

INTERVIEW WITH  
RICHARD SONDEREGGER  
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN  
JULY 19, 1994

**Subject of the Interview:** His involvement and years at Northern Michigan University.

RM: Sondy, could I, as a starter here, start a question, could you give me the date of your birth?

RS: November 12, 1921.

RM: Could you give us a little of your background in terms of where you were born and grew up, and then your educational background. And then how you got connected with Marquette and, ultimately Northern Michigan University?

RS: I grew up in Wisconsin but my grandmother owned a house on Beaver Island in northern Lake Michigan. She had hay fever and Beaver Island was a great place for hay fever sufferers in the days before air conditioning. I spent every summer there and in many ways really regarded Beaver Island as my home. So, that I had a very soft spot in my heart for the northern part of Michigan. After WWII, I went to Harvard College on the GI Bill, became a history major and I had always done a lot of sailing, been around boats, as you can image, if one spends a summer on an island, you've got to be around boats. At Harvard I took Professor Morrison's courses and Morrison, of course, was a great sailor. I did a paper for Morrison comparing handling LaSalle the way Morrison did in Columbus. Morrison liked it very much and he asked me to sail with him, which I did and formed, really, a long close friendship with that very distinguished man.

I went to, after I graduated - I took a master's degree at Boston University and then went to St. Paul in Concord, New Hampshire, a very remarkable Episcopalian boys boarding school. I taught there for two years and then decided to go into college teaching and went to the University of Michigan for four years, and took a PhD. In the spring of 1958, I found out that there was an opening at Northern - one of my predecessors - I'm sorry I can't think of his name right off hand - had fallen ill - Harry Heberson (?). Harry Hebersole - and I had met Dick O'Dell sometime earlier and had discussed with him the possibility of teaching at Northern. When this came up, I then got in touch with Dick again and before long I was invited to Marquette for an interview with Vice President Sponberg and with President Hardin and I was hired. I, of course, was delighted to come to Marquette because it's my wife's home, it's also on the lake - a center of sailing - and also the woods. So that it had everything that I associated with Beaver Island plus the possibility of making my living here. In that way, there was

a kind of preparation for coming to Marquette in my childhood.

RM: When you came in 1958, how would you characterize, describe the campus, the students, the faculty?

RS: I would characterize it as wonderful and it was wonderful in many, many ways. One of the things, I think, that we can see in examining life at Northern over the 30-odd intervening years, I think applies to all colleges and universities, and to some extent to the United States that there has been a growing loss of stability in the country and in almost every way social intercourse was infinitely more pleasant and civilized 40 years ago than it is now. It's - what I think it is - a proletarianization of our society. You remember, Professor Andre \_\_\_\_\_, the distinguished Russian who had lived through the Revolution. \_\_\_\_\_ said that that had happened in Russia - the loss of civility, the breakdown of grammar, the careless speech, careless clothing - all those things in a sense we are less civilized now than we were. Well, now going back to Northern in those days, it was just a delightful place. There were all sorts of touching old customs that had been developed at the college in the early days, and they were often copies of customs at the major eastern universities. You may have heard, I am sure, in your reminiscence you've had women tell you about the rose ceremony, I've forgotten the details, but it seems to me that senior girls gave them to junior girls - something like that - they handed out roses. It was just a nice, sweet kind of thing. The times changed and it was regarded as "corny" and ultimately dropped. They used to sing carols at the end of the fall semester before the Christmas recess - the students would gather around the hall - in Kaye Hall on the different floors, hanging out over those railings and sing the carols and it was really, I think very charming. I think those things are a real loss, although it may well be that there was no one realistically to preserve this stuff, and it may be if we'd tried it would have been an empty business and it would have been repugnant.

RM: Speaking of those customs, do you remember or recall the thing called the "heart of Northern" in front of Longyear Hall? A large, raised area that was shaped like a heart, about 3 feet high - there's a little part of it left?

RS: I didn't know, I'm sure it was there, but I don't recall. I probably just never noticed it. Just the way - there used to be a little weather station near the corner of Longyear Hall, the geography department had a weather station there with a thermometer and various instruments in a little house. But if you - you could walk by it every day and never really noticed it.

Within our department, of course, one of the great things were the various dinners and so one that were held. I know particularly - I remember the spring semester we always had a dinner for all the

history majors - it was really very nice.

