

Robert Sibilsky

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Start of interview:

(I) Ok Bob I'd like to interview you this afternoon concerning your tenure with the purchasing department, could you give us a little of your background, where you are from and how you got to Northern and into this position?

(R) Ok I'm from Houghton, Michigan, I graduated from Houghton High School in 61' I ended up going to college at Suomi College on a basketball scholarship. Subsequent to that I join Michigan Tech in the 1962-63 both as a student and finally as a full time employee working with Otto Hurskane. Hurskane is [spelled out phonetically] Otto was the assistant controller at Michigan Tech and our mission was to set up a purchasing department to expand upon the autonomy that was given to the state schools about that time. So we literally created procedures, forms and all the appropriate documents that are necessary to operating a purchasing office at Michigan Tech. I stayed there, Otto left in about 1966 I stayed and acted as their director until the spring of 1967. I came down to Northern at the request of Otto, who had in fact come to work here as the purchasing agent, being hired then President Edgar Harden. They needed an assistant and the dollars that they were offering was twice what Tech was paying me to manage their operation so that great sum of at that time \$10,000 dollars was quite an incentive for me to come to Northern. So we ended up coming down the Job Corp program was in place and in addition to the regard purchasing duties I managed all of the buying activities for the Job Corp program. Job Corp left shortly thereafter and we were housed in at that time in the old Kay Hall gymnasium on the southwest corner as part of the business division or business offices as it was called in those days. That was headed up by then and deceased Bob Kemp.

(I) This was in the old gymnasium below the auditorium Kay Hall?

(R) Correct.

(I) With the old running track going around it?

(R) Right right.

(I) So they, how did they have that set up? Was it divided up?

(R) Well they made up from the carpenters in house created some plywood partitions and they were supported basically by file cabinets and desks as to how they were held up. The division office was... well the accounting office is located down there, purchasing, equipment inventory, physical plant under Ernie Newman at the time. Mr. Van Tassel, was our vice president of finance who over saw the whole operation, he and Ken Pierce our recently retired budget director occupied offices on the second floor of Kay Hall just above the gymnasium. The duplicating office run by Leo Deshane, now retired, was occupied the space which was the shower room for the gym proper just off of the east entrance to the gym. So the news bureau, World Macintyre

who was head of it at the time, occupied another little locker rooms on the north side of the gym and the mail operation which was headed up by Leonard Bartlie [Spelled phonetically] a retired state police officer was located on the northwest corner of that gym. Personal I believe at the time was handled through by Bob Kemp and I can't remember Bill Clark came in now retired from Northern as well shortly thereafter.

(I) Now was that, that complex they set up they moved in there after they established Hedgecock? And then this became the kind of the place where all these offices? Hedgecock I think was open about 58' 59'.

(R) Yeah I don't know I would assume that would be the case because Hedgecock was pretty new in fact as a high school basketball player I played four regional tournaments in Hedgecock and that was quite a facility and it was quite an attraction for us as high school students in the U.P. to get to Hedgecock that was like you made it to big time, you made it to the NBA. So yeah that was quite a facility I remember coming here in 67' that's shortly thereafter we decided to put concrete in Hedgecock and get rid of the old, we used to have a wooden floor and that thing was kind of a cinder type surface, earth surface in there prior to that. You could smell, they used to bring in the carnivals for the Wisconsin group.

(I) Oh yeah.

(R) For they would have them in and the animals would do their defecation on the floors and all that kind of permeated the smell of the building's ground structure so that, it had an air or an odor that was interesting at least. Subsequently then hired Pinot Nero [Spelled phonetically] who was now a major contractor and associate here in town to put concrete in that field house and that was probably his first big major job if I recall correctly. He became a knowable contractor some years thereafter associated himself with expansion of the Till and Empire mines and now is a very well to do contractor and still exists here in Marquette under the name Associated Constructors. We some years thereafter got rid of the old wooden floor, we sold that at an auction sale to several parties, one of which was one of our former coaches, Buck Nystrom who turned it into a handball court which was nonexistent in the area, off the Wright Street into an old garage.

(I) Was that down Center Street?

(R) Yeah right over here some place.

(I) Ok I played there actually. So that the floor from the Hedgecock building?

(R) That was the Hedgecock floor from the 1950s.

(I) Ohhh.

(R) Yeah and then we sold some of it to Norm Poshnik [Spelled phonetically] deceased contractor from south Marquette who attempted to do same elsewhere in Marquette, I didn't know where he ended up but it was unsuccessful venture and I think the floor of what was left of it eventually became scrap or burning material someplace throughout the county. That was an interesting time and then we applied what is known the Pro-turf in there which was a liquid

rubberized trail that became the actual surface for the play of basketball, the lines were embedded right into the rubberized trail that was colored. Then it was coated with a wax material but it became very difficult as it's not very resilient and they are having a lot of problems with the players playing on it. We used to have a tennis courts set up in there and basketball courts and crossways and that was under the deluge of Glen Brown are then varsity basketball coach. He succeed Stan Albeck who is now in the NBA in 1968 or 69'. Stan was here over a brief time which I just came maybe one season and then he ended up going to San Antonio or one of the NBA teams and eventually coached the Chicago Bulls and Michel Jordan and I think he is still coaching as an assistant level in Texas. Trying to think of... various activities I guess following the purchasing department from the Kay Hall setting I didn't mention there before but prior to Otto Hurskane my employer or my supervisor there was a fellow by the name of Bill Winzinberg and as an assistant at Michigan Tech at the time that the state of Michigan established the separate board of control of the various colleges, I used to travel with him to meetings to at Central Michigan to develop purchasing department systems and procedures to be used at all the schools. Prior to that we were essentially Clarks of the works and when we wanted to make a purchase of \$150 dollars or less we were to use a seven part document referred to as a DPO. Departmental purchase order and if you can imagine this was a mailing process to Lansing to state buyers you could go down and make that \$150 dollars but we had to do the actual payment of that document through the state of Michigan on what they call the DA-207 invoice form, seven parts as well. So the vendor would make out his invoice, make out the state's seven part invoice and then that was summited to Lansing for approval sometimes 30, 60, 90, or 120 days before you got money that was committed on a \$150 dollar departmental purchase order.

(I) Oh my word.

