

This is an interview conducted with John Vandezande by Robert Hendriksen on behalf of Russell Magnaghi, University Historian. This interview was conducted on Wednesday, November 16, 1994.

RH - Just some preliminary things. When were you a student here at Northern?

JV - Roughly 1957 - 1962 with time off for a trip to California when I left school. Graduated in '62.

RH - Did you major in English as a Bachelor or did you have another major?

JV - I didn't start out that way. I started out in pre-med. Cause my grandfather was a doctor. My mother was a nurse in the operating room. My brother took a degree in X-ray Technician, although he died before he ever practiced it. And I just felt I belonged there, so I had no idea, and I discovered I was reading short stories, and novels and plays, and poetry when I should have been reading chemistry. I started to wonder about it all, and drifting in to English. No accounting for it, it just happened.

RH - When did you come to Northern as a professor?

JV - 1964. In between I taught a year of high school in Lansing. And I did a years graduate work, and picked up a masters at Michigan State. For that mater I was offered the job while I was at Michigan State. One of my teachers down there a Dr. David Dixon had accepted the chairmanship of the department up here. And knew that he would need people, he would need staff. So, he offered me the job down there and I accepted it. So when I came here I never interviewed, or anything. I just came here, went into the classrooms, and went straight to work.

RH - Are you glad that you came to Northern?

JV - Oh absolutely! This is my home, and I do best here. I've lived other places, downstate, California, I'm just a native through and through. I was just thrilled to get the offer, and after two years in Lansing I'd had enough of that place. I was out of my element down there. All the lands are privately owned, you can't hunt, you can't fish, you wouldn't want to swim in that water anyway. And to be offered a job back here, was a dream come true, and my wife and I were just thrilled. I didn't know if I'd stay here, because I had no intentions of getting a P.H.D., and it's pretty much taken for granted that you will go on to get a P.H.D. I thought well, I'll stay here for as long as it lasts. Maybe I'll go back to teaching high school, or go back to working construction. I had no idea, but it just lucked out.

RH - Why no P.H.D.?

JV - I had no interest. There was no area I could see myself settling as settling into and limiting my self to. Well, the

reason I ended up staying here I'd never had a creative writing course in my life, but I had always written. And what was then called a policy committee in our department, since they were losing their creative writing teacher, wanted to take a look at what I had written. So I showed them a couple of things, and they offered me the job of teaching creative writing. So I did, and as time went on, I'm not terrible ambitious in this regard, but as time went on I started sending some things out, and they were being accepted and published. Based on that, I was promoted and granted tenure and then went up through the ranks from instructor, to assistant to associate, to full professor. All just luck, things just happened at the right time. I could have been out on the street anytime. Things just fell in place.

RH - Coming to Northern about 1964 as far as a professor, is about the time the four course plan started wasn't it?

JV - Well, they had been working on that while I was away. And the vice president who was I guess you'd call, the spearhead behind the whole thing, a Dr. Burg. He provided the incentive and the momentum to bring the program on board. It was the common learning core, and the four course plan. Based as I understand it on a model at Boden College, Boden University. But he left before it was ever implemented, he went I think is was Chicago. So that left the faculty to deal with this whole brand new program which involved interdisciplinary programs, team taught courses, courses such as mathematics, and natural science. Combining courses, mass lectures, small group discussion of mass group lectures. And for a whole host of reasons it didn't work out, and it slowly unraveled over the years, and it went back to individual department courses. No more of the team taught courses. For instance with a course with a title Man's search for meaning in the modern world, by the time you say the title your ready to take the midterm. Philosophy, history, english. Departments of that nature would combine to teach the courses. Kind of an example of what would go on: Say on a Monday somebody from one of these departments would give a mass lecture to all of the classes say in Kaye Hall auditorium, and then the individual classes would retire to their own rooms for the rest of the week. To discuss the lecture, integrate it with the readings, etc. There was a common book which everybody read. As I recall one of them was: A Canticle for Liebert, I think another was The Immense Journey by Lauren Eisely. The idea being that there would be that common experience among all the students at Northern, and faculty. Everybody would have read the Immense Journey by Lauren Eisely, and you could approach that book, the thinking, the theory was, in classes. Say the Immense Journey, a historical perspective, a scientific perspective, a literary perspective. It was a good idea I thought, the thinking was, I think it was the students would take four courses and the professors would teach three. We used to have courses for any where from 1 to 2 to 3 to 4 hours of credit. A student putting together a 17 hour load might be stretched of a half a dozen courses, made up of all these courses for less credit. And they wanted to kind of focus students on taking fewer courses for a

