

Interview with Dr. Michael T. Marsden

Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Northern Michigan University

Location: Marquette, Michigan

Interviewed by Dr. Russ Magnaghi

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#### START OF INTERVIEW

Russ Magnaghi (RM): Mike, could you tell us the date of your birth, as an opening question.

Michael T. Marsden (MM): I was born on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941 in Chicago, Illinois.

RM: Okay, and as we're going to be covering your years as dean of the college, could you give us a little of your background, educational background, and then how you came to this position, learned about it, and came to the position.

MM: Sure. I began my undergraduate days at Quigley College, which was a private preparatory seminary actually in Chicago. I was there for year, and then transferred over to DePaul University in Chicago, which is a catholic university in the city of Chicago. Graduated from DePaul with an undergraduate degree in English, minor in, I think it was minor in philosophy, or concentration in philosophy, in 1964. Then I went on to Perdue University to pursue the Master's Degree in English. I was there from '64 to '66 graduated with a Masters in 1966. I took a teaching position at the University of Minnesota Morris, which is a liberal arts campus of the University of Minnesota. It's located in west-central Minnesota. I taught there for three years in the humanities department, which primarily taught English courses. Taught there for three years and went back, well not back, went to Bowling Green State University in, full time, in the fall of 1969 to begin doctoral work. Went there primarily because I wanted to pursue a terminal degree, but also because that's where a mentor of mine, Ray Browne, had moved from Purdue to Bowling Green to head up this new Center for the Study of Popular Culture and I was really interested in that. So I began to work with him almost immediately upon my arrival. In fact, I worked with the center there for virtually all my years there. I got my doctorate in 1972 from the Department of English at Bowling Green, graduate I think in August of '72 and then entered into a, pretty much a 20-year career with the institution starting off as an Assistant Professor of English and Popular Culture. Later on just popular culture and went through all the ranks from associate to full professor. One break in my time there was in the '76 -'77 academic year, I was a fellow at the National Humanities Institution at the University of Chicago. I took a leave of absence from Bowling Green, went to the institute for a year, developed new courses, got a grant from the NEH and brought those courses and the grant back to Bowling Green in the '77-'78 academic year. About '79, 1979, I was asked by the then provost, who was Mick Ferrari, to come into his office to serve as the Coordinator for Undergraduate Recruiting. The problem was the institution didn't have a problem with enrollment, what it had a problem with was the mix. So what they were focusing is how to increase the number of students in the top quartile of the SAT composite, how to increase the minority students and how to increase the number of students

with special talents. So for two years I headed that up out of the provost's office on a part time basis. Then simultaneously with that I was asked to direct the American Culture PhD. program which I had designed, I wrote the, I was one of the four architects of the original program. So in its second year of operation I was asked to direct it. I directed that program until 1985. I was only in the provost's office for a two-year period because the plan, the idea was to develop the plan and then the admissions office would be implementing the plan. So I then directed that PhD. program, pretty much on a full time basis, more or less. I taught some courses so, but I was also primarily directing and building that program. In 1985 when I left that job, there were about 30 doctoral students pretty much involved in the program, so it was moving along nicely. 20 or 30, I can't remember how many exactly I guess between 20 or 30. Then in about 1985, in the summer of 1985 I was asked to join the dean staff as Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs for Arts and Sciences. I did that for a couple of years, then I became Associate Dean, then took over the role of the Student Affairs and Academic Affairs within Arts and Sciences. The college structures there are different than they are here. The college function there has all sorts of advising, record keeping functions, probationary functions, determining whether students are on probation or being terminated and so on. So it's all about the college level there. So I headed Academic Affairs and Student Affairs for a couple years, then I went back pretty much to Academic Affairs. I served as Assistant, and later Associate, Dean, there from '85 to 92. Under different deans, it was an interesting period of time. Basically I decided about '92 that it was time to really seek a permanent deanship, I had actually been casting about for a couple of years, I had had a couple of offers but none of them seemed to be very, what I really wanted. In '92, I mean the ad for Northern was in the *Chronical of Higher Education*, I was responding to an ad. I was contacted by the search committee, Karen Rybecky, if I remember correctly was the chair of the committee. I was contacted the committee to follow up on it, and I almost didn't follow up on the second stage! They sent me a personnel form, I had just sent them my entire resume and all the other material and they sent me this personnel form, which every new employee is asked to fill out, but of course it asks for all the same information that I had already given them. I was just about ready to put it in the garbage and say "the heck with it!" But some impulse moved me to fill it out and send it in, you know that would have been the end of it if I never sent in the form [laughter.] But later I was asked to come up for the interview, and it was a good experience. The original interview was a good experience, the second visit, particularly the second visit was really very good. I had asked on my first visit, there was only one faculty member who came to the open forum. I shouldn't say forum; it was kind of a reception. So I talked to Phil Beukema at the time, I said that I thought was kind of odd, maybe on my second visit I could have a chance to meet with more faculty. Basically on the second visit he orchestrated it so I got the chance to meet a whole host of faculty members at different times and different places. So it was a good experience on the second visit and it was clear to me that it would be a good match. I really liked Phil's approach. Phil was a very good recruiter, he handled the whole interview process very well, down to details that were... He, historic! I'm not even sure, when I look back on it. He did things, for example, on the second night that we were here for the second visit, we had dinner in his home which was very nice, but then he took us to a play. Now, he had no way of really knowing, I suspect, that Madonna has a long background in theatre and so on. I mean, we were so impressed, that was probably the best theatre production we've ever seen at the college level.

