INTERVIEW WITH LUVERN CUNNINGHAM

AUGUST 7, 2001

Q. This is the Ohio State University Oral History Program, deposition of former Dean Luverne Cunningham of the College of Education. This deposition is being made on Tuesday, August 7, 2001, in the conference room at the Ohio State University Archives on Kenny Road. The interviewer is Robert Butche. Let's start out, Dean Cunningham, talking about what attracted you to an academic career in education.

A. Well I think the motivation for that is issues from more than one source. My mother, who is a country school teacher, and literate and highly motivated, was someone who led me into reading and encouraged me to follow that pursuit. And then I had a strange kind of motivation I suppose on a troop transporter in World War II, when we were anticipating landing in a staging area, I found a small library and it was all consuming I suppose to relieve the distraction of what we were about to experience. But that kind of confirmed again that a life of interest in scholarship was likely to be what I would pursue. I had one year of college actually prior to this time and engaged in pretty heavy liberal arts kind of curriculum. Very satisfying. It was more attractive I would say than a lot of the responsibilities I had on the farm at that time. And it just seemed to kind of multiply, aggregate, get stronger all the way through. High school was a very pleasant experience and I did well and had a lot of family support in motivating

notions issuing from here and there. Brothers who encouraged me to follow this and the like.

Q. What was your own schooling experience on the farm?

A. Well I was one of I think 16 kids. Every year it would vary a little bit. And it was a one room, actually a two room school. One room was kind of for public events. The other was a classroom, had a pot bellied stove in the back. Part of the kids' responsibilities were to help carry in the wood and keep the fire going in the winter time and to avoid its overheating. Some enterprising kid who didn't really realize what they were doing would throw 22 bullets in and they would ricochet around the chimney and be part of life in that kind of environment. There were several of us that rode horses to school. There was a horse barn in back, room for eight horses. This school building itself had an entry all outside before you'd come into the main building. That was the clock room of sorts. The water for kids would be out there in big uncovered buckets. You'd get a drink out of a common ladle device and the outhouses were on either side back of the school house. In the wintertime we had to trudge through snow. It took a lot of need to go so to speak, to be motivated to go out there and use the facility. There was kind of aura of recklessness that we didn't really realize I suppose. Some of us would race horses, usually going home from school and there was competition that kind of evolved over time. All of that was part of that life. The teachers were only moderately trained. One of them, we didn't realize at the time, but would come back on Sundays, after Sunday weekend on Monday, and have a very pronounced hangover. She'd lay on a bench in the back and she would ask two of us who were

then 7th or 8th graders to teach the other classes, which we did. And in our country in eastern Nebraska, the county superintendent would administer exams to the 7th and 8th graders all across the county. They would come to the county courthouse and would arrange the courtroom in such a fashion that there could be a monitor and they would take those exams. The results would be published in the next issue of the county newspaper. Every parent would be waiting with some enthusiasm or lack thereof, depending upon what they thought the results might be. And then the follow through, the Sunday dinners afterwards, particularly in our family, there would be discussion of how all the cousins did in that particular competition. Now it was a healthy environment. A lot of family support, not just in my case, but for other families. A lot of community assistance. My father in blizzards would put a binder canvas over the back of an old wagon and the kids, by the time they got to school there would be seven or eight of them, huddled down in the bottom, and he would be driving those horses and they would be collecting long icicles on their nostrils with their going and coming. And seldom, the school just wasn't closed a lot, even though in the 30's, '36 in particular, there was a terrible, terrible winter on the plains of Nebraska and Iowa and so on. And so those memories are still vivid, the names of the kids are still there, and on visits back to that part of the country, my brother and my family, sometimes cousins would always go by the old schoolhouse which is no longer there. It's just a topic of you remember when, when you go down that particular road.

Q. When and where were you born?

A. I was born on a farm about three miles out of a little town called Kennerd, had a population of about 305, something of that sort. The doctor came to the house and I was born at home.

Q. And what was your date of birth?

A. June 28, 1925.

Q. So the period that you were describing just now about the old schoolhouse and the people who were in it that still populate your memory today, would have been around 1930-35, in that era?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. And you were already teaching school?

A. I really was. I sort of didn't recognize it at the time, but particularly during these periods of preparation for the county exams, we used a lot of visual aides if we were doing competitions in mathematics, flashcards. And phonics were the order of the day in terms of the theory of reading. So a lot of phonetic manipulations were used through flashcards and just old fashioned drill. Mental arithmetic games were always something that were kind of fun and we could work on those as long as we liked, particularly when the teacher was laid out flat on a bench in the back of the room.

Q. And what was your formal education after that period?

A. Well we had a choice of going to a small high school that probably had about 75 or 80 kids, or going to a big high school, which probably had 130 kids. And the one that had 130 had a good academic reputation as defined by my mother and father. So we chose that even though it was some distance. And the first two years

I rode with an older student who lived a mile away. And I would walk there in the morning and back at night. He was a close friend as well. Paid him something for transportation. Then I was old enough to get a permit to drive to school and so then I started to drive an old Model A Ford; not a Model T, but a Model A. And did that to finish high school. I graduated when I was 16, so I was very young when I was driving to school. And in bad weather it had it's own excitement.

Q. So after Nebraska?

A. Well, I had one year of college at Midland Lutheran, which was within driving distance. And then, the War was on and most of my friends were in the military. At that point, farm kids could kid an agricultural deferment if they wanted to keep food and so on. And I was eligible for that, but it just didn't seem right for me to take advantage of that when all my friends were going. And by that time some of the older ones had already been hurt or killed or were involved in the war, that you were kind of conscious stricken and a lot of guilt surrounded the fact that if you felt that you really ought to help the war effort and go. So I volunteered for induction and went in when I was just a little over 18. And went through basic training, infantry, moved quickly to the Pacific, and was on Saipan at the close of that engagement; then went to the Okinawa battle area. Landed there and spent the balance of my, actually after the war was over went to Korea and was there on occupation for less than a year, but nevertheless was there fore quite a while. But the actual tough part of the military was in Okinawa where it was really tough, down and dirty. It's hard to find an adjective to describe that. I'm very lucky that I got back.

Q. And you had this experience and you're not yet 25?

A. I was not yet, I was back before I was 21, from the military. So it was really compressed into just about two real action packed years. The war in Europe was over. It was ending and they were moving large numbers of troops from Europe to Okinawa and an irony occurred on a hot, hot day, reminiscent of this. We were kind of bogged down and anyone that had any opportunity to read about Okinawa would probably remember the tombs which were all over the place on the south part of the Island and for safety we would move big jars of bones of people out and get inside at night. And then also when there would be some shelling on our area, but this one very, very hot day, we had rumors that some troops were coming from Europe. A tank came up behind us and we hadn't used tanks at all in the fighting that we were directly involved in. And one of my buddies was named Ray Macedo. The tank pulled up and stopped and the canopy was lifted and the first guy who came out turned out to be the brother of my friend Ray Macedo. The statistical probabilities of anything like that ever happening just don't exist. And it was a reunion of sort and it was amazing, just amazing. And then the tank went through and I didn't see the brother of Ray after that, although the two I think were able to see one another. And after the war was over then, they both went back eventually to Salinas, California, where they were from. Lots of little episodes like that that salt and peppered the military experience. But with the mathematical consequences as this one, I'm sure. So when I came back and had a decision to make really. Got married shortly thereafter and make a determination as to whether or not I would spend time on the farm with my

brothers and my father. The GI Bill was an incredible thing and it just seemed a shame not to take advantage of that, even though there were opportunities on the farm. So I quickly enrolled back in this Lutheran college, went to summer school and two full years, three or four summer schools. So I finished quickly and got my BA and did well. And by a curious happenstance a friend of mine who was going to become a teacher, a college friend, said "I'm going out to this little town and check out where I'm going to be a student teacher." At that point, I hadn't thought about education as a professional pursuit. He met with the principal and with some of the students and with some of the teacher and we walked up and down the corridors and all. And I was really quite impressed with that and decided I would start taking a couple of education courses. I had two majors I think at that point, history and sociology. I decided I would talk to an advisor and determine what I would have to take to get a license to teach. And I did that. It didn't take a lot of work given the professional certification requirements in Nebraska at that point. So I finished that and another student who had came back from the military was maybe a year older than I, was going to become a superintendent in a small town. And he said "I know you've never been a teacher, but how would you like to come out and be high school principal with me in this little town?" And I hadn't even done my student teaching yet. So at the end of that term, I went to this little town of Shelby, Nebraska with maybe 150 kids. And started my professional career. It seems impossible to reflect on this. I taught five different subjects and was principal. I had responsibility for the senior class for the school newspaper. I directed two class plays. I coached junior high and

helped paint the gymnasium on Saturdays. It was a full curriculum. And then the next summer, about three weeks after the school ended in this little town of Shelby, my advisor from Midland Lutheran called me and said "This little town of Snyder up here wants to have a superintendent and your name came up and I thought I would call you." He said "The Board's meeting tonight. This is a Saturday morning. And if you can get there, well why don't you just interview?" So I drove the 150 miles or whatever it was and got there in time. And the interview was held in a little room in the back of a pool hall. A lot of smoke, a lot of noise, beer bottles, the pool balls rolling around. And they offered me the job that night as superintendent. I still must have been only about 22 or 23. And was there three years. In fact, that community just invited me and the principal and others back this summer for a reunion which turned out to be a spectacular event. Following that, I was offered a job as admissions director at Midland Lutheran in Fremont, Nebraska. I was there one year, then persuaded to take another superintendency in Battle Creek, Nebraska. That system was about three or four times bigger than the one I had served before and a whole new set of challenges. A very academic oriented, little community, for some strange reason just outstanding students. And I was offered a fellowship at the University of Oregon, a Kellogg Foundation fellowship. I went out there and spent two years. I had been there for summers before that. And got my doctoral work out of the way. There was a dean at Oregon named Paul Jacobson, who had a reputation of being an irrasible son of a gun. And he was that way and was really kind of a drill sergeant mentality. Had the faculty all on their toes and they had created a

seminar in the social and behavioral sciences. And they limited the enrollment to 12 students and there were six faculty. There was about 18 around the big table. And of course it lasted about four hours per day during the summer period. And so the summer before my two years of residency was one of the most outstanding intellectual experiences that I can remember. The dean would always be there with a scowl on his face and then these other faculty members, one from sociology, one from political science, one from psychology, one from economics, and two from education. And one of the members of that group, one of the educators, was Jack Hobertson, who eventually came to Ohio State to become Director of the University Council of Educational Administration, which was located here on campus. And was here for, I guess, 20+ years. It became the most celebrated organization in terms of leadership development in high education in the country. He's still living in town by the way. I see him now and then and talk to him on the phone a couple of times in the last week. His health is about as bad as a human being's could be and still be living, but he's bright as a new penny and his memory is amazing. Another irony is that he was in school at Berkeley when Jack Corbally was in school. They were both grad students. Both very, very good. And Culbertson was a master in several disciplines including German. When he would be invited to Germany to give a talk or something, he would always speak in the German language. It always was a very interesting thing that Jack Corbally and Jack Culbertson were colleagues once again here. And Jack, whether he remembers it or not, was very active in bringing the University Council here. It did an awful lot of work and its physical location

here, over in the basement of … the building escapes me at the moment, and then it was moved to Arps Hall for much of its tenure. The fact that it sponsored lots of activities and had a journal and supported conferences and institutes, I had learned of when I was at the University of Chicago and before I came here, some research at Columbia University simulating a local school system in order to study its properties and the problems it faced and so on. And they developed a lot of in-basket items patterned after work that AT&T had developed a few years in advance of that. It seemed to me that the in-basket technique would be a tremendous way to teach the administration of an elementary school. So I contacted people at Columbia and they agreed to use the materials. A grad student from Columbia came out. So we at Chicago developed a summer program using the simulated approach. It turned out well and then Jack Culbertson, entering the picture again, invited me to do 13 institutes around the United States to demonstrate the utility and viability of this method of instruction. So Tolbetson and I have had a close association as well. Not as intimate as with Roald Campbell, but nevertheless one that has been reinforcing all the way long.

