George Robb

**Interview with George Robb**

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

**Interviewed on August 22, 1995**
**University of Minnesota Campus**

George Robb - GR
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: This is Clarke Chambers and this morning, I'm doing an interview with George Robb, who has been in Morrill Hall in various capacities since the late 1960s. It is Tuesday, August 22, 1995, another hot summer day. The interview is being conducted in his office in Morrill Hall.

George, say something autobiographical about your early education and if you had any mentors in high school or before and who really urged you to go on. Say something about your family and, then, we'll come down to the university pretty fast. I find that listeners like to know where someone is coming from.

GR: I started out as a high school student being interested in going to medical school . . . came here. I did, in fact, have a mentor who was very important to me. His name was Chuck Caruson. He was a teacher at Hopkins High School.

CAC: How do you spell Caruson?

GR: C-A-R-U-S-O-N. Chuck was the debate coach at Hopkins High School and he got me involved in that early on as a high school sophomore and I spent the next three years on his debate team, which was almost semi-professional by today's standards. In those days, a lot of schools had good debate programs.

CAC: This would have been the late 1950, early 1960s?

GR: The late 1950s. I think, at that time, the high school I attended spent probably four or five times per year more than the University of Minnesota on the debate team.

CAC: [laughter]

GR: Chuck got me interested in English and speech as an area. He always thought I should pursue the medical school thing; but, by about two quarters of my university freshman year, I figured out this was not going to be for me. I went and talked to him and he said, "I was wondering when you would get around to this. Go talk to Stan Kegler and Don Smith in the Speech Department." I had the great good fortune of having Don Smith as my first undergraduate adviser at the university.

CAC: In those days, full professors did have advisees.

GR: That's for sure.

CAC: Do you know how many people have complimented Don Smith about that relationship? I've got all kinds of them. That's interesting.

GR: In that department, which was where I spent most of my time, I had the good fortune of working with Don, and Bill Howell, Bob Scott, and George Shapiro . . .

CAC: Oh, boy.

GR: . . . Ernie Bormann, so I had a lot of exposure to major figures in their field and then went into the education program in Speech and English Education.

CAC: In the College of Education?

GR: Right.

CAC: When they were still training teachers?

GR: Lots of them. I had my first student teaching experience in University High School, which is a whole other book, where all the faculty kids whose parents you knew were playing dirty tricks on student teachers. It was quite a place. I found that high school and that experience to be one of the best grad student, faculty connections I've ever dealt with.

CAC: Say something more about then. Why?

GR: In that school, each of the department heads was a full professor. We had Stan Kegler who followed Dora V. Smith—she had been his mentor—and Edith West in Social Science . . .

CAC: Oh, my.

GR: . . . Emma Birkmeier in Languages, Harry Beck in Science, and Donovan Johnson in Mathematics. It was a marvelous group of full professors who were very, very active in secondary and elementary education. They were much plugged into the schools. I found that a marvelous place and as a soon as I graduated . . .

CAC: They were prepared to mentor you, too, as well as the students?

GR: Yes, right. I had thought I would be going out to be a high school teacher. In one of the great interviews of all time, Stan called me into his office one day and said, "I have some questions." I said, "Yes?" "Do you drink Jack Daniels?" I said, "Yes, when I can afford it." [laughter] He said, "Do you vote Democratic?"

CAC: [laughter]

GR: I said, "It's none of your business but I do." He said, "Do you want a job?" That was it. That was the entire search process.

CAC: But, he knew you for four or five years by then?

GR: Right. That was an assignment where it was a full time instructorship . . . had a lot of teaching duties. I think we all taught at least four classes per quarter. We each had somewhere around a dozen or more student teachers to supervise every quarter. It was rather a full-time job and, yet, we were expected to be graduate students.

CAC: You were working for what degree at that time?

GR: A master's in English education. We were expected to maintain reasonable progress toward degrees and I, more or less, managed that. Then, after three years, Stan went over to be associate dean in the college and asked me to work as his assistant. As soon as I got into the administration, I began to get more and more out of graduate work and I never did recover from that.

CAC: Sure.

GR: Part of the reason, I suppose, was I was doing things already that I could have wanted to do five or six or seven years out. The whole motivation for graduate work got a little less and a little less as the years went on.

CAC: Did you get closure on the M.A. though?

GR: No, I never finished it. I had about three years in the dean's office in Education. We had a major federal grant that, in those days, seemed like more money than had ever been given to anyone. I think we had $250,000 for about a three-year period.

CAC: Now, this is the mid 1960s?

GR: Yes.

CAC: The grant was from the Office of Education?

GR: Right. It was the Regional Educational Laboratories.

CAC: In current dollars, that would be close to $1 million.

GR: Right. We had five states that we were supposed to coordinate. We ended up using a lot of that money to give small grants to colleges, universities, and high school districts in the Upper Midwest Region, which was great fun. I got to know a lot of people in the Upper Midwest that way. When you have money, they will come. [laughter] After awhile, Stan was hired over here to work for Stan Wenberg.

CAC: Before we get into that, I want a few more words about this grant. Did it accomplish what it set out to do and was it worth accomplishing?

GR: I think there are still a few regional laboratories in existence but I have not followed that for years. For awhile, it was going to be a national program. Every region of the country was covered.

CAC: By laboratory, what did they mean?

GR: That was one of their problems. They were supposed to be bringing the research from universities to bear on regional educational problems.

CAC: And high school teacher training?

GR: Teacher training, administrator training, school reform, curricular reform . . . we touched on just about every conceivable topic of the K[indergarten]-12 and university relationships. I think it tried to do, probably, too much in many of the regions. It brought a lot of people together who had never talked, which I think was one of the great advantages.

CAC: That's a good idea.

GR: We actually had the universities in the region talking to the K-12 sector in ways that had just never happened before and working together on some common problems. I thought it was great fun. It was a fascinating experience; but, it more or less fell out of fashion with the Office of Education. They moved on to other priorities.

CAC: So, it begins to fade even . . . ?

GR: It was allowed to fade, yes.

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

GR: Sure.

CAC: I find that some professions are very good at liaison of high level research and its implementation at practice levels whether it's health sciences or law or teaching. What I hear you describing is such an enterprise . . . to try to take university research and make it function and make it understandable with people who were doing the hands-on teaching and administration in the school districts. Is that a fair . . . ?

GR: I think it's fair. Perhaps, one of the problems with that whole effort was that it centered so much on colleges of education and less so on universities as institutions. It was limited, by and large, to colleges of education in the region.

CAC: Including then the state teacher's colleges?

GR: Right.

CAC: They were part of the network?

GR: Right. They were part of it.

CAC: So, Mankato, Moorhead, and St. Cloud?

GR: Right. I think we had some good projects out there. The projects themselves probably had very little lifetime. The relationships with faculty from different institutions with administrators from different institutions . . . I think those were probably more important. I think they probably did set in motion some very long term relationships that made a difference, but I couldn't prove that now.

CAC: There was some resentment on the part of the state teacher's colleges of the leadership of the university or not?

GR: I don't think so. I think probably heavily because we had the money to give out for projects.

CAC: That can overcome resistance all right.

GR: [laughter] That can overcome the initial resistance. I think we did a fairly nice job of maintaining good relationships with those institutions.

CAC: That's a real diplomatic problem however.

GR: Yes, it was. I think we got along well.

CAC: It was Stan Kegler who was kind of honching this thing?

GR: Right, right. When he went back to work in Central Administration, the laboratory hired a man who was, prior to that time, school superintendent at Racine, Wisconsin. His name was John Prasch, P-R-A-S-C-H. He was head of the lab then for about a year or a year and a half and then went on to become school superintendent down in Lincoln, Nebraska. During that time, for example, we spent a lot of time talking about distance education.

CAC: Ah!

GR: We had some projects that involved the Nebraska Education group . . . the University of Mid America or some such thing. It was one of the early versions of reorganizing all of education to do by television—that didn't work. Now, we may be back in more of that with the new telecommunications.

CAC: Yes.

GR: I had a chance to deal with it at the fairly early stage. Then, I came over here.

CAC: Kegler went from associate dean in Education over to become an apprentice to Stan Wenberg?

GR: Right.

CAC: With the thought that Stan was nearing retirement at that time? What that's relationship?

GR: I don't think he was planning to retire at that time, but he needed the help. Stan was an assistant v.p. [vice-president] under him. I don't remember the exact timing of when some of Stan's changes . . . this was back in the [President Malcolm "Mac"] Moos Administration.

CAC: They are both Stans so we have to make a distinction be one and the other.

GR: Kegler, for awhile, had a role not unlike Nils [Hasselmo] had as vice-president for Administration and Planning. For awhile Stan had the Police Department, and the Athletic Department, and a few other [unclear] . . .

