

Interview with Sherwood Berg

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

Interviewed on August 5, 1999

Sherwood Berg - SB
Ann Pflaum - AP

AP: This is Ann Pflaum. It is August 5, 1999. I'm interviewing Sherwood O. Berg, who carried out a number of significant positions in his life. Starting backwards he was president of the University of South Dakota at Brookings? Is that correct?

SB: It's South Dakota State University. That was a very serious error, right off the bat.

AP: Oh! my gracious! I apologize. Then you were dean of the Institute of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics from 1963 to 1973?

SB: Correct. From 1973 to 1975, there was a hiatus there. We were in Indonesia. I represented UC at Harvard in a higher education development project for a museum of which Minnesota is a part.

AP: Let me explain a little bit. This interview is one of a large number of interviews that is taking place as part of the university's sesquicentennial. We're looking back, particularly, over the last fifty years to try to get a one-volume readable text that would introduce people to all parts of the university. Of course, the part we'll be talking, today, about will be the College of Agriculture and the Institute of Agriculture.

Would you tell me a little bit about your educational background and how you go to the university?

SB: I came to the university in July 1957. Prior to that time, I had served as an agricultural attaché to three countries in western Europe. Upon completion of the doctor's degree at the university in 1951, I became an agricultural attaché to the Yugoslavia. For about two and a half years, we lived in Belgrade and I served as agricultural attaché as well as a Marshall Plan food and agriculturist at a period of time when Yugoslavia was more or less wavering between East and West, trying to strike the best deal they could. Both factions were interested in them and we wished they would embrace us rather than the other. We had a pretty heavy assignment. In 1954, I was appointed as agricultural attaché to Denmark and Norway, a tremendous contrast in agriculture and the economy.

AP: Could you explain that? I was wondering, did you live in one country and commute to the other?

SB: Yes. In Scandinavia, we lived in Copenhagen and about ten days or two weeks out of every six, we would spend up in Norway. We had a Norwegian trained agricultural specialist in the office there at all times. We communicated between the two offices. Physically, I was there part of the time.

AP: When you say "agricultural attaché", are you free to say what kinds of things you were doing? Were you doing the same kinds of things in all three countries?

SB: The agricultural attaché was really the eyes and ears of American agriculture abroad. There were, more or less, two general areas that we were watching. For example, we were looking for potential markets for our U.S. agricultural commodities. This was after World War II and our agricultural production has stepped up tremendously. It had been geared up during the war, so we were creating surpluses—this was under Ezra Taft Benson—filling up field grains as well as dairy products and so forth. In Yugoslavia, I put a great deal of emphasis on assisting that country to meet its food needs, because it was slow in recovering from World War II. Furthermore, they experienced a drought in 1950. Another drought hit the country in 1952 and we had to make estimates of what their feed grain shortages might be as well as others such as soybeans and so forth. We formed the U.S.D.A. [unclear] under the AID [Agency for International Development] program how much food we might move into the country. In Denmark, it was more watching the production in that country, particularly in terms of pork. They're great pork producers. Many Danish raise hogs, plus they export to other countries in western Europe a great number of dairy products cheeses and other things of this nature. [unclear] economic [unclear] back here to the United States in farm organizations and farm groups. Keeping track, for example, of crop developments was an important aspect of the job. I traveled probably 25,000 miles a year [unclear] sector of Europe [unclear]. We watched also any new developments in the area of biological research [unclear] very proficient, in for example, in [unclear] hogs. When I was in Yugoslavia, they produced 100 pounds of pork using 600 or 700 pounds of grain. When I got to Denmark, they were using 325 to 375 pounds of feed to every pound of pork produced. So it was this type of thing we were involved in, as well as [unclear] a good number of trade negotiations—for example, getting Florida citrus moved into the Danish market.

AP: Tell me a little bit about where you did your Ph.D.? It was at Minnesota, is that right?

SB: Yes. Before I went to Cornell, I stopped by Minnesota and met Dr. [O.B.] Jesness, head of the Department of Ag. I was a Minnesota farm boy. I was interested in coming back to the University of Minnesota but I wanted the experience of going East and studying at Cornell. Forest, "Frosty" Hill was head of the department and he had been director of the Farm Credit Administration. I was very interested in agriculture at the time so [unclear]. I went East then to study under "Frosty," so I could get the master's degree. Then I came back to Minnesota.