Q. Let's look at your years at Oregon and establish the degrees and years of those degrees, if you would.

A. Well, I had a Master's from the University of Nebraska prior to going to the University of Oregon. I was just an eyelash away from going to the University of Illinois, where I had known some professors and read a lot of books from there. But my father's twin sister lived in Eugene and she was a family favorite. So it's amazing that his family affection was instrumental in my making the choice to go

to Oregon. But it was not a mistake at all. The program at Oregon was very, very solid. They had the alternate of a D. Ed and a Ph.D. And I made a mistake I think. I chose the D. Ed and I could have done it, I think, in the languages. I think I was just getting lazy at the time or tired. But did a dissertation which turned out to be certainly satisfactory from the University standpoint. It led to, certainly unexpectedly, to getting some visibility within the University itself and beyond in Oregon, and was a factor in my being offered positions at Ohio State and Chicago and University of Nebraska. I finished it in the winter quarter. Oregon was on the quarter system, in 1958. And then was interviewed in these three other Universities. And left to go to Chicago in the summer of 1958.

Q. Let's focus for a moment on your dissertation and what was your area of interest for this?

A. Well, I had always had interest in political phenomena and in my undergraduate work, although I had a major in sociology, I had some work in political science. So those two disciplines kind of reinforced one another and were prominent in my program at the University of Oregon. There was a center there which was interdisciplinary and headed by a political scientist of some reputation, Vincent Ostrum. He spent most of his career at Indiana University and was certainly celebrated there.

Q. Is that Ostram?

A. Ostrom. Vincent Ostrom. He was there along with sociologist of some reputation eventually. At that time, he was just a grad student. And an economist also over there. It was a lively place. It would intolerable on a hot day like today. It was up

in the ceiling almost, the third floor of an old, old building. Cramped quarters. And all of us had our own little nook. It was before computers, almost before telephones, because there was one phone one could use under restricted circumstances. It was just about two minutes from the library. The University of Oregon in that state attracted a lot of rain, so we were always in the winter moving around from place to place with an umbrella. I remember people coming in and setting their umbrellas down on the floor and it would get wet and kind of greasy and messy, but it didn't seem to really detract from the enthusiasm that we all had. There was another grad student who had been in the center about six months ahead of me who was brilliant, eventually became Dean of Education at Michigan State at the time I was Dean. So we had the Oregon roots. At meetings of the Deans of the Big Ten, he chose to study a school board in a small community. In fact, it was where he had been a principal, down on the ocean. And he used kind of a case method technique. I had always been impressed with the case method as well. So I chose to study the decision making and policy making of a school board in Springfield, Oregon. It was about a five minute drive from campus and the superintendent was friendly. It was a nice atmosphere to enter to meet people and to interview and raise questions. I attended every meeting of the school board and every committee meeting for eighteen months in that distract had voluminous notes, and was struggling with how I would provide a conceptual overlay that would make sense out of this. And on a sunny Sunday afternoon, I was in the library and browsing and found some of Lazwell's work. His name was not new to me, but I came to the south, it was like with Lazwell. So I began to

take the books down and set and read. Came back the next day and read some more. And came upon one of the books that had a framework that I could use for making sense out of my data. And his thinking was profound and his writings still to this day are just phenomenal from my standpoint.

Q. How do you spell Lazewell?

A. Lasswell, Harold D. Lasswell. He himself is an interesting figure from his origins. His parents, his mother was an elementary principal and his father was kind of an itinerant Methodist minister. And moving around Indiana, small towns in Illinois, and he got into the University of Chicago when he was 15. His career was celebrated in almost every way an academic could be honored. His thinking as I explained was very helpful on my dissertation. But later, unexpectedly, he was invited to come to Ohio State by Richard Snyder, the Director of the Mershon Center. At that time, I had taken leave from Ohio State for, turned out to be three years, to do work in Detroit. And I was commuting back and forth. We had Ford Foundation money or the Detroit Public Schools did, to help underwrite and finance this. Often used the University airplane. Sometimes when grad students got involved in it, we rode up in a unhealthy, unsafe old VW wagon. And it didn't have a heater in it. It was cold as all get out. We suffered between here and Detroit and back. That went on for two years. Lasswell came to campus, certainly once a month, and often more frequently than that. I had created in Oxley Hall in a square environment, perfectly square, a place where I could convene groups and we could pursue some of Lasswell's concepts of the decision seminar. We had directional microphones in the ceiling. We had a big octagon in

the middle in which we put markings of Lasswell's community defined sectors, eight of them. We had data suspended in three rings of track that you would use in a cleaning establishment to move clothing around. We suspended information about Detroit and about Southwest, I guess it is, Southwest Michigan, about the State of Michigan, about enrollments, about finance, about personnel, all kinds of things. As my work in Detroit was to focus a citizens group on things that ought to be improved in the system, I asked 12 academics from across the University, to meet every month I guess it was, in that room. And I would give an update of events there and we would talk about the data that were suspended, give an update on new information. And they would ask questions of me. And I would them. And we had a way of taking a record of that, which was called selections. It wasn't minutes, but selections. We trained two young women from the University to do that task. And then those would be typed and prepared and sent through campus mail before the next meeting. It was our little adult learning trick that helped a lot. And Lasswell would come and he'd sit in the corner and never said a word. He would never say a word and even if you called upon him, as we did, he would say "Well, let's just wait and we'll see how this goes." At the twilight, at the ending of those sessions and neither Dick Snyder or I would ask Harold about all this mishmash, "Can you make any sense out of it for us?" And he would just in a few paragraphs lay it all out and things that were muddled would become clear. Enormous capacity of synthesis within his own mind and he'd draw observations from … he was so interdisciplinary, he wrote in

psychopathology, public administration, political science, sociology. His last book was on architecture before he died. An amazing man.

Q. Would it be true to say that Lasswell was the principal intellectual stimulant?

A. Yes, indeed, and still is. A meeting here on campus yesterday in which we were pursuing a project that we're trying to get off the ground, and I was asked to kind of frame the work to be done. I used Lasswell's conceptual systems to frame it. It just made it so clear. It unmuddles things, if that's a word. And so hardly a day goes by that I don't draw upon his thinking.

Q. So you had to central themes running through your life in the mid-20's, one of which was from being a school principal, you were very interested in school administration issues. And secondly, this Lasswell experience early in your life by rigging his work gave you intellectual stimulation. And you applied them subsequently.

A. I don't know the number, but I'm one of those persons that has been very successful, I would say that in an immodest way, of applying the intellectual productivity of more than one, but certainly Harold Lasswell on a continuous basis over a long, long period of time.

Q. Where then did your interest in inner-city schools originate?

A. Well it came very early I guess, at the University of Chicago. Here this farm boy getting intellectual kind of transfusions from several sources, particularly at the University of Oregon, arrived in Chicago on a memorable hot day. And had rented over the telephone the third floor of an apartment building on Kimbark Avenue. And children were I think two and four years of old … no, they were

older than that, they must have been about seven and nine. And while I was down at campus, there had been a shooting in the apartment next door and they took this fellow out dead. And my two boys watched that event. And there was always a feeling on my part that if you're going to go into an urban setting, you ought to live there. But that became quite emotional. And school was about to start in a strange environment. And my wife then decided that, I think, it would be best that we move. So we moved out to a suburb and I became a commuter after just a short time, maybe three months, less than that, in Chicago. But from the very opening day, conversations with faculty and in a commons area in Judd Hall at the University of Chicago, there were faculty of a celebrated nature that would sit down and talk about we've got to do things to improve education in the City of Chicago. And it was apparent the data about those schools, going back now to the 1950's, late 50's, were just abysmal. And the problems, if I were to recite them for an hour here, would sound like I was speaking from today in Chicago. That same kind of things are there. There have been some improvements, but the conditions under which kids are expected to go to school and learn haven't changed.

Q. What is that the case? Why does that persist in every urban community?

A. Well, I think much of it traces back to decisions about public housing. There were, over on State Street, coming out of the loop and heading out south, close to Old Comisky Park, there was over a mile of, I think they were 21 story high rise public housing projects.

Q. Is that the Trevinni Green?

A. No Trevinni Green was northwest of that.

Q. I see.

A. And although many of these that I'm describing have disappeared, two of them would often populate an elementary school. So all the way up and down along State Street there were school after school after school after school. Those apartment houses were beehives of humanity and all kinds of … elevators wouldn't work and kids would use the elevators as toilets and the smell was just enormous. People would live in them for three months and not pay their rent and be elsewhere. A principal and in Chicago at that time, you would often find very dedicated people. Many of them I would know as students, that were principals and they were fighting against the odds and one of those principals down on State Street had difficulties unimaginable. He came to campus one afternoon and said, "Is there any way that you can help or the University can help?" And I said, "I don't know, but let's think about it and get to the bottom of it." Three professors and about three or four grad students, we wrote a proposal to work in that school for one and maybe two years, through being on hand, observation, bringing in research ideas. And then working on developing the culture into one that would really support educational purpose. And that involved taking, during the summer, for three weeks, we planned this and it was insane, took every adult and even some of the practice teachers from the previous term out to Illinois Beach State Park. And we stayed overnight out there and developed a way of thinking about the school and working on its problems. And then when school opened, we took note of how things were going. Over Thanksgiving, we all gave up Thanksgiving

and went back out there again to have down time and think things through. The custodians were there and they violated union rules in what they did. And grad students just learned so much. They were just sponges. And I was a sponge also. Well, we had a lot of short term success from that. And a lot of us wrote things about it. We had Herbert Thelen was one of the academics there. Fred Lighthall was another name that you'd never recognize. But in their disciplines they were celebrated and the students were good. And then that became for me a gate that was opened that gave me a sense of confidence that I could work on urban problems elsewhere. We had a big grant from the Ford Foundation called School Improvement Grant. And there were three of us that were assigned to schools where we had to visit them regularly. And one of them was Rochester, Minnesota for me and one down in Indiana, two big schools on the south side of Chicago. And so I would be sure that I visited them as much as possible. The one on the south side of Chicago was urban, Chicago Heights, massive school. And then I was still working at the school that I had mentioned. Rochester, Minnesota was the other end of the continuum with the Mayo Clinic with a first class community college, with an enterprising superintendent. Things were really humming in Rochester. They didn't need us at all. We learned more from them. And then we began to have institutes through the Midwest Administration Center on urban problems. And we brought specialists in. And I was right in the thick of that. We had national conferences on the model cities program when that legislation passed the Congress. So that was I guess the origins. Down the street was an elementary school that was just three blocks away from the celebrated Lab School at Chicago.

A lot of interaction with that particular building. A lot of the kids there that couldn't get in the Lab School were the kids of faculty at UFC and kind of a natural affinity. It was not a typical urban, nevertheless a place to learn about urban issues.

Q. So while you were at Chicago and dealing with these large schools, in the time following the work of James Conneaut who was a proponent of large schools and tracking of students. Was that a contributor to the problems in Chicago?

A. Well I think it was a contributor to problems in Chicago and elsewhere and his interest was evolving throughout his experience in Europe and Germany and he came back to this country and wanted to do more in education. He had support from high places to do that. And did a lot of school visitations. He and a team criss-crossed the country. His work that ended in a book called "Slums in Suburbs" is the one that's most germane in my mind to issues of urban problems and the like.

Q. And that was published in the late 50's?

A. I think it was, yes. I have that book; I should know. The proposals about largeness and the comprehensive high school, including vocational programs, and advanced programs for gifted kids, differentiating it in ways of building schools that had different structural properties. Evanstown Township High School, north of Chicago, is one of those that I think had four different divisions, each with a principal under a principal and a superintendent actually. A lot of that reflects Conneaut's thinking and to be square historically, some of those schools already existed before he began to advocate that they exist. So the invention of it isn't

quite his invention. His gathering information, interviewing people all across the country, he was seeking examples of schools that pretty well fit his thought about how they ought to be. And he may have spent more time in those than he spent in the big complex high schools and urban centers. The University of Chicago is located just about three of four blocks from what was one of the premier schools in the world as a high school before World War II. The understanding, the complexity of urban life and that's as it relates to kids and their motivation, arrival in schools, feeling about what education might contribute to them. I'm blocking on the name of that great school on the south side, I spent a lot of time in it. But that won recognition everywhere. And in the period from about 1940 to 1960, it was transformed from one of the best to one of the worst. Not the absolute worst in Chicago, but it certainly didn't measure up to its celebrity status before. And the population changed 100%. That had been middle class whites primarily and a few middle class African Americans. And its standards were threatened and eventually they just kind of ebbed away. It's academic achievements, the number of kids that graduated from there and became celebrated were just unending. And then all of a sudden, it just went into a tailspin. Now is that because the African American kids that came from the south were not as smart or whether there is some kind of different capability tied to race, or was it motivation, or was it the cold winters, or was it the smoky environment, or was it just not having enough food on the table. Or was it the schools were bad. To tease out all of those factors and to come to some clear explanatory conclusion is really a tough thing to do.