It happened to be one of Jim Rapport's plays. That shows you the level of that program, and it really did, it was really attractive to us in terms of the campus. So we finally decided to make, we made the decision to come here in early May after the offer was made, we took a week or so to think about it. We made the decision, for us it was a pretty radical decision as I had, I actually had had I think about six offers before that one came along from different institutions, and none of them were right. It's a curious thing as you interview, you can hit a campus and you know within a day or two if the feelings are right. It's not always something you can articulate, it's something that you feel more than not. I think about one in particular, for example, we were offered the position at that time at the University of Lowell in Lowell, Massachusetts, which is now the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. Well, I mean Lowell at that time was in a depressed state, and we really couldn't afford to move there. We wouldn't, that's the kind of negative, it was a great position, the pay was wonderful and I couldn't send my children to the public schools nor could I afford housing. So we had to say no to the position. So I'm mentioning that only by contrast to Northern, where when you came up here it was obvious that this was a community where you'd be safe and where your children would enjoy going to school in the community and housing was affordable. Again, time and again that was an issue. So, came here in '92. Actually I think, this is one of the most interesting coincidences I guess. My first day here was August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1992. My last day here will be August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1999. Pretty awesome [Laughter.] I was seven years as Associate Dean at Bowling Green and seven years as Dean at Northern Michigan, just these little coincidences. I'm also sure that tends for the future in other words. So I came here in '92, the summer of '92, and the move went very well actually and got started right away. I actually came here two weeks on my own, came here started on August 10<sup>th</sup>, I'd spent about two weeks living in the residence halls and working here. So while the family got ready for, they wanted to complete their summer, the house wasn't ready here anyway. So we basically orchestrated it so I then went home and just before classes started here, before school started I moved up here. So that worked out fairly well. One of the things I would comment on Russ, I think it's an interesting piece of business. When we came here in '92, Phil Beukema orchestrated a reception for us a couple of days after I got here. He orchestrated a reception for us over in the Charcoal Room and Madonna and I were absolutely taken aback, just absolutely taken aback. You've been to these receptions I know many times before, people stood in line for a half hour to say hello. It was amazing, absolutely amazing. I mean people really turned out, so it was a very welcoming thing. What we experienced early on was that the welcomeness, the kind of friendliness of both the campus and the community, that was the other side of the coin. The community out there is really good and willing to help out, and be supportive. We had never ever, in our lives been in a neighborhood such as the one we moved in to where people sent us flowers, it was unbelievable when we moved in. Then the neighborhood where live, it was an association, so they had a large gathering which they do every year. They welcomed us in, had a special cake "Welcome to the Marsdens." It was an amazing kind of a thing, which we, you read about, or you hear about a situation kind of like this, but you never experience it. So there's that real warmth. So, that was my introduction to the community and to some of the things about the campus. One of the things that certainly I've had to adjust to, since Bowling Green was not unionized and Northern clearly is, that adjustment. It's not difficult, it's just a different way of thinking. Bowling Green was under essentially a charter arrangement,

where the government's documents were well in place, and they are just about as specific as is a master agreement. But the process is different, in other words, in a master agreement what you have is the AAUP Executive Committee, in particular the person the Grievance Officer, adds a layer of discussion to any action. That doesn't apply to a charter arrangement. So for example, the Senate at Bowling Green is extraordinarily powerful. By contrast the Senate here has authority and power, but I suspect, I would venture to say the power is share between the Academic Senate and the AAUP Executive. That's my read of the current environment. So, whereas under a charter system you really don't have that fixed hierarchical structure. Well, over the years, when I came into the College of Arts and Sciences it was pretty obvious to me that a couple of things needed to be done, rather than just... One of the things I think is that the college was not operating as a college. I think it was operating as a series of independent departments. The general flavor of things was that what departments wanted, we would put forth. I came into a situation where I didn't accept that. I didn't necessarily include that because the department it was bigoted; it might have been quite good. But I tried to introduced to concept of college based decisions rather than just department based decisions. I would question, for example, grade changes, which apparently had historically not been questioned. If it had been, it wasn't the routine to be questioned. I began to question lots of activities, but again that's the natural tendency of someone coming in from the outside, they ask "why is it being done this way" and "what can we do maybe to improve that." I think the thrust was to focus on trying to get some quality control in that reserve, quality control measures in place and also to encourage professional development. That was really easy, it really needed a lot more attention. It was pretty clear to me that professional development, there was plenty money to do that wasn't the problem. But there wasn't much emphasis on professional development of faculty and staff. One of the things that I think we did do in the last seven years, was institute an enhanced program of development for faculty but we also created a program for clerical staff and professional staff. Which had never existed. Then we also created a nice network of support for students' professional development. We did that of course by fundraising, again that would have been done in a college, so we now have a telemarketing campaign which is very successful. Last year, apparently we just raised close to \$60,000 for the college. Over the period of my seven years the telefund has raised about a quarter of a million dollars to support students and this comes from alumni. In order to bolster that support we came up with idea of the newsletter which we've been publishing about twice a year, and that goes out to all the alumni that give us money, all the donors and friends of the college. Also to people on campus. So that newsletter helps reinforce the idea that the money we get from alums goes back to help students. Apparently it's working, as in alums are now understanding, very clearly by way of example, how the money they give influences the quality of education that student receive. So that's gone well. We've, one thing that I didn't accomplish and that was always a goal, though I never got around to it, because I was never sure that I had a good agenda for it. I wanted to develop a National Advisory Council for the college, I wanted to get that done and that still has yet to be done. I suspect I delayed in part, I'm not a person who puts things off if I think they need to be done. So my reflection on this would suggest that the reason I didn't move forward faster was I didn't think that our development work was in place yet and I don't think we had a significant agenda for them to deal with, because I don't want to put together a National Advisory Council and give them

