

Richard Sauer

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Interview with Richard Sauer

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

**Interviewed on July 17, 1995
University of Minnesota Campus**

Richard Sauer - RS
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers and I'm interviewing this morning, which is Monday, July 17, in my office, Richard Sauer who is currently president and chief executive officer [CEO] of the National 4-H Council but was at the University of Minnesota for some very crucial years of his life and our life, too, and we'll get to that story. I suggested before we turned the machine on that it's always helpful for listeners to know where the person came from; and so, we should establish that first. You weren't a farm boy yourself, you were telling me.

RS: No.

CAC: But you got interested in biological sciences somewhere and, perhaps, there was some individual or some event? You just take an early history and then we'll gallop through your education and your early career.

RS: Okay. I grew up, Clarke, in Cass County, Minnesota, in Walker where the natives are sometimes affectionately referred to as "Jack pine savages." We kind of lived off the land. Tourism was a very important part of it but only part of it because in those years, tourism was really Memorial Day to Labor Day, not the year around outdoors like now. Most families made a living by piecing together three or four pieces of income. They might be a guide on the lake. They might cut timber or pulpwood. Maybe, three or four sources of income like that might add up to give a family \$15,000 or \$20,000 worth of income for the whole family to live on. We ate a lot of wild game. I could talk about eating barbecued beaver and all kinds of unusual things.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: My father had a fourth grade education. He was not born in this country. He was born in [unclear] near the German border.

CAC: Heavens.

RS: He came to this country when he was about six years old. The family all settled in Kansas. They came with his grandfather, my great grandfather, at the time who was sixty-one and brought the whole family to this country. The family settled in Ellis County, Kansas—Bob Dole country—and my father's father, my grandfather didn't like that flat, barren, God-forsaken land. He missed the trees and lakes of Austria; so, he uprooted them and moved them to Cass Lake, Minnesota, where there was employment for non-educated people. There was a large what we called a box factory where they made pallets, and shipping crates, and so on out of the local woods. My father went to school through the fourth grade and then went to work. My mother was born and grew up in Walker, and had education through high school, and Normal School, which was a training period beyond high school to qualify you to teach.

CAC: Yes. Right.

RS: She taught in places like Bena, which is over on the other side of Leech Lake near Federal Dam. They used to say, "There used to be a town here at one time."

CAC: [laughter]

RS: My mother valued education very highly and so it was always important. I was the oldest of three children and doing well in school was a high priority. I guess I was salutatorian in high school, a very small high school. I think it was a graduating class of about thirty-two. I had a scholarship to go to the University of Minnesota in engineering but my mother wasn't so sure that coming here as a freshman was the place for me coming from that small town. So, I turned that scholarship down and went to St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, with no scholarship and my parents working quite hard to help to support me there.

CAC: What year was that?

RS: That would have been the fall of 1957. I graduated from high school in 1957.

CAC: This is just a wild shot. John Brandl was there at the same time. Did you know John?

RS: Right, he was a couple years ahead of me. I probably shined his shoes.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: They had quite an initiation for freshman. You had to wear a beanie until the homecoming football game that fall. Each freshman was assigned to a senior, and you had to take out their trash, and shine their shoes, pretty innocuous things but it was sort of to put you in your place. I actually went there in pre-engineering. I was very good in math, and physics, and that kind of stuff and I was going to transfer to the university after two years. I was getting essentially

straight As in math and physics when I realized, after about a year, that I had picked that because it was easy for me not because I was interested in it. My interest really was connected to biological sciences and I think connected back to all the time I had spent hunting and fishing and outdoors; so, I switched majors to a major in biology and a minor in chemistry. I made a professor at St. John's, a Father Hughes, very angry because he was a very demanding task master. He gave only two As in Engineering Drawing, and I got one of them, and he felt it had been wasted because I had changed my major; so, he was not happy with me. It was the right move for me. I majored in biology, and took a lot of chemistry, and had an interest in teaching, and wanted to teach . . .

CAC: How did you know that?

RS: I don't know. My mother was a teacher at one time. I admired teachers. I particularly admired a man named, Ed Hibbard, who was on the faculty at St. John's, a layman not a priest, who was a very avid outdoorsman and also a very good teacher. In fact, he took me along hunting and fishing a lot when I was a student. I'll come back to him later but he was an ABD, all but dissertation. He encouraged me to look at graduate school. I applied at three places when I graduated from St. John's: Michigan State, the University of Michigan, and the University of Illinois in zoology departments. I ended up going to Michigan on a fellowship. About half way through that I was wondering whether I wanted to go on for a Ph.D. or not. I was interested in teaching. I had decided to take my education credits at that time—I didn't do it as an undergraduate—so I was certified to speak so to speak in the secondary system. I practice taught at Ann Harbor High School. I was actually offered a job there but about that same time there used to be a museum seminar series at the University of Michigan Zoology Museum where you'd bring your brown bag over lunch once a week and some professor would show slides, talk about whatever. There was a professor named Irving Cantrell, who I wouldn't say was really a mentor in any way, but he showed a bunch of slides about spiders. I got very interested and intrigued in spiders. I took an entomology course—they really only had one; it was that was the Zoology Department—and became very interested in insects and spiders generally. About that time, my father's health was not very good and I was also interested in maybe getting back closer to home. One thing led to another and I ended up with a NDEA [National Defense Education Act], or whatever it was at that time—this was following Sputnik and they were concerned about producing more scientists—fellowship at North Dakota State University in the Entomology Department, which got me back within 120 miles of my home town.

CAC: Was your degree in Michigan?

RS: I did a masters's degree in zoology, an MS, a Master's of Science in zoology, and got the qualifications to teach high school if I ever wanted to.

CAC: Okay.

RS: I turned down the teaching job, and at the last moment accepted the fellowship at North Dakota State, and that was sort of a crossroads of my career because I might have gone off into teaching at the secondary level for quite some time. Ann Arbor High School at that time was one of the top ten high schools in the United States; so, it was an attractive kind of place for a young teacher to start, and lots of resources, and lots of intellectual resources in the community with the University of Michigan right there. So, I went to North Dakota State, and I did a Ph.D. in entomology, and my doctoral thesis was on the crab spiders of North Dakota, which is a pretty obscure topic.

CAC: Most dissertations are.

RS: Right. It was taxonomy, and biology, and ecology. I'd known too many people with ABD degrees, including the one I mentioned at St. John's so I was determined that I was not going to leave, even though by that time we had three children. My wife and I had married just before I started my graduate work at Michigan. She was a student at the College of St. Benedict, three miles away from St. John's University. By the time I finished my graduate work at North Dakota State, we had three children but I had determined that I wasn't going to leave until every member of my committee had approved the first draft of my dissertation—even though we were living on \$250 a month, in student housing, where \$100 of that was going for rent. I was determined that the only way I was going to finish was do that.

CAC: Either you were very bright or you had a very good adviser. I mean, a lot of kids don't know that.

RS: Well, I'd just seen too many people struggle for years trying to do a full time job and finish their degree; and it was from seeing the problems they'd faced from not doing it, I guess. It maybe also went all the way back to the days when my mother made sure that when I was in school, I finished something.

CAC: It's known as the Protestant ethic. [laughter]

RS: Yes. My father was Lutheran and my mother was Catholic. I was raised a Catholic but it was all part of this values set and work ethic that you find in this part of the country, perhaps. By the end of 1966, I had a draft written that every committee member had kind of said, "If you make these changes, it looks okay." Then, I took a teaching job at St. Cloud State College in the biology department. The department chair was kind to me to give me a very light load the first quarter, the winter quarter, so that I could make the final changes. I typed my own dissertation. I couldn't afford to pay somebody to type it; so, I went and met with the dean of the graduate school . . .

CAC: You're talking to a fellow who did the same thing, Dick.

RS: This was a long dissertation, 180 pages, plus drawings.

CAC: That's a lot for entomology.

RS: I went and met with the dean of the graduate school at North Dakota State and I said, "I want to type my own but I don't want to do it with four carbon copies. This was the day when they were still producing these carbons and . . . he didn't know about that . . . the policy was carbons. I said, "I want to do one of these new photo offset, or multi-lith, or whatever processes." He wasn't so sure and I said, "Well, let me think about it." I went to the library and pulled out an old carbon of an old dissertation, and took it to him, and showed him how illegible it was. I said, "Now, look at this. Thirty years from now mine is going to be on the shelf like this and somebody can hardly read it." Then I took him copies from a new multi-lith process. It was sort of the forerunner of the xerox machines.

CAC: Yes.

RS: You typed on kind of a master and corrected the master and then you made copies and all the copies looked like originals; so, I took him some and he wanted to know how I could guarantee the permanency. I said the permanency is at least as good as this carbon in the library; and so finally, he let me be a guinea pig and do it. After that then, they changed the policy and allowed other procedures.

CAC: So, you were an innovator very early on.

RS: I suppose. I rented a typewriter when we were in St. Cloud and spent my evenings and weekends getting this finished. I went back in March of 1967 and defended it, right at the end of winter quarter, and I was done and I assumed a greater teaching load. I enjoyed teaching. I think I was good at it. I had lots of good feedback from the students but I was missing something and it wasn't the research per se. I never was a great researcher. I never thought I wanted to spend most of my career doing research. I missed the interaction with people doing research. When you'd go to the faculty coffee lounge at St. Cloud State, people were talking about grading, and exams, and all this stuff, and there was no talk about science, not much. I remember people that were good friends of mine and we spent a lot of time in the outdoors, fishing and other things but I missed that. A former faculty adviser of mine, not my major professor, but a member of my committee who was on the faculty of North Dakota State . . . a guy by the name of Dean Haynes . . . left and went to Michigan State on the faculty and he'd been trying to get me to come there. He was trying to get me in more of a research position than I wanted to be in and, finally, there was a position available in what was called the Department of Natural Science. It actually was a program set up to teach science to teachers. It was the bridge between a College of Education and a College of Natural Science. At that time, there were programs like the Academic Year Institute that were big. The Academic Year Institute was set up by the federal government to upgrade the science knowledge of elementary and secondary teachers where teachers could take a one-year leave from their teaching job and in two summers plus an academic year, they could do a master's degree. So, I was hired into a nine-month teaching position where I taught biology to those teachers, all of whom were older than me.

Then, I taught biology to elementary teachers. I took a summer appointment in the Entomology Department doing some research. Two years later, a position opened up in the Entomology Department that was heavily Extension with some teaching. To me Extension was a form of teaching, and so I took that, and I did various things in extension Entomology. I produced a weekly newsletter that went to all the county agents in the state, alerting them to insect conditions. I taught economic entomology and some other courses and did a little research on spiders. I went there in 1968 and I took that Extension job two years later in 1970 and did that until mid 1974. I'd gotten involved, because I had a department chair who was so involved nationally, in doing some work with national committees. At that time there was a large university/USDA/EPA Coordinating Committee for Environmental Quality, Monitoring, Education, and Research, a big long title, because this was in the mid 1970s when the issues had all surfaced around the environmental damage being caused by persistent pesticides, DDT and other chlorinated hydrocarbons. So, it drew together university talent, USDA talent, and the Environment Protection Agency to try and reach some compromise agreements around some of the issues. One of the issues that emerged out of all the control of the use of these pesticides was that there were not pesticides available for growers of minor and specialty crops, high volume, low acreage crops, like a celery or some other vegetable or fruit. The company wouldn't make the investment anymore required by the federal government to get it cleared to be used on a crop; so, these farmers were left without the protection they needed to produce the high quality produce. So, I got involved in that. They needed somebody to pull together the report they had developed. I flew around the country and met with the major committee members, pulled together all the pieces, and wrote the report for them. It led to my taking a year's leave to work with the Department of Agriculture in Washington with—not the Extension Service—what then was called the Cooperative State Research Service which administered the agricultural research funds that went to state experiment stations.

CAC: I'm going to interrupt here for a moment to make an observation for posterity, that at a very young age two things at least are clear. One is you were beginning to shape your career in unusual ways, and consciously and deliberately so, and that's not often done with other people I've talked to. The other is that you're right into interdisciplinary administration very early, very early.

RS: I was very interested in interdisciplinary collaboration and getting people of different backgrounds to work together; so, that's true, and I did make some conscious decisions because early on I had decided I wanted to teach in a university setting, and then later on I decided there were some other things I wanted to do, too, but I wasn't sure what. I had some interest in administration and management but I suppose that experience to pull together that major report was a little piece of it because of the people I worked with. What happened is that after a year's leave in Washington in this research agency where the administrator wondered why they were recommending me to come in and replace an entomologist who was going on leave for a year, because I came out of an extension background . . . I did establish a certain amount of credibility and I think they felt good after the year at what I'd done but my plans were to go back to Michigan State and go back into extension entomology. I was interested in integrated pest

management which was really emerging at that time and it really came out of entomology because I think entomology as a discipline was in more trouble than any other. They had much more depended on hard core pesticides. They had had enormous problems with insect resistance to those chemicals, and they needed a different approach, and the solution didn't lie with entomologists only. It had to involve getting plant pathologists, and entomologists, and plant breeders, and economists working together. In fact, if you go back to Michigan State today, the Entomology Department has more interdisciplinary connections than any department in the university. They work with system science, and engineers, and resource economists. Then integrated pest management moved more into other disciplines but it started in entomology. So, my interest was there. I'd been back at Michigan State six weeks when my department chair got a call from the director of the Agriculture Experiment Station. That man's name was Sylvan Whitwere. He wanted to know if I could be the acting associate director. It turns out that Michigan State had just gone through a musical chairs at the top; and they took a provost who was an outstanding ecologist and very ineffectual as a provost, which often happens.

CAC: Sometimes happens.

RS: Universities take people out of faculty positions and put them in. And they moved him aside. I would call that in management circles creating a floating ancillary apex.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: And we have a few of them floating around this campus by the way, which we could talk more about. [laughter] They took the associate director of the Experiment Station who really ran the Experiment Station because the director was an international traveler, and he was much interested in international agricultural development, and wasn't there very much. He let the associate director make all the tough decisions. They took the dean of the college, a guy named Larry Boger, and made him acting provost, dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. They took the associate director and made him acting dean and then they said, "Ah ha! this young faculty member just came back from Washington and knows all the ins and outs of the bureaucracy of administering these funds, he could be our associate director."