Q. Was searching for the answers to those questions the heart of your work at the University of Chicago and the Midwest Administration Center?

A. It was certainly related to it and it came under the umbrella of school improvement. And then teaching about to, want to be, principals and superintendents, that had a theme of leadership factored into it as well. And I taught courses in the politics of ed. which was in some ways much too academic and less tied into the hard-nosed politics of the City of Chicago. Kind of an ideal I knew how things happened, but when you got down to the level of the trenches in the City of Chicago, there wasn't a textbook around that really told you what it was like. And that's another fact that the African Americans who came in large numbers to work in Chicago in the factories during and after World War II, entered a political environment that was absolutely strange. They had always been discriminated against in the south. They had some comfort in the fact that they were with their families and people of the same race. And then they came to Chicago and just bumped into the harshness of that environment in every way. And they didn't learn quickly how to use the _____ system. Eventually they did and they know how to make it work. And all of this fed my interest and I was doing a lot of work nationally within two professional organizations, the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration. I was active in that and was its president for one or two years. And then within the University Council for Educational Administration, I referenced earlier that Jack Culbertson was operating. He was here in Ohio at Ohio State out of Chicago. He had been a

mentor of mine of sorts in Oregon. And very quickly I was on the Board of Trustees of the University Council for Educational Administration.

Q. Let's to back to Oregon for a moment because I'd like to begin to understand whether your interest in matters of race and civil rights originated while you were still on the West Coast or was it really the Chicago environment that inspired you to go in that direction?

A. Interesting question. I think having the experience I had at the University of Oregon and really learning the social sciences, gave me a sort of a conceptual understanding, but more important, a kind of confidence that I could apply some of those things and achieve understanding that might have some practical value. So when I came to Chicago, I had finished my dissertation and it had been sent in advance I guess, walked into a room about this size, 328 I remember the number, 3rd floor Judd Hall. Around that table was Bob Haverkerst, known to Ohio State, having been a figure here, and Ralph Tyler, and Rould Campbell, Jack Itsells, Phil Jackson, Joe Schwab, all of those persons who had a national and international reputation. There was that work that I had done and I was to face those persons and answer questions. And the questions came thick and fast. And the thing went on forever. And when I walked out, Jack Itsells who was such a number cruncher type, who had lived in books using experimental designs and other statistical format, and I had written a dissertation that probably didn't have more than three or four tables in it of any consequence. It was certainly a different approach. And he must have thought I looked worn out or bedraggled. But he came up and put his arm around me and he said "Vern, don't ever apologize for doing a case study.

After all, Freud had just one individual that he studied for a lifetime." And that was kind of a little boost that I certainly appreciated at the time.

Q. You spoke of Robert Havighurst. Researchers interested in his career will find him in the OSU College of Education in the history of the Ohio State University School, where he was on the first faculty. And he was written about in the EDD dissertation of Rudolph Lindquist at UC Berkeley about the founding of the Ohio State University School. And Havighurst has had a very important career in education. Well let's go on to your coming to Ohio State. What prompted you to come here?

A. Well, it sounds immodest but I really enjoyed Chicago and had a reasonable amount of success there I think. There was one episode that I haven't described here. After being in Chicago three years, I was Assistant Professor and the University of Minnesota declared an interest in me and invited me to come to the campus. They offered me a full professor with tenure, a teaching load that was very comfortable, consistent with what I thought I knew a little bit about. They added that I was to become director of a new structure for the twin cities which was essentially called Metropolitan Education Research and Development Center. And it involved school districts in two counties, Ramsey County, close to St. Paul. Then Hennepin County, where Minneapolis was located. And that was a developmental task that I found very, very exciting and what I'd learned at Chicago in terms of our school improvement program just fed so naturally into it. And Rould Campbell, my principal-mentor in many respects, called me. In fact, he flew up to Minneapolis. He had been named Dean at Chicago. Prior to that, he

was Director of the Midwest Administration Center and I was his assistant. And he flew up and said "I'm making this change and I want you to come back to Chicago. I know that you're here and you like it and all that." So I went back to Chicago under Rould's persuasiveness and it certainly didn't turn out to be a mistake because I, just like old home week in many respects, colleagues were still around, I was welcomed. And to manage and run the Midwest Administration Center was just an attractive kind of challenge. And because of my having national responsibilities within a couple of groups, I didn't see any need. I wasn't motivated. I didn't yearn to become a Dean. I had been offered the Dean at the University of Texas and turned that down. And Hoiston University in St. Louis and turned that down. I just didn't hanker to assume that task. So I had several phone calls that came from Ohio State and some letters saying "Why don't you declare your interest in this?" I hope I was graceful in saying that that I wasn't interested. Then a call from Fawcett and maybe there was more than one call. Jack Corbally also invited me to meet them at a downtown hotel in Chicago at a certain hour, certain day, and we expect you to be there. I had known Corbally before that and Fawcett in a very remote way. So I joined them and we met downtown. It was a long, long interview and at the close of it, they said "We don't want you to say yes or no. We want you to come to campus tomorrow morning in the University airplane. We'll land out here at the airport. Expect you and your family to be there about 9:30 and come to Columbus." So we did that and was in Columbus for two full days. And they in a sense rolled out the red carpet. It was a very appealing thing. I really didn't want to be Dean, but it was

so appealing and the fact that there were people here that I knew and admired so much, including Jack Corbally. And I got to know Fawcett better as a consequence of this. Then, among the faculty in the College of Ed. were persons that I had known well. In fact, I supervised dissertations of two of them in Chicago, Roy Larmy and Virgil Blonky and Fred Staub, that I had known through national organizations, was here and he had spent a summer at Chicago. No, a whole year, actually as a visiting faculty member. So there was a lot of Chicago influence here and it was warm and welcoming. So I accepted. And I can't recall the date of acceptance. It must have been in April, early April possibly. And then between that time and actually arriving September 1, 1967, I guess, I was in the process of winding things up at Chicago and making the transition, finding a house in Columbus. And planning a retreat for the entire faculty that was to be held in September, October, or November at Lake Hope. That transition and the fact that I worked with several people, came here more than once, a lot of exchange of course telephone. We planned that event and that gave me a chance to get to know people in advance of the retreat itself. That's where I worked with John Ramseier and what a man. And with Jack Frimeier. Jack was someone that I had heard about, but I hadn't really known. Very intelligent, brusque, hard-nosed, scared the hell out of grad students, still does. He was one of the linkage persons in helping to plan the details of the retreat that we ultimately held at Lake Hope.

Q. Before we get into the details of the retreat, what were your impressions of the state of the College of Education when you arrived?

A. When I went to interview at the University of Texas, to a lesser extent than graduate institute, it wasn't a college, at Washington U., I had been apprised of all the imperfections in advance of that.

Q. Imperfections at Ohio State?

A. No, at University of Texas. And also at the Institute. And there were rumors floating around and I heard them, that maybe alerted me to what was happening at Texas. And it may have been the reason why I didn't go there. Here, I wasn't interested in knowing all the warts on what was happening down there. I heard about them. I heard about University School. I heard about all the Dave Clark and Egan Gubba restlessness and the fact that people moved and left because of unhappiness. And I had known people that were in the research unit. And persons who ran that. But it didn't give me apoplexy. It didn't discourage me in a sense. I just felt that this was a great, great College of Ed. historically. And I had read about and read writings of a lot of the people in elementary ed. and certainly curriculum and philosophy and a great university within which the college was located. And I jus felt there were people here and resources here and that we could certainly live beyond and pull ourselves up and beyond the negative feelings that had been acquired over a period of time. It didn't seem to be an impossible task. I had no difficulty in getting to know Don Cattrell and his wife and being comfortable with them and I hope they with me and my wife. We found the adjustment to Columbus easy and comfortable. My children were out of high school at that point. One of them was about to finish at McCallister in St. Paul and the other one was at Kent State and was at Kent State when all the excitement

came along. They came here, I don't know that they developed a sense of identification with Columbus or with Ohio State University, but I think that made a difference too in the fact that they were already sort of out of the nest when I arrived in town. And their careers or their work was going along okay.

Q. Would you have arrived with major support from the administration, the president, the vice-president, soon to be provost, Jack Corbally. And you arrived at a College of Education that was legendary. The House, the Arps, Body, Alberty, Zirbes, legendary names, W. W. Charters, you go back and the names are legendary in education. But it was in trouble when you arrived and you knew that it was in trouble. And that's what called for the Lako Conference.

A. Yes, indeed. And of course when I had those lengthy talks with Corbally and the president, President Fawcett in Chicago, we talked about those. And about the closing of the University School. And I shared my perceptions on the value of University Schools historically. And when we talked about the risks that were there. But somehow those didn't seem to be challenges that one couldn't overcome.

Q. Well the decision on University School had been made.

A. Thank God.

Q. But in fact it needed formal appointment and you were the appointed person to formally close the school. What are your recollections of that?

A. Well, it was sad in a sense. Had I been here as a faculty member, I probably would have, I know that there were all kinds of perspectives on it and my feeling I think was colored by the fact that the University of Chicago, University School

was in the same building as my office. And I walked through every morning and there the kids were and there was the principal's office. And I had a feeling that this is where education takes place. And I had known about the record of the University School here and the role of celebrates in its formation. It didn't seem right that it was going by the wayside and I know that Fawcett was a major factor in it and he had support from other people in central administration. But I didn't argue. The historical fact that it had already occurred and worried more about how we were going to close it and do that respectfully and acknowledge the professional lives that had been pursued in that building on that faculty and there was going to be a big change. It had enormous meaning for people who were very successful teachers and had probably done some research and had been writing, but to move into an environment where the published or perish mentality was much more pronounced was there. I had a great asset though in coming here. More than one but certainly Arliss Rhoden, who was in the central office and eventually became my associate dean, was the Rock of Gibraltar and he had help from a person in the McMahan who was in charge of student records. Paul McMahan was a tremendous asset. And then others that I brought in to the administration, Don Anderson eventually and Virgil Blonkey played an interesting role for a while.

Q. Virgil Blanke?

A. Yes.

Q. And McMinn?

A. Yes. But primarily Arliss. Arliss not only in terms of an outstanding educator, was an enormous humanitarian and we had some real difficulties the first year. The kids were still there at the elementary level and there had to be some kind of dignified closure, families, children. And he did a lot of that with some tremendous help from active members of the faculty. People like Isabelle Miller would be one that you would recall. Helped close it out with some dignity, even though …

Q. As did Alex Frazier to bridge that gap.

A. Very much so.

Q. So Arliss Rhoden?

A. Roaden.

Q. And Alex Frazier?

A. Yes.

Q. Well University School was closed, the Bureau of Educational Research was run by a chap by the name of Egan Gubba and there was an Associate Dean by the name of David Clark. And they had worked together, many felt, in order to assure the closing of the school. And when it was closed, they found themselves not well received on the faculty and from that came a major change of attitudes and a divergence of feelings and careers. And that was the genesis for the Lake Hope Conference that you did. You must have thought you had a can of worms by that time. How did you handle it and what happened?

A. Yea, there was a can of worms, there's no doubt about that. The experience I had at Chicago in working with this large elementary school, we had over 2,000 kids

in that building, and taking the away for three weeks. And in that, the chemistry, there were a few little irritations here and there, but certainly able to rise above them. In the great confidence that we could use a simulation device as a way of dealing with issues that higher education confronts here and there and that we had confronted here, I was always an open person I think. So we organized it in a fashion that allowed tremendous opportunities for people to talk. And to talk candidly and to talk historically and to talk projectively. They had gone through a lot of on campus discussions about creating the School of Education, had that short history under John Ramseier's leadership. But somehow we chose the right kind of subject matter and we did it in a theatre in the round. We had the faculty on risers and we would set up a simulated faculty meeting right on the floor with people all around. Different people would be chosen to play roles. We created a faculty senate, we created an assessment structure. We had three different patterns of organizing the faculty into different units. We chose to call each of the units a faculty and not a department. So we had a faculty of educational administration, a faculty of elementary ed., a faculty of research and development. Six or eight faculties came out of that and we had enough time at Lake Hope that we could try to arrive at some comfort with the language of the faculty. And we had the people who were going to be a part of those meet in break out sessions and to talk about their futures and what they could arrive at as reasonable objectives for themselves. And then we had college wide issues that we talked about in this theatre in the round. And some of the most vocal, outspoken,

irreverent voices would arrange themselves so they had eye contact across this little theatre.

