that piqued my interest was a good school, which, since I didn't get offered that job, I probably ought not to mention it. We had gone far down the road on that so I'd thought about a presidency. I mention that first one because that was the first time I ever thought about a presidency. As I said just a little earlier, I found the happiest job and the most interesting job I'd ever had was the academic vice-presidency because of its issues, not because it was doable but because it's issues were ones that interested me. So, I hadn't thought a lot about presidencies. I guess I should say one other thing that was truly important to me and that is I was deeply engaged in this place.

CAC: Yes.

KK: Minnesota meant and means a lot to me and I was not looking for an administrative role at a place that I didn't have a connection to. I cared about an institution that I really cared about. I'd spent my whole academic career here so that was a place I cared about. I had to think about this. At the same time, I'd been academic vice-president for five years during which time you make a lot of enemies. That's fair enough. I said, "If I turn down the acting presidency, I'm essentially announcing to the world that I'm a candidate for president and I'm the only publicly announced candidate for president of the university." [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] That's a mean position, right.

KK: I said, "That is bound to lead everybody to think of all the reasons why Keller ought not to be president." Not only that, but when they choose somebody else, I am now somebody who
has just the position of president and who is going to want to keep you as academic vice-president? That didn't make any sense to me. This clearly is a kind of no-brainer when you come to think of it. If I take the acting presidency, I can provide some continuity. I can continue to preserve my position as an academic vice-president who is stepping in for some time and since I don't have an interest in the presidency, I don't have to think about what I'm doing every second in the acting presidency and, therefore, worry about whether or not I'm pleasing or displeasing one group or another. So, I said, "Fine with me. I'm happy to be acting president and to accept fully the idea that I'm not a candidate for president."

CAC: Was that ever formalized in a resolution?

KK: It was. The regents adopted a resolution which said that the acting president could not be a candidate, was not a candidate for the presidency.

CAC: So, that led to further ambiguity in six months.

KK: It would come back to that.

CAC: Yes.

KK: At the end of the six months, they had to undo it. Literally, at a meeting, they had to undo it—a totally mortifying meeting for me. Then, what happened? In my first meeting as acting president, Rudy Perpich said, "I want to come over there. I don't like what's going on at that university."

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: We will move now to the meeting with the governor that is scattered throughout many interviews. It's one event that there are more accounts of than any other single event I can think of.

KK: Is that right?

CAC: Yes.

KK: That's interesting.

CAC: A lot of it is secondhand. It becomes legendary.

KK: [laughter]
CAC: Who was there and how they responded . . . so you go ahead with your account.

KK: The governor whirled in. He said he wanted to come over and talk to the regents, that he was very critical of the university, that it was incapable of making decisions, it was incapable of planning, and that he certainly had some ideas about what could be done and he'd come over. Publicity around the meeting was all negative; that is, he was coming to lecture the regents on how they had failed to make judgments.

CAC: He made public statements about this before he came?

KK: Oh, yes. He made a lot of public . . .

CAC: This was all set up as a public affair although it was a private meeting?

KK: I don't remember it as a private meeting. I don't think that was legal for the regents to meet in private. My recollection is that it wasn't held in Morrill Hall; it was in Coffman Union— . . .

CAC: Yes, in the Campus Club.

KK: . . . that's right, it was in the Campus Club, not in Morrill Hall—that he whirled in with some of his aides.

CAC: Including Gus Donhowe?

KK: Gus was there; that's right. It was that the university is running amuck. It makes no decisions. It only grows. It has no control. It has no idea of what it ought to do and he said, "I think what you ought to do is close a bunch of units." I think he mentioned dentistry, as I remember, as one of the units.

CAC: His brother was a dentist.

KK: Yes. I think he may have mentioned one or two of the coordinate campuses. He had a whole bunch of things. He said, "I think you ought to do that." The regents hemmed and hawed and I, having little to lose, said to the governor that I thought he was wrong on the basic point, that, in fact, the university more than most universities had been involved in planning. We'd done lots of planning. In fact, I commented earlier that we'd done seven years of planning even though we didn't have a plan. We did know what all the issues were and I knew what the issues were. The fact is that there was a need to put it together but we had done enough of this that, in fact, I could put together a plan in a month.

CAC: [laughter]
KK: It wouldn't be de novo. It would draw on everything that we'd done before and we could come back and show him that, indeed, we do have some ideas about where we're going, that we'd spent a long time thinking about it, and we could make much more sensible approaches. I don't think I said much more sensible but I made clear that I thought that was for us to do, that he had thrown a challenge to us and I cast it in these terms: I said, "If the board wanted, the administration could, in fact, produce a plan by the next board meeting that summarized what we had done over these years. This must have been either a special meeting or a second meeting after my first one because at the first meeting of the board, as the acting president, I had, in fact, laid out some large issues that we faced. It was not, at that point, the specific plan but it was a document which set the stage for what followed as Commitment to Focus. The board immediately bought in on that. They said, "Yes, governor, that's exactly what we can do. Since it's our responsibility and not yours, we're charging the acting president with coming back to us at the next meeting with a plan that we can discuss and think about." The governor said, "Fine. If you're going to do that, go ahead. We'll take a look and see what it looks like."

CAC: I'm going to interfere here just a minute.

KK: Yes.

CAC: Some people remember or have heard secondhand that Mr. Donhowe played a larger role in that discussion at that meeting or maybe he was the person who was priming the governor on these matters because of his general association. That's not your memory?

KK: I don't have a strong recollection of Gus actually speaking at the meeting. I don't have that.

CAC: Some give to him the Commitment to Focus . . . that you must commit yourself to focus this university [unclear].

KK: Absolutely not. No.

CAC: I ask this not to bait you but to clarify the record.

KK: No, no. I'll tell you where that term came from actually. That term is due to Jim Borgestad. The term, the notion of focusing the university, you will find in the document that I wrote earlier that was my first . . .

CAC: These are all in the university archives?

KK: Yes.

CAC: Fine.
KK: My first speech or statement to the board when I accepted the acting presidency which preceded this meeting was one that talked about what we needed to do and I'm sure the term "focus" must appear in that.

CAC: Okay. Good.

KK: Those are in the records and can be gotten. Donhowe was there but I don't have any recollection of his speaking very much. It's more the governor and the board sort of saying, "We need to move on this. We're prepared to move on this but this is the obligation of the university to do." That meeting must have been a regular board meeting. So, we had a month to the next one. In that time, I wrote Commitment to Focus. It really was sitting down and writing it.

CAC: You'd been writing it for seven years.

KK: That's it. This was not new stuff. The difference is that for seven years the issues had been clear but we had vacillated about taking a position on one side or another of them. We had talked about what our choices were and we'd sort of made clear where we had to go but we had not bitten the bullet and actually come down on those issues. In those next weeks, I literally wrote it. I wrote it out by hand, gave it to Borgestad and to George Robb who were people who helped and did some of the smoothing. We discussed it. Remember, the administration is now pretty bare bones because there is no academic vice-president since I was occupying both offices. There were the people who could give us data but there wasn't a large central group to think this through. Stan Kegler certainly was there and part of it. Lyle French was there—no Neal Vanselow had arrived by then. Vanselow was there but there really weren't a lot of people. We wrote it. I think what happened is that Jim Borgestad—it had no name—looked through the verbiage and found in it somewhere "commitment to focus," and he said, "This is it." Up it went and it became the title. I said, "Jim, you know better than I about these things. That's fine." So, that was the title. It was a typed version that was distributed the following months and that laid out what these issues were. We brought it back to the regents the next month. The record, I'm sure, would show that. We have to talk a lot about the regents and where they were at this time.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I want to come back to that because already the politics of the regents was beginning to emerge, the politics as it developed during my administration. It was certainly a divided board.

CAC: You would know better than I when to introduce that. It is central to my perception.

KK: I think that should get introduced next.

CAC: I'm going to intervene then just with one question bearing on this.
KK: Sure.

CAC: From many interviews, including your earlier one, Mr. Magrath had made the cultivation of the regents his first constituency.

KK: Yes, absolutely.

CAC: All the way through, everybody has commented on this. He had not prepared them in detail for what planning had been going on for seven years?

KK: I think, Clarke, that they were aware of it; but, we never got to discuss the long-range questions. He was acting to keep a process going. Someone once pointed out to me that, in public settings, process is much more important than outcome. So, the regents were perfectly happy that process was going on and the kinds of decisions in which they engage were less those of the long term outcome of that process than they were in the budget issues that we had to face every couple of years. They were deeply involved in discussions about retrenchment and reallocation every time they came up; but, I can’t remember any serious discussion with the board about the long term goals in any but the most general terms. None of the issues that finally came out as part of Commitment to Focus had ever been surfaced at the regents. They had been surfaced elsewhere.

CAC: That would confirm my perception—not that that’s a big deal.

KK: They weren’t. I don’t remember any of those discussions going on. Peter didn’t want that at the board. In large part, the issue with the board was how did you get through the monthly meeting and not get anybody hurt and no damage? [laughter] So, the idea of proposing to the board what would be a deep discussion, even an intellectual discussion, just was not in the cards. That was not an intention. The notion of a broad discussion was kind of the usual rhetoric about the great role of a public university without getting into any details of what that might mean or what it might mean to talk about a liberal education or what it might mean to talk about any of the issues that we really needed to discuss. I don’t think we did that. I certainly can’t recall anything like that. So when Commitment to Focus comes back, it’s a short document. It’s got a lot of stuff in it. It’s certainly filled with long term directions, not a lot of detail, but enough detail to have people join the issue. Now, the regents are of two minds on the document when it comes back. All of the discussion in the first month is positive. There are certainly concerns about access, concerns about this and that but not a lot of argument . . . mostly a sort of, “We certainly have to talk about this.” In other words, it wasn’t, “We accept it,” or “We reject it.” “This is really good food for thought as we think about a new president and as we think about what we need to do.” Meanwhile, the newspapers take this up and think it’s the greatest thing going.

CAC: Ahhh.
KK: Editorials start appearing all over the state, certainly in the two Twin Cities newspapers, saying, "This is terrific! This is great. This is exactly what the university should be doing," which relieves our problem with the governor entirely. That disappears as a problem.

CAC: You have no direct response from him or his office at this preliminary stage?

KK: No, other than basic encouragement . . . no negatives from the governor.

CAC: Does the governor call you up often during this period?

KK: Not in this period, no. No, not in this period. I speak to him a couple, three times during the six months of my interim presidency . . . not very much more. They're good conversations. I think, at that point, we already have a good relationship, which actually persisted. I always had a good relationship with Rudy. He probably thought of me as a strange academic but it was not like what Nils faced with [Governor Arne] Carlson or anything like that. Basically, the governor ultimately supported everything in Commitment to Focus. He never gave us any problems with that. So, Commitment to Focus comes out and it has a bunch of pieces in it that are major things that are worth mentioning: the General College issue, the coordinate campuses, downsizing, and preparation standards.

CAC: You mean by preparation standards what?

KK: I was thinking politically, I must say, in trying to see how is it we could downsize and get better students coming to the university without falling on the issue of access? How could we deal with access and, yet, preparation? The thrust was to say that we don't want to turn people away from the university arbitrarily but we do want to encourage certain people to decide not to come here. The way to do that is to not change the grade point average for coming to the university—as one would have done in the California system—but to say, "We are going to insist on a solid preparation so that anybody who wants to come to the university can do so. All they have to do is take those courses which are available in the schools. In fact, we're going to give them a four-year lead-in period." In fact, what we did was write to the parents of every eighth grader in the state . . .

CAC: Heavens!

KK: . . . and say, "In four years, these are going to be the university requirements. You ought to be making sure that your high school counselors are advising your kids to take these courses." We sent that to the parents of every eighth grader in the state of Minnesota.

CAC: Whose inspiration was that?

KK: I think we worked on that together. We decided that that was the thing to do.
CAC: God!

KK: I don't want to take credit for it, particularly.

CAC: You have to; you were it.

KK: Yes. "You're going to need more foreign language. You're going to need an extra couple years of math. You're going to need history and social sciences."

CAC: Good.

KK: "That's what we're going to require," and we said that even if students haven't taken that, they can come to the university but they have to take it remedially and not get college credit for any of those courses. What we were doing is, we were acting on the belief that the better students would do this, that those who really didn't want that would go to the state college system and the community college system but the choice would be theirs. We would not have turned anyone away. The argument we would have to make is only the one that those were important to success in college, that taking those were important if your degree was to mean anything later on, so that these weren't arbitrary, and we were not turning anyone away. The late bloomer would have as much way of doing this as anyone else. We weren't looking at grades in that sense. So, that was a very important principle which was how, in a populist state, can you improve the quality of the university without being subject to the cries of elitism? Of course, you can't avoid it.

CAC: Did this ran into a snarl with those members of the board who were sensitive to the access issue?

KK: It sold. Ultimately, they agreed to it. It ran into the difficulty that it needed to be explained but when it ultimately was explained, they bought it and before the end of my interim term, they had adopted the principles of Commitment to Focus with only one negative vote. That was Dave Roe. Dave never changed his mind and he always felt that this was a access question.

CAC: And Wendy [Wendell] Anderson not?

KK: Wendy voted with us in that. I think it was eleven to one.

CAC: I have a sense that he spoke otherwise.

KK: Yes, he did. Lots of people, later on, acted as if they had not approved these principles when the facts came along. In other words, the important—all these things are important—point I want to make is that, in fact, the board approved the Commitment to Focus. They approved it in principle saying, "Now, we'll get the details." Among them were the preparation standards, the General College change . . . With General College, again, the distinction in what
Commitment to Focus proposed and what has happened later is that it was never proposed that we close General College. Never. What the argument was that I made was that General College had veered from its earlier mission. It was intended to be an open-admission college that took underprepared students and prepared them to be able to go on into the College of Liberal Arts or wherever else and that that was its purpose. Somehow, in the early 1970s, it had started to give its own degree. When it did that, it had created a separate but unequal pathway and that, in fact, that defeated its purpose because a General College degree really didn't lead you anywhere. It just gave you an imprimatur for nothing. What we proposed in Commitment to Focus was that we eliminate the four-year degree program and just offer the two-year associate program, not remove resources but have them focus resources on starting to get better results in that, recognizing that it was a tough row to hoe, that is, it's hard to get students through that. Of course, we got hit on a lot of issues there, not the least of which was the minority community. But, in fact, General College was not primarily a minority college. It was mostly kids at the bottom of the class in Edina. I don't object to General College. I really do think General College serves a role and served a role. I also felt very strongly that the university had a commitment to the minority community... had because it was the only urban institution in this state. To talk about these kids going to Normandale (Community College) didn't make any sense. It's the same problem with employment of trying to get people to find jobs out in the suburbs when you can't get out there. You can't take these kids... Not only that, but we had a critical mass of minority students which raised their comfort level; that is, we didn't have the rare individual student who was a black among whites or an American Indian among whites. We did have the possibility of taking advantage of the fact that we could have a sufficient number of minority students to do well with. Commitment to Focus never argued against that. It argued, in fact, that we had a comparative advantage for urban communities.

CAC: For listeners or readers of this, they should be referred to interviews regarding the setting up in the late 1960s, early 1970s, of all these programs you're talking about. They'd been in place for twelve, fourteen years.

KK: Right, they had been and they'd gone through the pains of growing, as I'm sure came out in the course of talking to people who were much more closely associated with them. Those were terribly torn, torn by the requirements of the community and the requirements of the academic world.

CAC: I've got a lot of good interviews on that.

KK: Good. I think that was very important. Commitment to Focus then is an attempt to do several things. It draws together the seven years of planning. It then tries to steer a course that recognizes in some way the populism of the state of Minnesota and its feelings and, yet, helps us to make some choices. I think that was reflected very much in the preparation standards and how we approached it and in General College and how we approached it. Then, we looked at the size issue and the issue there was that we knew that if you looked at per student funding at the University of Minnesota, it was lower than our competition. We got less money per student.
The legislature, I believed, understood that from my conversations there. At the same time, they
didn't have any more money to give us. It's a medium-sized state with a huge university. The
argument I made in Commitment to Focus was that what we ought to do is to reduce our size
but have the same funding so that by reducing our numbers, we could get to a per student
funding that was legitimate, that was appropriate—not only that, but we could redress another
imbalance we had. If we looked around the Big Ten at public research universities, we found
that all of them had a ratio of undergraduate to graduate that was in the range of about three
undergraduates to one graduate student, with the exception of Ohio State which was bigger and
Michigan State which was somewhat bigger. We were very big. We were over four to one. I
argued that was an imbalance which hurt our role as a research university and that we could take
a goal of reducing our undergraduate student numbers until we got that ratio to about three to
one which works well in terms of the synergies between undergraduate and graduate education.
I think it does work well but I think it was somewhat arbitrary. I think it aimed us in the right
direction. It gave us a rationale for getting smaller. It held open the promise of being able to
deal with our money problems. Those things made sense in reducing the undergraduate
population. I must say that gave rise to the criticism often made that it dealt with graduate
education but it didn't deal with undergraduate education. Because there were no particulars in
it, you could reach that conclusion; but, in fact, if you read it and I know in my own head, a
large part of this was how do you make better undergraduate education? That is, our problem
was not that we didn't have enough emphasis on graduate education; it's that we had too many
undergraduates, and that we couldn't do the job for undergraduates—we couldn't advise them or
anything else—and that this was a way of getting us into a better position to be able to serve
undergraduates. We didn't sell that well. There was a lot of criticism that said, "This is a plan
for making this a graduate university." But, it wasn't.

CAC: The coordinate campus . . . ?

KK: The coordinate campus issue . . . there, I think too, it was a mixture of politics and ideal.
The easiest place to take a strongly idealistic view was the Morris campus, which I think is a
beautiful, terrific, little liberal arts college in the public sector. I like the Morris campus. I like
what it does. Their problem, as I saw it, was also focus; that is, in their concern about a losing
enrollment and losing support, they were beginning to broaden and add a bunch of things. They
were adding undergraduate education [KK meant to say graduate education] and they were adding
business courses. They were adding things like that.

CAC: I see.

KK: I argued that what Morris should remain is this unique public undergraduate liberal arts
college that served bright students from small towns who wanted that kind of environment and
that I thought that was not only a good mission but one that would be very attractive. I argued
that the coordinate campuses also had to find their focus. For Morris, it was liberal arts. For
Waseca and Crookston, it was clearly applied fields and they certainly ought not to have four-
year degrees. That was something that I lost out on but I was a little bit more hands-off on
those. I think I was because I was just arguing that I didn't need a great deal of political problem. I think my feeling about Commitment to Focus and the coordinate campuses, with the exception of Morris where I thought we really could make some improvements, was that there was probably more for me to lose in raising too many political questions there than to gain. The main thrust of my concern was what we could do to improve the Twin Cities campus, not to reduce the other campuses because I didn't think we'd be able to but to get them to do what they might do best. The one I thought we could do the most for was Morris, as I've described, and I think we did. Waseca and Crookston...I thought if I could hold them—they're always going to be funded—as two-year vocational/technical kinds of colleges with an emphasis on agriculture which gave them some uniqueness over the vo/techs that that would be good. With Duluth, I said very little. About Duluth, I said that they should figure out ways of focusing. Duluth was always our hardest political problem.

CAC: I see.

KK: Oh, by far...more so than Waseca and Crookston because Duluth was expensive, and big, and ambitious.

CAC: It had unified legislative support from that region?

KK: Total support from the Eighth District. There just was no way to do anything there. In fact, the reason that we were able to get support from much of the Eighth District for Commitment to Focus was our laissez faire attitude on Duluth. You could buy a lot. Still we had objections up there and never had strong support but probably I was able to get half the votes in the Eighth District for things related to Commitment to Focus, which was an unheard of large amount from that group. There are some sensible people up there.

CAC: Let me raise a related question. We're talking about constituencies outside the university. I have a sense—maybe it's no more than an intuition and a reflection of listening and reading lots of things—that it was very difficult to explain this in explicit detail with rationale to so many different constituencies. The newspapers had to know it. The governor had to know it. The legislators had to know it. The administrators in all these colleges and so forth had to. But, there was the faculty and the faculty is a very busy bunch of persons. I have a sense that many of the faculty, including many leaders of the faculty, never understood clearly, quickly, this document and this process. Is that an accurate perception on my part?

KK: I don't think they understood it quickly but I think that that was not a major concern. Let me tell you why I think that. It was a couple of years earlier—not in this round—when I'd been academic vice-president that we made the decision to close the library school.

CAC: Yes.
KK: I felt that was very much a test case of whether or not the faculty were understanding and agreeing to the way I was thinking about the university because I'd made the recommendation to close it. It was not a good school. When that recommendation was made, the library school faculty protested to the University Senate and actually brought a motion to the University Senate in which the senate would petition the administration not to do this. At that senate meeting—I was present at it—the arguments were made, that sort of there but for the grace of God go I, and can you do this, and we really ought to make it a better library school. It was a motion that was soundly defeated, almost unanimously defeated by the senate; that is, the senate went along with the recommendation of the administration to close the library school. I took that as a strong indication that the faculty really did understand that focusing and cutting five percent of your programs...