longer period of time, and also to free the professor up to assign individual research projects in the library, all kinds of things. A lot of that was predicated on the assumption that we would have students who were capable and willing to work on their own on individual research. Like I said it was modeled on a program at Boden College, Boden university. Because at the same time we had the right to try program. Which means a student could enter here regardless of his or her performance in high school, and try Northern. So, we had students coming into the university whose level of preparedness, at times was not all that high. In any event for a number of reasons the program unraveled. Kind of lapsed back into individual departments, individual courses, and I supposed the chief vestige we still have of that program is that most of our courses are still four hours, and professors teach three. Although the entire school underwent a restructuring. In the common learning program there was a director who over the saw the lower division courses. and under him were people in charge say of composition, the science components, social science component, this kind of thing. there were a lot of smaller administrative jobs created, which were then phased back out, and many of these people went back to teaching again, went back to their departments. Like I said we still have vestiges of it here, but it took awhile, and it all kind of unraveled, now were back to where we are.

RH - How do you think the four course plan compares good or bad with the current liberal studies program, and what do you think of the talk around the university of going back to something like the four course plan?

JV - I like the liberal studies program the way it is now, but I think you have to remember our school and I think all schools are always under a curriculum review. Nothing stays static. In our department now we have a curriculum committee. You're constantly changing and adjusting. Phasing in phasing out, trying to meet student needs and department requirements. So that just goes on all the time. Like you say, there is talk. Well, there's always talk. Going back to something we had before, or moving on and trying something different. Which I think bespeaks the health of the university. If a university is to stay abreast of societal developments and consequently student needs, change is just the operative. Which is not to say you throw off all traditions of standards, I don't mean that. We're constantly looking to see how we could better do what we do for the students. So curriculum review is right at the top, that is always undergoing examination.

RH - You did mention in talking about the four course plan, everybody, faculty, students, and administration reading the same book. Was that the same thing as, I can't remember, book of the month, or book of the semester?

JV - It was kind of that, yea. In one semester the entire university would read the same book, and then it would be approach from all these different discipline's perspectives. Which I think

is a nice idea. I think it lends a certain focus and commonality to the university's experience of a certain semester. I wouldn't mind going back to that at all, it would be kind of nice. At least you knew you had that in common anyway. And it was always interesting to me to see what the different discipline's perspectives did to the book. To go back to the Immense Journey, what a scientist had to say about that, or to approach it from a literary perspective. Lauren Eisely was a fine, fine writer, and he could make popular and understandable some of the vagaries of the sciences of anthropology, and archeology. and his book deals with humanistic implications of such exploration and a sense of wonder and awe about the man as he was allowed the privilege going about his work of trying to discover our past. It was interesting to me to see what different disciplines did with the book, how they reacted to it. So, I liked the idea.

RH - You mentioned right to try was going on at the same time. I've heard the same phrase a lot since I came to the university in the last two years. Is it the same policy now as it was then?

JV - No the standards are higher now then it was then, somewhat. They're a bit more stringent. Its not quite as wide open as it used to be.

RH - Part of the argument about right to try is the state requirement that there be a community college in each county and Northern trying to decide how much of that role do they want to fill. Do you agree with the right to try, or do you think it should be into a community college format?

