Eugene Cotton Mather

Interview with Eugene Cotton Mather

Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota

Interviewed on September 5, 1995

Cotton Mather - CM
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: Listeners will be familiar with my voice. I've done about 100 interviews. I'm Clarke Chambers. It is Labor Day, September 4, 1995 . . .

CM: In the Year of our Lord.

CAC: [laughter] I'm interviewing a sweet friend and longtime colleague in Geography, Eugene Cotton Mather. The interview is being conducted in Clifton Township, Pierce County, Wisconsin, in the cabin that he used as a study for many years. We're borrowing it just for this occasion; so, if the walls could talk, they'd tell us the truth.

CM: This is the log cabin in which the oldest county geographical society in American was formed, the Pierce County Geographical Society. We met here regularly, and we discussed research, and these were all professors. Being away from the university, they could harass the speaker of the evening. This is not only the oldest county geographical society in America, at that time, it was the only one.

CAC: Now, there are two?

CM: Now, there are two. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] Professor Mather, will you tell us about the other one?

CM: It's such a nondescript one that we're trying to bury it out in Oregon.

CAC: Oregon?

CM: Yes, Lane County.

CAC: I thought that you started one down in Las Crućes.

CM: No, that's a state geographical . . . the New Mexico Geographical Society.

CAC: But, it headquarters in Las Crućes [unclear] cabin?

CM: Yes. The state one has published several books, and we are now have contracted out some of the leading scholars in the field, and some of the manuscripts have already been completed on that. Some of the manuscripts are on the United States and some are on the Far East.

CAC: You have a recent book with a co-author on places in New Mexico.

CM *Registered Places in New Mexico.*

CAC: A beautiful book.

CM: In addition to that, I and a man from India have completed a manuscript and the map and it's not being copy edited on the *American Guide to Japanese Landscapes.*

CAC: Ohhh, that would be interesting.

CM: This is not the landscapes of what the tourist thinks about, Shinto shrines and temples, but it's the landscape in which the people of Japan live. We did extensive field work in a private automobile all the way from southern Kyushu [Island] to northern Hokkaido [Island].

CAC: When did you do the field work for that?

CM: That was two years ago. Incidentally, the Americans, of course, have been rather reticent, for one reason or another, mostly, language I presume and the strangeness of the culture, to go in and try to do research. It was interesting to me that when I got into this there were quite a few American geographers that had become specialists in China and we had courses in the universities on the geography of China. I believe in antecedents. Even though I'm a geographer who believes that place is important, I think you have to take antecedents and place, that, actually history and geography belong together, and that every historian should know a lot of geography and every geographer should have a great background, as much as possible, in history. In trying to discern why American universities had professors with specialists in the geography of China, I began to search out the antecedents of these people and I found out that almost everyone of these specialists was a son of a missionary who had married a Chinese woman; so, this shows you what sex has to with the development of curriculum in American universities.

CAC: This would be true of our generation of Chinese historians. They're all missionary brats.

CM: Is that right?

CAC: Yes. They were born in the 1920s and the 1930s and, then, the war came and, then, after they got into the academy, after the war, they were the Chinese specialists. Same story.

CM: When I was trying to search out reasons for specialization in certain parts of the Far East, the lack of specialization in very important parts, it was in this process that I discovered that American universities in geography had no courses on Japan, no specialists, in almost all cases, on Japan. When I came to the University of Minnesota, I was here a short time when I went before our Geography faculty and pointed out that all of the universities, including ours with Mei-Ling Hsu, a Chinese, had these courses and literature and we had a lot of ignorance on Japan and we had no courses on Japan. I felt that Japan was probably a more important place in the world of geography than Granada . . .

CAC: [laughter]

CM: . . . and that there might be some argument for having some knowledge of a country in which people, in general, felt it was probably one of the four or five most important countries in the world.

CAC: You bet.

CM: So then, I began to think about, why shouldn't the Department of Geography at the University of Minnesota distinguish itself by hiring a Japanese expert? This expert, I felt, could either be either an American, unless they were non-existent, in which case we could hire a Japanese person who was an expert on Japan who knew English. There were people of this ilk. I'm sorry to say that one of my great disappoints at the University of Minnesota was that this was turned down as not being worthy of progress.

But, I want to go on to another point, that in this book, *The American Guide to Japanese Landscapes*, I felt the book—I was working with a man from India and one of the leading Japanese anthropologists, both of whom have been friends of mine for thirty, forty years and who have known Japan for decades—should be based on what the landscapes says. It really isn't important what people who hadn't traveled all over said, but it is important what the landscape itself says. So, we should go in the field and look at the everyday landscape that people are living with and what does it say to us? What does it reveal to us that literature doesn't?

As I reflected further on this, I thought, it would be interesting peripherally to go through all of the literature in English by American geographers that had written anything on Japan. Were they just talking about Shinto shrines and so forth? Had they really seen the landscape of Japan? It was interesting to me, when I did this with my Japanese anthropologist friend and with some other Japanese over in Japan, that they kept reminding me that there was one book on the regional geography of Japan [*Japan: a Physical, Cultural, and Regional Geography* - 1945] that,

regardless of the language it was written in, was a superb classic of the country and it was written by a professor named Glenn T. Trewartha of the University of Wisconsin. It is still considered the best regional geography of Japan and it was written before World War II.

Of interest, I think, with the University of Minnesota in this connection, is that in going through the literature there was a man from the University of Minnesota Department of Geography who was maligned in private to me in many ways as an administrator when I came, a former head of the Department of Geography, who was considered a ring-tailed dictator, whose name was Darrell Davis. He had gone to Japan and some of his work on Hokkaido still stands as some of the classic work. Unlike Trewartha working . . .

CAC: Here were these connections to Wisconsin and Minnesota?

CM: It's interesting in that connection that today people are more interested in big league athletics and even athletics in universities than they are in academe. When I was a student, actually, we had athletics but that was subsidiary to the academic enterprise. Today, apparently, this has all been reversed.

CAC: Except Minnesota doesn't have winning teams so it's not that big a deal anymore. This is transcribed.

CM: Yes.

CAC: We'll never know how to spell that fellow from Wisconsin. What's his last name?

CM: Trewartha. Glenn T.—which stood for Thomas; that was his mother's maiden name—Trewartha.

CAC: That's a hard one.

CM: Yes, it is. That is a Cornish name. This is extraneous; that's why I continue with it.

CAC: But, you're trying to remember how it's spelled?

CM: T-R-E-W-A-R-T-H-A.

CAC: All right. Now, I'm going to interrupt and tell you a story.

CM: Okay.

CAC: We have a Kinnickinnic River Land Trust.

CM: Yes, I've heard of it.

CAC: We authorized a botanical map, a study, from the falls down to the bridge; so, we'd see what kinds of plants, flowers, trees were growing. You know how they do this. You start out with aerial pictures and, then, you go down and you map out really what's growing there. You get a good idea from a good aerial photograph. We had a young woman who was doing it for us, a young botanist from some state service. She told me that when you take those air pictures and, then, you go down on the ground to check it out and to draw your real maps there, the process is called *ground truthing*.

CM: [laughter] That's wonderful isn't it?

CAC: That's a wonderful term. I thought, that's what historians do, too. We get this picture up here and, then, you got to get down to the evidence and go through and do the ground truthing. And that's what you're talking about with the landscapes of Japan. You've got to do ground truthing.

CM: Exactly. It's that sort of thing.

CAC: Wow! Tell me how you got interested in geography? We're going to back up now.

CM: I can't answer that.

CAC: You were a young farm boy from Iowa?

CM: Yes. Let me say that I just used the university to carry on my interests instead of getting an interest in schooling.

CAC: [laughter]

CM: The story there is that my father was a farmer in eastern Iowa. In those days, let's say back in the 1920s, most Iowa farmers had pigs and chickens, maybe a few sheep, some ducks; but, the cattle feeders were people that only had one carload of cattle that they fed out, that they got from the western range.

CAC: Fed it out and took it to the market?

CM: They got the cattle from big commission companies that operated out of Chicago or Omaha, like John Clay and Company. My father got his cattle that way at first and, then, he thought, there's a middleman, John Clay and Company; so, he should get the cattle directly and cut out the middleman.

CAC: Sure.

CM: He would ask, when he got cattle every year, where these cattle came from. Of course, John Clay and Company, or the other commission companies didn't want to tell because they wanted to run this operation so they would get their commission. My father heard that there was a thing called cattle brands and brand registration in states to the west. On one shipment of cattle that he got, he found out that the cattle came from Nebraska, but he didn't know where the hell they came from. He went to Lincoln, Nebraska, the state capitol, and went to the brand registration office and found out these cattle came from a place in the Sand Hills of Nebraska. It was a circle with a dot in the middle so it was a circle dot brand, and it came from Hyannis, Nebraska, and the rancher's name was Earl Monahan. So, he went to Nebraska, and saw Earl Monahan, and began to buy cattle. He would bring these cattle back and he was getting better buys than going through a third party; so, his neighbors began to ask him, "Anders, when you go out there, get some cattle for me." Then, he had a cousin over in Illinois who was a big farmer and he got for his cousin and this cousin had cousins and friends. After a series of years, dad was getting cattle for people as far as east as Lancaster, Pennsylvania . . . in fact, all over the corn belt.