Q. Well they were genuinely angry at one another. These feelings were deep and seething.

A. Yes. And somehow there must have been divine intervention here, but the talk and the shouting across this arena, which we knew would happen, had kind of a catharsis to it. And the venom kind of dissipated. And maybe I had rose colored glasses on and didn't detect that the catharsis would be short term, but nevertheless we had conversations that went all night long in those little cottages down there. We had decent food provided and the opportunities for informal discussion was prominent. And we would convene around different patterns or organization. We had these simulated problems that we brought for discussion. We had in our midst, as well as the loud voices, we had a lot of soothing voices too, like John Ramseier and Roy Larmy and Walt Hack, people that I knew well. And others that I came to know well. We had a lot of help from people in health and physical education. Persons that had been on the faculty a long time. We had help from a little group that other people thought they were a little more dissident, the industrial arts group. Don Lux and Will Ray, who were just coming into national prominence. They were getting lots of grants and so on. And they were strident at times, but they were also kind of a mellowing influence as I remember. Driving down to Lake Hope, I think Arliss and I were together, there were four of us from the Dean's staff that were in the car. And we were all kind of apprehensive and we were going over the agenda and we were anticipating that

there would be rough water. But coming home, it was just a feeling like we had just trounced the University of Michigan. A lot of joy, a lot of feeling, a lot of hope. And when we got back, we had to put it all together in an administrative way and try to make it go.

Q. Well at first it looked very helpful and then there were signs that the wounds had not in fact healed. Shortly after that, it became apparent that both Egan Guba and David Clark would leave. They went on to the University of Indiana.

A. In fact they had left.

Q. Were there others who then left afterwards?

A. Well there were a husband and wife team, I didn't ever know them personally, three others that went I think to Indiana also. There was just a migration to Bloomington. I didn't know them to know what the feelings were. There was so much strength in certain units here that I think a person became, almost they adopted the feeling that we can't let this great thing disintegrate any further. Our science education, goodness there was such strength there. And then in math, Alberty being a leader. He was in the twilight of his influence at that time.

Q. Elsie was on staff also.

A. Yes, she was. She was another important person.

Q. That's Elise Alberty. Harold Alberty's wife.

A. She was less visible and much of her respect and distinctiveness was earned later, but she was there. She must have been an Assistant Professor at the time I would guess, something like that.

Q. Well there were people of great character and sanity that helped steer through this period. One of them that I understand you relied upon heavily was John Ramseier. What are your recollections of him?

A. Our exposure of close colleagues in friendship was within about two years or three before he passed on. But I had known him before through the University Council for Educational Administration and I had been invited here for different events when I was at Chicago and then the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration was family based. So people came with their children, spouses. And I think there was 13 years I hadn't missed one of those. And there would always be strong representations from Ohio State and John Ramseier was one of those that was there almost always.

Q. Stable.

A. Able, smart, patient, listeners. And his own eloquence just made a big difference. And he played that role nationally too. He was seen in the same way as they … well Jack Culbertson or Rould Campbell. Although he and Rould were close friends and had written a lot together. Rould was more prominent nationally than John ever achieved. Rould Campbell became President of the American Educational Research Association. And almost the only person out of educational administration that ever achieved that level of national prominence. But John was just a marvel to behold and one of the toughest things I ever had to do was to speak at his funeral. It was a tremendous honor to have to do that, since I was a short term member of the faculty, the academic family here. I still have my remarks tucked away in the file someplace. It was a tough day.

Q. Well at the time of his death John Ramseier was Chairman of the Department of …

A. What was the department's name at that time? Well maybe he was Chairman of the Department of Ed. Amn. I'm not sure.

Q. I'm not sure it was Ed. Amn. I think it might have been the teaching … what had been the teaching school before. There have been so many reorganizations, it's hard to remember their title at this specific point in time. But John had worked closely with you up until the time he had his last heart attack in August.

A. Yes, he had. I don't think he had a title on the Dean's staff, but he certainly worked with us. He was around all the time. I'm fuzzy about the structural significance of that. I remember spending hours with him in his hospital room over at University Hospital. On one of his visits to the hospital, it was the afternoon of the football game and I was there and he were glancing and listening on the radio and looking up, you could see the, you couldn't see the players but you could certainly see the stadium and what was going on up there. He had these periods when it appeared that he was going to get better and would come back to work. And it didn't work out that way for him. There were other people that were not close to me but had stature in their own disciplines. John Richardson in science ed. And he was the Rock of Gibraltar within his field. And his health began to deteriorate. Goes back to Arliss Rhoden as a stalwart. John Henderson would be invited to go to a meeting to give a speech. And what he was losing was his voice. And his wife couldn't convince him, John, we can't hear you. When you get up on the platform, your lips move but no one hears you. And he just

would not accept that. And so he would get a call to address occasionally a national audience some place, and he would accept it and get there. And then of course it was an embarrassment to everybody. And his wife just couldn't … Arliss and I went over to their home once or twice and just sat there with him and his wife. And saying, "John, your scheduled to teach this quarter but we just can't let you do it. It's just painful for us to talk to you about that but students can't hear you. They just can't. They want to but they cant." So we had to get someone to fill his classes. And he would come down to the office and it was so difficult. Eventually, I can't recall, I know what we did – we put him on leave and his salary went forward. And we were able to do that for one full year. But eventually he got sick and left it. But Arliss was the person that could take the lead in a difficult situation like that. He could meet and be received by and was such a humanitarian. Not that I wouldn't to do that or couldn't do it, there would just be times or occasions where he would do it better than I.

Q. Let me ask you about Jack Frymeier. Everyone in the college from that era remembers him with great enthusiasm. He's still active today. And he is a character that is etched deeply into the heart of College of Education. What do you have to tell us about Jack Frymeier?

A. Well, he has always been a friend, a professional friend as well as a personal friend. And from the very beginning when we planned Lake Hope, that's when our association started. He became a faculty chair and we had to negotiate budgets and we'd sit around a table. And he'd argue forcefully for salary increases for this person or adding a new staff person or so and so. During his tenure he was

President of two national organizations that I can recall. And was an inspiring leader and speaker. One of the most inspiring speakers I ever heard and I listen even now when he makes presentations, that same amount of interest. When he was President of AFCD, the American Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development I guess it is, he developed a multi media presentation, big screen, for the national convention and his keynote address in Minneapolis. And he had six projectors going simultaneously under a central control system, in which he was making a presentation on a big research project that he was just finishing. And it had some controversial aspects to it. The enthusiasm that he had in preparing to do that and the success he had with it, and the satisfactions later on, were just enormous. I was not there so it is all second hand. But it was pure Frymeier.

Q. Well among the people in curriculum at that time, he was the articulate, well-spoken, outgoing personality?

A. Yes and he and Alex Frazier shared being national presidents of the same organization. The AFCD. Alex Frazier was also president at one time. And Jack was, he was tough and still understanding of students. He had high expectations for them. Their dissertations were always well done. He was busy, he was on airplanes, he was here, he didn't miss classes. He was giving speeches everywhere, standing room only. And he was doing research projects at the same time with grad students assisting them. And he had the project in Westerville in the elementary school. The name of the building escapes me at the moment. But gathering data over and over again, writing about it, publishing books,

autographs. Just a tremendous member of the faculty. And also a person who went toe-to-toe with the best of them in the trenches on the issues. I stay in touch with him every week by telephone, by e-mail. We did a couple of projects together, one on values and he established, but I was involved in it, a league of values centered high schools about three or four years ago. He, along with myself, and Arliss Rhoden, and three or four other people from Ohio, did, it's a book really, on city schools and suburban schools, in which we contrasted them, the resources, the issues that are so different, although they are separated in Nebraska terms by a fence line.

Q. Dean Cunningham, at your first year at Ohio State you established the Ohio State University Advisory Commission on problems facing the Columbus Public School system. What impact did that study have on the Columbus Schools and what impact might it have had on the College of Education?

A. Well, I'll start with a brief introductory history of that, because that helps make the answer more understandable I think. On an afternoon, it was in the winter as I recall, I had a call from President Fawcett and he was explaining the fact that his preamble included the fact that before he became President he was Superintendent of Schools in Columbus. And that he had a great deal of fondness for the system and wanted to make sure that it continued to be a decent school system. He had had a phone call from Mr. Sloan, the President of the School Board, that afternoon and Mr. Sloan had asked him if the University would be willing to come and do a comprehensive survey-study of Columbus Public Schools. It was currently undergoing a lot of internal tension of a racial nature. A lot of concerns

over how well it was treating the African American community. And whether there were other aspects of the system that warranted an outside review related to curriculum, internal policies and the achievement of kids, things of that sort. And would I be interested, would I be willing to lead such a study on behalf of the University? He said "I think it's important but I want you to feel it's important. You're the logical person to head such a responsibility as Dean of the College of Ed. Think about it overnight and then come in tomorrow morning and we'll talk about it in my office." So I did think about it at great length. And anticipating the fact that if I said yes, he was going to say "How do you want to do it?" So I had given some thought about how we might mobilize ourselves within the University in a fashion to do the work and do it within a reasonable timeframe and do it responsibly, so that the product would be something that we could be proud of in the end. I even think I had a single piece of paper in which I had sketched out some of these notions. So to get into it quickly, it was something that he was pleased with. I proposed that we try to maximize the benefits to the University as well as to the Columbus Public School system. And that this was a rare, rare opportunity to invest time and interest on the part of selected people toward that end. It seemed to me to make it a authentic University responsibility, that we ought to draw heavily upon other units beyond the College of Ed in that work. And I had identified six individuals to work with us, primarily Arliss Rhoden and myself, for my leadership standpoint, in doing what had to be done. So we invited the Dean of Law and the Dean of Medicine, the Dean of the old business school, the Dean of Social Sciences, the head of the big vocational technical

center which was lifting off across the river. Bob Taylor, five Deans and Bob Taylor and myself and Arliss. And I had projected the kind of talent that we would need from each one of these units, what I thought a decent timeframe might be, and he said "That sounds good. Have you thought about A, B and C?" So after that first meeting that day and a follow-up meeting in which I put more meat on the bones. I think Arliss and I and I don't recall whether Jack Corbally was around the table, but we pretty well had what we had in mind and we met with the President of the Columbus School Board as well as the Superintendent at that point. His name will come to me. Harold Ively. So we met around the table and we got to the point where we were in agreement in terms of what ought to be done, how it should be done, and within what time frame. And we set ourselves a tight timeframe in which to do the work. Arliss became the coordinator and I was the person who was working with the other Deans, the other units. And Dean _____ the liaison with the Columbus Public Schools as it was going on, met with the media more than once in respect to the work and we got going. We had grad students involved as well as faculty and their assignments would be worked out. Arliss and I would work them out and then Arliss would work with an individual in terms of his or her responsibility. And we built around the interest and talent as much as we could. And the numbers that were coordinated here, I think we had 34 people, either 43 or 34. The arrangement of those two numbers. We set aside kind of a work room where materials were gathered and where people came for conversations about their work, if more than one person was working. We had people from other colleges and units as well. And a private and

a selfish benefit to me was that I got to know the University quickly. I got to know the Deans. We became much more communicative with one another. When the President would convene the Deans, it was almost like a little club of those of us who were working on the Columbus School project at the time. For planning purposes, we met every Monday in the conference room of Dean Myling in the Medical School. And we met at 7:00. And it was kind of a privilege to him. He wanted to be able to do his rounds in the medical school. He would come in with his wife's jacket on and his stethoscope and we would do our planning there and report our progress. And eventually when we had drafts of things that were going to go into a big comprehensive report, they had been made available to them before we had our Monday morning meetings. And if they wanted to read them they could. If they were confident that we were alright, they would say that's a go.

Q. Could you make clear for us whether this was your vision to make it a University wide project or whether that was not Fawcett's vision.

A. No, that was mine because that was on the paper that I took over there. And I think that his view of it was that you people in the College of Ed have got good, strong faculty there. He never said it in those terms but I think that was his feeling about it. But he didn't object at all. And after it kind of sunk in that, my goodness, this is a place where the whole University to be helpful to the school system.

