

Interview with Arthur Neiger 4/5/96

INT: Basically I would like to get started if you could give me a little bit about your background, your education and how you came to Northern.

AN: Well I got out of the service and all that is left to be done and I went to stop at Mt. Pleasant and the winter semester was about to start, and my mother said why don't you go up and enroll. So I went to enrolled for the lack of nothing better to do. I went two years before I was admitted.

INT: At Western Michigan?

AN: At Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant. I was looking around and I was going to be a conservation officer because I liked the outdoors and tired of Detroit and I said man that was too long. So I went into teaching and teaching was four years. And I liked the industrial education with ? and so one so I became a industrial arts teacher. Taught in Pelston Michigan for ten years, industrial arts and I was ? director there, it was a small high school class C. I did carpenter work there, I had a contracting business going. And one day some people drove up in a State car and said I understand you are doing a great job here at Pelston. Would you like to come to Northern and teach? So with four kids, we thought that is one way we are going to get those kids to college, so we did and I taught in the Industrial ed department from 1960 to 1967. I decided I would work on my Ph.D, I went to the University of Minnesota and to ? and to U. of M, and so on. so I decided I would go down and try a year of teaching at Michigan State, so in about '67 or '68 I taught there and ? courses and so forth. I came back here in late '60's, I stayed down there one full year and a summer session. And there salary raise was going to be so small, \$150, I couldn't afford that, so when I was trying to decide what to do I got a call from the Vice President for Public Service wanting to know if I would come over there set up a, what they call a program of general studies, what is really Community College within a university. I found it exciting so I did. That is how I got started in this whole field of continuing ed. They called it public services at the time. And it was the outreach of the University. The president we had then put heavy emphasis on faculty, and staff and out in the field working with teachers working with community government people, all the ? and so on and so forth. So anyway, I sketched out the notes here, I guess at the time I was going to be vague somewhere around '68 or '69 I took over this program of General Studies, which I said was the development of a community college within the University with a focus on one and two year certificate and associate degree programs that were primarily of vocational nature not general education. These were programs where the goal was getting a person a job, one year programs like in welding. Very Very little academic courses if any in welding, a little bit of metalwork but we taught that right in the classroom, you get health programs like, practical nursing, we

had medical secretary, all those kind. Some of the ? some of the ? were important. Like in the medical secretary, the secretarial skill, we got the school of business where they learn typing over there, and learn short hand. When it comes to learning medical terminology and the practices in the hospital, I brought in people from the hospital to teach this. I had them all approved by the committee of undergraduate programs so they are legitimate with the University and carry credit. Some places we teach technical mathematics and I have hired people from the field for that. Not our Mathematics professors because they weren't geared up that way. It was quite a job to blend practical education with traditional college education. and it did work out pretty well. Well even though everybody has lucky breaks and I, and the luckiest break I had was to realize that to make a medical secretary program really work you had to have people from the field to tell you what should be in there. So I had advisors, I used advisory committees on every program I put together. I saw to it they weren't a rubber stamp those people I made them they came to the campus or I went to them and we discussed issues and so forth and then I went to the right department to get the kind of course we wanted. And many cases department had to tether(?) a course. This was back in the '60 or late '60's and academic people lived in kind of an isolated sphere they had blinders on they didn't see the field. I had worked out in the field before so you had to get the realistic world in here in order for these people to function on the job. So that is the nature of the beast. We develop programs on the basis of the need and we did extensive survey and they would show you where jobs come under that program. A lot of programs were willing to start but there weren't jobs. For example one of them was this whole matter of recreational specialist, we got it all figured out we taught a guy to mount bindings on ski's, how to take care of skates, how to fix outboard motors and all of that. We researched that all out and there weren't jobs enough full time jobs that a guy could support a family. One other time we did an extensive research, I got a grant from the link foundation, on the feasibility on having airplane and power ? mechanics. I got a 3 state conference together, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota, the Upper Great Lakes States, I got a grant from them to do this and I brought the FAA people and the CAA people aviation people together. And when we got all through this we looked at it and said this the way the jobs would run, run through the two year program got a degree and hustle out for a job, Fontana Aviation in Iron Mountain couldn't afford to pay him the wage so ah these kids would gravitate towards, we didn't do this we found out this is what happens, they go to Kansas City for American Airlines and they become an airplane mechanic. Out there they find out it is such a sophisticated operation they fixed the right hand landing gear on these big planes, that is all they do day after day after day. They would come back to Marquette and go to work for Frie Chevrolet. I think that is what they are having problems with right now. I think they put a couple million dollars into equipment for that Aviation program. I think they are having difficulty right now