CAC: [laughter]

CM: I was a boy—this was in the late 1920s—and I was the only one of the three children in our family that would go inexhaustibly on any trip with my father.

CAC: You were curious.

CM: I was something or other. I was abnormal, let's say that. So, I always went with my father. When he went into the Sand Hills of Nebraska, the biggest sand dune area on the North American continent, 24,000 square miles, none of it under the plow, tall prairie grass, huge sand dunes covered with this grass, some of them 500 feet high, some of them so steep you couldn't ride a horse up, a pristine environment . . . as a boy, I never saw anything more beautiful. There were few people there. I saw, even as a boy, that one of the things that was terrifying to me was that there were people moving in around us.

CAC: Was that tall grass prairie . . . ?

CM: Tall grass. The generalist called it the tall grass compared to the short grass of the steppe. The ones that wanted to distinguish themselves as scientists said, "There are some mid grasses."

CAC: It would have been blue stem and Indian grass?

CM: Yes, and grama grass and I don't know whether it was buffalo grass. There are over 500 lakes in this region, small lakes, to be sure. To me, it was one of the most beautiful sites in the world. I had travelled with my father through all of these western range lands, in the mountains, and so forth, and I always came back to the Sand Hills of Nebraska.

CAC: That engaged your imagination.

CM: It did. There was an interesting thing in this that, in homesteading, I realized that this was a nation where we were preaching democracy and I realized that democracy in some situations is absurd. It simply isn't ethically right to say, "Everybody has an equal chance," when one bozo gets 160 acres of the richest Illinois prairie land and you call this equivalent to 160 acres of the Red Desert of Wyoming. Now, I saw this beautiful Sand Hills of Nebraska and I was curious about it. Here was unplowed land. All the rest of the Great Plains was under pressure of trying to raise wheat in a sub-humid land.

CAC: It had missed the Dust Bowl, the grass hills?

CM: During the Dirty Thirties and the drought, this was the only region on the Great Plains that had a lot of grass. The reason for this was that every bit of rain that falls in the Sand Hills goes into the ground. There is no runoff. It works up by capillary action to the surface in dry periods so that during the drought of the 1930s, there was a deficiency of moisture but there was this great reserve of over 500 lakes in the lowest part, plus, there was moisture down in the sand that worked up and this grass was the only good grazing land in the drought of the 1930s.

CAC: The roots go down three, four, five feet.

CM: Absolutely, deep rooted.

CAC: I'm going to tell you something that you probably know. There was a thumb of that long grass prairie right here on what used to be the north forty [acres] of your land coming up what you called Inspiration Point. Now, we call it an oak savannah. Last year, we burned that oak savannah and this year, here comes tall grass of all sorts coming back in there and all the weeds and flowers that are associated with a prairie. Those things must have been sitting there for decades.

CM: Just waiting, yes.

CAC: We should walk out there to see it.

CM: It would be beautiful.

CAC: It's not fully brought back; but, as you know, we're trying to bring up your old meadow here to tall grass.

CM: There was an interesting thing when I, was a freshman in 1935, at the University of Iowa. The first book I read as an undergraduate at the university was not assigned in any course, had nothing to do with any course. It was a book that happened to come out in 1935 . . .

CAC: Don't tell me it was *Prolegomena to the Grasslands*? [*The Grassland of North America: Prolegomena to its History with Addenda and Postscript* by James Malin.]

CM: It was *Old Jules*, J-U-L-E-S.

CAC: Ah.

CM: It was written by Mari Sandoz and it was a Pulitzer Prize book, I think.

CAC: You bet.

CM: It had just come out and I read this. It had to do with a German-Swiss who had gone to the northwest part of the Sand Hills. He was trying to catch everyone of the new settlers going on west, stopping them and telling them, "This is God's country. Plant grapevines. Plant fruit trees," . . .

CAC: [laughter]

CM: which, of course in a way, was utterly absurd. He was a real character. Mari Sandoz, his daughter, wrote this story or novel about her father, a true historical account. I read this book. Remember that in the 1920s, I was captivated as a kid going through the Sand Hills. Now, I read *Old Jules* and I didn't know I was hooked; but, circumstances were beginning to gradually get a hold of me. I went to the University of Wisconsin for my Ph.D.

CAC: Let me interrupt.

CM: Yes.

CAC: James Malin's book comes out about the same time . . *Prolegomena to the Grasslands.*

CM: Yes.

CAC: Did you read that as a kid?

CM: I read that, too.

CAC: That was one of the first books I read under John Hicks at Berkeley after the war.

CM: Oh, is that right?

CAC: I thought, wow!

CM: I was reading all the books on the Plains because I <u>loved</u> open spaces.

CAC: Sure.

CM: I wanted to be able to have wide vision. Of course, these billowy sand dunes were like great waves of the sea with the grass blowing in the breeze. The imagination was wonderful and now, *Old Jules.* I went through graduate school and through the courses . . .

CAC: At Madison?

CM: At Madison . . . and all the time I was going through, I'm haunted . . . I'm haunted. I have these academic requirements; but, I was an individual. I was always rebelling a little bit about requirements because they didn't seem pertinent to my heart. When I finished everything except my thesis, my adviser said, "What is your dissertation topic?" It was a tradition at Wisconsin that all Ph.D. theses had to be field-based.

CAC: Ahhh.

CM: You had to go into the field. That, now, is not true. Today, all you do is punch buttons on a computer. We try to get closer to our subject today through remote sensing.

CAC: [laughter]

CM: This is the secret of today.

CAC: But, it isn't the ground truthing?

CM: In the old days, we had ground truthing. When Professor [Venor C.] Finch asked me what I was going to do for my Ph.D. thesis, I said, "The Sand Hills in Nebraska." He advised me against it. As we talked, he saw how earnest I was and he said, years later, that he had never seen a student so committed by heart that he wouldn't succumb to reason. So, he backed me on this. Incidentally, I went and slept out every night in the Sand Hills for one whole summer doing field work under arduous circumstances. At that time, in one place for example, you could go 100 miles in one direction and there was not a single road, not even a country road that crossed. I had to go across these dunes and I got stuck with my car. I had to let down fences, go across, and put them up again. I slept out because it was too far from meals and so forth. I really did this work under dearth of financial resources and with great physical deprivation.

CAC: But, you liked it.

CM: I enjoyed it. He was so impressed with this that, when I got ready for the second summer of field work, he said, "Before you go, you have to come to Madison and see me." I thought I was going for advice. I went to his office at the start of the second summer and he handed me an envelope. He said, "This is to help you with your summer field work." It was a check that

had been written by an anonymous donor. This was the first wonderful break I'd gotten in academe.

CAC: Good grief.

CM: I went and wrote my Ph.D. thesis there. What I'm saying is that I didn't decide to be a geographer. Circumstances just led me on a trail. There was my father; there was *Old Jules*; there was this Ph.D. thesis. The years went on and, recently, I realized that I was near eighty years of age. I have old notes of interviews from fifty years ago.

CAC: Ohhh.

CM: I have old photos. I have all kinds of information on this region. I've gone back because I've been haunted by this all my life. I've gone back all these years. Remember, that this area, was not homesteaded. People went around it. It was by-passed. Senator Joseph Kincaid, either in 1902 or 1904, presented a law to Congress that was passed called the Kincaid Act and it said, "Only for this region, of all the regions in the west, a homesteader could homestead a square mile," because it was so God-awful for agriculture. Of course, the agriculturists came in. They started the plow, and the sand began to blow, and they were blown out of business overnight, and it went back to grass and to big ranching.

Now, we come to 1995. I'm an old man, almost eighty. I know I've got information. I've got old maps. I've got old interviews.

CAC: Some of those you used for the dissertation?

CM: Yes, but a lot of them I didn't. There are materials that have never been used. I realized that I'm an old mine on a gold mine and it's tragic. It's a lack of responsibility if I die and I don't put these in some sort of useable form. This May, I said to my wife in New Mexico, "I have to leave." She said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to the Sand Hills of Nebraska." She said, "What are you going to do there?" I explained this, "I've got to write a book and I've got to have these old pictures in it."

CAC: I see, you're going to do it yourself.

CM: I've got to put this in. I might die anytime now at my age. Here's something that goes beyond all reason. I went up there and I realized how much this meant to my life ever since I was a boy. It had always come back and it was haunting me. I realized that this is where I wanted my last days. I knew this region so well and I knew the best, the jewel of the few towns in the whole region, was a town called Arthur and I bought a house in Arthur.

CAC: Cotton!

CM: And it is my last home.

CAC: Wow! You aren't going to move from Las Crućes there?

CM: No, but I will go up as a pilgrimage every year whenever I feel the need.

CAC: You've got your notes there at Arthur?

CM: I've got them at Arthur and in New Mexico. I can work both places. This is not how I became a geographer.