CAC: Interpose again just for the record so people can see this. How old were you then?

RS: That would have been 1975. I would have been thirty-six.

CAC: You were doing all these things in your early thirties?

RS: Yes, I was pretty young. I finished my Ph.D. when I was twenty-seven because I went right straight through. One of the reasons I almost decided to stop during my master's degree at Michigan is I was getting tired of going to school. Maybe, I just felt I needed a break but I continued and, in retrospect, I'm glad I did because would I have gone back? I don't know. I sort of feel like I went to school for twenty-one years from Kindergarten through Ph.D., you

know—and then another twenty-two working in higher education institutions; so I felt like it took me forty-three years to graduate.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: So, I became the acting associate director of the Experiment Station at Michigan State and really ran the Experiment Station. It was a wonderful learning laboratory for me to get involved in in administration and see whether or not I wanted to do that kind of thing.

CAC: Particularly in your fields because Michigan was noted for this?

RS: Right, in Entomology but they were also noted for trying to create interdisciplinary research in agriculture. The director was gone a lot, and had a pretty free hand, and kind of ran the place. I decided before the year was out that what I wanted was that director's job when he retired. But I'd also concluded that it's almost impossible to become the director by being the associate director, just like it's very unusual to become the dean by being the associate dean at the same institution because if you're the good associate dean or good associate director, you're making a lot of the tough budget and personnel decisions. So, I looked at the people who I really admired as experiment station directors and almost everyone had come from being a very successful department head. They had built a very strong academic department. So, I wanted to do that. About ten months into that year, I was offered the department headship in Entomology at Kansas State University. It was an interesting situation. I had been a candidate for other department heads . . . Florida, Virginia Tech . . . even in Michigan State, I was a candidate. The department wanted an external person on an internal person as those things sometimes go. Kansas State was appealing because in the early years, it had been a glorious department that was among the top in the country and it had languished. The father of insect host plant resistance had been on the faculty there at one time and had been very strong in some of these areas but it had a situation where the same person had been head for twenty-three years. It desperately needed some infusion and it was in a very conservative state and university where resources were limited. Of course, I thought I could take it on; so I did and we moved to Kansas. Michigan State tried to keep me there and later on when they sorted out all of the musical chairs in administration, they tried to hire me back as associate director two years later in 1978—I went to Kansas State in 1976—and I turned Michigan State down. They made me an offer that was very attractive. It was more money than I was making as department head and I turned them down because I wanted the director's job. I figured I was going to be department head about seven years maybe at the most and about that time, I would be able to go back to Michigan State.

CAC: In your field in those days, they were heads rather than chairs?

RS: Right. In Agriculture very often, they were heads and then had more authority than chairs.

CAC: You bet.

RS: I think if you asked the faculty, I operated like a chair; in other words, I really involved the faculty in decision making but I wasn't afraid to make decisions and had to in order to make the kind of changes. Kansas State had a very dismal leadership situation. It had a very weak president who stepped down about that time and was being replaced by another weak president. It had a very powerful Experiment Station director who had a political base out in the state with wheat growers and others and then it had created a vice-president for Agriculture. I was really attracted there by this person; he hired me but he really didn't have much control over the Experiment Station director even though the director technically reported to him. The Experiment Station director sat on the research budget and you can't build a strong academic program in a College of Agriculture without having the support of the person who funds the research; so, there was a real internal tussle there and things were getting divided. I had been there about three and one-half years and I finally decided I was going to have to put my foot in the door someplace else in case everything broke loose there. I was not one to shy away from those kinds of controversies. In fact, some early controversy I was involved in St. Cloud resulted in the department chair getting removed because I didn't think he was a strong department chair. That's another story. We don't need to go into that.

CAC: I'm just going to make a general principle that to be this kind of middle management administrator has a down and an up side. You gain a reputation by making sound decisions that are difficult . . . at the same time it does cause trouble.

RS: It does. At Kansas State, I decided to become a candidate for two experiment station director jobs that were open at the time. One was at the University of Nebraska and the other was at the University of Minnesota. I continued to push on the issues there. I had a Sunday morning meeting with the president of the university in his home. He wanted to ask me what he should do to resolve the conflict between people. I told him what he should do. I said, "You ought to just support the vice-president, can the director, and take the heat for six weeks, and get on." He did the worst possible thing he could do; he appointed a committee and not only that but he asked the vice-president to approve a sixth of the committee members, and he asked the Experiment Station director to approve a sixth of the members, and the committee was totally polarized. Both people ended up leaving their jobs. The one that was vice-president is very successful in another job at another university. But I backed the vice-president.

I was a final candidate and asked to interview at both Minnesota and Nebraska. At Minnesota, I was asked to interview for two jobs at once. It was the most incredible interview experience I've ever had because Minnesota was not only searching for a director of the Agriculture Experiment Station but at the same time was searching for a director of the Minnesota Extension Service. I was a finalist for both.

CAC: Now, Bill Hueg was the deputy vice-president by that time?

RS: Bill Hueg was the deputy vice-president over the Institute of Agriculture.

CAC: That was one of the interviews you had?

RS: That would have been my boss, right.

CAC: Had you known Bill by reputation before that?

RS: I knew him somewhat. I got to know him better. In 1978, Bill was an innovator . . . he realized that many people who were coming into the leadership roles in Agriculture, and Forestry, and related fields were coming in without much background about management, administration, leadership; and he felt they needed some training, and some experience, and felt they could learn from the business world. He created a two-week institute for recently appointed administrators in Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics.

CAC: Good grief!

RS: His first goal was to have it available to young and aspiring faculty here to make sure that if there was somebody that might want to be a department head . . . Then he broadened it to the north central region of states and finally made it available to anybody nationally. So, when I participated in it, I suppose half the folks were from the Midwestern states but there were people from across the country.

CAC: You don't mind my interrupting? The university has adopted this just the last year and one-half, university wide.

RS: How interesting. Bill did it for several years and then said, "It's time for somebody else to take this over." It got passed to Kansas State actually. I was on the planning committee to run it at Kansas State and then I ended up leaving to go to Minnesota, which is interesting. Kansas State ran it for two or three years, and then Michigan State ran it, and then nobody else wanted to put the same energy into it. Bill had an unusual group of people here who put the energy into making it. Through that I got to know Bill as a person and his philosophy.

I suppose it was a combination of things. It was coming back to Minnesota. I had always had a lot of respect for the university even though I didn't come here as a student. I wanted to be Experiment Station director very much. Even though I never saw myself spending my career in research, I really enjoyed research administration. Minnesota had a lot of resources. I had left Michigan State, which was a large diverse institution with a lot of resources and went to Kansas State which was much more conservative in a state that was very conservative. I'll tell you how conservative. The state legislature would decide how many state appropriated dollars the university could use for out of state travel. I had a large Entomology Department, twenty-four faculty and our annual allocation of money for out of state travel was \$500; so, I became very aggressive to raise private money to get faculty to meetings because one of the biggest problems with the department was the faculty didn't have any exposure. We went a long way in four years to putting the department back on track. I hired eight faculty in four years, a one-third of the

department . . . that plus other resource acquisition. Minnesota was attractive to me because it had the level of support from the legislature that I was used to in Michigan and there was a lot of flexibility within the university. It was a very open, consultative, decentralized environment. It wasn't run by bureaucrats from the top like Kansas State is. So, there were a lot of reasons it was attractive. It turned out in the search process here, I ended up being the number one candidate in the Experiment Station search and the number two candidate in the Extension search. The offered the Extension job to Norm Brown who was at Michigan State at the time and offered the Experiment Station job to me, and I took it, and moved here in March of 1980.

CAC: This would be a good time, having posterity in mind which is composed of lay persons for the most part, to say something about the role of the Experiment Station, not a long disposition but some explanation. It is an anomaly.

RS: There is a role of experiment stations in a generic sense and there's a role of the Experiment Station in Minnesota which is somewhat different.

CAC: Say something about each.

RS: Some people view experiment stations as experimental research farms and nothing more and Minnesota, like most states, has a network of so-called branch stations. In Minnesota they're in Lamberton, and Morris, and Crookston, and Grand Rapids, and Waseca. Plus, Minnesota has a large piece of property at Rosemount because the research land locally is so limited. There is some plot land over by the St. Paul campus but not very much and it's a constant challenge with the residential neighborhoods every time you spread manure on the field or do anything. The Experiment Station at the University of Minnesota at one time was on the Minneapolis campus and then they got moved to St. Paul with the expansion in the early, early years. Also, they had better land in the trade. The soil it was on over here was not very good. Experiment stations were set up to initially do the research that was necessary to advance agricultural technology in order to improve the productivity of food production in this country and really to free up the labor force for industrial expansion because at one time, most of people were involved in producing food. It was enormously successful. Maybe some would say too successful. I don't think so but as people looked at low prices and populations that had to shift out of rural areas, people would say, "If we had just stayed with eighty acres and a team of mules . . ." But where else in the world can you find the quality of food at the price we're able to buy it for?

The Minnesota Experiment Station is different and it's particularly different due to Bill Hueg, I think. Although the institute was there earlier as something to go beyond the College of Ag and tie several colleges together, Bill really helped it flourish. I don't think there's any experiment station in the country that puts more money into research in a college of home economics than Minnesota does; so, the research in Family Social Science and Clothing and Textiles . . .

CAC: That's done through the Experiment Station?

RS: That's done through the Experiment Station.

CAC: Where are the funds for the Minnesota Experiment Station?

RS: Like all experiment stations, they each receive an allocation of federal funds. It's based on an old formula that is determined by the number of farmers in the state, the amount of rural land, and a lot of other things. Minnesota does fairly well in that. As you might expect states that do extremely well are states like a North Carolina that has many, many small farmers. Minnesota gets a significant check there. Minnesota gets a very large line item appropriation in the university budget for the Experiment Station.

CAC: Is this a legislative special?

RS: Right, it's a legislative special.

CAC: Okay.

RS: And Bill Hueg is the one that built that over the years. He had enormous success in the 1970s, when the legislature had lots of money, in building that. I can't anymore recount the dollar amounts but he also worked hard at integrating it more in the university. It used to be that when he would get the increases for the Experiment Station, it never included any adjustment for faculty salary increases like the general fund at the university; so, he would have to take out of whatever the increase was for research the money to increase salaries, the same as any other faculty in the university. One year, he made a political trade-off that was very important. He gave up any increase in research funding per se and Extension, two specials, if the legislature would agree to apply the same percent salary increase to those as it does to the university's general fund. So, if the legislature decided the university was going to get 4 percent for faculty salaries, it would put the same 4 percent on those two specials. He negotiated that in the back rooms of the capitol and from them on, we didn't have to worry about that.

CAC: I gather this was not an end run. It was without the full approval and knowledge of the chief lobbyists?

RS: Bill always walked on the edge. He tried to work closely with the lobbyists, including Stan Kegler and his predecessors here at the university, but he would always test the system and take it as far as he could go. If you go back and interview somebody like Peter Magrath, I'm sure Bill gave him an upset stomach a lot because he was always working on the edge and was never quite a team player for the whole university. He was enough of one so the university would tolerate him and he was strong enough so the university couldn't . . .

CAC: And he had outstate strength.

RS: Enormous, enormous and he had enormous political strengths—and I learned from that. I, perhaps, was a little bit more of a team player but I had some of the same challenges. I can recall in 1981 after I had been here a year and the university was getting hit by a major retrenchment by the state legislature, Peter Magrath was the president and Ken Keller was the vice-president of Academic Affairs and they asked Norm Brown and I to each cut something like \$600,000 or \$700,000 out of our budget. Norm and I visited and I said, "I'm going to refuse." They wanted us to tell them where we would cut it and what the impact would be. I said, "I'm going to refuse because if I tell them where I can cut \$700,000, it's obvious I can cut \$700,000." I said, "You tell me how much I have to cut and give me a dollar figure that's fair in the context of this cut you're dealing with across the university and then I'll cut it." I had a call from Peter Magrath who was not happy with me. I said, "Peter, I have in front of me an article from the paper where you did just the same thing with the legislature. You said, 'I'm not going to tell where and how we can cut this many million dollars. You tell us what we really have to do to balance the state budget and then we'll figure it out.'" And I said, "I'm doing the same thing."

CAC: Was this when you were vice-president?

RS: I was still director of the Experiment Station. I wasn't vice-president yet.

CAC: It sounds like a caper that Bill Hueg would have to be involved in.

RS: Right but Bill was supportive of our doing it this way, and we were the two directors, and he just let us do.

CAC: I see.

RS: We hung ourselves out there.

CAC: Norman Brown did the same thing.

RS: Norman Brown did the same thing but I fought most of the battles with the president. We ended up with a lower dollar figure than we felt was a fair figure. The initial figure we were given we felt was disproportionately high compared to the amount that had to come out of other parts of the university and we felt it was high because we always felt that Peter and Ken felt that we were living on the fat side because we had these large state specials.

Let me go back a little bit on the Experiment Station . . . we wondered away from that. Minnesota Experiment Station funds research in a lot of colleges in this university. It's put money in the Humphrey Institute. It puts money in Veterinary Medicine and Biological Sciences. You can go to many universities and the experiment station puts almost all of its resources in the College of Ag, which I think is a weakness and a detriment because it focuses unduly on the applied research of one college. The Minnesota Experiment Station supports a lot of basic research in this university. That has led to, I think, its longer term impact not only on the

university but on the state. Some of the cutting edge technology in agriculture has come out of this state. The interesting thing about agricultural research is it so easily transfers to other parts of the country.

CAC: Yes.

