

Interview with Forest Roberts, Marquette MI. July 20, 1994

Forest was associated with the speech department and the theater at Northern Michigan University and will be discussing his career and life at Northern between 1928 and his retirement 1966.

RMM: ok, Professor Roberts lets start with a pertinent question. What is the date of your birth.

FR: October 15, 1901.

RMM: Ok so your almost the same age as the university. Now how did you become associated with the university, even a little before that what were some of your educational background and some of things where were you born, where were you from prior to coming to Northern.

FR: I was born in southern Iowa and I grew up in a small Iowa town called Lemoni, I think it's population is between 2 and 3,000. And I was , I went to high school there. They had a junior college which was , called Graceland college and it was a church supported college but fortunately it was accredited and when I was in my teens my father died and that left the farm we had about 160 acres that left my mother to handle. She was a good manager and I was at the age, I was in my teens and so I helped out quite a good deal, I expect I had milked hundreds of cows. We were on this dairy farm this small dairy farm and let me tell you there is never an end to the work. I don't think it hurt me a bit but they had a good local high school and we had some outstanding teachers there I remember two of them: Dr. Max , who was the principal at that time, he went from Ramona High School right to a position in Iowa State, State university there. So he was good and there was also my english teacher, I think I was very fortunate in having a good english teacher. Her name was Stanley, Mrs. Stanley and she was a inspiration, but I had a good high school background and I was awarded this scholarship, the high school scholarship which would entitle me to go tuition free to either Ames, Iowa or to Iowa City and ordinarily I would have gone and used that but it was, it happened to come at a critical time when I was sort of desperately needed on the farm and so I had to forgo that scholarship, but shortly after that things let up, there was money available and my mother made it available to me and that there was enough money available that my expenses were where I didn't have to worry all the way through getting my BA from Iowa City, the State University. I went ahead from there and got my MA, masters degree, from Iowa City. And back then in those years if you had a masters degree you could go most anywhere you wanted to teach. Because that was almost the equivalent of PH degree would be today. I got my masters degree and my in the home town wanted me back to teach courses in communication and debate, debate, the debate team, and so forth. Well I had a great deal of fun and I had student that was very good who worked with them and you

felt like you were getting someplace. So I came back and I taught there and when I was teaching at this college I was in the middle of class and the door opened and the president of the school, his name was Briggs, he came in and he was escorting a young girl, and he said "Mr. Roberts, here is a young girl, Ester, she is late about a week or ten days, she thinks she can make it up without too much difficulty, will you take over and see that she does, or help her" and of course there was only one thing to do and that would be to say of course. And I found out that this girl was a little mature than the average run of the college freshmen girls and she had been out of school a short time and she taught country school for two years while I was, I spent some time when I was growing up in country school and I knew anybody that could teach at country school and keep it going and be on top that they had something, they had some real ability. And so I found out that this girl that the president had sort of dumped on me, I found her name Ester Saulter she came from Wisconsin I found out and I found out that she had had two years teaching experience. And so we moved on from there, and I helped her along but she didn't need a great deal of help, but the more we worked together the better we liked each other and it wasn't too long before we became engaged. Ester's mother became a little concerned, because she was up in Wisconsin, and her daughter was in southern Iowa and attending a school that she had never heard of before, but the reason that Ester went down there for school where I was teaching was she had a sister, an older sister and a son in law who had given a considerable amount of money to this school, and of course they wanted Ester to come down, which she did. But anyway that is how I met her. And one thing led to another and after a few months we were engaged. We went back to her home in Wisconsin and were married. And quite a few of the relatives and they were shaking their heads, they're too young.

RMM: And how old were you?

FR: I was about, I must have about 22 or 23. I know, of course at that time I felt I was foolish to think that we were too young. We went ahead and we made, Ester and I were married and we had the blessing of her people and my people both and we went ahead and got married. And I continued my teaching at the College, she graduated with what she did with her certificate, her teaching certificate. And then she had a sister who was living in Chicago and teaching there and she wanted Ester to come and join her, there were a few positions open, and so Ester left southern Iowa where her positions were just social and she went over there and she taught and then I got, I had my name in for summer school job and with the Clark & Brewer teaching agency which was one of the strong agencies in Chicago at that time. I had my name with them and they had a position open up at Marquette, Michigan for summer. A six week summer school, would you be interested. Well I had never heard of Marquette before, I didn't even know what it's position was on a map, and I looked around and it didn't take me long to say I think I would be

interested and my wife has said yes, let's go. And when otherwise I might have been cultivating corn for my mother. I went up to Marquette Michigan for a six weeks

RMM: What year was that?