CAC: Yes, that's a powerful story. There's another young man, whom you know, who visited there on a field trip out of the University of Minnesota for a geography summer session and had the same kind . . . it wasn't as deep as yours. My son, Robert, just says that the Sand Hills is the most magical place that he knows.

CM: It is. It is. Let me say something else.

CAC: Please.

CM: Since I was a graduate student in 1940, the population of the United States has doubled.

CAC: Oh, yes.

CM: I was fascinated as a boy going out to the wide open spaces; and during my lifetime, I saw people multiplying like rabbits. We were filling up this country and I wanted space. I saw this crowding and it was crowding in on my spirit; so, the love that I had originally of the great west, which was wide open—I saw a doubling of population since I was a graduate student—now became even more of a pearl in my mind and I had to go where there was this wide open space, unadulterated by overcrowding.

CAC: How about the town of Arthur?

CM: Let me put it this way that—Arthur, incidentally, is in the county called Arthur—there's not a single house in the county of Arthur that is not a ranch house, unless it's in the town of Arthur. Metropolitan Arthur has a population of 128 people.

CAC: What was it in 1940, do you think?

CM: It has been gradually declining over the years. It never was very big. It never had a railway. When I went in this May and bought that house, there were two women who conduct all of the business in the courthouse. The town is, of course, unincorporated so there is no police, but there is a sheriff. The sheriff, since there's such a sparse population, runs the only

grocery store in the whole county of Arthur and he also cuts lawns in the town for these old ranchers that have moved in there.

CAC: There must be a registrar of deeds, which would be the important post to register all that land?

CM: Yes, that's right, in the courthouse.

CAC: That's an engaging story. Where are we going to take it from there?

CM: We were back on the geographical societies. The New Mexico Geographical Society already published a book on leaders in geography and they published this last book, *The Registered Places*. We have a prize-winning author in geography who has just finished a manuscript on registered places of Montana. I am presently doing registered places of Wyoming. I'm writing this book now on the Sand Hills and, then, this Japan landscape book will be published in two different volumes. The first volume has been finished and is ready for the printer. I wrote the full text, but it was co-authored; this is one of the things in writing that sometimes happens. The text, though, was sent by of my co-authors to the University of Tokyo Press and they want exactly the same book but my twelve major aspects of the Japanese landscape enlarged and printed by the University of Tokyo Press, which is the most prestigious press in Tokyo. That enlargement will be done by my Japanese anthropologist friend and my geographer friend who is an Indian. That's the story of that.

CAC: You better stay in good health and do the Sand Hill one as your next priority.

CM: I'm doing that now. Yes, it should come next.

CAC: Let's go back to 1940. You get your degree from Madison, which is a good school. There aren't a large number of graduate schools of geography at that time . . . five or eight, something like that?

CM: I started to talk about athletics in a university. If you use the concept of farm clubs, it is a fact that most of the highly respected geography departments of the United States were in the so-called Big Ten universities. Chicago was one of the Big Ten universities. Now, if you believe in searching out antecedents, it is interesting that if we use athletic terminology, Wisconsin was a farm club of the University of Chicago. The University of Michigan was a farm club of the University of Chicago. The University of Minnesota was a farm club. All of these were farm clubs of . . . academically.

CAC: I knew we had quite a few folks from Wisconsin on our staff.

CM: Yes, Darrell Davis belongs in this hierarchy there . . . this man that did studies in the 1930s.

CAC: Then, by chance, you leave the Big Ten and go to Georgia? Is that your first job?

CM: Yes.

CAC: In 1940, roughly?

CM: There was the war and the war interrupted my Ph.D. so that I got my Ph.D. after the war.

CAC: I see.

CM: During the war, I went to the Army map service and within six months there, I had been moved from routine map compilation to become a map editor of the Army Map Service. This sounded great and my friends were so pleased. The fact of the case is that there's nothing duller than just working twenty-four hours a day with maps. So, as soon as I was map editor and about sixty days had elapsed, I knew I couldn't survive the war with this anymore. I went and was readily taken into OSS [Office of Strategic Services], which was America's first intelligence service.

CAC: They probably didn't have many geographers.

CM: They didn't have many of anybody. When I first went in, there were probably only sixty or seventy people in all fields. Later, of course, it got to be several thousand. After the war, I came back and finished my Ph.D.

CAC: Where did you do the OSS work?

CM: I would just answer that very briefly, nominally in Washington, D.C.

CAC: Did you meet Harold Deutsch during that period? He was in the OSS.

CM: No. I knew of him but we were not supposed to communicate with people in the next office.

CAC: I'm sure. That was more engaging work than just doing the map work, really doing intelligence?

CM: Yes, yes. Incidentally, the atomic bomb—there is a question today whether we should have dropped it or not—saved my life. Would you like to know what happened?

CAC: Sure.

CM: In OSS . . . while I was living there, one day I was riding down Connecticut Avenue in a streetcar. Being in OSS, of course, a secret organization, I was in civilian clothes. A hand

reached from the seat behind me on my shoulder and I turned around. A gray-haired lady said, "Young man, why aren't you defending your country?"

CAC: [laughter]

CM: This moved me so much that I went to General [William J.] Donovan, who was head of OSS and said, "I want to be moved out of this work I am in now." Within a short time, it was decided that I would receive special training and be flown to New Delhi and from New Delhi, I would be flown over the Hump to K'un-ming. At K'un-ming, I would be put into a small plane with three people in it and I would be in charge of this. One of these persons would be a demolition expert. Another one would be a native Chinese so that we would land in territory that he knew. I was given training that we would not sleep in the same house two nights in succession, but we would be with his friends behind the Japanese lines. Then, the demolition expert and the Chinese had in charge somebody that didn't know what he was doing, who was Cotton Mather. I received the training for this. I'd gotten married during the war and she didn't know what was going on except she knew I was taking something special. I had strange hours and I had told her that I would be leaving shortly for the Far East. She didn't know for what or where. There's no doubt in my mind—this was so hazardous—that my chance of coming out was not too good.

CAC: That caper was cancelled?

CM: The atomic bomb dropped just before I was to be taking off and, I reckon, saved my life.

CAC: I was with the 20th Bomber Command on Tinian [Island].

CM: You were? [laughter]

CAC: Ground intelligence.

CM: Yes.

CAC: And had fled to Okinawa by that time. But that's your story, not mine. I'm going to have somebody interview me at the end of this thing.

CM: You should.

CAC: I haven't found anybody yet. I may interview myself.

CM: Because you can ask the right questions.

CAC: I can put on another voice [in a high-pitched voice].

CM: [laughter]

CAC: So, you were saved and the war was over and, then, you got your degree and went to Georgia?

CM: The reason I went to Georgia was that I was asked at the University of Wisconsin to give an examination twice because of a grade that had been received by the son of one of the leading labor leaders, who had gotten an *F*. The labor leader didn't get the *F*, the son got the *F*. I said, "To hell with you," and went to Georgia. [laughter]

CAC: That's where this athletics comes in again.

CM: That's right. When I was at Georgia, I had a great cultural experience and I enjoyed it because this showed me that there is no such thing as economic geography. It's more complex. In Georgia, I found this out: that a government program operates differently there than the same program operates elsewhere. I was disturbed about this. I was also disturbed at what was happening with regard to some of our citizens that were dusky-skinned who couldn't get into the University of Georgia. I had decided to move abruptly to the University of Georgia and right after I decided this, the telephone rang and a man whom I had never heard of before, who was from the University of British Columbia, said, "Would you come to the University of British Columbia?" I said, "Yes." We went to the University of British Columbia.

The reason I came to the University of Minnesota was a three-cent stamp. I'll mention this that at the University of British Columbia, I was called out of a lecture hall by a phone call from a man named John Borchert who was the, then, chairman at the University of Minnesota. He asked, "Would you join the University of Minnesota faculty? We'd like to have you do that." I said, "I accept," and I was ready to hang up the phone and he said, "We haven't discussed anything including your salary." I said, "That's your problem. Goodbye," and I hung up. I went to the University of Minnesota, which you wouldn't do today I understand, without even a letter, or a contract, or anything and moved my family there. It was a wonderful move. However, the next day, I got a letter from another university and if it had not been the letter with the three-cent stamp and there had been a telephone call, I would have gone there instead of the University of Minnesota. Because of certain circumstances, I knew that man there who was the chairman and it was in an area where I wanted . . . it was out in the west and Minnesota was not in the west.

CAC: Well, we're west of the Mississippi.

CM: I used to say to students that the geographic question about the Twin Cities is, is it on the edge of somewhere or on the edge of nowhere? . . . thinking in terms of most people's minds, that most of the people of the U.S., most of the agriculture, most of the industry is from the Twin Cities on east and in their mind, most of the empty land, most of nowhere is to the west. I used to say this. The world authority, a theoretician, on this was invited from Sweden years later to the University of Minnesota. He was the one that originated the idea of central place and its

significance. He came up that evening, after his lecture, to me and he said, "I'm so glad to have met you." I said, "But, you haven't met me. I flew here from New Mexico to hear this lecture. The honor is all mine." He said, "I've seen you on tape and the tape has been played in graduate schools in the east."