CAC: There were going to be costs.

KK: That's right. To preserve ninety-five percent was better than cutting everybody by five percent.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I felt they understood that. The sense I had when Commitment to Focus came out was that there was the usual concern about whose ox was going to get gored but that we got past it pretty well with almost all of the faculty, that there were groups that were concerned about it, pockets. Some of them were important and good people like Joe Schwartzberg, a vocal, good scholar, who never could accept it. He always thought it was a bad idea.

CAC: In Geography?

KK: Yes, but it was really the South Asian Studies program that stimulated him to feel that was a wrong way to go.

CAC: I see, sure.

KK: There were individuals but I thought, Clarke—it may be a measure of my own inability to have read the tea leaves right—I had very strong faculty support. I don't think I had as much deep support of regents; although, I think they sort of realized it had to go this way. I think I had it among the legislative leadership because I spent a fair amount of time at the legislature and with Perpich. Then, I did speak to Perpich several times and I think I had that support. A lot of this is now getting over into the presidency itself.

CAC: They smear over, of course.

KK: They do. The first year of the presidency... I think of Commitment to Focus in two phases: the adoption of this general document and its principles and the first decisions on General
College and on the preparation standards and a number of things like that and, then, a second phase which comes in when Roger Benjamin became academic vice-president and we begin to look at programs. In the first phase of Commitment to Focus, we weren't looking at specific programs. We were looking at these general decision issues that I've gone over and we had put to the second stage, what about the individual programs and which ones continue and which ones don't. That was a separate process. It's this first phase where there's a lot of selling to be done. Just to finish out the thought because you've raised it, one of my great frustrations was recognizing ... In the three years of my presidency, I gave an average of about 200 talks a year out of the university.

CAC: [whistle]

KK: Generally, the audiences could have been as little as 15 and as many as 200 but let's say there were about an average of 100. What always occurred to me is that, therefore, over three years, I spoke, if you do those numbers, to 60,000 people.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: There are 4 million in the state of Minnesota. That means that despite the huge numbers that I was speaking to, most people got their information about Commitment to Focus some other way . . .

CAC: Of course.

KK: . . . secondhand, the newspapers, whatever else. My frustration was that I had the strong feeling of wherever in the state I spoke, whether it was a Kiwanis Club in Redwood Falls or whatever little groups that I spoke at all over the state, I think I could make people understand what this was about and that group, when I left, always gave me the feeling that they agreed. But, it was only a small fraction of the people in the state. The media, on the editorial pages, was almost uniformly supportive but not always understanding; that is, they didn't necessarily understand what they were supporting. A lot of the translation made it difficult for people to understand the pieces of it. Nevertheless, they were supportive. The state university system and community college system thought it was fantastic.

CAC: Sure.

KK: I was proposing—I thought importantly proposing—that if we were to work together, the university as the big gorilla had to be the first one to talk about contracting and focusing and doing less. You couldn't expect the smaller relatives to take that view first and to think that it was best for them to make the first moves. They were very worried about what we would do. We got a lot of support from the other three systems—then, we had the AVTI [Area Vocational Technical Institutes]—because they thought this was a good first move. It wasn't out of generosity. They thought it would help them. Immediately, we began to negotiate with the
community colleges. Fred Lukermann was very helpful in this. Fred worked on working with the community colleges to fix their programs so that a student admitted to the community college had automatic acceptance in CLA.

CAC: The courses would match so that that would be acceptable?

KK: They would match and we would guarantee to a person going to the community college that if they had a grade point average that exceeded whatever—I don't remember what the number was—they were admitted to the College of Liberal Arts. It was not a separate process. They might have been processed but it was automatic from certain of the community colleges which had agreed to matching the curriculum. That allowed us to say to students, "You can get your degree from the university and start at whatever community college. That's a fine way to do it." That also reduced pressure on our enrollments.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

KK: Because we were aiming at the reduction in the student numbers, we were helped by the fact that the projections of high school graduation rates in the second half of the 1980s in Minnesota were a diminishing rate of high school graduation. When we were dealing with how can we get smaller without turning lots of people away, we had the approach of the preparation standards; we had the approach of having joint admission to the community colleges and the universities which would reduce our numbers; and the third thing helping us was the reduction in student numbers graduating from high school. So, that without turning people away, we could make a virtue out of what we perceived to be what was coming anyway.

CAC: It was a chance of the birthright.

KK: That's right. Unfortunately, that ended when we got into the 1990s and we're going back up again. That was our window of opportunity to get smaller and we were able to achieve that. As you know, in the succeeding years, we actually did make the undergraduate classes smaller and achieved pretty much what we had hoped for. The legislature didn't quite meet its obligation to keep us funded at the same level; but, they weren't funding the schools that were increasing in numbers at an appropriate level either so that it wasn't a particular bite out of the university—although, it was a problem. I just wanted to pick up on that.

If I could then backtrack into the interim presidency.

CAC: Please, do, yes.
KK: Commitment to Focus, as I said, got wide positive reviews in the media in the state. It got positive reviews at the legislature in general—at least those who were speaking. It got support from the governor. The search was going on for a university president. What I discovered afterward and did not know at the time . . . David Lebedoff, I believe, was chairing the search committee. David would come and talk to me occasionally. He didn't betray any confidences about anything but he would talk to me. What he told me later on was that he went to see perspective candidates carrying Commitment to Focus with him. He'd show it to people and people would say, "It looks pretty good. It looks like the way of the future. Why don't you get the guy who wrote it?"

CAC: [laughter]

KK: That, obviously—again, you may get this from others who may know more about it than I did—was causing a lot of concern among the board because the board kept hearing this and they heard from some people that they respected. They came down the line and kept thinking, what about a Keller candidacy? I was not made privy to that at all until, I think, two weeks before the end of the search when Lebedoff called and he said that he'd been getting all this kind of feedback. Would I be willing to be a candidate? I said, "We have this resolution. I can't be a candidate." He said, "We'd have to take care that but would you be a candidate if we took care of that?" I said, "Sure, I would be a candidate." We're now very close to the end of the search and I'm not sure exactly whether the announcement was then made or it was certainly made within a week or so that there were two finalists and I was one of them. The other was Lattie Coor, C-O-O-R, who was then president of the University of New Hampshire.

CAC: What's his first name?

KK: Lattie, L-A-T-T-I-E. He's been around for awhile. He's now president of Arizona State. He was the other finalist. Final interviews were to be conducted in public by the Board of Regents a week hence or two weeks from that time. There was a certain outcry from some groups within the university who said that I'd obviously been a candidate all the time and that this was just a fake and that it was unfair, an argument that had a certain irony since nobody else was known as a candidate. There was no inappropriateness in not having announced me as a candidate since nobody else's name was announced at that point. There was some protest that was dealt with.

CAC: Excuse me. You'd mentioned earlier that being vice-president and all the other . . . dean of the Graduate School, etcetera, etcetera . . . that you always have a certain number of enemies. This was a good occasion to [unclear], I would guess.

KK: Yes, I think so. Actually, it was a women's group.

CAC: Yes.
KK: I think it was Andrea Hinding who must have headed them.

CAC: She was one of them.

KK: I can't remember some of the others but there were several . . . Pat[ricia] Faunce, perhaps. I'd had some problems with some of them, clearly. It's a little ironic since I've also, in that time, had a lot of support from certain people . . . Toni McNaron, for example, who has always been very strongly supportive . . .

CAC: Of course.

KK: . . . in part, because I helped a lot in establishing the Advanced Feminist Studies Center and she was appreciative. Mimi [Madelon] Gokey was always very appreciative. That group in English actually was quite supportive but this other group objected. That led to the beginnings of a public to-do about my candidacy, which hadn't been a candidacy up till now. At the same time, during that week, Lattie withdrew.

CAC: I'd forgotten that.

KK: He, I think, may have seen the handwriting on the wall. As a sitting president in another institution, going up again somebody who is already at the institution, you don't want to get turned down for that position so he withdrew. So now, there is only one candidate and that person is not a candidate yet because the regents now have a resolution that says, "You can't be a candidate."

CAC: [laughter]

KK: The day of the meeting occurs and we meet in Morrill Hall . . . [laughter]

CAC: You can smile and laugh now. I don't know how hard you were laughing that day.

KK: I have a tape of that and I was not laughing.

CAC: Yes.

KK: There were two meetings. The first was a meeting of the board to consider whether or not to rescind their resolution concerning my candidacy.

CAC: You had to be present?

KK: I had to be present although not sitting in the chair but actually standing in the room because there wasn't another seat around, standing at the side while they debated the issue of whether or not this was appropriate, which they debated for some period of time, at the end of
which they voted by a vote of nine to three to rescind the motion and allow me to be a candidate, at which time they then invited me to sit down to be interviewed. All of this is on television. We proceeded to have a two-hour interview.

CAC: Whose television is this? Is it the university's?

KK: Oh, no.

CAC: I see. If someone wanted to see this great moment . . .

KK: Yes, it's all the evening television.

CAC: All right.

KK: The University Archives, I'm sure, has the tapes, too. I'm sure they have the tapes. I have copies of them. I haven't looked at them for years.

They invited me to sit down and we had this public interview with the only candidate. At the end of that—there's a nine to three vote on my original candidacy—I believe that the vote was eleven to one. I believe Wenda Moore continued to vote against me. I could be wrong. It might have been [Mary Kay] Schertler and Roe. I think it's nice that I've forgotten which was the one that voted "No." That was it. Finally, after this four-hour ordeal, I'm declared the president.

CAC: That's a test of a person's composure, isn't it?

KK: Yes, I think it is. You disassociate yourself from it a little bit. It was really not a good thing. It was a bad thing. It was not a particularly good start on the presidency and probably had an effect on some bad decisions that I made in the immediate future after that. The first of them concerned the politics of the board. This must now be March.

CAC: March of 1985.

KK: Yes. An election for new board officers—not new additions to the Board of Regents but the board officership, the chairman and the vice-chair of the board—takes place at the end of the academic year. We were starting down that road. At that point, I believe Lauris Krenik was chair and David Lebedoff was vice-chair at the time of my appointment. We should talk a little more about this and come back to the appointment details because it gets into the big Eastcliff issue. At least that ought to get in the record.

CAC: Yes.
KK: I am in a very odd position. Presidents have rightly stayed far away from the issue of board elections. That's board business. They carry it on on their own. I got engaged in it, unfortunately, because David Lebedoff came to see me and David said that there was a big fight going on on the board and that while it was appropriate, since he was vice-chair, for him to be the next chairman of the board—he was certainly one of the people who had supported me for the presidency—that three people who had not supported me . . . By the way, I don’t think Wendy Anderson was on the board at this time. I think that may be why he didn’t object earlier on. I think Wendy came on the board in the next round.

CAC: One can check that. I don’t know.

KK: I could be wrong about that. Certainly, Roe, Schertler, and Wenda Moore were the three who had opposed my candidacy, even though two of three voted for me when the vote came up. Those three and [Charles] Chuck McGuiggan formed a minority of four on the board who didn’t want David Lebedoff to be chairman, in large part, on the part of three of them, because Lebedoff supported me and on the part of the fourth because McGuiggan want to be chair. The other eight were votes for Lebedoff and, essentially, supporters of mine. I get the story not from the other four but from Lebedoff who says that in this fight the four have argued that if Lebedoff is elected chair they are, essentially, going to be very troublesome in the next few years, that there are going to be problems on the board and they’re not going to put up with that, and it’s not going to be easy. However, if Chuck is elected chair, presumably Chuck can exercise some influence over me and some control and, therefore, they would be more cooperative in the following two years. David comes to me for advice. I, at the time, for two reasons, both of which turned out to be wrong, said to David that I did not want to begin my term as president having a board which is fighting every month and that I would rather live with the chairman who I have to deal with one-on-one and work with and who may not be the person I would select but I would learn to work with that person because I have an agenda that’s more important, which is to move forward with these things. When I say I was wrong, I think I was wrong in overstating and overjudging my ability to deal with Chuck McGuiggan in a rational way, and to work with him, and to try to find compromises and ways of being together, and I was wrong in thinking that I was really buying peace on the board and that there would be harmony just because this agreement had been made, that that wasn’t going to guarantee anybody of harmony when it came down to conflicted issues. So, for two reasons that turned out to be not good reasons, I said, “David, I can’t speak for you but if you’re asking my opinion, I would just like to see us let the group of four have its way and I’ll work with that board.” I think that was a serious error which set the stage for future conflicts in a lot of ways, the largest of which is that Chuck McGuiggan—how can I say it?—is one of the meanest spirited people I have ever known in my life.

CAC: He was, in fact, elected?

KK: Yes, he was elected and he became the chair.
CAC: Nothing is secret. They all knew your conversation with David?

KK: I assume so.

CAC: One has to assume it.

KK: Knowing David, all other things being equal, I'm sure he would have said something to them. The election goes to Chuck and that sets the stage for how the regents are going to be in the next couple of years with Chuck McGuiggen as chair and David Lebedoff as vice-chair for the two-year period that followed. That was a difficulty. We'll come back to it. Let me talk a little about, if you don't mind, the beginnings of Eastcliff . . .

CAC: Please.

KK: . . . because it's important for the record; although, there's so much in the public record on that that we don't have to dwell a lot on that business.

CAC: I think that's true.

KK: Yes. In Magrath's Administration, Diane [Skomars - Mrs. Peter Magrath] or Peter had set up a committee of people to look at what needed to be done at Eastcliff. There were big problems there, primarily having to do with how you entertained in the place but also having to do with the fact that there were rotting floors and a number of other things. They came up with a rather comprehensive report, which is also in the archives, that suggested changing the dining room and doing a bunch of other things. At Peter's suggestion to me, he said, "Get that taken care of before you ever move in. You can't move in and do that." That made a lot of sense to me; so, in the negotiation with the group that was deciding this—I guess it was Lauris Krenik, and Lebedoff, and McGuiggen, and some others—we clearly agreed that there was a need to renovate Eastcliff and that I ought to hold off moving in until the fall and they ought to get that job done. I don't remember the estimate. We had to get some estimates. We didn't have estimates at the time. We talked about what needed to be done: a new kitchen, a totally redone dining room that could seat sixty people for dinner, fix up all the rotted stuff, and whatever else was involved, and we would not move out of the Grove until the fall. The fall came and very little had been done. During the summer, they did the planning but things go very, very slowly and by the fall, it came up with something like a $600,000 estimate with everything included. We did some other things, at that point. Obviously, we were sensitive to this issue so we brought it to the board and, at the same time, we invited all of the Twin Cities media to come through. We had a Saturday or a Friday and we all went through the house. We showed them where all these changes were going to be made and showed them the rotted planks in the floor and we showed them this and that. It must have been a Friday; we got wonderful Saturday press with lots of pictures about how the house was going to be improved and we'd take this great old house and do all these things.
CAC: It was understood that there were no state monies in this from the very beginning?

KK: Right. This wasn't going to be state money.

CAC: And the papers knew that and the regents knew ... everybody knew it?

KK: Yes. The regents had to approve it anyway because it was money at their disposal.

CAC: I understand, yes.

KK: It came to the Physical Plant Committee meeting. Irv Goldfine chaired that committee and Irv accepted the information for information and said, "I don't think there's any reason to vote on this because it's not state money," or this or that. "We just need to be informed about it. Keep us informed as the work goes along." He reported that to the board the next day. Naive that I was, I didn't think much about it and I said, "It's all reported. We've had the media through. We've got the bids. Everybody knows the amount. Here it is. Irv said, 'There's no need for a board vote on this.'" We went merrily on our way and, of course, the work didn't get done, and we moved in, and the work continued for a full three years.

CAC: [gasp] I didn't realize that.

KK: Yes. It went on all of that time. They converted an upstairs bathroom. They put in a cookstove and we washed dishes in the bathtub for months. Then, they got that done so we could go back downstairs. It was a big problem. They discovered some things they didn't know about, not the least of which was that when they took the rotting boards out in the living room, they discovered when they built this house that rather than using "I" beams underneath for studs ... they had used them but they had filled in the interstices with concrete in those days to give it better support. They had to chip out all the concrete.

CAC: God!

KK: All that raised the price but it also raised the time so two things were happening during the course of that time. One is that, as they discovered things, prices go up as they often do but in addition, there was regular maintenance since all of this was going through Physical Plant. So at the end of three years when people looked at what they thought was the price of renovation, it was the price of renovation plus all of the maintenance over the three years. I'm not going to say a lot more about that except when we get to the end. I want it to be clear that in the contractual agreement that I reached with them, in the contract, it says, "These repairs will be done to Eastcliff before the new president moves in." It just didn't get done. We had that on the one side. Then, we had the regents not taking action on the specific bids on the other side.

CAC: It would be no surprise to anyone that's been in this institution for any length of time that Physical Plant doesn't move very quickly nor very efficiently on a number of things.
KK: Yes. It didn't. The end game . . . there are pieces of it that people don't know, not the least of which is McGuiggan's role in precipitating the whole thing.

CAC: I don't know that at all.

KK: I'm not sure that that's well-known. We should probably come back to that at some point.

CAC: Okay.

KK: That was an important aspect of it that really had very little to do with me, I think. It had to do with a quarrel he was having with Physical Plant over Bill Thomas, a separate thing. I just wanted to lead us into it. Now, I'm in the presidency with a difficult board. That's all that needs to be said about that.

Nevertheless, in the course of the two months after March when I become president, the board does, in fact, vote for the principles of Commitment to Focus and by June, we have an approved document.

[break in the interview]

CAC: Is this going to lead to the Campbell Committee? You know this story better than I. You take the initiative.

KK: That's what I call phase two and that doesn't come for awhile. We can go to it anytime you want.

CAC: What is your judgment? It would be more informed than mine. It seems to me we've talked a lot about Commitment to Focus. Why don't we talk about the implementation? I know that we can't stick strictly chronological because my god! everything is happening at once.

KK: Roger Benjamin was selected as the academic vice-president. The board had agreed in principle to the general principles of Commitment to Focus; and we acted on preparation standards; and we acted on General College; and we acted on a new mission for Morris; and we acted on agreeing to a reduction in student numbers; and the legislature had gone along with a funding commitment that said that we would be untied to enrollments in terms of our appropriation.

CAC: These commitments are made before you become president?

KK: No, no. This is in the first year or so but before the Campbell Committee comes into being.

CAC: All right.
KK: We got through all of these pieces of Commitment to Focus and then what remained, after Roger became academic vice-president, was now we want to look at programs because we said, "In addition to all of these things, it's important for us to look at programs." A key element, in my view, about that was that while it was "publicly valuable"—I put it in quotes—and it made public sense to try to close colleges because you've got a big public media bang for the buck, the argument that the differences in quality between colleges were greater than the differences in quality in programs within a college was false, that generally, the notion of knocking off a whole college which gives you a lot of good publicity in the sense that, "Oh, boy! aren't they tough?" is less logical because you can more readily look at programs of widely varying quality within a college and the idea is to cut out the programs that are of the lowest quality or that don't meet your criteria for what makes a program good or bad. It needed to be a much more carefully constructed plan than one which tried to do this kind of collegiate unit thing, which didn't make a lot of sense. That took a different approach. Roger wanted to do this by forming a committee, the Campbell Committee, and have the Campbell Committee come up with a set of recommendations on what the priorities were based upon a review of collegiate plans where collegiate plans would be forced to say what they thought was good or bad and based upon a set of agreed criteria, criteria which hark well back in the planning process to before my presidency. When I was academic vice-president, we had worked very hard on developing a set of criteria against which to judge these programs.

CAC: These had grown out of the retrenchment and reallocation... centrality and so on?

KK: Yes, that's right. It was a group, perfectly legitimate, of five or six. The important thing about them... I think it's worth mentioning if it hasn't come out. My view of this kind of a tough process was that you could not have a committee vote so much on individual programs because that came too close to home and the mixed feelings on the faculty. Faculty's views would make it very difficult to do a good job on that. You either were going to be faced with saying that the program I want closed is the one whose space I covet next door or the one that's so far removed from mine across the campus that I don't even know what they do and we might as well close those. Those were not good reasons. On the other hand, you could not leave to an administration to make these judgments in a vacuum. It had always struck me that the way to approach planning was to reach agreement in the consultative process between faculty and administration that was abstract to begin with: agreement on a mission for the institution, agreement on a set of goals under that mission, and out of those, agreement on an abstract set of criteria—and using these, one ought to make judgments about programs. At that point, it had always struck me that after you had a collegiate planning process, the administration ought to make some choices. They ought to say, "This gets closed." "That gets opened." What's the accountability? The accountability is the administration has to be able to explain those in terms of the agreed upon criteria and the agreed upon mission; that is, it's up to them. The burden is on them to convince the constituencies—the faculty, the students, whatever—that they have, in fact, legitimately followed those guidelines. One might have reached different judgments but there was no question that this was a legitimate judgment growing out of a set of criteria. That struck me as making it possible for the administration to take a certain amount of heat but not
to avoid the process of consultation, not to misuse consultation in a way that I don’t think works well. Roger didn’t quite agree with this. He felt that it was possible to go to the committee to have the committee suggest specific judgments and then for the administration to either agree or not agree. But, that put us in a lousy position. Now, you had all kinds of political stuff out. Now, the rumor mill and the media really . . .