(R) If it exceeded \$150 dollars it was mandatory that we submitted a multi-list like document for bidding purposes by the state of Michigan buyers, they have buyers for all categories of products in Lansing and we'd submit this I forget if I mentioned it, it was another departmental of administration 200 voucher form or repression form. And then they would at their option comingle well their institution's needs a consumer type and they would go out on a bidding process which in most cases took anywhere from 20-30 days, now remember that's \$150 dollars plus. And then they would award, they could award something that was available just around the block for me to an agency or business in Kalamazoo or Detroit or Grand Rapids and ship it up. So you can imagine the frustration that was going on in those days and as a subsequent result of that these purchasing departments that we now have at the institutions were created and we then developed our own latitude and longitude and methods by which people could procure merchandise. When I came to Michigan, Northern Michigan University from Michigan Tech I had gone through all the processes I was there three and half years at Tech and..

(I) You came to Northern in what year?

(R) In 67'.

(I) 67' ok.

(R) Yeah June of 67' I think it was. I brought with me all of the purchase order requisition and procedures for buying plus warehousing that I had developed up at Michigan Tech. Ironically the warehouse stock record documents have existed despite my efforts to try and change them for some thirty one years. As I speak to you now the TMA systems an automated system associated with trades and maintenance has been put into place and the new system will be automated after I retire here next month. I'm not sticking through ones years of that processor, not that its high priority item but it was something that was rather simple that should have been done many many years ago. The requisition form remains though intact essentially as we see it today, there has been some minor modifications and some categories added for computerized input. We used to manually type all these purchase orders on a document that resembles our purchase order, the current purchase order which is being produced on the computer system of the university. We went to that system approximately 8-9 years ago and its now quite an efficient operation most of the data is entered through codes and the actual items are entered by our input secretary Diana Rodgers[Spelled phonetically]. That's in the computer and it turns into a purchase order document overnight and the documents are delivered to our office the next morning. We now have the advantage of there were a time when phone bids were prohibited and as the demand to get things more quickly and now in our areas we were always in the metropolitan area for all these purchases, we created the phone bid system we went to the cash purchase order system and now we've implemented fax coding and bidding and acquiring merchandise. We also use the credit card system for purchases under \$500, we also utilize it. So it's come a full swing and we can process transactions now assuming there is a contractual relationship or a minor or a no longer a need for justification of the purchase we can probably do things virtually in minutes but it took weeks and days and week sometimes months. We can process payment for a document if conditions demand within a day or two after see of merchandise. Typically the university pays ones a month that on the end of the month and we more than satisfy the relationship that we have with all our contracted sources in town. People frowned on doing business with Northern thirty some years ago just because of the complicated paper mess.

(I) Let's see yesterday you were talking about you were briefly going through the various areas that the purchasing department has gotten involve with. You were mentioning health care programs and a number of things, I'd like to go over that kind of review some of those things.

(R) Well I hope to touch on them all in this whole process of evolution from what we used to do is when they came here they were using a spiral notebook and recording numbers sequentially to multi-list duplicated PO simulations if you would. And they would hand write the material and that'd log them in these little spiral note books and that was what was constituted a purchase order back in 67' until we got to the multi-part carbo-tech documents.

(I) Now this was the one that you brought in?

(R) Yeah.

(I) That we have been modeling after?

(R) Right we brought that model in and course that's now evolved to what we now is the computerize process. At the outset we were strictly buying, we were managing the warehouse

which was a very limited local toilet tissue, toilet paper still use supplies primarily. When I came here it was located on the service building dock which is now the art annex to back of Spooner Hall. We moved from that location we were comingled there if you would with the trades, carpentry, and painters crews and I think even the grounds were in there. Then we moved down to the end of that building which was the old heating plant and we purchased factory operated forklifts that we used as elevators to transfer material from the cold bunkers beneath the building to the first floor for the delivery on campus which where I still deploy. We had an old 1952 white pick-up and that was probably the major vehicle of the day except for I bought a 1956 steak body that our custodian services used to use and they'd go to the building such as Kay Hall and Longyear and J.D. Pierce which were a lot of the classrooms were associated at that time and they used to dump papers loosely into the back of this truck and cover it with a tarp and a fellow by the name of Pat McDonald [Spelled phonetically] is the lame custodial grounds person who drove that truck to the city dump which is down on the south end of Marquette or what is now the new McClellan extension to what they call the Pioneer Dump. He would throw these paper out what was left of them what didn't blow off on the campus all the way through town on his way to the dump. On that site when he was up and that was all Norm who picked up their garbage in 1967-68 thereabouts. When I came here we didn't have rubber containers that they are using today for with wheels on it for the custodians they'd carry all their stuff in what was a fiber board conditioner loosely up and down the various stairs of Kay Hall. Then we asked them to consider the poly-glider bags, the garbage bags that we all use today and that virtually took over the campus and of course restricted the mess that we had going to the city dump. So we threw the back of the bags, the bags in the back of the state truck and he would haul them down that way. So that was an interesting scenario but we were got involved in a number of things, we got involved in the printing operation, took over that and managed it for some oh I think twenty years beginning in the...oh I would say early to mid-70s. Leo Deshane retired and then we changed from a multi-list ditto type operation to a printing press scenario. We got involved in the state of the art Heidelberg presses that the commercial printers would use. We got copiers, well our first copiers we used to match two pieces of paper run them through a liquid bath and then hang them up to dry like a photographer would and you know that's how you made the first copies. They would call them Pecco Copier at that time, Pecco I believe. Not many people made extra copies and you certainly didn't have to worry about anybody doing personal copies because that took a tremendous amount of time. So at the admen of the multipart Xerox 9400, 914 I'm sorry was one of the first machines that came onto campus it was a rather large oh six by eight box roughly and it did the black white copies and multiples and we decided to put those in several locations throughout the campus and through the evolution of time the boxes have gotten small and more sophisticated and still exist. We have a centralized copying system that is managed through the printing operation, where departments would turn in their copy qualities and they were billed out through printing services that still exists. We instituted the meters that they call the monotrons and that was how you turn the key, the machines on and prevent the students from utilizing the copiers without permission. In the 70s Northern was struggling with the cost of health care, we had a conventional Blue Cross Blue Shield health care program. It was our job in purchasing then with the assistance of one of the associate in the personal office we investigated the self-insurance programs through the state and came back after serval months of

review, made a recommendation which was eventually excepted for a self-insured program and that there by we became if not the first, one of the first in the state of Michigan to institute self-insured programs that resulted in significant savings because of the budget problems we had. We saved our first year over a hundred and some thousand dollars in cost and that we related to the administrative structure associated with the conventional program. We have been involved in all the health care short term, long term care coverages and insurances for that programs that we bid and help and design and implement most of the services that are rendered to the staff and faculty of Northern.