JV - I'm of two minds with that. I don't have anything specific to say about that. It's an age old quandary. For instance if you consider situations and school systems which students come from sometimes the fact that they went through a particular system that means they were punished by it. It wasn't a particularly good system, and they're not especially prepared. I've seen students come to the university, who either did not come from a fairly good system or were not challenged or stimulated or whatever in high school. Or maybe because they themselves were fooling around or something. Didn't do well but come here and catch fire, and just go on to do things, and to become fascinated by learning, and hungry for it. For one thing they're older, I don't know how long one's youth can be held against them. So along those lines I like the idea, but it posed problems. For instance if you have a number of people who are less then adequately prepared for say, a freshman composition course. You can't jeopardize the integrity of that course and lower it to a high school level. It must be a university course. We have all these remedial courses in line 090 and 080, the same in math. The writing work shop, in trying to bring people up to speed. If you're going to have an accredited university, and accredited courses, you can't jeopardize the integrity of the course because you have people who aren't prepared. There going to have to remedy their problems some how but you can't lower the standards of the course. So, it was a

hotly discussed issue, because many people saw a certain element of jeopardy in that for the university. So then we took on all these other agencies if you will to try and remedy the problem.

RH - I have a class with you and in that class you've mentioned vetville, and you just mentioned Kaye hall. Having grown up in the area, and going to school here, and teaching here. What other kind of memorable changes have you seen to the physical Northern.

JV - Well, this is a personal side of this interview. I'm in a very special situation that I would imagine 99% of the faculty aren't. I grew up right here, right on this piece of property. I was born in Big Bay, but we moved to Marquette. We lived by where the skill center is now, that was a saw mill, and my father was their lumber grader, scaler. And even after he died I grew up on Neidhart avenue out here which is two blocks away. I had to come right through this property to go St Micheal's for eight years. This was called the normal woods. When I was a little kid, the entire university was right where Cohodas is. That used to be Kaye Hall, connected to White and Longyear, John D. Pierce which was a laboratory school, because this was a state normal teaching school to begin with. It was not a university then it was only of college standing. I think it became a university maybe the year I was a senior here, something like that, or a junior. But just the physical campus ended right outside this window. [the interview was conducted in room 310 of Carey Hall] The parking lot behind Cohodas was a tennis court, a sunken lower than ground level tennis court with a retaining wall and a cyclone fence around it. Vetville was directly out here in front where the student union is now, out here on this circle. These were quonset huts, they may have been left over army surplus which were constructed for the returning veterans, because of the GI Bill of WWII. Which was like many small colleges across this country, the GI Bill and returning vets taking advantage of that opportunity and going to school. Many of whom I suspect would not have without it. Schools grew just by dint of numbers, and then they had to find accommodations for them. There were also vetville cabins down the hill here by Waldo [St.]. If you were to walk the length of this building and to look out the window down at the corner of Waldo I think there were about five or six of them down there too. But that's all when I was a little kid, and this part right here was all just woods. This particular dormitory here, Carey, and the connecting dorm Spooner, were the first to dorms built. What is now campus security, that was the Lee Hall area, that was the cafeteria, where campus security is now. Upstairs was the Lee Hall ballroom. And every thing else just remained woods, and we slowly, like America, moved west, and developed this campus. Out where Hedgecock is that was the bottom of what was called Slick's Hill. The whole development out on Wright Street, where Magers and all of those dormitories are, and the northern most edge of the LRC, that was called Berg's Field. There used to be a frog pond in the middle of that field. Loggers who used their horses to skid logs in the winter time, summered them there. Joe Sennemore, kept his horses there, and other people did, big draft horses, you'd see them in that field

all summer long. Over the years the campus has expanded to meet the needs brought on by growing. I've seen all of that I was just part of that. The normal woods was just a square block of, I don't know what the acreage involved was, of just woods. If you were to see an aerial view of Marquette right on this northern edge of the city you'd be looking at just a square block of trees. Solid woods, where the married student housing is that was all trees. Married student housing on center avenue was the northern most edge of it. And slowly they took all the, well not all, but some of the trees to make room for all these buildings.

RH - Specifically talking over there by Magers hall and the frog pond area. If you look now it kinds of looks like, there's a sunken area there with some trees and such, it kind of looks like there used to be a stream there. Do you know whether of not that's a fact?