nothing to do of substance. Yet I don't want them to come together and tell me what programs we need to offer in the college, now they could give me some advice but we can't let an outside group dictate the curriculum, the curriculum belongs to the faculty. They can comment on it and they can give us some suggestions, but I think we have to be careful that we don't lead them to believe, as a National Advisory Committee or Council, that they're in charge of the curriculum. That would be a mistake. The other thing we put a lot of effort on, a lot of time into is idea of interdisciplinary programs. Both for teaching a research. That's why when I joined Northern Michigan, the College of Arts and Sciences did not have any centers within it. Now it has three. The Seaborg Center of course already existed, but it wasn't within the College of Arts and Sciences. So when in my first year here, that was switched from Academic Affairs to the College of Arts and Sciences. And so then I became responsible for that and that's when the director at that time, Phil Larson, stepped down and we had a national search for a new director that is Peggy House. So that center came into the fold, and out of that center came the idea for other centers. As you probably know better than I would, one of the things that President Vandament and I came to include was that the culture of the Upper Peninsula in fact is distinctive, and is unique. We'd love at least the idea, with discussions with you and others, that a Center for Upper Peninsula Studies would make good sense. So that became the second center. The third center of course was directly related to the university's mission to work more closely with Native American communities, and that is to establish the Center for Native American Studies and now we have that in full form. These centers exist, by the way, in the case of the Seaborg Center we have our master's programs. They can offer curricular opportunities that are not traditionally offered through departments, they can offer research opportunities that are not traditionally offered through departments and so on. The other parallel piece of this is that I pushed from day one the idea of joint appointments between departments and centers, centers and centers, colleges, across colleges and so on. For a couple of years there we had what are called "temporary joint appointments" well I guess it depends in the time it went on two years, three years. But these last couple of years we've been very fortunate to get permanent joint appointments. The first two being the joint appointment that currently exists between biology and geography, the bio-geographer. Then the one that exists between the Seaborg Center and the Mathematics and Computer Science Department, the Math Education person. And we're gonna have others, I think in the future. So that's the direction that the college began and I think we'll continue to move there.

RM: Certainly.

MM: We've haven't ever gotten to really foster interdisciplinary teaching outside of the Honors Program. So the Honors Program of course is not within the College of Arts and Sciences. But it's the one place on campus where we can see regularly scheduled courses that are team taught. I would like to see more of that in the college in the future, if that's at all possible. The other thing that we began to do when I came into the college office, which was profound in a way, was to operate a decentralized budgeting system. Prior to my arrival, and it had nothing to do with me, the institution was very centralized. Bill Vandament decided to decentralize it. Unfortunately, decentralization occurred simultaneously with all the budget cuts. So for four of my first five years we were in budget cut situations left and right. So decentralization was meaningless in a

way because you have it, and now you don't have it. What kind of an argument...[laughter.] So we're now just beginning to get to a point financially where we can indeed look at better arguments for keeping certain money at the college level so we could do good things with it. Another important thing that happened budgetarily was summer school became interpreneurial. That is, we went to the interpreneurial model for summer school, and it made all the difference in the world. It allowed departments to plan summer school better, and to then make money for the fact. We came up with a system where the college received 1/3<sup>rd</sup> and the departments 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of all the profits. The college would then bail out departments that maybe had a troublesome summer in one way or another, at least up to \$1500-\$2000. Beyond that the departments would have to pay back that debt, but the college had some flexibility there to sort of help out some departments that might have had a bad year. Overall, the interpreneurial model for summer school brings in about \$80,000-\$100,000 every year for us. The other really budgetary success story I think is I lobbied hard, I mean as hard as I've lobbied for anything on the matter of equipment, because capital equipment is a real problem and still is in the College of Arts and Sciences. So we developed this idea of a capital equipment list, a five-year list which we now keep current every year. That list is used to lobby for increased funding, and right now there's about \$500,000 a year being set aside for capital equipment, okay? That's supposed to reach a million dollars, every year in other words a million dollars would be available. I think that budget pilot, that line budget item is there in part because of our effective lobbying on the behalf of our science departments in particular because they needed a lot of support, still do. But we're making real progress in this first go around on the capital equipment, Arts and Sciences got 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of that, because we had the arguments and we had the plans, we had it all really well. The college has come a long way in other ways in terms of planning, because we now have five year plans for technology, five year plans for staffing, five year plans for equipment.

RM: Now is that on the college level?

MM: On the college level.

RM: And also on the departmental level?

MM: On the departmental level, on the college level, these things are all there. So we're, if the newer administration coming into the college level has some real planning documents to work with. The other thing I did Russ, which was a little bit different, was I decided to use the Arts and Sciences Council, which is after all the elected faculty council much more fully than it had been in the past because in the past the college council was used for promotion, tenure, and sabbatical ranking, you know that was it. They didn't seem to have any other function. Well I decided early on that I needed a budget committee, a committee that would advise me on budgetary matters, particularly when we're facing all these cuts.

RM: Oh yeah.

