

Interview with Dr. Cameron Howse

March 15, 1996

Interviewed by: Didn't say

INT: First I just need to know about yourself, where did you grow up?

CH: I grew up in England, I was born in close to Birmingham, the central part of England, a big industrial area. I moved when I was about 5 to about 40 miles north of Birmingham to an area called St? where they make all parties ? ? ?. I went to elementary there, I went to high school in England, I went to college in the south west of England, a ? college in ?. Where I got a major in Physical education, education believe it or not in Physics. The first PE major to have physics. I left England in 1966 and came over to United States to the University of Oregon, I spent a year at the University of Oregon, a program in England is 3 years program I had to spend an extra year to get a bachelors degree, I then moved from Eugene Oregon to University of Toledo in Ohio, where I did my Masters and Ph.D. work. In 1972 I moved from Toledo and took a position, as assistant professor, at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg Canada. I was there from 1972 to 1976. I came to Northern in 1976 as assistant professor, in 1978 I was made department head and I have been the department head ever since.

INT: Then you came to Northern in 1976.

CH: yes.

INT: Before you got into the department, did you notice who was in charge of the department or what was the department like at the time you were hired.

CH: At the time I was hired there was some controversy surrounding the department, for a couple of reasons. Number one we were in the process, this building the V,DD,V was in the process of being completed, I arrived in the fall of 1976, I was housed, the whole department was housed in the Hedgecock field house. In the beginning of the winter semester we made the move and the transition the from Hedgecock fieldhouse into the V building and there was a lot of debate on campus. And I wasn't here when all this happened but it is my understanding that when the building was proposed the faculty and staff and students could utilize it to work out. When the building was eventually put on line it turned out the faculty had to pay a membership fee to use the building. Which lead to some interesting discussions, I think some of the faculty across campus felt as though that they had been betrayed, that eventually all died down. Part of the problem was, when the building was put on line and was funded a different way than other state buildings so money had to generated to operate. So a membership program was started, I was involved in that. It was also a time when moving to a new facility, as the programs here

started to expand, when you have a major expansion in the activities program, the health program, recreation, outdoor recreation, we expanded summer sports camps, we got into ? program, membership programs, so the whole department really was a time of significant growth. Internally there was some concerns and again I came in at the tail end of this thing the long time department head had retired, Dr. Rico Zenti, and the faculty when Dr. Zenti retired, at the end of the academic year, the faculty thought then when on break, that one internal candidate would get the position. When they returned from summer break they found a different internal candidate had the position. Which created some problems. That person was Dr. Robert Hocky he was the department head for two years, that would be from 1976 to 1978. In 1978 I was appointed department head.

INT: How, you said there was a major expansion, why was that, what was the demand for that? Did you see a major demand from students?

CH: Yes, there seem to be a major demand for a lot more variety and the activity program and given the new facility we were able to accommodate a lot of those types of things. We were also able to expand to the outdoor area, prior to moving over to this building, we had a recreation that was primarily a community recreation program. Moving into this facility with some of this equipment we had and the availability of the outdoors one of our pushes, one of my pushes was to move into the outdoor recreation area which we have done and have been very successful in. So there is a major advancement in the activities program, the outdoor recreation area, more recently the last ten years we have moved into the health and fitness area and that has proven to be very successful. And the balance of the department has changed significantly. From 1978 from when I was first department head the primary focus on the department was teacher education. And the majority our students arrived as physical education majors or health education majors. Now a minority of our students are in teacher education. Now they are in health and fitness management, outdoor recreation, sports science has just exploded in the past two or three years, so the balance is a real change in the balance of the department.

INT: What classes, have the classes down too since you came, are there less classes being offered to students?

CH: Well there has been pendulum swing on that. When I first took over as department head there was a full hour physical education requirement. And every student on campus had to take 4 credits that was changed a number of years ago to two credits. And while the number of students taking classes didn't, wasn't cut by 50 percent, there was a drop in the number of students taking classes. So when we first moved in here there was a big build up and there has been a somewhat steady decline, although we still offer, I believe, in excess of 60 sessions of activities classes each semester. Overall I think we in the department 150 courses each semester ? ? ?.

INT: Was the enrollment in the college, what was it like when you came in? The enrollment compared to now, how many students do you think were in this department as a major or minor?

CH: Well when I first took over as department head it was the prime days of teacher education. It was called the school of education at the time, it was the major, I hate to say it, it was the major school on campus, because there were a lot of people in teacher education. In terms of our department, as I mentioned if you have a changed, even though the university enrollment has declined the number of majors we have in our department over the past 10 years has shown a steady increase. I think that is because we have become more diverse in terms of in the types of things we do, if we would of stayed just teacher education we would probably no longer be a department. But because of the changes we have made, the number of majors we have is steadily increasing. There are indications when you look what is happening nation wide the interest on health fitness, the increase in leisure time people have, the dollars people have to spend on ?, there is a pretty good chance that, as long as you keep current with the programs, I think we are going to be marketable in a number of majors and will continue to increase.