RM: You're talking about quite a few people.

RS: No, the college was small - it would be 30 people or so.

RM: It wasn't when we got up to 400 majors later on.

RS: No, it would be 30 or 40 majors. It could be handled very nicely and the different faculty wives would prepare stuff - it was partly a pot luck. Most of the departments did things like that and had year-end parties. The faculty, of course, was infinitely closer then they became later. Again, I think the civility and good manners of the era helped in that even if people had some kind of academic difference, good manners paved that over. We really pay a very high cost for getting rid of good manners.

I made a couple of notes, let's see if there's anything. One thing that was also very nice was athletics was not really big time and ordinarily you always had some student athletes in the class. They weren't separated, they weren't on some different program - they just took courses along with everyone else and they were pleasant youngsters. It made the faculty, I think, feel much closer to the school and the team and I suppose that they felt much closer to us. I remember one time we went to a game, we always went to the football games and our children always went to the games, and the tickets to the faculty were free and you had free tickets for the children and so on. Our little boys were harem-scarem and they showed up at the gate at Memorial Field without their tickets and the students that were taking tickets, of course, recognized them and let them in. Athletics in those days wasn't something that separated the faculty from students, the way it is now. I was always a big booster of ice hockey and wanted Northern to go into ice hockey much earlier. But I think it's unfortunate that the going into big-time ice hockey is so expensive that there's no way that the students can be guaranteed a seat - to me that should be. I think a student should have the seats at Lakeview Arena and the townspeople if they're lucky get a seat - rather than the other way around. But, again that's - what I would like to have seen would have been that in the fall of the year, the hockey coach would put a blank piece of paper on the bulletin board and all the people that wanted to try up for the team would sign and it would be just with students. I think we could have \_\_\_\_\_ to respect to both teams - we couldn't have played in the Western Intercollegiate Hockey Association, but we could have played in a low-key hockey league with the small colleges in Minnesota. But that, of course, wasn't done.

One of the most charming - and again, this couldn't really have been maintained - but when I first came here the students were primarily from the Upper Peninsula and they had an excellent attitude - this was a big experience for them - they regarded the

faculty as savants - they were always very polite, they were impressed with a professor's vast learning - this was very flattering and, really very pleasant. Of course, when we got students from outside the peninsula and outside the state, the whole mix is different - the whole situation is different. One of the problems, and it's really destructive, not only at Northern, but at private colleges, as well - when take for example a first class private college like Lawrence - they'll have lots of local youngsters that go to Lawrence and that's what they want to do, but there will also will be maybe 10% of the student body that is from New York and New England and wanted to attend Harvard or Yale and didn't get in but did get in at Lawrence and they feel that they look down at them partly they're embarrassed for themselves - they really, I think, that any place at would admit them can't be much good and it hurts student morale. And, I think that we suffer from some of that - that threat of being of really being something great that these youngsters were doing, they did have a feeling that maybe it wasn't really quite first-rate.

RM: Do you think that was caused by the Right to Try Program?

RS: I'm not sure. My feeling, of course, has always been - I try to carry water on both shoulders, I didn't like the Right to Try and I didn't like the idea of virtually open admissions, but I do like the idea of fairly broad admission. The same way, I'm very negative about the Harvard admission policy of the top one-tenth of 1%. I think that it had made a very unpleasant student body - arrogant. I think that they ought to only admit college material, but none of that top one-tenth of 1%. I think that they got the top 20% that would be highly desirable. And the same way with our admission, if we took the 50% - maybe something larger than that but not open admission. I guess we've gone back to a more selective admission and I think that's very good. I'm sure that you've been a lot closer -

RM: Here are a few things that I just wanted to get back to from the earlier days, do you remember - I don't think she was around when you were there - Ethel Carey and her legendary rules and regulations around campus?

RS: Oh sure, I remember. You see after all while I wasn't here on the faculty, my wife's from Marquette and a lot of her friends went to Northern. I've heard the various stories. Earl Hilton maintains that the story about the red dress is just not true. I will tell any one though, this is true, I suppose I ought to conceal the names of the people. But, there was kind of a dull professor who's nickname around the students was "meathead" and there was a girl from Marquette who vowed that "meathead" or some derogatory phrase like that - that he didn't read the term papers that they handed in - that he just put a grade on them. Really that was relatively same grade as their hour exams. So in her term paper, on every page, she wrote, let's say Smith - that wasn't the

man's name - Smith is a meathead. She wrote that on every page and handed it in. Think of - she could have gotten expelled for that, of course. But, he didn't read it. The story that he didn't read it was true.