CAC: Oh, my.

KK: Anytime something was put up, what good would it do if, after the fact, you said, “No, we won’t do that?” You’d already lost most of the public relations’ battle and even having it on the block.

CAC: I’m sure I’ll not be able to interview Roger Benjamin. What was his logic?

KK: Roger thought that that was the way consultation ought to go. It was as simple as that.

CAC: I see.

KK: He felt that’s what consultation with the faculty meant is that you had to get them on board and then to buy in on all the decisions. I didn’t feel that. I also felt that he was the academic vice-president and I had asked him to come up with a set of recommendations and he said that the way this will work and the reason it will work to our benefit is that he, Roger, will own the work of the committee. The committee wouldn’t report to me and that when Roger, as the academic vice-president, made his recommendations to me, then I would be free to bring to bear whatever I wanted. That ain’t the way it works.

CAC: Yes.

KK: It didn’t work. It didn’t work well not because Chuck or anybody else behaved with lack of integrity at all.

CAC: This is Chuck Campbell.

KK: Yes. I think the committee worked hard at it but I didn’t agree with some of the things they come out with. That doesn’t mean they were wrong but I didn’t agree with them. For example, recommending that we close the Dental School or the Vet School—both of which they did—worked against one of the important criteria which was uniqueness. One of the things we argued was that what we were responsible for doing was carrying out those things which we were in a unique position to do for the state.

CAC: That no one else was doing.
KK: Right, that no one else was doing—if you thought it was important to do as well. There were other criteria.

CAC: Sure.

KK: Certainly, that failed in that criteria. Why would you eliminate those two schools? We had tried a couple of years before unsuccessfully, in the early 1980s, to get Wisconsin to join with us in building a vet school. That would have made some sense to share that. Wisconsin turned us down and wouldn't do it.

CAC: I see.

KK: So, we were stuck in that respect. Our Dental School . . . there really wasn't another dental school. There is a private dental school at Marquette but the University of Wisconsin didn't have one. How could you talk about closing the Dental School? It didn't make any sense.

CAC: How did the committee come to that?

KK: I never understood it. I think they looked at the need for dentistry and they said, "We've got enough dentists in the country. They're not doing enough scholarly work. There is Marquette and it's a private school." The problem I faced was that there wasn't anybody in the world who would believe this was Campbell Committee recommendation and not a Keller running it up the flagpole.

CAC: Of course.

KK: Everybody was quite sure that that was my doing—which it was not. I would not have chosen those programs. Other than that, the group did a good job; although, the group did come to me at one point and met with me and said, "Do you want us to give you political recommendations or academic recommendations?" I wasn't going to say, "I want you to give me political recommendations." That isn't what I wanted them to do.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: So, I said, "I want you to give me academic recommendations." That didn't mean that I wanted them to behave foolishly with respect to politics but it did mean that what I was interested in was academic judgments. I think they took that a little more carte blanche than probably I had intended. That's a small fault; but, it was one for which I paid a price later. They came forward with what they said were academic recommendations. My concern is that I do think that it was a manifestation of just the kind of problem that I had envisioned about faculty decisions in which dentistry and vet/med are so foreign and alien to those of us who live in the core of the institution . . .
CAC: Excuse me, I'm going to interrupt.

KK: Yes.

CAC: There may be a third factor—at least I've heard it from others—and that is that the assignment to this committee, at that time, was so onerous that they couldn't do their homework successfully and carry it through, that the time constraint was such. That was a hard committee to pull together.

KK: It was a very difficult one.

CAC: It was a difficult assignment.

KK: I'm really not critical of the committee.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I had gone through previous retrenchments and reallocations when I was on the faculty.

CAC: Of course.

KK: I know how much effort goes into that, and I know what we asked them to do, and I know how hard Chuck Campbell worked at this.

CAC: Wasn't that over the summer?

KK: Yes, they worked very, very hard at that.

CAC: All these guys are doing it pro bono.

KK: That's right, they're not getting anything for this. They're being asked to do a job . . .

CAC: A mean job.

KK: . . . that ultimately, I think, was the wrong job to ask them to do.

CAC: Yes.

KK: Because they had done the job, I also felt very strongly that I was not going to disown this committee or anything it said. My public comments were all supportive of the Campbell Committee. I said that I didn't agree with all of their recommendations but I thought they'd done a bang-up job and I felt it very important to do that. Once we had gotten to that process, I wasn't going to turn away from Chuck, particularly Chuck. I think he did an enormous job in
CAC: Of course.

KK: ... that it's easy to say, "That work is not worth doing at an institution."

CAC: McPhail and KUOM [Radio] were easier to finesse.

KK: McPhail and KUOM, I agreed with so I had less problem ...

CAC: But they are easier to finesse?

KK: Yes.

CAC: Among other things, there is an enormous outstate constituency for these two, the Dental School and the Vet/Med?

KK: Right. Politically, McPhail and KUOM were not terrible problems. They were some but not terrible ones. I also did believe that there was more to be said. We had a history of conflict between MPR [Minnesota Public Radio] and KUOM which had to do more with personalities than anything else. I felt that it was a mistake to continue that, that we ought to be working differently on that issue. McPhail, we had saved at one time as a private school. It didn't draw at all and the university had little connection at all except we were kind of taking care of it and subsidizing it—much as [Johns] Hopkins [University] is being called upon to subsidize the Peabody School of Music and would love to be rid of it as well and it's a much, much better school of music. It's a great difficulty. This was an important thing to do but it wasn't clear that the university ought to do it. That wasn't true of dentistry or vet/med. Clearly, a university does that. I did want to get rid of Mortuary Science; but, I failed on that every time I ever tried. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: When the Campbell Committee came into being, it was with this different process, which would involve a set of faculty recommendations that would be reviewed by the administration. It got me into difficulty in two respects. One was that nobody believed this wasn't my recommendation and the second is that because of the publicity that it got, the regents got involved in the process earlier than they should.

CAC: Ah.

KK: They wanted to protest that this committee was even making these recommendations. Their objection was not that I was tarred with the recommendation but they didn't think that they should even have a right to make those recommendations, that they should have been constrained from doing it. What got lost along the way ...
pulling that together. But, I don't think it was the right thing to ask them to do. Roger and I just disagreed on that. In this, because of the nature of the discussion in talking about these individual units, we lost sight of what I had thought was the strength earlier, which was that you had a set of criteria and that the focus could be on the criteria and on whether or not the decisions met the criteria. To be sure, they had those criteria in mind and they were using them but it was very hard for them to focus on that when this report finally came out. It was not written in terms which were easily explainable in terms of the criteria. That cost us when the second report came out.

CAC: You bet.

KK: That really cost us a lot. A lot of the public support that we'd had with the first round of Commitment to Focus, we didn't have with the second round of Commitment to Focus. We just didn't handle it well when we got to that point. We, obviously, didn't go forward with the big recommendations on dentistry and vet/med. I didn't endorse them so they never came forward but they were still considered a defeat for the administration even though the administration had never endorsed those.

CAC: Yes.

KK: That got us into a bad situation at that time. I think it slowed the momentum of Commitment to Focus. One of the things I've tried to stress in talking about this as two phases is that the first phase had really gone forward entirely as it should have. In fact, it planted the major seeds for what subsequently happened. The problems of the Campbell Committee did not detract from that first phase. It didn't derail those first issues. They continued forward. What would have happened subsequently is hard to know because that's when all the Eastcliff stuff started to come along, just about that time. I don't remember exactly when the Campbell report came out but it must have been . . .

CAC: The fall of 1986.

KK: . . . the fall of 1987, I think. I don't think it was 1986 . . . you may be right. I thought it was closer to the final dénouement of my administration. We have these two phases. I think the good things that happened came out of the first phase and continued. Nils certainly endorsed them when he became president.

CAC: Yes.

KK: That was a tough time.

I had mentioned several other things because, in parallel with Commitment to Focus is all the fund raising.
CAC: Yes. This is the Minnesota Foundation fund raising?

KK: Yes, the Minnesota Foundation fund raising. The great thing that came about with the original Commitment to Focus . . . At some point, we probably want to talk about the differences in how a plan like Commitment to Focus worked in the public and private eye. As it turned out, there was a lot of public support. Basically, setting priorities and making choices, which had to be handled very carefully in the public because of the threat of elitism as a charge, is easy in the private sector and, in fact, is a very positive thing. While we were delicately pushing Commitment to Focus in the public sector and how were we going to sell it and how were we going to convince people of it, it was a home run in the private sector. Everybody in the private sector thought, this is fantastic. This is a university that is now moving in a direction it should. We want to support the university.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: At the same time it was a tough row to hoe publicly, it was an opening to the private sector that public universities hadn't had very much before. It came at about the time that people in the University Foundation—particularly some of the early founders of the foundation—had been pushing for a capital campaign that Peter Magrath did not want. It was not his kind of thing. This was a new opportunity to rethink the idea of a capital campaign. We had the constant pressure coming from a certain number of the wealthy people in the community and people not in the community but who had been part of the foundation: George Piercy . . .

CAC: George Piercy?

KK: Piercy, P-I-E-R-C-Y. He's actually a chemical engineer who had been a senior vice-president of Exxon, and had been one of the founders of the University Foundation, and had been pushing for years for them to go to a capital campaign. He'd been involved in lots of them himself. There was a fellow in Chicago, whose name I've now blocked, who was not one of the great wealthy people, who had been pushing for a capital campaign for years; but, it had been resisted by the administration. They hadn't necessarily wanted to get into it. They weren't sure how they could do it without hurting public funding.

CAC: Or in competition with the liberal arts colleges in the state?

KK: There was that, too. They were very worried about it but I don't think that was what bothered . . .

CAC: That was not the major thing?

KK: . . . Peter or bothered people internally. That was certainly what led some people outside not to want it. There was a greater thrust for it and Commitment to Focus clearly raised our stature.
CAC: And visibility?

KK: Yes, and people said, "This is worth investing in." Then, there was the brilliant idea of David Lilly's on a permanent university fund.

CAC: By now, he is the vice-president for Finance?

KK: He'd become vice-president for Finance before Magrath left, in the very last year.

CAC: I think that's right.

KK: He'd moved over. He's a wonderful, wonderful person, a very, very good fellow. How much in your interviews has come out about what this Permanent University Fund is?

CAC: I have a good interview with him but he's very brief and it's not very elaborate. If you can add your own perceptions of that, that would be fine.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Tape 2, Side 2]

CAC: We're getting to the capital fund drive.

KK: There weren't many public universities that had attempted this; although, many had begun to see how much they would ultimately depend on private money. I think Illinois had had a campaign of some modest size. It established the idea that one ought to move in these kinds of directions. The Permanent University Fund is the residuum of the Land-Grant of 1862, which established Land-Grant institutions throughout the country. Those were grants of land. The land was sold off. The sold-off land created capital which was invested and generated income and was known as the Permanent University Fund. By 1985, it had grown to, I think, $60 million, $65 million, an amount like that. The problem for the university had been that each year at the appropriation of the legislature, the legislature after it made its appropriation, reduced it . . .

CAC: Yes.

KK: . . . by the interest income from the Permanent University Fund.

CAC: For that year.

KK: So, the Permanent University Fund was, essentially, of absolutely no use to the university.

CAC: [laughter]
KK: It sat there and as somebody said, "You have this nominal amount of money but it was no use to anybody." David came up with the idea, which we then went to sell to the legislature. He said, "If we could make this part of an endowment, a matching fund for the endowment, then we could go out to donors and tell them they can leverage their money. "You give a buck and we'll match it with a buck," if we can do it from this kind of fund. The thing that made it a likely political issue was we could go to the legislature and say, "Look, you can give us this $60 million or $65 million fund and all it's going to cost you is about $2 million or $3 million a year; that is, all it costs you is the interest. Because what you have to do is forego the interest that you've been deducting from our appropriation each year. So, for a relatively small amount of money, you can gain this enormous amount which we can leverage dollar for dollar so we can use it to raise that much more for the university." That turned out not to be a hard sell. It looked like a cheap way...

CAC: This was basically David Lilly's inspiration?

KK: It was his inspiration. My recollection is it was his inspiration to identify it.

CAC: I think he takes about two sentences credit for it. So, that's nice.

KK: I think David deserves credit for having identified it and then we worked together to figure out how to sell it. David was not one who liked to go to the legislature so I did a lot of the selling at the legislature. I've no doubt that it was David's idea to think about that. We, then, got it and that gave us the last piece in the campaign. Now, we've got people interested in the university. We've got a new Commitment to Focus plan that's easier to sell outside and we have this matching fund. We had another advantage that other universities don't have and that is, most of our buildings at that time were paid for by the legislature. Essentially all of them were. So, we didn't have to waste capital money on bricks and mortar. We could put capital into endowed chairs. We could build a campaign that didn't talk about six buildings and two endowed chairs but no buildings and 100 or 120 endowed chairs. That, of course, would work directly to the benefit of the faculty and the academic enterprise. You could sell that in terms of the needs that grew out of the planning process. More than that, you could define this in such a way that it wouldn't cost you in terms of legislative appropriation. That was a very important piece... to figure out ways of identifying this as extra quality for the institution that wouldn't substitute for legislative appropriation.

CAC: You were able to get that green light before the drive really hit acceleration?

KK: That's right. One of the things that I repeated hundreds of times at the legislature is that the first time that the legislature uses private endowment as a reason for reducing the university's appropriation, it's the last buck that we're going to be able to raise privately. I could assure them that we could raise no money from people who thought that their money was going to replace public support.
CAC: Yes, yes.

KK: We had to keep these separate and we had to recognize this as a separate way of building extra quality, of attracting people to the university who would not otherwise come, of adding lines to departments that might not otherwise be able to justify them, and that that ought to be the way we ought to go, and that this leveraging principle would work. Then, we went out to get them. I happened to spend last evening at a concert with Tom Keller, my namesake but no relative. It reminded me that the first chair—which, actually, we had started raising before we got clearance on the university fund—was one that he was trying to raise in creative writing in liberal arts. I thought it was a terrific symbol and told him. He reminded me last night that I'd told him that it seemed to me that the way to begin this fund drive was with an endowed chair in the liberal arts, not an endowed chair in medicine, or IT, or somewhere else.

CAC: Where most of them came later?

KK: Where most of them were going to come; but, what we wanted to do was make a statement at the beginning. He had access to money through some family friends, the Edelsteins, and I said, "Sell them on the idea that we will match it." We didn't have permission from the university fund yet. I said, "If we don't get it, we'll do it out of university resources but you can make the promise to them." I figured I had a little flexibility. He got that so we established the Keller/Edelstein chair in creative writing, which was the first one in the fund. Then, the fund did get approved so we were able to match it out of that university fund.

CAC: I have a sense, Ken, that you did an awful lot of the nitty-gritty work in meeting potential donors.

KK: Oh, yes.

CAC: It was a major investment of your time during this period. Is that right?

KK: Yes, it was certainly a third of my time of all the time I had in the presidency.

CAC: That's remarkable.

KK: What I learned about fund raising that I had not known because I'd never done any fund raising is that fund raising is not raising money. It's talking in the same way about the institution that I'd talk to the faculty or anybody else.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: So Commitment to Focus was the key to fund raising.

CAC: Right.
KK: All I did ever was talk exactly about the principles of what we were trying to do in the institution.

CAC: But, you had to do that often one-on-one?

KK: Oh, always one-on-one. In addition, we had something else. It was before the Campbell Committee but we still had the results of the earlier rounds of retrenchment and reallocation and we had college plans so I had in mind a matrix of opportunities; that is to say, I think I had a sufficient sense of where we could build within the institution. When I went to talk to a donor, it wasn't a passive process in which I found out what they were interested in and took their money for what they wanted so much as getting a sense of what they were interested in and figuring out what we were interested in within the institution in some specific area that could tie to that interest.

CAC: Excuse me. You had to be that liaison because people in the Minnesota Foundation didn't have . . .

KK: They couldn't do it.

CAC: . . . the intimate knowledge of the university and its needs?

KK: That was the whole key and why it has struck me that the old model of an outside president or an inside president didn't work.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: It didn't work. The only way you could do the outside job is if you understood the inside, if you were aware of what was going on, and where you could build, and what was possible. That allowed us—it allowed me; I spent a lot of time at it—to entertain people, to get to know people. It never happened in one meeting, never happened in one meeting.

CAC: Sure.

KK: You went out and you frequently went out with volunteers. Let me say this because it's very important that some names be known. Russell Bennett is a name that has to be known because Russ's contribution through all of this in organizing and making sure that these contacts were made in helping to sell people on a gift and the extraordinary time that he put in in the most selfless way imaginable . . .

CAC: I have a long interview with him.

KK: I'm glad because he is just a wonderful guy.
CAC: It was a good interview.

KK: He's a wonderful guy who epitomizes a loyalty to the institution, a selfless loyalty to the institution, a fellow who is very well connected, and has done well in life, and who has a lot but gives a tremendous amount.

CAC: He had a good start in life.

KK: Yes, that's right, he did. There's no question about it. But, some people have that kind of start and don't do anything with it.

CAC: Yes, you bet.

KK: Others do a lot with it. His involvement in the campaign was much, much deeper than you can imagine. Of all the people involved in the campaign, his was the deepest, by far. Curt Carlson's money was very important but Curt wasn't the kind that was going to deal in this day-to-day way with what was going on; whereas, Russ did and was wonderful in it. He would make the introduction and you'd always bring along a big donor. I once explained this to [V.] Rama Murthy. He said, "How does this get done?" I said, "You go and you talk with these people and you bring along a big donor." He said, "What do you do that for?" I said, "If you bring along a big donor, then they're saying, 'I gave them all this money.'" Rama said, "Ohhh! it's like the way you capture elephants." I said, "The way you capture elephants? What do you mean?" He said, "The way you capture a wild elephant is you take out a tame elephant." [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: I learned the tame elephant approach to raising money. These were one-on-one meetings. I discovered a lot of things about fund raising in these years. I discovered that when somebody gives you a huge amount of money, the happiest person is the person who just gave you the money.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: They are convinced that they're doing something very valuable and it connects them.

CAC: And they are.

KK: They are in a very important way. I can remember Sage Cowles and John Cowles elation when they established the chair in dance. They were very devoted to dance. It was a very important thing to them and the idea that there would be a dance program at the university that they were able to make happen was enormously valuable to them. Bill Fein . . . establishing the Theoretical Physics Institute . . . a fellow who had made his money in real estate, and always had
a love of physics, and understood physics, and wanted to build a theoretical physics institute here and the idea that he did it just gave him an enormous amount of pleasure.

CAC: In doing background research on this project when I’ve interviewed others, including Russ Bennett, I surveyed at that time and I think there were around 118 to 120 chairs. There were more added later, piece by piece. The very largest number went to medicine, law, what was then business, now management, engineering, often applied engineering. How on earth did this model that you’re suggesting that’s so successful empirically . . . how do you make it work with humanities? You’ve given two examples of the creative writing and the dance. But, there weren’t many of those and there were hundreds of the others.

KK: That’s right. You’re right about the difficulty. It just gets much, much harder, not to make the matches available but to get the donations. You just have to find the right people and you have to keep pushing. One of the reasons I started with the Keller/Edelstein chair was to say, “What did the effort of the president have to be in this?” The greatest effort would have to be to push the areas that others might not want to fund. By the way, it meant turning down some chairs. What doesn’t come up very clearly is where we cut people off. As many as the Medical School complex got—it got a huge number—it didn’t get what it wanted. We were offered a chair in actuarial mathematics basically by the insurance industry and we turned it down. We said, “We don’t have a program and we don’t want a program in that.” They offered $1 million but we turned down the million. The issue, Clarke, is how do you push people to understand? We were more successful in buildings—the art museum and the Ted Mann Music Hall—than in chairs. We were able to get some but never as many. We tried to get CLA working much harder on that and there were a few things that you should remember. One, we got Tom Keller and Tom Swain to take that on as their responsibility.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: Nobody had done that before. They did make some progress. Another is that I took certain things that were flexible monies, the biggest piece of which was the McKnight money and turned that into the McKnight professorships in CLA.

CAC: Yes.

KK: There were a half a dozen, I think. That was because I had flexible money.