FR; That was way back in 1928, the summer of 1928 and well the summer schools up here were a lot of fun, there were a lot of mature people coming in, they were trying to upgrade their degrees, there was considerable pressure in this state at that time to upgrade their degrees and so the best way to do that would be to take summer courses. Well I taught that summer and before the end of the summer, the president who at that time was John M. Munsen, who he sort of, I don't know, had his eye on me and he gave me an offer before the end of the summer. And it was a pretty good offer, and I debated whether I should give the Chicago school, let them know I wont be back and they would have to get a substitute.

RMM: Now were you teaching when your went to teach in Chicago, you joined her?

FR: Yes, I joined her.

RMM: You left Graceland College and taught in Chicago?

FR: and I taught in Chicago. While she was teaching at Itaska, which is a, on the fringe of Chicago, I was teaching at Berlin, I had a job at Berlin, but it was a pretty good job and at that time the Berlin school had quite a reputation, it's principal or superintendent, a fellow by the name of Shorts, but he had a reputatition all over the nation and so it didn't do me any harm to get a position in that school, in which I did. And then I went to making a long story short I went back to State University of Iowa got my masters and even some beyond that and then I was open for job and the president of Northern who knew me quite well, when he found out I was available he gave me a very good offer.

RMM: This was Munsen?

FR: Yes, no that wasn't Munsen, the president of Northern at that time was lets see what was his name, well let's see it isn't with me right now but I took the job at Northern one or two years and Ester in the mean time had made connections in Chicago. She and her sister were pressuring me into getting a job in Chicago which I did and then let's see

RMM: Then you were up in Northern in the summer of 1928

FR: Yeah I was up there in the summer of 1928 and that's the time I got the position, the summer school position here, I had not never heard of Northern before, I hadn't even heard of Marquette Michigan but a good job, so I took it, my wife

has ~~no hard feelings~~ with me and we like it here and fortunately they like me and they like her and she fit in in a teaching position and did all the teaching all the teaching she wanted and about that time we thought it was about time to start a family and so we did, we had our first born, a boy, Allen, Dr. Allen Roberts, he was a clinical psychologist, a very prominent one in Madison right now. He comes up here, he owns a cottage here on the other side and then that was, and then we had a daughter, a son, and a daughter and we came here and settled here and they were born here and they had pretty good, very close ties to this area. My daughter went her, she went here, she teaches in one of the suburbs of Atlanta, she has a good teaching position and she likes it. She married a mathematical genius who is mathematical powers are far beyond me, Jim, he's a good person I like him, he fits nicely with the family. My son has he has a daughter and he has two sons. So that makes the whole family, sometimes this summer, this place here is sort of a home place for them and one of these times, see my wife died this year, one of these times well, it's nice, I enjoy being here, of course. But the time will come and I can visualize it, and it may not be to far along, I'm 92 and when I get a few more years on there I'm going to have to change my style I suppose.

RMM: Going back to when you first came to Marquette, came to Northern, could you talk a little about what Northern was like, how would you characterize the students, maybe talk a little bit about the faculty?

FR: I came here to teach first in the summer school. I discovered that there were a lot of experienced teachers coming in to take courses at Northern at that time. And before long, I figured out why that is. The state was demanding that they had, the teachers had an excelerated background. So they, most of the teachers were out had to take courses to bring them up to state requirements. And those teachers who were out, that group in summer, they were a fine group, I enjoyed it. In fact, I enjoyed teaching very much here. With that student body, of course, there were younger ones who were, who had never had any experience too. So, I had a mixture. And before the end of the summer, I think I told you, that President Munson who had a reputation of being a severe and very exacting administrator or president he offered me a permanent position that continued to rise in salary from what I was getting in the Chicago area. And I talked it over with my wife Hester and she liked it here and by then she was at that time pregnant with our first child and so she thought that rather than ? it would be much better if we'd stay here rather than going back to Chicago. And that's what we did. When I started teaching here I taught communication courses and I also directed plays. And this was done as part of the English department. And so I was a member of the English department for several years. But I thought it was a little bit foolish for me to do all the work of the department head and not get any credit for it. Our Dr. Thomas was in charge of the English department then and he and I got along very well. There