JV - I don't remember a stream. There might have been but I don't remember. I think that pond was spring fed because I don't remember a stream. There was no inlet or outlet to it. I'm almost positive there wasn't. It was in a swell at the bottom of the northwestern most edge of Slick's hill. Which goes upwards toward that housing development by the grade school over there. I don't recall any stream I think it was a little spring fed bog.

RH - Going back to Kaye hall. The university now is making great attempts to revitalize the university center and make it a place for students and I've heard lots of stories from Dr. Magnaghi about how that's basically what Kaye Hall was. How do you feel about the difference between the two and the changes going on now.

JV - Well one of the first buildings ¹³⁸built although it was much smaller, was the student union over here as we presently know it. That was built in later years while I was a student here, and it was very common to leave a class in Kaye hall. Walk that short distance with your teacher over to get a cup of coffee and a table. It was a real gathering place for students and teachers. Course the school was much smaller, we have to remember that. The fact that all the classes could be taught in Kaye hall, and a small science complex next to it, bespeak its size and the J.D. Pierce building, some college courses were taught in that building. But that was a very common experience I had some of my best learning experiences around a big round table in the student union with various professors. But the fact that all of the faculty and the administration and the students were all in Kaye hall made for powerful intimacy. You just bumped into everybody all of the time, presidents, vice presidents, deans. They were in the hall all the time, you would have to walk past the president's office to get to class. So, just by dint of circumstance there was much more intimacy.

RH - Do you think that the changes that they've done to the U.C. now, The food court, and the lounge and such will bring some of that back?

JV - I've never been up there. For that matter even the present union the way it was before they did all these renovations. In five years I think I've been in there five times. The university has been kind of decentralized with dorms way out on Wright street. You know Magers and all them. You just don't see that anymore. Now we have little enclaves around campus, for instance I don't know how many of us English types are in this building 8 maybe something like that. There's no lounge in this building, it's an old dormitory. No place to get together really with students. And since the faculty are scattered all over campus, as are the students. A lot of it depends on traffic lanes. We, being the creatures of habit that we are. If its close and in our lane of traffic what with everyone's different schedule you might stop off there. And you might on occasion or maybe by design or lucky happen stance bump into a teacher and have a cup of coffee, but its very rare these days. In those days it was a matter of course. Well, I suppose its because of the psychology of geography. It was a different physical plant, it was much more compressed and we were all together. We don't have that anymore. I noticed one good thing about Gries hall, which they are renovating for faculty. There's going to be classrooms in that building. I understand some conference rooms, maybe a lounge of some kind, I'm not sure. I haven't seen all the plans. I would likethat kind of thing, were you could meet out of the class room over a cup of coffee.

RH - Are you familiar with what the Heart of Northern is?

JV - Are you talking about the piece of raised ground that used to be in front of Cohodas, the heart?

RH - Yes.

JV - Oh sure! I used to play on that heart all the time. There are vestiges of it left, higher ground, but it used to be a heart shaped mound. They got rid of it over the years kind of piece meal as they expanded their parking lots over there. There's a bit of it left as I understand, I haven't been over there in a long time. It was just kind of a landscaping novelty, it was nice. Trees and shrubs on it.

RH - Is there anything else like that around Northern or that used to be here. I understand that's used to be where a lot of impromptu student gatherings took place.

JV - I supposed the closest to it is this lawn in front of the U.C. where they set up the band early on, and the union has it's opening day picnic at the beginning of the fall semester. That would come the closest to it, this area right over here.

RH - You mentioned in class having had Dr. Rapport as one of your professors. Could you speak to your view of him as a student yourself and then as a fellow faculty member. Then if there is any other professors, here now or retired that you had as a student.

