

Interview by Donovan Cater

INTERVIEWER: Could you say your name

The name is John Ogren, O-G-R-E-N from the class of 1951 of from John D. Pierce and class of 1955 from Northern

DC: I will say the date, it is the first of July 1996, I will start out about the person we were talking about downstairs, and please the name slipped my mind of the professor so

JO: So I guess you are asking me about the little rhymes and things that Dr. Lucian Hunt of the Chemistry department, used to put in the Chemistry display case in the Peter White Science building, that was right on the route where all of the students who were going from their classes to having a cup of coffee in the cafeteria would always pass through the Peter White hall of science they would stop and laugh at the display's. One of which was a mirror, in which you looked into the mirror and there was a rhyme he had written there that said "look in the mirror what you see strange to save it, it is 98% H₂O by weight". Then another one he had in there "behold the village nit wit he doesn't give a dam, I am glad I am not a Nit Wit, ee gad's perhaps I am". Then he had molecular molecules, molecular models of different molecules one of which being the ethyl alcohol molecule he had it of course very easily done in the form of a dog. With the little sign underneath it that saying this is why alcohol leads you to a dogs life, or some kind of pun like that. But Dr. Hunt was always making puns of all kinds all the time in class. He would stand up on the desk and say, now you can say Hi professor and I will say to you as a student low student. Just because he was standing up on top of the desk. He also to a very old age, I didn't see his do this as an old man, but I think he and Harry Rajala were able to stand and walk on their hands. That is their heads down and their feet up. Harry Rajala is very good at that and Lucian Hunt used to do that. Scared to death of audience's.

DC: Can you do that?

JO: walk on your hands, I can't, but he was able to do that. Antidotes about Professor Lucian F. Hunt, Ph.D Chemist from Ohio State University.

DC: I guess I am going to start out with your time at Pierce School and then we will work our way on to Northern. To start with kind of interested to find out of the fond memory's you have or just specific or just a general you have.

JO: I started Jon D. Pierce in the fourth grade. We moved to Marquette two years before that actually. And moved to Norwood street or North ? and daddy tried to enroll us in Jon D. Pierce, but it was in the summer and the administration said it was all full. During the next year we kept the application alive and the

next year came along and we were told it was full again. Dad then decided to keep track of things, and he had found out that there was somebody who had left town who got, was a manager of some store, and then, also came into town a manager of railroad or mining or the docks or something like that, they were taken into Jon D. Pierce. So he wondered hey wait awhile how come those people are going out and coming in but my children haven't been enrolled. So the third year dad went down there and enrolled them, and I think it was Dr. Dewey started to say no and my dad was a very large powerful man, worked in the woods and he could lower his voice in a very dramatic way and made Dr. Dewey understand that dad wanted his students to get the very best education available and that was at Jon D. Pierce school. Some how or other we were enrolled shortly thereafter. I don't know exactly what he said but it was effective. That started in the fourth grade. And my little sister started in second grade, my little brother in kindergarten. One of the real effective happy moments that shaped my life a great deal from there was in the hands of Wally Thorn. One day I was out at Pictured Rocks and I saw wounded bird I went to go to help it, it hopped away from me, pretty soon I saw it wasn't wounded, walked away, came back I came closer again there it was wounded again. It looked like its wing was broken. I sat there and thought for awhile and said that bird is trying to lead me over here to the right I wonder if there is something over here to the left that bird doesn't want me to see. I looked over there and there was a nest with three eggs. That bird is doing a fake on me trying to lead me away from that nest. So I was on my bicycle, so I hopped on my bike went back to the school and told Mr. Thorn about it, he said you saw the bird do that? Yes, he said lets get out there and take a picture of that birds nest. And he did. I still have that picture of that birds nest. The main thing is that Mr. Thorn was able to make science so exciting, so that is what I have become an ? 40 years I have been in space craft engineer, tourist based scientist. Large part because of the influence of Wally Thorn.