RS: Vern Ruttan calls it the "Spill over effect." The technology to produce wild rice in cultivated paddies came in Minnesota and then, eventually, California became number one in production because they had all these rice paddies and they needed to have a crop more profitable than white rice. It argues for federal funding for agriculture research because of the spill over effect. The experiment station is a significant element of research in an institution like this and it's not just an experimental farm. Sometimes, faculty in other parts of the university look down their noses at agricultural research, that it's more applied, it's more pedestrian, it's second-rate. You can find in experiment stations support of research all the way from very applied, testing chemicals or whatever, to very basic research in molecular biology and other areas. A person like Ron Phillips, who now is a regent professor—wasn't when I was here—is world renowned for the work he's doing in plant molecular biology. There's always some element of faculty in agriculture trying to get the respect of their academic colleagues elsewhere in the university. There's less of that in Minnesota than some places and you've got departments like Agricultural and Applied Economics, which just changed its name now to Applied Economics, that I think are pretty well respected among the economists in the Department of Economics but there is still this, oh, you're in agriculture . . . you're doing these applied things. Frankly, the public that supports the institution would like a little bit more applied research.

CAC: [laughter]

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: Would this be the appropriate place to ask you to say something about Bill Hueg's managerial style? You made a few comments . . . bring them together.

RS: Sure. Two things . . . one of the things that attracted me to the director's job here in addition to Bill Hueg as a person was the fact that the Experiment Station director in this university did not report to the dean of Agriculture. In about half the institutions yet, half of the Land-Grant universities, the director of the experiment station and the director of the extension service either report to the dean of agriculture as an associate dean or in some cases are the dean, where the dean carries all of the titles and then has an associate director to run the day to day. I didn't like that model very well—that's one of the reasons I had favored Minnesota over Nebraska even though I liked Lincoln, Nebraska, a lot and would have liked living there—because it inhibits you from building broader interdisciplinary research programs. Every time you would take a dollar from a research budget going to the Department of Agronomy or Animal Science

and put it in a department in Engineering, or Veterinary Medicine, or someplace else, you were generating a conflict with your own boss because you're taking resources away from your boss's college. The model at Minnesota—which Bill Hueg fully actualized was sort of there as a skeleton but he made it reality with the dollars that followed it, and he was able to build all these resources in the 1970s, and he put them in multiple colleges, not just in Agriculture—was you had in an Institute of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics, three colleges: Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics, the Experiment Station and the Extension Service, all five with a dean or a director reporting to a deputy vice-president, as well as linkages to other colleges. In fact, while I was there, I tried to entice Veterinary Medicine to join the Institute but the faculty in Veterinary Medicine voted and the majority voted to be aligned with Health Sciences because they thought the potential for higher salaries was in the Health Sciences rather than the Agricultural Sciences. So, that model was interesting to me because I didn't have to worry about the politics of the dean of Agriculture who was one of my colleagues, not my boss, as I decide where to put research funds.

CAC: Yes.

RS: It's true there were a lot of research funds put in the College of Agriculture but I could freely reallocate, I could freely put new funds other places, and so on. I interviewed here and had this week long grueling interview because Minnesota has this process where everybody in the state wants to talk to you, particularly in these jobs. I was flown out to Grand Rapids and Bemidji, and met branch station faculty, and met citizens. But I remember when I interviewed with Bill Hueg in his office and sat down, Bill asked me a question something like, "Well, if you were to come here, what would it be like working with you?" I said, "Bill, the bigger question is What would it be like working with you? You have this reputation for being this ornery rebel who's a belligerent autocrat and I want to be able to work with somebody who gives me the freedom to do what I need to do to do my job."

CAC: You couldn't have given a better answer.

RS: It was a perfect answer and I think maybe that's the point at which he knew I was going to get the job offer . . . I didn't know. So, we had a very frank conversation because I told him about my perceptions of him but I said, "Granted, many of those are through other people. I saw a side of you in this two-week institute two years earlier that I liked but it doesn't connect with what other people tell me about you." So, he laughed in his big boisterous laugh and told me actually how little he interfered in the day to day. Although, I think he changed over time. He was a hands on kind of workaholic at one time and paid for it in many ways, including a divorce . . .

CAC: Yes.

RS: . . . and he learned that he needed to have more balance in his life and one way to do that was to have good people with you who you let do much of the work.

CAC: And you respect and trust.

RS: Right. He emphasized that very strongly. I ended up getting the offer. I came here and Bill and I got off on the right foot. I've never had anybody sort of leave me alone . . . Bill would freely give you his opinion and he was never lacking for an opinion. He would charge in and say, "That was a damned stupid thing to do" but he wouldn't tell you to do it differently. He would tell you why and you could learn from it. Sometimes, I would tell him the same thing. He never interfered. He really supported our plans. It was a great opportunity. The other opportunity was . . . I can't underestimate the value of starting a major leadership role the same time as the person you have to work most closely with. In this case, this was Norm Brown who was director of Extension Service.

CAC: I see.

RS: I knew Norm from Michigan State days; so, I liked him and knew I could work with him. On March 16, 1980, we both started on the same day at Minnesota. We sat down with a cup of coffee and said, "How are we going to work together?" Minnesota had had a history of—I'm not sure totally why, given this institute's structure—where the two directors of the Experiment Station and the Extension Service were very competitive with each other. I think it was partly because Bill was the Experiment Station director and he was such a strong and aggressive personality that I think he created some jealousies and other things but there was a lot of competition and not a lot of collaboration. At Michigan State, we had been used to many shared appointments so that the experiment station and the extension service would combine their salary dollars and create a joint faculty position where you might find a faculty member that's 60 percent extension and 40 percent research or vice versa. We saw a lot of value in that, in having a person extending knowledge about the applied research they were doing rather than try to extend somebody else's research findings. We worked hard at trying to create more and more joint positions. It was funny, after six months, I think the branch stations superintendents were accusing me of caving in to the Extension director and the district Extension directors were accusing Norm Brown of caving in to the Experiment Station director. It was really because we were talking to each other and working together. That became very powerful. We were successful in the legislature in the early 1980s despite very tough budget times. We were continuing to get increases. I think it created some jealousies in Central Administration and elsewhere.

Then, Bill Hueg decided to retire in 1983. At that time, Ken Keller was the vice-president of Academic Affairs, and Ken and Peter had talked, and I'm not sure, perhaps, partly motivated for the wrong reasons, they thought there were too many resources in this large institute and maybe roles could be combined. So, they had an idea that somehow . . .

CAC: It may be that Mr. Magrath was wearying of this kind of . . .

RS: That's a whole other issue and I'll give you my strong opinions about Peter Magrath once we get to the president, interim presidency, and the regents. Ken was very bright and decided to start talking to people, including some people out in the state, our statewide advisory committee and so on, about this. It turned out there was very strong support for me if there was going to be some combination or moving one of the current people into the deputy vice-president role. The model that evolved as a result of that was partly driven by people valuing me and partly by Ken wanting to somehow combine things. It ended up combining the deputy vice-president and director of the Experiment Station titles; so, I retained the director's title but then became the boss for the whole Institute, so to speak. In doing that, I made each of the dean's an associate director; so, I was really delegating more of the day to day to the deans. The issue of the deputy title, I can only replay secondhand and that is that there was an effort afoot to get a vice-president for Agriculture before I ever came here because the university had a vice-president for Health Sciences and the agriculturalists said, "Agriculture is at least as important as Health Sciences in the state. If you're going to have a vice-president, we want a vice-president." They lobbied Peter Magrath, in his early years, very hard to get a vice-president. Peter was a great compromiser and the compromise in this case was deputy vice-president, which was a totally unique title in the university.

CAC: It didn't mean anything functionally?

RS: What Peter was trying to say was, "You're a deputy to the vice-president of Academic Affairs." He didn't want this thing disconnected from Academic Affairs but, you know, any other place would have said, "Associate vice-president, assistant vice-president," whatever; so, by saying, "deputy," maybe it gave it some unique value to the agricultural constituency. I don't know but anyway, it was deputy. It was a strange title.

CAC: That was changed when you came in?

RS: I originally came in as deputy vice-president and then the agriculture constituency started lobbying again to remove the deputy title. Two years later, in 1985, it was removed. Ken really removed it. What difference does it make whether it was deputy of vice-president, I was really reporting jointly to the vice-president of Academic Affairs and the president. It wasn't going to change that. It wasn't going to change my salary. It wasn't going to change anything else. He made a lot of people happy, in a sense, by just removing the deputy title and to me, it didn't make a lot of difference. So, he did it in 1985. I played that role with dual titles until March 16, 1988.

CAC: Do you want to say some more things—you were there really as deputy or vice-president without deputy for nearly ten years—about the accomplishments of that decade in that office?

RS: I worked very hard at trying to foster interdisciplinary research and found out there were ways not to do it and ways to do it. I would get new funding from the legislature and I would set aside a significant chunk and say, "I'm not going to put this in any of the colleges. I'm going

to support interdisciplinary research by getting faculty to work together.” We tried to identify some priorities like water quality or pest management or whatever. Then, you’d invite faculty to work together to submit proposals. That was the wrong way to do it because . . . I’ve got money available. Do you want to do an interdisciplinary research? The faculty would come out of the woodwork, of course . . . write an innovative proposal, get the money, go back into the woodwork, and not talk to each other even though they were on the same research project. Farmers have the problems but universities have academic departments.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: There’s lot of turf, lots of turf.

CAC: Right.

RS: In the St. Paul campus, there were some very strong academic departments and they were strong partly because of the turf. Herb Johnson was a department head in Agronomy, built a very strong department but was very turf conscious. He didn’t acknowledge faculty who would take time to work with other departments. He wanted them working on Agronomy and publishing in the *Journal of Agronomy*. That’s part of the culture of universities.

CAC: It’s not peculiar to St. Paul and you found out?

RS: No, no, it’s not. It’s not peculiar to the University of Minnesota. We say that these modern Land-Grant universities have basic and applied research, and education, and outreach, and service all coexisting and balanced but the basic research is the inherited scale of values that drives everything.

CAC: Yes.

RS: That’s part of the problem universities are still facing. I finally figured out that the best way to really help foster interdisciplinary research is find the faculty who had already figured out they needed to work with each other to solve a research problem. You’d have a group of three or four faculty who had gotten together with limited resources because the research question they were asking couldn’t be solved by the knowledge in one discipline. So, you had an engineer, and an agronomist, and somebody else working together, and then you put the resources with them to make them successful because you knew they were committed to it—and that worked. That angered other faculty who said I was doing it in a non-competitive way but it was a lot easier to do and it had a lot bigger payoff.

CAC: Ken Keller is a chemical engineer and he was doing basic research in the Health Sciences as some of us were.

RS: In fact, Ken and I really alignment philosophically around that kind of work.

CAC: He knew it firsthand, hands on.

RS: He did. He really supported my doing that. I think he also did because he always felt to some degree that Agriculture an unfair share of the pie. It had resources to support this kind of research that most other parts of the university didn't have unless you went outside and wrote external grants—and it really had it because of Bill Hueg. Bill Hueg built the resource base that was there. I made an argument in the legislature one year that I wanted \$1 million or \$1.2 million in new money and I wouldn't put any of it in permanent faculty positions. I sold that argument in the legislature. I sold it on the argument that we had the faculty resource base and that what we needed were dollars to maximize the potential of those faculty by getting them to work together. I sold that philosophical argument one year in the legislature, in 1983 or 1984. I took those dollars and I told the deans I worked with, "You're going to have so many of these dollars but you can't use a single one to pay a tenured or tenure track faculty member. You can either hire temporary people or you can use them to build research linkages with the people you have," and that once a year I wanted to review those dollars and they, essentially, in essence come back to me. We had all kinds of interesting arguments because at the same time we had faced some budget cuts.

CAC: Yes.

RS: Here, I had new dollars. I remember in Forestry and Home Economics, I told each dean that they could fill a non-tenure track position out of that money, a contract position and they argued violently, "You can't attract the same quality faculty to a contract position." I said, "I'm not talking about a post-doc position. I'm not talking about paying them in post-doc salary." I said, "In fact, pay them higher than you would a tenure faculty member to offset whatever risk they're taking. I'm convinced that the very best people don't worry about the tenure as much as where they work and who they work with." Well, they hired two outstanding people. I told them they could do a three-year contract and I'd consider one two-year renewal but five years was the limit. Of course, they got out in the fourth year. They wanted to put these people on tenure track. They were their best faculty in these two programs. I said, "You can if you give me another tenure position back." So, that generated all kinds of debate.

CAC: That's internal. I'm going to ask you a question about the legislature. Whom did you have to speak there and what were the arguments that were effective?

RS: I worked very closely with Stan Kegler who was the university vice-president for governmental [unclear], a lobbyist really, who was very sharp and understood the legislature. I established a very open and trusting relationship with him. I didn't ever blind side him. He taught me that you don't need to convince 201 legislators. You need to convince the majority of the two subcommittees that mark up your appropriation; so, whether it's ten or twelve folks in the House and six, or seven, or eight in the Senate, it's a small number of people. I focused very hard there. The other thing I did when I was already deputy vice-president—Norm Brown had left in 1984—I made Pat Borich the dean and director of the Extension Service. When Pat

was first appointed, he and I decided to do sixty-seven legislative meetings around the state in a matter of just a few day's time.

CAC: Heavens.

RS: We picked sixty-seven because there are sixty-seven legislative districts in this state, each one producing one senator and two representatives for this very large state legislature we have. Each one was hosted by a local citizen who was well respected. It might have been a banker, the mayor, whatever, who believed in our work and what we did. It might have been in a church basement, or in the back room of a local restaurant, or in a community center, or in somebody's home. They each invited ten to twelve other respected leaders from that district and the senator and the two representatives.

CAC: That's the size of the group you had, twelve to fifteen?

RS: Right. We did that in sixty-seven places in the state. As a result of that, I got on a first name basis with every single legislator in the state, essentially, because we continued to follow up with all those folks. We had, I suppose, 85 percent or 90 percent of them show up for these meetings. We talked about our programs. We talked about their value but most of all we listened. We listened to what the community citizens were saying about their needs.

CAC: How long would each meeting run approximately.