CAC: This is Stan Kegler.

GR: Stan Kegler . . . that reported to him. I don't remember the years on how that all sorted out.

CAC: This is late 1960s, early 1970s?

GR: Right. During that period of time, the lobbying was primarily handled by Wenberg, assisted by Kegler. Then, I worked for the two of them doing whatever. Much of my work was putting materials together, writing . . . not so much the direct lobbying, person-to-person conversations with legislators except incidentally. I was in the back seat singing.

CAC: I hadn't realized that there was that partnership. The two Stans overlapped for awhile then in the legislative lobbying?

GR: Yes, for, I would guess, four or five years,

CAC: That long? This would have been into and through the Moos Administration?

GR: Right, through the Moos Administration and then into the [President C. Peter] Magrath Administration.

CAC: At some time Wenberg drops out. I guess that's early Magrath then?

GR: Right, somewhere in the early 1970s . . . 1974, 1975, perhaps.

CAC: You're doing staff work for this five or six years then, providing documentation, finding answers to questions that they have to have to tell to legislators and so forth?

GR: Right.

CAC: I talked with [Charles] Chuck Backstrom [Political Science], for example, and he kind of described some of these things. You had a good opportunity, however then, to observe two styles of lobbying?

GR: Oh, yes.

CAC: I don't think I've talked to anyone who knew Stan Wenberg other than secondhand. So the stories become heroic and mythic.

GR: [laughter] They do.

CAC: Yes. You had a chance firsthand. Can you say something about Stan Wenberg and Stan Kegler as they worked on this function?

GR: Yes, I'd love to. First of all, I would say, Stan Wenberg was easily one of the most intelligent people I've worked with. He had an extraordinary mind. Many people were not all that aware of it. They saw him as the archetypal lobbyist with the cocktail in one hand and the big cigar in the other, which, of course, he did have from time to time. He was an educational philosopher without the license. I remember very well a fishing expedition that we went on with faculty members from the College of Education where, at about three o'clock in the morning, we went over to Stan Wenberg's cabin, and he was propped up in a chair with a big cigar and the cocktail, and he was lecturing about six or seven younger assistant professors of education about educational philosophy. These guys came out of there saying, "That man knows more about John Dewey and educational philosophy than anybody around. Why isn't he writing?" He was really quite an intelligent person.

CAC: He was out of an education college himself then?

GR: Yes, he came out of the Army and got a job working in the university doing advising and that sort of thing with veterans coming in under the GI Bill. I think he did some graduate work. I don't remember whether he ever finished a degree.

CAC: Where do you suppose he picked up this philosophical bent?

GR: Personal reading.

CAC: Self-educated?

GR: Right, very largely.

CAC: Then, he must have talked to lots of folks?

GR: Yes. He was a student of international education. He was absolutely fascinated with the Russian educational system at the time, as the Russians were training technical people. That view of technical education was very much behind the Crookston and Waseca campuses . . .

CAC: Heavens.

GR: . . . and his work getting them started. He saw the Russian institutes as a model for our two-year program.

CAC: Do you think he had travelled in Russia or he just knew it long distance by reading?

GR: He had done a little travel, a lot of reading, and a lot of talking to people who had been going over there.

CAC: Heavens sakes.

GR: He had an enormous grasp of what this university was all about. I always found it frustrating that people only saw him as this archetypal lobbyist and did not appreciate the grasp that he had of the whole university. He was quite a remarkable man. He had the advantage, in those days, of working with relatively few legislative leaders. Most of the major decisions were probably made by fewer than a dozen legislators, key committee chairs, and that sort of thing.

CAC: Was the legislature still in the hands, for the most part, of the rural Republicans?

GR: Right, the conservatives in those days.

CAC: Yes.

GR: He was very close to all of the leaders that he needed to be close to. That, however, also does not capture the fact that he spent a lot of time out around the state visiting lots of legislators when they were first elected, getting to know them . . .

CAC: I see.

GR: . . . stopping at the farm, having coffee, and stopping in the small towns. He spent a lot of time there. He knew many, many more legislators than most people realized. He concentrated on that dozen leadership positions. He spent just lots and lots of time with those folks. In those days, they felt perfectly comfortable relying on him for their dinners and, in fact, there were some legislators who relied on him for a lot of their dinners and for good reason. They weren't wealthy people. Today, this would be a great scandal that you would allow somebody to buy your dinner twice or three times a week. He did that with great regularity and, in part, because some of these folks literally couldn't afford it. He built some very, very close personal relationships with those folks. He had enormous credibility with them. His word was good. If they said, "What will the university do in this particular case," and he said, "We'll do that," they took it as gospel truth.

CAC: That was the point man rather than whoever happened to president?

GR: Right, right.

CAC: He was a legislative representative for [President Meredith] Met Wilson and for Mac Moos?

GR: Right, and for awhile for Peter Magrath.

CAC: Okay. Did you see through him and working with him at the grass roots level, what his relationships were with the presidents? After all, they have a formal responsibility for presenting budget and carrying the point of view of the university.

GR: Stan's job, as he built it . . . He did create the job. Basically before Stan, the university's lobbying was done by Ray Amberg, who was the director of the University Hospital.

CAC: And Bill Middlebrook?

GR: Bill Middlebrook was frequently over there. Wenberg was the first lobbyist. His office, by the time he got it set up the way he wanted it, had virtually all of the university's public and donor relations programs under it. He had University Relations, Alumni Relations . . .

CAC: Ahhh!

GR: . . . the Development Office, Intercollegiate Athletics. Part of our office did accreditation for the community colleges in Minnesota and for the independent high schools. We worked with North Central [Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools] on some of them as a joint accreditation but others were strictly accredited by the university.

CAC: He had to handle all of that?

GR: Yes. If you define institutional relations broadly, he clearly had that. It included relationships with the Higher Education Coordinating Board as it is now called.

CAC: That was established roughly when?

GR: It started in the late 1960s as the Liaison and Facilities Commission.

CAC: By that name?

GR: Right. Then, in the early 1970s, it became the Higher Education Coordinating Council or Commission, I forget which . . . Commission, I guess. Then, it changed to a board sometime later.

CAC: So, his office had primary responsibility for . . . ?

GR: He maintained most of the basic working liaison with that organization.

CAC: How large a staff was he working with for all these different constituencies?

GR: Not very large. He had about three or four total people working on the accreditation part. Anything that involved the Athletic Department, he did himself. He had Kegler and me for state relations and then, of course, Peg Wickerman, his secretary and assistant. Peg could be the source of great stories on who showed up at two o'clock in the morning in her apartment with Stan wanting a steak dinner to be fixed. He'd do that once in awhile, too. I don't think you'd

get away with that nowadays with a secretary. [laughter] But, Stan would call her up, "Peg, get up and fix a steak. I'm bringing Delbert Anderson over for a lunch."

CAC: [laughter]

GR: It was not a very large office. Each of the units had their own directors. Bill Nunn was the director of "U" Relations. Ed Hazlett was the Alumni director.

CAC: Of course.

GR: I can't remember who was doing the fund raising at that time.

CAC: It wouldn't be [Robert?] Odegard?

GR: That was before Odegard and then Odegard came along a little bit later.

CAC: All right. I knew Stan Wenberg at a distance and with a certain amusement—you can understand as a young faculty person—but it was an affectionate amusement because here he was in Morrill Hall, and he didn't have any idea who I was, and he always knew who I was. I'd see him at the Campus Club, and he'd put that big arm around me, and he'd ask not only, "How are things going?" but he'd ask a specific question. He knew what department I was in and he knew I was in a department with a lot of very old fellows. It was a very elderly department except for myself and David Noble. I thought, boy! there's a natural politician if he knows who I am. That's something and it was a compliment.

GR: Yes.

CAC: But, being a faculty member, I was a little skeptical of it, too. [laughter]

GR: He was also a student of history. He like history as a discipline.

CAC: I see.

GR: You were in the right place for him. His relationship with the other Central officers . . . he was a major part of Central Administration. You had a vice-president for Academic Affairs and a vice-president for Finance, or whatever we called it in those days. Then, you had Stan Wenberg. He was very much a major player in the decision making that went on.

CAC: The substance of policy as well as its execution?

GR: Right, right, very much so. He was a senior officer of the university. He played a real leadership role. Most of what was going on in those days was the expansion. We were starting the coordinate campuses during that period of time. We were developing the West Bank campus

and he was very much involved in the West Bank development. He was probably *the* leader as far as pushing the development of the West Bank. I'm not sure if he was always proud of that or not. It sort of worked and it sort of didn't work in his view. The university was very much in an expansionary kind of period during that time. He was very much involved in orchestrating it. A lot of that was straight politics as far as he was concerned.

CAC: It had to have legislative appropriations to build all those buildings on the West Bank.