RM: Are there any other stories about the rules and Mrs. Carey?

RS: I'm sure that they were quite restrictive as indeed they were at most institutions. My wife went to Milwaukee Downer College and they had to be in at midnight on Saturday night and we would break all the speed limits to get them back by midnight. I can recall many really reckless driving to get back to Downer College before the curfew rang. I don't think Miss Carey was more restrictive than other small colleges.

RM: Earlier, before we got started with the actual interview, I had mentioned Grace Spaulding - could you kind of just go over some of that - maybe some of the history of Middle Island Point and its connection with Northern and the faculty?

RS: There were always, from an early date there were Northern faculty that had summer places here. One of the stories, a little bit of dirty linen but I think that's not unreasonable. One of the professors out here used to require his students to work on the camp and if they didn't work on the camp, they didn't get a good grade. One of my friends wanted to become a physician, but he had to have this fellow's course, but he wouldn't do it. He was a very stiff-necked man and so he didn't go into medicine but instead went into law. I won't mention his name but it's quite true story.

There always were Northern faculty here and there was a University of Chicago group that summered here. Miss Spaulding had some connection, it seems to me with the University of Chicago group - I'm sorry my wife isn't here, she would know. But, she painted and I recall a lot of people out here have paintings of her of Middle Island Point - the older camps.

RM: Now, did she have a place out here or she just visited.

RS: I'm not sure if she actually had a place or whether she was a regular visitor.

RM: Getting back to when you first came to Northern, could you kind of just briefly recount some of the physical dimensions of the campus back in 1958 - what actually composed the campus at that time?

RS: Well, there was Longyear Hall, Kaye Hall, and Peter White Hall, the Lydia Olsen Library. There was one of the dormitories on the other side that had a ballroom and a cafeteria. It really was very nice - it became a popular place in Marquette to have Sunday dinner at the Northern dining hall - the food was good and the

servings, of course, were enormous. It was very good standard middle-western Sunday dinner affair of roast chicken and that sort of thing. I guess there was roast beef and the food was very good. You'd see Ernest Pierce, the President of the Union National Bank would be there and people like that.

The Fieldhouse was built - I've forgotten, it was named after - Hedgecock - Hedgecock Fieldhouse was there. Around 1960 the Dallas Cowboys football team was formed and in some manner or rather they were persuaded to have their summer training camp at Marquette. University people went around and got contributions from downtown businessmen. Not entirely voluntary either - they leaned on them pretty hard and I think they got \$10,000 in this manner and they built a beautiful football field about where the Thomas Fine Arts Center is - because it really was a first-class field with drainage and arch so the water wouldn't lie on it and so on. Well, Dallas came and it was wonderful - the Dallas coach was here and the players and they spend the summer here. The difficulty was - in particularly that year - it was a cold summer in Marquette and they practiced and was great, but when they went to Dallas to play football, it was hot and they weren't prepared for it and they decided that they really couldn't do that. SO, it was just a one-time affair. I regarded it rather favorably - I think a lot of my colleagues didn't. The \$10,000 troubled me a little bit - cause they built that beautiful field and then a year or two later it was all dug up - buildings came on or the drive way.

RM: So this was not the playing field that had existed earlier - this was a complete

RS: Complete new creation - I don't think that it was even on the spot at the Northern football team used to play - although it wasn't far from it. But, I don't think it was exactly the same.

RM: Was it the lawn area - the parking area in front of Thomas Fine Arts?

RS: I think so. If there's some lawn left, that's a good relic.

RM: Back at that time when you first arrived and then as the years past, what was the drive of the university. You kind of came in when it was still a teacher's college. How would you characterize its development in the years that followed - 63 when it became Northern?

RS: Earl Hilton used to say it went from being a normal school to an abnormal school. Earl has a very dry sense of humor.