CAC: Ahhh.

CM: Then, I told him about Minnesota, what I told the students, is it on the edge of somewhere or the edge of nowhere? He said, "Of course, the answer is both," which I realize now is true.

CAC: When I came here my wife's family from St. Paul would say, "St. Paul is the end of the east and Minneapolis is the beginning of the west."

CM: [laughter] It is.

CAC: You came about 1957?

CM: I came in 1957.

CAC: I thought [Jan] Broek was still chair then? He was not? John Borchert was?

CM: Borchert had taken over about a year. I think was probably the first year when he called me at British Columbia.

CAC: That was a pretty premier department you came into. Can you say something about that?

CM: It was a small department.

CAC: That's a sign of a premier department.

CM: That's right. One of the things about the University of Minnesota that I liked when I came here was the fact that it was small. It was really at the end of one of the floors in Ford Hall. We had a departmental library, which meant the main journals, foreign and domestic, were there. The graduate students, as well as some of the undergraduate majors, and the faculty almost lived together during their daylight hours there. It was the perfect academic setting. I realized then . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CM: When I first came to the University of Minnesota, I experienced something that was unique in my experience in academe. I thought I came to occupy a position. I thought I would be told what I was going to teach and directed in a few other ways. Only one question came up again, again, and again, "What can we do for you to carry on your work?"

CAC: Ah!

CM: I realized later that this was not only very nice, but it was just clever as hell because if you failed, you couldn't blame them. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] If you hire a good department, not many of them are going fail.

CM: That's right, yes.

CAC: Broek was still a presence? He was still a senior presence here?

CM: He was a senior man. Of course, I came not knowing anything except his writing. I knew him just from the printed page. When I came here, I realized the department had a problem. He had come from the University of Utrecht. He had taken his Ph.D. at Berkeley. The problem with this man was that he could only envision our department being a rubber-stamp of the University of Utrecht; whereas, we thought we were located in the U.S. There was a certain . . .

CAC: But, the rebellion had taken place before you got here? John Borchert was representative of the young Turks to give it another focus?

CM: Exactly; so, we were on a new track. When I came here, I saw this man was protesting that it was not like Utrecht; but, I also realized that he had made a few, particularly two, very important contributions to the department that maybe Borchert, or Mather, or the others wouldn't have done. One was that he thought that the department should have a faculty meeting every Monday afternoon and that they shouldn't be deciding in the faculty meeting whether you needed a number two or a number three lead pencil. You should be talking about intellectual questions and as a faculty, you were exchanging ideas there that would somehow or other permeate the department and have benefits for the student. That was a very important idea. Another idea he had that American geographers, in general, didn't have in these other departments was that, I don't give a damn what the circumstances are at the University of Minnesota, by god! [sound of fist pounding table] we can afford to take one slot and every year we have a visiting professor from another part of the world.

CAC: Ahhh.

CM: Geographers should be able to look beyond their shores. Actually, this was a very important aspect. With this, then, we had inflow of foreign graduate students which enriched as well as the visiting professor. For such a small department, let's say among the so-called Big Ten universities, we probably, in that respect, had the richest association between students and teacher and between American students and foreign students and always with the inspiration of leading geographers from across the world.

CAC: We talk about a community of scholars and that's what you're describing.

CM: Exactly.

CAC: It doesn't, in a large university, happen that much anymore.

CM: It doesn't. As a matter of fact, it diminishes often with larger universities because communication suffers.

CAC: Sure. Then, you folks had these Friday afternoon coffee hours where everybody came together?

CM: Exactly. This was a wonderful thing every Friday. Sometimes, it was a visiting professor. Sometimes, it was one of our professors about his research. Sometimes, it was a professor from the Institute of Agriculture on a related subject. Sometimes, it was an historian. But, very importantly, it included, from time to time, somebody from the roster of graduate students talking about their research for the Ph.D.

CAC: Bravo.

CM: This was a fait accompli.

CAC: These things were in place when you came?

CM: They were in place, yes.

CAC: And as long as you were here, they . . .

CM: They continued. As a matter of fact, they got more entrenched because now it became tradition and if anybody objected to it, they couldn't fight it. [laughter]

CAC: That would be true with the Friday afternoon. How about the Monday afternoon department meetings? Did they persist in the same way?

CM: They did through all of my time; but, I understand that about the time that I retired, with all of the committee growth in the university and all of the distractions from the straight pursuit

of academic responsibility, that time was running out for the individual and so, now, there is some alternating between committee meetings and the regular faculty meetings.

CAC: Let me say something that's really in the form of a question. I'm guessing that that department in the 1960s, whereas it had that double collegiality on Mondays and Fridays, it didn't mean that they all got along well with each other all the time? There's a real bite to this exchange?

CM: That's right.

CAC: It's not all light and goodness?

CM: No, but this was an advantage because it was laid out on the table instead of in the back room without discourse.

CAC: You were in the halls and the corridors.

CM: You had to have a certain amount of reasonableness when you met your opponents and the graduate students were around listening to this.

CAC: Yes.

CM: So, you had different ideas as to what geography should be. Here's an interesting thing in geography. We have fads just like you've had in history, etcetera. Most of the fads that we have had in the field of geography in America would be for specialization. Something new would come in so in some departments, they'd want to specialize this and ride the crest of the wave.

CAC: We call it the cutting edge.

CM: Yes, the cutting edge. But, Minnesota was one of a small group of institutions in geography that when these waves were coming, instead of taking the students and saying, "This is what is now in the future," we had discourse going on of these different ideas of what geography should be so that the student came in and they heard the pro and the con and the student was free to go in any direction.

CAC: There was no party line?

CM: There was no party line. That was a great strength here.

CAC: What was the size of the department, of full-time professorial?

CM: When I came, it was about six.

CAC: Then, it grew by 1980 to what?

CM: We were up around, I guess, twenty.

CAC: But still maintained a certain collegiality as you're describing it?

CM: We maintained a certain amount, but it was not as strong as when we had up to about twelve. In my estimation, after twelve, we still had it, but it was diminishing. One of the interesting things in universities is that your reputation lives longer than reality.

CAC: Sure.

CM: One of the things that I felt was that we were retaining a reputation nationally after we were already beginning to experience some of the hazards of a larger group trying to maintain this collegiality. One of the things that people often don't include as important in this is that when we were small, we were all on one floor. When we got larger, we were in two buildings and even in the Social Science Tower, we were on three floors and we didn't see each other constantly and interact informally as well as formally to the same degree. So that while our national reputation was going on up, I felt that on the inside, this was what is true, in general, that the reputation extends somewhat beyond reality and that there was a new reality of numbers that was setting in.

CAC: Could you say something about the relationship of the department to the college and the university? Was there much communication there or were you as a province pretty autonomous?

CM: I felt that, particularly in the social sciences, we were benefitting a great deal, especially in Ford Hall where there were fewer floors and smaller numbers, but I felt even on the West Bank that this was one of the strengths. It's interesting that one of the physical problems that the University of Minnesota has, and I presume it still has, is that we had certain interests that were akin to some over on the Institute of Agriculture, St. Paul campus. We did participate in these. It was a problem, but we overcame the problem. For example, in my own experience, I taught rural geography over there in the Agricultural Economics Department.

CAC: What contacts there were especially valuable?

CM: The two that were instrumental in this were Phil Raup and Sherwood Berg.

CAC: You bet.

CM: Those were the two. They were both the type of individuals . . .

CAC: But, they did bring along allies with them?

CM: That's right, but they were the instrumental ones. They were articulate. They were intelligent. They were friendly.

CAC: Phil Raup used to come to the Minneapolis campus regularly to eat in the Campus Club and keep those lines open.

CM: Yes. May I say a word about the Campus Club?

CAC: Oh, please. Anything you want to talk about, that's fine.

CM: All right. The first time I walked into the Campus Club, I walked in with John Borchert.

CAC: Good company.

CM: John said, "What do you think of it?" I said, "I would never recognize this as a faculty club." He said, "What makes you say that?" I said, "There are too many people with business suits and no elbow patches."

CAC: [laughter]

CM: I think that was the result of being in a metropolitan area instead of a little college town. The professors looked less professorial even though they might be more so. Along that line, we were just across Washington Avenue from the Campus Club, the Memorial Union. We all went over everyday. We mixed with people of all departments. It was one of the beautiful things about the University of Minnesota. When we moved to the West Bank, it was terrible what happened. I don't even want to go into it because I don't want to dig up dead bodies.

CAC: I stopped going to the Campus Club when we went over there. It took too much time to walk that bridge and get back again and I was too busy.

CM: That's right.

CAC: I was thinking of formal relationships with the college. You were chairman for three or four years?

CM: I was appointed by [Errett W.] McDiarmid.

CAC: Oh, that early, you were chair?

CM: Yes. There was a bit of a crisis when I was appointed. It happened in the summertime when the faculty were gone. McDiarmid said, "This is permanent." That's the way it was.