(I) So when did the, what years did that self-health care program...when was that?

(R) The self-health care program was probably instituted in the early 80s and subsequent to that we've designed our own program and for a number of years with the lack of, we used to have Blue Cross doing administrative services only. In other words they would review the claims for acceptance and compliance with our contract document and they would make payments and we would pay them 5% to cost the claim, 5% of the total expeditors for health care as an administrator. We went to Wausau Insurance after some time they bid it out and they did the same thing as Blue Cross did for a good number of years, ten or more maybe fifteen years. Then we rebid it and we rebid the administrative services fee process then and as a result in the last couple of years we've been with Blue Cross Blue Shield again. During that time we have developed a number of PPOs which we have agreements through our administrators to accept certain payments without any cost to the employees, it was no balance billing scenarios that were worked out so that they would accept whatever the provider not our case Northern was providing through our Blue Cross. We continue on that program today in essence and we've instituted since that time some changes in the contract urging embolizations and physicals as part of the preventable programs. We've been strong in the avocation of the health center and our doctor shot and the pharmacy contains in the health center for staff as well as students and that has made a measurable savings in our program were other cooperation's are increasing at the rate of any 10, 15, 20 percent a year we have reversed ourselves and even provide rebates to our employees.

(I) So then you are saying that this self-insured program is still in effect now?

(R) Still in effect now yes. Yeah it works well.

(I) Started in 82' and continues?

(R) Oh yes. Yeah during this whole time by purchasing was involved in developing contracts with local sources after, through a bidding process for a number of them more commonly used items, we have like 60 of them out there right now. These provide us with an expedient way of utilizing the what was the release method and cash purchase order and now the credit card method of purchasing so that if an individual wants to use one of the contracts we have gone through what is deemed appropriate by the auditors the bidding process to develop these contracts for use for different years. We have everything from Domino's to scientific supplies, Domino's pizza that is to scientific supplies to rooms at the Ramada and the Holiday Inn that are all available on contract. So one of our task and it is today is to continue to develop those

contracts for the frequently used services that we do and those are available to all of the campus. Like I said we have about 60 of them in the goal right now we also manage the and still continue to manage the recycling and surface property programs. We are responsible for the transportation operation that's the motor pool, scheduling the buses and if need be airplanes for staff and faculty transport we develop contract for private charter airplanes for people on a need bases. We have managed the risk management program. We have managed the mail services and got them involved in the automated mailing process and organized both mail and to save considerable dollars for a number of the areas, typically learning resource as fundraisers. Our central store's operation is supported by a number of contracts that had been negotiated and those folks work for us and they distribute, they stock and distribute merchandise in the campus. Nuts and bolts to plates for the food service. We do all the food buying for the auxiliary operation we get involved in contract administration all contracts associated with construction are administered to the purchasing office. We work with the university's attorneys on the development of the various languages associated with these construction contracts, we sit in on all progress meeting, programming meeting and eventually authorize final payment to all the contractors for the work whether it's rendered accordance with the contract language.

(I) Now this is, your saying your people from purchasing sit in, so you have the engineering folks?

(R) Right.

(I) Are...

(R) Are overseeing the contract portion of the engineering.

(I) And your there just overseeing the contract of the work?

(R) We make sure that the contractor complies with specifications and we've been doing a considerable amount of that Northern in the last ten years since Will Sabben [Spelled phonetically] been rehabbing building and maintaining structures and redoing those things that were build 30, 40 years ago. As a result of the Moomers contracts millions of dollars throughout the course of the summer and we worked effectively with the engineering planning and facilities that personal to make sure those documents are appropriately represented end task. We put them up for bid and then we administrate.

(I) So you started out in the gym of Kay Hall then you went to.... you came over here to...?

(R) No we went to the old Peter White, Lydia Olson library.

(I) To the Lydia ok.

(R) Ok and when the human resources was being completed that made moving the books out of the library, we moved back to what then was the old Bird side on county road 555 in the structure portions of the building occupied by Job Core, the administrative wing which was the north east corner. We stayed there until 1975ish when Cohodas administrative building was built on the site of Kay Hall our original home. So we ended up of the fifth floor of there until the Fall of 96' I think that's when Spooner was -

(I) Yup.

(R) And we came here in October of '96 and this our home I suspect for a number of years now.

(I) Is this sort of the first time that all the parts of your operation of engineering and everything are under one roof?

(R) Right. First time since I've been on the campus I think in the history of the campus that fragmented facilities for some reason who do we work with all the time has a common home. They have all of their - of --- and storage for its materials, central storage has material for the carpenters and the electricians, we are all in the same building first time ever. There has never been a quote total services building, the only people who did not exist from this building are those that are one site as building attendant and the auxiliary services organization which maintains a housing unit in quad two even though they come to here for most of their support material. Even our grounds people all come out of here and engineering this year the administration this year, campus safety this year and next year we take the nonstudent services other than parking infraction off the campus but near enough to the campus we are convenient to those that need us but we take our traffic way from influencing or inhibiting the student flow on the upper campus. So it's a good spot and it puts everybody together so we don't have to have 20 different store rooms, we can communicate with people we need to communicate with on a regular basis so that works out well.

(I) Let me just go back here how do you spell that Bill Winzinberg?

(R) Winzinberg I believe. That sounds, that's the best I can remember.

(I) When you mentioned something about and I just heard somebody mentioning something and I'm just kind of curious if you don't want to answer we can turn the thing off. You had mentioned about getting, setting up private air flight down to Lansing and so on. Has or ever been talk over the years of Northern getting its own plane for these you know these flights?

(R) Well there is discussion about that but once the cost analyzes put together there was no way we could support, we do the same thing we schedule all the buses and we have drivers that are dual they are equipment operators in the winter operators -- motors for moving the snow and no worse than such. But to do that with an airplane seemed to be rather prohibitive in terms of all the liabilities involved and the fact that you if you had one pilot and if he got sick then you'd be stuck. It would just be too costly to be able to do that. And we have gotten good prices from a number of charter sources so we have been able to maintain, we used to charter years ago our football team to cause we play in a different conference per say and we'd get involved. North Central Airlines used to have jet service in here and those DC-9s that we would charter them to take them to their various games around the country and then they play outed we would do the charters, we'd have fans that we'd sell seats to that would go on to these various games. So it was really interesting now that we play most of our conference games in state the need for that is not nearly what it was before and most of the chartering done now for those year-end title events or playoffs are done by the NCAA division too so we don't have to get involved anymore. Yeah we used to...