GR: Oh, yes.

CAC: And bango! bango! there were lots of them.

GR: Yes, there was a lot of it. During that time, because of the expansion of enrollment, it was relatively easy to get that kind of money. The legislature was used to the idea of building campuses. Stan very much wanted the coordinate campus system developed and part of it was for bare political purposes. He felt we needed more places out there that had some kind of stake in the university. He was also very much concerned that if we were going to develop something in Crookston, say, that it had a sound, quality program. He was not for just starting anything for the sake of having a few votes in northwestern Minnesota. It had to be a quality operation. But, he recognized that the university needed that kind of support around the state. That weighed very heavily on all of his actions in getting these places started.

CAC: Morris is started when he's around?

GR: Yes . . . Morris, Crookston, Waseca. We already had Duluth from 1947. He was very much involved in building the Duluth campus, working with Ray Darland, who was the provost up there at that time. That was a big part of his motive. I think it's an important one. It's important to the history of the place.

CAC: Good.

GR: We have lots of people on this campus who would like to think that one campus of a major research university would have enough clout to carry the day politically and Stan argued then, and I think I can still argue, that you need more installations out around the state to keep that kind of support. He was quite deliberate about where these schools got set up and developing the kind of support they needed to get built.

CAC: The speaker of the House in those days was a Republican and from Waseca.

GR: Yes, he was very close friends with Rod.

CAC: This is Rod Searle.

GR: Right. He was very close friends with Senator [Donald] Sinclair up in the Seventh District . . .

CAC: Yes.

GR: . . . and Representative [Richard] Fitzsimons from the Seventh District. Out in the Morris area, it was Delbert Anderson who was on our committees and was head of the Building Commission for many years. Stan knew where those votes were. [laughter] There's no question about it.

CAC: Both you and Stan Kegler had the opportunity of learning in that context?

GR: Yes.

CAC: I'm going to ask one more question about Stan Wenberg though and that is, I've known some politicians as well, some successful and some not. The ones that are successful have that sense of who people are and that memory for face, name, and circumstance and I don't know where it comes from.

GR: No, I don't think it's a very easily learned behavior. I think it comes naturally for some people. It surely did for Wenberg. He had enormous credibility with political folks.

CAC: Of both parties?

GR: Both parties . . . to some extent.

CAC: I'm guessing, he's running into some trouble . . . we're going to talk about the shift of majority that comes in the 1970s?

GR: Right.

CAC: Okay.

GR: He taught Kegler and me to pay a lot of attention to the people who were not in power because they would be in time.

CAC: I see.

GR: He could talk that game very well. The fact is, I think, that he spent so long working with the group who was then identified as the conservatives . . .

CAC: Many of them outstate?

GR: Yes. Some may have, in fact, have been Democrats in their voting but they caucused with the conservatives in the legislature. Stan had worked with them for so long that some of the liberals really just couldn't quite deal with him. He ran into trouble when we switched over in, I think, 1971 or 1972 to DFL [Democratic Farmer Labor] control. There were people—Senator Nick Coleman was one of them—who just held long grudges that they had not been paid enough attention to by Stan Wenberg. I think he ran into some real trouble.

CAC: And the Governor Wendy Anderson?

GR: I don't think Wendy probably had a great strong feeling for him.

CAC: He came out of the Senate, after all?

GR: Right. By that time, Stan Kegler had joined the office and Kegler was very much better connected with the Democrats. He had lived in Wendy's legislative district. Wendy hired Duane Scribner as one of his chief assistants and Duane had been an English education type working with Stan and me for years before, so we had some fairly good relationships with Wendy's office. That probably did make a big difference in the transition.

CAC: I see.

GR: We did manage to have some good DFL connections before the takeover.

CAC: Do you think Wenberg knew that Kegler would bring that strength, which would not be his?

GR: Sure. I've never really thought of that, but he would have thought that, yes. He knew who Stan was. I don't think Kegler had been all that political. He was fairly close to Wendy; but, as far as other kinds of political connections, I don't think Stan had that many. If he did, I wasn't aware of them. I worked with him for twenty-five years; I think I would have known. That whole transition was very much aided by the fact that Kegler had, at least, some connections and could talk to the folks that still had a grudge about Wenberg.

CAC: I'm glad we've had this conversation because it flies in the face of some widespread perceptions that Stan Wenberg was the *hail fellow well met* and very effective but very limited. That's a nice balance.

GR: It's simply not true but it's one of those where you had to have been there watching it happen and listening to it.

CAC: Yes, sure.

GR: I think if you talk with some of the legislators of that period, Rod Searle for one . . . Rod had a fine appreciation for what Stan Wenberg knew and didn't know about education. Rod was the beneficiary of a whole lot of Wenberg talk over those years. I have every confidence that he'd back up my version of the real Stan Wenberg.

CAC: I have him on my list to interview, among others.

GR: I think it's one of the real tragedies of Stan Wenberg's career that more people on the faculty here didn't realize just how intelligent and thoughtful an educator he was.

CAC: George, you must know what an enormous chasm there is between, in any administration, the practicing faculty, research and teaching, and Morrill Hall.

GR: Yes.

CAC: I knew it when I was here for forty-two years, but I have a bigger appreciation from talking with people that it's an enormous chasm.

GR: Yes, that's very true.

CAC: Hard to overcome. The president may come and preside over the academic senate and so forth but, I'll tell you, it's hard to maintain.

GR: Yes. During the time I've worked with the legislature, we began getting legislative . . . The faculty lobbyist position started during that time. We began that whole process. Those faculty members who had been hired on released time to do that worked directly with our office. I think it was a real eyeopener for almost any of them to get over in St. Paul and see what went on in hearings, and discussions, and the like.

CAC: This came down two lines later. The Consultative Committee had a representative off and on, right?

GR: Yes.

CAC: The other would be whatever that faculty association was?

GR: Right, the University of Minnesota Faculty Association. That came later.

CAC: That came when Stan Kegler and you were primarily responsible?

GR: Right.

CAC: We may move toward that. Have we said enough about Wenberg's era and the things he touched?

GR: Yes, I think so.

CAC: I think it's important . . .

GR: The key on the Wenberg era was that it was expansion and growth. We had enormous enrollment growth, which was always a strong argument for money. Beyond the regular appropriation, we had lots of opportunities for state support of other kinds of activities, the so-called special appropriations. Those really grew up during the Wenberg years.

CAC: I see.

GR: Stan worked very closely with some other legislative committees that were involved in such things as natural resources . . . we call it now the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources . . . the group that's there now. It had a couple of earlier names. It was money from cigarette taxes and I think some of the mining taxes that was available for natural resource related research work or, essentially, Extension work. We had a fairly involved process in our office for any department that wanted those special monies . . . had to write separate proposals for it. We coordinated that whole effort. We would go through twenty or thirty projects every biennium. That organization is still going. Some of those projects still exist. But, it was a time when there was a lot more money or there appeared to be a lot more money to be had. You could have a lot of different lobbying activities for special projects beyond the regular university appropriation.

CAC: I think the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs comes in as a special and still is, apparently.

GR: Yes, right.

CAC: Before we leave Wenberg, I want to turn very briefly to President Moos, because you come over just about the time that he is in the presidency, and see if you have anything to say about his coordination of legislative lobbying or his role within Morrill Hall.

GR: Ahhh. [sigh] I think it's interesting. [laughter] I found that Moos was not particularly well liked in the legislature, however, he was respected. There was something kind of *special* about him to legislators. They would complain bitterly about one thing or another that the president was doing and, yet, if he were the witness for a hearing, they'd all be there and would treat him with great deference. He did have a presence that . . .

CAC: He looked the part.

GR: Yes, he looked the part and when he was on, speaking, he really sounded the part. There were times when he wasn't so good and Wenberg picked up those pieces.

CAC: What occasions would those be?

GR: There were times when Mac would show up at an evening . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

CAC: I've had others report that Mac Moos would frequently turn to others for information. He wasn't as well informed as Met Wilson had been, for example. Is that an appropriate guess?

GR: Yes. Mac had a tendency to fix certain concepts in mind and may then have applied them where they shouldn't have been applied or use these in answers when the question wasn't quite that question. He'd come back with an answer and you could tell where he was coming from but it was the wrong . . .

CAC: You could?

GR: Yes. Mac was very good when he could prepare a speech. He cared deeply about the language.

CAC: Ah.

GR: In fact, he could write some rather good speeches. Every once in awhile he'd get carried away with his metaphors and would have utterances such as "We're standing at the vestibule at the launching pad." I always wondered where that was. "Graduates doing handsprings down the mainstream of life . . . " Whoa! [laughter]

CAC: Did you help him at all with any of his . . . ?

GR: No. No. He was his own speech writer.

CAC: I think he liked that part of the job.