AP: So you got a master's in agriculture from Cornell?

SB: Yes.

AP: Bachelor's degree from Minnesota?

SC: Bachelor's degree from the South Dakota State University, where I ended up.

AP: Your only Minnesota degree was your Ph.D. then?

SB: That is correct. However, I studied at the School of Agriculture after I finished high school. I had a couple, three quarters there, so I knew the campus.

AP: You must have encountered the famous J.O. Christianson?

SB: Oh, yes, very much.

AP: I never knew him. He reads like kind of a Billy Graham of the Farm Belt.

SB: Yes, he was the evangelistic type and could do a great job on the air. He was a South Dakota boy born out here in the middle of the plains, but found his way to Minnesota. He was really a remarkable person. Yes, I was in his School of Agriculture from the fall 1938, the fall of 1939, and part of 1940.

AP: He was reputed to remember people forever.

SB: Oh, yes.

AP: If a student came back, he would know that student's name instantly?

SB: Right.

AP: Some of the most loyal alumni of the university are alumni of that school.

SC: SAUM, the School of Agriculture University of Minnesota, is one of the most active alumni groups within the university. In fact, we can turn out more people for an annual banquet than the college can and those people are getting up in years. That's not going to last more than another five years or so.

AP: I think part of it must have been, from what I've been reading about the other schools as well, is that the boarding school experience is closer than going to a high school or going to college somehow.

SB: It was a residential situation so that you got to know the people in the dormitory. You met them at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. That permitted kind of a bonding that you don't find when people scatter to their various homes at night. However, in wise programming, J.O. and Ralph Miller had a good series of student activities outlined so that evenings would be taken up with work of that kind:

societies, theater, drama, forensics, debate, this type of thing. Those schools played a very important role in that day and age. They were in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota—part of the Scandinavian heritage.

AP: Oh, that's interesting. The idea of the schools came from Scandinavia?

SB: From Scandinavia and northern Germany.

AP: That's interesting.

Tell me about your Ph.D. under Jesness.

SB: My lead adviser was E. Fred Koller, K-o-l-l-e-r. Fred was a professor of Finance and Cooperative Marketing within the department. He was a South Dakota product of Augustana and had taken his advanced work at the department and was a very good scholar, a forthright scholar. O.B. hired him on the staff when he completed his Ph.D. I was interested in Ag/Finance. My thesis, my research, was over in the area of the production credit financing of Minnesota farmers. I looked at the Production Credit Associations, which were cooperatives, and that's how I came to work with Fred Koller. They were cooperative financing institutions for the operation of farms in the state, not the purchase of the real estate, which was another organization. That was the Farm Loan Associations. I was working with the PCAs, Production Credit Associations. So I visited every Production Credit Association in the state—somewhere over twenty of them—drew random sample of loans and took information and then analyzed that. It was one of the first theses on the St. Paul campus in the department that used computers. They were the old IBM Hollerith cards—you probably don't remember those things.

AP: I do indeed. One of the debates we're trying to figure out is when the first computer would have been acquired on the campus.

SB: It would have been prior to 1951. Do your records show that?

AP: I think so. There's a quote from [Theodore] Blegen, sort of a story from Blegen, in the early 1950s.

SB: Ted Blegen?

AP: Yes. It's a little hazy though. You'd have to probably go back and find the exact invoice of whoever bought the first one.

SB: Cornell was very much up on numerical analysis and I had picked up a lot of knowledge in the use of that process at Cornell, so I brought that to Minnesota and then would begin to apply it to my thesis.

AP: Was there a computer on the St. Paul campus? One of the early ones was owned by the predecessor to the Carlson School of Management.

SB: I know that we couldn't do all the processing on the St. Paul campus. I know we took some to the other side, to the Institute of Technology, I think.

AP: I think that was another place where there would have been one.

You got your degree in approximately what year?

SB: In 1951.

AP: Then you went to?

SB: To Belgrade.

AP: You were back from the consulting phase about 1955?

SB: It was 1957. That was no consulting phase. That came later. That came at the end of the career.

AP: I'm sorry. The agricultural attaché, is what I should have called it?

SB: A United States agricultural attaché.

AP: I was calling that consulting.