Northern expanded at a tremendous rate. Obviously, open admission played a role, but not entirely this was a nation-wide phenomenon that all of the country - universities were grow, colleges were growing. So Northern did too. It was, of course, a wild sort of

thing that we always had more students than we had faculty because the student numbers went up faster than we could get the appropriations from the state to hire more faculty. So we were always somewhat behind although I say that in general the attitude was good although the pressure was heavy. And, as time went on it did begin to produce strings - there's no doubt about that.

RM: Was this through the 1960's or was there a point when that kind of evened out and the faculty and the student body worked itself out?

RS: Yes, it was and probably in the late 60's, while the numbers continued to grow, we had hired a good deal of faculty so that - just as we got more people, even if the load went up, you could handle it better. Even if it proportionately went up, you still had more people.

**END OF SIDE A OF TAPE ONE - RICHARD SONDEREGGER (JULY 19, 1994)**

RM: Continuing with the development to the university, how did the or maybe give us a little history of the History Department from the time you arrived and then as it developed and expanded.

RS: Well, Dick O'Dell was department head. Of course, it wasn't history department - it was social studies. It was history, political science, economics, and sociology and social work. So it was a combined department. Dick was an excellent department head as he was an excellent scholar really. He had an excellent old-fashioned education. He'd had a good deal of traditional political science that was really was very valuable. Dick was very good on the Constitution and I was always very impressed and felt quite inferior when Dick would tackle various Constitutional questions in history. And, he had all the old maxims - for example, I recall him saying once, "a law with no sanctions, is no law." And, these things are perhaps are old cliches, but they are true. So, I felt that Dick was just a very fine scholar - and a very fine department. He was very fair and very earnest, very high minded. I think sometimes that he got into unpleasant struggles with the administration that a less noble person could have avoided, but Dick never backed away from anything if he believed it, he would stand up and do it. So that there was, often times stranded on matters on class mode and so on.

Of the men in the department, well, for example there was an old fellow who was kind of a quasy administrator, Dr. Burrows who was a delightful old man - I knew his family quite well - his daughter was married to a good friend of ours. He was from Iowa and was very much a country \_\_\_\_\_; one of the sociology professors - actually he taught economics, I guess, was Gene Peareman, who was from Nebraska from the Sand Hills of Nebraska - the cowboy part of Nebraska and he had met Burrows at one of the Nebraska teacher's colleges in far northwest Nebraska, and they would be in Burrow's

office talking about the "good-old days" in Nebraska when they went duck hunting before class on the River Platte. So there was sort of a nice rustic quality around. They were very nice men and were really very solid academically. We didn't have, perhaps, brilliant people but they were very solid - we didn't really have anybody that was an embarrassment. We never did, the history department never did but some departments have had people later on that, I felt didn't belong in the college. But in those days there really wasn't anybody like that. Perhaps, the whole level wasn't this good. We didn't have the mountains, but we didn't have the valleys either.

We, of course, only had a few people so that we taught all sorts of things and often times things that were not really in our field that our knowledge was perhaps peripheral. I know one summer I taught the introductory political science course. It was very similar to what in the public schools used to be called civics and it had to do with what is a quorum, and how old does the president have to be. It was pretty ghastly stuff - I stuck with it. I felt I was handicapped - I felt it would be dishonorable to do something more entertaining and spend the time swapping political stories about Andrew Jackson or something. It would have made a, I think, probably a better course, but I felt constrained to do with what the syllabus and the catalog said. We all did that sort of thing - the Europeanists would teach all sorts of European history courses and we Americanists would teach whatever American history was offered. Although, again, we did break down. I usually taught the colonial, the early U.S., and Dick O'Dell taught the Civil War and reconstruction material.

We had a curriculum with certain areas that had to be covered, and I felt it was very good. Again, it was old fashioned, but I think it was very solid. And, I think that we lost a great deal when we went into the four course plan that had the professor's teaching three four courses rather than four three. I always found the three hour course easier to teach and it gave the student more options because we had a substantially larger number of courses. Distribution - that was the word I was groping for - we had distribution requirements. If you had to have courses in this area and so on. An old traditional curriculum. I felt that the common learning was a pretentious disaster, it was based substantially on the University of Chicago with various additions that each person on that committee put in. They got biblical studies in that because Professor Dixon - that was his field. I know I offended them when I told them that I felt the emphasis on Greek literature and history was an upper class English affectation, which I think was and is, but I shouldn't have said that - I offended them and probably made some enemies. I feel that it would have been really much more solid to have the emphasis on Rome and medieval and our institutions really go back to the Middle Ages and it would be, I think, better all-around to have a really careful examination of a late Roman Empire and Early Middle Ages and up through the high