GR: Oh, yes, very much so.

CAC: The formal part.

GR: He liked the ceremonial part of it. He relied very, very heavily on Don Smith really as an executive vice-president.

CAC: To keep the shop, so to speak.

GR: We were might fortunate to have him.

CAC: Yes.

GR: Don Smith is just one of the great figures, as far as I'm concerned, in this university's history. He really was of superb intelligence. I liked him a great deal.

CAC: That was an office created . . . vice-president for Administration or whatever the title was.

GR: Yes.

CAC: How long was he in that?

GR: I'm not sure.

CAC: Does he come into Magrath?

GR: I don't remember.

CAC: Someone can check that.

GR: It's like three or four years that he was in Central Administration.

CAC: That was all . . . before he went to Wisconsin?

GR: Yes.

CAC: So many people have spoken of Don Smith in precisely those terms. I had assumed it was a longer tenure.

GR: Don Smith came up with a variation of what the legislature much later on called average cost funding as a way of determining our appropriation based on the number of students at various levels of training and high over low cost programs. Don's version of it was a much more involved calculation than I think the legislature eventually bought into, but it was basically his concept.

CAC: But, it was student related?

GR: Yes.

CAC: That's something we got away from with [President Kenneth] Keller—or tried to..

GR: Yes. The problem that we got into with Don Smith and that system was that once you calculated the number of students in each of the cells—I believe there were six different cells of two lower division, and two upper division, and one graduate, and one profession or something like that—you ended up with what he called "entitlement." That was a word that legislators never wanted to hear and Don could not stop using it unfortunately. [laughter] "When you get all of this math done, this is our entitlement." "Oh, yes? We'll decide that." Moos did not get terribly involved in the day-to-day legislative relations work. Wenberg really carried almost all of that.

CAC: You're suggesting that Don Smith carried a lot of that inside?

GR: Yes, he did.

CAC: And Gerry Shepherd as vice-president for Academic Affairs?

GR: Right. That was quite a team. I enjoyed it.

CAC: It led, I would guess, in a primary part to the resignation of Gerry Shepherd and his staff?

GR: Well . . . [sigh]

CAC: At least those were the stated reasons.

GR: I really don't know that much about the politics of that office at the time. Al Link stayed around for quite awhile.

CAC: Yes.

GR: He was a major figure around here. We're sitting in his old office in fact. [laughter] You'd really have to talk with Gerry about that history.

CAC: I have an interview with Gerry from several years ago and I've looked at the manuscript materials that have survived from it. There's a sense that Moos was not carrying his load of administering the university.

GR: Yes. I think that's probably true.

CAC: Finally, you have to have some direction, a constant direction.

GR: If we've had an imperial president, it was Mac way more than Ken Keller. That is the take on Ken Keller, which I think is a miss-take. As far as the sort of ceremonial, imperial presidency, that was Malcolm Moos, very much so. He would show up at, probably, only two or three legislative hearings . . . when he would be involved at all. Once in awhile, he would come and listen but he wouldn't be that much involved. During that time, he was fairly active

with what was the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. The president was a member and the chairman of the Board of Regents was a member. That was under their prior system. So, he played a fairly major role there; but, again, it was, "I can be the head of something and sort of speak ex cathedra. He kind of liked that. I think on the nitty-gritty, he was not that tuned in on a lot of it.

CAC: This may be a digression—it won't last long—were you here with the occupation of Morrill Hall? Were you over here in Morrill Hall?

GR: I think I came over right after that.

CAC: I see. So you have no direct recollections of that?

GR: Stan Kegler was here so I caught a lot of that. He was very much involved with negotiating with the students. I can remember the . . .

CAC: Kegler was?

GR: Yes.

CAC: You would know that secondhand?

GR: Yes.

CAC: Have we advanced in the narrative now to kind of look Stan Kegler as we've looked at Stan Wenberg?

GR: Yes.

CAC: Is that a logical next step?

GR: Sure, sure. I think Stan Kegler took Wenberg's mentoring very, very seriously. He regarded him as the teacher and tried very hard to follow his lead and to avoid some of the mistakes. Kegler, throughout his career, was a good deal more careful to deal with both parties, whoever was in and whoever was out. That was real deliberate. He was just very careful to do that and with good results. He had high credibility in both parties. Again, we tended to work with leadership legislators primarily and with their staff members very, very heavily.

CAC: Interruption . . . I get a sense from other conversations that it is in the mid 1970s and the late 1970s that legislators begin to acquire staff?

GR: Yes.

CAC: In a very substantial number . . . that politics became more professionalized as a career in the 1970s and this made a difference?

GR: Yes.

CAC: I don't know how to weigh that. You can speak to that?

GR: Yes. As far as the basic appropriation process was concerned, that didn't make a lot of difference to us.

CAC: I see.

GR: There had always been finance committee and appropriations committee staff that we had always worked with and they were always terribly important. We spent a lot of time with them. When legislators generally started hiring a lot of staff, the biggest effect on us was more requests for information because they had more time. The legislator would say, "I wonder how this works," and we would get the inquiry—usually, it was sort of amusing—as they were trying to mask what they were really looking for so they would ask for a boxcar load of data when they really had a fairly specific question. We'd spend a lot of time saying, "What do you really want to know? We'll tell you what you want to know. Don't ask us to generate ninety-four pounds of paper for you. It's just not worth your time and ours." We had a lot of that that came with the professionalization of the legislature—and that's fine. It was sort of a pain to deal with, especially in the early years with a lot of new staff who decided that they had *the* question that was going to answer all things for all people. They would come over here and ask us to deliver that boxcar, so it was kind of frustrating; but, by and large, it was a pretty good public policy and people started asking more serious questions about a lot of different topics that the university knew something about. It was good.

CAC: If my chronology is even roughly accurate, it is in the mid 1970s that there comes to be a larger push for the community colleges and the, now, state universities. Is that correct?

GR: Yes.

CAC: How does that play into what we're talking about here? I should it would make it infinitely more complicated to represent the university.

GR: Oh, it certainly was. The pressure to grow was so strong. Growth equalled money. That was how you justified more state money. You had a public policy at the time—they were quite proud of it in the Higher Education Coordinating Commission—that we ought to have a campus within thirty-five miles of everybody and we darned near got it

CAC: Who invented that?

GR: [sigh] I'm not entirely sure. Rod Searle was a player.

CAC: Did the community and state colleges play a role?

GR: Very much so. They wanted to protect, of course, their own . . .

CAC: And the vo-techs [vocational technical schools]?

GR: Yes. Everybody was trying to grow. The state universities only grew by virtue of Southwest and Metro[politan] State; but, during that time, the community colleges were just popping up everywhere with vocational schools popping up across the street in many cases.

CAC: They weren't mushrooms. They had to have people urging them forward.

GR: Yes. It was the thing to do to bring home some state money to your district, to bring it home for a school.

CAC: How did the University of Minnesota handle that mushrooming?

GR: Not as well as we would have liked.

CAC: What kind of arguments do you make? Does the university oppose, or is it skeptical, or is it just quiet about that proliferation of local agencies?

GR: That gets you still back into the Wenberg years. He tried working with the community college board and their chancellor, Phil Helland. He argued that they were overexpanding, that they were creating schools that could not possibly have the faculty critical mass that you needed to offer a decent general education. I think everybody still thought growth would happen and as soon as you built those schools, they'd be able to prosper and grow even more. It was a time when growth was simply the religion.

CAC: What did the university say about that? What position could they possibly have taken?

GR: They certainly could not publicly fight the specifics. In doing so, we would have bought the enmity of all of the legislative powers that were behind those; so, it had to be done with a good deal more care than that. I think, nowadays, we would look back and say, "We should have fought harder. We'd all be better off if we had not started some of those campuses." We're seeing that now in a time when it has all changed. That expand, grow, add campuses thing was a very, very strong political impulse. It was a juggernaut that you got in the way of at some risk. I think both Wenberg and Kegler tried to argue that some of these were really pushing it, that there just was not going to be the kind of mass that you'd need. But, there's a real strong political impulse to "put one of these in my back yard" and now we're paying for it. I don't

know that we could have fought them more effectively at the time. The university always had the problem of seeming to be self-protective, arrogant . . .

CAC: Sure.

GR: . . . and that would have made it much worse.

CAC: The style of lobbying had to change because of a whole set of factors as you get a DFL coming into a normal majority, you get Wendy Anderson as a Democratic governor . . . the first, I think since Floyd Olson?

GR: Yes.

CAC: You get the competition of the state university system, the community colleges, and the vo-techs. Ahhh! that's a lot of very systemic change.

GR: Yes.

CAC: So, you, and Kegler, and Magrath really had to respond to that?

GR: Yes. There was such a strong feeling that education just couldn't end at the twelfth grade and that there had to be post-secondary education for everybody.