was no hard feelings between us. And when I suggested that I would like to break off, by that time we had about two more people teaching speech subjects or related subjects, and so I told Mr. Thomas I thought the time had come when we should break loose and have a separate speech department. He went along with it. He didn't nose on to some people in that position would immediately think well you're a danger in my department. But he didn't, he was much to his credit, Dr. Thomas. And we were friends for many years, until after he retired. And after he retired he by the way, he was a native of the Copper Country, and after he retired he spent a number, I think about maybe six or eight years which I think were fairly pleasant years for him, and he lived here in Marquette, up on a corner street on Front Street, not to far away from that old fire department building. And well anyway, I decided that we should have our own communications department and he went along with it, and so we started. And had some very good people to help.

RMM: Who were some of the faculty?

FR: Well, let's see. There was one of the early ones who was a girl, or lady by the name of Martha Beammen, Martha Beammen. She was a good teacher. She was an asset to the department. And let's see, there was a fellow that I had lost track of, but he was here for about two or three years in the department, his name was Walker, Phillip Walker. But he never made much of an impression in the department, he was an average good teacher. And we had two or three others in that category. And a little bit later on, I, we got a fellow, his name was Jim Rapport, and he came into the department and we knew almost instantaneously that he was a fellow of ideas and a person who would like the department. And by that time I was getting to the age when I thought I should be retiring. The state of Michigan had down that we were supposed to retire at the age of 65. And when 65 came, I retired. But I my health standed which was very good, I could have kept on for ten more years, I think, and done reasonably well, but I didn't and I thought of the time maybe there would be things that I would like to do but couldn't do if I were teaching still. Well anyway, my retirement has been pleasant.

RMM: Let's just stop there, I'm going to turn the tape.

RMM: OK, you said that one of your jobs in the department, oh, before we get on to the next question, about what year was the speech communication department made independent of the English department?

FR: I would say and I might miss this by a year or two, I would say about the late 50s, that could be 58 or 59.

RMM: Do you remember, It is kind of a specific item here, do you remember a thing that some former students refer to as the Heart of Northern? There was a larger heart in front of Longyear Hall.

Do you remember that, could you tell us about it?

FR: Well that heart, I don't know whether it is still there or not, it isn't back of Northern, it would be in front.

RMM: There is a little piece left.

FR: That may be a little piece left, and what do I remember of it? I know that well, it never meant a great deal to me, and probably it should have meant more. But there was some people who had been at Northern longer than I and evidently they had, there had been activities that referred to this heart. I don't know just what they were, but I came in just about the time that evidently, that was shading off some. But that meant much more, I think, to the faculty that had been here before I was. That's my perception now.

RMM: And then it was more of a student, I mean students were interested in this thing now, not so much the faculty.

FR: That's right.

RMM: What were the conditions at Northern say, during the depression of the 1930s? Is there any kind of characteristics of the time, difficult times that you had went through and so on?

FR: There were from the stand point of the faculty, the faculty view point, we spent several years when there was no increase in salary and I think there was a year or two when they cut us back. So that did not help faculty moral, but of course, we had to understand that this was part of the country a recession that hit everybody and everything. We kept on loyally and doing the best that we could, hoping that one of the years we'd have an up in salary that would compensate us according to what we thought were our abilities.

RMM: At that time, the 1930s and during that time, what kind of relationships were there between the faculty and the students? Was it a close-knit community, I know some people said that the faculty would have dinners for their majors and there were parties and what not.

FR: I would say that there was quite a bit in give and take in communication. Most of the faculty were well aware of the sacrifices that some of these students, and I might say many of them, had to make, in order just to get a degree. And I think of us on the faculty appreciated that. And we knew students, quite a few students individually. And we knew what some of their problems were. And that was characteristic of the time, and I think the faculty on the whole was quite sympathetic to the students, most of them students were having a difficult time.