DC: Did, sounds like to me that Hunt helped also with the,

JO: yes,

DC: with the making fun of chemistry

JO: yes, back in those days there was it was at Northern sometimes we at John Pierce school we were just sent over to the other side, over to the Northern side. Sitting in on classes, I don't even know if we were registered or not, but I know I just sat in on or took I took tests in on Mr. Nance's college algebra class, but I was in high school. The teachers told me to go over there and I did. Then Mr. Nance taught algebra and then Holmes Boynton taught upper mathematics, than Clarence Bejork taught mathematics. I said I have a love in my heart for Clarence Bejork because he taught me calculus differential equations. That opened my eyes to a whole new realm of mathematics, as calculus does. Holmes Boynton was always cheery and always so

serious, he was easily distracted from the main topic. But I will tell you another thing. Hunt was, Holmes Boynton was just plain cheery, cheery, and Dr. Francis F. ? in business he tended to be very grouchy, he was I think the original grumpy old man. And he got grumpier and grumpier, until, he was a widow, then he married the librarian, I was told he got to be mellow, but I was through with his classes by then. So I didn't get the benefit of his mellow attitude. Do I need to tell you one important memory of Johnny Pierce. You see after ? was in sixth grade after World War II, so from that point on the student teachers, coming back to do student teaching were all veterans. And we would just wait in class, because any class in high school, junior high school the semester would start the regular critic teacher would be teaching, than we would see two or three others in the back of the room, we knew they were student teachers, than along would come on friday and the main teacher or critic teacher would say well now I am going to call Mr. Livingston up here and he will give you your assignment for Monday. Then we new Aha, Mr. Livingston will teach Monday and the regular critic teacher will be out of the room off doing something else. So we will just wait until monday. We just loved that when student teachers came there. Invariably the student teachers would not prepare quite enough. And we would be sensitive to the fact that aha I think they have covered everything that they had planned to cover, and we still have five minuets left of the class. Then we would ask what did you do in the war? And oh were there the story's. They had story's galore, and sometimes it was difficult to dismiss the class. They would talk and that was very very interesting all the story's. One particular time, it was late in the fall, we always had gym class outside, we would run in our little white shorts outside and the college had some painters fixing the windows over on the Jon D. Pierce the old old Jon D. Pierce building, those painters started laughing at us boys, they called us, what are you little girls doing out there with your little white shorts on, lets see your legs boys, they started making remarks, like I think today it would of been called gay bashing. But it was that kind of term. Well our student teacher was a tough old marine, he had been through water canal and everyplace in the South Pacific, I am trying to think of his name, I know he ran for sheriff up in Negaunee or Ishpeming or something like that, I think he won the election. He was a mean old guy, and he called those guys down from where they were painting and one started lippping off to him and what you did with all those pansy's out there, and him he bent down, just like that boom boom, painters didn't say anything more from that point on. No loses or anything like that, no violence or anything like that, but the issue was taken care of right there on the spot. One thing it gave us all of us boys in gym class we didn't lip off to that teacher, Mr. Austin, Mr. Austin was his name. There was another though one, what the heck was his name, Teddy McMann was his name, he was a football player, rough and mean, holy wow, he was something to have as a student teacher in gym. He really pushed us through. Then Maki, Maki wasn't his name, Koskimaki, George Koskimaki, he was mean to

those guys had all been in the service and been all over the world. You know had been through fire and brimstone, they didn't take any sass from students at all. So the football Mr. Austin and the story's of the war.

DC: When you were in Jon D. Pierce when you were in high school, did you participate in any extra curricular activities?

JO: Yes, I tried playing basketball. Never made it, almost on the B Team. In those days there were some good basketball players around, Duane Hall, ? Olson, Joe Revard, Niemi Twins, The Haupt boys, Don Hurst he is a doctor in town now, those guys were so good, I made it to the B Team, I think I got to wear a uniform 3 or 4 times. But I did play football, I played inside guard on balanced land, Dick Hurst called it unbalanced land and that was fun. I would say just one thing about that football team, I was very proud, I got two letters, but see between my 11th grade and 12th grade my dad died. And that meant that in my senior year there was no football or those kinds of things. That kinds of business was out of the picture. But I will just say one thing, we played a football game up in Baraga and boy did we ? big guys, my ? was they take those big indians off the reservations oh I think they only went to school in the fall to play football and then I think they sawed logs the rest of the year. They were so big, mean, and tough and strong and we got beat up left side, right side, upside down oh we got beat up like crazy. We rode back home in a car and everyone there return was torture, I got beat up ? side of my life. Like crazy, oh man did we get beat up. ? ? . Oh then Dick Hurst started a baseball team, and said, we had track in the spring, the boys didn't like track in the spring, but he said if you want to play football next fall you have to take track now. And so we did. The ? was a pick up team, because we had no equipment, I had a first baseman's mit, but someone else had a first baseman mit and was bigger and taller and could reach farther and of course have to be able to reach all over the place and I couldn't reach so good. So he said I have a first baseman mit I could be the catcher. So I wound up being the catcher. You need a mit like a first baseman mit to catch those fast pitches.