SB: That's a part of the Foreign Agricultural Service and we were recruited by the United States Department of Agriculture [USDA]. We were taken by the hand over to the State Department and we came under the State Department. Now, in 1955, we broke away from the State Department and became civil service employees of the USDA. That's a little history; that's all.

AP: I see.

SB: I came back then in 1957.

AP: The position you came back to?

SB: Was head of the Department of Agricultural Economics.

AP: You were replacing Jesness who had been there since about 1928, I think.

SB: Yes. He came up from Kentucky.

AP: It's interesting... I've been reading the history of the department by Willard Cochrane.

SB: Yes.

AP: He was not totally flattering to Jesness, alleging a kind of lack flexibility and alleging a kind of self-focused point of view. Was that too strong an assessment, do you think?

SB: O.B. was a benevolent autocrat. He just kind of ran the department. But the situation between Cochrane and O.B. was that O.B. was a dyed-in-the-wool conservative and Cochrane was a dyed-in-the-wool liberal. Both men had a lot of respect for each other, but they just had different points of view. That even went to management style. It created some tensions but, a lot of times, it was healthy tension. We'd get issues outlined. I think it was to many people's surprised that O.B. invited Cochrane and also that Cochrane decided to come to Minnesota. It turned out to be a real good move.

AP: The other thing that we have picked up is that you and your successors really built a first-rate, one of the sort of prize departments on the St. Paul campus.

SB: That's a compliment. I think one of the better-applied ag/econ departments among the ag/econ departments in the country.

AP: Yes, indeed! and one of the ones we are proudest of. Can you describe for me how you did it? What were some of the things that you did?

SB: One of the first things that I looked at was that the undergraduate enrollment was abysmally low. I think when I came there, there were twenty-seven or twenty-eight majors in the department. The first thing I wanted to do was really to bolster the undergraduate teaching in that department, so we could get the message across the campus and across the university what Ag/Econ was all about. That meant going out and finding a person who could really relate to the students. I think that was, perhaps, one of the first important decisions that I made. We brought in a chap by the name of Carroll Hess, H-e-s-s, from Penn State University.

AP: How do you spell Carroll?

SB: I think Carroll's name was spelled with a double *r* and double *l*. Within two and a half years time, we had built that to over 300 undergraduates.

AP: So, within three years, you had built it from 27 or 28 to 300 undergraduates?

SB: Yes.

AP: That's quite a lot of recruiting.

SB: It was just attracting them to the field. You have to give credit to Carroll Hess for doing that. He knew how to relate to students. It sparked the department. We had a lot more students to serve. They had different needs so that everyone, more or less, had to pick up their pace.

The second thing I tried to do was to internationalize—I suppose in this day and age, you would say globalize—the department. We had to get across the idea that we were part of the world and not part of a state market or anything like that, that the products that we produced in agriculture were going around the world and what was happening around the world was very important to the demand situation for food and fiber products. We did quite a bit to really get the members of the department engaged in this. It also meant some other things to put quite a bit of emphasis on just a general education of the student. That meant going down, for example, and expanding the work of the Department of Rhetoric, so it embraced a strong component of the humanities as well as straight economics or some of the social sciences. All of that takes a lot of discussion and time.

Part of getting the internationalization of the department involved getting the members of the department staff actually engaged in activities overseas. That, of course, meant that as a recognized policy within the university and O. Meredith Wilson came along about that time and he was quite interested in this because he had been with the Ford Foundation. To get some of this going and underway, we started, more or less, in an informal fashion working with—I suppose at that time it might be called the Professional Union of Professors—the American Association of University Professors and setting up in there a committee on internationals. Gordon Swanson in Ag/Education was a great help in that. He and I worked on that for about two years. We had this group of people and we could elicit support around the university, particularly in the Department of Economics and the Med [Medical] School, so that President Wilson would recognize that there was a movement across the university on this. Then, we began to get some activity. We had a Ford Foundation project down in Chile with fellows in Economics on the other side. The Minneapolis campus played a great role in this. We also came along and then sent part of our staff over there. In addition to that, on the government side, prior to my coming there, the Korean War had broken out. [Harold] Stassen was head of the Foreign Cooperation Administration. I think it was called FCA, in those days. That was a foreign aid arm of our programs overseas and Stassen headed that up. He came over to the Twin Cities and leaned on President Morrill, at that time, and said, "Hey! I need your help. We've got to rebuild the universities in South Korea," because they'd been demolished during the course of the Korean War. We had a number of our Ag people in there helping them reestablish a major college of agriculture at Suwŏn just south of the city of Seoul, so our people were getting some experience there.