CAC: It made the task of lobbying far more complicated?

GR: Oh, sure, sure.

CAC: Did the staff increase correspondingly?

GR: No. No. It goes back to the description that I gave you of Wenberg's shop . . . Kegler's notion of how that office should operate was to be as small as possible.

CAC: I see.

GR: He did not want all those reports.

CAC: But, he sloughed off Intercollegiate Athletics and some other things?

GR: Right.

CAC: So, that list that Stan Wenberg had, Kegler did not?

GR: We got down to the point where Kegler's office had only state lobbying and the Department of University Relations and that was it. We did so little federal lobbying. If there was an office, it was in our shop, but we really were not very active in it. He did not have Alumni. He didn't have the Development Office. We had gotten rid of the whole business with accreditation. We still maintained the relationships with the Higher Education Coordinating Board and the other systems. It was really that, and the legislative lobbying, and general public relations and he liked it that small.

CAC: You had a backup staff of civil servants? I'm trying to get at how large an operation this becomes then.

GR: Most of the time, what we had was Stan Kegler, me, an office manager, and probably two or three secretaries and, perhaps, most of the time we had a grad student research fellow.

CAC: That's a pretty small operation. It was very tight.

GR: Yes, it was very small.

CAC: Now we're really into Magrath. How does it relate to Magrath? How did he relate to your office? What kind of a role did he play as a legislative lobbyist himself?

GR: He was very active. He wanted to be active in legislative work. He spent a fair amount of time with legislators. He did a fair amount of testimony in the early years. Later, in his last three or four years, he didn't do very much. For two or three sessions along in there, Kegler did virtually all of the university testimony.

CAC: Why did Magrath withdraw then from that activism?

GR: I'm really not sure. I can't answer that. Nothing comes to mind that sparks at any particular thing. He was getting more and more involved in the institutional planning end of things and putting a lot of his attention on planning, which we'll segway later into the Keller, and [Richard] Sauer, and Hasselmo years. I suppose if there's a reason, that would be it . . . that he just spent more time on the internal and left the external more to Kegler.

CAC: Did the office you were in have a relationship with internal planning or was that just parallel and you had to be aware of it?

GR: I sat on some of the staff groups that were doing the planning so I suppose I was one of the connections. I think Kegler was very much involved and interested in that kind of thing, too. We were pretty well hooked up as far as the planning. Dave Berg was very much involved and we used Dave very, very heavily as a source of information and he helped with some of the lobbying activities as well. By and large, during the time I was involved directly with the legislature, Kegler did a lot of the work with the members and I did the staff work. When the

staff member from a committee had a question, they would call me and I would get the information for them in a more of a behind the scenes thing and Stan was the one who was out there talking to the senators and representatives most of the time. Stan, as I said, did a lot of the testimony and it grew to the point where he did almost all of it.

CAC: He kept the outstate? Did he do the visiting that Wenberg did or on a lower level?

GR: A lower level, not as much. He wouldn't give up the kind of family time that Stan Wenberg gave up to do that.

CAC: And Stan Wenberg had a large family, as I recall.

GR: Yes.

CAC: That must have put terrible strains on the family life?

GR: Oh, yes, it did. That shouldn't happen to a family. It shouldn't happen to a wife.

CAC: I interviewed Bill Hueg and the same thing happened there—he had a lot of children with his first wife—and that led to real tension because he worked as hard as Wenberg.

GR: Yes.

CAC: He was out there all the time.

GR: Wenberg worked at it eighty hours a week—minimum. He did a lot of travel, a lot of evening stuff and his wife just did the family. It was a very odd situation. He was almost a roomer in his own house. He just did not have very much, in today's terms, quality time with his kids. He didn't have it. He just didn't have it. It was really too bad.

CAC: Kegler knew that and made another commitment with his own career?

GR: Right. He saw that. I saw that. We said, "No way. If it takes going out and doing that kind of thing all the time, somebody else is going to have to do it."

CAC: Do you think that was a loss?

GR: For the institution?

CAC: Yes.

GR: Yes, I think so. The problem is that there's only so much time and if anyone has a family, you simply can't spend the kind of time out there that Stan did.

CAC: I see lots of family here on your bulletin board.

GR: Yes, right. I would not have been interested in playing that kind of role and I don't think Stan Kegler was.

CAC: I'm going to insert another kind of question here and you can dismiss it, perhaps. One of the persisting legends—it may be a legend with very real foundation, I have difficulty judging it—is that in legislative lobbying, it's important to have winning teams, particularly in football and basketball. Now, what is your perception of that, sir?

GR: It absolutely has nothing to do with it.

CAC: [laughter]

GR: We lobbied very successfully during some of the worst football seasons on record. [laughter] To be sure, there are politicians, just like everyone else, who are more interested in the sports page than 1B in the paper; but, very, very rarely did I see athletics having any real role in support of the university. Yes, if you have a Rose Bowl team, you have the team being talked about more and the university is sort of talked about more out there, but I've never seen that translate into more money or less money in the state legislature. I've never seen an example. Lots of legislators used to like to come to football games and basketball games. They liked the free tickets and all of that. I don't see that it ever made any real difference in their votes.

CAC: What did make a difference in their votes?

GR: What they perceive as having value to their own district. That's probably true for most legislators. I think that I had the real privilege of doing this business with some people . . . it wasn't their own district . . . they believed in higher education and they believed in a university. They were willing to take whatever leadership risks that means. We really did have some of those very powerful legislators from Greater Minnesota who . . . maybe something came back to their district, but basically their interests were build the education system. We had a lot of those. I think that's why Minnesota's higher education system is as strong as it is. With some of them, this was personal leadership. It was not political gain at all.

CAC: Would some names come to mind particularly for those who were more statesman like in that regard?

GR: Sure. Rod Searle is clearly one of them . . . Senator Sinclair, Representative Fitzsimons, John Olson from down in Worthington who is a hog farmer. He knew a lot about higher education and cared deeply about it. Delbert Anderson from out in Starbuck out by Morris . . . Delbert was the chair of the Building Commission for several years. They had to approve all of the campus building projects. Delbert just believed deeply in colleges and universities. He couldn't build enough of them. It wasn't to be put in his district . . . sure, he had one, but

he cared as much about Duluth as he did about Morris or as much about Thief River Falls as he did Winona. These people just cared a lot about higher education.

CAC: I hear also from people I've talked with that that sense of the centrality of the University of Minnesota, if it did not go into rapid decline, at least in 1990, it's quite different from what it had been in 1960 or 1970, for example . . . that notion of the university as a flagship of higher education, etcetera. Is that a true perception that people are telling me in your judgement? We don't carry the weight now that we did thirty years ago?

GR: [sigh] I'm not real sure about that. I think it's not so much whether we still carry the weight as whether higher education still carries the weight.

CAC: Okay.

GR: What I see happening now is the competition particularly from health and human services, some of the really basic human need areas.

CAC: Ah, other than education?

GR: Most of the legislators who play a part in that competition still have the view of higher education as real central, but in their committee, they get day, after day, after day of people talking about basically life or death situations. They see genuine tragedy in their committees.

CAC: Health and welfare . . . prisons?

GR: Yes, especially in the health and welfare areas. In the prisons, then you get into another thing where they're responding to a very angry electorate who says, "By god! build more prisons and get tough on crime." That's a really strong political impulse. The welfare, the health and human services thing, is partly political, but it's also on a much more direct personal level.

CAC: And demands lots of money?

GR: Right. If you're sitting in the legislature and you're hearing about the problem of the homeless, or battered children, or battered women and, then, you go to a higher education hearing where university professors are complaining about $50,000 and $60,000 average salaries . . . wait a minute. Everybody may be right, but there's that immediacy in the mother who is appearing before that committee with bruises all over her face talking about what happened two nights before and not having a shelter to go into. That has real impact. That kind of competition has grown substantially. Plus the fact, that you have so many other state fund demands for health care, prisons, whatever on a very, very finite budget. We're into that period now, and I guess we have been for probably five, six, seven years, where we keep running into legislators saying, "It's a wonderful idea. I wish I could do it. We just don't have the money. Sorry." And that's the end of the discussion. I think it's been more that than the university losing anything in

people's regard. I think we still have legislators who hold the university in very, very high regard. It's just that the competition for the money is so much worse.

CAC: That makes sense.

GR: These same legislators would love to figure out some way to provide more for us, but it isn't there. It's just not there. No one wants to talk about increasing taxes. That's part of the equation that is simply no longer there.

CAC: That would have been true for ten or twelve years?

GR: Yes, but some of the years we've been talking about, in the Wenberg and Kegler years, a tax increase was a perfectly logical possibility. If people thought that there was enough need for it, they'd go and feel perfectly free to do it. That's just no longer the case.