because the jobs aren't there. So we did that very carefully we surveyed to be sure there were jobs. So any way along in this whole mish mash, law enforcement was beginning to emerge as cops had to be trained. You couldn't just give them a gun and put them out on the street. Too many professionals. So we got a little tiny grant from I think it was LEA, Law Enforcement Administration out of Washington. I think that money was handed down to the state and then dished out from the state. We had a little grant to run a two week police academy. So I got an advisory committee together in Criminal Justice and that same time our Marquette County Sheriff, who was a pretty progressive guy lost his job in an election, his name is Tom Jinstead, And so advisory committee said lets put him in charge of this two week program. You know he was out of work, a two week academy I think we had enough money to pay him for six weeks something like that. So he put this two week program together and I just kind of watched it on the side because it wasn't a certificate or associate degree program just a public service.

INT: Were there police science classes already at Northern?

AN: Oh no.

INT: This was the first?

AN: The very first and it was a non credit affair. ? credit. Now this is another one. I think I am getting a little lost. But anyway the program proved popular across the country to train police officers. So it seems to me we went from two week program, to a four week to a maybe six week or eight, ten, twelve up to sixteen weeks. Now that didn't happen all at once but over a period of time each year the thing got a little bit longer. So we ended up with a police academy, so Tom Jernstead the sheriff, he coordinated the thing and our advisory committee selected people to teach the program courses and they were all police officers or they were attorney's, or prosecutors and so on and so forth. I can't remember when this happened, shortly after that correction's officers, or corrections officers departments all of a sudden realized correction officers needed to be trained. They can't just go in and expect to be correction officers. So we set up an advisory committee and used basically our same committee and brought in corrections people and they said probably know how to deal with the inmates. So I am thinking in my mind well now how do you deal with people. That is Psychology and ethics, so we put some courses together and about that time we had enough kids graduating in that sixteen week program and police officers out in the field coming in graduating from it. So someone said, why can't we get credit for some of this towards a degree? So I worked out a program, I think we started with a two year program that they had some college English, some college Math, had some Ethics, Philosophy, the police chief said oh my your not going to put our guys in a Philosophy class. You two guys come with me and we are going over to the Philosophy people and you two tell me what kind of course we need.

INT: so you started teaching more than the Nuts and bolts?

AN: Yes, they wanted a professional person.

INT: So for the first time law enforcement and correction person were being educated.

AN: Yes so I don't recall but anyway, the program, the law enforcement program was going full bloom at this time this sixteen week program. We were running by as fast as we could. And they we accessed other grants to upgrade these people out in the field. At one time I had four men who left here on Monday morning and didn't come back here until Friday night. They were combing the peninsula putting on these programs that we provide. We had full cooperation from the Michigan Law Enforcement training concept. They were the guys that had the bucks, so we worked with them as well as the advisory committee when they tried to overrule what we were going to do all I had to do was call our advisory committee together and a phone call to Lansing and they would do what we wanted us to do. So that is about the way the sucker went. We moved from a 16 week program then I ? a lot in credits, I said well lets try a two year associates program. And I had a lot of bucking from the faculty and that. They said you want to train ? stick people and all this kind of crap. But we prevailed and we set the program up and the kids were going through that. When we had the academy, this is an important thing, when we had the academy for the 16 week school right in the two year program. That is where I had my most trouble with the faculty, getting that credit for that approved, as far as the program. But we did.

INT: So as far as the program they are already certified?