DC: So the catcher can chop anything ?????

JO: but than I was lucky, I have to tell you, we were playing someone, probably the B team, from Graveret, I was a left handed thrower, which is not a good hand to throw with when you are the catcher. Should use your right hand. I will tell you it was pure luck, cause I will never do it again, but those guys got on first and then to steal second, and I just closed my eyes and threw with all my heart and I got it there and threw him out. They didn't trying stealing again. They did ? the first time and got there respect. But that I have got to say it was the pure the stupidest luck. Oh well, I loved baseball, I think we played two games that year, probably against Baraga high school and Graveret B team. There was no swimming pool in those days. That

was sports. The Christmas programs, at Jon D. Pierce there was the Christmas pageants. Those were big events at the Auditorium at Kaye Hall. Those Christmas programs, everybody in the High School and the grade school, that was packed there was never any empty seats in there. That was a big thing that Christmas program. There was music, sacred music, ball music and orchestra music oh very good. I don't know what do they have those kind of concerts now?

DC: I don't know.

JO: It just occurred to me I don't know.

DC: Having just transferred here, I would assume it would be up in the theater.

JO: In the Forest Roberts Theater. Is there a auditorium and theater in side it.

DC: yes.

JO: Yes those concerts, Christmas programs the Christmas programs, then outside of the Jon D. Pierce Christmas concert, the college always put on a Christmas concert. And that was a really big event for the whole community. That was good classical music and that was one that ended up with Handel's Messiah, but there was orchestra and chorus, wouldn't miss it. good performance.

DC: So you say you sang or played and instrument.

JO: no, but my sister Grace played the base fiddle. My dad sang I didn't play, I was ? ? mathematics, if there had been computers in those days, I would be one of those, on the web all the time guys.

DC: So after graduation from Jon D. Pierce, you went on to Northern?

JO: Right on to Northern.

DC: right across the hall.

JO: yes, right across the hall. You see my dad had died, like there was that rich lady in Deer Track Village. Do you know where Deer Track Village is up there on the road to Negaunee. Her name was Abby Beacher Roberts. In the Upper Peninsula the name Abbey Beacher Roberts is rather well known by the old people. And she said that well Johnny you can have a room in the house in Deer Track, and just stay here keep everything warm and neat. And when you have time paint this room and paint that room. Then she would go down to Mexico or someplace like that for winter time and I had a room. I never worried or ?.

DC: wow.

JO: And you know the house is a Frank Lloyd Wright design. yeah. Frank Lloyd Wright see her son in law, John Laukner was at that time married to Abby's daughter Mary, and Laukner was a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, and Laukner designed lots and lots of really spectacular houses ?? . I think he graduated, John Laukner graduated from Northern in 1930 or 32. Then he became ? ? Frank Lloyd Wright on his ? ? . So that was a Frank Lloyd Wright design house with John Laukner. I had this one little room in the basement, with like helpers quarters. I was happy.

DC: So the rest of the house was empty.

JO: I try to keep it warm so that the varnish wouldn't crack, things like that. I had to keep it in readiness all the time so that because she would be gone, she had one long long buick station wagon, they call a woody, but the wood panels, a woody. Oh was it fancy, she would save to buy and then sell it. Then the snow flakes wouldn't come. You never knew when she would come back. I would always have the place spic and span, the fire place set, because tomorrow she might arrive back.

DC: she wanted it ready.

JO: yes,

DC: So that is how you worked your way through college?

JO: yes, that is how I worked my way through college. Then that ? called it, you see it was 1955, that Lucian Hunt told me you know I agreed to a job a teaching job that was in Iron River or Crystal falls one or the other, but that Lucian Hunt found me one day and he told me Johnny I have thinking you should really go on to graduate school. He say's this is this place, you see Lucian Hunt was from Iowa, and out there in Iowa in Ames Iowa, town called Ames, at a campus of Iowa State University there was a big Atomic energy research lab, he said you should apply, you should apply there and see if you can't get in. Back in those days Atomic Energy was good stuff, now people criticize it. So I allied and I got an appointment. So I was doing research in atomic energy and starting to take courses toward my masters degree physics, chemistry and mathematics.

DC: In Iowa.

JO: In Iowa. I did that then one day he said in Christmas card, Do you want to come back and teach? So I said yes, so I came back here and taught for three years.