RMM: Did the, were there various, at that time, were there any ceremonies like Christmas Caroling, you various public activities

that were held in Kaye hall and on Campus that you remember?

FR: Well, there is one activity that I should never forget. And that is the Christmas party. Before school let out for Christmas vacation they had, there was always a bit Christmas party. And it was held in the forier of Kaye hall, there was plenty of room there. And for many years of for several years, I was supposed to be the climax of the party when I was Santa Clause, my office was clear up on third floor, and so I would get my gear on up there and I'd come down the stairs laughing like Santa Clause is supposed to do, and so forth and then I'd get down and this is quite popular with the students, I would call some of the faculty up individually and I would say, "Now I hear that you are" and I would go after them, being hard on the students. And I remember this, one of the faculty wives contacted me before that party and said, "My husband is feeling rather sensative today, don't call him up." But that was fun, and the students ate it up.

RMM: Did the faculty and their wives and everybody attend this?

FR: Not so much the wives, but the faculty attended. There were concerns where the faculty and their wives attended that would probably be an evening concern.

RMM: Like a dinner, a university dinner?

FR: That's right.

RMM: Now, What kind of plays did you put on? What kind of problems did you have putting plays on? Could you talk a little about that?

FR: Well, let's see. At the time I came, 1928, the only theatre that was available then on campus was the theatre which was a part of, which was the auditorium for Kaye hall. And that was never made for a theatre. But I had to adapt to it. And you could do a lot of adapting and the students were very good about it and they understood. So we, even inspite of difficulties, we produced, we did some very good productions in the old Kaye Hall auditorium. And in fact, I had an early reputation of being a drama producer. When I came I produced for an assembly program for the summer a one act play, I don't know whether it was one or two, I think it was just one, and then that fall of that next year, at that time, the sophomore class was supposed to do the graduating class. And it had been a tradition for many years before I came, that they would, part of their graduation or a part of their last year would be to produce a play and that was a pretty good tradition, and I went along with it for a while. And I remember I had some outstanding students in my dramatic production class these students in their dramatic production they were enrolled as a chorus and they got credit as a chorus, course they had to produce. But I can remember some of these students I thought one that comes up early in my mind was a fellow by the

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name of Bert Henne. His family lived here in Marquette and my first production here, major production was a play by the name of "The Queens Husband" and he qualified for a main role in that. And he had quite a reputation and over the years I was acquainted with and followed him, he went down to Escanaba. He directed plays down there. And I gradually after I retired I lost track of him. But, and there were not only one, but several who were outstanding students and I worked closely with and they helped with the production of plays.

RMM: Now how long did the, or it seems like the plays were when you first got here, plays were a activity of the graduating class. At what point did you take over and then you developed a regular season or it broke away from the graduating class, you know it was a graduating activity?

FR: Shortly after I came I started producing, I got away from that tradition. Some of the best people of course were not, were in other classes and by that time of course the sophomore class, which was the graduating class was no longer the graduating class it was the junior and the seniors came into the picture. So I did not contribute to that tradition too much, but shortly after I came I would have in mind the play I wanted to produce. And in the back of my head maybe for a couple of months I would be thinking about who do I want in this play, and here is a part that would be crucial for the play who is available?

RMM: You would sort of select a play according who was available on campus?

FR: that had to come in it but that was only one of the factors. I wouldn't say it was the main factor, but it was a factor.

RMM: What kind of problems in the early days did you have putting on the plays? You said that the auditorium wasn't the best for putting on plays. Was there any interesting experiences?

FR: Did you ever see that old stage?

RMM: Yes.

FR: Did you see the vast amount of space which was up there above the ? All the rats and the rooks and the special borders that they had up there. You could pull them up and you could put them down. Well that was more or less the procedure, a play production at that time. And it, I haven't been in play production now for a number of years so I would not want to say what the procedure is now.

RMM: were there any interesting-humorous incidents that occurred in some of the plays that you put on over the years?