Q. You had law involved.

A. Law, medicine, the School of Business, voc tech school across the river which was a great big resource in this. We had the social sciences, Roger Craig, and

there was one other one that I'm leaving out of this picture for some reason. Anyhow, they all played a great role and they were really good to me in the sense that they would say, "Cunningham, have you thought about this from a University kind of standpoint." And we became a kind of a pretty good community and they became involved in going out into schools and conducting hearings where parents came to register their gripes about things. And each high school, my dying day, I'll see Dick Myling, the Dean of Medicine, with his hands almost knuckle wide on a podium looking up into hundreds and hundreds of black faces. And he was not the world's most notable liberal, to say the least. And he would listen to their shouts and vituperations and charges about the racist University. And just listen. He didn't fight back; he may have made some opening comments. He may have listened. When there was quiet, he may have made a comment and at the close some remarks. And there was a young black male that came to everyone of our hearings around the city, we had them in every high school, and I would be present for as many as I could make and Arliss would cover the rest. And the Deans, we'd have a Dean at every one of them. And in the white sections of the community of course, there was much more orderly, there was less bad language, it was more congenial. But in east and in two or three other settings, it wasn't a happy place. But in every one of those there was a social worker from a settlement house on the south side, South Side Settlement, that came to every one of them. He was a handsome, well spoken, tough black who just worked everybody over who was on the podium. He went in the white schools and white places. And after it was all over and we had gotten a good report on all of it,

Arliss and I were sitting there in my office one night about 5:30 and almost like it was pre-ordained we said, "Do you remember that person from South Side Settlement that showed up at all of these and just gave us a bad time?" And by then we had remembered his name and his name was Charles Taylor. I said "Arliss, I 'm going to call him right now. Let's see if he'll come up and have dinner with us tonight." And I called him and fortunately he was in about 5:30 or 6:00 and introduced myself and he said "I know who you are, Associate Dean." And I said "Arliss Rhoden and I are sitting here and we wonder if you would go out and have something to eat with us tonight." And he said "I don't know that I want to get close to you. You guys are at that racist institution. You've got a lot of responsibility for improving things in this community and I don't know that it would serve any purpose." Well he didn't accept that. The next night we were there again. So I called him again and he came. We went someplace down in German Village and had something to eat. And well to get to the bottom line, all of this eased and learned that he had gone through University School, that he had his BA from Ohio State and so I said "Well how about graduate, work up here." Eventually we got him enough outside support. He wanted to bypass the Master's degree and to right to Ph.D. He was really a tough guy, an attractive guy. He wasn't hostile; he wasn't threatening. But he wanted you to know where he came from. And so he got his Ph.D. from Ohio State. We got an internship in Washington for two years in the Office of Civil Rights. He came back to the Academy for Contemporary Problems over on Neil Avenue and became Associate Director and eventually became President of Wilberforce. After that, he

went to Standard Oil which eventually became BP and he headed a big division, administrative division there.

Q. That night he had dinner with you was an important night for him.

A. It was and for us too because we were able to get through the tough stuff and the hatreds were minimized. So he's a close friend. I talk to him every once in a while. Right now he heads a big head hunting firm in Atlanta. Became a member of the Board of Trustees of University of Akron, he was President of the School Board in Shaker Heights and I often think if we had never made that phone call, what life would have been for us and for him. Just one of those little stories I guess. But the Commission was an alert for the University and an alert certainly to the College of Ed., that we needed to learn a lot more about inner-institutional relationships, that two big, big institutions occupying the same geography ought to find better ways for communication. I don't know the exact linkages here but the fact that we had earned the confidence of that district improved our relationships with other districts and allowed us eventually to work out our exchange of services agreement, where teachers could come here and not pay tuition. It's just been dealt another blow. I don't know how much longer it's going to exist. The trustees decided that they were no longer going to do that. It was too costly for the University. But that goes back now almost 30 years that we worked that out. From the standpoint of the school district, the hostilities and tension in the community was so pronounced that they would not join me in a press conference on it. Harold Ively said "I think it might be better for all concerned if you send us copies." We sent it to every member of the Board by

taxicab and to him. And I held the press conference, Arliss and I, and the media had received the document the night before. There was always a lot of tension between The Dispatch and the other newspaper in town about when press releases were going to be held. And we tried to not disadvantage either The Columbus or The Citizen Journal. The radio and TV were not that upset about it. They asked a lot of good questions and then we wrote a synopsis of this three or four hundred page document that could be put in the Sunday Dispatch. And it went to everyone who got the Sunday paper across the whole metropolitan area. I think it was 20 or 30 pages long.

Q. Was this the project in which you worked with Gene DiAngelo?

A. Yes, it was indeed. I needed a lot of help on the media and I had heard him and had met him somehow. He was the name that I recognized and was comfortable with. I called him and I said "You know, would you bring to me people over to talk with me and others about how we ought to proceed in our media relations with this thing?" And we'd already begun to get phone calls. I would get one and they would say "I understand that you've _____ so and so and I just talked to Harold Ively and he's really upset about that." And so they wanted to get a fight going between Harold Ively and me over what we were going to do. So DiAngelo brought these people. I think it was over at the student union we met someplace. And I was really dumb about a lot of this stuff. I said "I don't want to get into a fight over all these issues. I wouldn't mind if you came to watch us work but if you're going to write down everything we say, that's not going to be good." So DiAngelo kind of interrupted me and he said "Cunningham, it's clear that you

don't know what the hell you're doing here," or language just like that, and I said "Yea, you're right but we do need help and this is really a major thing for the general well being of the school now and into the future. And if we botch it there will be remains of this around for ages. And if we do a decent job we may be able to help things." And finally he said, "Okay, I'll speak for everybody. If they don't like it, they can tell you. We'll call off the dogs. We'll let you do your work and we'll wait until your done if you'll agree to hold a press conference that will be helpful to all of us, give us a copy of it before you hold the press conference and ask you questions about it. And that's the way it will work." And they honored that. It worked out beautifully.

Q. And future researchers will want to know that Gene D'Angelo was at that time President of the Dispatch Broadcast Group which included Channel 10 television. And WBNS Radio. So he was a major force in the community, both in the video media and for the Dispatch Group in the written media.

A. Yes indeed.

Q. And your accord with him made all the difference I suspect.

A. It did from my standpoint and I don't think the media suffered as a consequence of it. But it was a great community service that his leadership provided us and helped us so much.

Q. There seems to be a link between your early experiences in Chicago, down in the barrios so to speak, in the schools, and seeing what was really going on, and then this chapter with the Columbus Public Schools doing an extended study, not just of the school but of the community in which the schools lived, that involved

multiple disciplines and the University. It's clear that by this time your thinking towards urban education and towards civil rights and race relations has cemented. And you have a clear mission now.

A. Yes. And there's another event which helped me organize I think. When I came to the community, almost in the first week I had a call from a social worker who wanted me to see the city and to see it from a poverty standpoint. And for two days she took me around this community, particularly on the east side of the American Edition. We went into white homes where there was no plumbing, it was all the sewers. And into black homes and into retirement communities. And I sat and occasionally broke bread with people that I would never, ever have met or seen. We went into South Side Settlement and she just ushered me around from place to place. Knocked on doors, didn't call in advance. Just went in to see people. So I got a feeling of what poverty was like in this city and I had witnessed it in Chicago and so I saw it here. And then Lazarus, Bob Lazarus and Charles Lazarus, asked me to spend some time with Harrison Saylor, Lazarus' voice for the community. And also creating the Columbus Foundation at that point. Harrison Sayer, who said "Let me tell you about this community." And he went over its leadership structure, the people who really were behind the scenes, people who were calling the shots, what was really important from a business standpoint, the significance of the school for the future of business in the community, and the at risk nature of the community because the schools were needing an awful lot of help. Concerns over the race problems that were already prominent. And I came here of course after all the riots in Chicago and the things that had occurred

during the election when Mayor Daly was on TV 24 hours a day. So it wasn't new to me in that sense. But to get that orientation from an honored figure in the community was so beneficial. And following that, working with Chuck Lazarus and Bob Lazarus a lot, becoming personal friends to the point where we visited one another in our homes. And I still see Bob and Ray Lazarus at social events and see Charles once in a while. Those two things really galvanized my commitment to urban places and to the needs of those communities. And it made it much more easy for me to exert myself, leading around those interests within the University itself.

Q. Well the summer you moved in to the Deanship was also the summer that Jack Corbally moved from Vice President of Administration to being the Provost of this University. And the years of strife were mounting for the University and for the College. There was a great deal of stress socially and politically on this campus at that time. In 1968, Jack Corbally made his decision to move out at the end of that year and go to become the Chancellor at Syracuse and it changed the flavor and the flexibility of the administration. And in 1970, when you were still Dean, you were faced with a very, very difficult year on campus. The shootings at Kent State and the events at this campus that led to the shutdown of this University for two weeks in April of '70. What are your recollections of that stressful ear, because the input you bring to it is one who understood race relations and one understood poverty and sought to understand the inner city. But this University was not flexible.

A. That's true. Well, that's a long story and it's hard to be crisp about its summation. It's both personal and professional. Jack Corbally became a personal friend. He was a friend before I came here through national organizations. But became social friends. And exchanged dinner and things of that sort. And when he decided to go to Syracuse, it was a personal as well as a professional loss to me. And to my family and certainly to a lot of others at the University since he came here as an Assistant Professor at the College of Ed. While he was here, and when he became Provost, he was very friendly to the College in terms of things that we were trying to do. He was here when we did the study and that was successful. And there were many federal programs that were appearing during that time where federal monies could be attracted. And we wrote proposals and we were successful in several different dimensions of that, that had race significance. One was a program, "New Careers" was its title. And it was designed to bring people into education, potentially into teaching, and into social work. And we had both of those in our college and we had quickly some African Americans that became leaders in them. And we brought in to become teachers or maybe even school administrators, persons who had not graduated from high school, nor did they have a GED. And we brought them in on the basis of selection criteria involving lots of interviews. But many of them had never been on campus before. So it was an induction task and there were people here who were in their 30's, one who had had an injury in a steel mill and had steel in his back and so on, could hardly sit down. They had to be introduced to the University community, how to go to class, how to behave, how to dress, how to

get books from the library. And they had an account that they could draw from, but one of them didn't know how to administer that. He charged a fortune in books and we had to work that out. We had a person administer that program who was such a fetching individual, but he learned how to work the system. He helped his students register in the College of Ed. or social work. He also knew how to register himself. And he registered himself for an enormous amount of hours each quarter and he also knew how to give grades into the computer system. So he gave himself all A's. Oh what a mess that was. And as an African American you're trying to put a good face on that person's work in the University. Anyhow, programs of that sort were here. We were trying to build credibility and faith with the African American community. And we're making some headway. Some of these persons, with the help of mathematics and the chairman of the Math Department, eventually went on to get Ph.D.'s through that open door. And that caused us to get into conversations with other people. Art Adams was Dean of Humanities and he was willing to take a lot of risk with people of this sort. And eventually he became the Dean of a very militant African American, which didn't do a lot to help build confidence elsewhere in the University that African Americans could succeed. So we had a lot of bumps in the road, but we also had a lot of successes along the way. And then Jack Corbally was paving the way in central administration for a lot of this.

Q. Were you aware when you came here that the University was fairly uptight about these kinds of issues and very conservative in its view? Did you know that Jack Corbally had been rebuked by the trustees for his handling of the '67 uprising?

A. Yes. And of course socially, I talked about that endlessly, but I think of us shared the view that sooner or later the University was going to have to modify their very conservative stance and unless you took some risks or spoke out or developed things, it was always going to be that way and in the long run it would not be the best thing for the institution.

Q. And you took those risks and you took positions of leadership?

A. Yes, we worked out a collaborative project with the Cleveland Public Schools which allowed us to take students, and most of them were white, into Cleveland. We rented a hotel that was about to be demolished. The students stayed there and we had staff that lived up there with them. A lot of commuting back and forth. I was up there several times. Cleveland had to be convinced that we were sincere. Our number one night in the basement of a community leader, an African American, in which we were, I think Arliss Rhoden may have been there with me, were really worked over for bringing these lily white students into Cleveland expecting that they could make adjustments to inner city life. They were really on our side. They were wanting to make sure that we didn't have some unfortunate incidents over there. So half dozen major things of that sort within a short time frame sent signals to the University. I was called the Red Dean by people on the school board downtown at that time.

Q. You were from a long list that had been similarly accused over the decades.

A. I guess so. I guess so. I didn't lose any sleep over it but it happened.

Q. But it's now April of 1970. The uprising is serious. The militantism, the cooperation between blacks and whites on campus is evaporating. And then the confrontation comes and the decision from the President to close the University.