JV - Oh I had a lot of wonderful teachers. Jim Rapport to me is an institution unto himself. He's a wonderful teacher. He's a very warm man, as is his wife Karla. I knew the whole family, I knew their children. Jim came here in my later years as a student along with Dr. Pennel in the English dept. Who was one of my teachers when I was a senior I think, and just stunned us. He was just brilliant and good, as was Jim. Jim help design and build the little theater. He just totally revamped the speech and theater department. He was the chairman for I don't know how many years, over 20 years of the speech department. He just stepped down from that position and went back to full time teaching. Put on shows here when I was a kid like South Pacific in conjunction with the music department. I don't know if he vitalized or revitalized that program, but it's because of his enthusiasm and dedication. I had him for theater courses, history of modern theater, another course too. Excellent teacher and a good friend. And now as a faculty as a colleague, that friendship has just remained. Dr. Pennell who retired maybe five or six years ago. Just a brilliant teacher, I had him for literary criticism, and went on to Michigan State in it at the graduate level, and partly studied at all because I had Art's course. Just an exciting and enthusiastic teacher, who later became my boss as chairman our department when I came back here to teach. He was chairman for some years, very helpful in getting me promoted. He believed in the things I was writing, and worked to get me tenure here. Just a great friend, and like I said just a wonderful teacher. Having been here 31 years I've a lot of memories of these people. Dr. Earl hilton has been retired for about 10 years now. I never had him for a course, I always wished I had, but we had many conversations with him about literature, and writing, and many other things. Dr. Thomas who was the department chairman when I was a student, and my teacher. Who was tough, but fair and good. Even after he was retired when he'd hear that I'd published a story he'd want to see it, and he was always in your camp always pulling for you. As a matter of fact, when I'd had an offer, a deal at Michigan State, a teaching assistanceship, I couldn't afford to take it right away because I needed some more money than that offered. So I taught a year of high school, then I reapplied, and the graduate director called me at the school I was teaching at in Lansing and asked if I could come to see him when school was out. So I went over to Morrell hall on State's campus at 4 o'clock. I'd never been there before. He introduced himself and told me he was an important man. Which I didn't quite know what to make of. He said, "don't take that wrong. You see by important I mean I'm very busy. I sit on a lot of committees I direct a lot of programs. And I'm here to tell you, you have the assistanceship that you applied for, because I'm so busy that I can't afford to be on the phone with a Dr. Russell Thomas from Northern Michigan University, every day as he insists that I give you that teaching assistanceship." and he said that your credentials that you've submitted are in line with every body else, but I just have to get that man off the phone. He said do you realize what a friend you have in that man. And I said Oh yes I do sir. We didn't start out that way. We started out arguing in freshman classes, but it was because he was trying to get the best

out of you. He was tough and good. He died maybe five six years ago. His son, Norman, is the chairman of the political science department of I think its Perdue, no excuse me, university of Cincinnati, something like that, Ohio. For years after his retirement we remained friends. I'd visit him over on fourth street. Then he left town, he and his wife, and they both died down there. Just a great friend, and without his help and support I might never have finished here. It's people like that you remember, because they were so helpful. They knew a lot about you, they made it a point to know a lot about you.

RH - Do you think its possible to establish that kind of relationship with students here at Northern now? Or have we just gotten too big to have that kind of relationship?

JV - Well, big is a relative term. Northern is still a very small school, but as we were saying before the geography of the campus is different. For instance when we were all in Kaye hall. All the different departments under one roof. I had many conversations with people from other departments about books and current issues, because we were together. I chatted with historians, and sociologist, and political scientists, and there was a great deal of collegiality of that kind. If you were interested in ideas it was very stimulating to be in daily contact with these people who though they might reside in a different area of enthusiasm they brought perspective to what ever was being discussed. It was very exciting, very rich. Now because we are all separated, our department hasn't been together in a very long time because we are so big. We will be in gries hall. We will be there eventually with psych, and sociology, and criminal justice. We might gain some of that back, but (and I don't mean to talk about the good old days) in Kaye hall it was not only the faculty together, but the administrators, and the students. And know the administrators are all over here except for a few deans, like the dean of Arts and sciences down in Magers. But it was very common to have everyday conversations with academic vice presidents, with the president. Now there all in cohodas, and we're all over here. That particular fact is going to decrease what we've just been talking about. You're not together on a daily basis, and everybody goes about their business, follows there traffic plans, their schedules, times of the day when you have to be somewhere classes or whatever, and by the time your finished you go home for the most part.