FR: I can remember one, and there were probably others. I was



producing a Bernard Shaw play, and one of the key players with a key part who was a fellow from Negaunee, but he evidently had a philosophy that he could always come through at the last minute and I put up with that a little bit and when he wasn't producing I called him when all of the other people were there and I said "the more we progress with the play the less and less it seems like Shaw and the more and more it seems like, and I gave his final name. That sort, I think that sort of shook him up because he got busy and he learned the lines from there.

RMM: What play was that, do you remember?

FR: No I don't.

RMM: any other

FR: on the whole I never had difficulty with the players, they were there because they wanted to produce and I would occasionally get one that I knew very well that they were bluffing, they weren't working and so I would, I wouldn't hesitate to do what you would call bawl him out. But, and when I did as a rule I got results.

RMM: How many plays did you put on in your years?

FR: Oh I suspect between 10-28 and I produced up to almost the 60s, a major production every year and probably I produced a play at least one in the summer time and so I expect I averaged two major productions a year.

RMM: could you comment on some of the staff and faculty and so on, I now there is some stories that are told and so on, I would like to get your ideas about Ethyl Carey, was the Dean of Women. Do you remember, do you remember her? Do you want to make some comments about her and some of the things

FR: I knew Ethyl Carey quite well, and there was, I don't think this was entirely justified but around school, oh what would Mrs. Carey do, and I never produced a play for Mrs. Carey. I did produce plays where I would invite here in and ask for suggestions. I didn't consider myself much of an authority on costumes but I would, somebody Ethyl Carey was much more apt to costumes than I was. And I would call her in and ask for advice, but none of these people on the faculty who seemed to be interested in play production, none of them stepped in and took over my job as director, "you should do this, you should do that" and so forth. So I had a lot of cooperation and we had a president at that time, when I came, and he had the reputation of being a pretty stiff person and much to my surprise when president Munsen made his one and only trip to Europe, he still was president, I got a card from him. And the card had a picture of an English actor who was quite a stage professional and would give programs around and evidently Munsen heard him and he sent me a card with his picture telling all about it and he added this

note "you can do better than he". Now he would never tell that to me to my face.

RMM: So he wasn't as hard nosed

FR: Oh no, no.

RMM: and do you remember other faculty like, Lou Allen Chase who was a department

FR: he was the chairmen of the History department. Yes, I had many contacts with him.

RMM: what kind of reputation did he have? Hard nosed?

FR: sort of hard nosed and course he was teaching under difficulties, because he was practically blind but he had a good historical mind you know and there were some students who feared him. Never wanted to take the course with Lou Chase. But the better students they weren't frightened.

RMM: and then like there was Grace Spalding, what do you recall of her, Grace Spalding.

FR: Grace Spalding, oh she was what I would call a lovely person, just a lovely person, and her field was art and it seemed to belong to her. It was natural and it should be and Grace Spalding and Mrs. Carey had, they had a house together and I guess they had separate departments in their house. I know that Grace Spalding for instance, she would walk from her place where she would stay to school sometimes, she liked to walk. She would go by our place, and our son Allen who was growing up at that time, he would be outside playing and improvising and doing something and she would stop and have a good time with him. And I think he still remember Grace Spalding.

RMM: how about some of the other people? Lidia Olson?

FR: Lidia Olson of course was, she was the librarian for many years and she was a good one. She never had what you would call a warm personality, although those students who had to work close with her might not agree with that, might disagree with that statement that I made.

RMM: How about Hunt?

FR: I have a picture here that I want to show you before I go any farther. I think about at least four years, Luther West, Max He retired before I did Carl Slick, I'm not sure I think he hung on but his health became very poor and he died several years after he retired. And this was Dick Hurst, did you ever know him?

RMM: Nope, I knew his son but not him.

FR: and the next is Don Bottum, which you never knew him but you knew of him, and the next happens to be me and here is Jamrich and I see Jamrich down in Florida ever once in a while, he retired down there and then this is Rusell Thomas at the very end.

RMM: how did you feel, or what were your feelings when they constructed the Forest Roberts theater and named it after you?