MM: So I put together a budget council comprised of the elected people, Arts and Sciences Council, and four department heads that I chose. So we brought these people together and they became the advisory group for the dean in terms of that, and that was the first time that it ever happened and it was very helpful to me. But I've continued to use that model even until this year

when I had to come up with various five year plans and various approaches. What you find is those planning committees are reluctant to really make the hard calls, because in a sense it's very difficult for them. But they are very good at giving you the criteria by which the calls can be made. So what they're good at is really fostering a clear statement and understanding of what good criteria are for making selections, making priorities. So that was a good innovation. Another major thing which occurred shortly I arrived, I started asking about the university press because as a graduate student I was using publications that came out of here for some of my work so I knew it existed. I was told well that was suspended due to budget problems and so on. So I looked in the matter and found out that was true that it was just sitting over there in university relations I guess at that point. So what I did was talk to Phil Beukama and he and I talked about it, and he arranged for that to be shifted from where it lie in a suspended animated state, or state of suspended animation, and then brought it over to the Arts and Science College where as you know, through the good work of a whole host of volunteers we were able to bring it back to life. Over the time since we've resurrected it we've published about four titles and we've let one or two, one more for sure maybe two. That was a nice thing to do for the university and for the college, I think in terms of scholarship. I have put a lot of emphasis on professional development for the faculty. I think it's, I'm proud of that. I think that what happened is historically there was a de-emphasis on it, and I think what we've tried to do is establish a balance. Arguing that we're not ever going to be a research institution, we're not intending to be one. This is a regional, comprehensive, undergraduate, primarily undergraduate institution and selective graduate programs. What I argue is that you can't be a good teacher unless you're also a good scholar, the two are complimentary. I think there had been a dichotomy developed over the years that teaching and scholarship were not connected and I think that is what, that's partly what I've worked the hardest on is to get that misunderstanding clarified. The main thing, the main challenge of this job has been to get the college to think like a college, to think like a unit instead of all these series of separate departments. I think department heads, when the pinch was on budgetarily, staffing wise whatever, the departments heads have been able to come through beautifully as a team \_\_\_\_\_. Their cards were down, and they had to make that decision "do we anty up or get out?" They were always there with the right advice, they were very bold about that and that was good. What else developed I think a good relationship in the sense that, I don't take myself too seriously and neither do they [laughter.] It's just as well I think that we keep a good sense of humor about what it is we do. Is that, does that give you a good overview?

RM: Okay, now I have some of the questions here. One of the things I'd like you to go back to because it was something I stumbled across, something you did, your dissertation was on Henry Schoolcraft.

MM: Yes.

RM: Could you just talk a little bit about that?

MM: Yeah.

RM: Also comment on, didn't you also do a very lengthy article for the Smithsonian Book on Native Americans?

MM: Yes, we did. Native Americans on film.

RM: On film?

MM: Yeah. And my dissertation was on Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, a 19<sup>th</sup> century American ethnologist who of course lived in Sault St. Marie and ran the agency there. You probably know as much about him as I do. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was a bit of a scoundrel, but he was also an adventurer, explorer, you know always looking for an opportunity. He wanted to be the head of the Bureau of Mines, that's really what he wanted but never got that appointment. So Governor Cass, he wrote a campaign biography for Governor Cass of Michigan when Cass was running for the presidency. Anyway Schoolcraft had the local connections and essentially got assigned to the Sault St. Marie agency. Basically Schoolcraft spent his time collecting and dieseling a lot of ethnographic information about Native Americans. Some of which was accurate, some of which was not. The most important point though is that Schoolcraft was the source of virtually all information about Native American life and culture that has been infused in American literature. He was the single most important source for Longfellow, for a whole host of other writers, Thoreau. So which when you're looking at Schoolcraft, is a very interesting kind of sourcebook\_\_\_\_. So my dissertation was a critical addition of his personal memoirs, which were huge so I edited them with annotations and so on, it was a lengthy introduction placing his work in terms of its influence on American literature. It was profound, profound influence on American literature.

RM: Now was that, you had it published?

MM: No, I tried several times but they said it was too long, it was too complicated. Michigan State Press was interested in it at one point. But what I did published was the critical introduction. That was published in Northwest, oh what was it called... came out by Miami University it was Northwest publishing or...it was a historical.

RM: Northwest Ohio Quarterly?

MM: No it wasn't call Northwest Ohio, it was called. I'm trying to find it let me see if I can find it, it should be on my resume. Gosh I should know that, that was one of my earliest publications. Let's see if I can find it real quick. Northwest right! The Old Northwest.

RM: That's what it's called.

MM: So I published that in The Old Northwest. Anyway, so but Henry Rowe Schoolcraft has remained a fascination for me, I mean really quite a good one. The fact that I'm up here is, in this area that he traversed, and I gathered that Schoolcraft actually named Sugarloaf Mountain over there, they had given it a different name at one time or it was called something else. You go through Schoolcraft County. I remained interested in Schoolcraft because he was such a complex man, I mean here was a man who was married to woman who was half Chippewa. Yet who seemingly distained from Native Americans except as a source of information. So it was hard to really completely understand him, and he was successful later in life! He had a couple of, I guess real estate schemes that didn't work and all sorts of other things. But eventually got Congress to give him \$150,000, a princely sum I might say for the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to do his six volume history



of Native Americans. So that was interesting. Then the other thing I did for the Smithsonian, Jack Nachbar, my colleague from Bowling Green and I, we both co-edit the *Journal of Popular Film and Television* for a good number of years. He and I were contracted to do an article for the Smithsonian's handbook of Northern American Indians that dealt specifically with Native Americans on film. Now, you gotta think about this because I mean we did this about 1973, somewhere in that range. We went to the Library of Congress and we spent an entire week, 8 hours a day or more depending on how long they would let us stay there, viewing films on these old steam back editing machines. I mean unbelievable, I came out of there so groggy I couldn't stand up. I mean that was the only way to go back and look at some of these early films, because you couldn't get them any other way. I mean you couldn't get it on video tape, you couldn't get it any other way and the alternative was to go to someplace like the Eastman School, where they had to the big projections too, but then you would have to pay the projectionist too show them. So the Library of Congress was free to legitimate scholars.