RS: Oh, three hours. We might do two a day. The legislators came because they were being invited by very influential citizens in their district who had a lot of influence on the vote—not by us . . . they weren't invited by us.

CAC: Yes.

RS: So, we did these sixty-seven meetings. We were totally drained afterwards but it came back in a very unusual way . . . not only did it come back immediately but from then on, I had the kind of communications with legislators that in very tough times, we were able to continue to grow the budgets and to make an argument like the one we made that this university has a wonderful human resource that is often under-utilized and, particularly, I made the argument on the basis of getting faculty to work together to solve problems important to people in Minnesota and if you could create those linkages to get a team of faculty working on a common problem. I thought at the very end, in the closing days of the mark up, it was going to get cut out of the budget but it didn't. So, we did continue to make some modest increases and we made quite a few acquisitions for new buildings . . . the new Natural Resources building on the St. Paul campus and a dairy barn . . . there were quite a few buildings; although, I think there were even more building built when Bill Hueg was here because there was a lot more capital development at that time.

CAC: Yes.

RS: But we did acquire a lot of resources for new buildings which were separate from the operating budget of the university. You could work on this capital appropriation separately. I will share only one experience in that regard as an example of how you work with the legislature. We were trying to get a new dairy barn on the St. Paul campus for research and teaching. The barn that was there dated back to the 1920s, or something. It was despicable. We had some wonderful facilities in some of our branch stations but the best barns in the state were in the hands of dairy farmers themselves. So, I took a student in Animal Science who was majoring in dairy science, to the legislative hearing in the House. I had him present the testimony instead of me. He got up and said, "Gentlemen, I came to the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota because I wanted to get a first rate education in dairy science. I find myself being taught in the same barn that my father and my grandfather were taught."

CAC: [laughter]

RS: He said, "It's totally out of date. It is so far behind." That's about all he said. We got the mark up just like that.

CAC: I'm going to make an irreverent comment. Have you read Jane Smiley's novel? [laughter]

RS: Oh, yes. A wonderful book.

CAC: It puts it in mind right here.

RS: I know the chapter that deals with budget retrenchments . . .

CAC: Yes.

RS: . . . where all these memos trickle down across the university down to where departments can't do photocopying and . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RS: Yes, it's a wonderful book. She understands a lot of it and I identified with some of the characters.

CAC: I knew who quite a few of them were.

RS: [laughter] Yes. I was enjoying the work. I didn't make a lot of the day to day management decisions. I had very good deans and directors that did that. I focused on building those relationships with the legislature and outstate. I spent a lot of time outstate traveling. I

spent a lot of time at branch stations and made those folks feel like they were full members of the academic community. It all came back to a benefit to the university in the final analysis because the day that I was appointed interim president, I did four things. First, I walked directly over to the editor's office of the *Minnesota Daily*. Ken Keller had had a terrible relationship with the paper . . . wouldn't even talk to them because of the things they printed and so on. They were totally shocked that the president walked into their office. The editor wasn't there and the rest of the students and the staff were all scrambling, trying to figure out what to do. But as a result, I started off on the right foot with the *Daily* and they treated me well during that ten months. Then, I went down to St. Paul and went to meet with Rudy Perpich, who was governor, who had a very grandstanding kind of a meeting. He invited the press in and the TV cameras; so we didn't meet in private and he was posturing. Then, I went to meet with Roger Moe who was the Senate majority leader, still is I guess . . .

CAC: Yes.

RS: . . . a private meeting. I'd known Roger well because we had worked hard on some things for the branch station up in Crookston, which is his district and had a very open, private meeting about . . . I want to work with you and so on. I took David Lebedoff with me. He was the chairman of the board of regents; so, he went along with me. We went from Roger Moe's office to go see the speaker of the House—I think it was Benson at the time—and the House was in session; so, the speaker of the House wasn't in his office. We went down to the House floor and the speaker of the House stopped the House session, and invited me onto the House floor, and announced that I had just been appointed interim president by the board of regents, and I got a standing ovation from the House. Then, I walked back out into the anti-room and dozens of legislators came out to congratulate me personally.

CAC: Many of whom you knew.

RS: Yes, many of whom I knew and we called each other on a first name basis. David Lebedoff was astounded. The board had settled on me because they figured I was the best among the vice-presidents to help restore the credibility and the trust but I don't think any of them realized what kind of relationship I had with the legislature. He was speechless. He said, "I didn't realize this." Then, of course, he realized the value of what the board had done if we were going to rebuild the relationship with the legislature.

CAC: Let's back up a bit. All these things you're talking about in that decade . . . you dealt with Vice-President Ken Keller and also with President Magrath. Say something about those relationships.

RS: Right. We need to talk about that. I had enormous respect for Ken Keller, a very bright person. In fact, what he was proposing for the university was desperately needed . . . Commitment Focus . . . to make some choices. This institution was so large, so diverse, trying to do so many things in a state with modest resources and I think was living on borrowed time

with how lavishly the state had supported the institution, in a sense, given the population of the state and its resources. You wouldn't have predicted this kind of a university would emerge in a state with 4-4½ million people and modest resources. It ties back to a lot of things with the work ethic, and people valuing education, and a lot of other things but the university in the years of abundant resources had just grown by adding on the margin. You had all kinds of majors and curricula and so Ken was right on in his ideas that he talked about even when he was still vice-president.

CAC: Those ideas started with the first retrenchment in the early 1970s?

RS: Yes, that's right. Right, exactly. Peter Magrath was something else. I thought he was a fairly weak and mediocre president. He was here ten years and he survived ten years by doing a lot of compromising. One battle I got into with him when I was already deputy vice-president and still director of the Experimental Station is one year in the legislative session, there was \$100,000 in the mark up and the legislature was either going to put it on the Experiment Station special or they were going to put it on a special for what we called the FIRE Special, F-I-R-E, the Fire Information Research and Education Center, which no longer exists in the university but it did at that time. It was a small educational program to train rural volunteer firemen. It was a vocational program. It was something that probably shouldn't even have been at the university. Well, the legislature in its political wisdom said, "We're not going to decide where to put this \$100,000," because they were getting lobbied by rural fire chiefs on the one hand and by agriculture on the other hand. They said, "President Magrath and the board, it's up to you to decide." That was in a very tight budget year, right after the cuts from the previous year, and the university was forced, for one of the first times, to rank in priority order the requests for the state special appropriations and there were like twenty-five or thirty of them at the time. The Experiment Station and Extension were two of the top three in the ranking. In other words, the president and the board, when they submitted the request, said, "These are high priorities." The Fire Education Center was way down at the other end, ranked at the bottom end; so, now if the legislature turns to the university at the end of the legislative session and said, "Here's \$100,000, you decide where to put it," you would think that for the president and the board who had gone through a priority process, the decision would have been obvious. Well, of course, Peter Magrath started hearing from rural fire chiefs and board members did, too. At the next board meeting, they were supposed to decide where to put this \$100,000. One of the board members, or the chairman, or whoever, turned to Peter and said, "Well, Mr. President, what's your recommendation?" He said, "I don't have any strong feelings about it. You decide" . . . threw the priority process out the window. The politics, of course, put the \$100,000 with the FIRE Center. I was livid and Peter knew it. I went and told him what I thought of that. Then, I decided that wasn't over; so, I went back the next year in the legislature and worked on all of this. I'd proposed to Peter at the time that the FIRE Center doesn't even belong in the university. It ought to be transferred to the state department of vocational technical education and, maybe, tied in with the Vocational Technical Institutes in the state. Stan Kegler agreed. So, we worked in the next legislative session and got the FIRE Center transferred out of the university and got the legislature to leave the \$100,000 in the university budget and move it over to the Experiment

Station budget. Peter never even knew what happened. I ended up with \$100,000 and the FIRE Center disappeared. This is jumping ahead again but I have to do it in order to reinforce some of what I said about Peter. Peter and I are friendly enough but . . .

CAC: Your offices aren't far apart in distance?

RS: No, they aren't. When I was appointed interim president, two members of the board of regents came to me right after the meeting, two women who were on the board, and said, "We hope you'll listen better than Ken Keller did." I wasn't sure what they meant at the time—but I found out later. When I had to appoint an acting vice-president of Academic Affairs to replace Roger Benjamin, when he decided to step down, the same two women came to me and told me who to appoint. I said, "Frankly, his name is on the list of twenty or twenty-five I'm looking at and considering but he's not at the top of the list and, frankly, I don't think he's that interested in doing the job. He's ready to retire." It was Keith McFarland, who was the dean of College of Home Economics.

CAC: Oh, dear sweet Keith, yes.

RS: I said, "I don't think he would do the job." One of them said, "We know he would, we've talked to him."

CAC: Where would they have run across Keith? He was a very able, [unclear] person.

RS: He'd played some other acting roles in the past. I think it was really politics. Somebody else came to them and said it ought to be Keith. It was politics. I ended up appointing Shirley Clark who was very good and it kind of defused all this conversation because she was a woman of course, among other things but she was very capable. In fact, in retrospect, she should have probably ended up being the vice-president of Academic Affairs here . They went through a search, appointed somebody that didn't work out at all.

CAC: That's true.

RS: She went on to another institution.

CAC: Oregon.

RS: Yes. After I made the recommendation to the board for Shirley Clark, the same two regents came to me and said, "You don't listen any better than Ken Keller did. Peter Magrath would listen to us." There are a lot of other examples I can give you. If you read books around management, and leadership, and governing boards . . . in fact, Ken Dayton, one of the Daytons of the Dayton family here, wrote a little publication you may have never seen. I'm going to see, I think I've got a photocopy I can give you. [looks for article] That's my last original. It's a wonderful gem.

CAC: I've worked some myself in the independent sector; so, I know the kind of work they do.

RS: Okay. Peter Magrath created a leadership void in the institution and when the hired chief executive of an organization—whether it's a non-profit, a university, a company—doesn't assume the rightful leadership role, the board steps into the void; and the board stepped into the void and got used to making management decisions.

CAC: Well, they stepped in earlier with [Malcolm] Mac Moos, you know.

RS: It started there really.

CAC: Yes.

RS: Yes, it really did. I think it started with Moos. I didn't know that as well but I understood that and it continued all through Peter's years; and so, they were telling him whom to appoint.

CAC: Really caucuses within the regents?

RS: Yes, it was caucuses within the regents. Peter was always trying to get a consensus of the regents. He hated split votes. Then, the only way you get consensus is by compromise. Peter Drucker, who is one of the fathers of management in this country, a wonderful wise man, now in his late eighties and still going strong, once told me that consensus is not only unnecessary but it's undesirable . . . it breeds mistrust. When you think about it . . . So, you had this board full of mistrust in little caucuses and camps and all individually or in groups of two or three trying to lobby the president with their own agendas. I stood the ground of, You hired me to run the university . . . I run the university . . . that includes I decide who to hire and fire and if you don't like the way the university is being run, then you get a new chief executive.

CAC: Now, do you think they had that relationship or tried to have it with Mr. Keller?

RS: Ken tried it and they didn't like it because they'd had all these years of having their way. Ken was very strong. He was very bullheaded and he was trying to say, "I'm the chief executive," but so much so that he did some things that they didn't know about, such as the famous reserve fund that he, and David Lilly, and Roger Benjamin created. David Lilly was a very bright guy, and very under appreciated by this university, and he did the right thing. He looked around the campus and found \$18 million sitting around in little pots of money, not making any money, pulled it together and arbitrated it in the securities market, and turned it into \$35 million or \$40 million. I really wasn't aware of the fund as the vice-president for Agriculture. I knew there were some reserve funds and if I had an important issue, I could make my case to Ken, and Academic Affairs, and David Lilly. If you look at how they spent the money, it was all spent for the right things. If you had gone through some priority setting process and decided what are the important needs, the money was spent there. The fatal mistake was they never informed the board at all; so, that it was all done very secretly. They did a great

service for the university but it should have been Ken's job to openly communicate that with the board and reach an agreement.

CAC: I have to interpose here for whoever is listening to this to say that there are interviews I've had that pose quite a different picture . . . that Mr. Lilly . . . the board did in fact know of the reserve, and how it was created, and how it was being used.

RS: I think there was some knowledge of that perhaps. Have you had board members tell you that or was this university administrators telling you that?

CAC: The latter.

RS: Yes, okay. I think you need to ask the board members at the time.

CAC: Yes.

RS: They knew there was a fund balance on the financial statement and the reserve money was buried in there but in any financial statements I looked at presented to the board, there was never any kind of a line item.

CAC: I see.

RS: I sat at enough board meetings as vice-president and never heard it discussed. Now, that doesn't mean it wasn't discussed behind closed doors or in non-public meetings.

CAC: That's a good caveat. I'll check that out and whoever is listening will have to check it out.

RS: Yes, right. I could accept the idea that they did know something about it. I never heard a regent argue they did but, of course, the regents might have been covering their own tail on that, too. The bigger point I wanted to make was that while Ken was politically naive at times and he let his bullheadedness get in the way of communicating with key folks, he was so bright and so right on what the university needed. I mean, Commitment to Focus was right on target and was needed. He was so bright that the regents couldn't undermine him directly. They couldn't attack him frontally because you couldn't intellectually argue against what he was proposing. So, I think there were enough regents, that because they'd lost this ability to have the president make the decisions they wanted through all the years of Moos and Magrath, and really had created a new culture there, and they didn't like the fact that Ken was saying, "I'm the CEO and we need to make these changes" . . . Of course, they were getting lobbied externally about some of these changes.

CAC: Yes, not only on matters of personnel but on other matters as well?

RS: A good example is Mortuary Science. Minnesota is one of only two or three institutions in the country offering a four-year degree in mortuary science and it was one of the examples Ken used in Commitment to Focus of a program that needed to be phased out. We don't need to be giving four-year degrees. They did an analysis of the cost. There were very few students. The cost per graduate was enormous and, basically, mortuary science is a combination of technical training and a Dale Carnegie course and most morticians can become morticians in a year or two in other kinds of programs. But as soon as he announced it as one of the targets, the rural morticians in the state—the small community morticians are one of the more powerful figures in the community—got up in arms and lobbied the regents and lobbied the legislature. It was an example of that. The regents had gotten used to getting the president to do whatever was necessary to quiet down the fires that were being built under them. In order to defend what Ken was proposing, you had to be willing to take the heat because he was proposing that some things needed to be cut and the regents didn't like the heat. They hadn't been used to it in the past and so they started undermining Ken.