(I) So you kind of even now you're at the ready to get into whatever might come your way then?

(R) Oh yeah. Right of course I am. We've like I've said we are in almost every aspect that I guess a truer name basically we come under the flag of purchasing but essentially I mean we have been risk management to health care to receiving, surplus, storage, chartering, transportation, printing services, duplicating, and mailroom. We do errors for people out of the central stores, go and pick up merchandise and that and then construction management. We've been every place in the business realm that I think one can be in an institution. Very interesting because you don't know what you are going to do necessarily for the end of day, hour to hour. We probably more appropriately should have been titled business services which Carl Pace [Spelled phonetically] is currently our director of services and myself I'm now finally titled appropriately of purchasing manager. We've had titles from accountants to purchasing agent to management of logistical services to you name it. Titles that maybe not necessarily reflex where you work or what you did. But yeah, we were one of the first schools in the country not corporately to institute the credit card purchasing method and now that a standard method of operation in most corporate settings. That's been in operation for some three-four years now and quite successfully and forward zest is as time dwindles more time is spent devolving contracts that can be utilized by the card holders as opposed to going through some menial task with bidding some 50, 60 items \$25 a piece including develop major contracts then we can assure ourselves that when the people go to use the items those contracts those numbers are being offered to them. We do a lot of the, we manage most of the contracts associated with all the maintenance scenarios be that be elevators or copiers or whatever, we've operated the copier systems in quad one and LRC for a number of years and we've provided delivery services to all the campus operations for those items. A lot of that still maintains itself today.

(I) Now has there been any instances where you are lost various branches like is printing still under your...?

(R) Printing is now with the added group that, I'm not, I never remember the administrative title, information technology of computer wing of the campus and they are part of that organization now. That took the copiers and the printing function out of purchasing we managed and held risk management some years ago lost it to accounting and now got it back again. Jim Bradley [Spelled phonetically] functions as our university risk manager and he reports to Carl Face [Spelled phonetically] so we manage that function again. Trying to think of anything else that has come and went... pretty much, transportation is relatively new for us in the respect that we got that about the same that we lost printing services. So we became responsible for the motor pool and charting aspect.

(I) Ok sounds like you've got most of it down for me here.

(R) Trying to think of, trying to log out some interesting aspects I guess. We used to have a bowling league at Northern that was a faculty-staff bowling league on Monday nights back in the 60s and a good share of the faculty and professors we had our own bowling alley at Northern, it's now the bookstore at the University Center and every Monday night the NMU bowling crew would get together. That was an interesting part of time.

(I) Is that when Ricco –

(R) he was very strongly in that. Hego Mets [Spelled phonetically] , Will Berg [Spelled phonetically] , a couple from... Pat Ferrel [Spelled phonetically], Ted Tow [Spelled phonetically], from the geography people. Most of our accounting people were Bob Kemp and -- were part of the program most by --. That was best out there Ricco said he had participated in it and a couple are still around.

(I) What happened with that just the interest in bowling went out?

(R) It just died and bowling kind of went by the way side, teams started to move off into the community and they have maintained a league here but it was for anybody at that time. It subsequently closed when they remodeled the university center a couple years ago and expanded the book store into that area and we contracted for student services with the Windmill Lanes on the west end of Marquette. But like I said we, our contracts we started contracts, master contracts with Ryard Food Services, Cysco when we got them on the computers here and we've developed those kind of relationships, we've contracted with Domino's to put in the first on campus private source for student food. They currently exists in the university center and they have been a number of programs where we've changed the or developed contracts with the food services operation including their convenience store and a number of those contracts all the vending operation on campus is virtually administrated a contract and serviced by us. We've placed equipment and we've got involved and we are responsible for instituting the current campus guard system which is the ID door opener, food acquirer ID system that's now in place. We were one of the founders of that program.

(I) Oh first in the state?

(R) We were one of the state to do that first in the Upper Peninsula for sure and I think in the second to Michigan State.

(I) Oh.

(R) And we still exist with the smartcard chip we are one of the very schools in the country that still utilizes... a lot of people excuse me use the magnet strip back but we are the first to institute the smart card which used the computer chip and that has some long term replications and flexibility that we think is going to be an enhancement and we will be able to go to the next step on technology without any difficulty. That allowed students even now I think we are instituting this Fall is direct they can book students on campus and have their paychecks or their financial aid directly deposited on their cards

(I) Oh.

(R) So it becomes a debit card to them for use at all of the people who take cards virtually in the community.

(I) Oh.

(R) That's an option that's ability to them. If student that goes home for the holiday now he can designate to the payroll office that he wants his check directly deposited on his ID card at the bank and he can take his card to any ATM or like type device and throughout the state of Michigan and where ever the First of America Series Systems are available to him. That just gives the students a lot more flexibility. It's been a major change for instituting these door accesses throughout the campus, we utilize the motivation of the card which help keep the key system to which has been an unmanageable monster in the past so our Sharron Hard [Spelled phonetically] from our campus safety can put you on or take you off very quickly without key cutting if you will by utilizing the card.

(I) As we get to the end here are there any sort of humorous stories connected with your job? Things that have occurred that kind of maybe had a falling sort of folklore sort of legendary stories or individuals in the past that were?

(R) Mm that may take some thinking.

(I) It could also be a story that you don't to repeat.

(R) Yeah... we've had generally pretty good encounters throughout the campus that have worked well. We've gotten we've had some personalities that we've meshed with successfully and others we've clashed with. Others we were that were very predictable but I don't think I have anything that's outstanding enough to make noteworthy at this point. If I think of something I can certainly pass it on to you.

(I) Because I am sort of looking for I do a lecture on fact and folklore at Northern and kind of talk about some of the history and some of the legendary things you know like what's her name Temple Carry [Spelled phonetically] the evil women and all of her regulations and what not. So I'm always looking for some, you know something like that but its one that you will probably think about tonight or tomorrow or sometime in the future might just want to give me a call or.