AP: I understand that [Arthur] Schneider in Forestry was the man on the spot, as it were?

SB: He was the country director for the University of Minnesota across the board in Korea. He was out of Forestry and a very, very good man. He did a good job at the University of Minnesota.

AP: One of the things I've read is that the university's output in the Korean project was somewhat uneven. I've read, for example, that the Medical School—Neal Gault—felt that the hospital and the medical component had gone very well. He seemed to suggest that something like in Engineering,

which was another component, and Public Administration that we relied on faculty from other institutions more. Do you have any feel for that?

SB: Probably that's in part justified. I would say the Med School and Agriculture certainly used their own people—no question. In fact, we brought in some of our people from the outlying experiment stations because Suwōn was not in Seoul. It was forty miles south of Seoul. We wanted some people with the philosophy of being at a branch station, yet associated with a large university right there in Suwōn so they could sense what was going on at that location.

AP: Can you spell the name of that Korean town for me?

SB: S-u-w-ō-n. It's forty miles south of Seoul, the capital.

AP: One of the things we're trying to recreate is a sense of the culture of the St. Paul campus. Do you have any vignettes or stories that remind you of what it was like to be there in the mid 1950s?

SB: I'd say that it was one of—these are just personal impressions—being a fairly idyllic, rustic, somewhat self-satisfied, conservative, academic community run with some very brilliant minds and espoused a number of clearly identifiable individualist leaders. They gathered around them a covey of good graduate students who then went on to do greater things. It was ready for some refurbishing and renovation from the physical plant standpoint. It had to step through a threshold of a different type of research and exploration in which you had more team efforts than had been true heretofore. [Elvin] Stakman, Christianson, [Herbert] Hayes, Jesness were outstanding people and they were strong individuals. That era was fading out in the mid 1950s. They were getting more into the type of team research, interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary research. That's what one had to be prepared to do. Is that an appraisal you can deal with?

AP: Yes. That's extremely helpful and I think it fits the profile that we're getting.

I'm struck with some parallels between [Owen] Wangensteen and Stakman. Interestingly enough, they both seem to have gone to the University of Minnesota for all their degrees and they both seem to have been devotees of the basic sciences and of sort of pushing their graduate students for a broad background, not simply an applied either in surgery or in Plant Pathology, going directly to the applied route, but beefing up the training with a greater breadth than was typical earlier. I was struck by that sort of generational insight and also the ability to phenomenally, apparently, lead students to, as you say, collect people around them.

SB: Yes, right. Stakman would go out there and play softball with his grad students at fifty-five, sixty years of age—that's great. The loyalty and the bonding that went on there was just remarkable. Many of his graduates went into foundation work, Rockefeller in particular, because that's where he had a great association. Those people just stuck with him through their working life times. They just believed in "Stake."

AP: Of course, it's interesting, the story of [Norman] Borlaug...

SB: Oh, Borlaug, yes. I met Borlaug in the fall of 1938 when I first went to the St. Paul campus. I was interested in cross-country, working under Marshall Rieman, who later became athletic director at the University of Minnesota. Borlaug was a wrestling coach. In the fall of the year on a beautiful fall day there on the St. Paul campus, we'd be out going through our exercises, tossing the [unclear] ball back and forth, not realizing thirty years down the road... In 1970, Betty and I were in the Constitutional Hall in Oslo when Borlaug stood before King Haakon and rendered his Nobel Peace Prize oration. That's how things go through life.

AP: Catch me up. I knew that Borlaug had coached wrestling. You were in the School of Agriculture?

SB: Right, earning your way through college.

AP: Sure! Oh, I see. Now, I understand.

SB: The Depression was coming—we didn't know it—to an end. You took any type of work you could get. Norm Borlaug was a university wrestler. Marshall Rieman recognized this and invited him over and he became a wrestling coach.

AP: It's interesting that he also entered through the General College because he didn't have the conventional programs.

SB: The credentials to get into a regular [unclear].