CAC: The headship?

CM: Yes, the headship, whatever they entitled it. McDiarmid made this clear to me and what my responsibilities would be and this was ongoing. The first year, I was fascinated because I met and had an opportunity to discuss with administrators things that I was separated from; so, I enjoyed the first year because it was opening up new doors. The second year, I was bored as hell! I decided I had to get out of this. I said to my faculty colleagues that I was appointed in the summer when you were absent. I think this was inappropriate. There may be another crisis in the future, and I think we need to regularized this, and we need a departmental charter. Next year, I'm moving out. Set it up so it's systematic. This was another wonderful thing about Minnesota, I got out of a tight spot.

CAC: This was the mid 1960s?

CM: I took over, I think, in 1962; so, in 1963, I set up the committee and at the end of 1964, I left.

CAC: There was a constitution then?

CM: We had a constitution.

CAC: This is a parallel play. No one told us to write constitutions; but it was in the mid 1960s and some of us were slow witted and a bit later. It was in the decade of the 1960s that these governmental systems were created in lots of departments, particularly in the Arts College.

CM: Yes. I remember, at that time—when you say, "particularly in the Arts College"—that there were discussions going on in the Campus Club and in some parts of the university, they were saying, "Never. Democracy is okay, but don't carry it too far." [laughter]

CAC: Say something about the growth and the size of the department. What kinds of persons did you hire? Did Yi Fu [Tuan] come in at that time?

CM: Yes.

CAC: What kind of folks did you bring in? The job market is expanding from the early 1960s to the mid 1970s, right?

CM: Yes.

CAC: And that's where you grew?

CM: Yes. We brought in Phil Porter.

CAC: An Africanist. You never had an Africanist before?

CM: No. Fred Lukermann never got a Ph.D. He was an advisee of Broek. There was something going on there where Lukermann didn't want it if he had to get it under Broek and he couldn't get out from Broek. These were things that we tried to remedy. We suggested to Lukermann that he had three related articles that were of good nature and they could be bound together as a thesis. We could hold a mock examination, and he could have a degree, and he said, "I'd rather not." He later, of course, became dean of the college. Incidentally, it was during my chairmanship that Lukermann, I felt, was being exploited because he didn't have a Ph.D. but he was teaching a full load and he was an instructor in rank and they couldn't raise him because he was nominally on this Ph.D. program. I told my faculty, when I became chairman, that I wanted to recommend him for an assistant professorship. I was told by my faculty colleagues, "He can't be because he doesn't have a degree." I said that I felt that was irrelevant. The question was, does he deserve to be an assistant professor? Against, their advice, I decided to put through the papers recommending that he have an assistant professorship. This was turned down.

CAC: At the dean's level?

CM: At the dean's level. I had to report this at the faculty meeting and the faculty, in so many words, said, "We told you. Now, let's get along." I said, "I'm going to submit this again." So, I submitted it again and I sent in the papers again. This time, I realized if I send in the papers, this is not the way to do it because the University of Minnesota apparently doesn't know what the sensible thing to do is in a case like this; so, I carried the papers up to the dean's office. I had a personal appointment with the dean. I said, "The real question is, would you rather have Lukermann without a Ph.D. or an inferior man with a Ph.D.?" Lukermann was then appointed.

CAC: [laughter]

CM: I'm going to tell you something about my first year at Minnesota, which was one of the most heart-touching experiences I've ever had.

CAC: Okay.

CM: When I came to the University of Minnesota and I'd look out of a window in Ford Hall, they'd say, "There goes the campus cop." Of course, you know later, the campus police was a fantastically . . .

CAC: The police force?

CM: Yes, it's a police force, actually, a small army. You could take off on a war against El Salvador with our police force. There was this ballooning, over the years, at all levels and administration.

CAC: Support staff, as we call it?

CM: Yes, support staff. [laughter] My first year, at the University of Minnesota, I was impressed . . . "What can we do for you?" I was in a small department and all of our efforts were scholarly. We had nice relationships with undergraduates and graduates. History and Anthropology were down the hall. I thought this was really great; so, I'm happy. The start of my second year, when I come back from the summer, there's a letter in my mailbox from an administrator. It happens to be a man named [Theodore] Blegen and it was written not by an assistant dean, associate dean, or an assistant to the associate dean and typed, it was handwritten [sound of fist pounding table]. It said, "I have just finished reading an article that you have written on ethnic geography and I want to make the following comments and encourage you."

CAC: [laughter]

CM: That had one of the greatest impacts on me as an individual in my entire academic life. I look back, today, with tenderness. I wish that I could sit down with Blegen now and tell him what they meant. It may have only taken him five minutes to do that.

CAC: But, he had read it.

CM: He had read it and commented on it.

CAC: He followed Guy Stanton Ford who was an historian of European history. Ted was a Norwegian-American immigration historian. Guy Stanton Ford was dean of the Graduate School from 1913 to 1941, when he became interim president and he built the departments. I imagine that with many of them, he communicated with chairs and he talked with lots of people; but, he went to Political Science, Psychology, History, other departments at national conventions to spot bright young persons that he could encourage to come to Minnesota. Then, he'd have to persuade the department that that was the right person for them. That meant that he had to do his homework on personnel.

CM: Yes.

CAC: He knew that professors, and scholars, and teachers were the heart of a university. He built from 1913 to 1941. That's a long time.

CM: That' right. So, it was a tremendous contribution.

CAC: Ted Blegen really inherited that model; but, by 1945, it got beyond him—this is my interpretation. He couldn't do it, but he still would do something as you're describing now and keep on track with the professoriate.

CM: Yes.

CAC: That was a strength. You bet, it was, yes.

CM: I would like to mention something very negative about the University of Minnesota when I came.

CAC: Go right ahead. Be my guest.

CM: All right. This was one awful shock to me. The first year I was there, we had the weekly faculty meetings. The next National Association of Geographers meeting was to be held in California. I waited week after week for somebody in the faculty to say something about going to the national meetings. Nobody was saying anything. Finally, the time came and I said, "I have to make plans." So, I brought up the subject and no one was going. I said, "I think the department should be represented. What is the funding for this?" They said, "It comes off of the supply budget." That's one awful shock. They said, "The supply budget is short." I said, "Could I get the . . . " Registration, today, costs eighty-five dollars or something like that for most of these national association meetings. In those days, it was seven-fifty. I asked for seven-fifty and I was denied because the supply budget was short.

CAC: [laughter]

CM: Now, that's a negative.

CAC: In the 1960s and 1970s, a lot of departments got around that because of research grants that came in from various foundations. They would write travel into the budget. History did that. We got our travel money out of supply but also out of research grants.

CM: May I say something? You just brought up grants.

CAC: Oh, yes.

CM: I guess this was about thirty years ago or so when I began to talk to professional colleagues, even to graduate students, about something in American society that I felt deeply about and I said, "We're going to have a real threat." Things were quiet and smooth then. I could almost detect, when I started off on this, "Here's another troublemaker." Many professors are considered that way anyway. "So, what is it you're going to tell us?" "I can see," I said, "that there is going to be a growing threat from grants to intellectual freedom. The grants from foundations, I don't worry about; but, I am opposed to grants from business corporations and I am opposed to grants from the government. I think the time will come when it will become so serious that you'll even have scientists, in order to get business, that will adjust their scientific results. Any society should have at least one sector in the society where the church doesn't say, where business doesn't say, where government doesn't say, where you have freedom to say any damned thing you want to, and you've got tenure, and it doesn't hurt sales no matter what you say. There should be one place where you can express and be protected and free." I can say now thirty years later, "I'd like to say this with more vehemence—but I'm now retired."

CAC: Even down in New Mexico, you're read news of the university about that.

CM: That's right. We know the truth of this more than you do. [laughter]

CAC: Do you think within Geography—just to pursue that—that in any minor or major way research agendas were modified or switched because of the appeal of grants in one field and not in another?

CM: There is absolutely no doubt in my mind. Recently, without identifying the university, a young geographer told me that he had just applied for a $285,000 research grant from the National Science Foundation and he had been encouraged from the inside to submit this.

CAC: Of course. But, you think that he was inventing a project which on his own he would not have?

CM: Exactly. Exactly. Imagine someone with a $45,000 salary encouraged for a grant application of nearly $300,000. You have to be naive not to be worried about the implications of this. I see this as one of the . . .

CAC: But career advancement has come to go to those who can attract grants.

CM: Exactly. Along that line, I want to tell you a little story.

CAC: Please.

CM: When I first came to the University of Minnesota, we had one of the brightest young men from the University of Chicago come and give a guest lecture. We went to the Campus Club and we congratulated Marvin for having gotten this position at the University of Chicago. In those days, when you hired, it was with the presumption of permanence. He said, when we congratulated him at lunch at the Campus Club, "The reality is they have one position and they hired two of us." We said, "What do you mean?" He said, "At the end of three years, they indicated that the one who paid for his salary from grants would retain the job."

CAC: You didn't see that operating at Minnesota to that extent?