RM: So these were the films that had been copyrighted?

MM: Oh yes, all of them had been filed.

RM: Right. They had them.

MM: Yeah any film that's copyrighted, two copies have to be filed, one or two copies have to be filed at the Library of Congress. Included what they called paper prints. Which were literally paper prints, not negatives you know in the same way. The significance of all this was Jack and I went back and looked at films that we'd read about, and we found that the reviewers were totally inaccurate. The reviewers were obviously reviewing, historically had been reviewing the films off of press releases not, they had never seen the films. We could tell by comparing the review against the actual film. So during that week, I don't know how many films we viewed but it was amazing. So we did that article, and we worked hard on that article. At that time both of us were young, assistant professors, just getting started you know. Here's a chance to publish in the Handbook of Northern American Indians, major Smithsonian effort, right? That thing was finally published in the late 1980s, well after I was full professor it was totally luck [laughter.] It was one of those incredible things. It's still a good piece, because it's a good piece of research that collects a lot of this information that's out. It's just frustrating when you're young and you want to get these things going, and it takes 15 years to get it in print and you think "oh is this fair? It's not fair!"

RM: It's actually a small, it could be a small book.

MM: Yeah. I know.

RM: Quite the extensive...

MM: We actually took the liberty at one point of actually trying to circulate that in a small monograph form, because for us people kept asking us though and asking us and we said "They got it, they got it, they go it, but that haven't published it." Anyway, that was a fun thing and I enjoyed doing that. But I think back on those years because, when you think back what it took to do that kind of research, which now is so easy. Compared to now it was horrendous to do that

work. Those rooms at the Library of Congress were hot, dark, you had to manipulate all these films.

RM: So how many films did you work with? Now were you...

MM: Eight hours a day!

RM: Were you, well this was done mechanically for you? Or you were hand cranking it?

MM: Well once you started it, it runs itself. But you can speed it up or slow it down or reverse it, see. So we could zip through things. We could see a lot of films that way because we could fast forward through stuff. The steam back editing machine was, in fact, you could let it run normally or you can speed it up or slow it down.

RM: Oh.

MM: So you can study individual frames, and you can do that kind of thing. But we covered, I don't remember the total number of films.

RM: So you had a list of films that you were familiar with?

MM: Right, right. We knew they had them.

RM: Yeah.

MM: And they \_\_\_\_ at the University of Maryland during the time. But it was an intensive week, you see, after they would kick us out of the Library of Congress Motion Picture Section we'd go to the Library of Congress and do the paper research. That is, look up the reviews, look up the other information so we'd spend our nights then downstairs.

RM: Having to wait for the material brought up to you, etc. So this was a very lengthy process?

MM: Yep, it was very lengthy. You know very exhausting but I look back on that and I say "You know what was one of those wonderful experiences that you don't very often have happen." But it is interesting about how all this comes together because it's just really, I've always let things... I got worked on Schoolcraft because Metro Williams, who was the big labor historian from, was that his name? Metro Williams from Wayne State? I think it was Metro Williams, he was the head of the labor archives there. He told me I should work on Schoolcraft. I was fishing around for a graduate topic. Nothing's been done...

RM: You're not thinking of Phil Mason?

MM: I am thinking of Phil Mason I'm sorry.

RM: It's okay.

MM: No, I'm sorry. Phil Mason. He's the one that directed me towards that topic.

RM: He had worked, he had done some work, he had done Schoolcraft.

MM: He had done some Schoolcraft work, he said that I should look at the personal memoirs because no one has ever done any of those he says. So it was fine. Of course, that leads to the things that you keep going on in life. One of my earliest publications as a scholar was actually on folklore. I became involved in folklore very early. In fact, I could have easily become a folklorist, I mean I was entranced by it. What I did in that earliest publication was take an anonymous play, a Tudor drama play *Arden of Faversham*, which was a popular Tudor drama which no one, it was anonymous, no one knew who wrote it. I demonstrated how it had come, it had come from the Holinshed's *Chronicles* that's where got the story from, whoever wrote it got the story from. And then it was embellished with foot motifs, that's what made it interesting. The story itself was pretty commonplace, but when they took the story and embellished it with all these magical events, which were all folklore and be understood by the audience to be a part of folk tradition. So I dissected it to show that, that connection. So because of that, I developed a real interest over the years of textual, I wouldn't call it textual deconstruction but textual, textual development. I'm interested in how a text develops over time. It's really what I want to know.

RM: Yeah.

MM: So for example, one my great discovers in life I thought was *Shane*, how *Shane* evolved. I mean here's a man who had never published a novel before and *Shane* appears on the scene, it's his first novel ever. You say to yourself "How can someone who has never written a novel, write such a perfect story?" You have to ask yourself that. Then you realize that it was an evolutionary process. Jack Schaefer hadn't put a \_\_\_\_\_ on Toledo, Ohio until after the war, until the '50s eventually. He wrote *Shane* on the back of a newspaper copy during the war. It was published in serial form in magazines, in serial form in the late '40s. It didn't come out in paper, in book form until the '49 or '50 I think, and then in paperback later on. It of course became a film in '53. But I'm interested in how these things evolve, a very interesting process very often. Stories don't just happen, the evolve. So we'll put that aside.