Middle Ages and intellection. But, that wasn't done. The result was they hired a lot of youngsters to teach those courses. The senior faculty regarded them as beneath them - I think they felt that they had done that in graduate school and they weren't going to do it anymore. And, so there were a lot of really questionable people - again, not our people and I should criticize other departments but I think that they did get some dubious people.

RM: Do you feel that with all of this change that came in the 60's and with things and like change in particular is going to come to an institution that goes from a few hundred to several thousand - but do you feel that things like the four-course plan, the way that was presented and maybe ramroded through and pushed through and so on - did you get a sense or as you reflect on it do you get a sense that this was kind of - from what you were saying earlier about this cohesion among the faculty - do you feel that besides bringing in larger numbers of people that all of these new programs, and people's pet ideas that possibly pulled the faculty apart?

RS: Well, I think to some extent and I know, as I have thought about this sort of thing a good deal, Russ, when we have made these long trips in our sailboat - I'll often steer the boat for 8 or 10 hours and I partly pay attention to what I'm doing, but also a good deal of introspection so I have thought a lot about it. One thing that I really realize now that I'm a very conservative person, and always have been and that used to \_\_\_\_\_ mask a little bit because my mother was a very ardent southern Democrat and so that I was raised in that milieu (?) and it tended to conceal from me, at least and maybe others, that I really was a very conservative person, so that I probably am not fair about the four-course plan and the common learning. It certainly did make a split between people like Dick O'Dell and myself who liked the traditional way of doing things. With the younger faculty I don't think they had the opposition to it. I was mainly concerned that they not be taken advantage of. I had a feeling that some of the departments were going to try to dump the introductory humanities courses on us. As indeed, I think they were. Later on, of course, when jobs became precarious, then those courses weren't a burden but life savers. But, at the time, I think, that there were some idea that some of the people would get rid of these introductory courses and get somebody else to take the burden.

The idea after all we all want to teach writing, and we all want to correct spelling, and make sure that our students are literate. That's true and that was used with the idea - I always felt that there was a camel's nose under the tent to really to try to get us to teach Freshmen English or the equivalent of it.

But, again, I may be too suspicious. I have a feeling that Americans far from being paranoid that our real problem is that we are too trusting. We can look at something were there obviously is manipulation going on, and still believe that everything is on the

up and up. That's an American trait.

RM: How would you characterize the Presidents of Northern - the ones that you were

RS: Well, I was involved, of course, in the strain with President Hardin because of the open admission and this sort of thing. Professor O'Dell was already committed to some opposition so I fell into that. I think a good deal better of Hardin now than I did at the time. I think he did a good deal for the university, not some of the things that he's credited with unusually. For example, the increase in numbers, I think, was nationwide. But, for one thing he charmed the local business community completely. And, so instead of being indifferent and contemptuous of Northern, they became boosters. And, I think that was a good thing. He had all kinds of energy and, really, a charming personality. His background, of course, was Michigan State and that was the way they had built Michigan State up as a University of Michigan person, Dick O'Dell and I probably automatically resisted that - more probably than what was entirely called for. We may not have been fair about it as we should have been.

At one time Northern had a close relationship with the University of Michigan and we felt that it was a shame that that was lost. We had some kind of joint Masters degree program that the degree was - well, I'm not sure just how - but they were closely connected. Maybe the degree was given - the degree was given by Michigan but they took courses here and it was coordinated. And, I - Dick and I hoped that that sort of thing could be continued. I think what we would have like to have seen would have been that Northern would become a University of Michigan campus the way Flint - or something like that. We felt that great things could have been done that way.

RM: Was there ever any move to go in that direction or just something?

RS: No, I don't think that anything was ever formalized but it certainly was implicit in what was being done, and given the Empire Building \_\_\_\_\_ of that era, there probably were people in Ann Arbor that had some thought about it.

I think that it worked out just as well that we were independent and got our own board of control. I think in the final analysis it might have been. What we wanted was the attitude and the style of the University of Michigan - we really didn't want to be a poor relative.