CAC: There's another instance and, perhaps, you could speak to it . . . the computer contract.

RS: The Super Computer Institute. I don't remember the details but I was right in the center of it because I got crosswise with Wendy Anderson on that one. He wanted to take reserve funds and execute the contract for the super computer lease that just smelled like two-week old fish.

CAC: Why did Mr. Anderson have a connection with the computer?

RS: It was connected through Rudy Perpich who between terms when he didn't get reelected was a consultant to Control Data.

CAC: Okay.

RS: Control Data was producing this super computer. They had a program to develop super computers and they were not at all competitive. Cray [Research] was running by them so fast. The only thing that would have kept them going longer was getting this juicy contract from the university and it was in the legislative request for the legislature to fund the Super Computer Center. The legislature didn't fund it and so at that point then, the politicians connected to Rudy and Control Data were desperate, and then lobbied Wendy on the board to say, "Get the university to take money from the reserve fund and actually get the contract."

CAC: Wendell Anderson is usually is thought of as representing the labor interest. Does labor have an interest in Control Data?

RS: That I don't know about.

CAC: Okay.

RS: One thing I knew for certain about Wendell Anderson is he had separate political agendas that were not necessarily aligned with the university's priorities.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: We're talking about the board of regents and its relationship to the Central Administration during late Magrath through Keller and into your interim presidency.

RS: The board was used to getting its way with the president and I think more than we'll ever know. Unless Peter Magrath is willing to talk about that openly or unless you could bring Malcolm Moos back from the dead, I don't think we'll ever know. I had enough exposure to it to know that several board members had their own political agendas and that there had been a culture of expecting the president to do what they wanted done to satisfy whatever political pressure was being brought on them. Ken was not going to cave into that; so, I think they were very angry with Ken.

CAC: Ken had a long time to observe. He was in the Graduate School. He was vice-president, etcetera.

RS: Right. I don't think Ken was naive to all of this. He had to see how that board operated when he was vice-president and Peter was president. But Ken truly loved this institution so much, truly saw what could be done to take it to the next step, to focus, and sharpen, and improve quality. I'm not sure Minnesotans generally wanted the highest quality institution. They wanted a good institution, one they could send their kids to.

CAC: I found with friends who were out in the public that this talk of being the Harvard of the Mississippi didn't go over very well.

RS: I think part of it, unfortunately, is Ken might have been more successful if he had had these ideas and been a native Minnesotan. Minnesotans are very parochial. I can't remember the name of the man but we worked with him closely in connection with our Extension programs . . . He was from northeastern Minnesota and he was the president, or whatever the title is, of the Minnesota Association of Counties, the elected association of county commissioners, and he was elected the statewide president. He had been a county commissioner twenty or more years in this county in northeastern Minnesota and he was defeated in a reelection by a man who ran on a platform that this incumbent was not a native—and he was not a native of the county—but he'd been a county commissioner more than twenty years.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: I had learned from that experience as I reflected on Ken . . . Ken had been here over twenty years at the university. It was his life. He truly believed in it and was committed to it but as soon as he started proposing change that was not comfortable to some folks, people started labeling him, "an Easterner," "a New Yorker" and while they never said "Jewish," there was this, you know, he isn't the religious bent of most of the folks here in Minnesota.

CAC: We had had the trouble earlier with candidate Saxon for the presidency.

RS: Sure, that's right. Minnesotans . . . they fell in love with Nils Hasselmo . . . Swedish, talked the language; and I think to some degree, I had the support I did through that rough fray because I was a native Minnesotan even though I hadn't been at the university near as long as Ken Keller and even though philosophically I was very close to the line with Ken in terms of the hard decisions that had to be made—but I was a native. Minnesotans unfortunately don't treat non-natives kindly in many cases or at least if somebody comes in who is not a native and tries to do something and they don't like it, they'll use that as an excuse . . . well, you didn't grow up here . . . you're not from here . . . you don't understand. I'm not trying to say that's totally unique to Minnesota that you find that. It's very difficult to go into some southern states as a non-southerner and be accepted. When you put it all together, this is the most populist, public university in the country, I think, because most Land-Grant universities like this are not in the state's major population center . . . when you think about it.

CAC: True, yes. Many people have . . .

RS: Ames, Iowa. Manhattan, Kansas. Here, over half the state's population can reach you with a local telephone call. I think even that had an influence on how the Ag research dollars were spent because there were a lot spent on urban and suburban issues. Secondly, it's a very populist state when you look at its political history and how it's voted but there is sort of an expectation that we'll be equally mediocre good together and that if somebody tries to be too good, he or she gets beaten down by the system here a little. Ken had the image of trying to be very good.

CAC: That was known as elitism when [unclear].

RS: It was called elitism, that you're being too elite. Minnesotans don't like elitism whether it's a big desk in a president's office or being chauffeured in a limousine. Peter Magrath figured it out. Malcolm Moos used to be chauffeured around; and the first thing he did was get rid of the chauffeur, and got a station wagon, and he drove himself. How could you be more Minnesotan—except maybe have a pickup?

CAC: [laughter]

RS: Ken bought nice suits or Italian loafers, was chauffeured a little bit. While he had a car assigned to him, he would often have somebody drive him so he could read and work and not waste the time. He did not extravagantly spend university money. The famous reserve fund was

spent on high priorities. If you had any group of faculty review how it was spent, you'd find few question the use of it.

CAC: Eastcliff was long overdue for a little . . .

RS: Long overdue. Peter avoided it because he was afraid of the politics around it and the stories I have at least are . . . First of all, Ken didn't want to live there when he was appointed.

CAC: He didn't for awhile.

RS: The regents insisted he live there as part of the appointment agreement and then he said, "You've got to do something with the place." The regents had set aside some amount of money, \$600,000, as an amount of money that could be spent on it. He started having Physical Plant people and others look at it and they realized what a desperate state it was in. The place was falling apart. Ceilings had to be taken out, and timbers replaced, and you name it. Pretty soon the estimate was \$7-, \$8-, \$900,000 and more. He went to the chairman of the board at the time, Chuck McGuiggan, and said, "It's going to go far beyond this," and Chuck said, "That's okay, just do what needs to be done." Then, later, those same regents used it as a . . . you went far beyond . . . you didn't have authority . . .

CAC: Spoken authority in any case.

RS: Spoken authority and then the same reasons were used to undermine him when they couldn't stand the heat around Commitment to Focus.

CAC: Your story then places a central importance on Commitment to Focus and managerial style, those two ingredients?

RS: Yes, and a board that had assumed a management void for a long, long time. Even though the board members change through that time, every new board member came into a culture and a linkage to a politic in the state that knew that enough lobbying pressure on a board member—because the board was appointed by the legislature—could influence the decision making of the president. If we go to the incident after Ken was president and the basketball players were accused of raping some white coeds in a hotel in Madison, Wisconsin, after a game . . . We had a vice-president's breakfast at Eastcliff a day or two later and I said to Ken, "You just ought to fire Paul Giel," because in the next day's press when this all happened, the press went to Giel, he said, "It's not my responsibility. I don't know anything about it." It is his responsibility if the coach and the team are having that kind of a problem. I said, "For him to deny responsibility to me is sufficient cause to say you don't need him in that job anymore." He wanted to move him out but he decided because he had so many chips being played around Commitment to Focus that he couldn't take that heat; so he tried to talk Giel into moving on himself, and taking a job in the University Foundation raising money for athletics, and had Giel well down the track on that conversation, and then Giel started talking to whoever, board

members, community leaders, who told him, "He won't be able to fire you. We can put enough pressure on the board." The heat built up with the board, and on Ken, and Ken backed off.

CAC: I would imagine Sid Hartman's [unclear], as well.

RS: Sid is sort of a front for some of them. He's a gossip columnist really. It was really other people . . . the guy that runs Super Valu . . . I can't think of his name . . . former big football star here many years ago but he's the president and CEO of Super Valu.

CAC: Someone can look it up.

RS: There are several folks like that in town who had a lot of influence. Jack . . . something or other. I'm just using that as an example of how the board and the politics that lobby the board from the state, from the business community, or whatever, could stop decisions that really needed to be made and were overdue. I remember several weeks later, when Ken wasn't able to do it, I said to him at a breakfast meeting, "You should have fired him on the spot that morning" and he bristled and then he said, "Yes, you're right." But he made a choice there for the university. He would have used up the chips he thought he needed to get Commitment to Focus through; so, in a sense, it was easier for me because I wasn't interested in the job and I wasn't going to be here very long.

CAC: But as interim president, you did in fact carry through.

RS: Yes. I remember I had been interim president for three months or so . . . Maybe, I ought to talk about being appointed. That in itself was an experience.

CAC: Yes, this is a good time.

RS: In March of 1988, we had just had a very rough regents' meeting. It ended on March 11 and some of the regents were really beating on Ken and some stuff around Commitment to Focus. On Sunday morning, March 13, my wife and I flew to the Woodlands—the Woodlands is a conference center north of Houston, Texas—for a conference on what we used to call the SSAAP conference, Social Sciences Agricultural Agenda Project, or something. People like Vern Ruttan and others were heavily involved in it. I was there as a research administrator in agriculture and scheduled to be on the program. My wife and I flew down early Sunday morning in order to get there and have a round of golf. The conference was starting with a reception that evening and [unclear] on Monday morning. So, we played golf, and went to the reception, and had just gotten to bed and about asleep at eleven o'clock at night when the phone rang. It was David Lebedoff, the chairman of the board of regents, who called to tell me . . . In fact, I had told my wife on the way down, "We really had a rough regents' meeting this week. I don't know if Ken is going to make it through this. The pressure is mounting around various things." It started with Commitment to Focus but then the reserve fund, and the decoration of the president's office, and the fancy desk, and all this stuff; and then it was sort of like they were using him as

excuses. I always felt the fundamental issue was Ken wanting to change the university. I said, "I don't know that he's going to make it." The phone rang at eleven o'clock that night, and I woke up out of a half sleep, and David Lebedoff said, "I'm calling you . . . I want you to know that Ken Keller just resigned this evening on WCCO at ten o'clock." I thought he was just calling all the vice-presidents to let us know so we didn't hear it secondhand. I appreciated him for calling, and I thanked him, and I said, "Well, I'm not totally surprised but I'm saddened because I really believe Ken was trying to do the right things for the university." In the next breath he said, "And we want you to come back and be our president." I said, "No. I don't want to do it." He said, "Why?" I said, "I believe too much in what Ken was trying to do and I don't want it in any way to be perceived that my career would change or advance on his misfortune." He said, "We don't have anybody else here that is the right person." I could never get out of him how many regents he really talked to but evidently he talked to enough that he felt he had the board behind him. Part of my nervousness later, more than that night, was David himself who I wasn't sure would come on and stand strong and tall when the chips were down. He was a real politician but it turns out he really did. He said, "You think about it overnight and I'll call you back tomorrow morning."

CAC: That didn't give you much time.

RS: My wife and I literally sat up the whole night. She convinced me to do it. I think she regrets it now someday as we talk about it. She convinced me that I was the only person, because of what I had done statewide, that could rebuild the relationship with the legislature and alumni.

CAC: And the legislature is still in session at that time?

RS: Yes. In fact, they were going to start hacking on the university pretty hard. They were going to take money out of the budget equal to the reserve fund. The next morning I said, "Well, yes, I'll consider it." So, then the challenge was to fly back on Monday and stay in hiding until the board had a special meeting on Wednesday because they didn't want the press to know what they were going to do, of course. It started leaking out. By Tuesday in the papers, there were pictures of five or six *likely* prospects and my picture was among them. They'd picked up rumors. My wife and I at the time lived in a townhome in St. Anthony Village and the phone was ringing off the hook and, of course, we didn't answer it. My secretary on the St. Paul campus told them I was out of the state at the conference and couldn't be reached; so, the press never did track me down before the board meeting.

CAC: Were there other serious candidates at that time?

RS: The politics emerged. It was the most curious board meeting. It was an open special meeting of the regents to name an interim president and somebody put my name in nomination. Then, one of the regents decided to nominate somebody else and I forget which regent it was but they nominated Bob Stein, dean of the Law School. Bob Stein had wanted to be president . . .

CAC: Oh, for a long time?

RS: . . . and had the political support of at least two or three regents.

CAC: He wanted to be president when Keller was selected?

RS: Right and he was a candidate when Hasselmo was selected, if you recall. He was interviewed then. I told him he shouldn't go through it again if they weren't going to appoint him but he put himself through the process. This came out of left field. Bob Stein wasn't there. I had been called to come to the meeting. Then, the board decided to recess while somebody went and found Bob Stein; so, they chased across campus, and found him, and brought him over to the board meeting . . .

CAC: Ohhh.

RS: . . . and then they proceeded to interview both of us.

CAC: Oh! I didn't know that.

RS: It was like two or three brief questions but, you know, What would you do? What do you think the university challenges are? Then, they voted 9-3 to appoint me. There were three regents that voted for Bob Stein. After the vote, then one of those three made the motion to declare a unanimous ballot. It was a really funny kind of a thing. Obviously I knew there was this division amongst the board already and that reaffirmed it. And then I went off and did those four things I told you about: went to the *Minnesota Daily*, to see the governor, and went to the legislature. Within in that first week—I made an extra copy so you can have one—those are the goals and objectives I wrote for the interim presidency. When I talked to David Lebedoff further . . . he came over to my house the day before the board meeting, and we talked through things at length, and I wanted to know how long the board was talking about. He said, "Oh, we can find a new president in six to nine months." I know how university searches go but I said, "Okay, I'm doing this for six or nine months but I surely want to be out of it in a year or less."