(R) Well there is one fella initial that I can think of right off the bat there were two people that remind, that hang in there and that was Frank Schwimmen [Spelled phonetically] who was the superintendent of the buildings. He operated out of the same building as Ray Smith who worked for us as the receiving agent for Northern and it was just ironic I mean they used to issue one we never, we had a couple of trades people who were just kind of evolved handy men on the campus that he would literally go to the dime store and other type places and purchase tools that were of questionable quality to say the least. And he issue out to his carpenters a saw and a hammer and then he made them as they broke anything or whatever he'd bring back the piece. You know hands says they didn't have power tools. You know old guys Ed Anderson [Spelled phonetically] I still remember him and they were probably close to the carpenters on Green Acres I mean they were definitely shaky people but Frank was in this interest of trying to save money, he was constantly saving he would buy very cheap things and make them sign out for everything from the nails to their paintbrush to the rags the whole bit. It became just an absolute mess before it was over, nothing ever got done. Northern didn't get done very well and Ray Smith was our receiving agent and I think if that old truck that 52' Ford that we had maybe it was 56' I can't remember it was a white truck no tailgate, Ray would delivery about a half dozen packages I

think in an afternoon or a day and that took him the whole day to do that. You could never find Ray, we never knew where he was eventually we discovered that in the afternoon he'd take his break at Hedgecock pool. He'd go down and swim in the pool and he'd always managed to do it and he knew how everybody did their thing but he managed to do it so that nobody ever caught him at the task of swimming in the pool. He was quite a guy. I'm trying to think of... yeah. But...

(I) Have you sort of noticed that as you know you think about you might want to think about this as well that in the earlier days you had more of these characters that you do today?

(R) Oh yeah there's no question and maybe being a little native too when I came in. I mean we had all of our people here I've seen us evolve from warrants of the state, in fact people that were given to us to they were all political appointees being it custodians, cooks, whatever, friends of Jacobetti they were called on Harden in exchange for getting his yay and nah on some financial things with the state. We had to absorb a number of people who were constituents of these politicians on our payroll. They were trained for most cases nothing whether they were keening from dispossessed from Dow Chemical Factory over here and had no training or skills or anything that we you know turned them into plumbers and carpenters and steam plant operators and what have you. Well since that initial political conversion if you want to call it process of hiring, we had a revolt of most of our people now. College graduates very sophisticated and a good share of our people are very knowledgeable in modern day computer operation, a number of our people teach in the academic side as well as work the administrative side. So the quality of the staff for the most part has you know improved 200%.

(I) Mmmhmm.

(R) I would say the characters that we had, the elite people even Dick Hoges [Spelled phonetically] just recently passed away was the head of our food service, he was a food manger out of Michigan State, worked out of the Kellogg center and so forth down in Lower Michigan. My first encounter coming on campus as a I was young and virtually not threatened and I was shall we say driven by procedures and textbooks in terms of how I did everything and I didn't have an appreciation for any kind of loyalties or adjustments or experiences that a lot of my supervisors had. In one class that I had Dick Hoges the head of food service at the time ask concerned that I had bid out some items that he had felt was in his privy to just award without bid. I was looking at everything that had met the criteria for bid being a thousand dollars plus, I bid regardless of what kind of conditions existed. I remember him telling me one day that I was impeding the progress of the institute if I didn't get off my ass and do things that he wanted them done that he'd put me on a bus back to Michigan Tech!

(I) [Laughs]

(R) Or maybe I got, so we had some exchanges like that but we eventually very good friends in the end and he had succumb to the rules and regs that we had to apply. We also improved and became more forgiving in the sense that we worked harder to get things done more associated with the bottom line then the task at hand as opposed to letting procedures drive us. We both kind of came both ways. We had one unique accountant who is still here today or I should say

retired got into a health kick his name Bob Forbiling [Spelled phonetically] and Bob was in our business office as an accountant when I came and he also taught in school of business as a business general business instructor. He left and retired very early and uniquely enough bob is still running today and he ran half around the world I think! And he was from Bessemer, Michigan and Bob was a unique he would run so he could have at least as he put it he could afford to have the luxury several beers at night.

(I) Oh.

(R) So he would work it off by running and now he is a very very thin person, I'm not even sure of his age but he has been gone gosh twenty years at least and I still say him in the same places in Marquette and he is still running around. Tried to run I think oh 100 mile marathons and frequently seen on the road between here and Bessemer he would run home, hometown on occasion. I mean he ran everywhere! Course at a time when running just started to come in he was one of the first but his mythology was old Pat Solin - I guess when the computer just started to come online he was involved with the old card system the IBM cards that process became too much for him in the end and he just didn't want to do those anymore so he left. He went to the business office PIF under Ricco I think at the time.

(I) That's right yeah. That's where I remember him was over there.

(R) Sure.

(I) But he was originally...?

(R) He came from the business office and I think prior to that he actually came from the school of business as a teacher and may have come under the ERA program. Wait that's where the cards went now the Jacobetti center which is a skills center it must be terminology. We had some ARA retraining act or something it was a federal program or a state program where they would take people that were displaced and they would upgrade them in their skills. Primarily mechanical trades types programs. Welding was a big one and Jon Tigin [Spelled phonetically] was involved in that over and that was in the orphanage up the Catholic Diocese in south Marquette and then it was also on the corner of Rock and Front and Thornton Ruth [Spelled phonically] he was involved, Dick Chrotaski [Spelled phonically]...

(I) So this ARA program had characters?

(R) Oh yeah in fact when I came here it was headed up by Jim Snyder now one of our city council men.

(I) Oh ok.

(R) Jim left that to chase the logging business up near the tracks here just beyond the services building you know he and his father set up an electric logging mill which it failed. I'm not sure his dad had a lot of land up in the Big Bay area that's where Jim went then Dick Chrotaski took over and he managed it after that. That program would tie up they had contracts with CCI and a number of business to upgrade their welders and machinist and things of that nature. But it worked out of those two buildings and we provided all of the support services for them. We used

to go down when I first came here Northern didn't have any vehicles and I guess I mentioned that I had two trucks that old state body and a pickup and our trades people literally walked to the job sites with their little pouch of tools and there was a little motor scooter and course our campus was pretty much totally up around the Kay Hall area. So it wasn't exactly like it is now. We used to go down to state surplus in Escanaba had these old metro trucks that were utilized by the Air Force for servicing their airplanes and they just beat to hell, and we bring them back and we'd have our mechanics make them operate until they finally reach their end demise then we'd go -- say here is our vice president of finance and we had to have a vehicle to replace this one so by buying surplus we were able to weasel ourselves into position of getting replacements for the surplus vehicles with new vehicles.