RM: Now how did you, you've to my understanding, you've found time to not only be a dean but you also keep up with publishing. Could you just comment on your publishing while you're still an administrator?

MM: That's, I'm glad to talk about that. I think that when I came to Northern I was determined that I was going to continue to teach and to do research, alright? And I did it because I like it, that's number one. But number two, is that honestly I believe that an administrator is about as effective as is their credibility. In other words, I think they have to be retain credibility. It's very difficult for an administrator to sort of try to indicate his expectation, or her expectation, that faculty should publish as well as teach, as well as do service if they're not doing the same three things. So I think you really have to set the tone, individually and collectively. So I believe a good administrator should in fact be a functioning professional. Now, realistically of course, you can't do it all, all the time. You have to figure out what your schedule is and what you're doing. One of the things that we committed ourselves to when we came, Madonna and I, is that we would become an intimate part of life on the campus. So we attended virtually everything we could, musical events, theatrical events, art openings, etc. We didn't make them all, by the - \_\_\_\_\_ of imagination, because there's a lot going on on campus. We became very active in the

community, with various arts organizations as well as with some political structures. In later years I became heavily involved in the Lake Superior Community Partnership, which is as you know and economic development activity. I became very involved at the cathedral, St. Peter's Cathedral, in terms of some of the, I'm chair of the Education Commission for the parish. My point is, I guess, we really gave ourselves pretty much 24 hours a day to the institution. To answer your question, I structured it in such a way, that over the three, let's see over the seven years that I've been here I've taught three independent courses. One in Art and Design and two in English. Then I did a short course, as you recall, called Introduction to Upper Peninsula Studies. I finally coordinated that, I didn't actually present the materials, I hired a number of individuals to make those presentations. And I've done special guest appearances in various courses. But at least I've at least been able to teach three times. I felt that was a very important kind of credential, because I could then say for example to the Department of English "Well, I've taught the graduate course in literary research." So I have some sense of the graduate students and the graduate programs. So I think, students are different from institution to institution. So I think you have to get a sense of students from the classroom. That has to be your experience. I also think it tests people, it gives you continuity and it test your own personal medal. It makes you question some of your own judgements. Is this really in the best interest of the teaching faculty, for example. And having been in the classroom with all of these students, you have before we started the formal interview we talked about how do you deal with difficult students? It's good to realize that faculty have to deal with students that might not always be on their best behavior, and they have to deal with them every day! So it's good to keep that in mind. But I did commit myself to continue scholarship which wasn't all that difficult because by this time in my career people were asking me to do things. I didn't have to go, I mean I still submit things of course, blindly. But more often than not I'm asked to do this, that, or the other thing. I've got enough academic and political connections in the academic world that I've cooperated with people on special projects and so on. So I was able to come out with a couple of books that really were cooperative efforts. Not things that I did myself. So I think that was very good. I've continued to edit the *Journal*, which I'm very pleased at and it's still functioning very well.

RM: And the name?

MM: *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, which I've brought with me here. Jack and I continued to coedit it until about a year and a half ago, and now I coedit it with Gary Edgerton who's at Old Dominion University. So we'll publish out of Washington by the health of the publication. So the editing is done here, the publishing is done elsewhere. But I'm able to continue to do some original research. My first couple of years here I coasted off of material that I had done before I came. That was research I had gathered but hadn't really published. But really I was able to do some original research after about a second or third year here. I had been publishing original things the last three or four years, which I'm very pleased at because I didn't know that I would be able to continue. But I have been, at least in a modest kind of a way. I mean I'm not, I mean I'm not a full time scholar so I can't do that. I think what it comes down is that if you choose to try to do both your good administrative work, some teaching and continue your scholarship, I means you have to get up your evenings and large chunks of your weekends because that's the reason I'm here. So when I came here I developed a pretty decent schedule for

me a least, because I would work obviously during the day on a regular basis. But I'd work every evening. Go home obviously for dinner, come back and then work. Partly because it's quiet and partly because that lets me be prepared for the next day and I can take what comes the next day. In other words, as you've heard before we started the interview, no day is without its problems right, crisis or whatever. Not a crisis necessarily, but the challenges. And I like to keep the day free by doing my homework the night before. Then I can respond to things that come along during the day.

RM: When you come back in the evening, what was the usual schedule? What time to what time?

MM: 9-1 was what I kept for a long time.

RM: And now in the evening you would take care of?

MM: I would do both. I would take care of the things I didn't get done during the day but I would also then continue to do my research and so on within the *Journal*, might do other things with the other hours that I had. It worked out pretty well, in the later years...

RM: In other words, was this, I mean you had a plan each evening? You work on some project? Or you took projects as they needed work?

MM: I took projects as they needed work. Lately I've been trying to catch up on the *Journal*, so I do read one article a night of the articles that are submitted. You know at least one, moving on to the other coeditor or to the managing editor. So I try to do that.

RM: And all your corrections in what colored pen?

MM: Blue! That's, only blue pencils.

RM: Blue pencils?

MM: I love blue pencils. Blue lead pencils.

RM: Okay.