A. Well I was on leave one year. I had had a tremendous honor given to me to be invited to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. That was an independent unit but on the edge of the Stanford University campus. And I was the first one in my field, Educational Administration, to ever have been invited there. Forty-eight people around the world were given one year at their salary, moved there with expenses paid, to just study. So I talked with Jack, well Jack was gone then I guess, with _____ and the Provost Jim Robinson, who was the successor, about it, and they said "It's a tribute to the University. We've never had anyone from our faculty invited there. You should go." So I did and Arliss Rhoden was appointed as Acting Dean while I was gone. This person that I reference so often. And when it got tight and when the campus was closed down and even before that, I flew back on the red eye every Thursday night and when it was closed, we conducted faculty meetings at St. Stephens Church across the street from Ramseier Hall and had faulty meetings and talked about these issues. And had we ever been smart, we would have worked out some way to have made a record of those and televised them and kept the record. Because I presided from the front of the church and for each one of those meetings, Bob Johnson, who ran one of our programs, and Woody Hayes were on either side. And the conversations across, you could hear a pin drop. Because they were addressing one another around the issues with clarity and conviction that none of the rest of

us could produce. Walls were lined with the National Guard. They had gas masks. They had their rifles with them. Grad students were there. People walked in off the street and here we had those electric conversations going. And we weathered it. We talked about things. Things that we ought to be continuing to do in terms of increasing our enrollment of African American students, trying to hire more faculty, getting federal grants that would support our interest, to work along in a favorable way. I was never in a confrontation with another administrative official or with another faculty member from another part of the University over my views on these things. And had people who were saying "You're on the right track." So I wasn't in it with one exception where people really were after me verbally. And I've kind of lost track on the calendar on this, but one morning, it must have been maybe the year following this, I'm not sure whether it was after the Guard had left, I walked in one morning at 7:00. I usually was there pretty early. And just a sea of African American students with one or two whites walked in on me and said "We want to talk to you." And I said "Well, that's okay." And we moved to a conference room next door and that wouldn't hold the numbers. The numbers kept growing and we went from two or three other classrooms in the building to where people were able to sit or stand or be inside. We would talk over these things. And they were loud and vituperative occasionally but no physical sense of aggressiveness. And we continued until late in the afternoon. They took a vote and said "Should we just take a recess and come back tomorrow morning at 7:00 and we'll continue this?" And they voted to do that. And so I went home and I came back the next day. I did some

telephoning with other faculty at night, but I was there by myself. There wasn't anyone else from the faculty or administration there.

Q. And this is the same timeframe that you were involved in the program at Stanford?

A. No, this was a year after. I think so. It's not that, I guess that I was a little disappointed that faculty didn't come in and sit with me during this thing.

Q. They didn't want to take the heat.

A. Well maybe so and some of the administrators, I think Arliss would be one that would be there to the dying day. And I don't think that he was there. But they wanted to exact their once of flesh. They wanted me to promote an instructor to an assistant professor's rank. They wanted someone else to be given tenure. They wanted assurance that we were going to work hard to get more stipends for faculty or for students. That we would increase the number of African American students. That I would sign something which I couldn't sign legally and didn't, but just around those issues. The same issues coming back and back and back. And we left on kind of a handshake basis with leadership. I think the current Mayor of Cleveland was in the group from time to time if not all the time and Mayor White, who was President of the student body at that time here. One of the faculty person that I had come to admire at some distance who was Assistant to the Mayor in St. Louis, Mayor Sherventez. I recommended him to come as a full professor with tenure and I did. And there were faculty here willing to accept that. There were faculty I'm sure that were disappointed that he didn't go through the academic rank process as other people were expected to do. And it was a high

risk appointment that had support from the Central Administration to do that. That was in the following year. And he was involved in this meeting with me and was in it from time to time. Other African American members of the faculty were aggressive and certainly supporting all of the civil rights issues were there. But my white colleagues were notable in the fact that they weren't there.

Q. Well your reputation grew greatly as a result of these experiences as someone who was willing to take the heat, bridge the gap, mediate the dispute, and try to get change effectuated on both sides. What that produced before long was an opportunity in Detroit with the new Detroit Committee that had some fairly unique problems. They thought you brought a value to.

A. Before we get to that, one or two sentences. At the time I wasn't cognizant of the meaning of these things for the College and for the University, but our national ranking shot up in the minds of colleagues around the country who made those judgments. And we moved within the land grant college grouping, to the top land grant College of Ed in the country. And we stayed there. And occasionally we were tied with Stanford and Harvard for number one in the country as a College of Ed. And I think there was certainly a lot of more liberal sentiments among the people making those decisions and the word was out I suppose, so that they were aware of that. And I think that helped somewhat in those ratings too. But now back to the call from Detroit. One winter morning, the president of a department store chain in Detroit called and me and said "Detroit is setting up a major citizens group, to try to leverage improvements in the Detroit Public Schools and we want someone to head it. And we've heard about you from people up here in

Michigan and I don't want you to worry much about this but we're having a big meeting up here. We want you to come up and talk to these people. We're going to be meeting in a certain Cadillac hotel and we want to talk about urban schools and how to improve urban schools. And so if you'll come up we'll be glad to meet you." So I got there and it was cold and it was snowing and it was a miserable night. And I wondered why in the world I ever decided to go. And I walked into this meeting and I had asked them to have an overhead projector. And I had a whole batch of transparencies which I thought would help me make my presentation. I got in and there wasn't room to even set up the projector and there wasn't anyway you could get it to an outlet. And so we just abandoned that by the way. And I made a few remarks for an opening nature and then questions came from everywhere. And they were not polite and they were not friendly.

Q. It was East High School all over again perhaps.

A. It was an East High School experience. Dean Miley should have been there. And it went on forever. And I was wondering whether I could catch a flight back, which I did. And I didn't know what the outcome was really going to be. And my friends, there were three people that were heading this big citizens group. All of them were there. Two African Americans and one white. The names are not important now. I don't know that I could come up with them, but I decided that the problems were worse than I thought in Detroit. And the next morning this fellow said "We want you to come and take this job. We want you to be heading this thing. And we'll work with you." And this was the white guy calling and said "That was a pretty heavy night last night. It was heavy for me and I wasn't even

answering the questions. It would mean that you would have to give up your Deanship to do this and I know that's really quite a request." Well to get to the bottom line on this one too, I did resign. With consultation with the central administration about it.

Q. March 14, 1973.

A. That when it was, indeed. They didn't want to wait. They wanted it to be right away. And we did negotiate it pretty fast. I would go up and stay at a hotel one black from the central administration building. I was able to bring some persons from another program that I was responsible here in the National Program for Educational Leadership. This was an attempt to bring people and mostly minorities into a program that was located on six university campuses, on an Indian reservation out in Arizona, State Department of Ed. in North Carolina. We had several of them here. And I thought since their careers were to be in leading in urban school systems, nothing could be better. So over this period of two years there were five or six of them, plus other ordinary Ph.D. students that came up there with me, stayed in this hotel, went to school board meetings, interviewed people all over the city. So I was retained my professorship, my tenure and left and went up there for two years, driving sometimes, flying other times, but always working on these urban educational issues. And of course selfishly what it meant for me is that I was acquiring insights into the problems and potential solutions, that I would never have been able to get sitting at a desk here in Ramseier Hall. That went on for two years and we were reasonably successful. We were able to get quite a lot of financing for various programs, from Ford Foundations and from

foundations in Michigan. And of course the word spread and I had a call in from the Commissioner of Ed. in California, Wilson Riles, an African American, who described the conditions in the San Francisco. He was the only African American in such a position in the country. He told me about the problems of the San Francisco Unified School District and wanted to know whether I would come and be interviewed by the leadership of that commission to do the same work in San Francisco that I had been doing in Detroit. I was informed by him that they had selected 25 of the most influential leaders in the City of San Francisco to serve on this commission. And the mission of the commission was to find ways to improve the San Francisco Schools. I went out and was interviewed by several members of that commission for a day. They invited me to come and worked out the way that I would be paid and so on. The way I was paid in Detroit was the same as it was in San Francisco; that Ohio State University was reimbursed for my salary and I wasn't paid anything beyond that when I took leave and work in these places. Transportation and living costs and so on were all paid by Detroit and then San Francisco. The arrival in San Francisco was so different than the arrival in Detroit. In Detroit, there was a 46 member group; in San Francisco there were 25. In Detroit, it was a mixture of leaders from neighborhood levels, persons from neighborhood organizations as well as the five motor car presidents in Michigan. There were four bank presidents of enormous prestige in Detroit, but after talking about those … oh also, the presidents of the University of Michigan, Michigan State and Western Michigan and Wayne State were also on this thing. But when you got both all of that, you've got people who wouldn't come to a

meeting and break bread around the table in the Sheridan Cadillac Hotel with those racist business leaders. They would bring a little brown bag with a sandwich, whereas everyone else was served a several course meal. We had this social and racial distance in Detroit. When you got to San Francisco, you had diverse racial composition which included Chinese, African Americans, Hispanic, and White, and almost all of the individuals knew one another very well. They were in the major country club. They were all leaders of professions with graduate degrees. They were in the Bohemian Club grouping and the level of conversation, although the mission was to improve the live chances of the minorities in the San Francisco schools, the conversation about it was a very different one. Detroit it was down in the trenches about we've got to save the lives of these kids. Out there, it was we've got to figure out ways that we can do better. Not that the meaning was different, but the approach and the conviction and feelings were starkly different. And the interview was very different. The business membership in California was equivalent to what it was in Detroit, but it was a more hard headed one of we've got to exact out of these schools a progress that can only be achieved through hard headed business practice. And there was no lag time. That is, we want this progress here and now. And although we made a lot of progress, it was a very different climate within which to work. And not nearly the level of satisfaction. I won't go into a lot of detail about that, but …

Q. The Detroit committee was more satisfying to you in terms of accomplishments.

A. Yes, much more so. And it was partially the structure within which was dictated. Going into Detroit I could create the structure. Out there, it was created for me.

And it had much less flexibility. Not that I wanted more time to achieve things, but it was top down and driving things into a system, rather than introducing it into a system and helping make it go. While I was there in San Francisco, Roland Brown from Columbus, who had been President of Buckeye Steel, and then took over later creating of the library system out in Dublin, flew out to San Francisco (I knew him before), and said … let me get this in the right sequence … he came out because he wanted to know whether a system similar to Detroit and San Francisco is something that ought to be developed in this city to help on racial matters. And he said "When you get back, we'll talk to you some more about this." In the meantime, a lawsuit had been filed and Judge Duncan was underway and when I got back then, Judge Duncan came right away and asked me if I would work with him as special master commissioner in the Columbus desegregation case. And I liked Judge Duncan immediately and then Roland Brown came in through the side door, through his work with some citizens, and then the creation of a coalition of religious congregations. And all of these things happened within a compressed period of time, but involved me and the University. And I had to go or felt I had to go to the President to seek his counsel and advice about whether this would be a good thing to do. Now that was Harold Anderson, who was then President, and he welcomed that prospect and thought it was a good thing for me to do, even though I hadn't come back and I hadn't assumed full teaching load, nor was I, and I had been named Novice Fawcett Professor of Ed. Adm. in the meantime. This was something new and something important I thought important

for the community and for the University. And fortunately I think the community accepted that responsibility.

Q. Well it was June 28, 1977 that made a big difference in your life.

A. It was my birthday to boot. And started kind of a new era for me and for the University. I was pretty much alone in that. When I had talked with Judge Duncan, I talked about whether it would be feasible for me to bring grad students into this. And he had quirks working with them and it just didn't seem that there were resources available and all, it was wise to try to bring grad students into it, where they would have to be supported. So that didn't work out. And that was always kind of a disappointment to me. But I think it was my failure in not figuring out how to get it integrated into the work that we had to do in a fashion that wouldn't contaminate the legal clarity which had to surround all of this work. And there was a byproduct from this because I learned an enormous amount about the law, just the law itself, and how it works. And then I had been all, the sequence, the precision, which I'd like to go over, but I it just isn't possible I guess through memory. But in Detroit, part of our work up there was on desegregation and I met on occasion with the federal judge that was involved. And then coming back to Columbus, I was invited up to give testimony on some aspects of the decentralization of the Detroit Public Schools as it related to desegregation. So I had the consequence of being special master commissioner going to Detroit to give testimony in a different twist on the case, which extended my legal insight into this. And then being invited to come to Cleveland as an expert witness on that case up there. So all of a sudden I was into desegregation in

three different places with three different aspects of separate litigation that I had a chance to view from the outside. And that helped me I think understand things in Columbus a little bit better too.