AN: You bet, they can go to work. I stuck with that, I said we are not going to write a two year program just for the sake of an associate degree, we want these people ready to go to work. And all of a sudden we had graduates, including my own son, and I come home one night and we set here with a Michigan State University catalog. And I said Mike what the hell you doing with that. He said he wanted to get a bachelors degree in Criminal Justice and Michigan State is the only one that has it. And I said well lets have a look at that, as a result of that he ended up with a bachelors degree in criminal justice with a major in Law Enforcement. The same time the corrections thing was coming on, the guys were coming on, so we set up I think we set up a two year program in criminal justice for corrections officers and also private security was coming in at the same time. So anyway I hired two guys on Law Enforcement, Ron Nicksetch and Larry Johnson and in Corrections I had Richard Johnson who is one of the wardens in the State, and Larry Johnson is chief of police in Indiana or Ohio, I forget just where, a big department, it shows what the educated guy can do. And Ron Nicksetch is in Texas or was in Texas and he manages a huge academy down there. I don't know what it is all about but it is in law enforcement field. I

then hired a fella, Ken ? in security and he since has left and gone to Speigals, head of security for speigals, we have had some top notch people. We were luckier than hell to this kind. DNR came on board then, because they had authorization to carry guns and they were having liability and law suits and ?. So we adopted them into our program, we ran a separate academy for practicing law search and we ran the two year and four year for people who wanted to start up themselves and ? with it. So we added in the chief of law enforcement for he DNR for the Upper Peninsula, Frank Kopoko was one of them and he is now Deputy Director. We stuck with that program and now mind you this was in with continuing education this is not an academic department we were a separate part of the University and we reached a point where we had 450 majors. I was handling along with developing all of these other programs. So I started talking to the Vice President I said look we have to do something in this program I can't continue to manage it the way it is. The guys were overloaded, overworked and that is when Ron and Larry started looking for another place to work. It was just ? course. We were the biggest by far the biggest department on campus and we were keeping a lot of other departments alive. I know the Philosophy would of folded if it hadn't been for us having all the officers in the Ethics ?. So I recommended to the President of Academic Affairs that we establish a center for Criminal Justice. I didn't want things get mired in mirk of an existing school like Arts and Sciences. Because I knew what the hell had happened in there. You get in there and you have to fight with all the other departments for money and space so on and so forth. Riajala he didn't buy my judgement he said we are going to put in the school of Arts and Sciences and make it a department. Immediately what I predicted would happen, happened, we had to ? our enrollments boy we bringing students on this campus like can't believe and we were giving them a good job too. Not just a smuck...? So we ended up exactly what I was afraid we had to compete with, English department for money, science department for money oh god, and he ? the faculty so the program still goes. What we wanted int he center was to have a full ? approach we wanted to have the law enforcement training go and we thought that would maybe peak out. Because after a point you need more officers trained, corrections was coming on as a big thing this is in the '80's the prisons were being built, guards had to be trained because again of the liability and law suits. Security was in demand in the big cities, it wasn't in demand around here, but Ken ? in his national contacts we were able to place all these kids, and then the fifth program we wanted to start that we thought would be coming on and never did really materialize, that was the administration adjustments the court system, that never really caught on and we never did start it. I guess that what we did, well lets see, what I have sketched down. We started a program for kids, the Alcaught program it runs in the summer.

INT: Does that have something to do with the American Legion?

AN: yes, the American Legion.

INT: I was in that program.

AN: well you know what that is all about. I hired Bob Hanson he was, when did I hire Bob, he was coming out of the military and he had been in the

INT: in the intelligence

AN: yes, the intelligence, the CIA or hell, it wasn't the CIA, Army intelligence, so I hired him. He had an academy for us for a long time. Then we put it in the academic part of the program so I guess that is roughly the things. We were running full board, we had 450 majors in there, we were graduating 70 to 80 police academy people, every year, we ran two academy's one in the fall and one in the spring. So

INT: You said the department wasn't received well by the rest of the University.

AN: at first no, it was the last thing to be training cops. In an academic community.

INT: what were some of the arguments against it.