(I) Yeah yeah.

(R) The first vehicle that we got was new I remember it renting it for Ernie Newman was our physical plug director and we rented it for I guess something a year before anybody knew we actually rented it and that was quote a backdoor illegal type of maneuver that we had to put into play. He finally got to buy it after that, because we are utilizing vehicles from the motor pool in Lansing, renting those and we never really had vehicles that belonged to Northern.

(I) Oh.

(R) Now we have a fleet of god I don't know 50 or 60.

(I) So you were renting trucks as well?

(R) Oh yeah

(I) Trucks and?

(R) Yeah. So it... so that's how we would make these things happen and that's kind what we used to do more and more and then the cost of the state motor pool, renting the vehicles became too expensive we could buy them cheaper. So we bought a whole bunch and we still have a number of them today. Now the state has realized that people are moving away from as much and they kind of revamped their organization now we can lease a vehicle for probably because of the high cost involved to replace them we can lease them and utilize them and get them within our budget framework more easily. We can spend 15, 20, 30 thousand dollars for a vehicle out of one year's budget. So there is a lot of people doing that or they are just leasing it for the need purpose only for matter of transport and then they are sharing it with another department.

(I) Oh.

(R) So one vehicle serves more than one master so to speak. That is all managed through Roxane Costello [Spelled phonetically] who is our coordinator of transportation. So yeah we had to... that was some interesting times because those were really garbage that we used to get for those. But it was the only vehicle they had! And the campus started moving, when I came here quad two was just being finished and you know I mean that was the furthest point of the campus.

(I) Yeah.

(R) Quad one was in place, West Science was in place LRC was being worked on, Jamrich came later and most of our work was in the Kay Hall area in that complex. Well there was still, we moved to I guess I forget part of that that we I am wrong too. We did spend some time in John D. Pierce in between Lydia Olson and coming back to Birdsisle. The business office moved into John D. Pierce for a while on the second floor.

(I) Ohh.

(R) And Bob Kimp was still here then.

(I) So this was kind of the first time where you had a permanent, nice new permanent home, all the other places you were kind of in a transient or a lot of...?

(R) Except for Cohodas.

(I) Except for Cohdas.

(R) Yeah then they wanted us out of there, they kind of put all of the service together so that's how we ended up here and that was by design rather than by default. Yeah so trying to keep all this stuff in some kind of order here. Offhand I think it pretty much covers the front.

(I) This is kind of an interesting interesting evolution that you've been involved with so it's been good to talk to you because you've kind of seen the whole thing develop that way. And I often wonder you know you see all the vehicles around so in the beginning they had some junk trucks that just went around Kay Hall if they even needed them. Probably a lot of cases...

(R) Yeah you know the ones that went off campus were virtually was the truck that went to the dump. That was an old pick with steak sides.

(I) And then would they have...?

(R) I mean the old state body.

(I) Would they have then the city garbage pick up the garbage and what not from the campus? Or did this truck take everything out?

(R) I want to think it only took the paper goods. Our garbage gosh the city picked it up. And then eventually we were forced to do it. We bought our own garbage truck but the load-all system and we instituted that on campus and that was part of our doing. Subsequent to its current state which the present city contactor came to us is now and purchase our load all and our containers and are performing the services and we got credit for our system.

(I) Oh.

(R) And it's worked well so far. Vincent's Sanitation was the initial man that we worked with I think they may go by that.

(I) They do still yeah.

(R) So that's how we worked with them but they did a lot of work for us on garbage prior to that. They were in fact they may have been the first contractor here under Jon Peterson [Spelled phonetically] to haul our garbage then we went to our load-all system and then we did that for many many years. And then they came back and wanted to buy this but then they got bought out by that New York whatever is sold that whole operation. So yeah.

(I) Now are you finding that you know as years pass now that it's, that you can save money by going to privet concerns like instead of having your own garbage truck and hauling stuff that's it's cheaper to go through a privet in this particular case going through the Peninsula Sanitation?

(R) Well I think that comes and goes with time. I think essentially a lot of our self-serving organizations I mean things that we did ourselves evolved through need and availability of outside sources or high cost of outside sources. We could deal with the existing organization more economically we did that. I don't know we have always looked at the privet sector and that was probably a major factor in why we got involved in our printing operation. We were measuring the costs and capabilities of our privet sources and what we paying and the payments that we were making for those things. It much more cost effective to take our own staff and upgrade and we could control not only the scheduling but the quality and the price. Over the years we have measured ourselves in other words we have done some test analyses of what we charge verses what they charge and we still remain less than the cost of the privet sector. Not to say anything about capabilities and the scheduling controls that we have in our hand and we bought equipment to enhance that we predominantly utilize on the university sector as opposed to privet. So we have the capability to do the things that we need to do and we do it well. We've hired every one of our people in the print shop for example are pretty much college they came out of a sophisticated commercial environment, so we've got top shelf people producing documents that we utilize. I look to that as being a very successful strategy that we kind of put in place.

(I) Does it have anything to do with, we were talking about some of these things like I know when I was first here you didn't have the Xerox capability and you didn't have these now they have different print shops around town. In the old days I think it was at Welth Printing down on?

(R) Kelf yeah.

(I) And that was about it and that was kind of heavy duty they did big...

(R) Well they had multi-list like we did with Leo we used to do the multi-list master you bring them in and you type them up, your secretaries would type them up and you bring them in and then he'd put them on this drum and they'd wake them up and then make you 100, 200, 300 copies. Well that's what those people had multi-list as the demand for more and more services and two-sided all that kind of stuff put into play and new equipment came on board we kind of kept up with that and now we have like the 59s that ultimate in offset duplication in the print shop. Now they can take a whole book and program it in and out comes a book on the other end. All you have to do is bind it.

(I) See what they have just done well for instance with me we had I had a student actually type set the book but then I had the print shop had to do it on special paper with special printer, laser printer and all this stuff and basically what they had produced will be what we will press in Connecticut uses.

(R) Yes.

(I) So you could almost say they so you don't want say they, they printed, yeah they printed the book you know they just didn't do the...