RH - You just mentioned having been here 31 years. Is that all as a professor or student too?

JV - That's from '64 to almost '95, so that's all as a professor.

RH - That gives you a kind of unique perspective on change. The administration is kind of panicking over the closure of K.I. Do you think really in the long run that's going to effect Northern all that much?

JV - Well, there's always the problems with numbers because numbers

means money, money means programs and staff. I think northern will make the adjustment and go on. Northern was a university long before K.I. was ever in the Upper Peninsula, and I think it will go on being a university. It might not be the same university, I doubt very much if it could be, depending on the amount of numbers that we lose. But it will scale down I supposed in terms of staff, programs, numbers of administrators. There will be consolidations as there already have been in administrative positions. there will be shifts in emphases in programs, some might be down sized, or eliminated, what ever it takes. As far as I'm concerned, I have no reason to believe Northern wouldn't go on. Probably a different Northern, but maybe that's not a bad thing. Change is a very good thing for a university to keep it quick and clean. I don't mean to lose it's traditions, and I'm saddened by the traditions we've lost here. Especially in terms of some of the buildings we have lost, but that's another whole issue. Northern 10 years ago was not the same university alumni remember from 1930, but its still here and its still Northern. If it's not a slightly different Northern, its probably not keeping abreast of the times.

RH - The theme of all of this has been change. Growing up here, how do you feel Northern's presence in the community as a whole has changed?

JV - Well, since 1899 when the school was started it has been a part of Marquette, but in large I think there are good relationships. There could be a real town - gown rivalry, but I don't see that at all. Many of the people who live in Marquette are graduates of Northern. In my own case with my own children I was very glad to have a university here that my children could attend. It's a great benefit. It helps you financially that they don't have to leave and go off to some other place. I think the university greatly enriches the community. In terms of its cultural programs, its intellectual impact, it's sporting events, all kinds of things. Marquette wouldn't be Marquette with out Northern and vice versa. I think for the most part Marquette has been receptive to Northern. There are difficulties at times. You'll hear college students being maligned for their behavior, but that's going to go on in any university. But the people who are right thinking about it all realize the young people of Northern don't cause anymore problems than people who are not going to Northern, maybe less. There's no great rivalry as there are in some towns, and the two of them have grown up together, my God, we're talking almost a hundred years here. Marquette was established in 1849, so it wasn't here much longer, or very long before Northern came on the scene, so it's been a mutual kind of maturing.

RH - You mentioned being sadden by traditions being lost. Could you speak to some of those traditions?

JV - Well, I realize we're talking money here. Of the lost of some of the original buildings here on campus. I would have really have like to see Longyear at least be able to stay, but I guess

financially it wasn't feasible, or whatever. I don't blame anybody for that. I'm not in on making those decisions, and I don't have to account for the dollars. I guess I really would have like to seen some of that kept. I guess the traditions going beyond architecture here, that I look back on was that close relationship between students and teachers. That might be a thing of the past and may have to remain that way because we've grown in size. I doubt very much you could have both. For instance I took a graduate degree at Michigan State when it was only forty thousand strong. I encountered students who didn't even know their teachers names. Literally did not know the person's name, sitting halls of two and three hundred students and one teacher. There was no exchange no give and take, straight lecture. You could have put it on a tape, and start it running and the professor could have gone sailing. We don't have that problem, we're not that big. In that sense some our traditions remain, less than what they were in the past. But we still have smallness in size to offer. The fact that you and I are sitting here talking like this would not be happening I don't think at state. The fact that I know you as well as I do. We fight hard around here to keep our classes small. That's an ongoing, not a battle, but a top priority for us. For pretty soon your not teaching, your talking, and I think there is a difference. I don't know, I don't like to become just an old sentimentalist about it. Talk about the good old days as compared to now, because I'm sure there were problems in those good old days that I wasn't even aware of. I'm not so sure they're all that bad now. This is still a small campus. I can still get to know my students fairly well, and they me. I'm on a first name basis with administrators, and people who are in charge of running this place. Especially with our president now, President Vandement. Who, I'm convinced is the best president we've ever had in the thirty one years I've been here. He's honest, he's open, he's forthright, he's accessible, he's friendly. That's all good I have no complaints with that at all. Which is not to say I don't have arguments with administrators, of course I do. Years ago when we started a union here it took us three attempts, three years to get a union. That was a running battle, but we just saw the need it had to be. We needed representation, we needed grievance procedures, we needed all kinds of things we needed more money to survive. There was a time when I first started teaching here. In addition to my teaching here I would teach on the road. I taught every semester on the road, extension courses. I taught summer courses, worked construction on the summer when I was not in classroom, just trying to make a living to raise my family. And after about the third or fourth year I was here, I didn't think I could afford to teach anymore. I couldn't make a living at it. I could support my family, and do the things that had to be done. So, we agitated strongly for collective bargaining, and it was not welcomed in those days at all. You know, we had real antagonism between a handful of us who started the collective bargaining movement, and the current administration at that time. Which is not to say I don't have disagreements with administrators, I do. All of us I think very forthright in expressing our views. Because, we're fighting for what's important to us. But I don't think it becomes