AN: well just the fact they didn't realize and didn't know, it wasn't that they hated cops, well we did have a period of time when there was a dislike for government you know. It never really bothered us we have a good clean honorable program and kids were getting jobs. I think that might of been a little part of it these kids were getting jobs and people who come out of oh hell social services programs found out they couldn't get a job unless they had a masters degree. Our kids were going out and reeling in the jobs, good credit. I guess that was a long time ago, but we crossed that bridge and when we started putting lots of people in these other departments sometimes we didn't use the traditional course and we asked them to design a course, that was a little bit hard, but they, most of the departments come around to it. There I couldn't get from the academic faculty I went out in the field and hired attorneys or whatever I had to hire got away with that. Now they have union, faculty has unions, its tougher, I could do it. But I have lot, president gave me lots of freedom to let me do what I want in this course. I produce for them so I don't have any problems. He said if you want to do something like that give it a try. So you know that is really from about 1968 to the early '80's. We had a lot of grants, we were lucky we got grants. At one time I had almost two million dollars in grants. So I was busy, I didn't look around the ? as much. And I had these guys out in the field, Ron ? and Larry Johnson whenever we had an opportunity to go into a school or go into the community we put on a program for them. A professional ? so even the community understood what this program was about.

INT: But the administration at first didn't see a need for the professional law enforcement personnel.

AN: Well at that time this program kind of grew with the times. When it first started we were meeting the community needs, we were giving these officers that were in the field a two week program. As the needs changed we elevated the program to a certificate and associate, and a bachelors degree. In those days if you produced the graduates you got the money to run the program. Now I have to admit to all fairness to the guys that are there today, the money isn't there you have to fight for every dam dollar there is. There isn't the grant money like there used to be. If the university didn't have 200,000 dollars for a particular program, hell I could go to the Feds and I could get 400,000 dollars. And I could come back with that and the University is happier than hell. so we use grants. And alot of that money is dried up, But I still feel I know of other areas where I have been called back to help out. There is still grant money to help develop a program. But you can't depend on grants for money. When I was in this business you running the program was based on getting more students. Every student you got the University got a few more bucks. That has changed now, they limit the enrollment, but I still think that if people handle this thing right there is grant money out there.

INT: You said it started out as a public service, a police academy.

AN: Yes,

INT: What were the contributions of the local law enforcement, because they ? in that.

AN: Well there contributions were basically what I mentioned before. The biggest contribution was that they served on an advisory committee, we met once a month. And we talked not only with the people that were teaching the program, but with the students of it. Took the remarks back, the chiefs talked to their own community people, their own city managers I think we had three or four city managers on our board. So our finger was on the pulse what was needed and what was ? we needed. The biggest thing was we kind of fed these people in the community by inviting them in to tell us what they needed. We didn't always do what they want and I made it real clear to them that I invite you in here as an advisory, and what you tell me is not necessarily going to be done, but we will incorporate what we can in the program. I didn't want them to get the feel that what they said we had to do. I put hard on them that this is a advisory committee and I outlined their role. But that is something I learned, if I ? they didn't have any training in this stuff. I just happened to with luck, ??. So another way the community helped is that they provided us with police officers. For instance in the defensive driving I used a couple of officers from the Marquette PD to help with that, we had a skit put on at the Lakeview arena after that was used. Spun cars around, learned how to handle the cars. There was a young officer up in Negaunee who is hell of a marksmen, and had him run our firing

range.

INT: Do they still have local officers help out the academy.

AN: Yes, and we have prosecutors come in to sometimes just to teach a course or sometimes just to come in as a specialist. So our kids had a good feel for the whole realm, judges we had judges come in and talk about the pros and cons of the law you know. And administration and justice and so forth. So it was truly community program. And I know that Northern Michigan University at that time was intricate part of the Upper Peninsula. I mean we were into every community, in all kinds of things, health, not just things with health social services, economic development, we had one guy that worked with us, his job sounded like a great job, his job was to go around to every municipality, and attend there commission meetings, their city commission meetings, county board of supervisors that kind of stuff. I couldn't go to every one all the time, but that is his job in the field, but he could feed back to us, he bring me back information, like why don't we do something on law enforcement, he had all kinds of feedback coming to us, to keep those programs up to snuff. There is excitement I had lots of fun, just taught them all I know, freedom to do things, and ?? I never had any problems. Worked with teachers, upgrading teachers, medical people, teaching the regular teacher how to work with handicapped kids, but again that all comes through grants. I guess that answers your questions, I can't see anything else I scribbled down here.

INT: You answered all the questions, and you answered them before I even got to ask them.

AN: I tried to give you a picture what it was like.

INT: you have been very helpful.

AN: there was a lot of stuff here, I am sorry if I can't be more definite on dates, that is the one thing I am sorry about, I just don't have dam thing, I just can't figure out all these records were in the department, I do know when the department went