DC: Here at Northern?

JO: Here at Northern. Yes. Then one day, I would go off every summer, wait now I talk about myself and we want to talk about Jon D. Pierce.

DC: No we can talk about you.

JO: Back in those days you see, then I was teaching back here, in the fall of 1957 was when regents launched sputnik were number one, and all of a sudden that glamour for science education there was all of a sudden money available for to go to summer institutes all over the United States. I allied and I got one at the University California Berkley, And started there teaching ? ? ?.

DC: Glenn Seaborg.

JO: Yes, Glenn Seaborg, yes, McMillian, S?, Owens, Chamberlin, all the award winners in Physics. or some part of it. They were torpedoes, I mean they were big guys. So when I was there I found out Johnny why don't you get a job, why don't you try and get a job out here in California. So I talked to some guys, so I got a job in California State Politicking University in Santa ?. So from there the space program started up, and did those space company's recruit, there were jobs, jobs, jobs. I got a job at a space company called TRW, at ?.

DC: Still in California.

JO: Yes still in California, we made the satellite that went to mars, to ? it, to find life on mars, couldn't find it. WE made the satellites that went to the outer planets, to Saturn, Eur?, Jupiter, Pluto.

DC: ? ? ?

JO: NO, that is we competed with Hughes on the Hubbell. We were very mad that we lost, then after the problems we were happy.

DC: I Laugh, can't understand they are both laughing.

JO: But we did make that primary, we called it primary 10 and primary 11, and it now has left the solar system. Beyond Saturn, Jupiter, and Pluto, outside the solar system as we know it. Last I heard was about two years ago, they sent a wake up call to the instrument package. And we got the ? back about 3 hours later, so it takes about hour and half two hours, probably this time it takes about four hours, two hours there and two back. If you stop to think it only takes 8 minuets for the light to come from the sun to the earth. That takes many hours so that is way way out there. But then,now I am retired from there. But I spend ? in Helsinki Finland, space craft engineering was that ever fun, then one year in Pakistan. In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan my wife had to wear a veil.

JO: Other than the key part it is important. * Puncy how the

DC: She wasn't very happy about that. can disappear in the fall of time so I think time is not blurred and how important to

JO: She was happy when our assignment was completed. that was really interesting, well you know there was a bombing here in New York at the Trade Tower, the International Trade Tower, There is a trial going on right now, the guy who is on trial is name is Mr. Ramzi, R-A-M-Z-I, he was arrested just 50 feet from where my wife was having her hair done. The town in the capital city of Pakistan, called Islam?, yes they just came up and I must say ????. Now we are back home in Southern California and home in the Upper Peninsula. That is the good thing. We will be going up to Suomi College, because that is part of our back ground. But it is really really amazing to see and pleasing to see the growth and the changes in Northern Michigan University. It was called the Normal School. Oh I have to tell one other thing. WE were little kids playing around here on campus in the late 30's. As I understand it people in those days got teaching degrees only after two years of college. They got something called State limited degree or something like, Limited Certificate, but they go out after two years of college to teach, but they had to come back in summers and take classes. Well us kids would be playing outside on the swings or outside and then some lady would come by and say, would you kids like to come inside for a few minuets and we will give you a candy bar if you take this little test, do these little things. They were giving us psychology tests, reading tests things like that, part of there class. WE were happy we got a candy bar out of it. If you stop and think about it today if the kids were playing in the playground and somebody says, John you nice little boy you want to have a candy bar. I had been told later on that those lady's, they were invariably ladies, that they were taking some summer courses in child development or child psychology or something like that. Giving some kind of tests to see how do children respond to this set of questions or that set of questions.

DC: Just to close I had just one question to add when we were talking but I didn't want to interrupt you, but you seem to, when you talking about Ronnie Thorn such an influence, did you get to see him.

JO: Yes, ??? he was my ??, then when my last year in college. One semester I taught Physics over at Jon D. Pierce. Then the next semester I taught Chemistry. He was my ? teacher we had a chance to work together very well that time. Then our class of '51, had our 40th class reunion in 1991 and he was present. We had a chance to talk and reminisce.

DC: So he remembers you.

JO: Yes.

DC: Well thank you unless you have anything else to add.

JO: other than the Key part it is important. " Funny how the

things that seem so vivid in the lives can disappear in the fall of time so ? ? images become dim and blurred and how important to keep them". Thank you very much.

DC: Thank you.