Q. Let's examine some. What were your duties and responsibilities as special master in the Columbus case?

A. Well the title Special Master-Commissioner, once that is applied and given by the court to an individual, in this case it was a tremendous amount of power and authority with it. And as a non-lawyer I had the power and responsibility if I wanted to exercise it, to call hearings and to bring people before the court for informational purposes if I chose to do that. And I thought that was power of enormous consequence and needed to be exercised with diligence. And it also, if exercised, changed the political nature of the relationship between the school district and the court. So I chose not to use it. There were occasions when it might have been beneficial, but if exercised it involved people from the school district, put a different cast on the relationship immediately and would cause people to be much more cautious and much more unwilling to take risks and so that was not an option. But I did meet with school officials regularly, spent a lot of time with people that were working on different aspects of the implementation of the remedy plan, particularly in terms of transportation and in terms of determining which students would go where in the district, which buses they would take. I didn't get into naming that but listening to reports about how that was going to be done. How we were going to use achievement data. What kind of reports would be helpful to know what was happening in schools themselves.

Whether any overt evidence of discrimination was being sustained. And then they would write reports. They being the people from the school district under the authorship of the superintendent. That was Joe Davidson in the beginning and then there was a change and we had Jim Hyer later on. Over this period of time, it was almost seven or eight years I guess, we would meet every three months in chambers with the school board and representation from the State Department of Ed., legal representation, legal representation of the district, and the judge and myself. Prior to that meeting, the district would submit a written report to me and sometimes it would only arrive 48 hours before we had the chambers hearing. I was asked to read that report and make notes and talk with Judge Duncan privately. And then in the subsequent hearing which followed the next day, he would have the same little language. "We're glad you're here. Thank you for coming. Thank you Mr. Superintendent, Mr. President of the Board." The same address would be given to the people from the State Department of Education. And he would say "Thank you for presenting this written document. I have asked Dr. Cunningham to brief me on it. And I'd like to turn this meeting over to Dr. Cunningham now to comment about what you put on paper and any questions that he might have or any comments that seem warranted at this point. And later on, if I have questions, I will ask them too. I want to say before I turn this over to Dr. Cunningham, I would like to commend you for meeting our deadlines and I've heard some good things that I think are reassuring to me and the court and after this is over with, please feel free to ask any questions of me or Dr. Cunningham about this proceeding." That was the ritual. So I would go through my notes and

it would usually take an hour, maybe an hour and a half. At the close occasionally there would be a question. Sometimes from the state as well as from the local district. And we kept this on this open kind of professional level one of friendship and respect both ways. It went along very well. I can't recall any serious interruption of that kind of pattern of collegial respect during all of these months. We finally got it down from four times a year, to three times a year, to two times a year.

Q. And the total pendency of the case was about five years.

A. I think it may have been seven. It started in '78, '77 or '78. On that basis of having the hearings in chambers.

Q. As you reexamine the issues of that case now some quarter of a century later, what was the impact of the desegregation case on the school system and on the community?

A. In the early stages we worked out, as it was manifest in these written reports, reports on several different areas of concern to the court, one of them was on student achievement. Another was on membership in sports such as tennis and swimming where it was obvious there were only whites in both of those, participation in student councils, participation in the court, the queens and kings which became quite an issue at homecoming time. They were always white up until this. And in other areas, we were able to, and this was volunteered by the school system itself to their credit we have some respectable measures of attitude and we'd like to use them with our teachers and with the students themselves – attitudes towards minorities. And they were administered periodically. And we

saw some dramatic changes of more respect between and among students for one another. Less so at the teacher level. There were discriminatory attitudes in abundance at the start of this and took awhile to kind of change that. And it was never changed for some teachers before they retired. Others there was some movement. But there were good signs. We were monitoring the migration patterns of parents and their kids. And in the early, this was related to white flight in some respects, but not totally so. We were able to measure the number of kids who left by race and the level of their achievement in the district and then their replacements who came in by race and the achievement of the kids who came in. It turned out that every year the kids leaving would be about one grade level above the city wide average and that was true of blacks and whites. And those coming in would be one grade level below. And those migration figures were astounding. The 20% of the kids would leave every year and 20% of them would be replaced by new kids coming in. And in theory over five years the entire student body could change. And when you have the good kids leaving the poor kids coming, you're pushing a wet noodle up hill all the time on achievement. But despite that, we began to get, among the minority kids some attractive gains in math and science. Teachers were working hard inside the system in respect to that. Now in terms of the outcome, there were positive outcomes on achievement and more so in the early stages than later. Because the black kids were so far behind they had to catch up a larger distance. And when you were moving up the scale, it was harder and harder to make those improvements. And on attitudes that was a good constructive thing. And I think we didn't have a lot of big episodes of

fights after football games or athletic events. Things seemed to be going along reasonably well in the building. We had almost zero incidents on the buses. We had one where some fights broke out and the driver was smart and drove this bus right into an underground bus garage with all the kids on it. So the kids were there and they had to pay the price of what happened on the bus. So those I think were benefit. The downside of it was that there was a remarkable decrease enrollment, that they had to fight the fight of closing school buildings which were horrendous in terms of community antagonism and dissatisfaction. And that was a part of kind of a downward spiral. The enrollment decreased. Part of that was from flight but a lot of it was just natural decrease in the birth rate. The ratio of minority to majority began to move up towards 50-50, which means that there was white flight. And there was a question too of quality of teachers that were being employed, willingness to come in.

Q. Did the good teachers move out to other opportunities as well as the good students?

A. Some did, yes. Some did. And good principals too. Now that's an interesting question because I don't think we monitored that. I think we would if we did it again, but I don't' know that we did that. So that we would have an absolute tally on what the numbers might be.

Q. One of the things you learned very early in Chicago was that the problems were not in the community, were of the community and not of the school, and you couldn't fix them in the school. In many ways, the deseg case was to overcome problems of social adjustment within the community at large.

A. Yes.

Q. That fixed by bussing students to the schools?

A. I think pieces of it were fixed. I think kids got to know one another that they wouldn't have had that opportunity. There was respect and more so among kids than among the adults. So I think that's a benefit. And I think there is still evidence of that. I don't sense in walking in neighborhoods now that there are overt signs of disrespect. I know that under the face of things there's a lot of discrimination, a lot of dissatisfaction, probably a lot of hatred. But I don't have that tinder box feeling anymore, that something could happen tonight. But I don't sense that. There was a lot of fear back in those early days and whites going into black neighborhoods and so on. Intimidation and although it may still be here, I think the other thing in society itself, the job discrimination, inability of African Americans to get a fair deal in terms of trying to move up the income scale, getting better jobs, housing opportunities, was bad in the city and it remains bad. And whether it's worse for poor blacks and whites, I don't know, I don't know. I've driven through poor black neighborhoods in the last three or four months and poor whites. Sometimes I wonder if it's just as bad or worse for the whites than for the blacks. But the community itself, I don't know. It's out there more than it's in the schools.

Q. Future scholars in education who might be using this material as we're recording it today, might wonder what our attitudes were in this period about using the schoolhouse as a place to solve societal issues. As a distinguished educator with a long history with a long history of interest in racial affairs and civil rights, do you

think using the schoolhouse to solve this problem is a good way to do it? Would you do it today if you were asked to revisit these issues?

A. Well I was on leave that year out at Palo Alto, my next door neighbor was John Davis, an African American, professor of political science at City University of New York, who also went to Topeka, Kansas and worked with Thurgood Marshall on that decision. And he and I talked about that. And he said he had deep misgivings about pushing this into the schools. On the other hand, we had tried it through housing and we had tried it in other places and it hasn't worked. And although there is great risk in using the schools as the playing field where we try to work out these other issues, eventually almost all families in this country, with a certain percent that will always be in private schools and parochial schools. The public schools of the country touch the lives of almost everybody. And even though there is great risk, we thought we would move faster and with more long term effectiveness of we chose this desegregation of schools as the point of entry than other things.

Q. And so the risk was consciously thought about by the people who were doing it. But what about your view as an educator? Is a school a proper place? Is the school's job to educate or to be an instrumentality of the court? You must have faced these questions many times.

A. Yes. Well the answer is yes, many times. I guess I come to that spot where they did in Topeka, getting in classrooms all my life and being in all black and all white, and being in those mixed classrooms and especially in the early years, to

see those kids work with one another where there is no absolute consciousness of race.

Q. But Brown v. Board of Education was aimed specifically at problems in the school. It was mistreatment of blacks in the school as I recall.

A. That was the legal point of interest.

Q. Yes. But in the Columbus deseg case, the school was not the source of the desegregation. The school simply reflected the segregated nature of society.

A. But that was true of Topeka.

Q. You believe the conditions were the same?

A. Yes, they were. Indeed. If I had to, I could document it.

Q. Well I was more interested if in future educators could ask you today, do you think this worked in this era?

A. I think it worked and I would do it again if we were at the same place. Right now we're not at the same place at all because the demography in most of the cities is changing in such a remarkable way that it's not a black/white issue, and it's not a black/brown/white issue. It is an issue of multi-colored dimensions which are almost indescribable.

Q. But isn't it still a rich-poor issue?

A. It's a rich-poor issue and that goes back to Topeka in some respects, but certainly to Columbus and which we wanted to, I can't say we wanted, we were unable to and that's really pretty much conversations that were held involving some leading citizens, the judge, myself. The question being wouldn't it be more beneficial to segregate on the basis of social class and race. So we didn't get poor blacks and

poor whites in the same schools. They had experienced the same similar kind of socioeconomic conditions and discriminations which they described probably on the basis of money than on color skin. So we were bringing kids from neighborhood to neighborhood and the neighborhoods were pretty much the same in terms of socioeconomic characteristic. And if we could have had more poor kids with more rich kids, black and white, there may have been some more benefits in role modeling or poor kids seeing more about how kids of their own race with more income have more benefits and if they may striver harder to achieve some of that. I haven't tested that hypothesis.

Q. You've made clear that you feel that society as a whole is better off for having gone through this experience.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you believe you would say the same about the schools?

A. Well in some respects, see the attitudes that the population began to acquire early on and even among thoughtful people who were not discriminatory by nature, don't behave that way, was that the schools are getting worse and worse and worse. And began to attribute that to desegregation and efforts at achieving more equity in life, began to say "I'm not going to put anymore money in those schools. They're just going to hell in a hand basket." And it became a self fulfilling prophecy.

Q. This was the taxpayer revolt on approving additional funding for schools?

A. Pretty much. And it sustained itself over three decades.

Q. … resolving it this year in the Ohio Legislature, trying to decide just how to handle this, aren't we?

A. We are waiting on that. That's for sure. And the court is still divided and I'm sure there are lots of sentiments within all of the justices about this. But that's another tape.

Q. That's another tape. Let's go on to some other issues if we might. In a career that has been blessed with many great achievements, there are no doubt some disappointments. Do you remember any of significance?

A. Yea and could we take a break?

Q. You bet.

A. Disappointments. That's an important questions. I haven't dwelt on it in my years in this business. But there are some and I guess one category is people, personnel. Where I kind of felt that I failed. In one instance, it's one that I do think about every now and then. We had several people working on assessment or evaluation in a unit that was devoted to that after our Lake Hope experience. It was handled by Daniel Seffelbeam. Very competent scholar. Worked well within the University and worked well with the Columbus Public Schools. They set up an assessment capability in the Columbus Public Schools where the intellectual leadership really came from the College of Ed. and Dan Seffelbeam particularly. He quickly acquired and earned national visibility and reputation. And during a period of generosity from Washington, acquired lots of federal money, attracted outstanding grad students, and was just known so well. He wanted to set up within the University a center for the study of evaluation and he wanted it to have some

unique characteristics that other centers didn't have, around faculty appointments, around research. Freedom to do certain kinds of inquiry without too much obligation to involve other parts of the University in that work. I had always been an interdisciplinarian and wanted to see reflected in that, involving outside of just this unit and within the College of Ed. And he insisted on these kinds of freedoms. He had earned the respect of Central Administration, certainly Jack Corbally while he was here. And others, but he kept pushing Arliss Rhoden and myself to get that kind of freedom. And then had an invitation to go up to Western Michigan for an interview. Just made a decision sort of on the spot that he was leaving Ohio State to go up there.

Q. What was his position or academic rank at the time?

A. He was a full professor.

Q. He was a tenure track success at that point.

A. Yea, he was. And everybody liked him. And I liked him. I still like him. He experienced a terrible tragedy. He never lost his love for Ohio State and he and another Ohio State Ph.D. went over to East Lansing to a Michigan State football game and Ohio State was up there about five years ago. And I don't know who won the game, it's unimportant. But he was walking back to his automobile with his friend and was walking very close to a curb and somehow he stepped out in front of a bus and got pulled underneath. And they had to amputate his leg. And that has been such an incredible psychological impact on him ever since, that he's just not the same personality at all. Terrible tragedy. Well there were a couple of other appointments. When I came here from the University of Chicago, part of the

agreement was that I could bring a research project with me and the director of that person became an assistant professor. His name is Ray Nicetran. And he very quickly was able to attract him to Chicago as a post-doctoral student. And he was outstanding. I wrote his grant and we got money to study school boards in Boston and Chicago and Columbus and Los Angeles and another place or two. He did a great job leading that and went up from Assistant Professor to full Professor here in just a short period of time. And then was invited for an interview down at the University of Louisville to become Dean and he did. And he was a tremendous success down there. But I had hoped that he would stay here and maybe become Dean at Ohio State sometime.