AP: Right. Then, he also got his undergraduate degree in forestry, if I'm not mistaken.

SB: And his graduate work in pathology.

AP: What I've read is that even that was an accident. He had tried to get a job in forestry and couldn't, so then, for lack of another alternative, he bumped his way back into the campus and ended up in Plant Pathology.

SB: Yes. Yes.

AP: That's a remarkable story.

SB: Right, and then would spend much of his time down in Mexico City. We got to know him fairly well. My brother was an exec [executive] with General Motors and one of his first overseas assignments was to Mexico City and I would go down there and, here, Norm Borlaug is coaching my nephew in baseball.

AP: Oh, that's amazing.

Back then to building your department... You had two dominant strategies. First, you beefed up the undergraduate numbers.

SB: The undergraduate curriculum to attract the numbers.

AP: Right. Then you stressed globalization. Then you must have had to hire people?

SB: Yes. It was a case of where it really was difficult to hire additional staff in those days. The Cochrane and Phil Raup combination... They were very internationally minded, so we attracted also graduate students that became interested. Then to beef up this area when I was dean—not when I was department head—we hired Dr. John Blackmore, who came to us from the University of Massachusetts. He'd had a great deal of FAO, Food and Agricultural Organization, experience with the United Nations to head up the international activity of the institute, the three colleges: the Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics. In other words, we elevated it to that plain, gave it that recognition, so it could become a part of the career development of the staff members, if they so chose. We didn't force anybody. The impact of this was terrific on the faculty. I wish I could take you over to visit with some of the retired professors who, under either foundation sponsorship or the U.S. government, the AID programs, came to these countries. Many of them came for two or three month assignments. There were a lesser number that came for two year assignments, brought their families over and stayed in countries, such as Reynold Dahl in Ag/Econ was over in Tunisia for a couple of years. Charles Sitkin was down in Chile for five or six years. In other words, there were people that went out for extended periods of time. Now to talk to those people and have them reflect on what that experience meant to them in their career development, how they then began to use some of the things that they encountered in this international experience and the teaching in the classroom or further interests that they developed then as a result of seeing some of the agricultural practices and methods that were carried out in other areas of the world... As I meet some of these people today, when I go over to the St. Paul, I can hardly get away from a couple of them. They want to talk about what happened when they visited us in Indonesia and went down to Djakarta to see how they were doing in this particular dairy project, which was kind of unusual for Indonesia, or some of the food production. Food Science, too, was another area that [unclear].

AP: How would you reflect on the quality of the research of the experiment station? Were we sort of global in quality, respectable nationally in quality, uneven in quality?

SB: I would say that in response to a land-grant philosophy in which we had an interest in the stakeholders of that enterprise, which is the Minnesota agricultural experiment stations, we did an admirable job. In other words, we were moving that Corn Belt further north, developing the species that would thrive, say, eighty to a hundred miles further north than normally, developing the grasses and forage crops up around Roseau and things of that nature, even going to some extremes in terms of developing apples that would grow in the climate around Le Center and over in the Winona, Houston County area. It precluded us from doing some of the more esoteric things, which contribute to a research operation. On the other hand, given the resources of the University of Minnesota—this is one of its strengths—being so broadly based, we could reach into and go down in depth and do the research that was required. In other words, when you're dealing with cellular biology—agriculture is

a biological science—or nuclear biology, when you get down at that level, it really doesn't matter whether you're working on human, or it matters less, or animal tissue, the problems and the issues you encounter are likely to be very much the same. So our scientists would communicate with the people in the Med School and the biochemistry that was carried on in the departments and reach some of the answers to questions that were confronting all scientists working at that level. On the other hand, we did have the structure. We did have the manpower to service the needs of the farmer just as today. That's one of the strengths of the University of Minnesota. You had the basic research there as well as the applied research, probably a little more applied than, say, Cornell. The Cornell agricultural experiment station would be, perhaps, a bit more basic than ours. On the other hand, no other ag experiment station, no other ag setup in the land-grant system has produced a Norman Borlaug.

AP: I get the impression that Borlaug was very closely tied to Stakman and Stakman's research and was a sort of extension of it. Why did the award go to Borlaug and not to Stakman?