personall. I'm still on a friendly basis with all the people I've had terrific arguments with at times. Which is the way it should be, so I don't think this school is all that bad now.

RH - Just a curiosity. I know you don't like to point to then and now, and compete between the two either way. I've been talking with others about past presidents, pointing out the differences between Cohodas, and Kaye hall. Events going on in the sixties. Do you remember anything outstanding about events that happened during the sixties, and why Cohodas looks like a fortress?

JV - Well I wasn't in on the design of that building. But yes, there were many events that shook this campus. What was called the Mclellan affair, when professor Mclellan was summarily fired. Because he uttered an opinion contrary to the official position of the university on condemning lands out north to expand. One president thought that this campus would expand to 20,000 and go right to the lake. They condemned property out north, people were being treated unfairly. Bob Mclellan got involved and was fired. We had the ACLU here. We had all kinds of things going on here. He was eventually reinstated with monetary awards of some kinds. reinstated to his position. It was fought in the courts. Those kinds of things shook the campus up. We had moratoria here on Vietnam of course. We had civil rights agitations, and protests, and demonstrations. To some people that was as it should be, to others that was disruptive and did not belong on a campus. There were days when the campus was much more of a political hot bed than it is now, with all of they attendant benefits and problems which accrue when you have that kind of dissatisfaction among large groups of people. But Northern survived it all, and perhaps is the better for it. Its board of control in those days, though they said they were autonomous and could do what they want realized and was kind of a lesson lately learned that there's a constitution to this country which overrides their autonomy. Which means if you work for a university, you can utter your own opinion whatever it is, and you do not have to adopt and administrators opinion on anything. Protected not only by the constitution, but academic freedom and all kinds of things. They didn't know that but they learned it. They learned it the hard way but they learned it. In effect it was kind of a purge, it shook the thing up a bit it was good for it. Which is not to say I advocate destruction, but you can't have people thinking like that. Certainly not in a university. There is no one line no ideology, that everybody has to follow, and if anybody thinks there is, or that there is any place where there's that kind of thinking on a university campus, they are just dead wrong. Events like that have happen which brought about various different kinds of discord, but there was discord all over. It's all part of the history, part of the maturing, the growing.

RH - Ever since I came here I've been hearing comments about past presidents, especially President Jamrich, and the conflicts between faculty and administration during his tenure as president. What was your perspective on the conflicts caused by president Jamrich?