(R) We do all the stuff on that, they put it on a disk and they ship it out and we do a lot of, we do color work there which we've never done in the U.P before at least at a university level without going through like ABRY studios one of those.

(I) Yeah yeah.

(R) We do all of that now cause we have two Heidelbergs downstairs. We are instrumental in having Paul Matson [Spelled phonetically] buy a Heidelberg so that the students coming for his program could double up and working for us. They were supported our fulltime so they had the kids that were coming out of his program then and for all intensive purposes were able to go into industry very easily. And since we have computerize type setting our students would, we entered how many kids into Fox River Valley now in the Treasure Island down in Chicago we got probably six kids that came out of our print shop that by virtue of the kinds of work that they did in the print shop were able to walk in to the paying jobs in the print industry. We still hear from a number of them today and we had dreamed of having a directed study associated with those kids I worked with Richard Gorski [Spelled phonetically] at the time and we just couldn't recall all the details of how that was going to be done. But we did end up having Kim Hadly [Spelled phonetically] he taught in their system and so did Escolski [Spelled phonetically] taught in their system as an adjunct to staff. We took all of the kids out of their graphic design program and put them in our shops. Yeah. Like I said Carl got involved in we instituted and managed the first on campus privet telephone system. We are involved in all the telephone power, erm TV tower installations around the Upper Peninsula. We did all the bidding and organizing of those programs so we feel comfortable that you know where we've been every place and toughed just about everything on campus in some shape and its made a very interesting job.

(I) So how do you feel about retiring?

(R) Well I'm going to miss it's hard to take 30 some years and just walk away from it. Obviously I'm gonna miss the people I've missed a number of gone before me that I was just a little bit younger than and we've had this mass exit of the last four, five years. Now I am one of those few left that had any long term time here at school and has a history of all these things that took place.

(I) Because I find as you talk to some of the newer people like even department heads and what not it's really a waste of time because they know absolutely nothing about the past, you know.

(R) Yeah.

(I) It's just maybe if you are here five years you go back five years but the people like yourself that have been for 30 years that's...

(R) One of the unique things I will always remember about Northern which made it very good I mean we were able to we met day by day, every day with the staff and faculty got together daily. In the old Kay Hall lounge we all had coffee together. We got to be pals together we all did things together we instituted one of the things I remember instituting is Northern Basketball that was an exercise program that I guess I'll take credit for it used to be one of the initiators for that program over in the fieldhouse. And that's where all of our staff would get together and we had half faculty and half administrators. We'd go over there and you know you get to bitch your frustrations or whatever you want, we got to be great pals and we played ball together. I think now that we've kind of spread ourselves out and we've lost that contact that we were able to get along a lot better. We were concerned about one another.

(I) I think what you find now is that the faculty and before I kind of got involved with the early historian job and got into working like with your department and so on. You really have, as a faculty member you have absolutely no idea you know the papers there the machines there but you don't have any idea where it comes from! Or who these people are! Who the faces that are out there you know you're sort of your peers out across the university have no idea of any of that how the place works. I can see if you went and you went to the lounge together you know they would hear what you were doing, you'd hear what they were doing.

(R) Oh yeah.

(I) And there was a nice...

(R) Oh it was great. We got to be good friends with the Psychology department because they would come over from Kerry Hall into the Kay Hall complex and sequent places where we housed them. We'd always wrap even to the Cohodas building that Steve Blat [Spelled phonetically] and Prister Fillmen [Spelled phonetically] and all those people, Jo West [Spelled phonetically] and Bob Moore [Spelled phonetically] and all those other fellas. Not only that, I took them, I had classes from them. We became very good pals throughout the years so that part is... I used to be able to walk not that many years ago but I could walk to campus and I knew every person secretaries on down and then you had an appreciation for what they did do. You'd call them up and say you know I got this thing for you and help you out and now you aren't sure who you are calling when you call. If that's one negative thing I've seen over time that's probably one of the biggest ones. We are not as close, one of things that I was involved in and I was president of the Administrative Professional Staff Associate back before there was such thing as senior administrators were the first nonunion associated developed under Jamrich to give us a voice in the governance of the institute and Jamrich's big wheel he used to set up and we'd have that presidents counsel. Wed all meet in the UC and each one had a rep and everybody in the faculty and staff and various unions were all there and we'd all input into these things. That was an interesting time if you will and we all got together we all got to know all the things and to know one another and that's no longer part of the same.

(I) Yeah. Well I doubt you are down here we are over, well we over in Magers Hall but then you have other people in Cohodas and Gries...

(R) Oh yeah.

(I) Longyear, not Longyear but Lee Hall and you know really scattered now. Gosh if you want to get to know people or interact with them you almost have to walk across, I mean you are burning up a lot of time but you have to go out and interact with them. It doesn't just happen at lunch or something.

(R) Yeah then with the staff cut backs on our side then it's not afford to us that a lot of need that time anymore to get out.

(I) Yeah yeah.

(R) They just haven't been able to do that, didn't have the free time to go out, really didn't become free time it became very valuable time cause you were spending relationships and helping things to function. So yeah I miss that.

(I) See I remember when we were up in the LRC and we had our offices there, yeah I got I guess at that point I knew just about everybody but like you say go across campus you knew everybody and the new people that came in you got to know them very quickly somebody would introduce you and that was it. Today and now with all of the retirements there probably, like I remember I used to know and I had my office over in Geography and I knew a lot of people were good friends Bennie Peters [Spelled phonetically] and all those

(R) Sure.

(I) Uh the last few years that department is still doing change, I don't know I would have to go over there and introduce myself and...

(R) Right.

(I) Sort of intrude upon the department to get to know who the people are. I think I met the department head but there is a whole bunch of people there they're all new.

(R) What we used to do too now this is back in the old days we had the Administrative Professional Staff Organization would host a Christmas party, it was kind of a can too a relationship to do you remember the old military? Part of military science would have those punch prize?

(I) Yeah yeah.

(R) Potion punch I remember that. God everybody get a little bent out of shape with those biggies. What this was this night I don't know during your time or something, we had a group of what was called the East of Orange a musical group in town and then we had the Fantastic Share here at Northern and they were typically the band and the entertainment that we would hire for an all campus Christmas party bring your own booze and we provided a food for a fee down at the old armory on Wright Street.

(I) Oh.