RM: How about President Jamerich?

RS: Well, I personally got along rather well with him and didn't dislike him. I was certainly a minority - people seemed to take

offense. I didn't find him offensive. I didn't particularly agree with him on things but I didn't find him that way.

I think he had a lot of things that he was very sensitive about. You can only kind of guess at them, but I think he's very sensitive about his size, and after all I'm rather short so maybe he felt more at ease with me than he did with my bigger colleagues. But, I didn't find him that offensive. Again, some people, of course did.

The person that I had the biggest questions about, and again it wasn't personal - was Vice President Bryd. And, he was reasonable for the curriculum changes and he was a very overbearing, insecure person. We had a quarrel with him right at the beginning when he first came. He didn't like Western Civ and he apparently had a bad Western Civ course at Boston University and he made that sort of preposterous argument that he'd had Western Civ and it was no good and that didn't apply to our course. And so we would have rows with him that were quite pointed. His predecessor was Harold Sponberg who was an infinitely ebler (?) man. Quite a different person - Sponberg was from Minnesota and had an outstanding, outgoing personality rather than a kind of up-tight that Milton Bryd had. Sponberg was very good - he was a good balance for Hardin. Hardin liked to take the big picture and go around giving speeches, and Sponberg really ran the place - he minded the store. And, Hardin would get sore at somebody, and he often did, and fire them - he had a grief temper and Sponberg wouldn't do it and he would stall and then three or four days later he would go over and talk him out of it. Sponberg really kept things on an even keel and, see when Sponberg was gone Bryd really didn't have that kind of relationship with the President, and so when the President would say fire him - he would fire him as they did with Bob McClellan. We would really never find out what it was - why Bob was fired. He had offended the President in some fashion and so there was never any substance to it - you couldn't really grapple with it cause there wasn't any reason. Of course, that was a long, bitter struggle and ultimately Bob was reinstated. The whole thing was really unfortunate - I think that if Sponberg was here it wouldn't have happened.

RM: Do you think part of the problem was that as the - you had a whole new experience, the university was rapidly expanding and I'm saying this, not only for Northern but in general - that the university was rapidly expanding and possibly a lot of the people, the administrators didn't really know how to deal with this particular experience of this rapid expansion - possibly there were other people, I think it was brought up with Bryd that he kind of set up this four-course program and then left. Possibly a lot of people were in this tremendous expansion throughout the country, that people saw better opportunity elsewhere - do something big at Northern, and then move on which then sort of left the shambles behind them.

RS: Absolutely, yes, absolutely. Bryd, of course, was the best example of that. Sponberg, of course, went on to other things - he became President at Washburn in Kansas and then Eastern Michigan. But, he really always wanted the job here and he was really groomed as the heir apparent - I have no idea why he took the Washburn job and didn't stay in the wings and get anointed because he would have been very good.

RM: He would have been the successor to Hardin.

RS: Yes, I think - he fit into this a milieu - Minnesota farmer, all American football player. Sponberg was very popular and fit in well. And, he really was quite bright - he was a very bright fellow. I think that ultimately his career was a disappointment that wouldn't have happened if he would have stayed here.

RM: His whole career has been associated with Northern.

RS: No, he was down at Michigan State and I forgotten just what he was doing down there - but he was one of the people that Hardin hired and brought a whole staff up here.

RM: What were some of the problems when you were department head and at the time you hired myself in 69 and others - what were some of the problems, the problems you had to face in terms of this expanding university and trying to hire people?

RS: Well, we had gotten censured because of the McClellan man and that, of course, was known instantly throughout the professor - surprisingly fast. I don't know how they all knew about it in a kind of graduate student network. So, it's very hard to hire people and there were lots of people we would interview and show the community and they really would be quite favorably inclined, but then all of a sudden they would draw away. Indeed, some people that we did hire, there was one fellow that we hired who wrote a letter saying he wasn't going to come and then he changed his mind and we felt that it was worthwhile that we still hire him even though he'd said that he wasn't going to accept it and he did - some other job fell through. It was very difficult and all the other colleges were hiring at the same time. We always wanted to get PhDs - we didn't want to get into any less than a PhD - there never was - I don't think - any degree less than a full PhD in our profession. The way they have that - what do they call that in literature that doctor's degree with a dissertation

RM: Doctor of Arts - DA

RS: Well, I felt that we could get the real thing - I would have much rather struggle when you do that - I think that's a bad mistake.