CAC: Was there a clear understanding with them that you really were interim and not as Keller got caught in that earlier, as you remember?

RS: What the board did do when they appointed Keller was they passed a policy that the interim president cannot be a candidate, which became very messy because when they ended up at the end of that search, Keller was the only candidate they had left and they had to un-pass that in order to appoint him.

CAC: And you knew that history, you weren't going to get caught in that?

RS: Right. I made a statement both to David Lebedoff and to the full board in the open meeting that I am not a candidate. They wisely said, "We're not going to have any ruling here one way or the other. If you end up being a candidate that's fine." They had learned. They weren't going to get into that fray again. I never was a candidate. I never thought about being one. I didn't want to be one—that never changed. My three big goals were really those first three bullets up at the top.

CAC: Okay.

RS: They were: to try and restore trust and credibility both inside and outside the university; secondly, to regain lost momentum for institutional change—I simply didn't call it Commitment to Focus because that was like a red flag but that's what I was talking about—and then to continue to build the support needed for continued and increased funding. The legislature was still in session and about to whack our funding right in the behind. Then, I went on and set those additional following objectives.

CAC: Which as I look at them quickly—this is the first I've seen them—are really managerial?

RS: Yes, right, they are.

CAC: And out of your experience?

RS: Right. The first three were the three big things. That's where the focus was. I spent an enormous amount of time outstate talking to alumni groups and citizen groups. I spent a lot of time down at the legislature while they were in session and then even after they adjourned. I can remember two key things with the legislature in particular. One . . . Kegler had picked up the rumor that the legislature was going to . . . Actually, Kegler had already stepped down. Rick Heydinger was the vice-president at the time but Kegler was continuing to play a back room consulting role to Rick and to me. He continued to provide helpful advice. He said, "I picked up the rumor the legislature is going to cut the university's budget by the amount of the reserve fund." This was the off year. The legislature meets every year but this was the off year. It was not the year the university has its big request in but it always had in a small request for special items. Kegler and I talked and there was another guy in this town who was a political consultant, D.J. Leary, who was very helpful, very astute. We decided the best thing I could do was to go down and formally withdraw the university's request for new funding. Kegler said, "If you do that, you will probably stop them from cutting into your current funding." I went down and I said, "I don't think the university is in a position to be asking for any money at this time."

CAC: I see.

RS: This was in the House Subcommittee on Appropriations. I said, "I'm formally withdrawing our request, and I think we need to sort out where we're going, and what resources we have, and

sort out the questions around these reserve funds. I'm convinced there's no doubt a university of this size needs some financial reserve and flexibility." So, I in essence was saying, "You need to leave that money there"—and it worked. They appreciated my openness and direct approach to it. I sort of nipped it in the bud. I took the university's request off the table so it was no longer an issue and they left us alone. The other thing I did was appoint, sometime later, a Financial Review Committee. I chaired it but I appointed to it the chair of the Senate committee, the chair of the House committee. I appointed Arne Carlson to it. He was the state auditor at the time. I don't know whether I have that along; let me see if I can find it. Yes, here's the report of it that was actually formally finished right when I left but we met several times during the summer and the fall. You can see who was on it. State Auditor Arne Carlson who became governor. Lyndon Carlson chaired the House committee that handled the university's appropriations. Gene Waldorf chaired the Senate committee. I had some other key folks . . . Warren Ibele, former dean of the Graduate School, Elton Kuederer who was a regent . . . some other legislators, James Noble who ran the legislative auditor's office, State Finance Commissioner Tom Triplett. It was really to bring together the political players who could influence the university's finances negatively and say, "We're an open book. We'll put everything on the table. We'll show you what we have and what we don't have." We answered every question.

CAC: That had not been done fully before?

RS: Never.

CAC: This really comes out of this report?

RS: Right. If you want that report, I need a copy back because that's the only copy I have.

CAC: I'm going to assume that these are in the university archives?

RS: They should be but if you want to make a photocopy of that and give it back to me, you could.

CAC: You can put these two documents on loan to me?

RS: That one you can have because I have another copy . . . the State of the University.

CAC: Okay. You are not back in your office for three or four weeks?

RS: You can mail it back next month, that's fine.

CAC: I will do that. That would be very valuable.

RS: I may find a couple of others here you might want.

CAC: Okay. Let me interpose here that some persons are doing this and I file it along with the permission; so, that when people see the transcript, they can see supporting documents as well.

RS: That's fine. Yes.

CAC: This is not normally done in oral history projects but I think it's a necessary thing to do.

RS: Here's one other document that happened to be from a very specific talk I gave. I gave a talk at a breakfast meeting of the Minnesota Society of Certified Public Accountants which is a group of professionals that would have some interest in all of this financial mess. I talked to them on April 28, 1988, which was about five or six weeks after I became interim president. I'd been long enough to understand maybe some of what the issues were. I just talked from this outline; so, this is the outline and, again, this is a single copy but if I give it to you, you can make a copy and give it back to me.

CAC: I will.

RS: I identified the current problems as Eastcliff, reserve funds, fiscal management, and communications and public relations. I talked about the immediate challenges as being (1) restoring trust and credibility and (2) moving ahead with an academic plan for change . . . parenthesis, Commitment to Focus. I talked about Commitment to Focus, what it means, what it doesn't mean and why it's important and then I said, "My jobs in the months ahead were to do these four things: to fix the flats in the tires of the university vehicle, to get back on the road, to fill the tank with gas, and to help the university recruit a new president."

CAC: You've got good metaphors operating there, too.

RS: I did because I had a very talented person that helped me create the words and helped develop some of the speeches. That guy is still here, I think; his name is George Robb.

CAC: Oh, yes!

RS: He's absolutely the best . . . I hate to call him a speech writer because he's much more than that. He didn't write my speeches. We talked about the ideas together, and what I was trying to capture and accomplish, and he figured out the right kinds of ways to say it that would fly well with Minnesotans, and using analogies, and metaphors, and putting things in simple language were part of it. He's the only person I've ever worked with that could get inside my brain, and talk about an issue, and then say it as if I would say it. There was another guy here that used to write speeches for Peter Magrath, Jim Borgstadt. He worked part time with the university's attorney's office. One time when Robb was on a vacation, he wrote me a speech for some outstate meeting and it was terrible. I tried to use it and in the middle of it, I quit and just talked because it wasn't the way I would have said it.

CAC: Yes.

RS: George Robb is one of the unsung heroes in all of this because whatever I did to restore trust and credibility, particularly with alumni and citizens outstate, he helped capture the images and the phrases that accomplished that. I spent a lot of time talking to faculty and staff but I particularly spent a lot of time externally, wherever there were a group of alumni or other interested citizens.

CAC: You knew you had nine months, or ten or twelve and that's it?

RS: Right. There are lots of negative memories, so to speak, of those experiences, and the stress, and everything else but one of the things that was real positive, maybe even a little bit of a surprise, for me was how positively and well received I was by the Faculty Senate. The president really presides over the Faculty Senate meetings.

CAC: Yes.

RS: The last meeting I presided over, they gave me a standing ovation and it really surprised me. I was nominated to be a candidate for vice-president of Academic Affairs when Ken became president. Actually, I think Keith McFarland chaired that search, as I recall. Keith and I were good enough friends that—I'd worked with him—afterwards he told me, "The reason your name didn't make it to the final interview is that some of the faculty saw you more presidential than vice-presidential." What he really meant was, they didn't see you as an academician as much as a politician and it's an accurate assessment. I'm not sure I ever wanted to be a provost or vice-president of Academic Affairs. I'd rather deal with the politics of the real world than academic politics. To quote a person who used to be an administrator in a building we can see from the other side of this building, the Humphrey Institute . . . the first dean of the Humphrey Institute was Harlan Cleveland who once told me that academic politics are the worst kind, (1) because the stakes are so small and (2) because the men of honor are outnumbered by the men of principle.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: There's an element of truth in that; and that is, that faculty will stab each other in the back in order to stand on a principle; and so, academic politics can be very mean unless you play by the rules of the academic game.

CAC: Yes.

RS: I was a candidate for vice-president of Academic Affairs but not a successful candidate but I'm not sure it would have been the right job for me anyway. That had all happened and here all of a sudden I'm thrown into chairing the Faculty Senate. I was never a senator. I never spent any time in those kinds of things. I spent my time elsewhere.

CAC: I understand.

RS: I was so open, and direct, and honest, and straightforward that the faculty respected and trusted me. I can't think of any other explanation as to why it went so well. I'd go over to the Faculty Senate and run those few meetings . . . that plus they just felt I was restoring some of the credibility of the institution that had been tarnished maybe. I didn't come out of any heritage of having been a . . . Some faculty tend to be career academic politicians and they serve on the senate for years, and all these other internal committees, and so on; and that just wasn't me, I didn't do much of that. I was surprised to be able to jump into it and have a good relationship with the Faculty Senate. I have here copies of a few speeches I gave and you might want to look at one or two of them. I'll leave them.

CAC: Those also you want the copies back?

RS: Right, I do. Here's one that stands out for me—I didn't go back and read it—and the only reason it stands out for me is the date. This is a speech I gave to a public forum of alumni and other interested citizens in Mankato on June 30, 1988. It was while driving to Mankato myself in the president's car—the car that I had inherited from Ken—that somewhere along the road on Highway 169, I decided that I had to make a change in the administration of athletics . . . that particular day. I had met with the current athletic director at that time, Mr. Giel, about five weeks earlier and revisited the conversation that Ken Keller had with him about, Wouldn't he like to move into a different kind of a role? And said that I thought his real strengths were public relations and fund raising. He could do a lot of good there and that we could move on to some other management that needed to deal with some of the tough issues. Frankly, the Athletic Department was faced with all kinds of challenges. It was under an investigation by the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association]. Only after I left the university and we'd made the people changes did I find out that the university was very close to getting the so-called death penalty from the NCAA and that maybe making a change in the leadership helped avoid that. It hadn't been any one thing that had happened. Every time I turned around, there were these mismanagement problems. I finally decided—going back to the conversation when Ken was president when he didn't deal with the issue—a change had to be made; so, I picked up the car phone and called David Lebedoff and said, "David, I think the only solution to all of this continuing, chronic set of problems around athletics is to make a change in the athletic director." After David sort of [gasp] took a deep breath, he said, "I think you're right." I said, "But I can't do it unless we can figure out how to get the majority of the regents to support it." And I said, "You've got to hang in there. If you say it's needed, then you not only need to say it today, you need to say it when we do it." He said I had his full support. I thought this was a real test of whether I did or not. We agreed that he would call some board members and I would call some and one by one walk them through why and try to get their support. We agreed to leave two or three board members to the very last moment, the two or three we figured were most likely to oppose it. We agreed we'd each call regents over the weekend. The trouble with a board of twelve members is not everybody can keep their mouth shut; so, somebody—I have a suspicion

who but I don't know for sure—leaked the word that I was probably going to make a change. We started this on a Friday, June 30, and so looking ahead to the following week, Tuesday was the Fourth of July. We targeted to try and get this done by Wednesday, the day after the Fourth. By Monday, he and I had talked to about nine of the board members and we figured we had eight and one-half votes out of the nine; so we figured we had enough to go ahead. By that time the rumors had surfaced. A couple of sports writers had picked it up and on Monday afternoon, July 3, Sid Hartman stormed into David Lebedoff's office in the IDS tower, in his law firm. He just stormed in and said, "What's this I hear about the university going to make a change in the administration of athletics?" David Lebedoff said, "I'm sorry, there's no truth to that rumor. I don't know where you got it," with a totally straight face and Sid Hartman believed him. Sid Hartman left and went on vacation over the Fourth of July. Then on July 5, I called Paul Giel in my office. First of all, through George Robb and the information folks in the university, I said, "I want a press conference for three o'clock in the afternoon and you can tell the press that the university has some announcement to make about the administration of athletics and that's all it is." When I called Paul into my office that morning, I said, "I'm going to do this this afternoon at three o'clock and I invite you to join me and announce that you're ready to move into a different role." He said, "I'll have to think about that." I said, "You think about it and I'll call you back at noon." Then, I called in Frank Wilderson who was the vice-president of Student Affairs and told him that I was moving temporarily the administration of athletics from his office to the president's office, that I didn't believe long term that it should report directly to the president but I had to do it during this interim." Frank was concerned about that and upset that it would like I was pulling the rug out from underneath him and so on. After a little while, he called me back and said, "You're doing the right thing, and I support you, and I'll join you in the announcement." Then, I called Giel back in at noon and he said, "No, if you're going to do this, you'll have to go ahead without me." He dug his heels right into the carpet like that. It became more obvious later, but it was obvious that he had talked to somebody on the board perhaps who told him that an interim president couldn't get this done . . . there was no way . . . just hang in there. It was late that morning that I had called the last three regents, one of whom was David Roe. I reached him at his health club someplace and I had this image of him standing there just having come out of the shower or whatever. I told him and he became just outraged. He started pounding a table very loudly, and using lots of four-letter words, and telling me that I was just trying to build a name for myself, and he'd get me, he'd get me if it was the last thing he did. It was all a very threatening kind of response. Then, I called Wendy Anderson who was equally outraged and I think Wendy and Paul were pretty close all the way back to their playing days here. They were sort of stars in the same era in hockey and football.

CAC: Yes.