(R) And we'd get hundreds of people coming faculty staff and it was just one big Christmas party and we had tons of food and that's where you had the custodians right on through the vice president and the presidents would come down and we'd have a pretty nice dance off.

(I) Now what happened to that?

(R) Well I think alcohol all that kind of stuff disappeared, the EPSA group broke off. There's AP unions that's part of it, so your administrators are another part, it's just lost again the closeness that close-knitness that was part of it.

(I) Yeah it just the old.

(R) Part of the old school!

(I) Yeah a whole variety of factors there.

(R) Yeah. I was president at that time it was a lot of fun. Some of the other things we'd have fun with it, we started here and hosted the number of the Northern --- Club parties and did that as a marketing person I was on the marketing advising board for the UC. Little things were interesting that I can retain, that was kind of a kin to do you remember they used to have the old club? Faculty club?

(I) Yeah yeah.

(R) At the UC? This was a takeoff of that.

(I) And now I don't see other people Steve Oaks [Spelled phonetically] in the education department some other people want to revive that and I don't know some of us remember it and then kind of saw the demise of it and kind of wonder is how you know is it going to work I guess you know. Where would you go and so on? You almost need some of the history of these things that you did that worked out very well and then see if they could be plugged in anywhere.

(R) Oh yeah. I kept files on all those!

(I) Really?!

(R) Yeah I got files on all those parties and we used to....

(I) Now what you should do when you are packing up is you can call the archives and have them just have the stuff piled up and have them take it.

(R) Yeah.

(I) And then they will put them under, they will identify them under your name and your papers but I mean those are things that you know when you are dealing with the university of the future and you want to you know even say party you know throw that out but if somebody wants to go back and kind of research the things. What did they do? How did this work? You know how do we bring the campus together.

(R) Oh yeah.

(I) See going through some of that might be very useful.

(R) I remember being involved in starting the hockey program here and those box are right there. I have all the film the tapes I kept, I was going to turn them over to the Belmond Fund I guess I didn't trust the custodian the person I was going to turn it over with. It was Kara Prince [Spelled phonetically] at the time and she didn't give damn whether that program...

(I) Well yeah... well now the archives takes all that.

(R) That I have here I mean this is all stuff I took personally with my own camera and everything. This is a collection of all the 20 some years of hockey at Northern from the Press Guides to the parties I mean I used four couples of us used to host parties from anywhere 50 to 100 parents would come to town that our homes to support the program. We were trying to get the good side or to get on the good side of the parents so that they referrer future athletes to our hockey program and we started the Blue Line Club as they have it today and we got involved with the overtime periods. We started that and I remember Harvey Inn one time having one of the first one, gosh it was 200 people filled that place, just absolutely unbelievable. So that was some of the great times that I can reflect on and I kept a lot of the records of course I was on the board with assistant vice president of the Wildcat Club for probably seven to ten years. So a lot of those files I kept.

(I) Oh ok.

(R) Trying to turn those over before I go.

(I) Because now see in the old days I mean this happened to a lot of people they'd have stuff like that and you give it to somebody and then you know it went in one door and out the other.

(R) Yeah.

(I) Luckily like I went, I gave I donate I am constantly cleaning my office because I'm collecting things and I gave the archives I think about seven feet of these boxes you know of the stuff I've given them and I went up there one day and asked them to give me a print out because they had it all cataloged and I looked at this print out and said my god! That's where this stuff went I thought it was lost and totally forgotten about it and...

(R) They did have it?

(I) Oh heavens yes! All there and you know the other thing I like about I probably shouldn't say this because it will go to the achieves but if you ever want the stuff they have it you can find it you know it's there. Not that you might be overlooked for it.

(R) Sure.

(I) Like I go and I look for things and you know I give them a topic and bingo there it is and they give you the box and the folder and they pull it out if you want to make a copy you can do it. So

it's really a nice sort of a convenient it's a convenience for your stuff and things you really don't want throw out but you might have access to it.

(R) Oh yeah all that movie we put the scoreboard that we subsequently knocked it down already, that was done in 83'.

(I) So you have all the information?

(R) I have pictures and all that and how it acquired the whole bit.

(I) Ohh.

(R) Yeah the tapes on some of the first women's programs that were here that film of that. I had had Mark Patrick [Spelled phonetically] take it.

(I) Yeah.

(R) I still have all the photos that I've kept and stuff that I kept and the negatives.

(I) Oh see now we are also looking for pictures like that or movies for the centennial video that you know...

(R) You might be interested in this stuff it's all in that box. I've kept it because I didn't trust the people I was giving it to like you said it was going to one way and the archival program was not at a point that I was comfortable with that and neither is...

(I) Yeah yeah. It would have been safe but still you had a bunch I know I did or you heard a lot about bad experiences and you didn't want to take a chance.

(R) I wasn't going to take it with me I said I'd run into somebody that I could trust and give it to as like I said I was involved with hockey program and so forth.

(I) See now –what you call it has, Marcus Robyns the archivist has this you know they have this storage area back here.

(R) I didn't know how far along it was.

(I) Yeah no he has done a superb job of recording everything.

(R) Well as you talk you run across some of this stuff. We got involved in the total mail replacement I have the project there. We kept the files on that we did the first home book project I'm giving those to trades and they are putting those in their achieves of campus construction projects so as I move on in my aspect of construction I turned it over to them they called me to create one file so if they ever have to go back and say what happened to this building what's intact? All of our notes and everything is over there. I think eventually they would have to get rid of those and go to achieves.

(I) Yeah yeah. Well I think they transferred things that have for I know Gene went a transferred a lot of stuff that was for buildings that don't exist anymore that's all been transferred. But the rest

is kind of active, kept on an active statues because yet you don't know when you are looking for pipes or what's in the ceiling or whatever.

(R) I had some pictures of the old building I don't even know where that went.

(I) Oh.

(R) I had kept those of all the guys I was going to give them to you too. Berrry, Jim Marry [Spelled phonetically], Norm Harry [Spelled phonetically] from food service and John Swanson [Spelled phonetically] from computer center, Ricco, a bunch of the bowlers Bob Kimp, Bob Crigly [Spelled phonetically], Keen Gomez[Spelled phonetically], all these people here dead now really. Some place I'll find those and I'll get them to you.

(I) Yeah well I also act as a conduit I mean people give me things around campus and I carry them to the achieves.

(R) I even kept the bowling records from those years.

(I) Oh really?

(R) I have those too.

End of Interview