RM: Do you feel that in this process that there was actually some

kind of a break between Northern's past role and then after 63 we became Northern Michigan University that there was some lack of continuity between the past - did you ever notice that as a possible problem in terms of - you mentioned earlier how students kind of looked down at the university.

RS: In the later 60s - we've got for example we've got students that parents would tell them - imagine parents doing things like that - that they would tell them that they could go to some expensive college or they could come to Northern and the old man would buy them a car. We did get a fair number of them and like that. I think that hurt but, again those things - all of that changed very rapidly, of course, with the Viet Nam war and the heavy military calls and the great concern about that. I think that particular kind of "playboy" view was kind of dated - college - the whole business became much more serious.

RM: But then, though, we seem to have a problem in terms of Northern Michigan University, once again it might have been a national problem as well, but there seems to be - there was a great deal of turmoil in terms of expansion, of hiring, of four-course programs, the Viet Nam war - a lot of this I was here for and I lived through - kind of interesting it's only until rather recently that we get a more stable, more peaceful situation and things in recent years - at least that's my view

RS: I think that's really wonderful that they've have. I've gotten kind of pessimistic that maybe Humpty Dumpty could never be put together again. Yes, as you say there was that feeling and that the connection with the past was not very apparent and everything was new and rushing around. I think of the time when Dick O'Dell taught the Negro History course and at that time we hadn't realized what a time bomb that was. Dick asked the class if they didn't think it would have been the same if the slaves had been white and the masters black. This was an interesting thing to get them to think about - just what slavery was and how it operated and get into the scholarship but after all they weren't taking this course because they were interested in the scholarship or the American history, they were taking it as part of the black movement. And so there was this tremendous uproar.

RM: You mean over that question?

RS: Yeah. I guess that was the time - well, that's what it was a day or two after this that there was a sit-in in Dick's class and somebody brought me word of it so I immediately went upstairs to the classroom and they were milling around in there singing "We Shall Overcome" and so on. I asked one of the students in the hall to call security - they did but the security people just hid - they didn't help us a bit. The only real string there was a giant Polynesian student in there - 6'2"/6'3" - 280 pounds in there and he was furious and he said I didn't come 9,000 miles to waste my

time like this - about the demonstration and he was all set to fight with them. The thing could have broken down into a riot but happily everything kind of stewed around and they marched outside singing We Shall Overcome.

END OF SIDE B OF TAPE ONE

BEGINNING OF TAPE TWO SIDE A

RS: Dick O'Dell was a wonderful idealist and he called this course Negro History because after all that was the proper word to describe dark-skinned people was Negro - anything else was regarded as incorrect - colored for example like the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People, but colored had become somewhat disliked but Negro was the proper word. Then, when we began to get more militant students, they had oddly enough picked up the - I suppose because they were of West Indian background - they used the British phrase black and blacks became the preferred word - well they wanted it called Black History and Dick O'Dell didn't want to. So we had this great impasse and I had a meeting with some black radical students - they came in wearing their stocking caps and scowling and this middle aged Negro lady and she - I agreed with her and she agreed with me - but it was much more strenuous with her then with these young men and these stocking caps. I would say but Mrs Blank I agree with you, I agree with you. But she would be lecturing me like mad. Out of the blue I got this - just popped into my head - I said, Mrs. Blank, what do you think if we called the course Afro American and that went over big - that was great. That's why we called it Afro American long before that became the popular name. There was just a serendipity, I think. It was amusing because she was a very able middle-aged woman - she was married to a master serjeant at the air base, but oh, boy was she ferocious. Of course, the young black men were all terrified of her, as I was in my middle-aged life. She was really formidable.

RM: How do you - you retired in

RS: Fifteen years ago - in 78.

RM: Did you retire early - or was it a regular retirement?