CAC: That's a useful commentary. Let's come back to the central narrative then. I'm trying to move us through Moos and Magrath. I guess we're really up to Keller. We can comment now on how Keller handles all the same range of issues that you've been describing.

GR: Let me go back very quickly on Magrath.

CAC: Sure.

GR: There are two things on Peter, one that you probably have already picked up. Peter Magrath was an absolute master of keeping a coalition together, building and keeping a coalition, including the Board of Regents. Peter spent a lot of time worrying about what the board was feeling, and keeping them apprised of what was going on, and keeping their support. He was very careful about that.

CAC: Careful and successful?

GR: Yes, I think very largely successful. He lasted ten years, which is something of a miracle in this business. He paid for it. There was an awful lot of stress involved in just the care and feeding of his twelve regents. The Friday noon after the regents' meetings, he was done for that week. We knew there was no talking to him that Friday afternoon because he was wiped out from just the sheer tension and stress of the regents' meetings.

CAC: Do you think that the regents, that constituency, became more assertive and more difficult to deal with for any reasons so that Magrath had to invest that kind of time and energy?

GR: The board activism was increasing through that whole period.

CAC: Why?

GR: I think that was part a national trend. I don't think it was anything all that local.

CAC: Why a national trend?

GR: I really don't know. There was just more and more talk in the literature of higher education governance about not being the rubber stamp board of regents or board of trustees.

CAC: I see.

GR: It was a period of general activism probably brought on in several schools with anti-war activism and that kind of thing.

CAC: Oh . . . which the regents felt uncomfortable with?

GR: Yes, yes. They got involved in a lot of controversial stuff back then and a lot of higher pressure situations than boards had been used to. They didn't have chanting students outside the building . . .

CAC: Or inside the building!

GR: . . . or inside the building. With student activism, I think, probably came a certain amount of governance activism.

CAC: I see.

GR: That did increase over that time. Peter cared a lot about making sure they knew what they needed to know, that they felt comfortable with what he was going to be doing, so he would talk to them a lot about . . . he'd phone them all the time and talk to them about he felt about this issue or that. As a result, he pretty much knew where his votes were all the time. That's a political accomplishment. [laughter]

CAC: But there may be a downside of compromise on issues that the university needed internally?

GR: Right, I think so. I think some faculty leaders felt that he was just too worried about the board and should have been pushing harder for whatever their priorities were at the time. He was good at that and it probably did make a real difference in his tenure here.

The other thing that people around here don't think much about anymore is Peter's role in whole institutional planning.

CAC: Please, say more about that then.

GR: Back around 1979, Peter started the Planning Council. Some of the people who were involved in that early group . . . Bob Stein was very much there . . . Carl Adams, Nils Hasselmo . . .

CAC: And Ken Keller.

GR: . . . and Ken Keller were very much involved all along through the planning process. Peter set out to get that going and he appointed a whole series of task forces. Dave Lilly, who was then dean of the Business School, had one called Higher Education and the Economy of the State. Bob Holt chaired one on Graduate Education and Research. Carl Adams had a committee on, basically, computers and telecommunications. I forget what they called that one. Al Link had a task force on Outreach. Who did the task force on the Student Experience . . . from the Philosophy Department?

CAC: I'm sorry, I don't know that one.

GR: There were about a half a dozen.

CAC: These were all the late 1970s?

GR: Yes. They, by and large, reported in the 1982, 1983, 1984 period.

CAC: Excuse me. How much of this is driven by the need of retrenchment and reallocation or does that come *out* of the planning process?

GR: It started before the retrenchment and reallocation. The first year that we did a major retrenchment and reallocation process, we had just been doing enough of the institutional planning to have a better handle on which direction to make decisions. Planning was beginning to inform budgeting at that time and it probably saved us from making some really stupid mistakes in the early retrenchment period. It was that series of task forces that really did what I regard as a relatively comprehensive view of what was wrong with the university. The task force on the Student Experience, for example, really identified the problems in considerable detail: the large classes, and the registration system, and all of the kind of stuff that had really been undermining undergraduate education and making the undergraduate experience something a whole lot less than it should have been. Those task force reports have, by and large, provided the underpinnings of almost everything that's happened since. It's just remarkable to me to look back at some of those and see how they diagnosed the problems and how efforts since then have been made to fix them. Whether we called it Commitment to Focus, or Access to Excellence, or Retrenchment and Reallocation, or University 2000, basically, they go back to those late 1970s, early 1980s task forces.

CAC: What you're saying is generally known? There is that sense of institutional history?

GR: I think there's very little of it.

CAC: [laughter] Then, how do you account for it?

GR: It's one of the real frustrations about the whole thing. It depends on who you talk to. For Nils Hasselmo, there's enormous continuity.

CAC: There's [unclear] because he was there.

GR: There's virtually no break in it for him. For people like Carl Adams, who is very much key right now . . . Carl's been part of it all the way along. He's been very active in the institutional planning ever since 1980. Tom Scott in CURA [Center for Urban and Regional Affairs] has been involved in this stuff pretty much all the way along. So, there are people who have that kind of continuity. There are lots of others out there where, for one reason or another, probably, it wasn't something that had a lot of importance for their particular college or their particular program at the time so they didn't pay any attention to it. That's always a problem. You also have turnover in Central Administration and in dean's offices . . .

CAC: Ohhh, yes.

GR: . . . where to some extent some of the new people say—this is not a judgmental concept—"That was before. Now I'm in charge and I'm going to do my thing." I think some of those folks don't much care about what went on before. Their concern is their own plan, their own agenda, as they see it now. I look at it and most of this stuff has a certain continuity that makes all kinds of good sense. It is frustrating that more people don't understand it. We're still paying for a real fundamental part of the early planning. As I said before, it was a very comprehensive look. We tried to figure out <u>everything</u> that was wrong.

CAC: Your office and Kegler's was involved in this planning?

GR: Yes. We got involved in it all along. Because of it's very comprehensiveness and the number of things that we've been trying to fix, we have never had, even from the very beginning, the four or five *big things* to do that people could fix and say, "Ah! that's Commitment to Focus." Commitment to Focus, when it first came out, was . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: The issue we're on now deals with the central planning that begins to accelerate in the late 1970s and you are giving Mr. Magrath chief credit for having established these task forces and, then, getting the whole process underway and trying to coordinate it?

GR: Right. Certainly one of the absolutely most important decisions that Peter Magrath made that had to do with planning was to appoint Ken Keller as his academic v.p. That brings us into the period . . . Ken was very much involved in the planning effort. Nils was very much involved in the planning effort.

CAC: Then he went to Arizona but Keller stuck around?

GR: Right, Keller stayed. The planning document that makes the most sense from Ken Keller was a half year before Commitment to Focus came out. There was a meeting of the Board of Regents in November 1984. Ken delivered a little two-page statement that he called the Report of the Interim President. What he basically said to the board was, "If I'm going to be interim president, here's what I'm going to do to continue the planning effort that has been underway." It basically said, "I'm going to continue pushing this plan. Thank you very much." That was the paper where Ken outlined the university as a major research university, a major Land-Grant university, a major urban university. He basically laid out the kind of university that he had in mind in that little paper. I forget . . . maybe it's more than two pages. It's very much more a vision statement of Ken Keller's than Commitment to Focus.

CAC: But, it reflects these task force findings?

GR: Very much so. As far as I've been able to see, there's virtually total continuity between what Ken was trying to do and what had gone before. What Ken was able to do was really kind of a jump start, an energizing of the process that I don't think Peter could have done. Ken put some excitement to it that I don't think Peter would have been able to do.

CAC: And, perhaps, arouse some antagonism within the Board of Regents that Mr. Magrath had cultivated.

GR: Oh, yes, very carefully. In fact, I think one of the people who was, at the time, most critical of Peter's caution and conservatism as far as dealing with the board was Ken Keller. When Ken came in, he was not about to spend his Sunday nights talking to the members of the board on the phone. He thought Peter had gone way overboard in doing all of that. He just took a different tack. As a result, sometimes he didn't have his board when he thought he needed it most. But, he was not going to do the kind of lobbying of his own board that Magrath did. I would suspect that Ken, today, might say, "I probably should have done a little more of that but I really didn't want to and I still don't think I should have."

CAC: I'll find out. He's teaching in the Humphrey Institute this fall. He's flying in on Mondays and he's agreed to set aside a series of Mondays so we can have an extended conversation.

GR: Great, great. That's quite a chapter in the history. [laughter]

CAC: Yes, it sure is. Share how you saw it. You already have to some degree but . . .