CAC: Those are floating, are they not?

KK: No, there are two kinds . . . they may be five-year appointments.

CAC: That’s what I mean by floating.
KK: I had wanted a lot of five-year appointments, yes. I wanted a lot at the introductory level. The idea there . . . that was both a good and a bad thing from my point of view. One of the very successful donations we got was from the McKnight Foundation. Bonita [Sindelar - Mrs. Ken Keller] and I had lunch with the [James] Bingers and the family that run the foundation at least two or three times just to get to know them. Finally, we asked them for money and they sent, literally, a two paragraph letter. I'll summarize the first paragraph which might have been four sentences into two. It said, "Dear Ken. We like very much what you're doing with Commitment to Focus." The second paragraph says, "Here's $10 million of unrestricted funds."

CAC: That was one of the few unrestricted?

KK: Totally unrestricted . . . $10 million.

CAC: But, it was one of the few?

KK: Yes, we didn't get very many of those. That allowed us to, then, turn to CLA and say, "Here's a place we can use it." I wanted it to be used in the humanities. I don't think it got used as well as it could have been. I would have liked it to be focused in someway but it was used to get six good people. That was the way you had to do it. You had to find unrestricted funds, generally. There were things like dance and theater where you could get people who might have a greater interest. It was very hard to get donations in other areas. Creative writing, we mentioned.

CAC: Philosophy, Classics, History . . . those are hard.

KK: It's very hard to find somebody who has a great interest in that.

CAC: It has the downside of, again, the faculty seeing all these positions going to the applied fields and, again, there's a morale problem.

KK: There is, which is why we kept pushing.

CAC: I'm not faulting anybody. It's just the system.

KK: You're right. In fact, the other thing we did was to hold money aside; that is, it wouldn't be committed anywhere else. A lot of this was just to take parts of the university funds and to say, "These are held in reserve. They're not going to be matched to gifts in these other areas but we can't give them to you until you do match them because that's the agreement we have with the legislature." It was, at the same time, a promise and a frustration. The frustration was that you still had to raise the money and there are fewer opportunities in the liberal arts.

CAC: Yes.
KK: There's just no way around it that there are fewer opportunities there.

CAC: It's interesting that you're commitment and your background at Columbia University . . . The same thing is true of Nils Hasselmo. The same thing is true now of Mr. [Mark] Yudof talk about the humanities. But it's a hard nut to crack.

KK: Yes, it isn't a lack of commitment. I think the commitment is clearly there. It's who do you get to be willing to do that here at this institution? We tried lots of people we never got anywhere with; but, we were successful with a few. Then, we were successful with the two building projects.

CAC: Were you surprised at the sheer numbers, the success? I think it was the largest drive of a public university up to that time.

KK: Yes, it was . . . by far. Yes, I was shocked.

CAC: Pleasantly surprised.

KK: I was enormously pleased. I was enormously pleased and I think I was also deluded a little by it. When it came to the end and the problems started with Eastcliff . . . I knew that these problems were starting. They were talking about $1 million spent on Eastcliff when we had just gotten through raising $350 million.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I said, "Everybody's going to see that the house is being used to raise this money and look at all the money we raised." That was delusion. That was just a mistake on my part that it would be seen that way because it was not seen that way. It was enormously successful. I think I did a lot in it; but, when I talk about Russ Bennett or we just talk about this community and the fact that this community raises the money or talk about the fact that if these chairs were appearing in the health sciences or in certain applied areas, I'm not doing much for that. They're doing it because they've got people. What I've made available is the matching fund which makes it easier for them; but, I do think that a president plays a very important role in this and I sure spent a lot of time on the campaign.

CAC: That's been recognized by others whom I've interviewed, yes.

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

[Tape 3, Side 1]

KK: I think he's picked a good thing to do next.
CAC: You know more about it than I but I think so.

KK: It’s the best of the Washington organizations because it’s involved with the smallest group of universities and the homogeneous research universities. He knows the people very well.

CAC: I’m sure he has their respect. We jumped right into it. We’re talking about Nils Hasselmo.

KK: One of the things that I’d said at the end of last time—since we’re going to shift subjects—

CAC: I’ve got to date this first. I’ve got to tell posterity that this is December 3, 1997, Wednesday, on a very cloudy afternoon in the winter.

KK: I will verify that.

CAC: We are, as before, in room 1152 [Social Science Tower] and we hope to get resolution on this this afternoon. Now, pick it up.

KK: Good. Thank you, Clarke. We’re in a transition. We’re going to talk about some issues that are, in some ways, peripheral to the presidency but, in some ways, the presidency sometimes seems peripheral to the issues of the university.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: It depends on how you look at it. A point that I had wanted to make is a point about affect and moving from the academic vice-presidency to the presidency and the difference in the nature of the two positions. I had watched Peter Magrath as president for some five years. Actually, I watched him all of his ten years but I’d been his academic vice-president for four or five and knew what his life was like but living the life is a lot different from viewing the life. What struck me early on in that transition was that in the academic vice-presidency, although it was a senior administrative role, in your dealings with people and your dealings with issues, the substance of what you had to say was what was subject to discussion; that is, you were judged . . . you engaged on the basis of what it is you were saying. When you moved into the presidency, it was almost a change in the drama of the situation and it was oftentimes less what you said as who was saying it at a particular time. There was so much a sense that you were part of a media event in speaking in which people may not even have heard the substance of what you were saying so much as attached to it the context of the location, and the time, and the voice, and the position. I found that disconcerting. I found, in some ways, it made it much less possible to communicate substantively. Everyone wanted to read everything into the situation rather than into the words.

CAC: Regardless of the group that you were with?
KK: It varied. With people I knew better, it was somewhat different but even with faculty friends of many years, it was the event of the president speaking and very difficult to get beyond that to the tough exchange that you could have had with that same group of people over a set of knotty issues under different circumstances. It just is part of the role and the power of the role.

CAC: But you were surprised by that when you got into the presidency even though you had observed it?

KK: That's right. You could observe something from the outside but until you had lived it, you didn't appreciate how much it interfered with your ability to be yourself.

[break in the interview]

KK: That was an important transition. What was also obvious in the transition, which I, again, knew from observation, was the set of issues was vastly different. The issues in the vice-presidency, even with all of the bureaucracy and administration that was a necessary part of that job, you were essentially focused on academic questions. I didn't have to worry about athletics as an academic vice-president.

CAC: Ah! Yes.

KK: I immediately had to worry about athletics when I became the president. I didn't have to worry as much about the agricultural lobby, or the inter-city lobby, or the student lobby, or the sports enthusiasts lobby, or the ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps], or whatever it was. Those issues didn't really occupy the central attention of the academic vice-president. Certainly, the regents did not; that is, we supported Peter Magrath. We supported the president in his relations with the regents; but, he, clearly, was the point person. That was his job and they certainly viewed it that way. They felt free to come to the rest of us and that was a little awkward; but, we worked that our fairly well as to how we would deal with the board. Once you get into the presidency, that all changes. You are an extraordinarily public figure in this state wherever you go. If I didn't wear a maroon and gold blazer to the football games, I got letters about it.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: It's quite different. Yes.

CAC: As an historian observing through documents and other accounts, persons in authority almost invariably have two attractions. One is an excessive deference and another is an excessive hostility. Right?

KK: Yes.
CAC: I think you were talking about the deference . . . that you were seen as playing a role and it was very difficult and people deferred to that role if not to you personally.

KK: That's right. The problem was that it made it difficult to communicate because, sometimes, there really was a communication you wanted to have with them, there really was an exchange which was more than superficial that you wanted, and you wanted them to hear your words, and to respond to them honestly and that was difficult to get.

CAC: How did you manage that, Ken?

KK: I found I couldn't manage it. I simply tried to work through it. You worked through it by finding more and more informal ways of meeting with people to the extent that you could. With faculty, I always found it easiest to do that. I would not go places with a retinue of people. I would try to go places myself so that, at least, there was not that surroundings that I think added to the difficulty. I tried many, many ways of meeting with faculty informally. One of the things that I had started was the idea of a monthly faculty dinner at Eastcliff and to make sure that I didn't just invite my friends—of whom I think there were many—we actually worked out a random computer-generated invitation list of sixty people a month—no substitutions . . .

CAC: [laughter]

KK: . . . with a skewed computer program that would give me more young faculty than senior faculty and would mix it up. We had one of those a month.

CAC: How many would come?

KK: There were sixty a month. Everybody would show.

CAC: That's a large group to stimulate to discussion and exchange.

KK: It's a very large group but we did a couple of things. We organized it around a talk that was given before dinner, not after dinner, so that the first thing that happened when people arrived is we all trooped down and listened to one of colleagues say something, usually something challenging, almost always something interesting. What that provided was the material for the conversation at dinner and I moved from table to table. We had four tables and I'd take a course at each table, basically, and move around from place to place. We had the advantage of having a subject or, at least, the beginnings of a subject. There was no formal requirement to stay with what was talked about but it usually got things started. I remember Susan McClary got people really going when she talked about her views on music and the reactionary nature of Beethoven and Mozart. That really stirred up the audience. I think it was a very useful and good thing to do. The talks were good and I found that a very good way of dealing, certainly, with faculty. I always found it easiest to deal with faculty. That was always

Kenneth Keller Interview
the most comfortable place for me to be. The other comfortable group for me to work with was the private sector, the business community and the people around the cities.

CAC: That’s been clear from other interviews; so, I’m glad to hear that you had that perception, too.

KK: I did have it. I’ll tell you an interesting thing, which is less part of my presidency than part of my post presidency. When I left the presidency and went east, I figured that stage of your life is over and you go back to a different kind of life. It was only two or three years later that somebody in that community called me when they were in New York and we had dinner. What they made clear to me, in a gentle way, was that I wasn't keeping in contact with all of these people in the Twin Cities and they were hurt . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: . . . because they felt that somehow my friendship . . .

CAC: Depended upon your role?

KK: . . . depended on my role and they hadn't thought of it that way.

CAC: How rewarding.

KK: It was a very rewarding thing because, of course, I only assumed that that’s why they were friendly with me was because of my role. The result of it has been that I've reestablished friendships with many of these people and it's been elating, both for Bonita and for me to find that those were friendships that really had developed as friendships.

CAC: I want to press on this just a bit more. I was never more than just a chairman for longer in the early 1970s when things were pretty woolly so I never enjoyed deference. What I notice, as you move up the line, the deference most often takes the form of laughing excessively at a witticism or a joke made by an authority figure.

KK: Yes.

CAC: It always deeply embarrasses me. I just creep.

KK: I think that’s true. You recognize when people are overreacting one way or another to what it is you say. You know you’re not that funny, or that deep, or whatever.

CAC: Yes.
KK: It's disconcerting. It's hard to establish a relaxed exchange with people under those circumstances. That's part of it. Maybe that's one of the manifestations of what I'm trying to get at, this notion that it isn't what you've said. It's this whole aura of who is saying it that makes so little sense and is really disconcerting, largely.

CAC: This has a bearing on where one gets advice. Where do you find persons in Morrill Hall or from the faculty who could really level and say candidly, "Ken, that was a swell thing. This is a strategy that will work out, but for god's sake, don't do that." Were there such persons?

KK: There were.

CAC: How do you cultivate them?

KK: You cultivated them by recognizing them and then coming back to them. You cultivated them by calling people who aren't necessarily part of your inner circle. At least, that helped you to see how you were being perceived far away. In the circle close to you, you had to depend strongly on recognizing people who would be honest and would be helpful. There were a group that were very important to me. There were two very close to me. Marsha Riebe who had been my assistant since my days in Chemical Engineering. She was not so much critical as she . . .

CAC: Was she a colleague or was she a civil servant?

KK: She was a civil servant person.

CAC: Was she part of your presidential staff?

KK: She was my assistant. She was my primary sort of managerial assistant, administrative assistant. Rick Heydinger filled the role of the outside person, that is, the staff person who made a lot of outside contacts. I depended on Marsha—Marsha is a very unpretentious person—to handle anything coming into the office, talk to people, deal with them. Her personal ways of doing things were very suitable for me and she was very good at sort of cleaning up where I'd made a mistake with people in a personal sense or intercepting letters that I wrote that I shouldn't have written, that she'd put in a drawer for a few days and, then, come back and say, "Did you really want to send this?"

CAC: No music criticism, like Harry Truman though?

KK: [laughter] No. I never had the opportunity to tell a critic what I thought of him in that respect.

CAC: [laughter]
KK: Rick Heydinger was a very thoughtful person whose great strength for me was that he thought so differently from me.

CAC: Ah.

KK: He's a very systematic, systems oriented person who liked organizational things, which I always hated. What Rick could do is to make clear where we needed order and come back and say, "These are the kinds of things we need to put together to make some orderly sense to affect what it is you're interested in." Then, the wisest head in my administration, by far, was [Stephen] Steve Dunham, the university attorney.

CAC: Yes.

KK: Steve was the one person... there were two people, I should say. Steve, in most areas, was a person who would, I felt, always tell me the truth, be critical when I was wrong, would argue with me. I didn't always agree with his arguments; but, he was the person more than anyone that I dealt with whose judgment on issues I depended on.

CAC: Was he head of the legal office at that time?

KK: Yes, he was the university attorney.

CAC: He had an increasingly staff.

KK: His staff kept getting bigger; but, it's gotten much larger since he left the office than it had been then. I think there probably were six or seven attorneys when he was the university attorney. I agreed with him politically about a lot of things. I liked him personally. He had enormous integrity and he was very, very helpful. He was an important person that I would turn to and bring into almost any kind of decision. On most of the decisions dealing with human resources, I depended very heavily on Pat[ricia] Mullen. Pat was another one who I could depend on for honesty. I could call her in and say, "All right! I'm listening. Tell me about this. Where am I doing things wrong and how should we think this through?" She, too, I think, was extremely helpful and honest in those dealings in the office. There were a set of people—Marsha Riebe, Rick Heydinger, Stephen Dunham, Pat Mullen—who I always could count on within the office. Outside the office, there were a half dozen faculty... 

CAC: I'm going to interrupt just a moment.

KK: Yes.
CAC: I've a long and very feisty interview with Pat Mullen that you may want to read sometime.

KK: All right.

CAC: She talks about this relationship herself. It's very interesting.

KK: It was terrific. I was very comfortable with her, as I had been with Lillian Williams before her. Pat will often say that she learned a lot from Lillian.

CAC: Oh, yes, she makes that clear.

KK: Pat was quite good and so level headed, obviously not tied to a bureaucratic approach to these issues, yet, so obviously devoted to the issues. That was an important thing, I think. She wasn't shocked by the problems she encountered, which was helpful.

CAC: I have a sense she had a gyroscope of her own making. She really was a very self-sufficient kind of human being.

KK: That's right. She understood what she was trying to accomplish.

CAC: She understood herself.

KK: I think very, very well. She'd made a lot of transitions in her own life.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I think that was part of her understanding.

CAC: Before we get into faculty, for example. You served on the Faculty Consultative Committee and as chair so that you had the opportunity of seeing vice-presidents and presidents coming in.

KK: Yes.

CAC: Then, you came in yourself. Can you comment on how it looked when you were chair and how it looked when you were president?

KK: Yes. I used to say that some people, in their view of the president's role, assume that you lose fifty IQ [Intelligence Quotient] points when you go into the presidency and that they, in one hour, can do what it takes you sixty hours a week to do, to understand the job.

CAC: [laughter]
KK: There was, obviously, the issue of breadth of perspective and the issue of understanding the political reality; that is, you can afford to be a protestor when you are not responsible for having to get things done. It's important that you be a protestor because that's, clearly, one of the forces that must exist to counterbalance others; but, ultimately, if you're forced in the position of making decisions, you're in a very different position from raising questions. I saw an interesting quote the other day which I'd not seen before by Sidney Drell. Drell is a very fine physicist. It is often stated in scholarly work and, certainly, in the sciences that the difficult thing in research is posing the question. Once you've posed the question properly, you can get the answer—not true in politics.

CAC: Ahhh!

KK: In politics, the questions are fairly obvious but the solutions are very, very difficult. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] That's nice.

KK: I think that's an interesting change. These are tough, tough decisions. What I came to understand, particularly when I moved into the presidency, was what I think was the proper role of consultation; that is, that in consultation, what you are trying to find out are what the problems are but you're seldom going to get much advice about the solutions and that what you have a great need to do is to call on people who do understand better than you can what the bad situations are, what the negative effects are in the institution of certain kinds of things but seldom do you get very good advice about solutions because seldom does the advice come forward with the same perspective that balances all the things that ultimately have to be balanced.

CAC: Would persons feel that they were presumably beyond their function in proposing solutions?

KK: I never found that people were shy about proposing solutions.

CAC: You found that the faculty and the FCC were candid and straightforward?

KK: I believe they were.

CAC: They weren't excessively deferential or hostile?

KK: I think that with the Consultative Committee—I'd had such a long association with them and there was enough overlap—that there was a fair amount of candor; although, it varied from year to year, Clarke. There were groups that were better than other groups. The Consultative Committee makeup changed so much, not only terms of personalities but in terms of what parts of the university were represented.
CAC: It's a chance, sure.

KK: Sometimes, it was not sufficiently representative of what I considered to be the core undergraduate and graduate disciplines. We tended, sometimes, to get more peripheral representation. They were good people but their experience was different. The Consultative Committee was varyingly useful to me. I called on the Regents' professors much less but when I did, I found frequently that I could get fresher, better advice.

CAC: Did you meet with them as a corporate body or just individually?

KK: On rare occasions, as a corporate body but, frequently, I met with them individually. Since they were not part of the governance system, it was essentially better advice because it connected me to thinking within the academic units. I also depended a lot on going out to units. I went to departmental meetings whenever I could. I've advised Mark Yudof to do the same. I felt another way of getting a little more candor was to meet people on their own turf, to go to their place rather than their coming to my place. That helped a little but it wasn't always a perfect setup. Sometimes, what you got was people saying, "We've got him for a short time. We'd better complain a hell of a lot because this is our shot at doing it."

CAC: Sure.

KK: You didn't even get balance. That's very similar to what I referred to earlier, that your role, when you are not making the decisions, is to make sure people understand the problem so you emphasize that. You may be over emphasize it. Maybe you exaggerate it but it's important to do that, I think. I depended a lot on consulting faculty and I said, "I got along well with the business community." What that meant is I felt very comfortable with the advice I got from the University Foundation Board of Directors, whom I did meet with regularly. I felt I got more disinterested advice from them than I could possibly have gotten with the other governing board I had to deal with, the Board of Regents, who had less experience, in many respects, and more commitment to a position because of their role. I was always very happy to meet with the University Foundation Board. I found that quite helpful.

CAC: I interviewed Met [O. Meredith] Wilson many years ago . . . I think in 1986. He said that the most important advice he had was from John Cowles, Sr.

KK: That's interesting, isn't it?

CAC: Yes. For a sense of the state and the community . . . that was it.

KK: There was one former board member who is so important a person in the state that you could depend on his advice and that was Elmer [L.] Andersen.

CAC: You bet.
KK: He's such a broad-ranging, good human being. I did get advice from him.

CAC: You saw him through the Minnesota Foundation?

KK: I saw him separately whenever I could and always felt that I got the best kind of advice from him. It was useful. Through the term as president, I even met more than occasionally with Rudy Perpich.

CAC: Just the two of you?

KK: Yes. He sometimes would have a staff person there but, oftentimes, it was just the two of us or Lola [Mrs. Rudy Perpich] might be there and it might be the three of us. For all of his idiosyncrasies, he, too, was astute in a lot of ways. He had many idiosyncrasies but he was a very easy person to like because you believed in what he believed in—at least I did. I believe that, as much a politician as he was, he had a set of values and interests in what was good for the state of Minnesota that were not bad. They were good interests, even if he did it badly sometimes.

CAC: I'm always amazed, Ken, at the number of presidents of the United States who are able to keep a diary or a journal everyday. You never did that?

KK: No, I never did.

CAC: I don't know how they do it . . .

KK: I don't know how they do it either.

CAC: . . . or why they do it.

KK: I think both of those are good questions. Since one of the concerns that I expressed was a lack of comfort with being perceived as being in a role, the idea of keeping a diary seems more to run in the direction of seeing yourself as this figure in history. It would not have been comfortable for me to be constantly thinking in those terms. It was too much to do but, more than that, I did not want to have that feeling that I was always making a record for the future. Probably, I erred on the other side and should have kept more of a record of some of these things so I wouldn't depend as much as I do on a bad memory, which I do do. I never was interested in that kind of an approach. I wasn't in the job long enough, when you come to think of it, to have a sense of my place in history.

CAC: [laughter] I was looking at the chronology here. It was exactly three years . . . March 13 [1985-1988].

KK: Exactly.
CAC: That was just by chance? You didn’t plan that?

KK: It was by chance.