RS: And then the third regent, I think was Mary Shertler. They were all angry. Then the phone started to ring. The first call was from Curt Carlson who was chairing the big campaign to raise \$300 million dollars and, of course, Ken resigned before that was completed and Curt and I were trying to bring successful closure to it. He talked in a very soft voice and said, "Mr. President, with all the controversy we have and our trying to finish this campaign, are you sure you want

more controversy?" I said to myself, "God, now what do I do?" I just talked him through the logic of why I thought I had to do it and the problems that were beyond what he knew about in athletics. We got all done and he said, "Mr. President, I learned long ago never to second guess the chief executive officer. You have my support." The next call was from Stan Hubbard who owns KSTP-TV. He said, "President Sauer, I've been told you're going to fire Paul Giel today. I've been asked to call you." It was obvious to me afterward that maybe one of the regents who was angry had asked him to call me. He said, "I just want you to know you're doing the right thing and it's long overdue." Clunk! and he hung up the phone.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: I didn't even get a chance to respond to him . . . it was just like that. Somebody thought he was going to call me and try to tell me to stop and they misjudged how he felt about it. Then, I had a call from a man who owned—I don't remember his name—the Thunderbird Motel complex out in Bloomington. He was a major donor to the Athletic Department; I think he gave something like \$100,000 a year. He threatened to withdraw his annual support. I said I was sorry to hear that but I said that I was sorry to hear that but we've got to move ahead and this is why, and so on. That was the end of the calls and then at three o'clock, we had the press conference. Giel was not there. Frank Wilderson was and Bob Stein joined me.

CAC: Bob Stein had been on the Intercollegiate Athletic Committee?

RS: And he was sort of the lead faculty representative to the NCAA and did an outstanding job. He was really good at it. He helped me work through all of this and so he joined me. The announcement was made by he and I and Frank Wilderson together. Then, Bob worked side by side with me as we did a search for a new director. He was very good at it and I came to respect him enormously. I didn't know him well before that because our paths didn't cross that much except maybe at a breakfast with all the deans and the vice-presidents or something. We made the announcement that we made the associate athletic director acting director—I don't remember his name now—and that the director was going to report to me through Bob Stein and that I asked Bob Stein to start a search for a new athletic director. Of course, then all hell broke loose in the press. There were three or four days of constant phone calls and letters. It was a paper tiger and it died down after a few days.

CAC: Did the regents in fact have to take a vote or is this . . .

RS: No, they really didn't have to take a vote because it was my decision.

CAC: Yes. You'd made that line clear?

RS: The vote the regents could have taken was they could have removed me from office. Perhaps, they were in a little bit of a box because they had already been criticized a lot for some of the other things they had done around here. By that time, I had a lot of support from the

legislature and statewide. If they had removed me, they might have been treading on impeachment, if you want to call it that. My position always was that I'm going to manage this, to work us through all of this stuff, and straighten this institution out; and if you don't like the way I'm managing it, then get another manager. But still, I wasn't naive enough to go into that without knowing I had the majority of the board on my side and I was nervous the whole way because of the behavior of some of the board members and their politics that if they got pressured that they would fold on me, and particularly Lebedoff would fold. He didn't. He hung in there. I really applaud him for that. He was a stronger chair than most people realize because what they don't realize is that when he was a very young man, he was Wendy Anderson's campaign manager. Wendy was governor and then tried to make that fateful move to being a senator. I think Lebedoff severed his friendship with Wendy in order to stand up behind me because Wendy was—maybe he's forgiven him now but I don't know that he has—very, very angry; so, he gave up that friendship in order to stand tall at that time. It died down quickly in a few weeks and played out as the right decision in the press, and with the people of the state, and with the faculty, the Faculty Senate, and people like . . . Bob Holt was dean of the Graduate School at the time. He came over and he said, "God, thank you for doing this." But I wasn't trying to do it for any personal gain in anyway because I wasn't trying to be the president but it was so needed as part of several decisions that just simply were needed to get the vote upright again.

CAC: In and of itself, it was not high priority but it had to come to be high priority to clear the deck for these other agendas?

RS: Yes. Nils Hasselmo thanked me several times when he took over that I had made several decisions that he would have had to face and it would have been very difficult to do in the first year and still stay there, you know. The regents who were angry didn't want me to have anything to say about who the new athletic director should be. The first thing after the air had cleared and Paul was not reappointed . . . I really couldn't fire him. He was on an annual appointment and we chose not to renew his appointment, which is always the privilege you have. In fact, I had checked with the university legal counsel—Steve Dunham was the university attorney at the time—and you don't even have to give reasons for non-reappointment. You just have to give notice that they'll not be reappointed. With the number of years he had been there, technically, he had to be given a year's notice; so, he really was on the payroll for another year but with reassigned duties. I think he had an attorney begin to engage a *quirimonia lassa* but it never went anywhere because I think the attorney advised Paul that the university didn't do anything wrong. You don't have a legal ground to . . .

CAC: Probably in the long run, this report of the Financial Review Committee was more important.

RS: Oh, yes it was, really.

CAC: Did that get the same kind of publicity [unclear]?

RS: No, no, no. Not at all. Not at all. The athletic thing got so much publicity partly because of Sid Hartman and Sid Hartman was so angry—not that he wasn't a friend of Paul Giel—for a couple of other reasons. One that Paul was his sort of source of information but even more important than that, he got scooped.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Tape 2, Side 2]

CAC: . . . the Paul Giel situation.

RS: On Wednesday, July 5, we had a press conference at three o'clock in the afternoon to announce the restructuring of athletics or the change in the assignment of the athletic director. That afternoon on the *Cannon Show* on WCCO radio, Steve Cannon's radio show . . . when Sid Hartman is gone, traveling, on vacation, or whatever, he will still call in and do a sports update. In fact, a lot of times he does it . . . he does it from his home over on the St. Croix River, I think. He called in to Steve Cannon to do an update and Steve Cannon said, "Sid, by the way, did you know that the university today removed Paul Giel?" I didn't hear the show; I was told only by others who were listening but I guess he went absolutely ballistic. People like George Robb, and D.J. Leary, and others who know the communications world better than I do said he went ballistic because he got scooped, that he was not able to be on the radio talking about this, that he was off on vacation. So, then he continued to attack me for years actually in his column off and on. In fact, Sid Hartman and I had one conversation all the time I was interim president. He called me the day after I was appointed, and wanted to interview me on the phone, and wanted to know whether I ever played any sports in high school or college. I said, "Not in college. In high school, I played a little basketball."

CAC: But you were a sportsman.

RS: Yes. And he asked me about growing up in Walker and so on. Then he wrote this little thing in his column . . . talked to the new president . . . he likes sports. In fact, I was an avid fan, and had season tickets to basketball, and I used to go to quite a few. Then, he sent me a letter after he wrote this one paragraph in his column on his stationery and if you ever got a letter from Sid Hartman—I should have saved it but I didn't—you get this modest sized piece of stationery, not the full legal size, and about a third of it is taken up with his picture in the upper left hand corner staring at you.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: He said something like . . . thanks for talking to me the other day. You're doing a great job. Keep up the good work. Regards, Sid. I laughed at it so much. I think I passed it on to Rick Heydinger or somebody. I never kept it but I should have kept it to show it to him later. It's funny how things play out and what's important politically externally because the other

important thing that I did in the eyes of people, which actually was just luck the way it happened. There was all this controversy around this palatial office, supposedly, with a \$9000 desk and a \$6000 credenza. In fact, even after remodeled, the president's office here is modest by any standards.

CAC: Yes.

RS: I remember being in the president's office at the University of Illinois, which was unbelievable and it's another Land-Grant, Big Ten institution, you know.

CAC: One of the troubles was it was called a credenza and none of us knew what that was.

RS: The interesting thing is, I'm in the office—in just a matter of days I had moved in there—looking at this expensive desk and so on. A guy that runs a used and antique furniture store up in North Minneapolis called me. He said, "You need a new desk." I said, "I sure do."

CAC: [laughter]

RS: He said, "I've got a proposition for you. I'd like to give you a desk to use. You can pick any desk in my store. They're all either antiques or used desks." I said, "Well, I don't need a \$20,000 antique." "No," he said. So, I went out to his store and picked out a very ordinary looking oak desk that is not unlike the oak desks that faculty used to have in their offices at one time, except this one was different; it had a step down on one corner. One corner was built down lower and it was a bookkeeper's desk. It used to belong to a bookkeeper way back in the start of the Dayton Company . . . in fact, so long ago that at the time the calculator sat on this step down ledge, a hand calculator, because you can see where then somebody finally bored a hole to run an electric cord through when they first got electric calculators. He had it for sale in his antique store for \$700. I said, "That sounds about the right value."

CAC: [laughter]

RS: So, I moved out a \$9000 desk—it went into storage someplace—and I replaced it with a \$700 desk; and I never touched the credenza because it was the only place to store anything in the office. There were no book shelves. There were no file cabinets. The credenza had . . . which was really a big, long, flat, narrow table behind your desk where you put your phone and you've got a couple of drawers underneath, the only place you could put anything. So, I left it there. It's funny reporters would come in my office afterwards and talk about it, and then want to come in and take pictures of the desk, the new desk. So, it got all kinds of press. They never noticed the credenza or even talked about it. Actually, I'm not sure I would have had the insight politically to think of doing it but once the guy called, I thought, "Oh, yes, why not?" Of course, it played out in the press. Then, when I'd go outstate and speak, they'd say, "Gee, thank you for getting rid of that big desk," as if that was the issue; but it had become an issue in the press. It was much less important than some of the other things we did but it taught me the value of

public relations. That's an important part of this and often you do get in academic institutions where some wonderful scholar moves to some leadership role in the management of the institution and is very naive from a public relations or politics standpoint, and yet, very bright, knows the right things that need to be done but it's very much a political job. It forever—this sounds funny with my last name—soured me on wanting to do one of these jobs, in a public institution like this at least, because you're in a fish bowl. You have a board that's politically appointed. They have different agendas. You meet in public with the press. You're constantly posturing and measuring your words. In my organization now, I have a wonderful board of trustees that meets twice a year in private. They all come to the board meeting because they care about young people. We focus on our work and our mission. We don't deal with the politics. It's totally different.

CAC: You do pose in this letter you wrote to me . . . Is strong management and leadership possible in an institution as large, and as consultative, and decentralized as the University of Minnesota? It would be true of many other state universities?

RS: Oh, yes. It's not unique here. I think in some respects you could say that universities like this one have become too large. I don't know what a desirable size is. Could you not have smaller more focused institutions that then might collaborate in different ways? It's impossible to get your arms around this institution.

CAC: I've been amazed with these conversations—I've had about eighty or eighty-five of them now. I was at the university forty-four years before I retired but the rage, I knew about but it's more impressive when you talk with folks for three hours each.

RS: One of these examples that's flared up and continued to brew since I left was the issue around the laboratory that produced the anti-rejection transplant drug.

CAC: That's ALD [antilymphocyte globulin].

RS: ALD. The regents approved the construction of the building while I was interim president in October or November of that year. The board has to approve the construction of any building whether or not university funds are used. I remember reviewing it with vice-president Neal Vanselow who said that the Medical School wanted to build it, and they had private money to be able to build it with, and we just needed board approval to build it. That was the extent of it. It was put on the docket. The board approved it. All of the stuff around the production of the stuff, and the violation of the FDA [Food and Drug Administration] regulations, and so on happened after I left but I have been interviewed by press and I have provided two different depositions to attorneys in the last two years about it, about what I knew and didn't know.

CAC: None of those things were known by the board or by yourself at that time?

RS: No. In fact, I said, "I recall two things. I recall being briefed by Neal Vanselow about wanting to take this to the board to approve the construction of the facility. I recall sometime in the fall of 1988, October, November, it being on the board agenda for action. That's all I remember." It turns out they verified that that's exactly all I did know. They found handwritten notes from Neal Vanselow in the file that he had briefed me because there had all kinds of accusations made that the president knew about this. I use it as an example of how it's impossible to know about all the issues and all the parts of the institution. Neal Vanselow was I think maybe . . . he and David Lilly were the two best vice-presidents in the university when I was the vice-president; and I respected him enormously and trusted him but he, in turn, trusted the Medical School dean and department heads who didn't give him all the information. The institution is so large . . .

CAC: It was really a failure of accountability in that case, wasn't it?

RS: Well, it is. I would go outstate after all of this controversy and speak to alumni and irate citizen groups and they would want a guarantee. Can you guarantee that there will never be problems like this again in the university? I said, "No, let me use an analogy. Let's pretend I'm mayor of New York City and you want me to guarantee that nobody is ever going to break a store front window or tip over a garbage can. I can't. This university is a large city with many types of people, and some of them very trustworthy, and some of them very mean-spirited, and some of them that are willing to lie, and deceive, and steal. I can't. It's an impossible job. Just because it is the university doesn't mean that every single person meets the highest ideals and the same value set. In fact, it wouldn't be a university if it did because part of its strength is its diversity."

CAC: You served in different capacities at different universities and colleges and did you find any that was really manageable? You really state a systemic problem here which is worrisome.

RS: I found it was possible to manage a department well.

CAC: Oh, sure.

RS: I have an organization now with 150 employees and you can get your arms around that, so to speak. You're talking about other fundamental problems. I'm not sure the members of a university community want to be managed. That's part of it. It's a very consultative environment. No matter how much you consult, you are expected to ask one more person.

CAC: Now, do you think that's more true here than at Kansas or Michigan, for example?

RS: In the universities I was at, it was more true here than any I worked at.

CAC: Okay.

RS: Although, I know there are other universities that are very much like this. I think the University of Wisconsin is very much, in some respects, very decentralized, consultative.

CAC: And a populist tradition for both of us?

RS: Yes. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying the university ought to be hierarchical and autocratic because I think that's terrible. In fact, we've moved our own organization far away from that kind of a culture to very much of a flat team-based organization that would not be unlike, in some respects, a university culture. There are two fundamental differences in my organization: we don't have any hard money and we don't have any tenure. Everyone of us, including me, works from year to year and you make decisions differently about who you employ, about what you're doing that's productive. My niche of work is where we find alignment between the needs of kids, the interests of the Extension staff, and 4-H staff, and volunteers that work with them, and the needs of a funding partner that's willing to invest in it, which means you have to demonstrate impact in responding to their needs as well as the needs of kids. That hard drive towards accountability is often not there in a university in the same way. I can recall in twenty-two years experience of one time when I saw tenure needed for what it was meant to be originally, and that is, to defend a person's right to stand up on a soapbox and offer your point of view. When Ed[ward] Schuh, who is still here today, was head of the Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics—before he left to go to the World Bank and then come back here to the Humphrey Institute in 1983 . . . Peter Magrath was still president—was speaking around the state predicting the farm financial crisis. That actually happened two years later in 1985. He was predicting it and Peter Magrath got a call from Rudy Perpich, who was governor then as well, and he wanted Peter Magrath to fire Ed Schuh because he was saying these negative things about Minnesota agriculture. Peter Magrath had to point out to Governor Perpich that Ed Schuh had tenure as a professor and he had every right to offer whatever opinion he felt he wanted to offer, particularly in his area of expertise, around farm finance and so on. then, Peter called me and told me that and kind of chuckled. I said, "Peter, this is the first time I've known in recent years where anybody has had to really fall back on tenure. Too often, it's become noted to be job security and other things and here's a wonderful example of tenure as it was created back in the Middle Ages." When you don't have tenure, you make decisions very differently about human resources, about program priorities.