CM: No, I never saw that. I realized that the questions asked during application included this as important.

CAC: Cotton, I'm going to ask you . . . You were at Georgia, British Columbia, Minnesota but you were a guest professor for greater or longer periods of time in . . .

CM: Fourteen different universities.

CAC: I was going to say twelve . . . fourteen. All right.

CM: The U.S., Canada, and overseas.

CAC: That gave you a chance to see the culture of other universities.

CM: Yes.

CAC: You described earlier the culture that you came into at Minnesota, at that time, in the late 1950s as, what can we do to advance your interests and assist you?

CM: Yes, to help you.

CAC: I think I catch a tone that some of that faded over the years at Minnesota?

CM: Yes, that's right.

CAC: Can you say something about how the culture at Minnesota looked when you went to these other places? Is there a Minnesota style? Is there a Minnesota set of principles or are we just Land-Grant, Midwest, Big Ten?

CM: As a student, as a visiting professor, and as a faculty member, I had personal experience at five of the Big Ten universities; so, I really learned quite a bit about five of the ten. What I learned was that the Land-Grant or public institutions had certain ideals or traditions—I'm not sure which—that made me convinced that I was always going to be lucky if I could stay in the public institution. They came more nearly to what my ideals were for the educational experience.

CAC: On what particular points?

CM: I felt as an undergraduate student, it was better. I felt as a professor, it was better. I felt as a graduate student, it was better.

CAC: By what measurements? Why is it better at a state university than something else?

CM: For one thing, the institution should be free from everything as far as formal acknowledgments. It should be a free institution. Even without mentioning any of the Big Ten universities—some of them were private schools—and even though they'd been started with church institutions, there was still the tradition of, they were started as a private school and they had certain attitudes that were not as acceptable to me in the greater freedom of the state university for <u>all</u> of our citizens.

CAC: Chicago and Northwestern [unclear].

CM: Those were two that I was thinking of. I felt that they were more classless, is the way I'll say it.

CAC: Say a couple more sentences about what you mean by more classless?

CM: First of all, when you went there, you had higher tuition so that affected the student body.

CAC: I see, okay.

CM: There were other things that were built onto this.

CAC: You're thinking of the undergraduate, graduate student bodies as being different at a public university?

CM: Absolutely. Along that line, I want to say that one of the things—I'll illustrate it with Minnesota—I've always thought is that under the state supported, the public supported institution it is very sad . . . We know that roughly half of the population of the state lives in the metropolitan area and we know that the percentage of students who live in the institutional shadow and go to the institution is larger than the percentage of students that live far from that because of commuting costs and other things. I have always been disturbed, at Minnesota and elsewhere, how you can go to the north woods where people are living on sub-standard incomes and tax them for higher education at the University of Minnesota, which is a premier institution of the state, when they are at a locational disadvantage and fewer of their community youngsters can go to this state institution and, yet, you tax them the same as the people who live in Minneapolis, St. Paul, and the suburbs. This has always bothered me as a student of America who believes in equal opportunity. I still am upset by this. When I look at Northwestern, I see what I call this class element. But, what I'm saying is that, even if you go into this pure democracy of Minnesota, locationally, we still have problems and it does not answer the problem to say, "We're a public institution and we all have the same opportunity."

CAC: Did you see any change in undergraduate and/or graduate students from 1957 to . . . when did you leave, 1983?

CM: About that.

CAC: Was there a growth, a development, a decrement . . . what's your sense of the capacity, the ability, the fire of the undergraduates and graduate students? Were they different over that thirty year period?

CM: Absolutely; but, I hesitate to answer your question.

CAC: Okay. That's fair enough.

CM: Maybe, I should just end it there. The reason I hesitate is that all through my life and even reading literature, old people are always fuddy-duddies and the new generation is . . .

CAC: You're afraid of saying that there was a decline in the capacity and the ability?

CM: I'm not only afraid of it, I won't say it; but, you know and I know, it's true. As a matter of fact, one of the greatest things in my academic experience that happened was that we had these people that might have been going to college after World War who had had enough years that they'd gotten out of some of their adolescence and not only that, we had federal support for people of an economic and social class that had not traditionally participated as much and we had an air, an enthusiasm, a dedication, a seriousness, an earnestness that was abnormally high.

CAC: How long do you think that survived? Most of the GI Bill from the Second World War is gone by 1951, 1952?

CM: Yes, but the effects of it were that it had an impact on professors in expectation and younger brothers and sisters who had followed so that this was not just ended when that crop of GIs left. It continued. In my estimation, instead of abruptly falling off, it was a gradual change. Of course, there's another thing that's involved. My father, for example, was a graduate of one of the Big Ten universities in 1914. He believed, and it was true to some extent at least, that if you had a bachelor's degree, your future was made even if you were a *C* student. Today, we have Ph.D.s and their future is not secure.

CAC: But you don't blame the universities for this?

CM: No. It was a social change that occurred. There was another thing that was happening. In the old days, you had medical schools, you had dental schools, you had law schools, you had both training and education. The fact was that, in the older days, there was relatively a very important part on education. Today, the emphasis is more on training. For example, in the College of Liberal Arts, if you're on the inside and you look at it, what you find today is that it's not so liberal and there's very little art. If you take geography for example, in the old days, we educated geographers. The only ones that were trained were still educated but they took a course in cartography. Today, we have these people come in and right in the liberal arts college, a liberal arts field, we have most of our students that don't want to be educated. They want to be trained. [sound of fist pounding on table] They want to get a job. They want to push buttons. They want to go into GIS.

CAC: GIS . . . what's GIS?

CM: General Information Systems, which is churning numbers. They want to go into remote sensing to get closer to their subject. They do this high-tech mapping. The fact is that most of these people have never had any experience in the field, and they never will, and they aren't even interested in going into the field. This is a devastating aspect—using just geography alone and

the College of Liberal Arts, which is supposed to be educating people—that here is a field in which 90 percent or something overwhelming is on training and not education.

CAC: This would be true of geography departments across the country?

CM: It's a national phenomenon. While I make a criticism of Minnesota in this, it is following the national pattern.

CAC: So, you have seen a loss of the Land-Grant and the liberal arts traditions over a fifty-year period that you've been watching or engaged actively in it?

CM: And it's disheartening. Clarke, you know and I know that most of the professors of our generation are grateful that they lived academically in a period where this was not true to this degree.

CAC: I've heard that from a number of people. Being a skeptic—historians start with a kind of basic skepticism—there's always a nostalgic factor operating and that when one is young, and engaged, and creating a career and scholarship, and engaging the students, there is a kind of excitement that tends to wear. I'm questioning—I kind of agree with you—to what degree what I've heard you and other people say could be supported by empirical evidence.

CM: All right. I can give you good empirical evidence . . . Ph.D.s in geography . . . University of Minnesota and elsewhere.

CAC: Good.

CM: Geography is supposed to be dealing with the nature of area just as history is dealing with the time factor.

CAC: Yes.

CM: Geographers are dealing with the nature of area and most Ph.D. theses today, whether it's on Africa, Far East, Europe, the U.S., they have not had the field experience. They can handle this all with numbers and machines.

CAC: The field experience was maintained here . . . you and Fred Lukermann sustained it for a long time, right?

CM: Yes.

CAC: And others or were you two primarily the . . . ?

CM: Along that line . . . when I came here, I was the first one at Minnesota that had ever done this. Instead of taking students out in the field, which other geographers had done, I said, "They need to not only go out in the field, but they need to study in the field. They need to interpret the field. They need to be in the field seriously." This is not taking a bus or an excursion trip. You need to have field seminars. I was taking graduate students out.

CAC: Often in the summer?

CM: They were always in the summer. My program—I was the only one in all of the so-called Big Ten schools that was doing this regularly—was alternatively one field seminar this summer in the Midwest and alternatively, in another region. Sometimes, it was in the south or the Appalachians. Sometimes, it was in the west. I carried this on. I received no money from the University of Minnesota for this. I not only paid all of my expenses, I arranged for travel expenses and I had foreign students that I even subsidized—they didn't know who paid for it—their lodging and so forth. I felt that this was important. I had Ph.D. theses again and again come out of this field experience. This became known by departments not only in the Midwest but elsewhere. For example, one spring, I got a call from Northwestern University and the man in charge said, "Would you take our students and guide them on a field seminar at Platteville, Wisconsin, this summer?" I said that I would. I did something for Michigan State. I organized a tri-university, regular field seminar between the University of Wisconsin, the University of Iowa, the University of Minnesota. I carried not one-third of the load, I carried 80 percent of the load. I had foreign students that didn't have any money. I supported them. I did all kinds of things there. Near the end of this, the University of Minnesota just began to support it.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: The topic of conversation at the moment is field seminars, not travelling in the field; although, that in itself is not without some benefit to students. I'm going to ask this way and, then, you can carry the story where you wish. A university in a graduate program would not hesitate to underwrite laboratory resources in the sciences, whether they're biological, or physical, or chemical, or what have you. I'm guessing that they wouldn't hesitate in music, for example . . . that there have to be special things that musicians do and the university has to pick up the cost. But, you're saying here that the university and the department did not have the money to make possible these field seminars?