SB: That's a good question. Stakman might have been the person who grasped the idea that hey! this man Borlaug, situated where he is at a world-renown research center in [unclear], Mexico, a person who has traveled to the hunger areas of the earth—India, Pakistan, regions of Africa—might have been, perhaps, a little better illustration of the fruition of Stakman's work than Stakman himself. Secondarily, it was very characteristic of Stakman, as we indicated earlier, to support his graduate students. He moved them forward.

AP: Of course, another point that might be relevant would be that the award was for peace, not necessarily for research.

SB: Yes.

AP: So if you were making the award for research solely, if it was a prize for research, you might have given it to Stakman, but if you were doing it for peace—as, in fact, the award was with Stakman pushing for Borlaug—you ended up with a sort of poster child that fit, maybe?

SB: Furthermore, there's always a little internal politics in these things. Furthermore, the Norwegians—this is where the Nobel Peace Prize was given—had recognized Borlaug's work. Norway and Scandinavian countries have a pretty good outreach in terms of helping with assistance to so-called underdeveloped countries. They had spotted Borlaug and they looked upon him as a brother Norwegian and they actively supported his nomination. There's no question about that.

AP: Was Stakman Swedish?

SB: I don't know what Stakman was. He probably was Norwegian.

AP: Do you have any thoughts about the impact of the Home Economics on the campus?

SB: Fairly traditional, in fact, quite traditional, but had areas that might be termed a big deviant in their related art area. They put quite a bit of emphasis over there and were recognized for it, to the

credit of the college. They worked pretty closely with the Food and Science Department on many of their nutritional and food preservation issues. They were quite intent on turning out teachers to support the secondary education efforts in the state. Anyone who came out of there was well-trained.

AP: We're doing, probably, a little piece on the [Harriet and Vetta] Goldstein sisters, who would have left by the time you came. Our justification is the impact nationally of their book [*Art in Everyday Life*] and sort of the lingering impact on the culture of the college. Does that seem like a reasonable judgment call?

SB: I think that is a very reasonable judgment call. Yes. They were one of the first ones, I think, to look at the name change and that type of thing. For a time, I think Keith McFarland headed up the college. I thought he did a good job in recruiting staff with a little newer points of few and that type of thing that were encouraged in Home Economics, at that time. Human Ecology, I guess, is what we call it today.

AP: Could I ask you to reflect briefly on the 1960s and 1970s on the St. Paul campus?

SB: I can recall one time in the latter part of the 1960s when one of the counselors from the Student Union came over and said that the student body [unclear]. I don't know if it was organized by the St. Paul campus students or the College of Agriculture. So we set it up for—this was Monday—the following Wednesday and we were to meet in their office. That was just downstairs in Coffey Hall and I walked into the room and there was nothing in there except mattresses. So we sat on the floor and held our conference. That was part of the 1960s.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

SB: They were venting their frustrations to the dean of the institute.

AP: Will you say that again because I had to change the tape as you were saying that? The students were frustrated about what?

SB: They were venting their frustrations to the dean of the Institute of Agriculture.

AP: Who was, of course, yourself?

SB: Yes.

AP: What were they frustrated about?

SB: The fact that the Student Union Council, administration, the college, and so forth, had not adequately supported the student Rodeo Club. This was something relatively new at Minnesota. I can tell you it wasn't new out here, but it was relatively new at Minnesota.

AP: This was an issue even though the room is bare with mattresses, they're there before you saying, "Our issue is: you have not supported the Rodeo Club?"

SB: That's right.

AP: That's somewhat of a different...

SB: Before I had come in, they had cleared out all the furniture, so we sat on the floor to discuss this.

AP: I bet Malcolm Moos must have been rather envious?

SB: Right. [laughter] I'll tell you one on Malcolm Moos.

AP: Sure.

SB: This is at the time that the students were occupying his office. One morning, Vi Chandler, who was the administrative secretary for our administration, came in and said, "Dean Berg, there are six students in the College of Forestry who want to meet with you." I said, "Sure, we've got time. Have them come in." So they came in and sat down. One of the spokesmen turned to me and he said, "Dean, we understand there's a little trouble on the other campus. We're here to tell you that if you need any help, just let us know and we'll go right over there and clean them out. This is a forestry [unclear]." [laughter] They were set to go. I said, "I think we'll handle it in a little different matter; but I'm sure the president will appreciate knowing that he has this support." They would have done it. That's another facet of that period as far as the students were concerned.