CAC: I thought I was making clerical errors.

KK: No, no.

CAC: I went back . . . that can’t be possibly be true.

KK: It was exactly three years. I think, actually, in my resignation statement I made mention of that.

CAC: I see. Would you feel comfortable saying something about Bonita and her relationship to your professional role?

KK: Bonita was in a difficult position as any presidential spouse is and hers was doubly difficult in that she followed Diane Magrath. Diane Magrath had not only been a very public figure but had an assertively official role, which Bonita did not want.

CAC: Sure.

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CAC: Sure.
to supervise all of the decisions that needed to be made on what was going to get done at Eastcliff.

CAC: Oh, my.

KK: Clint Hewitt was running it. Clint was there, essentially, every other day saying, "We have to make a decision about the color of the paint," or whether we do this, or how this is going to look; so, in effect, she had to become the person to make a number of decisions. Somebody had to make the decisions. Essentially, what Physical Plant came and said to us was, "We need a customer."

CAC: Ah!

KK: "We need somebody who is going to say, 'This is okay and that isn't.' If we were doing this in a department, there would be a committee that we would go to." The supervision and everything else is done by the Physical Plant people. They're responsible for paying the bills, and judging the bills, and taking the bids, and doing all of that; but, ultimately, they bring something to the customer and say, "What do you want in terms of your taste about this thing?" That was a great burden for Bonita mostly and also, in the end, a great frustration because it appeared as if we were controlling a project we really weren't controlling. We were doing what you, as a department head, might have done if you were renovating the department. There were decisions and, then in addition, we entertained, at sit-down dinners, over 3,000 people a year. Everyone of those meals didn't just have to have a menu planned with . . .

CAC: Who will sit next to whom.

[door opens - break in the interview]

CAC: Let me ask another question along that line. You not only had a spousal relationship but you were friends. Bonita must have played a supportive . . .

KK: Oh! very supportive and important. Aside from the outside stuff and the inside stuff, here was somebody who did know the university.

CAC: Yes.

KK: That was a very, very useful thing to have because it was another voice and another way of looking at things and a Minnesotan, which, I think, was helpful and useful. Bonita's role was a very important one for me in both of those respects. She also was the one who had to keep up our personal contacts and our personal relationships. We did some private entertaining and being with people. She placed certain limits. She was not going to have more than three events a week.
CAC: That's more than most wives have to handle.

KK: That's right. That's what called on. She did all of those jobs very well and she even learned to go to football games; although, she never learned to like it. Basketball was another thing.

CAC: That may lead into our inter-collegiate athletics topic.

KK: Yes, this is the humorous part of the interview. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] Let me start with a dumb question that I've asked many people. We'll add them up from all the interviews. Does it make any difference if you've got a winning football team or basketball team with the legislature, or with donors, or anything else?

KK: Let me change the question.

CAC: All right.

KK: It does not make a difference whether you have a winning team but it makes a very big difference whether you have a losing team. There is a big, big difference. If you are respectably in the middle, it probably makes no difference. If you're extremely good, it makes no difference; that is, all the studies and, certainly, all of my experience shows you don't get more because you're doing well but do badly and you have a very, very down trend in a lot of things. In fact, one of the things that shocked me was that faculty members who had no interest in athletics would write nasty letters if we had a really bad season in football. These people didn't have any interest and they'd write, "This is an embarrassment." [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: I never found that you needed to go to the Rose Bowl. We never went to the Rose Bowl so I don't know how much more money we'd have brought in but I never found that that was particularly helpful. I did find that if you got way behind and if you had very serious problems, that was a great negative to deal with.

CAC: That leads logically into troubles with Lou Holtz and trouble with the Madison [Wisconsin] basketball caper.

KK: The Holtz thing was certainly the first thing I encountered. He's quite a character and we don't have time to go into lots of Holtz anecdotes; although, I have loads of them. They're all wonderful. Holtz is in private, almost the same as he is in public.

CAC: Tell me one.
KK: I'll tell you one. When I first came into the acting presidency was about the time when we had to make a decision downtown on whether we were going to stay in the dome. It was really a non-decision because we had already closed down Memorial Field. We had started on a thirty-year lease at the downtown dome, the Metrodome, and this was the end of three years when we, in principle, could have gotten out of the lease, except we had no place else to go so it was kind of a foregone conclusion that we were to continue there—but, it was up in the air. At the same time, we had just raised money to build our indoor practice facility, which some of us came to call the “Taj Maholtz.”

CAC: [laughter]

KK: I decided I should have, at least, a face to face with Holtz, and relax him, and tell him that, although I'd been an academic vice-president, I really liked athletics. I asked him to come over and he came over. It was always my practice when somebody came to the office not to have them escorted in but to go out and meet them. It was one of the ways I tried to get out from the role. I walked out into the outer office when I heard he was there and reached out and said, “It's good to meet you Coach Holtz.” He looked up without getting up and said, “Who are you?”

CAC: [laughter]

KK: I said, “I'm Ken Keller.” He said, “Don't kid me! A man as young as you could never be president of a major university.” [laughter] I immediately, of course, was softened up and feeling a little loose-legged and brought him into the office inside and said, “Coach Holtz, I just thought that we could talk a little about the dome and about the practice facilities here.” He said, “Dr. Keller, you don't have time to worry about things like that. The only thing I want to know is what is it I can do to help you?”

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: So, the conversation sort of went on like this. It was Lou Holtz at his best, disarming everybody in sight.

CAC: You didn't feel deserted when he packed his bags and left?

KK: We had a conversation about it. He came to visit me. It was another one of these funny conversations in which he really did, literally, say things like, “Ever since I was a boy coming home from St. Aloysius High School whistling the Notre Dame fight song, I've wanted to go to Notre Dame; but, Dr. Keller, I wasn't smart enough at the time or big enough and, now, is my chance.”

CAC: Ahhh.
KK: There wasn't much to be said about it, frankly. The serious conversation we had was the one which preceded that and it had to do with the fact that Lou Holtz, for all his charm and whatever stories one may tell about him, was a person who had a difficult time living with success. He was always challenged to want to find something else to do. He decided, at some point in his career at Minnesota, that he really want to be athletic director as well as football coach. He got Sid Hartman and some others to agree with that.

CAC: I'll bet.

KK: I objected to it. I didn't think Paul Giel was a particularly effective athletic director but I didn't think it was appropriate to have the coach of the largest team, the one that could cause us the most difficulty, being the same person as the athletic director. I didn't think it was fair to other sports and, more than that, I didn't think it was fair to a set of checks and balances that I think needs to exist within the program; so, I objected to that. Some argued that that was the precipitating event. I don't think so. I really do think he wanted to go to Notre Dame. There was not, as far as I know, any formal statement in his contract—rumors to the contrary—that he would be released to go to Notre Dame. The issue was one, at that point, of saying, "Unless you believe in indentured servitude, if someone comes to you and says, 'I want to go,' they have to go." I took a lot of heat over it but I don't think there was much that could have been done. Subsequently, Lou has written to me, last year or the year before. His vision of what happened is entirely different from my recollection. He says that if it hadn't been for outsiders, he and I would have worked things out wonderfully and he'd still be coaching at the university. But, I don't know on what he based that because that's not my recollection. That was very time consuming but not terrible traumatic. The trauma was the event in Madison.

CAC: Yes.

KK: That was a serious trauma. Interestingly, it was a trauma which showed what was wrong with our system of governance. It happened to be a situation in which the Board of Regents behaved wonderfully. I'll get into the event. The Board of Regents and I were on a retreat at some center out west of the cities. I don't remember where it was, at the moment. The agenda was so boring that no media had showed up, even though it was required to be an open meeting. I found myself, for the only time in my memory, alone with the Board of Regents at a meeting when we could have a discussion at which nobody needed to pose. We were having a retreat which was running through a weekend when, on a Saturday morning, I got a call. The call was from Jim Dutcher, the coach, saying that he was in Madison, and that he was at the airport, and that three of his players had just been arrested by the Madison police, accused of raping a woman the night before in a hotel. That was it. That's what he said. I said, "What happened, Jim?" He said, "We haven't got it all sorted out. The woman has made this accusation. We're on our way to Northwestern to play a game Monday night." I said, "Jim, you can't do that. You've got to come back. We have to sort this out. This is a very major ..." He said, "We have to play Monday. We can sort it out after that." I said, "No, no. We can't do that." I didn't know if there were other people involved, anything about it. He said, "They were in this room with this
girl and they claim that it was just consenting sex with all three of them." I said, "That's just terrible. We have a very bad situation. You've got to come back here. I need to know who else was involved in this, what all the circumstance were, and then we have to decide what to do." He said, "We've got to play this game. Are we going to forfeit it? Are we going to postpone it?" I said, "Jim, I don't know what we're going to do. You can work that out but you've got to get back here."

CAC: Oh, boy.

KK: He said, "I'm willing to try to get it postponed by calling the Big Ten but if we're going to forfeit the game, I'd have to resign." I said, "Jim, if there's a problem here with that, let's make a decision and let's forfeit the game." That's what we did. I said, "Bring the players back here." Of course, what I said to myself was that he, clearly, did not seem to understand the depth of issue that we were dealing with here. I'm sure he wished it hadn't happened but he, nevertheless, wanted . . .

CAC: He didn't see, at that time, any personal responsibility for his players and maintaining some kind of . . .?

KK: I'm sure he felt badly about it and there was no question, as the facts ultimately sorted themselves out, that the players had been out after curfew. It turned out there were five players in the room . . . a couple just sort of watching the proceedings, that others were not involved, and that it was not the first time that players had at least broken curfew in terms of being out of their rooms, and that, clearly, there had not been close supervision of the basketball players. I think Jim, himself, recognized that but it was his style. The issue then, and the reason I say that it was very important that I had the board together, was that I had a chance to talk to the board about what we were to do and what exactly our strategy would be. I, obviously, had to go back to the Twin Cities and had to have a press conference and the press conference was, obviously, going to be a very large one involving people from all over the country, and what was going to be important was the first statement, the first sentence.

[End of Tape 3, Side 1]

[Tape 3, Side 2]

KK: What was going to be important was the first sentence. The two approaches that one was faced with on a situation like this is, is the first message, "Everybody is innocent until proven guilty," or is the first message about the problem of date rape and rape on American campuses.

CAC: Of course.

KK: You're ultimately going to say both but which is it you're going to say first? I had a discussion with the board in which I said that it struck me that it was extremely important to
make the statement about rape in the society in which we lived and the issues which we were facing and that it was impossible for us to judge guilt or innocence of these three players but the facts, as much as I could put them together at that point, were that, clearly, there had been a group sex event taking place in a hotel by players who were out representing the University of Minnesota and that, in itself, was unacceptable. Let's put aside the issue of a criminal act. That was, clearly, inappropriate and I was proposing that it was important for us, immediately, to say that these players were suspended from participating as basketball representatives of the University of Minnesota. Just on the basis of what we knew at that time, that was inappropriate and that I would need to interview the other players and find out what I could about who else might have been involved, and that we would, obviously, make the point that whether or not they were guilty of a felony was something for courts to decide, and we had no way of deciding that, and they certainly were entitled to being considered innocent until they had their day in court. Our thrust would be to talk about the issue of rape and to talk about how the university was jarred by this and was going to look at the issues on the campus of that kind of thing and what we could do about it. That, ultimately, was the thrust of what it is we said and did. I never would have been able to get the agreement of the board if we hadn't been able to talk it through that Saturday morning so that each of them could understand it and so that I knew when I went that afternoon to speak that all twelve members of the board agreed with this. That was a very important time. It showed what you could do if you had a little time in private to help people think through those issues. The university president doesn't have that in our system.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I finally took that position. It turned out there were a couple of other players who were involved. We suspended them. Then, of course, the question was, how are we going to play the rest of the season?

CAC: Ah!

KK: We did with some people even from the football team and some scrubs and we won a game. Bonita and I then decided that we could not miss a game from then on. We, obviously, had to be out there. I spoke to the basketball players. I went down and visited with them and said that I realize how tough all of this is. In a sense, after we'd had these discussions, all of us could feel more confident in the people who were out there, that they really were above reproach, that the ones who were playing were people who were not in any way a part of this, who were people whose behavior had been looked at and judged honorable, judged to have followed standards of integrity, and that I would be there cheering for them.

CAC: Was Jim coaching?

KK: Jim resigned.

CAC: Immediately?
KK: He resigned immediately either at that press conference or the press conference the next
day in a gentlemanly fashion. He didn't go through, I'm resigning for this or that reason. The
resignation was, clearly, because we forfeited the game. I decided that forfeiting the game was
the right thing to do after that event. In fact, I had a call from the Big Ten commissioner. He
tried to convince me not to forfeit the game, to have it played. I told him that I really did think
that this was too important.

CAC: Was Mr. Giel part of these conversations at all?

KK: No. I'm not sure where Mr. Giel was in those days. We didn't see very much of him.

CAC: Wendy Anderson was supportive?

KK: Wendy was supportive. He was there and I think he saw the issue. Dave Roe, who was
another strong athletic supporter, saw the issue that way. There was no backing off among the
board at that time.

CAC: Do you think it hurt the university publicly?

KK: Yes.

CAC: Or was it helped by the way you responded to it or the university responded to it?

KK: I think that the university was helped by the response just judging by the public reaction
and judging by the mail that came in. It was primarily supportive, really supportive.

CAC: Do you get lots of mail in the president's office on a deal like this?

KK: On a deal like this, hundreds of letters, hundreds.

CAC: I see.

KK: Some of them funny. Yes, a deal like this generates a tremendous amount of mail. I
usually read those letters and frequently responded to them unless they're really crazy. That was
a very, very telling issue for me in a number of respects. It pointed out—your question about did
this hurt or help the university—how these issues totally peripheral to what is the purpose of the
university, nevertheless, are extraordinarily important in what happens to the university. You
spend a good deal of your time.

Take the issue of investments in South Africa. That's an issue which is an important issue in
itself but an issue peripheral to the goals and purposes of the university and, yet, one with which
the university has to deal. One can argue that it may be peripheral but, nevertheless, is important
in the sense that what the university's symbolic position is on these issues is important. I would
argue that that is possibly true but is a secondary effect, particularly with an issue as ambiguous as the issue of investments in South Africa. I found it relatively easy to make the decision about investments, that is the decision to disinvest in South Africa, as a university, in large part because mine was a relatively easy situation. We didn't, at that point, have a huge endowment so it wasn't going to cost us a lot. The Board of Regents had a majority who were in favor of disinvestment and it was kind of easy to get out in front of it. Colleagues of mine who were presidents of other universities found themselves in just another kind of situation in which what was easiest for them to do was not to go along with disinvesting in South Africa or in stocks in South Africa. For both of us, the major question was, how do I get this issue off the table as quickly as possible? How do I get this out of the way? This is a no-win issue; it doesn't matter what position you take. It wasn't that there was hypocrisy about the issue. It's that there was a very different view. People were interested in having the university sell its stocks in companies that did business in South Africa. There was no move to do that with retirement funds. There was no move for us to push on Minnesota Mutual to sell those retirement funds. I brought that up with several groups. That wasn't the issue they wanted to focus on. It was a selective approach that was based upon the publicity value of the issue within universities more than the principle itself. So, I had some difficulties with it. It was interesting because I had a meeting after I recommended to the board that we disinvest. It was a meeting with some faculty group, at the time, that wanted to thank me for doing that. I said, "I really didn't want to accept that," because of the kinds of reasons I have just talked about here, that for me, this is an issue that we shouldn't have been dealing with because it deflected our attention. It was an issue we had to deal with but that my real reason was to get it out of the way. I didn't want to take credit for something different from that.

CAC: Your friends appreciated your position?

KK: One of them was a guy who's a wonderful fellow. It's Allen Isaacman. I think Allen did. He disagreed but I think he did understand what I was talking about. We didn't come to the same conclusion but I thought we had a cordial and, actually, a substantive discussion.

CAC: It was a good learning experience.

KK: For all of us, I think it might have been in that respect.

CAC: It is a real danger, isn't it, Ken, to lose control of your agenda when you're president? These distractions pull it away.

KK: That's a constant problem. Eastcliff, of course, was just that kind of thing. We've seen it in the national scene with [President Bill] Clinton and the gays in the military.

CAC: Yes.
KK: That is what happens to you. You find yourself losing your agenda. I made a stupid mistake one day with some reporters. I had once-a-month news conference, a briefing, before the regents’ meeting. I’d gotten to know those reporters so very well that it was very casual and there was a lot of give and take. There was always a little suspicion. Was I telling them everything? This was about budget time. I said, “There isn’t going to be any retrenchment.” They said, “Now, come on, really. Is there going to be a retrenchment?” I said, “There isn’t. Honest Injun, there’s not going to be a retrenchment.” The next day, there it was published in the paper that Keller said, “Honest Injun, no retrenchment.”

CAC: [gasp] Ohhh!

KK: You can’t imagine. Not only that, it was Columbus Day that I said it on. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: I just took so much heat. I had to have a special meeting with the Native American community.

CAC: Oh, my!

KK: We talked about whether or not students ought to have sensitizing courses and faculty and university presidents ought have sensitizing courses. I wrote a letter, an unabashed apology, to the papers saying I had just done a dumb thing and I apologized for it. That wasn’t quite good enough. It went on and on. It was another indication of how you lose the agenda.

CAC: How quickly.

KK: Yes, you lose the focus if something comes along that is not central to what you’re trying to do. Athletics certainly fit that role. Issues like this fit that role. I wanted to get them out of the way. In talking last time about the organization of the Board of Regents, there, too, in a sense, I viewed that as moving us away from the agenda to have to deal with the dissatisfaction of a few members of the board.

CAC: Yes.

KK: In the interest of moving that away, I made the mistake I talked about. That turned out not to be something that you could dismiss because it had too major a role on what went on in pursuing your agenda. I think your point is well taken that there are all of these issues which are absolutely necessary to deal with because they, otherwise, do take control even though they, themselves, are not central. There were all kinds of them. Some of them were more humorous but, nevertheless, time consuming. The time we spent getting the Final Four Basketball Tournament here in Minnesota, which took my going out with Perpich and others to make presentations at the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] in California.
CAC: The governor expected this of you and Minnesota did as a state?

KK: That's right. Or going to Detroit to make a presentation for why the Saturn plant ought to move to Minnesota, which was another venture with the governor that takes preparation time. It takes your time to go out and do that. You must do it. It's an obligation. I think you have to do that. It needs to be handled right. The governor got interested in getting the super-conducting super-collider to the state of Minnesota. There, actually, the time that I spent was convincing him not to do it, that it was not the right way to go. That, too, required a lot of work because you couldn't just say, "No, I'm not interested because I don't care about the state of Minnesota."

CAC: Ken, how do you control your calendar daily, weekly, monthly...the budgeting of time when you're constantly being drawn away?

KK: What you do is you depend on someone, as I did on Marsha Riebe and Rick Heydinger. Those two were the ones who made most of the specific decisions for which I would, obviously, have some say in the sense of what are the criteria for doing what it is we do and, after the fact, some second guessing if I thought that we were spending time wrongly. Your time was totally programmed, totally programmed. What you depended on was an office that had not only organized your time but organized your life so that you had folders of different colors that told you which ones you had to carry, which ones you had to read immediately, which ones you could wait for two or three days to read. You had an entirely programmed life.

CAC: How do you keep your physical and psychological health? How did you keep your physical health?

KK: I played tennis. I tried to continue to play once or twice a week—that was it. Your psychological health has to fend for itself. I, in fact, think that was a burden and that was not a good thing. What I discovered, to my unhappiness, was that, even when I went out for a private evening, I spent the whole evening passionately talking about the university.

CAC: I'm sure.

KK: It wasn't that people were necessarily pushing me on it. It's that I couldn't change gears. All of my waking hours and some of my sleeping hours were thinking about university issues or thinking about some aspect of it. I was quite passionately involved in these.

CAC: Of course.

KK: You didn't have a way of separating your life in any good way. It's why the let down after a university presidency is so difficult.

CAC: Ahhh.
KK: You have to reclaim your other ways of thinking. You have to reclaim your time because the first morning you get up, you say, “What is the meeting I have at seven thirty this morning?” They say, “There is no meeting at seven thirty this morning.” Not only that, but there’s nobody to ask that question because you no longer have all those assistants of whom you asked such questions.

CAC: [laughter] Yes.

KK: It’s very difficult in those positions to maintain a balance physically. Some people do it in different ways than I did it. Tennis is the thing I like but, in fact, I never had the time to do what I liked to do which is to read, to read long nineteenth century novels. There just was not the time to do that.

CAC: Theater and the symphony?