JV - Well, I don't want to get into personalities here. He was here during tumultuous times. Here was here during the Vietnam era, that wasn't his fault. He inherited that with the job, right? He just happened to be here at that time. Other presidents have reigned here, if you will, during times of relative ease and innocence, and peacefulness if you will. His times weren't that. It was when he was here that we started our effort for collective bargaining, it was happening all across the country. So he was the president we had to deal with. He was not receptive to it and defeated us twice, and the third time we won. I don't know if you know what's involved in moving to form a collective bargaining unit, but you pass cards as to whether or not the rank and file want an election, and you have to settle upon an agent. We initially wanted AFT which is a more radical teachers union, but our faculty being relatively conservative would not go for them. We went for AAUP, American Association for University Professors. Which I believe was the last intellectual fraternity to come into the collective bargaining, on to that scene. He caught the full brunt of that too. I'm not going to sit here and bad mouth him. We had our differences, but part of his situation was the time in which he was the president here. I don't agree with some of the things he did, but that's neither here nor there. Nobody is going to have full acceptance. So, I really don't want to get into personalities here. I wish him well in his retirement. His daughter worked here, June Parsons, good friend of mine. Which again is not to say I didn't have violent disagreements with the man, I did, but I wasn't the only one. But those were the times.

RH - You mentioned in class about Paul Harvey coming to the university and the interesting experience that he had here, and some other dignitary type people have been here like former President Ford. Would you care to relate that story he told us in class and any others?

JV - Well, he was up against a university audience which is not about to except his bromides, and broadcast statements, and they wanted, as students do, some verification, some specificity. They wanted support for the argument he was putting forth in broadside statements. It just wasn't a very happy experience for him. I just got the feeling he was not accustomed to speaking, maybe he was maybe I was dead wrong. I just had the feeling that he wasn't accustomed to speaking to university audiences where people want a rationale for what your saying. They want supporting evidence that document for what your position. They are not simply going to because you say so. My God, I would not want a class full of students like that. By my likes he did not have a very happy experience here. I'm sure he survived it. He probably cried all the way to the bank. He's kind of an american phenomenon, and very much an entertainer. I really don't know that much about the man, I don't listen to him on the radio. Before you couldn't help it because he was on the dial, but I was never especially drawn to him. That flamboyant deliver he had, I'm kind of low key myself, and I appreciate people who are also. The thing with president Ford. Secret service got all shook up about students with their

guns. It was funny I suppose. I don't suppose it would be funny to a secret service man responsible for the safety to the president. I think they just forgot or didn't know what time it was, and where they were, on the eve of opening day of deer season. If you don't like guns don't be in the U.P. on the opening day of deer season or the night before, because they are all over the place. I saw two guys the other day walking with their guns down Washington street. As I did last month as I brought my 20 gauge into Lindquist's Sporting Goods Shop. They're in a case, they're unloaded, but there's just guns around here. And people come from all over to hunt white tail deer. Just kind of unfortunate for them [the secret service] I suppose.

RH - We've been talking about change the whole time. Is there any particular change to the English curriculum that you would like to see?

JV - Well its undergoing a review all the time. It's under review right now. I really couldn't speak to any specific changes, it has changed so much. For instance if you could pursue titles of courses I took freshman english when it was titled composition and rhetoric. Then it became modes of discourse. Then it became humanities 1. Then I think it became freshman composition again. The course pretty much remained the same except the under the four course plan it was integrated into the humanities program. So you had a body of content material such as the common books I was talking about, to consider in some of this courses. But freshman English to me pretty much remains freshman English. You have the group of people, no mater what you call the course, who have difficulties with the language, and employing the conventions, and consequently they don't communicate well on paper. That's your job to help them with those problems, and that's remained the same no mater what they call the course. They call it apples and oranges I would still have to go in and try to help these young people and older people with there writing skills. So sometimes course curriculum revisions are more editorial and cosmetic then substantive. We used to have and English major, and you had to take two minors. You where either in secondary ed or you were not. Now we have graduate bound and liberal arts, and secondary ed. We have a writing minor. Now we have a writing major. These have all been added since I've been here. We have a technical writing program, fifteen years ago I don't even think the term existed although people were doing it for a living. Now because of the need to communicate in this fast pace changing modern age of ours we have course called technical writing. We have a field out there where people gain employment as technical writers for business and industry and science. Because somebody has to be able to describe what's going on in easy to understand terms for the rest of the world. We had none of that before. This is what I meant when I talked about northern changing.