MM: Can't live without them. Life isn't perfect without them. [Laughter.] So that part was actually pretty good. It, I started that pattern of working those hours when I was doing my dissertation and we had smaller children at home. And I pretty much continued because it works out well and allows my wife, Madonna, to have her alone time too. I really like the night hours in terms of just being able to focus. You're not distracted. Now sometimes I did conduct business, because people knew I was here. So they would call, I didn't really care, it was fine. E-mail, e-mail is becoming increasingly important. From the time I came to Northern till now, gosh we live in \_\_\_\_\_ back on our emails, so we use them. And it's also a very convenient to get back to people. One of the cool other things I've developed as an administrator is that I respond to every telephone message, every email message every day to the best of my ability. I don't let the day close without trying to get back to people. If they make an effort to call I try to get back to them and give them my responses. I don't always succeed, but I certainly do my best. I also stay professionally active, and I did go to at least one or two professional

conferences every year in addition to the typical Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences which is more administrative. So I kept active that way and that was for me has always been, as you know as a scholar yourself, conferences are a good way to test out ideas but most importantly if you are committed to giving a paper you write the paper, if you're not committed to do it you don't do it! [Laughter.] I mean I found those to be little handy devices personally to stay active. The longer I've been here the less, the more administrative work there seems to have be and less time I seek out for my own work. Partly because, and I think the staff in the office will tell you the same thing, I like to, I take things to myself, an opportunity comes along. I'm just interested in them, so I do it because I find it interesting. That might be the Summer Academic Success Academy, which we're starting this summer, or it could be a variety of other projects that come along which I just find interesting. So I let myself follow those tracks as they, if they're in the best interest of the college. But you always have to ask yourself that question, "am I really doing something that benefits the college or not?" That's a caution, we have to be careful.

RM: Okay. I guess the other, you've talk about the positive things you've done. I guess...

MM: The negatives?

RM: Are there somethings you wish had been accomplished? Or some plans that you have that were there that didn't evolve or didn't get support?

MM: I wish, because I mentioned to you earlier the National Advisory Council never came out. I wish I had been more successful in a couple of other front. Steve Christopher and I tried to sell the idea of both of us sharing a Development Officer here in the college. We were never successful in getting that funded. That's too bad, because I think we could have done good things for development work in our college. So I'm sorry that didn't work, 'cause I think we need it. Fifty percent of arts and sciences college across this country have Development Officers. People who are out there getting the money to support the programs. We don't have such a person. So I'm sorry we didn't do more for them. As much as we've done, we did do very little \_\_\_\_\_. The telemarketing campaigns been hugely successful, but that's only a piece of development, it's not even the major piece but it's an important piece. Another thing I regret is I didn't take a stronger leadership role in general education reform. It doesn't fall to the Dean of Arts and Sciences to have that role necessarily, but I could have been a stronger voice for reform. I remain convinced that the current smorgasbord programs for liberal studies is simply not serving our students all that well. It's not that their unhappy with it, it's not that they don't reflect back as alums on it very positively, because apparently they do according to the survey information we have. I don't think we're giving them the kinds of rigorous, flexible skills they need. I think that we need to back and develop a core curriculum that focuses on critical skills, critical thinking, clear straight forward forms of communication, value verification, there is a whole list of things that become important. But the current curriculum doesn't guarantee that, there are too many choices number one. Number two, nobody's watching to make sure those courses that are in those various categories are accomplishing what they say they're going to accomplish. I think thirdly, there really isn't a faculty wide commitment to these kind of core principles of general education, and I really wish there were many more, what do you call it, a more serious in-depth commitment to it as principles for \_\_\_\_\_.

RM: So you're saying that you have these core courses, but then these principles, faculty should be carrying into their...

MM: Every other course.

RM: Every other course.

MM: Right, they start in the core courses but then move beyond that to all the courses they teach. You should never have a student come up and say "Why are you grading my writing in this course, this is not an English course!" I mean preferably a student response. Well that's an inappropriate response which is born on the fact that apparently enough faculty don't require [laughter] good quality writing in their courses. So that needs to be reformed ultimately. General education is everybody's business too, not just Arts and Sciences. So I guess in terms of regrets, I'm sorry that I didn't take much more of a leadership role because I would have enjoyed that I think, ultimately. Another thing I think I have not been successful at; we've recruited some good leaders in the college. Department heads, program heads, and so those are good things. But we know we have never succeeded at, and I have to take some blame for this, is training the next generation, there is a reluctance on the part of any of our major administrators to train their successors. Or to train people who might go off and take another position perhaps. We don't do very much with that, if you look at benched strength, we just don't have it. So if somebody, if one of our department heads gets ill, if they get ill who do we turn to? Where's the next person in line? So we haven't really succeeded in that. I'm also...

RM: Do you feel that's a problem cause by training? Or is it a problem caused by the people we hire? Or a combination of the two?

MM: Partly both. I think it's mostly though the environment. The environment is such that we, I inherited the inner culture that says once you're appointed to an administrative position you have it for life. It's like the Supreme Court. I think that's wrong, I think that when you're talking about a dean or a vice-president they don't have a position for life, they should have it for a defined period of time. They hopefully do good work during that time. But I inherited a situation where department heads were serving for long, long, long periods of time and not at all thinking about who's gonna follow me, or who's gonna take over when I, whenever. That's part of it. The other part of it is contractual. That is, there's still a clear reluctance on the part of the faculty to accept the fact that the department head is not a faculty member. A department head is part of management. They are not in the union; they are outside of the union. But most departments still hang on to the idea that the department head is a colleague, a faculty colleague, not an administrator. They don't see department heads as an administrator, as such, because of that there isn't the training process that I'm talking about.