KK: We did all of those. But, those … you were always on show. You didn’t do it very much as a private citizen. I maintained connections to certain boards like the Walker Art Center Board. Bonita was on the Guthrie [Theater] Board. That meant we did all these things but there was always a connection. I must say, for example, that I never knew what the good restaurants were around the Twin Cities because I was always eating at banquets. [laughter] I think that’s a very difficult thing. You may get the same thing from Nils. I would talk to Nils from time to time and I saw the change in him. It was, in a sense, easier to see the change in him than in myself watching as he became so engaged in all of these things.

CAC: Of course.

KK: It was difficult for him to distance himself from them in any way.

CAC: I had to see him occasionally just on this tiny project here. Sometimes, he was so distracted he couldn’t hear what I was saying. I wasn’t blaming him.

KK: Yes. There were things that I said about my calendar. I said, “I always want to see faculty if that’s possible.” On other kinds of calls, I delegated that. I said, “Marsha, you can speak for me. You know what I’m likely to have said. You’re very good with people. Convince them that you’re speaking for me, that they have, in fact, seen me by saying that.” Then, I tried to control meetings, formal recurring meetings, because they can occupy all of your time. But, there are certain ones you had to have.

CAC: Sure.

KK: I had to meet once a week with the vice-presidents and once every other week with the deans. There were all these other meetings around that would constantly occupy your time.
That's what you did. You spent the evening preparing for the next day's meetings by reading through the material. It's an impossible pace for anyone.

CAC: And far more difficult that the vice-presidency where also many hours were consumed?

KK: It really was not the same, and the nature of the issues was different, and you found yourself in a very, very different position.

CAC: I may come back to this at the very end and talk about your Council on Foreign Relations and so forth. How much time do you have?

KK: I have to meet a student at three; so, we only have twenty minutes.

CAC: The centralization of university reserves . . .

KK: That's a very important issue. It was part of the transition to planning. The term planning doesn't capture an important element of what was different about that. It's a term that sounds like it's a process term but it's an absolute sea change in the nature of universities in the sense that most of our experience in universities was an experience in a time of expansion driven largely by the post-Sputnik era that led to some twenty-five years of university expansion. When you are in a mode of expansion, then, making choices isn't very important and, therefore, the intelligent thing is to delegate authority as much as possible because the smartest decisions on new things to do are going to come in the different units of the institution that know what the possibilities are. It is a mode in which the decentralization of the institution is the most sensible thing to do. If things are bad, you don't even have to worry about them. You dilute them. You let them go on because the money is not all that important and you just build stronger things around them and hope that they atrophy after awhile. When you begin to talk about planning and choice, then, the decentralized model is dysfunctional. It can't work and you have to begin to recentralize because that's where the overarching choices among fields and among areas comes. You can't do those unless you also have some control over budget. Along with the decentralization of activity and of program within the university, there was a huge decentralization of money in which all sorts of people, not academic units so much as support units, found ways of maintaining their own little squirrel's nest of money. There are a number of techniques by which you do it. You do it by encumbering the resources, that is, saying that this is committed to a purpose for which they aren't going to be spent for three years; but, as soon as they've been committed, they're expensed in a budgetary sense and they no longer appear as existing. They are now out; although, they exist. Then, there are support units that make money, like the bookstore. I think one of the things that turned David Lilly and me on to this was when we discovered, one year, that the bookstore had some enormous surplus of $50,000, $60,000, $70,000 and they had decided they were going to buy the band uniforms with this. [laughter] We said, "Wait a minute. Is that the highest priority for these funds? There are all sorts of things that the university needs to do and we've got this whole list of projects that we are unable to find support for that would require some one time funding." David worked
assiduously with my support—we worked together—to bring all of those little pots of money that existed all over the university into a central reserve with the idea that each year, we would make some central decisions looking at the list of priorities for special projects for the institution and find out which of them we could fund out of these reserves, rather than allowing all of them to be spent and held by whatever process or serendipity might lead to them being held. A very, very important change that went along with the change to planning was holding on to these. What we had available to us each year were these reserves and those reserves amounted, when we got them together, to some $50 million or $60 million.

CAC: [whistle] Did that surprise David and you . . . the size of it?

KK: Yes, until we looked at the consolidated budget of the university, which was over $1 billion. We said, "That's five percent." Now, five percent is a sensible amount to keep because it means that if, suddenly, we got a bad year at the legislature, then, we would be in a position to help ourselves for a year or so and, secondly, it was a source of money to buttress the endowment campaign in the sense that the endowed chairs brought people in but didn't provide any setup money for them. If you brought in somebody in the sciences, it might cost you $500,000 at that time—it'd cost $1 million now—to buy them the equipment. If you brought in somebody else there would be things around it that you had to deal with or maybe you had to provide summer support for the first two summers. This was a source of money that could be used to make sure that those chairs went where you wanted them to go, and got people from the outside. You, in an earlier statement, had said that a large fraction of them went to the Medical School, the health sciences, and the Institute of Technology, which is true.

CAC: And law.

KK: Law. But a worse problem was that, as it ultimately turned out, a large fraction of them went to people already here so that rather than being used to bring in new people, which was what the idea was, to enrich the place. Because they didn't have a lot of support money, it was frequently easier to say, "Let's give it to someone already here. We don't have to provide support money." This was later when the reserves didn't exist. Early on, the creation of those reserves gave us that possibility. Now, did we spend that every year? No. What we did was say, "We've got $50 million to $60 million. The earnings on that money, the interest, amount to $3 million or $4 million a year. That's what we had to spend on special projects; that is, we would not invade the principal of the reserves because the principal was something you really did hold for a rainy day. We had the interest which was available each year and was distributed on the basis of meetings of the central officers. What was called the Budget Executive—we talked about it some interviews ago—would make these judgments. Chet Grieger and Dave Berg would prepare a list of projects, a list of things that in the planning process had come up.

CAC: To what degree did members of the Finance Committee and the regents, for example, involve themselves in this?
KK: They had it reported to them. They did not approve the budget because that was budgeted as a discretionary fund of the administration but the administration reported it as it did the rest of the budget and those expenditures were either approved, if we had them the day of the budget, or reported for information afterward.

CAC: There was no expressed concern until the end?

KK: No mention, never. It was always assumed. Let me give you an example, Clarke. There was a year when there was a sudden change in the cost of health care. There was a change in the contract which resulted in an additional charge of something over $1 million to the university. I went to the Board of Regents and said that this was not in our budget. I did not want to do retrenchment for it. It was a one time cost this year. I proposed that it come out of discretionary funds. This was the discretionary funds. There were no other discretionary funds. The board thought this was a great idea so they approved it. In fact, they approved that and two or three other things that amounted to $2 million of discretionary funds. The board afterward said, "We didn't know there were any discretionary funds."

CAC: Some members of the board.

KK: Some members of the board—that's fair—not all of them. That, of course, was the discretionary funds. It was the interest on the central reserves, which were the discretionary funds that were available. They were not in the budget because the budget was recurring. They were off the budget but they were clearly stated as existing. Now, when it came up, of course, we saw this other attitude in response that came out about the reserves, the secret funds. They are hardly secret if you are bringing up the expenditures to the board.

CAC: How do you account for that then?

KK: I account for it in two ways. The first part of it is that the board itself, many of them, were totally naive on budgetary issues. I can report to you, for example, that we were audited every year by one of the big auditors.

CAC: Of course.

KK: I remember a meeting of the audit group with the board in which the audit group took us through the audit and the accounting for the past year. At the meeting, they went through all of this. They went through the operating budget, the operating statement for the year. They went through the capital statement for the year. They got to the end and one of the regents raised her hand and said, "Let me understand. Does this mean that we took in more this year than we spent?" Well, yes. There was a lot more in it; but, that was the level of being able to understand what this whole report was about. Understanding the details was really very difficult for them. That was the first part. The second is that the circumstances under which all of this became very public put them into a defensive mode.
CAC: This was Eastcliff and spending the money there?

KK: Yes, Eastcliff was the time when the reserves really did come up.

CAC: That poor desk.

KK: [laughter] I wonder where it is. I’ve been accused of various things about it. At one time, in fact, some reporters arrived and decided that when I had that desk put in, I had absconded with Peter Magrath’s desk and put it in my summer home. That was the rumor. When they came in, I said, “I haven’t done that.” They said, “Where is it?” I said, “I don’t know where it is.”

CAC: [laughter]

KK: Actually, we spent—several people were turned to—four or five hours looking through Morrill Hall and, finally, found it. They came down and they took a picture of it. [laughter]

I wanted to make the point of the reserves because the creation of the reserves was very much a part of the issue of creating a central planning process with the idea that there were priorities that had to be set on the spending not only of your recurring funds, which were in the budget, but of the non-recurring funds so that we had things like this. The issue of whether the regents knew about it was the point I wanted to make. Each year, we did report to them on what we were using discretionary funds for. I do believe that, quite honestly, a number of the regents never made the connection between the existence of $2 million or $3 million a year of discretionary funds and the fact that they had to come from somewhere. Where did they come from? They came from the interest on the reserves. I don’t think they ever made the connection in their own minds even though, importantly, they understood the use to which they were being put. There was this second question which was, (1) did they exist and (2) how were judgments made about how they were used? The regents were involved in those judgments. In fact, all those large expenditures came to them.

CAC: If it was difficult for the regents to understand, more so reporters and the public generally?

KK: Yes, it’s quite true. If you look at the reporting that went on on the reserves, you can take a set of headlines over a two- or three-week period that have the reserves varying from $60 million to $200 million. The issue there was that reporters didn’t understand the difference between encumbered funds and reserves. Encumbered funds are merely funds which we expense at an early stage and then pay out over time but they’re not reserves in any sense. They’re part of budgeted money that is used over time. I saw headlines that the secret funds are $220 million. As I said, they were in the range of $50 million to $60 million and they were just what I said they were. I think, actually, David, particularly, deserved a lot of credit for understanding the
need to bring those kinds of reserves into where everybody could see how they were being used or how the interest on them was being used.

We can stop on that one.

[End of Tape 3, Side 2]

[Tape 4, Side 1]

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers. I think we’re having our last conversation with Kenneth Keller. Today is Monday, December 8, 1997. We are, as before, in my office, which is 1152 Social Science. We are nearing the end; but, there are several items that both of us had thought would be appropriate.

You talked some the last time we met, about ten days ago, about the raising of funds for the endowed chairs. Also, you were involved in raising funds for two of the best places we have on campus: the Ted Mann Theater and the Weisman Art Museum. Why don't we start there?

KK: Yes, good. There are a couple of things that are worth saying about them, as you remarked and we remarked before. One of the things that Minnesota had been fortunate about is that, since building, bricks and mortar, has generally been something that's been handled by the state, our private fund raising and, in particular, most of the fund raising in the 1985 to 1988 capital campaign was aimed at endowing chairs. We were not called upon to put large amounts of money into bricks and mortar which, at other universities, has generally been the case and has been a major problem.

CAC: Even at public universities?

KK: Even at public universities . . .

CAC: That’s interesting.

KK: . . . there has been a lot of private money that has gone into public building. In fact, that’s been more often the case than not at many public institutions. We avoided that here. In a sense, while the two project to which I’ve referred are ones I feel very, very good about—I think they were wonderful additions to the campus in a number of ways—they may have set a bad precedent but I’ll come back to that. The art museum is something that had been on our minds for a very, very long time. Our art museum had languished in the upper reaches of Northrop Auditorium where it didn't have good space and had very little going for it. It was nothing that you could ever have gotten funding from the state to build.

CAC: May I interrupt?
KK: Yes.

CAC: I interviewed Met Wilson and that was his expectation and hope that they were going to have an art museum. That goes way back to the early 1960s.

KK: It goes back a long time. Actually, I think it even goes back earlier than Met Wilson.

CAC: Probably.

KK: It may even go back to—who was it before Met?

CAC: James Morrill.

KK: Yes, James Morrill actually was the one who established the art museum without space when T. B. Walker was the first director... T. B. or Hudson Walker [Hudson D. Walker was the chief donor and may have acted as director], I forget which one. It's very difficult to get state money for that. It appears as if it's frivolous. The campaign allowed us to do that because, at the time, some money came in which was totally undesignated. It was a $4 million undesignated bequest to the university. We hadn't expected it. We weren't out raising it. It came across the transom. I thought it was a very important thing. We were able to do two or three important things with that. First, we were able to use it as a challenge grant. Secondly, we were able to convince the regents to designate a location on the campus, namely, the one next to Coffman Union, which was in a perfect place. The argument for the museum was a very strong one. It was not that there weren't other museums in town but that our role was in opening people to art, opening young Minnesotans, the students who would not normally go to a museum, that we had an enormous role in sensitizing them and opening them to that possibility. That was something that a university museum could do that the other places in town couldn't do because no one was going to go across town before they had been opened to that experience.

CAC: Sure.

KK: That was the argument... that there was more to education than merely training, that this was, clearly, something that was part of it. The third interesting aspect of that project was because it was not state money, we were able to go much, much more widely in our search for architects; so, we were able to bring in Frank Gehry because we were not limited by the state selection process, which kind of puts you into getting cinder block buildings or other things that aren't necessarily wonderful buildings like the one we've just completed next to the Humphrey Institute. We were very much freed in that respect and the result was that we could engage people in the community who were interested in good architecture as well as good art and that made it possible for us to get the additional contributions. Once you had a building which not only served a great purpose but was, obviously, going to be a wonderful landmark, that opened the interest of contributors. Of course, the rest of the money came not from Minnesota but from...
an ex-Minnesotan living in California, Fred Weisman. In several respects, that was a very interesting and good thing to do. We took the same tack with the Ted Mann Theater.

CAC: Before we leave that, you said there was a $4 million unspecified grant. What did it cost, finally?

KK: It was $9 million or $10 million when the building finally went up. It was between $8 million and $10 million. I can't tell you the exact amount.

CAC: Tell me then, Ken, how does a challenge grant work? Why are people attracted to a challenge grant possibility?

KK: It's, essentially, a leverage for them. Their name goes on the building and they only pay half the cost.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: So, you go out to someone and say, "You're going to get an $8 million or $9 million building with your name on it and all you have to give is $4 million. We'll put in the other $4 million." The great attraction is the attractiveness of offering a terrific deal for somebody. All of the prestige that's associated with a much larger gift is associated with your name.

CAC: And the person or persons who gave the $4 million are not recognized then?

KK: That's right. There's only one recognition that comes. That was a bequest. That was totally at the university's discretion to spend however it saw fit. It was only a question of my convincing the Board of Regents that it was the right place to put the money and that got done. It was the same thing with the matching money in the capital campaign because, there too, we could say to someone, "Give $500,000 and a $1 million chair is established in your name. Give $1 million and a $2 million chair is established in your name." That was an extraordinarily valuable approach that you could take with people. I think that was singularly responsible for the success that we had. In fact, I suggested that in the new campaign, we go to the legislature and point out how enormously valuable that kind of matching money is and try to get an appropriation from the legislature for a similar kind of matching fund in the next campaign. The argument is not only that it's useful but that it doesn't cost the state very much because, in effect, the only thing the state provides, on a year-to-year basis, is the income they would otherwise get from that kind of an endowment; that is, if the state were to say to us, "You have available a $10 million match, in effect, the cost to the state in any one year is only $500,000 because it's just the income otherwise earned on that money or, as a matter of fact, what it amounts to is merely a guarantee that that income will be provided to match the income that comes in from the endowment which one obtains from private funds. It's a matching principle that's also not an expensive one to the state. It worked very well in both the Ted Mann building and the Weisman.

Kenneth Keller Interview
CAC: I'm going to stick with the Weisman just for a moment.

KK: Sure.

CAC: It's my understanding that Gerry Shepherd came out of retirement to help with the search for funds for that.

KK: Gerry, I don't think, ever went into retirement with the respect to the museum.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: Gerry Shepherd . . . you probably have interviewed?

CAC: I interviewed him before this thing happened.

KK: Is that right?

CAC: I think part of this story should be told.

KK: If there was a single motivating force of continuity, it was Gerry. Gerry did something else which he has to get credit for—I hope he gets credit for. As I said, I was successful in convincing the Board of Regents to designate the site and to agree to the commitment of $4 million of this windfall bequest that we got to the museum. But, before the museum got built or, in fact, before the Weisman gift was closed, I left and there was pressure from the board to rescind on that commitment.

CAC: Oh, my! I didn't know that.

KK: It was Gerry's testifying at the board in an impassioned way that kept that commitment intact. His was a very, very important role right from the beginning. He also kept this alive from the time that he was vice-president for Academic Affairs. He was the first one to approach me with it. He and Lyndel King may have come together; but, it was certainly his influence on me that convinced me that this was an important thing to do.

CAC: Of course, he had built a reasonably modern house himself earlier so the architectural part would be appealing.

KK: That's right. He always understood that.

CAC: Do you know where his interest in the visual arts came?

KK: No, I don't. But, it's not that unusual for somebody in engineering, it turns out.
CAC: Often, it’s music, I would associate with physics and math.

KK: You’re absolutely right. That’s much more frequently the case. There are a number who have had this interest and I don’t know Gerry’s originally came from.

CAC: Of course, Gerry always had such awful bad eyesight so the visual arts seemed liked a strange thing.

KK: Maybe he could see beyond representational art, as a result. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: He saw patterns and he saw colors.

CAC: Bravo!

KK: He did see that as important and I think it was a mark of Gerry’s more eclectic vision of knowledge, and scholarship, and the purpose of a university that was reflected in his interest in that. He was very important in that. Lyndel King . . . one can’t underestimate her doggedness about this to keep it on track. That was very important. Then, there were people in the community, particularly Mike and Penny Winton, who were key not only in making a significant contribution to the museum but Penny, who had been among other things president of the Alumni Association at the university, was the one who pressed most for getting us a nationally known architect. Frank Gehry had actually built a guest home on her property out near Lake Minnetonka so she had another association with him.

CAC: Let me share something with you, Ken, and make it a conversation, again. I chaired a committee in the arts college—1979 and 1980—to revise the group requirements for undergraduate baccalaureate. Among other things, the committee had originally proposed that we have a possibility of doing an arts or humanities group requirement, in some part, by practice, that is, by dancing, by playing, by painting pictures and having a refereed exhibition. I’ll tell you, the opposition from the humanities departments was shrill and stern.

KK: Yes.

CAC: We kept on with it, however, and when it came to the college assembly in a vote, the three people from the IT who were in physics and mathematics, pled on the floor for the educational value of performance.

KK: That’s interesting.

CAC: And it carried.
KK: It did?

CAC: Yes, the three of them carried the day for the committee. I can't remember who they were. One was an oboe player, I remember that.

KK: My son is an oboe player, our little guy. I think that it's humorous; but, it reflects something real. When we spoke one of our last times, I pointed out that I had thought it important at one time to break up the College of Liberal Arts in order to provide for the creative and performing arts a separate organizational structure. Quite frankly, it was precisely because of what I perceived as just what you've described, the fact that the creative and performing arts were not viewed in intellectual terms with the same sympathy by the humanities as other kinds of scholarship; in other words, there was not a willingness to accept this different paradigm as appropriate for the university. I think that was unfortunate. It was an unfortunate kind of rigidity because it didn't allow the development of those fields where a published article is less important than a performance.

CAC: You bet.

KK: There were many other kinds of things. A connection to the community is very important in the performing and creative arts—not as much so in the humanities. One could argue that it ought to be but it isn't. I think that it's reflective of the story you told on that.

CAC: You've reflected on this, I'm sure, that persons in the sciences are so often close to music, sometimes often performers themselves with voice or instrument.

KK: I think music is easier to understand than the others. Your point earlier that it was a little more surprising that Gerry Shepherd would have an interest in art is a point well taken. I think with music, it is that there is a way knowing and thinking of rhythms. There's a mathematics of music which is aesthetically related to the mathematics of modeling in the physical sciences, the ways we think about the world and theorizing about the world and seeing its regularities. You see its regularities in scientific laws and you see its regularities in harmonies in music. Music is very much a mathematical form. I think it makes most sense to see that connection, particularly between the physical sciences and music and to see talents that are of the same kind. You're certainly right that there's a very strong connection that occurs there.

CAC: I suspect it's a connection we haven't really built upon as much as we should. Music leads on to the Ted Mann.

KK: Ted Mann was merely another project of the same kind in which we had no possibility of getting the legislature to fund it. We went to the legislature and tried very, very hard for years to get money. We weren't trying with the museum because we knew that was a lost cause. We thought we could try with the Ted Mann Theater and, of course, we got the music building. But, we got the music building with the performance hall lopped off.
CAC: Ah, yes, that’s right.