FR: well they constructed it and fortunately at that time when they were thinking about a construction of a theater we had a person coming on to the faculty by the name of James Report and he had, he was fresh out of the university and one of his special assignments was theaters: constructions of theaters and the patterns and so forth. And so I felt very fortunate, he knew, he was up to date and he knew

RMM: So how did you, with that and the name of the theater and so on, looking back retrospect, how do you sum up your career and the direction that the speech department has went and Northern has gone over the years? Starting with yourself.

FR: Well I think I got it off to a start and probably a good start, I had had at the university of Iowa, under a national, a fellow there had a national reputation in theater, his name was E.C., and so I had absorbed a lot of ideas and some of them pretty good, some not very good, and I absorbed them and brought them with me. I didn't know what was ahead, but I know that the area of speech, that if I were in the speech department, I would have a lot of problems, there would be theater problems. And some of them might land right in my lap, and some of them did. But I didn't mind, I enjoyed producing plays, I produced quite a few before I came to Northern. The question I turned over in my mind, perhaps several times now and then was do I want to delegate the production of plays to someone who is a more up to date specialist than I am now. And I came to the conclusion that I did want to delegate it and it was a good decision.

RMM: Do you see the department thing, the speech department then grew from a part of the english department to a full grown department.

FR: Yes, and I think I have already mentioned when the time came when I felt we should have our separate departments, I felt that way not because the english department with Dr. Thomas was interfering, he was quite cooperative, but I had the feeling from the standpoint in the years ahead and the future we should have the separate speech department including theater. And we went along that way and Dr. Thomas went along his and so it worked out quite well I think.

RMM: In your last years at Northern teaching you the school went

Continuation of Forest Roberts interview July 20, 1994.

FR: we were talking about Jim Report when he came on the scene. He came on the scene at a very crucial time and that was the time the theater was being formulated and a lot of questions, although I knew the answer to a lot of them, there was some I didn't and Jim being fresh, from the standpoint of his background and his academic pursuits he did a far better job than I could have and I so happily turned over the responsibilities for most of the problems, of course Jim would check with me and we would agree, but I felt very fortunate in having him. And the theater was not, it was just theater for a period of maybe three or four years and then they decided it should have a more meaningful name and I got a phone call when I was down in Florida and asked if I would object to having my name on the theater. Well I said if that is what you want to go ahead, I don't object.

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RMM: In your last years at Northern teaching you the school went

from a teachers college to Northern Michigan University 1963. Can you recall sort of growing problems, growing pains that you, your department, the university experienced that you encountered? Or were there any?

FR: They all took place so gradually, we were scarcely aware of it. And I was acutely aware of anything which you would call growing pains. I was fortunate in this respect when we were with the English Department, Dr. Thomas and I were personally quite friendly so there were no problems. He wanted me to go ahead he didn't want me messing with some of the speech problems. So I didn't have any problems there. The growth and development went along gradually and we weren't aware so much when problems came up, it was a new problem you go to it and you would help in your department, you faced the problems. That was my philosophy and I think it worked out quite well.

RMM: I just want to talk a little about your place here in Point, when did you get this place and did you build it yourself or?

FR: Well this, way back in the 1950s we had a place in town which was on third street and our number there was 1018, it was a two apartment house and I started out renting it but ended up buying it, so I had, Ester and I occupied the top floor and by that time our children were our two children were pretty much grown up and out. But coming back and then the time came when we wondered what should we do with this. There was a period there that we rented out. Ester and I no longer wanted to occupy either apartment. By that time we were going down to Sarasota and so we rented them out and then the idea occurred to me as it should through a period of natural growth that is we should be selling this place. First of all we bought it from the first owner who had moved the house to third street and moved the one we occupied and we bought it from him and then we had a chance to sell it. The place didn't owe us anything and we had had a good time there and in the sale, we had a good sale and so we gave it up and when we go by there I have a feelings of warmth because we had a good time there and even the people we got in the spare apartment, they were good people. While you hear a lot about renters having problems, we didn't. But the time came and we thought it was time to get rid of it and we sold it to a gal from the Copper Country. She came down and wanted to rent it, and we rented it to her and she decided she wanted to buy it and so we were kind of pleased that she wanted to buy it. So we gave her a good price, and she appreciated that and so the time came when I did not have property.