RM: Sure.

MM: Or that's part of the problem.

RM: Yes, it's larger than that.

MM: That's part of the problem, because they don't see department heads as administrators necessarily. So therefore they don't see why we would want to \_\_\_\_\_ "anybody can do that job" attitude. Well, no. Anybody can't do that job, some people can and some people can't. The other thing I'm sort of sorry about, we didn't make much progress in my time here. I'll give you the contract we revised. The contract, in it of itself was not a problem because the contract was a way of describing behavior, expected behavior, guaranteed behavior, you know whatever. But there are certain things in our contract that are not serving the best interests of this institution. They are not. The contract has too much which focuses on playing to the middle and not enough playing to the edges. So for example, we don't have no vestiges of America. Just as an example, and I think that's a mistake. We don't have a clear statement in the contract anywhere on the relationship between scholarship and teaching. I can go on with those kinds of things. What I'm saying is that I'm sorry we didn't have much more of a dialogue about the contract.

RM: Okay, then you only had what one opportunity? I mean it was only once?

MM: There were two in there. There was an extension opportunity and then there was a full flown opportunity about half way through my term, or two thirds through my term, through my seven-year term. I know I haven't been; I didn't have that many cycles. But I was still disappointed, the conversation seemed to be on issues that to me were not the heart and soul of the institution. So I worry about that.

RM: Now do you feel well this last, this latest and last initiative that Phil Beukeman began looking at this question of scholarship and the will of scholarship, do you think that is a move in the direction you're talking about?

MM: It could be, but Phil's intent wasn't for it to be in that direction. But I think some people have misread it. Some people are misreading the documents, either intentionally or unintentionally but they're misreading the documents because the documents of scholarships assessed are indicating that scholarship should be broadened, but it's scholarship that has to be evaluated. What I hear people interpreting on the streets around here is "Oh this means anything goes! This means we can put anything in..." that's not what's being, that's not the intent or direction of scholarship assessed. So I don't think people read it as carefully as they should've. At least if I'm judging by what they say, I don't think they read it as carefully as they should've. But I think Phil, to answer your question, yeah. Phil was right on target, he was moving in the right direction and he was trying to get the faculty to go along with that. But it's hard, it's hard as you know. Another failure I've had here is I really, I think in terms of, I have not been able to get the whole committee process streamlined. Some of us, we go to so many meetings and we hear exactly the same thing, slightly different versions of it, 3 4 or 5 times. We have never developed an efficient meeting schedule. Now on the success side, in Arts and Sciences we've streamlined our department meetings, we don't delay we get to the points. So we've had some successes there.

RM: I'm trying to think of some of the others. Do you want to comment on your interaction with the television station?



MM: Well, I think that's been a disappointment, that's a good point. When I came to Northern I came as a veteran of having produced and hosted a television series at WBGU Television in Bowling Green. I produced a percent, in six years hosted for five of those six years, and it was a weekly television program dealing with higher education issues. Focusing on campus visitors and/or some of our own faculty and staff that were doing interesting things. It was a way of sharing all of this with a larger audience. Also for a short time, about two years, there was also a radio version of the show which was aired on about four or five other stations across the region. But when I came here, I had been totally, absolutely totally unsuccessful at selling to concept of the institution presenting itself as place where ideas are heard over our television station. Obviously we have been totally unsuccessful. So since I've been here I think I've produced, one program and hosted another one, coproduced one program I should say with Steve Christopher who did an hour long special on the Theory of Evolution to counterbalance a program that the television station had done on the creationist science. So Steve Christopher and I did that, and then more recently I did a half hour live show, I hosted that on Ask NMU. But we haven't done any serious radio or television work since I've been here for the university. So it's been a real disappointment because I think those are tools to reach out that are very real and a very significant part of academic life, and we're putting a lot of money into it so we might as well get something out of it in terms of the institution. So that was a disappointment because I came from an environment in which that kind of interaction between the academic affairs and the broadcasting facilities, that interaction was encouraged, even required, to an environment where it was barely tolerated. So that was a disappointment to me. On the positive, I was gonna follow up but I was going to change topics.

RM: So there was never a, you were never able to get the powers that be then to see that putting an academic program on television would enhance the university in eyes of people, parents and grandparents, who might influence their offspring to come to Northern?

MM: Right. Totally unsuccessful, I even tried for a while. I figured that, Bill Vandement for example, I thought would make an excellent host for a show. It wouldn't have to be weekly, it could be monthly, on issues in higher education. He would have been perfect for it. Anything from budgeting to why, for example, formula funding is not a good idea for Michigan. Bill knew everything there was to know about formula funding, ultimately. Why couldn't we do a show like that? I might parenthetically add that to the new president I'll be working with, Bob Custra, has his own weekly radio show on public radio down at Eastern Kentucky University, and deals with higher education issues every week. Week in and week out he has a large audience because it's public radio for a huge part of Kentucky. So I raise that only because I know that it can be done. I wasn't even able to sell Bill Vandement as a show. So yeah, I'm disappointed.

RM: You mean not to him, or to the?

MM: No, to the broadcast people. When I think back on it, Bill would have been a wonderful host, he's got that style. It would have been smooth, it would have been easy, it would have been nice. Anyway, so that was a disappointment, and I'm sorry that didn't work out. I am glad over the years that I've been here that I was able to get to know a lot of people in the College of Technology and Applied Sciences.

[Audio cuts out abruptly.]

END OF INTERVIEW.