CM: And I requested it and they simply said that it was unavailable and I went ahead anyway.

CAC: The students, for the most part, had to pick up their own tuition and room and . . . ?

CM: That's right. They had to pick up their own tuition. They had to get out to the field area. They had to pay for their own food.

CAC: What a wonderful opportunity . . . to be in the presence of persons pursuing the same general subject together for a long time.

CM: Absolutely.

CAC: You were just being together like that.

CM: That's right. It really goes back to the Middle Ages that one of the most effective types of learning that you can imagine is an apprenticeship working with the master . . .

CAC: You bet.

CM: . . . a person that has practiced this for a long time, and knows a great deal about it. The students aren't lectured, but they work with you in the field.

CAC: Yes, yes, yes.

CM: They see and participate in this. Along this line, I feel it's very important that you can lecture students for hours and hours on how to swim, but they'll never learn how to swim until they jump in the water. If you want to do geographic research, lecturing is not the most effective way, but it sure saves money.

CAC: What's the resistance here and elsewhere to that kind of learning setting?

CM: I feel that again and again, the administration, maybe through pressure from the legislature or whatever—I don't know what their pressures were—was always looking at cost per student. It's obvious that the cost per student in the field is higher than just taking students in for an hour's credit—shortchanging them incidentally . . . only giving them fifty minutes—and still they haven't jumped in the water. I was the only one that offered this field experience for graduate students for year after year for many years. In the later years now, for some reason or other, there was some consciousness by the university and they began to give me some support; but, I did this financially completely for years. I was gratified even to have partial support. When I was at retirement and was going to announce this, I was interested that in announcing it at the staff meeting immediately came up the question, "This has been carried on. Will we continue?" There was wild enthusiasm for continuing it. Then, they got to the specifics for next year and there were three people that were very enthusiastic and what happened is that within about two or three years, one of those three had an enthusiasm which was short-circuited and never lit a bulb and the other two experienced it one year and found out, it's a hell of a lot tougher to be with students twenty-four hours a day than it is to walk into a lecture hall and fifty minutes later walk out.

CAC: You're away from home.

CM: That's right. Often, I had foreign students, too, and they had personal problems. You can't say, "That's a personal problem. To hell with you." You have to carry on. Personal problems are problems of your field seminar.

CAC: For the record, say something about . . . let us say, you did one in the Midwest, in this region generally. What kind of a problem would you take and in what way was it a seminar? Did you get a focus and go to one place? You say it wasn't an excursion?

CM: No.

CAC: Tell me how you organized and what you did.

CM: Let me give you an example.

CAC: That's the best way.

CM: I had, two years previously, a field seminar that headquartered in an old hotel in Boscobel, Wisconsin—where the Gideon Bible idea was initiated. But, despite that, I was willing to headquarter there . . .

CAC: [laughter]

CM: . . . because we got special student rates there. Because of something that came up there, I needed to go to Minneapolis one weekend to get some materials for the seminar. I told the students, "Saturday and Sunday, as usual, is your day off. Do what you want to. Carry on with your field problem, or whatever, or just drink beer." I drove to Minneapolis to get these field materials for the next week. I was driving on that highway that goes from Boscobel up to La Crosse and it was through Veroqua. As I was driving along and looking at the landscape all by myself, I saw here a barn and it had these louvers and I said to myself, "This is a tobacco barn." I looked over in the field and there was tobacco. I went to several farms later, and I saw tobacco fields, and I saw tobacco barns. This is what is called field observation. With that background and continuing toward Veroqua, I came to the next farm and wondered whether there would be a tobacco barn as well as a livestock barn and there was a big tobacco barn and on the barn it said the owner's name "Knutson." For the first time in my life, and apparently in anybody's who'd ever thought about tobacco, I thought about Knutson and tobacco. I said, "By god! that is interesting." As I was going up the highway, I thought I will look at every tobacco barn or the livestock barn and see what the owner's name was. They were Scandinavian names. Then, I came to a farm and there were no names on the barn; so, I pulled up to the farm yard. I went up to the house and I knocked on the door. A lady came to the door and I said, "What is your name?"

CAC: [laughter]

CM: She gave me her name and by god! it was a Norwegian name. I said to myself, "This is interesting." The next academic year, I went through literature on tobacco, and I found that there were two tobacco regions in Wisconsin, and the soil men said that tobacco is grown in these two areas because of the soil. I, then, got out soil maps and I found the same soil type was in other areas where they didn't grow tobacco. I also found that in the economic literature that they said it was labor supply or market. I went through all of these and I found that there was always an explanation that went with the field of the observer.

CAC: Ah ha.

CM: So, I decided that what I had observed needed to be tested. Tobacco is the most strictly controlled agricultural crop in America. You cannot grow tobacco without government allotment.

CAC: [unclear] subsidy.

CM: I organized a seminar and I found out these two tobacco regions of Wisconsin . . . this western region was more or less centered on Vernon County and Veroqua. There's something like five or six counties. I got a list of every tobacco grower. I organized the students going out to field interviews in how to do it efficiently. This is one thing: people go out to interview and they don't know the technique. They go up and they spend a half hour. If you only have to find the answer to one question, you want to be able to do it sixty seconds; so, what you do is go up and you don't say, "I'm busy. I have to do a hell of a lot." You say to the farmer, " I know you're a very busy man and I only have one question to ask you." Actually, I had them ask three questions. We were doing so many interviews. We got every tobacco grower except 2 percent in these five counties. In round numbers what happened was that, regardless of all these great academicians, soil scientists, economists, and so forth, roughly 80 percent of all tobacco growers were Norwegian and, incidentally, of the other 20 percent, roughly half of them had Norwegian spouses. This blew all research theory on this subject.

CAC: How do you account for this correlation between Scandinavian ethnic background and tobacco?

CM: All right. I felt that this needed to go in print. I felt that I did not need to explain why this was, I just had to blow other people out of the field. But, as a result of this, because it did cause quite a stir in geography, there were people that suggested that maybe Norwegians had grown tobacco in Norway and they brought this over, so there was this historical . . . So, I went to Norway later and I found they grew tobacco there, but they started after the western Wisconsin people and I blew a lot of the other theories. The idea was, simply, are your explanations valid? Isn't it interesting that the soil scientists see the soil relationship and labor specialists see the labor relationship? So who are you going to believe?

CAC: You had enough students who were engaged in this, too? They found the joy?

CM: This was one of my most successful field seminars that I ever had. There was a Ph.D. thesis, then, that later came out of this. This person that got a Ph.D. is one of the most successful geographers today. He's one of the leading geographers in America. That was a field seminar. When you ask, "Was there a problem?" that was the problem. Why are these Norwegian names on the barn or is it true? I had a casual observation of a few barns. Maybe, when we had this investigation, it wouldn't work out.

CAC: I learned from you ten years ago here on [County Road] FF that barns with blue roofing are likely to be Bohemian, Czech.

CM: That's right. Incidentally, along that line, we had a real screwball graduate student from New York, and we had a field seminar, and he said, "Color is related to ethnicity in Minnesota."

CAC: Sure. There you are.

CM: That's related. But, the fact is that I thought, many enthusiasts carry this too damned far. I knew this student was wrong. When you know the student is wrong, you say, "Go ahead. Get your field data." In his report that came after all his field investigation, he said, "In the Irish communities, there are more screens where the frame is painted green. They order shingles . . . a larger percentage than others are green." And by god! it was true! There was a case of the student teaching the professor. Along that line, Clarke, in one of my forwards in a book, I thank for all of the students who had led me on field excursions. [laughter]

CAC: Ahhh. What you describe seems so central to a discipline, but the discipline is going to take another [unclear], going in other directions. So, this kind of field seminar is, I'm guessing gone?

CM: Is passé, yes.

CAC: Do you know of its existence anywhere? Geologist would still go to the field or would they do aerial photographs and soundings?

CM: Geologists still go to the field, but they use non-field techniques to minimize the field experience. This is true in geography. There are some that go to the field yet, but it has been minimized. That's why I said earlier, "The way to get closer to your subject in geography is now to go into remote sensing."

CAC: That's why I'm thinking of this nice young botanist who was doing ground truthing to find out what really was growing in the valley of the Kinnickinnic.

CM: May I tell you something else about the University of Minnesota?

CAC: Oh, I hope so.

CM: John Borchert said to me, recently, "I remember when you first came to Minnesota. You didn't like the winter climate." Of course, all Minnesotans love it. He said that there were some Minnesotans in the winter who were saying, "This winter climate is stimulating. It's drier. You don't feel it very much like you do in the humid areas." He said that I said immediately, "If you fellows keep talking about this, I'm going to have to take my shirt off."