Q. So your disappointment was at losing him?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you feel that you contributed to losing them?

A. Oh no. Not at all. I did my best and still lost. But it would have been great if they could have stayed. But for them they went on to do great things. It's a selfish kind of feeling I guess on my part. Other disappointments – we never did fulfill my intention of accomplishments around issues of diversity. We did at one time when we were ranked number one in the country in Ed. Admin., we had three very distinguished people, black members of the faculty. And we recruited other minority people here. And we had our set of different projects and programs. But we never did get everybody to assume that mission as a personal mission, something they were going to work on. It never acquired thoroughness and a culture within the college that I thought we would at some time achieve. And we

haven't achieved it yet. In fact, we have fewer African Americans and other people of minority status on the faculty now than we had before. And another disappointment was to recruit and sustain support for minority students. About the time I retired ten years ago, I did a survey, a state-wide survey, and numbers of people in higher ed. who were minority and also who were in the schools in minority positions, principals or central office or superintendent, and in that ten years we've lost ground rather than gain ground. And that's a disappointment of a different nature.

Q. But that's a pattern you are saying among many institutions.

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. That we've lost our focus or …

A. Well I don't know what it is. There was a period about 15 years ago, maybe longer, where Ohio State had turned out more Ph.D. students than any university in the country. That was true in math and science and physics and across the board, College of Ed. But that's not true anymore. It was amazing, the ____ Foundation asked me one time to go to visits to African American colleges, the historical black institutions. And I went to probably five or six and it was amazing. Every campus that I would encounter, particularly in the sciences, one or two Ph.D.'s from Ohio State. I don't know that Ohio State really recognizes the number of people that were graduating and were going into those institutions. I never heard of that much at the time.

Q. What was the Ph.D. output of your college where you were dean?

A. I don't know. I wish I could answer that. I'm sure that we've produced our share and many of them have gone into very distinguished careers. Interesting question.

Q. Let's go on and look at your work with the Mershon Center for Public Policy Issues. When did you begin that activity?

A. It began even, the critical point in my participation in Mershon began during the year I was out at California, when the Provost here asked me to make a special trip down to Irvine, University of California at Irvine, and to interview Richard Schnieder who was Dean of the School of Public Admin. at Irvine. I had known him when he was on the faculty at Northwestern and I was at the University of Chicago and we developed some associations at that time. The directorship at Mershon was open and Jim Robinson, Provost, wanted to find the most credible director we could find in the country. And so I went down to see him and renewed a friendship and we decided while I was there, not only to urge him to consider that which he did, he accepted it, but we wrote after I left and over the telephone, and he came up to Palo Alto and we wrote a proposal to bring non-educators into leadership positions in professional ed. I referenced that earlier in this discussion. We wrote that and the timing was right and we got an enormous amount of money. We set up centers at City University of New York and at University of Texas and Clairmont Graduate School and five major universities around the country. Plus a center at an Indian reservation in Arizona, State Department of Ed. in North Carolina, I'm repeating that. The intent was to locate in the broader society people of talent who would like to become superintendents or deputy superintendents or work at State Departments of Ed., or even become

principal. And we over a five year period recruited and worked with lots of people as a consequence of that. Writing this proposal brought he and I closer together. When he came here we became joint directors of it. And he gave me an appointment to the Mershon Center sort of on arrival. And I was on the executive committee of Mershon for a period of time and our Ohio Commission on Innerprofessional Education was given housing within the Mershon Center and given support rent-free over many, many years. That tie has been very good for me because of my interdisciplinary leanings and history. Working with other members of the Mershon faculty which is interdisciplinary was helpful along the way and certainly was helpful to our Ohio Commission on Innerprofessional Ed. The Mershon Center, under Dick Schneider's leadership, was elevated to a position of national prominence that it had not achieved prior to his arrival. And it was during his tenure that Harold Azweld brought to the faculty several times. Mershon was a party to the discussion between Battelle and the University that led to the establishment of the Academy for Contemporary Problems and that activity in itself achieved prominence beyond the borders of the campus, in the city, etc.

Q. We'll continue with the Mershon.

A. Well my association lasted throughout my academic career and was sustained when Charles Herman was chosen to follow Dick Schneider when he retired and moved out to Arizona. Charles Herman was a colleague and a close friend, social friend, and has been and continues to be even though he's out at Texas A&M. I found the association with scholars from disciplines outside of education always

to enrich the academic and intellectual life. That didn't diminish my respect for scholars within the field of education, but just added another dimension and in the kind of bent that I always had was made writing and research that I did much more broad and reflecting the interests of different intellectual communities, rather than just narrowly bounded by the thinking of people's education.

Q. Lots different ways of looking at life and problems.

A. That is indeed the case.

Q. And you have relished that experience because of its intellectual challenge.

A. Yes, that's true and even as we sit here, right now I'm engaged in a project at the University of Akron, in establishing a center for the sustained study of governance of education. And I'm doing a paper right now on e-governance, electronic governance, the P6E. And that's taken me into domains that I would have never thought about as being germane or relevant or instructive. And it's one of those intellectual exercises where the front end and the back end don't match. You're intent at the front end was to produce a kind of a product almost predictable in nature and that you could write the back in before the front end. Not so on this. It's taken me into arenas that I had never thought about, science fiction and places where great minds have been writing about things for a long time, unbeknownst to me. And tributaries and allies through the internet that are engrossing. There are always things that occur external to what you intend can now have great meaning. On C-span last night there was a two hour portion of the National Governance Association meeting in D.C. and it's all on e-governance with staff people from the Governor's offices plus governors, talking about

electronic business, electronic meanings for the improvement of state government. A lot of consultants were on the program, some of whom I had run into the day before on e-mail but had a chance to see. Interdisciplinary, it is intergovernmental. It's a mix of philosophy. It's craziness managed by a bit of sanity from here to there. And I don't know where in the hell it's going. There's a relevancy here to the work that I had been doing with the Ohio Commission on Interprofessional Education and Practice. That is, a trust that is now 30 years plus in tenure. It got started from very humble beginnings as most things. And I have been involved with it now in various ways. It has had a board from its beginning and I was on that from the beginning. At the time of my retirement in '89 I guess it was, or '90, we were experiencing a change of director of great stature, passed away from cancer. And so I was president of the board then. I moved from president of the board over to directing the program. And I did on a pro bono basis to kind of fill the gap. This is an attempt to bring around a common table over a period of time representatives of eight different professional communities within the University and also to bring the counterpart life in the practices of the different professions in the University simultaneously. A long and detailed history here but the benefits have been multiple. We created classes and the institutes and conferences sponsored by the University in a professional commission on subjects of significance to society; on things that were just coming into public recognition. Our classes would be large. We would have 80 or 90 students and about equal numbers would come from persons who were going to be teachers, persons who were going to be lawyers, person who were going to be

physicians, nurses, allied health professions, psychologists, theology, representatives of clergy, eighty different professions. And our classes were taught by teams who had prepared their classes a quarter in advance, do the teaching, doing very thorough evaluations at the end. They became interdisciplinary friends historically. Some of them that started teaching classes over 30 years ago are still teaching in those same classes with yellow notes on the _____. But nevertheless the concept is very vibrant. The other enriching part of it is to bring the leaders from the professional associations in the state into continued association and conversation along with academics. So through various different mixtures we would have the wisdom of practice – what you learn every day facing people with sort throats around the table who study sore throats. It's enriching in the extreme and it's continuing at Ohio State. It became the premier one in the world and slowly came to a point where there were 200 other universities that had programs of this sort over a 10 or 15 year period. We are still working now to perfect a certain aspect of it which is something we labeled interprofessional prospective policy analysis. It's clumsy, awkward language. But it purpose was and remains to look at issues facing the human community that are very complex which warrant examination and not narrow _____ addressing these problems that are understood better if we have people from different backgrounds looking at them together. So it could be issues of health, issues of ethics, issues of almost any origin, but having social significance. And we put together historically these panels and there would be eight academics and eight practitioners, two from each of the fields. And they would work for eighteen

months or so on a problem as adults, adults learning together, and put together papers that we could then and in one case better than the rest I suppose, to relevant committees of the Ohio General Assembly as intelligent documents for legislators as they approached the task and legislation related to issues in the public interest. Right now, we're trying to crank up one on the ethical meanings embedded in the evolving highest forms of technology. And reading the writings of those who are certainly downstream from the origins of artificial intelligence and writings about that. But leading up to the point where machines will eventually phase out human beings. And the writings are very disturbing. They are written by people of some accomplishment in an academic sense or a practitioner sense. And so we're trying to put together one now from several disciplines within the University and from areas of practice that seem to be germane, to think through the ethical consequences of further development. We probably should have started with cloning since that's alive and well in Washington today. But right now we're still working on the other one. And the research I've been doing for my purpose of it, the University of Akron, parallels this. And so I'm finding that when I'm tracing down through the Internet has significance for my narrowly defined thing on e-government. And how it manifested itself on a broader theme for society itself.

Q. This is very intellectually stimulating activity that you're engaged in, but the breadth of your interest is more than just an intellectual enterprise. So let's talk some about your work with the Ohio Human Services Commission.

A. Well that goes back a long time. That's in my early tenure at Ohio State and in the Deanship. This was an innovation that really came out of the mind of the Lazarus family and picked up momentum and so on. It's since been phased out and I could talk about the reasons for its departure I suppose. It phased itself out I think because of fatigue on the part of the leadership, the fact that breaking down boundaries between and among people in the human services was not as easy as had been anticipated. And it's conceptually related to the interprofessional commission, but at a very different level. And so those two are at different points in my history here. For a while there was a parallel. But I moved from the Commission downtown to work pretty much within the University itself.

Q. So you've played many roles in your career in intellectual enterprise and social enterprise and law enterprise. You've covered a wide range of activities. What have been the most important roles as you look back that you feel are significant and you'd like to here addressed to you perhaps long after we're gone?

A. Well that's a subject that I don't dwell on I guess.

Q. Well with the work with Judge Duncan would probably rate there.

A. Yes. There are those episodes I suppose, but I think all of those have created their share of satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment and having exerted some leadership in terms of their successes. I guess every academic will come around some time or later and say that one's success is measured in terms of the success of all the people that you've worked with. And in this case, the students. And even though I'm ten years away from sustained work in a classroom and certainly at Ohio State, it's almost every time one goes to another part of the country and

meets an assembly of academics, you run into your own students or people who know your own students and there are those endless conversations about how people are succeeding here and there. The greatest accomplishment I imagine is the fact that the tour of duty and the Deanship and great fortune that I am personally assuming that responsibility. An enormous amount of luck and there's that old adage that timing is everything. And there are lots of occasions and I happened to be at the right place at the right time to talk with the right people. A willingness to tolerate some uncertainties, sometimes some prolonged uncertainties. Luck goes along with that. When I came here, the President and Jack Corbally said then "If you want and you say you're coming you can have the resignations of every department chair and every man on the Dean's staff the next day." And although I didn't know those people, all of them, acquaintances of some, I decided that is not the smart way to go. Because even though those persons would have followed that request, he told them it would have had a residue, unhappiness and bitterness and they were all going to be here. They're not going to leave I thought it much better to be on the scene, be here, get to know people. And although there are some person who would say "You've got to fire so and so in the central office," it turned out that some of those persons that had all of these negative feelings about them, turned out to be very strong and it would have been a big mistake to have done that. And so my view is that we'll just wait and we'll see. And follow along and they will retire in time. And I think by really finding roles and kind of getting people to feel that there is a spirit here

that we all have a part of, that we'll work our say through this. I never had to fire anybody.

Q. Well your colleagues feel in many ways you saved the College of Education. Perhaps your decision not to fire a lot of people played a role in that.

A. We'll you're generous in that and I don't know. I hope that may have helped. But I know some people had expectations that were fairly low, were able to really do fantastic things. Forever grateful for that.

Q. Dean Cunningham, on behalf of the administration and active faculty at the Ohio State University, congratulate you for your career at this University. And thank you for your participation in our oral history program.

A. Thanks Bob. It's been a pleasure from start to finish. I hope that our association will continue.

Q. I think it will.