AP: I have a question about Forester's Day. In the 1950s, there was such a thing as Forester's Day. Was it still there when you were the dean?

SB: Initially, I think. It might have faded out of the picture.

AP: I'm trying to figure out what time of year it was. I've read about it, but I couldn't decide whether it was winter, fall, or spring. I can check with the college; they'll undoubtedly know.

SB: Yes. I think they shifted some of those activities up their camp, the camp at Cloquet, for years.

AP: Okay. That might have occurred.

Were you pleased with the level of research that began to flow into both your department and the institute? Was there, for example, an impact that flowed to the direction of agriculture after *Sputnik* or were those dollars going someplace else?

SB: After the experience out here, I suppose [unclear] changed a bit. We did have the opportunity to appear before the Agriculture Committee and the Finance Committees at the Minnesota Legislature

and that was very meaningful to us, because then we could lay out what our research program and what our need was based on the reflection of our stakeholders, the farm producers and the farm marketers [unclear]. I don't know [unclear].

AP: That ended up with what was called the state specials, then?

SB: Yes. In the main, given the overall demands across the university, I think we fared fairly well. Sure, sometimes, it's difficult to shift funds. For example, you have an outbreak of disease on the turkey population in the state. We had a lot of pressure on us sometimes and it's a little difficult to shift resources, but I think we were able to lay out our case fairly well. Faculty members' time, except for the Department of Rhetoric or the humanities, was fairly well split between research and their teaching responsibility, as well as outreach. I can say, parenthetically, it's so much different than at Southwest State University, where I have been, because there, so much of the resources had to go toward the teaching program than the research efforts.

AP: One of the things that I think I understand is that there are not the same rating, evaluating, groups for agriculture that there are for physics and things, so to understand the national rating of the university, one requires the kind of conversation we had a few minutes ago, for example, your observation that we were close to Cornell but, perhaps, a little less involved in basic research than they were. In the eighty-seven land-grant colleges, has Minnesota always been in the top quarter, the top ten, the top fifty? Do you have any feel for where our ranking...?

SB: I would say that we're certainly in the top fifteen percent.

AP: That's helpful. Would you say that, in general, we've been in a sort of fairly stable mode, haven't gone wildly up and wildly down?

SB: Absolutely. Absolutely.

AP: One of the questions as a non-agriculturist: if I were to describe the particular strengths of the research productivity at Minnesota, I would talk about the wheat rust. I wouldn't know what else to say. Are there five or six themes for which we have been known, say, from the 1950s on?

SB: I would say the research that's been done in poultry disease research, particularly turkeys—Dr. [Ben] Pomeran—certainly has been outstanding work and the work that Fred Koller did in cooperatives. I think there is now an endowed chair in cooperatives at the University of Minnesota named in his honor.

AP: Oh.

SB: He did a lot of very helpful work in the cooperative movement. Of course, at one time, we had a huge number of cooperatives within the state. Some of the work done in the development of grasses and forage crops in the northern part, particularly in the production of quality seeds, is another area. Agronomy was really heading that up. Then some of the, what we call, weed management is another

area that Minnesota has put a lot of resources into and in the area of artificial insemination of livestock species, particularly dairy cattle.

AP: That's G-r-a-h-a-m?

SB: Yes. That was outstanding. He was in the Dairy Science Department. That was, later, merged with the Animal Science Department. His work went around the world. Japanese were here. I mentioned pushing the Corn Belt north, the work of Emmet Pinnell, who has passed away. Emmet Pinnell was very instrumental in some of that work.

AP: This is very helpful. One of the things I do in these interviews is ask people: is there anything that I really should have asked you but I simply did not?

SB: [pause] We touched on it. Hindsight doesn't seem to raise many waves or have raised many waves, but the closing of the Schools of Agriculture was rather a traumatic experience. They were located throughout the state, in Crookston, Morris, St. Paul, Grand Rapids, and Waseca. The trauma was alleviated somewhat by the fact that other institutions took their place, such as the branch at Morris, the two-year college at Waseca and the one at Crookston was a four-year.

AP: Then Waseca became the college.

SB: And then it became a minimum penal institution.