RS: I had had plenty of years in and it was the age to do it. It wasn't early in that sense but - I felt in part remember that when the question would come up, if we were going to have to put young faculty out and I felt that that was really unacceptable. That after all we had raised our children, but these young fellows needed the job. And it was selfless too - there were struggles one sort or another that were just sort of nagging. I had some militant blacks in class who - this fellow was really crazy and should have been in a mental hospital and he insisted that American Indians were Negroes or African. When I wouldn't agree with this, he just went beserke, shouting - unintelligent. This went on for

a week or two and then finally we got him out. That kind of put - I was tired.

Another thing that I think that - probably it's still done - you can never get rid of those things - but that student evaluation of the faculty is very bad. I feel there's nothing good about it and all sorts of bad things. After all, if you read a critical remarks of some student that's sore because you didn't give him a good grade, you don't feel that same about going to class after that. It's destructive - it's just very poor business. Dick O'Dell and I both fought that as hard as we could. For example, the pilary, one of those old lady's that had been on the faculty forever - just savage criticism and savage criticism of Professor Fritz who was dying - he died in the hall - he didn't have much energy and he sat down and this kind of thing. I think the student evaluations are terrible. But that played a big role in making the life less attractive.

RM: Did you - are there any other things you had some notes there?

RS: No, I think we've covered them. I had curriculum down here and we've already done that.

RM: Was there - I'm trying to go back with some memory here - was there a time when you brought up Samuel Elliot Morrison to Northern?

RS: Yes, Morrison came - he stayed with us and he was here.

RM: What year was that?

RS: It was the time of the missile crisis - the Cuban Missile Crisis - was that 62? JFK was assassinated in 63 so it was 62.

RM: He came to lecture?

RS: He was over in Minnesota, I think giving lectures and we didn't have the money to hire him but he came and stayed with us and toured around. Another associate of his came up and did and went to classes with me - Admiral \_\_\_\_ Roy, who was a very colorful associate of Morrison's. And, of course, Howard Peckum from Ann Arbor came up.

RM: Was that under your sponsorship?

RS: Yes

RM: One of the things that I just kind of go back - when you were talking about the curriculum, when you were first here, did it remain pretty much what it had been over the years, maybe mandated by the board of education, or were there - later on when I came in the late 60's 70's we made all sorts of changes, new courses and

directions and so on - in the earlier days was it pretty much set and stayed in place?

RS: Yes, and my guess is that that curriculum had been in place since the 1920s. It really was pretty solid - there were ways to add courses and change them. But, it was a solid, traditional - there wasn't much strain on. Afterwards, when we got that very rigid curriculum, and I've forgotten just how it was done, but they opened a little door and you know how it went into our department - everybody on the faculty that wanted a course, just did it. Bob got a whole bunch of courses that he introduced. I think it would have been better if it had been left the way it was.

RM: I think today we have kind of a return to that because - you find for instance students going into teaching taking a whole series of courses like on the - all military history courses. You kind of wonder, you're going to teach some of that but you're only going to do a day or two, maybe a week on WWII - what are you going to be doing the rest of your time. Now there is kind of a call to go back for the education majors to go back to - what would be a more traditional curriculum of maybe the 1950s?

RS: Well, they had the introductory European history course that ordinarily started in late Roman times and went up to Napoleon, and then the second semester would be Napoleon to the end of WWII. And the American History, of course, would begin with the Northland and would run up through the Civil War in the first semester, and the Civil War to the present the second. And then, you would have the various specialized courses - I would imagine that the Civil War and Reconstruction had a great shot in the arm from the television series - probably a good deal of demand for it.

RM: As a matter of fact, we had dismantled that in the age of Jackson and Lincoln and now we have put it back as Civil War and Reconstruction and it's very, very popular - filled to capacity.

RS: Isn't that interesting - the same way with Latin American - you know how it was - I wouldn't say dead - but it was \_\_\_\_\_ and then Castro revived it.

RM: And then it slowed down and then my Latin American Civilization courses are capacity and that's not a multi-cultural diversity and all of that.

RS: I think that's the way to handle it with real thing - rather than creating some issue course.

RM: Well, that happened with one course - Peace and Nonviolence - Bob's course and I mean it was fine for some students, but then the students that were going into education, some superintendents wouldn't accept it, it was a very untraditional course and they didn't see how it would fit into your training and so on. Students



then came back and they told me that they didn't want to take it because they had heard it had been detrimental to their future jobs. So you did have that development as well.

END OF SECOND TAPE - SIDE A