KK: They said, “If you want to build that, go get your own money for it. There are too many performance halls in the Twin Cities already. You can go down and have your kids practice at Orchestra Hall,” if Orchestra Hall were willing to give you that.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: We just never were successful in making the case for another performance hall. We knew all the reasons why it was necessary because of the need for an intermediate sized hall which we didn’t have, the need to provide a venue for our own orchestras to perform in that didn’t fit Scott Hall. There were all kinds of true administrative conflicts of what you do when you have an opera group, and play groups, and music groups of various size. Can you possibly get just the right kind of venue? Ted Mann was the right kind of venue. Finally, when we knew we had lost the game with respect to the legislature, we turned to the private sector and Judson Bemis was a very important part of that. Actually, Bemis, and Curt Carlson, and I met with Ted Mann in Los Angeles—ironically, on my return from an infamous trip to Hawaii, which was sort of the end of my time.

CAC: Sort of the end.

KK: On that return trip, we signed the deal for Ted, who was from the Twin Cities, to make that contribution. It was very important and, for me, a great source of pride because those two projects were the first significant privately funded building projects on the campus. When I said earlier that I thought that they might have set a bad precedent . . . since that time, it seems to me that both on the campus and in the legislature, that success has led people to say, “Perhaps, we should be depending more on private money.”

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: In its last several buildings, the university both in selling and the legislature in giving have placed a very severe burden on the institution to raise significant amounts of private money to complete what, in the past, would have been public buildings.

CAC: We’re into that with the library annex building right now, Ken.

KK: The library annex and the Mechanical Engineering building are two examples. The Carlson School—however, it was a little easier to raise the money—is another example. The pattern, since my presidency, has shifted I think unfortunately, and it’s unfortunate because buildings are so expensive that their costs seriously impact program and we are forced to move money that is not easily moved from academic programs both to the construction of buildings and to their operation and maintenance. That is becoming an increasingly serious problem. It’s the downside of what I think was basically a very good idea where we had picked projects that legitimately would not
have been supported by public money, the performance hall and the museum, things that I think are extremely important but are just the kinds of additive parts of a program that one could argue could be funded by the private sector. I don't think you can make that argument for the library annex. I don't think you ought to be able to make that argument for . . . The Mechanical Engineering building now is almost fifty percent to be funded from private fund raising—something like $13 million from the state and $11 million from private sources. I think that's too great a burden. It's hard to raise the money and, more than that, when you raise it for that, you can't raise it from those same people.

CAC: I went to a meeting last Friday to try to find ways to raise a shortfall of about $8 million or $10 million for the library annex building.

KK: The same thing.

CAC: Yes, and it doesn't have sex appeal as performance or art would have.

KK: That's right. The person who understood that need more than almost anybody in the state was Elmer [L.] Andersen. Elmer was very, very clear about what he argued was the archival function of a university, the need for a university to be the source of continuity in the record. He would have, certainly, had your Social Welfare History Archives or the Immigration History Archives [Immigration History Research Center]. Other state collections, he would have seen as important. He's very eloquent on the subject.

CAC: He has a magnificent library himself for his personal library.

KK: Yes. He used to argue that the fourth function in addition to teaching, research, and service was an archival function.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: It was a good point.

CAC: Would it be true that with the Ted Mann you could have your own architects so that the place is acoustically beautiful?

KK: Right.

CAC: Again, you didn't have to take a routine architect?

KK: Yes; although, I know less about the details of how that person was chosen. It seems to me that was your neighbor in the Grove. It was the architect couple. [The reference here is to Winston and Lisl Close. The architectural firm for the Mann building was Hammel, Green, and Abramson.]
CAC: The one who died.

KK: Yes, the one who died. They built the house I lived in, the old Dick Jordan house in the Grove. I think they may have done the Ted Mann Theater. I could be mistaken on that; but, we were much freer in this architect selection process. That was a good thing in going the private route; but, as you're discovering about the annex building, it's not an easy business.

CAC: These are good stories on the up side; but, it brings us to a down side and that's a difficult set of events to relate, I'm sure.

KK: Yes; although, I've often remarked in recent years that those are, for me, scars but not festering sores.

CAC: Good.

KK: Things move from passion to remembrance.

CAC: How long did it take?

KK: It took years or, actually, it took intermediate years because, at the beginning, there was a kind of numbness about the whole thing.

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: Then, there was a difficulty and a passion about it. It was a question of three or four or five years, probably less in some respects; that is, internally, there was still great festering wounds but externally, I think I was dealing with it them well. I was situated so comfortably and well and so supported in a lot of ways that I think recovery was helped. The other thing that happened—we're sort of leaping into the center of the story—is that from the moment that I resigned, I really did change from being very, very defensive to becoming a rather popular martyr in the state. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: Everything changed. The media representation . . .

CAC: Oh, really?

KK: . . . even in the weeks after I resigned . . . the whole tone changed.

CAC: How do you account for that?
KK: I think it had a little to do maybe with Minnesota populism that while I was riding high and appeared to be arrogant about the events, whether I felt it or not, if I was perceived that way, that's easily attacked in this state. The momentum can build and you don't think too much about it. You figure your president ought to be able to take care of himself. Once, I'd resigned, you're not an easy target anymore. The facts after the case never supported any of the things that were alleged so they didn't perpetuate. It became clear that I hadn't benefitted and it became clear and even appeared in columns in the next year by the same columnists who had written terrible things saying, "What was all the fuss about? We've been over there and there's nothing fancy. Those drapes that we said were there, aren't there. Carpeted floors aren't carpeted." They never were carpeted. The quadraphonic sound around the swimming pool never went in. There wasn't any quadraphonic sound around the swimming pool. Of course, the substance wasn't there to perpetuate any of the negatives.

CAC: It may be that you had built a reservoir of goodwill over a long period of time with the community that then paid off.

KK: I think that may also have been the case. It certainly was true that the entire rhetoric changed after that point. Even the sort of summary articles in newspapers and magazines were, basically, very positive. They were not without criticism and I'm not without criticism of my role; but, everything did change. That, in a way, created for me a rather bittersweet feeling. I appreciated the change but was bitter that we'd gone through it all. It did help in the healing process. It also helped for me to leave.

CAC: Sure.

KK: We went away quickly within a few months.

CAC: You moved to a challenging position.

KK: I moved to something very challenging.

CAC: You had a continuity of a very supportive family.

KK: It was very good ... and friends. The friends here and elsewhere were very important to me. In the wake of my resigning, I must have received 400 or 500 letters . . .

CAC: Heavens!

KK: . . . from Minnesota, primarily. I couldn't exaggerate the warmth of those letters. They were quite meaningful to me.

CAC: You saved those?
KK: Oh, yes, I certainly have saved them. They didn't just help me; they helped my parents for whom this was very, very difficult.

CAC: Ahhh. They were distant and really couldn't understand the strangeness.

KK: Yes. I think it helped them. As you know, I went to Princeton. The day after I resigned, Harold Shapiro who is president at Princeton called and expressed his disbelief but then said, "Why don't you come to Princeton? We will set you up anyway you want. Take some time here and just tell me where you'd like to be and we'll arrange it. You can decompress, read, write, do what you want to do around here ... anyway we can help." It was a marvelous offer and that's, of course, the one we took.

CAC: How long were you there?

KK: I was there the better part of two years before I got involved with the Council on Foreign Relations. We'll come back to that.

CAC: I think it's important to have the context that you've just provided. You pick up the narrative.

KK: There are things to be said. A lot of them have been said so let me not try to tell every bit of the story but let me, at least, put on the record some issues that people know less about and try to put some in perspective as we go along. I had mentioned earlier that the beginning was that at the time I was negotiating for the terms and conditions of my employment as president, the issue of Eastcliff had come up. We had, at that time, a report that Peter Magrath had commissioned pointing out all of the problems with Eastcliff. I had a dining room that seated sixteen people and we never entertained fewer than thirty for dinner and as many as sixty. It did not have a kitchen that was appropriate for that. We had to bring in food from the St. Paul campus and heat it up at Eastcliff and it had some structural problems. All of those people argued that it ought to be taken care of and we agreed on the ones that needed to be taken care of; but, of course, at the time, there was no budget for that or anything like that. It was supposed to be finished before I ever moved in—this was March, as you know—and I was going to stay out for six months while they did all of that. September came around and very little had been done. I think we'd estimated it would be about $600,000 or something like that and there was agreement on that. We moved in and things began to move more and more slowly and we discovered things that hadn't been anticipated, like the eleven coats of lead paint on the outside of the house . . .

CAC: Oh, wow!

KK: ... that we needed to remove. We knew that was going to be expensive. I remember going to Dave Roe and saying, "Dave, this is really expensive stuff and we can't afford to pay union painters thirty-five dollars an hour to scrap this paint off," which, then, had to be shipped
to Illinois in special casks because it was toxic. "Couldn't we use students, Dave," I said. "Couldn't we hire such students over the summer to do this?" He would have none of that. He didn't want that. He said, "However, I'll arrange for the unions to do this for free." It was a wonderful offer about which nothing was ever done. So, it didn't happen and we wound scraping the paint and that, actually, was about $110,000 to remove the paint from the outside of the house.

CAC: [whistle]

KK: It's just not any luxury. This is just what it costs and everybody knows about the fence and the kitchens . . . all of that was there. I don't need to go through all those numbers—I'm always happy to—but we had all sorts of stuff. The fence, the kitchen and the paint are usually the ones that people remark on. What's interesting is that the job was $600,000 and when the newspapers got hold of it—again, I'm not operating sequentially here—later on, when all of this became public, the statement was we'd spent $600,000 on the kitchen. Columnists went around and talked to Twin Cities' contractors and said, "Can you imagine a kitchen for $600,000?" They all said, "No, you don't have to spend that on a kitchen. You could do that for $200,000." When we corrected the columnists and said, "The kitchen actually cost under $200,000," they said, "If you think the number means anything, you don't understand what the issue is about."

CAC: [laughter] You can't win that one.

KK: Yes, there was no way around that. All of that happened because the project took three years and we discovered things that cost extra money and probably, by the end, instead of $600,00, we were looking at $1 million. It was certainly more than what we'd anticipated at the beginning. It took three years and, moreover, during that time, there was regular maintenance and that kept getting added in and people considered that part of the project.

CAC: Of course.

KK: So, it looked like a very large amount. At the beginning, too, as I've mentioned before, we took the Twin Cities' media through the house. We showed them what was being planned to be done and what the reasons were for doing it and we got some very good stories. Both of the papers had very good feature stories on the renovations to Eastcliff in 1985, at the time I came into office. But, time passed and it didn't get done. The price crept up. But, more than that, it was that time had passed.

Then, 1988 came along and another issue was rising, which had nothing to do with Eastcliff and that was an issue in the organization of the Physical Plant structure at the university, which was headed, at the time, by Bill Thomas. I don't know whether you knew Bill Thomas. Bill was a very strong administrator but a very tough-minded guy. He happened to be African-American. I thought highly of Bill but I didn't think he was great with people. He was trying to reorganize the Physical Plant administration which was a very horizontal administration in which there were
many, many workers, employees, union people and very few management people and great inefficiencies, almost featherbedding-like inefficiencies. If you sent somebody out to put up a painting in your office, two people went out: one to drive and the other to hang the painting in the office. The driver stayed and waited downstairs while the worker did the work.

CAC: You know this better than any of us; but, each of us has had a personal experience precisely what you’re speaking.

KK: Yes. This was a terrible waste of money.

CAC: Terrible. It sapped morale of faculty down the line.

KK: It did. By the way, if it was a half a day job and lunch came along, the worker went downstairs, got into the truck with the driver and they drove back to the main building, ate their lunch and, then, came back here. We had all sorts of inefficiencies. Bill Thomas, following his own and consultations with others, wanted to restructure it so that, in fact, there were managers over thirty or forty workers. I think forty was the number he was looking for.

CAC: I would guess that Dave Lilly had part of this reorganization?

KK: He worked with Dave and Dave was very interested in doing it. It all made sense. But, of course, there were lots of end runs to the regents because Dave Roe was a regent, the head of the AFL-CIO and he said, “You’re moving money from workers to management and that’s the wrong way to go. We think this guy, Thomas, is all wrong.” Worse than Roe—Roe in his opposition was always very open—was that some people in the Physical Plant structure got to Chuck McGuiggan, the chairman of the board. It wasn’t hard to get to him because Chuck used to make a practice of coming onto the campus, and walking the shop floor, and talking to people and, essentially, creating his constituency in the Physical Plant.

CAC: What was he, himself?

KK: He, at that time, was chairman of the Board of Regents.

CAC: Yes, I know, but what was his profession?

KK: He’s a dentist down in, I guess, Marshall, Minnesota. Chuck came to see me during that time. He said, “You’ve got a real problem. You’ve got to fire this guy Thomas. He’s causing lots of trouble in the Physical Plant.” I said, “Chuck, I can’t do that. He’s got the authority. I don’t have any reason for second guessing him. He’s been open in these recommendations. He thinks they make sense. Dave Lilly thinks they make sense. I don’t think I ought to sit here and make a different judgment because they make sense to me, too.” He said, “It’s going to cause a lot of trouble.” This was, perhaps, November of 1987 or thereabouts. Now, I have some things I’ve pieced together after the fact. January of 1988 is when, all of a sudden, an article
appears in the *Minnesota Daily* . . . a great revelation about the money being spent at Eastcliff. The thrust of it was that this was information they got from secret sources in a revelatory way; that is, it was revealed to them otherwise secret. They didn't bother to find out that none of this was secret; that is, it was all known because we'd been through it. In subsequent conversations—Clarke, we all have to put this in some perspective—my friends on the *Daily* , reporters, said, "You know where we got this from? We got it in anonymous telephone call from someone that everyone of us knows was Chuck McGuiggan." He had called without giving his name to pass on this secret, which led to the article. That article stimulated others in which none of the information from 1985 came out and we were dealing with the costs of Eastcliff, which then became a focus not as a comparative thing but as an absolute thing. My god! $40,000 on a fence, $100,000 to remove paint! What kind of stuff is going on? So, it began to build and it builds from January to March. Of course, at the time that this came up and once there were this *Daily* article and follow-ups from the two newspapers, that led the Board of Regents to say, "We need to consider this," but to consider it now in a highly politicized context in which their great fear was they were going to get tarred with all of this; so, the meetings that we held were of a kind in which the regents said, "My god! what's going on over at Eastcliff?" Now, you have to understand that they were entertained two or three times a year at Eastcliff and, each time, we went on a tour of what was being done in the house. That's what you did. They wanted to see every detail of every change. Every time they were there over the past three years, we'd gone through and we'd shown them, this much has been done and this much hasn't been done. Of course, in the public setting, they were put on the spot.

I think there's something else worth saying and understanding: how our board has worked with the presidents. Because of the political nature of the Board of Regents of the university, there was a mode of action which usually ran as follows: what regents needed to do was to establish their political position in comfortable ways, which usually meant attacking the administration. What did that mean? If you had to raise tuition, then all the regents would make a statement that it's a terrible idea to raise tuition; but, since they knew what the budget required, they, then, would vote for raising tuition. But, they would have established their position by those public statements. What was the game? The game was the administration is strong enough to survive these sorts of slings and arrows and we're going to vote with the administration anyway. Generally, that was the case. What they didn't recognize was that, in this case, I was personally vulnerable. This was an attack not to someone in a strong position but someone who had been weakened by this general play and, therefore, it exacerbated that situation very seriously. It appeared as if that was a problem.

[break in the interview]

This was building on the regents. As I said before, it began with this conflict between, in my view, Chuck McGuiggan and the Physical Plant administration. There was an undercurrent, one that is always very difficult to assess. That undercurrent was that part of the objection to what Bill Thomas was doing was the fact that Bill Thomas was an African-American. What do I know about that? Nothing directly. I certainly had reasons, particularly in my conversations
with Chuck McGuiggan, to believe that it was not so much that that was a prime motivating force but that that was a less than primary, a secondary, fact that came into play and almost as if—if you were to take the worst possible interpretation—it was sort this is an African-American who doesn't quite know his place. Now, I have to emphasize that that's putting a larger interpretation on it. You have to understand that one of the issues that has also come up with Chuck McGuiggan subsequently, as well as other things associated with my situation, was the argument that there was some anti-Semitism associated with it.

CAC: Yes.

KK: I think there are a couple of things I have to say to that.

[Tape 4, Side 1]

[Tape 4, Side 2]

CAC: You were starting [to speak] about the anti-Semitism implicit and whatever.

KK: Yes. Let me just finish up some of the dynamics and, then, come back to that. I had to deal with Bill Thomas first because Bill Thomas and the Physical Plant were at the beginning of this thing and not too many people know it.

CAC: Yes.

KK: That was there at the beginning and not only had I been aware of it because I was aware of how Dave Roe, in an open way, objected to the reorganization and Chuck McGuiggan, in a much more surreptitious way, objected to it but in subsequent years, in the years that followed my leaving, I received a couple of letters, one signed and one unsigned, from people associated with the Physical Plant . . . managers, saying, "I hope you know that you were never intended to be a target of all of this," and that was an unforeseen consequence, that people were looking for an issue that would make Physical Plant look bad. Why? The Physical Plant was responsible for the renovations of Eastcliff so the real issue was their inefficiency and incapacity to have controlled the project that was under attack initially . . . in these revelations. Of course, that isn't the way it came out and, more than that, since we were dealing almost entirely with perceptions rather than any reality . . .

CAC: Of course.

KK: There wasn't any reality that could offset the perceptions along the way. It built. It built for lots of reasons in the state and I was part of the reason. Of course, Commitment to Focus . . . this as an issue that appeared to be symbolic of Keller's elitism, that he wanted to build this palace on the Mississippi River banks . . . that was certainly an issue in the whole thing. At the time, there was a circulation war going on between the Minneapolis and St. Paul papers so each
wanted to outdo the other. If you study the newspapers, what you will discover, first of all, is that there were about forty days in a row in which there was a story on what was going on associated with Eastcliff and, then, it became my suite of offices at the university in which, at one point, evening television actually had a picture of my office with a price tag on every item in it.

CAC: [laughter] I shouldn't laugh at this.

KK: That, by the way, was done by the university's interior decorator. He came to me and he said, "I'm going to put this is and that in." I kept saying, "Yes." I'm going to come back to my role in it. This all kept building and, then, the university reserves, which we talked about earlier, came into it.

CAC: I suppose part of the elitism is changing the standards of admissions or preparation?

KK: All the aspects of Commitment to Focus were parts of the elitism argument. At the same time that the front pages had these damaging stories, if you turned to the editorial page, you got a tongue-clucking, "What is all this fuss about?" Everybody knows this is minor. Keller has raised a lot of money. He's doing a lot of these things. These are non-issues." But, of course, nobody reads the editorial pages. They read the front pages. What we had was this daily dichotomy between the supportive message I always got ... CAC: From both papers?

KK: ... from both papers on the editorial page and the terrible treatment on the front page. It leads and gets worse, and worse, and worse. Actually, the weekend before I resigned, I had a Friday morning meeting with the Board of Regents which I read as only weakly supportive. I met over the weekend with a number of people. I mentioned earlier how much I depended on Steve Dunham. I met with Steve, and with Rick Heydinger, and with Stan Kegler, and with D.J. Leary.

CAC: Oh, yes. I have an interview with him. He doesn't talk about this.

KK: He was there. I block on the name of the other fellow who ran a PR [public relations] firm and was active in DFL [Democratic Farmer Labor] politics ... a dark-haired fellow who has had a stroke since. We met and we talked, and talked, and talked. I decided—that was on a Sunday afternoon—that it was time, that I had to step aside and so I did. By the way, the day before I resigned or maybe the day I resigned, there was a paid advertisement in one of the papers with several hundred signatures of university faculty, asking me not to do it. It was very meaningful to me and supportive and comforting. It didn't change my decision. I had other people call. George Latimer called about that time and said, "Don't do it. I know you're thinking about it. Don't do it. This will pass." Through the course of those months—although people have misinterpreted it—Rudy Perpich was actually quite supportive, not publicly so but in his own...
interesting and bizarre way, he was supportive. His answer was, “Move out of Eastcliff. That will really show them.”

CAC: [laughter]

KK: His other approach was, “Throw a hand grenade somewhere else.” I think he wanted me to close Morris or Crookston. I said, “Why would I want to do that?” He said, “It’s going to draw a lot of attention away.” [laughter] I said, “You can’t make decisions that way, governor.” Anyway, I resigned. Along the way, there were some things that happened that raised the issue of whether there was any anti-Semitism at work. At least, one of the columnists had referred to me as a “dark New Yorker,” in print . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

KK: . . . which sounded euphemistic. There were other suggestions of not knowing Minnesota ways. But, I have to say that I never was a believer in that. Others remained convinced of it but, in all of my experience in Minnesota, for over twenty years at that point, I had never had that feeling. In no small town that I ever went into in Minnesota did I feel it.

CAC: Ken, don’t you think that relates to the action of several board members on the Board of Regents, in an earlier search?

KK: Everybody went back to the L.J. Lee incident with David Saxon.

CAC: Yes.

KK: There were others on the board. Yes, there was certainly reasons for thinking it in that respect.

CAC: Yes.