AP: Right. Of course, speaking of traumas, closing Waseca was a big trauma, as you can imagine.

SB: During my time, also, the closing the experiment station in Duluth was rather traumatic, because we ran up against Willard Munger, who just passed away the other day. We hated to see him go, but he didn't really know agriculture [unclear].

One other aspect of development in the Institute of Agriculture was the [unclear] Landscape Arboretum.

AP: There is a truck going by. What I think I heard you say was that we should not forget the development of the Landscape Arboretum?

SB: Right.

AP: One of the things that people wax on about is how we either did or did not get right our biological sciences programs and offerings. We created a College of Biological Sciences in 1960, I think. Some people look back and say, "We never quite got it right." We are now working, yet again, trying to get this positioned appropriately. Do you have any thoughts?

SB: I don't know what the status of that is right now. I was back for this [unclear] Summit Conference.

AP: Yes, indeed.

SB: I visited then with Dick Caldecott and he did indicate that they were reexamining this whole concept. I'm not aware of what's underway. I don't know whether they're looking to dismantle the college or not. It was a highly controversial issue and I don't think there is a right solution to the thing. You can operate under different systems [unclear] never to establish an almost purely basic science operation and then it, in turn, would relate to the more applied areas, such as agriculture, forestry and medicine. That wasn't accepted by the Medical School. I think the Institute of Agriculture attempted to live with it. It requires a high degree of coordination. From a teaching standpoint, it, perhaps, is a pretty good concept. From a research standpoint, I think you could call it into question. Let me illustrate. We were having a problem with a particular type of rust on wheat in the state and the Rockefeller Foundation came out and said, "Look, this is an interdisciplinary thing. It's going to take people from a number of areas and a number of levels here to work on this. Would you be interested in setting up a separate laboratory where you could pull people from various departments and house them in this structure till we get this thing solved?" Pointing out the importance of constant communication [unclear] between people working on a problem when there are many different disciplines involved. We never came to the point where we got that online. It was a clear illustration of how some research managers looked upon how research should be conducted, getting people from the different disciplines in a location, where on the lunch break and the coffee break, they are talking to one another trying to get at the issue. Establishing a separate college of basic biological science just doesn't foster that type of interrelationship that's probably required when you want to undertake the investigation of serious problems. That's not to say it's wrong. From a teaching standpoint, it might have been just the right thing.

AP: This has been a wonderfully helpful interview. I'm just very grateful to you for spending time. People, when we were working on this project, kept saying, "Be sure to talk to Dr. Berg." So I'm very glad that you took time for me.

I have two housekeeping questions. I would like to get your address and I will need to send you a permission form so that when you sign it and return it, we can get this tape transcribed.

SB: I should probably interject that I should look at that tape just to confirm it is right.

AP: That's perfectly fine. Absolutely.

SB: So the Rhetoric Department won't complain.

My home address is 808 Christine, C-h-r-i-s-t-i-n-e, Avenue, Suite 301, Brookings, South Dakota, 57006-3985. Telephone: (605) 697-5946. The office where I'm speaking is Wenona, W-e-n-o-n-a, Hall-109, South Dakota State University, Brookings, South Dakota, 57007-0095. Telephone: (605) 688-5809. If you want to e-mail, it's bergs@mg.sdstate.edu.

AP: This has been very helpful. I very much appreciate your time. It will take about two and a half weeks to three weeks to get the transcript. As soon as it comes, we will get a copy sent to you.

SB: Okay. I've enjoyed it. If you have any questions, just give me a call.

AP: Thank you very much. Take care.

SB: Maybe we can meet sometime.

AP: Good, I'd love it.

SB: Are you on Minneapolis or St. Paul campus?

AP: I'm in the Minneapolis campus. I'm associate dean of University College, which is Continuing Education and Extension merged with the historic Undergraduate University College.

SB: You're with the general college?

AP: No, it's continuing education, the Harold Miller unit, the Julius Nolte unit.

SB: And Thompson?

AP: Tommy Thompson, right.

SB: Where are you housed now?

AP: We're in Westbrook Hall, which is right immediately west of Northrop.

SB: Very good.

AP: Thank you very kindly.

SB: Bye.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by: Beverly A. Hermes

Hermes Transcribing and Research Service
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124
(612) 953-0730
bhermes1@al.com