GR: Ken Keller has the most impressive intelligence. He was both a delight and sometimes a disaster to deal with just because of his intelligence. He was so demanding on people, but it was there and to the extent that he could communicate it to staff or others, there was just great excitement for what he was trying to do. I think he had his own difficulties in communicating things—I know he did. For one thing, I have always known his plan, and Commitment to Focus as part of his plan, to have a whole lot more to do with undergraduate education than most people would realize today. You can go to the documents and it's self evident in the documents that a lot of what he was talking about were changes that needed to be made at the undergraduate level. He cared deeply about improving undergraduate education. Yet, the news media sound byte that developed for describing Commitment to Focus was "Ken Keller's plan to emphasize research and graduate education."

CAC: And professional.

GR: Yes. Yes, there was an emphasis on research and graduate and professional education. That's all in there as well, but there is a very, very, strong undergraduate improvement initiative that he believed in and tried very hard to get going.

CAC: Why wasn't that more clearly seen? I think you're right.

GR: For the life of me, I don't know.

CAC: The faculty perceived it as you're describing it.

GR: Yes, I think people decided that was the nice easy way to do it. It sort of fit Keller as a very demanding academic . . . high quality research output and all of that sort of thing. Ken Keller was mighty productive as a faculty member and as an intellectual so this all sort of fit. I think it didn't fit that here was this heavily intellectual mover and shaker kind of president being involved in undergraduate education. Somehow people just assumed that he wasn't interested and it's not there. Looking back on it, what I guess I wish Ken would have done would have been to simplify his explanation considerably and just say, "Folks, what I'm looking for is a whole university that acts like the Department of Chemical Engineering."

CAC: [laughter]

GR: "If we can do that, we're going to have it made here."

CAC: Yes.

GR: That's what he was after. It was a good goal! The Department of Chemical Engineering is a hell of a department and it cares deeply about its undergraduate program.

CAC: That's a good comment.

GR: It's a perfectly model program and for some reason, he couldn't even make his own program the model that people understood. I still wonder what all happened there.

CAC: You were in outreach at that time? You're still doing legislative work?

GR: I was still doing some legislative and, then, soon after Keller became president, I had to take over University Relations and I was there for about four years.

CAC: So there you are. You have the major task of doing it to a larger audience?

GR: Right.

CAC: Why didn't it work? I'm assuming from what you say now that you did emphasize the undergraduate component for example.

GR: We tried. Why it didn't work, I really don't know. There is the same frustration that I've experienced with others . . . you could take Ken Keller out to a Greater Minnesota audience and have him explain what was going on and the people understood it. They came away with a feeling of very strong support. They certainly didn't come away with any sort of . . . this is an arrogant university that only cares about research and graduate, professional education. They didn't come away with that at all. The frustration there is, does it take a person to person audience to communicate . . . ?

CAC: The legislature understood it, that is, those who were in significant positions?

GR: I think many did, yes. They bought some primary Ken Keller recommendations, that enrollment management business . . . the decrease in undergraduate enrollment and moving that money into the CLA [College of Liberal Arts] and IT [Institute of Technology] primarily . . . that's a major Ken Keller move.

CAC: And the legislature accepted it?

GR: They accepted that. The graduate and professional research thing that they accepted was the use of the permanent university fund for the Minnesota Campaign. There was a strong undergraduate move and a strong research graduate education move coming out at about the same time.

CAC: Who was doing the legislative work in Ken's presidency?

GR: Kegler, most of the time, except for the last year.

CAC: You were shifting over to University Relations?

GR: Yes. I was doing less and less of the active lobbying work. Stan was doing a lot of it and Keller was very, very active in legislative work. He did a lot of testimony. Bob Holt did a lot of testimony at the time.

CAC: Yes.

GR: Bob was very, very effective. Right during that same period of time, Bob was after graduate student support, fellowship support. He accomplished some considerable increase in that and was moving forward with a much more aggressive recruiting kind of program for the Grad[uate] School. With Holt and Keller over there giving a lot of testimony, you had a lot of energy. [laughter] There was a lot of excitement about it.

CAC: As you talk, George, I'm impressed—I'm trying to get hypotheses here—that the one constituency he didn't do well with was his own regents.

GR: Absolutely.

CAC: That may have been the major flaw?

GR: Yes, I think it was. [sigh] This would be controversial—what the heck?—I think his primary supporters on the board, in my view, were not willing to step up to the plate when it really got threatening. I think some of his strongest ones got quiet in a hurry. Some of those that he had alienated by not paying a lot of attention to just gained strength through all that. Everything that he was doing was more example why they shouldn't support him. I think it is very much a case of just maintaining the kind of relations with the board. You do get into some personal stuff there, some personal styles of his and some of the board members. That will be the tough part of getting a history. That's part of history that probably will have to wait because there won't be very many people who feel free to talk really openly about some of this stuff. I happen to think that there were board members who had a lot more knowledge of what was going on . . . for example, with the Eastcliff expenses. When that became a big public issue, they ran for the hills.

CAC: That raises a related issue and that is the reserve funds. Let me share with you, as a preface to my question, that I have on many issues not conflicting testimony but tangential. Some people see one thing and some another. On the reserve fund, it's a direct contradiction of four or five people on this issue.

GR: Yes.

CAC: I've not untangled it because I haven't gone to the primary documents—perhaps, they don't exist. A major question—it isn't the only one—is the degree to which and the extent to which

members of the Board of Regents knew what Lilly and Keller were doing with the reserve funds. Do you have any insight on that?

GR: I think there was probably a good deal more understanding on the board than members will admit. That's a whole interesting history. Prior to that time, there was a central reserve, a fairly small amount. I don't really remember what the size of it was. The reserve funds that mattered were spread out all over the place. Every dean who was worth a damn had a reserve fund going somewhere. Department heads, program directors . . . we had reserves that had been built up just all over the place.

CAC: How were they generated?

GR: Savings . . .

CAC: Do you mean you don't spend your annual budget?

GR: Right. It could have been savings. It could have been from outside money, private gifts, you name it. People had these little honey pots full of money. A lot of the auxiliary services, the internal . . . we had to have a reserve so that when the washing machines broke down, you could replace them. It had been done this way for so long that the laundry probably had twice the reserve that they could ever hope to spend. Parking probably had the same kind of thing. One of the things that went on during that time . . .

CAC: [laughter] Let me share . . . it's awful. One person shared with me that what he made on coffee machines, for example, he had to pour into sanitary napkins. As a mixed metaphor, I thought that was . . .

GR: If there was a scandal about reserves, it was that managers out there all over the university had these little cubbyholes of reserve funds . . .

CAC: Could the Central Administration take those back?

GR: Heavens! the Central Administration would be doing very well to even know about them let alone take them back. What Dave Lilly did, to his credit as far as I'm concerned, is he really found out where all that stuff was. He went out and pretty actively said, "Folks, you've got twice as much money as you're going to need for washing machines." That's just an example I'm making up.

CAC: Sure.

GR: He pulled half of it into a central reserve.

CAC: And he could do that?

GR: Yes, sure.

CAC: Those reserves did not belong to a department or a program or a college?

GR: No, no more than their classrooms and offices. We still have that old problem where possession is nine points of the law around here. [laughter] There was a scandalous amount, in my view, of little reserve pockets out there. It was perfectly all right for manager of *X* to have an amortization reserve or something . . . good business, but you didn't need it two, three, four times as much as you could ever hope to spend in your lifetime. It was out there. The university as an institution was not exercising adequate oversight and control.

CAC: Ah.

GR: We were not saying to those people, "Look, if you're going to have a reserve, you better, by god, be able to justify how much you're going to need and when."

CAC: In the meantime, it's setting dead and not earning money?

GR: It's earning money. That's how some of those reserves were building up. They were still earning money through the normal investment stuff but there was not enough attention paid here. Wait a minute, where is that money? Who's making the decision to keep it or spend it? How closely are we going to monitor this? That's what Lilly came in and really took over. He said, "Folks, we're going to scrape up a bunch of that loose change, and make it a university reserve, and spend it on university priorities."

CAC: But, it was more than loose change? It was a big sum?

GR: It was a big sum of money. Plus . . . then Lilly did a good deal more aggressive investment strategy. He got into stuff that I don't even begin to understand . . . securities lending and some of that arbitrage stuff that . . .

CAC: It was a good market to play his game on?

GR: It was an excellent market, very strong. They put some money into some investments that paid off really well. Then you have this fairly significant central reserve built up and being used and this big scandal . . . "'U' reserve fund under the control of only three people" . . . the president, the vice-president for Academic Affairs, and the vice-president for Finance. Those are the three people who ought to be in control of it.

CAC: Sure.

GR: "Secret slush fund that only a few people . . . " It was exactly what a good administration should have been doing.

CAC: All right. Now, the deans knew about it?

GR: Yes . . . how much they knew, I don't know.

CAC: But, they knew when the money was being taken from them to be centralized.

GR: Oh, sure, they knew that and some of them knew it because they were getting money from those reserves.