RMM; So is that then when you bought this place?

FR: Well while we were still in the town property my wife Ester, we had paid for that town property and my wife Ester got the idea that she would like to have a cottage, a summer cottage and well I

didn't, I went along with her on that and we started to look around. And the word got around that we were interested in buying a summer cottage and there was a fellow who I knew and knew quite well and I met him one day outside that store on third street which is pretty close to the house that we had. And he said I heard that you want, you are in the market for property and I said yes we are and I said do you have any ideas and he said there is a place out at middle island, it is the hand of the lady realtor and the owner is dissatisfied because he thinks she is not pushing the sale, and she isn't pushing the sale and he told this guy if she doesn't sale it I am going to take it over and sale it myself. And so that is what happened. When I heard that it would be available and that the saler would be the owner and not some real estate person. I came out and we looked over the place and we thought it was, just about what we wanted. The price they were asking for not exorbent and for lake property and so it wasn't very long before we bought this place. The owner of it from whom we bought, his name was Posankay. And they gave it up. And they had in mind, they wanted to go out to California, the California is the place where you should retire. It has everything. And so I bought it from them, at what I thought was a reasonable price. They didn't give it away, but I got it at a reasonable price. And they made their way out to California, we had all the papers signed. Then for several years this would be our summer headquarters, while in town would be our other headquarters. And that worked out quite well. And when I got, retired and we wanted to spend more time in Florida, I sold the town house to, well it wasn't a give away price but it was a fair price. I sold it and then in the mean time, before I sold that place, one of my friends said, "Here, you want this, you're in the market for a summer home. There is one out in middle island, the Posankay place. They want to go to California. It's in the hand of a lady realiter, and their not satisfied. She has about another week in which to dispose of it, and if she doesn't, they say that their are going to take over and knock a thousand dollars from the price." And so I had a week their when, you know, pending some needles. I was just hoping this gal wouldn't sell it. I guess I had no need to worry because she wasn't the pushing kind.

RMM: How long have you had this place then?

FR: Well say 59 up to where we are now, how long would that be? Quite a while wouldn't it.

RMM: 35 years.

FR: And we sort of aimed to keep it up. We never let it get away from us so that it go down hill. We've had to do some work from time to time on the roof, as you might expect. And these windows are not the easiest windows to keep in shape. We managed to do it.

RMM: Now the storms come in here and throw ice on the shore here?

FR: The storms come in here then Thank goodness Middle Island is out there, and it obstructs the work of them. But then during a real storm, the waves are coming in and they would dash over there and the spray would go several feet above Indian Head over there, right here you see. When you get spray going up that high, you have some powerful waves coming in here. And they had come in, I would say, at the worst storms, they have come in within six or eight feet of our house.

RMM: Have you been out here when that happens?

FR: Yes. I've seen it.

RMM: Now are these summer storms or

FR: They would have to be fall.

RMM: Fall. Were there many Northern faculty then that had places out of Middle Island, you know back when you were teaching?

FR: Determined the being of this department event he was Cory Boomen, Professor Boomen, he had a place up on the hill, it's name is sky high. He called it sky high. So he had that, and let's see. Later there were more. But for a while, see they had the sociology and economics department to Lockner, Professor Lockner. He had a place up on the hill, not as high as the Boomen one. So he had one. Those two I think were the first to Northern ones and since that time there have been more and more Northern faculty or ex-faculty, and it kind of, I think the exact year when we bought this place it was in the late 50s.

RMM: How do you, as this point, I don't know if you have too much contact with Northern but how do you feel about the university from the time you came in 1928 to what you see today, in 1994?

FR: Well of course, it was quite a change as you expect it. When I came here with a yearly annulment the first two years, the yearly enrollment was around 600. Now they would pick a lot more than that during the summer. When you had a faculty that could take care of that many students as over the against the faculty that they have now take care of, what's the enrollment?

RMM: Now it would be about 7,000 or 8,000 students.

FR: So there is quite a bit of difference. I can't speak to much about what what the being is on the part of the faculty now, I know what it was then, and I suspect that there is a noticeable change.

RMM: What was the feeling back? You're saying back in 1928 when you arrived or later?