INT: You think that is why students stay interested more and more in this major. How many faculty members do you have now?

CH: When I first came into the department we had 16 full time faculty. 16 graduate assistants I think it was 5 AP, we had availability of part time coaches, because coaches teach, probably ? of 10 coaches. We now have 10 full time faculty, we have 8 graduate assistants, we have 2 AP and probably the same number of coaches. There have been some changes occurred, for a long time I was responsible for intramurals, the running of V, Hedgecock, the Dome, but they split that up into recreation sub units. So some of the less AP's goes to recreational services. But we have lost significant number of faculty over the years. But at the same time the number of majors has increased so the productivity, I mean we kind of downsizing or right sizing I suppose. And most of that was driven by budget, the 80's and mid 80's, most of the way through the 80's and into the 90's as well. We have seem to budget cuts, budget cuts...

INT: Now the Phys Ed department was first to come in, ???

CH: It is probably a toss up between recreation and health, they were probably about the same time. Bill Target came here to develop the health department in 1970. So I would think in 1970 probably the start of the health program, probably around that time was the start of the recreation program, then it was a community recreation program.

INT: who was in charge of the recreation?

CH: Gil Fox was a coordinator of the recreation program, Bill Taget and Bill is still here. The outdoor recreation program really

didn't start, let me figure it out. Keep asking me another question.

INT: Okay, I just wanted to ask you if you saw any major changes or anything you wanted to add about the department.

CH: Ya we have had a whole ?? as seems I have spent the past 18 years cutting budgets. It is also been, I have also been in the spark that is the quality of I guess I don't need to ?? the department some interesting options, we have a significant number of faculty that retired over a short period of time. And that is not unusual people tend to come to the institution at the same time and you retire at the same time and that is one major change I noticed over the years, that long time faculty are much more mobile now. Faculty for whatever reason are not as mobile as they used to be. So we did have a significant number of faculty retire and at the same time they retired at the same time they were retiring the University was changing its budgeting system to a decentralized budget, in the past when somebody retired or resigned or left I would have to go to the administration, the administration would take my money and I would have to go back and say please I need this position to justify the position. Now what happens, I will just use some ball park figures, lets say a faculty member retires, and lets say the total package, ??, lets say \$100,000, what the administration will do now they will give me say \$50,000 of that maybe a replacement cost for a young faculty member and take the excess and redistribute that which you have to do to other programs and new programs, across campus. So we don't have to fill that position I can use that \$50,000 to buy equipment and supplies or whatever or fill that position. So because we have had a number of retirements we have a lot of flexibility which has served us well because we have been able to take, couple of times we have ? the ? and bought some equipment and then we will hire somebody, and then we will hire somebody in a different area. For example our sports science program went from 9 students up to 45 and they did it in less then 2 years. So all of a sudden we were saying we need some, we need some resources, we need someone to teach and so we would advertise for a position in the teaching area. And when we advertised for a year and couldn't find somebody, and then we looked at our figures at the end of the year, we would say we don't really need anybody in the teaching area because that has declined we need somebody in the sports science area. So that is where we get that from. So decentralized budgets there are some problems with them, but us they have served extremely well. So we have been able to get equipment, we have built the ?? on ?, for many years we didn't have much, Gene ? was the one person in the department in outdoor rec., we were able to get some resources, we had a new faculty member in outdoor rec. and was able to put significant number of dollars into equipment and supplies to support that program. So that has been exciting, I guess I have been lucky to be in a position to shape a department to what it is going to look like in the next 10-15 years. Which is unusual for some of the ? ? but it has been good, overall we have an excellent faculty a very professional faculty. But we have young, younger people and a lot

of extra good things going.

INT: Do you know what year the education department started?

CH: I don't I am sorry. I should but I don't

INT: Do you think that if I talked with Jean ? she could have ? on the outdoor rec department.

CH: Oh yes because she was brought here, she was stuck in that very chair that you are sitting in and completed an interview process because we didn't have an outdoor rec program. And I couldn't get our faculty at that time to develop an outdoor rec program and she sat in that chair and I tried to get her when she came here and she finished her interview process and she said I have been here for two days now and I am really not quite sure what I am suppose to do. I said very simple if you don't have a program, I want a program that is going to be State and Nationally recognized. I want someone to build that program so if you want us to do that you can come here and do that you can play sports and if you don't like ? ? don't come, she came. So number of years she kind of struggled on her own with bits and pieces of people and adjunct, so the last couple of years we have really been able to, with the retirements, give the opportunity to really build the program, that program is going to go. 1979 she came here, so 1979 the outdoor rec program started.

INT: is there anything else you wanted to add? I might have more questions and call you on the phone when I am writing my paper I think of something, I talked to Gildo Canelli and interviewed ? ? he is very pleasant too. He helped me a lot.