CAC: And Morrill Hall knew it? The other vice-presidents knew it?

GR: Probably didn't know enough. I thing if there's a problem with it, it was that Ken and Dave, primarily those two, played it fairly close.

CAC: Okay. So, then the question is, to what degree and to what extent did the board know about it?

GR: Yes. I really can't answer that. I think some of them knew a fair amount. Most of the large decisions that were made were not made without the board members knowing about it. It didn't come to the board for action so, perhaps, the chair of the board knew and I think, in most cases, the chair probably did know about it.

CAC: Mr. [David] Lebedoff at this time?

GR: Yes, I would guess so. Certainly, if he had a question about it and asked a question, he would have gotten an answer. I think, as a matter of style, Lilly and Keller both played this fairly close to the chest. It was, in one sense, really discretionary money that could be used for university priorities. In my opinion, anything I know of, where major amounts of it went out, in fact, were for univerisity priorities. They were doing exactly what they should have been doing.

CAC: Some of it was maintenance of the physical plant.

GR: Sure, which had been ignored for years, and years, and years. They finally got started on doing some of that stuff. What deans wanted and I think what some regents wanted, and certainly some legislators wanted . . . "If you've got $60 million, put it all out on the table and we'll all have a big heyday deciding how you're going to spend it. Don't you decide how to spend it." That's executive power that goes beyond some people's versions of it. In my opinion, it was never executive power exercised in any sense for personal gain. It was to really go after what were the university's priorities. The people making the decisions were the top officers of the university.

CAC: But, now the press distorts this to some degree, right?

GR: Right, because it was secret. They didn't have all the information on it.

CAC: You had to deal with the press?

GR: Yes.

CAC: Can you say something about that relationship?

GR: [sigh] Yes. [laughter] There are interesting things changed right along in there. I'm not quite sure why. For example, things like spending money on the president's house . . . Malcolm Moos spent a fair amount of money on the president's house. That black marble bathroom on the main floor cost a ton of money.

CAC: To say nothing of his air fleet.

GR: Yes. That kind of stuff with Eastcliff before was private money and, by and large, people didn't care. I think that's generally true of press, legislators, everybody. People would raise hell about a decision and you'd say, "Wait a minute, that was private money," and many would react, "Oh, okay." End of discussion. That changed and I don't know why it changed. It was something about, perhaps, Keller's perceived style or something. It turned to, "No, I don't care whether it was private or public money. Was it a good expenditure?" or "If you hadn't done it to replace the fence at Eastcliff, you could have used it for scholarships, right?" The answer was, "Yes." Theoretically, you could have. Somehow, right along that time, that whole kind of ethic changed. All of those expenditures just piled up as somehow being Ken Keller's personal expenditures. Lord knows, he wasn't that enamored of Eastcliff and living there. It was a great pain in the hind end as far as he was concerned. He got very, very impatient with the work that had been scheduled to go on. He was supposed to move into the place. It wasn't getting done. He got mighty impatient about all of that. I think he dumped on Dave Lilly a fair amount and Dave Lilly . . . "Look, let's just get it done." Boom! I don't think they paid enough attention to the public reaction to some of this. From my own experience, I raised questions about it at some point early along. I know Kegler raised questions.

CAC: Having in mind public perceptions?

GR: Yes. Dave Lilly said, "But, this is not public money." We, too, sort of backed away, "Oh, okay. If you're talking about public money, we've got a big problem. If this is private funds somewhere, oh, all right, but you're going to get some flak about it," and we did. The sin of having a big reserve fund, I've just never seen as such a great sin. If there was a problem with it, it was the secrecy and the attempts to keep it from becoming just a major public fiasco . . . throw the whole reserve on the table and everybody fight for it at one time. They had priorities for it and they were trying to follow it.

CAC: It's my understanding that was one of the things that Dick Sauer, when he comes in as interim president, clarifies. He sets up procedures for a larger public awareness and legislative awareness of the reserve fund, and it's size, and how it would be used.

GR: Yes. When Dick came in, one of the first things that he did—I was very much involved with this thing; I staffed it—was we appointed a University Financial Review Committee. It was not internal. They were external folks. There were legislators. Arne Carlson, as the state auditor, was on it. We released every kind of information imaginable on the university budget. We showed them everything. That had a very, very healthy effect. It got Dick started out on the right step. Dick Sauer could make as peremptory a decision as Ken Keller and did on several occasions. [laughter]

CAC: He told me so. [laughter]

GR: "All right, I'm going to do that and like Huck[leberry] Finn, I'll go to hell." Laying all that stuff out for that review committee was an important step.

CAC: There's some advantage in being interim.

GR: Yes, there is.

CAC: He wasn't going to be interim like Keller had been, which again may have been a mistake?

GR: In a sense. But, he acted as he thought a president needed to act whether it was interim, acting, or full time and he was intent to do that. In that sense, both of the were the same. They said, "We're going to keep moving here and keep the decisions flowing." I think in that sense, they were very much alike.

[break in the interview]

CAC: We took a short break and we talked about where we might go. We thought it might be useful just to say a few things about the nine months that Dick Sauer had here as interim president, particularly because you were central in many ways to that. As I told you before, he spoke himself of the contributions you had made, that you were particularly sensitive to his style, and what needed to be said, and how to say it. Why don't you say a few things about that and then we'll just close up shop for awhile?

GR: As I said, the first major step was that Financial Review Committee that he appointed and the sharing of an enormous amount of what had before been private information or had been largely ignored if not held privately. We laid everything out on the table and virtually any budget in the university that people wanted to look at, we let them look at it and showed them

every dime we had. That went a long way toward establishing the feeling of trust and credibility that Dick Sauer needed.

CAC: That the university needed.

GR: Yes. He was very serious about the university opening up all information that we could possibly share, and owning up to the problems that we had, and getting going on solving them. He started on that agenda and pursued it, I think, very aggressively. It was a very important part of his administration to get out and talk with the people. He made a lot of speeches out and around the state in every sense owning up to the difficulties that we had at the moment and making it clear that there was a real commitment to fix what was broken and get on with the business. He made some pretty tough calls during that period of time. Firing the athletic director was a fairly tough call in this state.

CAC: Did you have pressure on your office?

GR: No.

CAC: You were in University Relations still?

GR: Yes.

CAC: I should think that would have been a difficult one to handle from a journalistic point of view. Mr. [Sid] Hartman didn't care for it.

GR: It was because it was a decision made by those *geniuses* in Morrill Hall. No, the sports writers went ballistic about that, at least Sid Hartman did, and to some extent all of the sports writers who felt it was their career to mouth whatever Sid Hartman had to say. That passed over in time. Sid was not a happy camper about that whole situation, but we haven't made Sid very happy for a long time, so what the hell? [laughter] Dick Sauer's real contribution was just reestablishing a sense of credibility and a sense of trust in the university. I think he did a magnificent job; there's no question about it. He kept a lot of very difficult work on course and made the initial steps toward reorganizing Physical Plant and Facilities Management. It was tough stuff to get started and he moved right into it without any big delay. I think we got started on a real reform agenda through his good efforts. I think it's the kind of thing that Nils has been able to keep right on going with. I think that's still going on in 1995 . . . still at it. We fundamentally still have the problem of trying to make really comprehensive institutional change in a world that only wants to hear sound bytes and even internally, our own faculty, staff, and student audiences want a plan like University 2000 described in five simple English sentences and it just doesn't work that way. We set out to do too much detail. I think, in fact, an historian looking at this ten, fifteen, thirty years out will look back and say, "It was the right way to do change." You've got to change it at the level in the trenches and you've got to fix a lot of little

things in order to make real change. We've continued to suffer from not having that easily understood plan that public and internal audience alike can sort of grasp without working at it.

CAC: Yes.

GR: I don't know where we're going to go from now. We keep trying to restate things and make them clearer. Even under Nils Hasselmo's plan, which have been very much . . . we've spent a lot more time talking about the undergraduate experience, plans to change the undergraduate program. We've talked about it a lot more than we did during Keller's years and still people think Nils' plan is a research and graduate education centered planet. It has not been. It has been very heavily undergraduate and that message still isn't getting out as broadly as I'd like to see it. That's a frustration that we've had for fifteen years now and it's still with us.

CAC: These issues would be in more and better focus two or four or five years hence.

GR: Yes.

CAC: As I suggested to you during the break, my task, I cannot do all by myself. Someone else has got to pick these projects up and I think that the details of the Hasselmo Administration especially, have to be left for three or four years. I think maybe we've gone through our agenda and touched on a lot of very important points. A lot of them were perceptions and descriptions of events that no one else had.

GR: Oh.

CAC: So, that's a very useful addition. I thank you in the name of posterity. [laughter]

GR: [laughter]

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[End of the Interview]

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