RMM: Oh, you were talking about Munsen.

FR: Well, you knew every one on the faculty. If they had special problems, you knew what those problems were. And sometimes you might participate and help. But know, I am sure that within the larger faculty there are clans probably organized around departments and that's natural. I'm just guessing, I'm not close enough to know.

RMM: Are there any, some final comment or something that I didn't ask you that you might want to add or something?

FR: Let's see. Well I feel even though I'm retired I feel quite warm, towards the institution. I've had occasion to meet Dr. Vandament on two different occasions. I think he is an excellent executive. I'm not sure that everyone on the faculty would agree with me, on that but from the contacts I've had and I still think that as an institution serving the Upper Peninsula, and the special groups that we have, we have a lot of Finish people up here and there was a time I think when Northern was quite susceptible to serving that group as well as other groups. And as it has grown larger, I'm sure it changes but I haven't been close enough to know just what they are, or how significant they are. But I still have the feeling that Northern is doing very well. I think they have a good administration, and I presume that the level of the faculty is just as good as it was when I was teaching. I see no reason why it wouldn't be. So I feel quite warm, I have a warm and of course they went so far as to put my name on a building. That I should be grateful for that, which I am. I think Northern has had a good history and quite a recordable one as I know. I've known of the various presidents. When I came here to Northern, President Kaye was just finishing his term as president. And then there was John M Munsen who hired me. And he had quite a reputation whether this is justified or not, but there were people on the faculty that were sort of afraid of him. But I always found him rather warm and he seemed to be willing to listen to me. I never was frightened but I don't know if I have any right to say this but the segment that seemed to be a little wary of him was the women on the faculty, they felt that he might have it in for women. I think I believe and historically this may be wrong so I should say this with a good deal of reservation. But historically I understand that Munsen at one time was engaged and that engagement was, the gal broke it off and some of the women felt that he had it in for them and sex because of that. But I'm not at all sure of that, I never would put that down as a fact, because it is as far as I'm concerned, just a rumor. But I found him quite there. He went from here down to Ipsolanty, and he became president down there. And I remember, I attended a meeting where there were representatives that are from Ipsolanty and one of them had come up to me and said, "What have you done to us?" They had had a president down who before I guess who is quite is liberal and the faculty really could do anything that they wanted to do and JM Munsen was (end of side one)

RMM: OK, you were talking about Munsen.



FR: I had ? several times about this fellow coming up to me and saying what have you done to us.

RMM: And who were some of the other presidents?

FR: Well there was Kaye the first one, no, I guess the very first one was a fellow by the name of Waldo. Then came Kaye, then Munsen was when I came. After Munsen there was Pierce and after Pierce was

RMM: Harden?

FR: No there was one before Harden. Well it could have been.

RMM: How did you get along with Pierce?

FR: I got along pretty well. I got along pretty well, in fact, I should feel pretty grateful to him. I took a at that time the pattern was you taught so many semesters and then you were entitled to a semester off with pay. And I let my semesters accumulate to the point that I had a full year coming. A full year with pay, and so we decided that we'd go out the University of Southern California, where I enrolled in graduate school out there. And we spent almost a full year there, and should have been back I think in the summer time to Northern, and I intended to be. But I got a letter from President Pierce and he said while your term of service doesn't justify this I want to offer you another quarter with pay. If you feel you can use it to advantage, at the University of Southern California, and I thought I could and I thanked him profusely, with letter and intended to see him personally when I got back. But when I got back, unfortunately he was quite ill, and he never recovered from that illness. So I never went in to see him.

RMM: And then how about the last president was Harden that you served under.

FR: The last president that I served under was Harden. Well he was probably the various presidents well he had his finger on everything. He knew what was going on. Who the faculty were, slacking and those who were making a contribution. So that isn't bad, unless you are a slacker. I liked Harden, but as I told you before, he went down to Ipsy and shortly after he had been there for a while, I was in a meeting, or let's see a faculty person was there and he came up and said, "what have you done to us?"

RMM: Was that Harden or Munsen?

FR: That was Harden.

RMM: OK, well I that pretty much answers my questions. I thank you for your time.

FR: You're very welcome.