CAC: [laughter]

CM: I used to say to students, "When I came to the University of Minnesota, I couldn't believe how Siberian the weather was. You folks say that because of the dry air, you don't feel it. I agree with you. When you freeze solid through, you don't feel a damned thing." [laughter] That leads up to something else. I was at the University of Minnesota something like three or four years and I said, "With the quarter system . . . my god! the Minnesotans, they can be this way; but, take a rational human being, he or she would not want to experience another Minnesota winter." I decided that I was rational and on the other hand you had the Minnesotans . . . that's their problem. I called up the, then, dean, a man named E.W. Ziebarth. We called him "Easy." I said, "I need to have an interview with you." This was arranged, and I went there, and he said, "What's on the agenda?" I said, "Mr. Dean, it is a fact that no Republican governor in the history of this state and no Democratic governor in the history of this state has tried to do anything with this goddamned winter climate."

CAC: [laughter]

CM: He said, "What am I supposed to do?" I said, "I want winter quarter off permanently."

CAC: Then, you'd do your field seminar in the summer?

CM: No. He was shocked. Of course, he's thinking about the budget.

CAC: Of course.

CM: I said, "Understand, I'm requesting this, but without pay. Dean Ziebarth, it is a fact that you don't have anybody in the College of Liberal Arts that can't lay out all his intellectual marbles in three months, but you have to carry him the rest of the year. I have so few intellectual marbles that I can lay them out in two weeks, but you have to carry me the rest of the year. This is one of the opportunities the college has never had before. You can take the money of the winter quarter and hire somebody who can contribute something more to the university." I was granted this from then on and that was one of the wonderful things in my career.

CAC: But, in fact, you did come back summers frequently to do this field seminar.

CM: Most of the time, I didn't.

CAC: Oh, I see.

CM: I had the three-week seminars, but that was all.

CAC: Oh, those were three-week seminars.

CM: Those were three-week field seminars. I was not compensated to that degree.

CAC: Let me share a story somewhat along the same line. As I got older, I wanted to take the winter quarter off; but before that, I had thought that it was foolish for us to get paid nine months and, then, have a drought in the summer and, then, things came due. You had to pay your real estate taxes or something and you didn't have the money. You had to borrow money. None of us can budget that well for three dry months; so, I said, "Why don't we have an option. If you want to take twelve months equal salary, nine months salary spread over twelve, let's do it." "Oh, no, no, no. The rules wouldn't . . . " Then, we'd go into the finance vice-president . . . "Oh, no, we couldn't do that." I did the same thing, following partly your example. When I was phasing into retirement, I worked in the archives summers—which I'd established—and took the winter off because I couldn't stand Siberia, and Florence [Mrs. Chambers] was in poor health, and we had to go away. I went and said, "Would it be all right if I took the winter off and taught summers?" "Oh, yes," they said, "that would be all right; but, there's one downside. You'll have to take twelve months' pay."

CM: [laughter]

CAC: I said, "That's a great sacrifice, but I'll do it." [laughter]

CM: Oh, that's good.

CAC: What other things should we talk about now? Have you got things in your notes that you want to talk about?

CM: I want to talk about something off the record—but, you can tape it.

CAC: All right. That's fine. The machine is on.

CM: I have not publicized this.

CAC: All right.

CM: I didn't publicize it for a very good reason. I was shocked by it. It happened in the university. I believe in carrying on the public good even as much as I can when there are negative aspects.

CAC: The truth must out.

CM: [sigh] What happened was—I don't remember the year, about 1958; it was my second year—we had hired a Marxist from New Zealand as a visiting professor for one year. I was responsible somehow or other, at that time, when he was here for taking care of him and whatever as a visiting professor. It was 1958, or 1959, or 1960, or 1961. We could go back through the records. It was early in my career at the University of Minnesota. I got a call from the president's office and this man said that the office would like to discuss something with me. He suggested that possibly, because I was so busy, such a fine person, dedicated, we could go out in the evening and have dinner together and I would be a guest. So, it was decided that we would meet at Jax Cafe, which, as I recall, is on East Hennepin.

CAC: You bet it is. Your fellow geographer, Mr. Lukermann, used to frequently to eat there.

CM: Is that right?

CAC: Yes.

CM: This was in the evening. It was preceded with martinis.

CAC: I hope so.

CM: We had a steak dinner. It was a very nice meal. The background of this relates to a book that was published called *Types of Rural Economy* that was written by a Frenchman named René Dumont and it was written in French and published in French originally. I could read forty or fifty pages of French per hour easily. Since it was written by one of the leading French intellectuals, although it was not in my field—it was an allied field, rural sociology—I had read this. This rural sociologist intellectual of France had done field work, which I believed in fervently, and had lived in different parts of the world, including Third World areas, and he had simply written up what he thought was his analysis of these different areas as it related to types of rural economy, which was the title of his book in French. When I came to Minnesota, this book had received so much attention and a great deal of acclaim that it had been published in English. Knowing that most of our students didn't read—they only partially read—instead of assigning in my agricultural geography, the book, I assigned only three chapters. This, of course, was before the Vietnam War and I don't know whether the Almighty was guiding me—he certainly had no reason to with my church attendance record— . . .

CAC: [laughter]

CM: . . . but one of the three chapters I had assigned was on Vietnam.

CAC: This was before Dien Bien Phu?

CM: Yes, this is before that. At the Jax Cafe, the two men from the president's office who had come to eat with me—I was to be the guest at dinner and wondering why—said, in the course of the evening, that it had come to their attention that Keith Buchanan . . .

CAC: The New Zealander?

CM: . . . the New Zealand professor who was a Marxist, was actually showing slides of Red China every day in class.

CAC: [laughter]

CM: They said this was very serious because the United States did not recognize Red China.

CAC: That's true.

CM: I said that it was interesting that Red China had nearly one fourth of the population of the world and we didn't recognize they even existed, which to me was a mathematical conundrum. They said, "Nevertheless, do you realize he is showing these slides to every class?" [sound of fist pounding table] Then, they said, "Professor Mather, there is another thing that we should mention."

CAC: Ahhh.

CM: "It has come to our attention that you teach a course in rural geography and that there is a Marxist book entitled *Types of Rural Economy* authored by René Dumas and you are actually assigning this as required reading." To sum up this situation, they said, "We hope you understand what this means for the university and we expect that this will be remedied." They asked me, "You know what the problem is?" I sat there silently and looked at them a moment and I said then, "This will make a great newspaper story."

CAC: [laughter]

CM: That ended it. [laughter] This sort of pressure was so great, for example, at Wisconsin. We know, at an earlier stage, about the University of Wisconsin when the academics were fighting for academic freedom which was related to what I was saying also about grantsmanship. This is a constant and ongoing problem that academe has to guard itself against.

CAC: One of my informants tells me a story of the only time he knows the last twenty-five years that academic freedom was questioned was when Ed Schuh, who was then in Agricultural Economics and now with the Humphrey Institute—this would have been in the early 1980s, I think—out of his research was suggesting that Minnesota farm economy was going to have some real serious problems the next four or five years because of such and such and such and such.

Governor [Rudy] Perpich called up President [C. Peter] Magrath and said, "We can't have this fellow going around saying those things in the state of Minnesota. You tell him to 'Shut up!'"

CM: [laughter]

CAC: Magrath said, "There's a thing called academic freedom. Maybe he's right." As it turned out, he was right.

CM: Yes.

CAC: Of course, Ed Schuh is a very conservative fellow. Mulford Sibley, and Ed Schuh, and now you . . . I'd never heard that story. That's very interesting. We have to go to dinner here pretty soon.

CM: That's right. This is more important than anything else.

CAC: Let me, again, make a statement which has a question mark at the end of it—although driving to our cabin here together, we talked about it. The years that you and I had—you're a bit older than I by five or seven years—was a pretty good time to be in the academy?

CM: It was wonderful.

CAC: The other part is the war we had was a pretty good war?

CM: It was. I look back over my academic years as a treasure.

CAC: Yes.

CM: I am so grateful that while society thought they employed me . . . I owe society so much because when I think back and review all of the options, I was so fortunate, for example, with the Sand Hills, my love, that I could go through life following the spirit and society was saying, like when I first came to the university, "What can we do for you?"

CAC: The spirit could take you to the top of the Himalayas.

CM: Yes.

CAC: It could take you to Japan.

CM: That's right.

CAC: It could take you all around the world.

CM: Along that line, Clarke, I was on expeditions to the high Andes. Even in my retirement, I went on a high Arctic expedition in which there were only ten us, courtesy of the Canadian government. I was the only American. Society kept giving to me, giving to me, and I was overwhelmed all the time—including my Mt. Everest which was a miserable failure—that society always kept giving to me.

CAC: As the Bible says, "The Lord cherishes a cheerful receiver."

CM: [laughter] This reminds me, with respect to interest . . . with agricultural land. I don't know whether I've ever told you this, but I've told people when they were talking about interest payments and so forth. I formerly had a dear Jewish friend who spent all of his time reading the New Testament. He said to me that, with respect to interest, it is more blessed to receive than to give. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] I think that's a good note to end on. I end only with a comment of my own. Part of what we cherish are the friendships along the way and ours has been an important one for me.

CM: A long time one.

CAC: Yes.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[End of the Interview]

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