KK: The issues that I went through were first looking and trying to assess personally whether or not I felt that I’d had interactions in which that was an issue and I need to state for the record that I never felt it. I never came away thinking that if people wanted to dislike me, that would be their first line of attack, that that had played an important role. The only thing that countered that—although, that was a matter of public discussion and it existed—is that Garrison Keillor wrote a letter in to the paper once suggesting that that was an issue. Others did as well. What I did get, rather unequivocally, were a number of indications that Chuck McGuiggan had been making serious anti-Semitic remarks at the legislature, which began when David Lebedoff became chairman of the Board of Regents. David, Jewish, was chairman and I was president. Chuck had left the office and I’m sure was bitter as a result of it. He was widely quoted by a number of people of unimpeachable veracity as saying, “What we’re dealing with is that this place is being run by Jews. We ought to call it the ’Jew-niversity of Minnesota.’” He made these
as open remarks apparently—again, it's second hand. I have no proof of it but I can tell you that a number of people said that to me, enough so that it was raised as an issue and there was a formal investigation by Pat Mullen, that followed my resignation, on whether or not there was any truth to it, the outcome of which was that there was a strong suggestion that he had, in fact, said this but nobody could so clearly pin it on him as to ask for his resignation. It kind of disappeared in the chaos on one hand and on the other hand, without true resolution. It was the only clear evidence that I ever had that that was at work. I think that, as I said, there were other things that went kaput, too. I'm not prepared to say, "It was true."

What I said earlier is that, naturally, one of the things I've thought about is my own role in all of this. The least thing that I would accuse myself of is that I hadn't paid sufficient attention, first, to the Board of Regents so that I didn't have a depth of support that would have carried me through this. I mentioned that earlier. I had operated in strong contrast to the way Peter Magrath did.

CAC: Yes.

KK: While I thought that it was more important to pay attention to things going on in the university, I think it was costly in this case. I don't think I ignored the board. I think I tried very hard to teach the board but teaching the board is a little bit different from nurturing and taking care of the board. I think that was the first thing.

CAC: Or deferring . . .?

KK: Or deferring to the board, right. The second thing is that I didn't properly read the need for public relations, for handling this as a public relations' issue. I made the assumption that it would be seen for what I think it was: a minor, trivial issue that ought to be viewed in the light of a lot of other things that I was doing. For too long, I did not organize a public relations' response. I responded. I apologized, or I explained, or I did these things but it was not the kind of effort that I think would be mounted at the university today under such a threat. That second thing leads to what is probably the thing that I most strongly accuse myself of and that is a certain degree of hubris, which is really present in the second . . . There are two ways of looking at the role of public relations. One is to say that it's a kind of self-serving crafted non-response that lacks integrity. You can argue that that's what it is.

CAC: Sure, spinning, we call it.

KK: Right, it's spinning. But, the other is to say that it's a necessary response and you cannot assume that your magnetism and personal worth are so obvious to everybody that you needn't engage in that sort of thing. That's the sense in which I would accuse myself of some hubris, of thinking that the very quality of my role spoke for itself.

CAC: And it was widely recognized so this was not entirely an isolated matter.
KK: Yes, but, nevertheless, I think it was a fair accusation. I think that I didn't think often enough or seriously enough of this question of public perception. I don't think I had ignored it entirely but I don't think I gave sufficient credence to it. I felt that you had to establish a presence, that the university had to have a style, that things had to look in a certain way. Today, as I look back on it, I see that, at least part of that, has elements that could reasonably be identified as hubris, not arrogance and not elitism—I sort of choose the word carefully—but hubris in the sense of giving more to your credibility, to your capacity than you warrant, of taking on a role that isn't necessarily yours. As the years have gone by, I've thought that that might be the fairest criticism. Now, having said that, I'm not prepared to view myself as the most important factor in what happened. I don't think so. I think that certainly there were circumstances in what happened. I was in some ways hurt by those circumstances. In trying to fairly apportion where blame resides, I would certainly say that the media and the regents, some of the regents in particular, were largely responsible for what happened. I don't think that, in any event like that, remove from yourself some of the burden for how you reacted to it and what you did about it. I would be wiser today.

CAC: You had a very full calendar.

KK: Yes.

CAC: You, earlier, noted all of the addresses out in the community you were giving all the time.

KK: Yes. I was there and I believe I was effective there. I also believe that not only did I not ignore the people in Minnesota, I really liked them.

CAC: Sure.

KK: I liked being out at those things. I enjoyed my times out there. I enjoyed being with people around the state. I enjoyed explaining the university. I enjoyed arguing for quality in the institution, arguing that that was serving people. I enjoyed all of those sessions.

CAC: On that ground, both Hasselmo and Yudof—though Yudof is here very briefly—have been following the same overall strategy?

KK: Yes, I think so. I think they both were very sensitive to that. Nils had the great advantage, of course, of that Minnesota accent that sounded a little Swedish. [laughter] Nils is a great gentleman.

CAC: Yes, he really is.

KK: He's a good human being so I think he carried it off. Nils, certainly with my great gratitude, was always extremely kind about me and to me and about carrying forward with some of the things we tried to get started and very publicly so, to his credit and courage. Before he
was chosen as president, he was saying those things. It wasn't after he had the security of that role. It's a funny thing... when Nils was going through his difficulties, I, obviously, heard about them and thought about them. I thought that for a long time I was criticized for not being more like him and, then, he started getting criticized for not being more like me.

CAC: [laughter]

KK: One began to think that maybe it didn't have anything to do with either Nils or me. [laughter]

CAC: Yes.

KK: If you have any questions, I can answer them; but, that was just to put a few additional issues on the table in what was, certainly, an exhaustively talked about, written about set of circumstances.

CAC: You spoke at the end of having a small group on a Sunday that you talked with.

KK: Yes.

CAC: Did you share this with any member or members of the Board of Regents at that crisis point?

KK: I met with them on a Friday morning just before a regents' meeting, the regular Friday once-a-month regents' meeting, and this was the Sunday following that. So, I'd already met with them. There were some I dealt much more closely with, particularly Vern Long and Lauris Krenik and I did speak to them on the phone before I made the announcement and, of course, David Lebedoff, who was chairman of the board... those were the three. I talked generally about my relations with the board but the board was not a singular group.

CAC: Of course not.

KK: My relations with different ones on the board was different and there are a few things that are worth saying. Perhaps, it was obvious that I would have a relatively close relation with David Lebedoff. Lebedoff had chaired the search committee that picked me. He was the chairman of the board. We knew each other well. We dealt with each other a lot.

CAC: You shared earlier an activity in the Democratic Farmer Labor party.

KK: That's right; although, we were on different sides of the issue there.

CAC: Oh, I see.
KK: I was a McCarthy supporter in those days and he was not.

CAC: He was for [Hubert H.] Humphrey.

KK: He was a Humphrey supporter. I was part of the group that I think he wrote very cleverly about but critically about. Our personal relationship was good and I suppose one would expect it to be good. What was much less understood by people though, who thought of me as the eastern transplant to Minnesota who was associated with the Twin Cities' elitists of one sort or another, was that the people next to whom I was most close on the board were, actually, Lauris Krenik and Vern Long, the farm regents who I thought of as wonderful people, who understood what I was trying to do, who were not close to me politically because I was a DFLer on the other side of things but who understood and who appreciated the notion of making this university excellent because that served people best. I had a very close association with them and they were very, very strong supporters as was the regent from Albert Lea, who took over as chairman of the board, a lawyer from Albert Lea—I've blocked his name now—who was also a very good person. He came in questioning, and asked his questions, and took the answers, and agreed with the answers. The other person that's worth saying about I think is Wenda Moore. Wenda had objected . . . I think Wenda was the only person to vote against me as president. But, Wenda saw, in what was happening at the end, a kind of populist uprising and discriminatory action against me that she was offended by. She, actually, was supportive of me at the end and did not want me to leave the office. She said, "You started the job and you ought to get to finish it." During those three years, she came to—I'd always respected her—respect what I was doing more and to believe that this was not aimed in any negative way at the minorities communities within the university.

CAC: Was she sensitive at all to the Physical Plant director and that situation?

KK: She knew about it . . . I think she did.

CAC: That may have had a part . . .

KK: That could well have had a part in it because, of course, I was certainly supportive of Bill Thomas.

CAC: Yes.

KK: At the end, she expressed herself well to me. Because it's easy to treat the board as one uniform group, I think it's important to know they weren't.

CAC: They must always be fragmented or almost always.

KK: They are and there are different points of view that play out differently.
CAC: Certainly, I've seen that in the few people I've interviewed out of the Hasselmo Administration.

KK: Yes.

CAC: I'll be doing him this winter in Arizona.

KK: The fact is that even in my much less close relation with the board than what Peter Magrath had, nevertheless, the relationship has to be a strong one. You have to know each of these people well and you have to be talking to them frequently. I did but not as frequently as McGuiggan would want. He's the one person, I'm sure, I come across as speaking negatively about because I feel negatively about him. Chuck Casey was the other person who I was very, very close to. All the non-Twin Cities' regents, were the ones I was close to. Some of the regents told me that McGuiggan had called them. He had told me that I had to stay in contact with the board. I said, "Fine. I believe in that." Then, he called the board members and told them that he wanted them to keep written records of when I spoke to them to be able to report on how often I called them and whether they initiated the call or I initiated the call to provide him, essentially, with the score card—which most of them just ignored but some of them told me about. [laughter] It was an impossible situation.

CAC: Impossible and improper.

KK: Yes, very bad—but over. If you reach an end of something like this, I think it's worth saying that I look back on it feeling as close to the institution as I did then. I separate myself from its politics now but not from a great affect and connection with the place. It's the place you and I spent our whole academic lives.

CAC: It's interesting that in politics, which is quite another environment and situation, a recurring theme is the devastation of losing an election. It takes a good politician years, sometimes never, to recover from that.

KK: Yes.

CAC: It killed Hubert Humphrey. He got cancer but . . . There are many other cases. The only person I know who has survived better is [Walter F.] Fritz Mondale.

KK: Mondale has done well and [President Jimmy] Carter.

CAC: Oh, Carter, yes!

KK: His great post-presidency is . . .

CAC: It's terrible . . . it's not only losing the presidency but any important position.
KK: Oh, yes, it's true. It changed Rudy Boschwitz and I'd voted against him. It sure changed him. Yes, I think that's true. I think it's hurt Dave Durenberger. We could think of lots of examples.

CAC: Oh, yes. Have we exhausted that?

KK: I think so.

CAC: Let's end then, if we may, with a few comments about...you went from Princeton and, then, picked up this assignment with the Council on Foreign Relations?

KK: Yes, we went to Princeton with the idea of staying a year or so and figuring out what to do next and reading, which I did a lot of. I didn't teach; although, finally, one semester I did teach in the Woodrow Wilson School which is where I got set up. It was a wonderfully reflective time and a time to think about a lot of the issues. I'd been there about a year or a little over a year when a friend of mine, who was one of the officers at the Council on Foreign Relations—an organization with which I'd had nothing to do—called and said that the board of trustees at the council had been discussing the role that science and technology might be exerting in international affairs and foreign policy, something the council had not looked at before.

CAC: And very few other groups.

KK: Almost nobody had looked at that.

CAC: What a profound importance!

KK: It struck me as important. What they wanted to do was bring in a consultant to help them think about what sorts of issues change that broad statement into something specific. What were the issues? Beyond that, was there a role that the council could play as a think tank in doing something about them? I agreed to come in and we talked. I agreed to serve as a consultant to their board to report on what this could be about. This was 1990. I worked some months on it and made a report in which I said, essentially, "Yes, this is important. There are lots of interesting areas that range from economic competitiveness, to world health, to environment issues, to information technology, to a whole range of things that are affecting international affairs. The interesting thing is it's a two-way street; that is, in one sense, science and technology are changing the choices in foreign affairs, changing the constraints, changing the possibilities and, on the other side, what we do in foreign affairs, we're affecting the development of science and technology so it's a two-way street.

CAC: At an accelerated pace, Ken, in the last fifteen, twenty years.

KK: Yes, enormous rates of change. I said that there were lots of interesting things one could study at the council and I proposed that that be another activity under a senior fellow. They
accepted that and came back and said, "Why don't you come aboard as a visitor for a year? We have a visiting fellowship. Help us get a program like that started." I came aboard as a visitor, and during the course of that year, helped them to raise some money to endow the program. That turned out to be more successful than we thought. In fact, they were able to establish a chair in science and technology policy and having done that, they said, "Now, we've got a chair. You don't have anything better to do . . .

CAC: Come sit in it.

KK: . . . why don't you come sit in it?" I got involved with them. Of course, at that time, this was a real career shift again but one that, in some sense, brought together a lot of pieces for me because I'd been involved, obviously, in science and research as a chemical engineer and a biomedical engineer. I'd certainly gotten involved in public policy as president of a university, a university with lots of international contact so I'd thought a lot about things going on elsewhere in the world.

CAC: But, Ken, when you were a kid, you were with [Admiral Hyman George] Rickover.

KK: I was with Rickover early on. Although, I would not have merely said, "This is obvious for you," when all of it came together, I said, "This is obvious." The other thing about it—much like bio-medical engineering—again, it allowed me to paint with a broad brush stroke. This was not refining what a lots of other people had thought about but being able to define a new kind of feeling.

CAC: Asking the right questions.

KK: Yes, great fun to do; although as somebody pointed, out in policy matters . . . Where did I read this? Oh, this was a speech by Sidney Drell who used to run Stanford's linear accelerator or one of the Lawrence labs out there. He made the statement that I've often made in science and scholarship. "The difficult issue is defining the question. Once you've defined the question right, you churn the answer. But, it politics and policy, it's the opposite."

CAC: Ah, right.

KK: The question is clear. The answer isn't very clear. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

KK: It does change things as to how you approach that. It made a lot of sense so I went to New York. Bonita said, "We're happily settled in Princeton. Here's the train." We stayed in Princeton. We'd already bought a house and settled in and I started commuting to New York, as many people do from Princeton. That was a revelation. That was six years of . . .
CAC: It was that long?

KK: Oh, yes . . . very, very intense education in international affairs. I don’t think there can be another place in the world, another institution in the world—private—that has the convening power of the Council on Foreign Relations. In the course of a year, the number of world leaders that spoke there to small groups—no group was ever over 100 or 150 and many were much smaller—allowed you to see things and learn. My colleagues, the other senior fellows at the council, were an extraordinary group of people who really were quite bright. In those halls, I probably heard George Kennan four or five times on those things.

CAC: He’s my model of what an old man can do.

KK: It’s extraordinary.

CAC: Just extraordinary!

KK: The man is a thinker, a real thinker.

CAC: And in his eighties, yes.

KK: Nineties.

CAC: Nineties, now.

KK: We celebrated his ninetieth birthday and he gave a very interesting talk. I think, in many ways, it was more interesting as history than as one of warning for the future but it raised some very interesting questions about whether it was possible to ever make foreign policy a populist enterprise. Could it work now? He was of the opinion that it couldn’t; but, that is a mark of an era in which George Kennan lived as opposed to the era that we’re now entering. I learned an enormous amount. I did a lot of traveling. I got involved a lot in Latin America. I got more involved in Asia than I had been before. I traveled in Europe. I was able to learn a lot and to push this field forward in a good way. The beginning of not my unhappiness there but a change in role came in 1993 when I’d been there about three years and Les Gelb, the former columnist from the New York Times and deputy editorial page editor, became president of the council. I didn’t know Les Gelb. He called me in and he said he needed help. He needed, essentially, a deputy to help run the place and I was the guy. I was not too happy about that but didn’t see how I could turn him down and did take that on. I didn’t want to do that.

CAC: Did it give you a double job then?

KK: Yes!

CAC: You were still doing the science and technology?
KK: Right, but very hard to do both so the science and technology was suffering in those years. There were many things that had to be done at the administrative level. We had budget issues to take care of. We had lots and lots of fund raising. We had to reorganize the council in a style that was more suitable to Les Gelb who is very idiosyncratic, a very bright fellow but wanted to do things quite differently in a much more hands-on way than the previous administration. There was a lot to be done and I did that for almost three years.

CAC: That made a long day to commute back to Princeton.

KK: It made a very long day and it also distracted me to administrative things from the role that I had found most profoundly interesting at the council, which was the intellectual role of defining a new field. At the time, I had started coming back here to the university once a year to teach a course to maintain some connection here. The first year or so, I was teaching in Chemical Engineering but about 1992 or 1993, [G.] Ed[ward] Schuh got me involved in teaching, rather than in Chemical Engineering, in the Humphrey Institute. What did I teach? I taught what I was doing in New York, science, technology, and international affairs. I started coming back here and doing that course. I enjoyed it a lot. It was, essentially, bringing out here to an academic setting what I'd been doing there. Then, he began to talk to me about, "Isn't it time for you to come back to the university?" It's not something that I'd given a lot of thought to before but began to think about—not deeply. Then, he engaged two people in the community: Ed Spencer and Chuck Denny, whom I'd known.

CAC: Good names.

KK: Ed is the former CEO [chief executive officer] of Honeywell and Chuck is the former CEO of ADC Telecommunications. They started calling and saying, "We'd be happy to raise some money to establish an activity in science and technology policy, establish a chair, and you could have the chair." I said, "It's a great idea whether I come back or not. Why don't you raise the money for the chair and, then, we can talk about it." They said, "That's easier said than done. If you were back here, your name is still a popular one in the community and it would make it a lot easier to raise the money. Why don't you come back and, then, we'll do it?" We argued that back and forth for a couple of years and, finally, that's what I agreed to do was to come back. Of course, Bonita and I talked about it. My younger children—then thirteen and six, I guess—didn't think that was a great idea. They'd grown up in Princeton and that's what they knew. We decided to come back. The larger issue, of course, was Bonita and I thinking about how we would be received in the community and how we would feel in the community. I think we came back with a proper sense of both caution and possibility, that we were coming back to a place we loved and to a huge circle of friends that we'd made, and that we now were older and wiser and knew enough to hold off negative publicity and not get badly affected by it if it were to occur. I took a blood vow that I would not get involved in university politics or do anything else which might threaten the continuation of my marriage, if not my life. With all of that in place . . .
CAC: Ed Schuh realized that?

KK: Oh, yes, I made that very clear.

CAC: What portfolios did you pick up then? Excuse me.

KK: Back here?

CAC: Yes.

KK: It really is, within the institute, to develop a center for science and technology policy, to be a professor, to teach, and to advise students. I have a joint appointment in Chemical Engineering so I maintain the umbilicus to my field; although, I haven't done much there right at the moment. Those are the only formal roles. In that role, within the Humphrey Institute, there, obviously, is a portfolio for reaching out to the community because it's an institution that's concerned with public policy.

CAC: It has to be.

KK: That, I felt very good about. I agreed more informally but I think also in the context of what the Humphrey Institute does that I ought to try to develop a nexus for science and technology in international policy issues around the university. Here, we have the great strengths of the medical complex, of the Institute of Technology, of the Institute for Agriculture, and all of those play an important role.

CAC: And the outreach of all of these to the world . . . that's one of the staggering things I've learned in these conversations. I hardly talked to anyone that there isn't some connection . . . often a big one.

KK: That's right. One of the arguments that I've made is that our problem in foreign affairs and George Kennan's problem in foreign affairs has been that it has been primarily an east coast phenomenon. The think tanks are on the east coast with one or two on the west coast.

CAC: Yes.

KK: They never connect to the kinds of interests that are important in an area like the Upper Midwest. In fact, they never connect to the people who make things in this country. That's where the financial institutions and the legal institutions are, on the coasts, but there are not the medical institutions, the agricultural economy . . .

CAC: To say nothing of soybeans!
KK: That's right. Those things aren't there and there is no understanding of how those play a role in the American view of the world or the world's view of American, for that matter. That, we could do here; so, the argument that I made was that a science and technology center here dealing with public policy in international affairs had a unique function that wasn't being met anywhere else in the country and that I found very exciting.

CAC: Have you attracted others as partners for this?

KK: Individuals within the institutions?

CAC: Yes.

KK: Only informally so far but there are lots of them who have an informal interest. We just haven't developed the formal mechanisms but will. Other than that, in the Humphrey Institute, I've tried to play a supportive but low-key role, an informal role. I'm not interested in having any official role in the Humphrey Institute. I think it would be a bad thing and I've made that clear to a lot of people. I have no ambitions to be a dean, or a vice-president, or anything like that and I think people have accepted that.

CAC: I would hope so.

KK: I'd rather be a wise old colleague to the extent that wisdom allows.

CAC: And when you get to be in your nineties, you could be like Kennan.

KK: That's right. [laughter] It's been satisfying. I'm glad I'm back. Our reception in coming back to the Twin Cities has had all the positives and I can't think of any negatives.

CAC: That's a good point to end on.

KK: Good.

[End of Tape 4, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]