I think the other fundamental issue—and the one that frustrated me so in this environment—is that universities resist efforts to improve productivity. Let me try to explain what I mean. I'm really talking about teaching where if you ask the citizens of the state what they most want from this university, it's they want a good place for their children to get an education. Even though the faculty may put the high priority on research, the citizens don't necessarily. There was an article many years ago now—I can't remember the author—in the *Chronicle for Higher Education*, on the back page that is typically the essay on some pertinent topic. The author this particular week in the *Chronicle* compared college teaching to barbering. He said, In the last 100 years, the only advance in barbering has been the electric clippers. And in the last 100 years in college

teaching”—and this was sort of before many professors saw the potential of using the computers—“the only advances have been the microphone and slide projector. But the barber still cuts about the same number of heads per day and the teacher still teaches about the same number of students, or even fewer because they want more time to think and create.” And he said, “As a result, the universities have not made the productivity gains that most sectors of our economy and society have made. And because they haven’t, the cost of running a university continues to increase at or greater than the rate of inflation.” Many faculty are openly defiant that you could become more efficient in teaching and still maintain the quality. Yet, there are individual cases where faculty have demonstrated you can—through using computer technology and other things, and measure the learning that results—teach more students more efficiently and have them learn more at lower cost. But to try and set an agenda for doing that in an institution? That’s why I think higher education is headed for more serious trouble yet. You’re finally beginning to see a few university presidents and others begin to talk about productivity. To me it’s very much connected to accountability because we have an accountability to make the best use of the resources the people of the state give us to run this institution. I think that’s the biggest single challenge any university faces, any public institution . . . a private institution as well; although, you see some of the private institutions taking the lead now around some of this. Bennington college in Vermont last year did away with tenure. At the same time, they gave every faculty member a 10 or 15 percent increase in pay and put them on one-year contracts. But the issue wasn’t tenure as much as productivity, and how do you measure it, and what return do we get on our investment, and how many teachers does it take to do a quality job of educating a certain number of students.

CAC: And how do you weigh in in distributing the relative weight of teaching, research, service to the community, service to the university?

RS: I would argue that instead of making the frontal argument for, we need to have more dollars to support research, that you could gain the faculty time to do that research if you would improve the productivity of your teaching without eroding the quality.

CAC: Even though you’ve been out of the . . . How long have you been with 4-H?

RS: Six and one-half years?

CAC: The pressure on sources of funding for research, both private and public, has caused another crisis, as I’m sure you’re aware of talking with folks in higher education everywhere.

RS: Right.

CAC: So, those funds are running out, not running our but squeezing.

RS: Sure, they are. When I see the political pressures now on funding for research in the sciences, for example, where I’m closer too . . . it’s the public funding of scientific research in

universities in this country that as much as anything made this country what it is. It's provided the intellectual knowledge base for all the technology advances. Much of that has come out of university research.

CAC: Well, and the Health Sciences . . . there's a spectacular [unclear].

RS: You look at the health sciences . . . you look at physics . . . you look at computer sciences . . . you name it . . . even the social sciences. It was interesting that experiment station directors, in general, are viewed as not valuing social science as much as hard sciences and I was sort of an exception. I put a lot of money in social science research and I'd get invited by Ed Schuh and Vern Ruttan and others to be the one administrator on an agenda of a conference of social scientists. I was on the review team that reviewed social sciences research funded by the Experiment Station of Michigan State University and I was the only hard scientist on the review team; so, I value the role that social science plays, too. Of course, those are sciences that have an even bigger struggle through all of these years of focus on hard sciences. They haven't had the dollars to support research and, now, there's going to be more and more pressure on it. There is an unformed electorate that are lobbying a group of politicians that this kind of stuff is not necessary. That's a real threat to universities but I think it was also fueled somewhat by universities trying to say that we don't need to become more efficient, and more productive, and more focused. It was sort of like, give us lots of money, and leave us alone, and let us do our thing whether or not it's relevant to your problems. In most cases, I could argue that the very basic research that a faculty member in History, or Economics, or someplace else is doing, I can draw a line that connects that to how it's going to benefit society. It might be ten years down the road . . . it might be twenty years down the line but it can almost always make the connect.

Universities have not done a very good job of the communications and marketing around that. Universities lack for having marketing expertise and some faculty will say, "We don't need to market ourselves." Of course, universities are important and, of course, the public should support us but it's come to be . . . everything in this world, I think, is about marketing in one way or another. I'm trying to market the change in the image of 4-H. I suppose, as a young man when I tried to get a date with a girl, I was trying to market myself. Universities are very poor at marketing what their about. They become very defensive and when pushed against the wall, because of a budget cut or something, will then extoll all of its virtues but I'm talking about the planned, ongoing marketing during good times that tells a citizen of Minnesota what they're getting for their tax investment, that tells a legislator what the university is doing for it. That's part of it.

But then, you throw into it the separate agendas that are there because it's a public university. When I was interim president here, John Dibiaggio was president of Michigan State University and then I went to this new job at National 4-H Council and our articles of incorporation called for one of our board members to be a Land-Grant university president and it so happened that he was the Land-Grant university president on my board; so, all of a sudden, he became one of my bosses. We spent a lot of time talking together because of what I went through here and then

what he was starting to go through where he had a board make his football coach athletic director in a joint title over his opposition. The whole thing ended up . . . they had to remove the guy later. Here's a president who said, "I should decide who I hire to run the university and particularly the board shouldn't decide who is the athletic director over the opposition of the president." What they should have done is remove the president if they didn't agree with him but they shouldn't have reached down into the institution and said, "Mr. Football Coach, we're going to make you athletic director." Well, John Dibiaggio finally left Michigan State in the fray after all of that. He survived that. The faculty stood up for him, many of the citizens stood up for him. Michigan's board is elected on the public ballot and while they say they're non-partisan, they really run on a political ticket; so, you know which ones are Democrats and which ones are Republicans and that may even be a step worse than how Minnesota's board is selected. John Dibiaggio has left Michigan State and he's now president of Tufts University, a wonderful private school, rather small size in New England, in Massachusetts. I run into him once in awhile in airports. He looks younger . . .

CAC: [laughter]

RS: . . . and he talks about a board that meets less frequently, maybe quarterly, in private. He doesn't have athletics as anything more than intramural. He focuses on the academic priorities of the institution.

CAC: Do you feel younger yourself?

RS: Oh, yes, much so. I come back here and see colleagues who say I look younger.

CAC: Has it improved your golf game?

RS: My golf handicap is lower now than it's been in years and years—when it should be going the other direction.

CAC: [laughter]

RS: Some of the worst golf I played was the year I was interim president.

CAC: I bet.

RS: I tried to play. It's an impossible job. One thing I respect Peter Magrath for was something he once told me about what it takes to be a university president. It's a combination of being an egotist, and a masochist, and something else. It was a combination of three things like that. You had to have a big ego, and be willing to take a lot of punishment, and want to be in the limelight. That ten and one-half months, we had no private life. Everybody expects you to be someplace. It was heightened by the controversy.

CAC: Were you children away from home?

RS: Yes, pretty much all grown up. My wife and I—when the last child went off to college—had sold our house in Roseville and bought a townhouse. The press would call the house at night. Some reporter even figured out how to enter a code to activate our answering machine to get messages on our answering machine; so, I couldn't even have anybody leave me a message on the answering machine. You couldn't walk into a supermarket without being approached and somebody bending your ear about athletics or this or that. You had no privacy. I don't think people understand. I don't think that's changed for Nils Hasselmo.

CAC: I'm sure.

RS: You're constantly expected to be someplace . . . show up at this party, that reception . . . speak to this group, that group.

CAC: Sure. I've seen Nils' calendar and it's just horrendous.

RS: You don't own your time anymore. I now own my calendar, and I decide how I'm going to spend it, and I spend it in balance. I work hard and I do a lot of things but I protect private time. Maybe that year helped me learn the value that your job doesn't keep you warm at night, your family and friends do—no matter how big and perceived important the job is. It's interesting how supposed friendships, developed during that year I was interim president, were totally friendships because of the position I held, not because of who I was. Your real friends are still there.

CAC: These are very helpful reflections as well as the whole narrative that you provided. I'm going to ask you to go back to one last narrative account, and that is, the search for a new president. You were interim. Can you say something about how that search was launched? I notice in one of your memorandum, you said, your last point was to get out of the way of the new president.

RS: Right. I really wasn't very directly involved in the search because (1) I was not a candidate and (2) I had angered a few members of the board over some of the decisions I made, like the athletic decision, and they didn't want me involved. In fact, they didn't want me to have a say in appointing a new athletic director but it turned out the search went to conclusion and had a recommended candidate, Rick Bay; and they wanted the university to wait until the new president came on board and have him decide who should be the athletic director. Well, the board then picked Nils but this was in November and he wasn't coming until January; so, I suggested that Nils review the search, look at the top three candidates we had looked at, and talk to Rick. He did that and said, "I agree with you." He told that to the board that Rick should be appointed but what actually happened was I was still the president; so I moved the action at the board meeting because Nils wasn't here yet. So, we ended up getting him appointed.

I had my job offer to go the National 4-H Council about October 8 but I wanted to keep it quiet because I was trying to move this process through to find a new athletic director and if the board knew I was leaving, I would have lost whatever base I had to get that done. The executive committee of the board that was hiring me and the president I was replacing agreed to keep it quiet and not announce it; and the only other two people that knew it here were my wife and my executive assistant, so we kept it quiet for a month.

CAC: That's remarkable.

RS: Once we got to November and we could see we were going to be able to get these other things accomplished . . . it was a coincidence but the National Association of 4-H agents was meeting here in town at their annual conference and it was announced there here in town. But I had told David Lebedoff then that I was leaving at the end of December regardless and he said, "I think we'll have a president before then." It turns out they did and Nils was able to come in January. I spent a lot of time with Nils going over things.

CAC: That's what I was going to ask you, if the transition from one presidency or another, whether at the level of federal government or anywhere, isn't terribly . . . you know, I don't know any literature on that—there must be . . .

RS: We sat two or three times at length. One time, he came while I was still here and there was some kind of reception at Eastcliff. I wasn't living at Eastcliff but we were using it for receptions. Afterwards, we spent three hours sitting in the porch and I gave him a whole file of stuff like this, told him where things were, told him about decisions I should have made and didn't, and he thanked me for the ones I made. Then, I came back sometime in the spring when something else brought me back to town and we met again. He'd had time then to go over everything and he asked me a few questions about pending issues. There was one, for example, where I should have made a change in administration of one of the branch campuses and I didn't—I put it off. I really had the chips and lined up with the board that I could have made the decision and, later, he ended up closing that campus. That was Waseca. So, we had enough visits. After the first few months, I didn't talk to him much at all. I'd see him at an annual meeting once in awhile and he looked a little frayed and tattered. I'd occasionally get these stories about the Medical School and the other things and I know some of that stuff still goes on.

CAC: Have you see him recently?

RS: I haven't seen him since November.

CAC: As you saw by the papers, he's settled for a few years.

RS: Yes and it was obvious that some board members are putting pressure on to maybe move out earlier and he resisted that. I don't want to try and judge the current president . . . I'm not close enough to him . . . I'm so far removed from it. My only general thought when he was

appointed was he's too nice a guy. To work with this board and deal with the issues you're dealing with in this institution, you have to be somewhat of a s.o.b. He came in very well liked by the people and he's very bright.

CAC: He's drawn on that capital.

RS: Yes, he has. He's used it very well. But you just knew that because of what happened in 1988 and before that there was going to be an unusual level of media scrutiny and it was going to go on for awhile. I felt like by the end of 1988 that it was like throwing meat to the piranhas, you know. The media . . . if anything popped up, the water was foaming and they were . . . I didn't know what the issues were going to be, whether they were going to be in the Medical School, or in Athletics, or whatever, but you just knew that there was going to be an unusual level of front page focus on the university and it's continued, unfortunately. It doesn't help because of where the university is located. If this university were in a Manhattan, Kansas, would you have that same level of . . . ? Not only that but in many of those states, the major university role is subdivided. In Kansas, you've got the University of Kansas, Kansas State-Wichita, State University. In Iowa, you've got University of Iowa and Iowa State. In Michigan, Michigan State . . . In Nebraska, you have one institution but it's not in Omaha. It has a medical complex in Omaha but . . . I think that in itself creates a special environment here, and there's a scrutiny, and you get these two major newspapers competing with each other and several television stations; and they're all trying to scoop the other and so anything becomes news. It's incredible. It would be interesting to see what happens as the board begins a search in the next year to replace Nils and what kind of a person they end up with, how successful they can be. It's a horribly difficult job. I don't think a given faculty member, or staff member, or student realizes anything at all what it's like. I like doing tough jobs and I continue to deal with some controversial issues in my current job but I also like having a life and you can't have a life in this job. Ken Keller didn't have a life. Peter Magrath went through a divorce and a few other things. Nils has seemingly been able to hold his family life together and I applaud him for that; although, I think his wife is becoming very impatient with all of it. I'm not sure she wanted him to do two more years but I don't know that for a fact.

CAC: Well, these reflections and stories will help others know better and we thank you not only for all you did for the university but for being a prudent and forthright interviewee. This was an extraordinarily helpful interview and I thank you very much.

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

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