

University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
Voices of Illinois Oral History Project
Interviewee: Winton Solberg, Professor Emeritus in the Department of History
Interviewer: Alicia Hopkins, Student Life and Culture Archives
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Alicia Hopkins: Today is Tuesday, May 15th, 2018 and I'm Alicia Hopkins from the University of Illinois Archives Research Center. I'm here today with Winton Solberg in his office at the Main Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to talk with him about the University's history as well as his time with the University. First of all, thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. We can go ahead and get started with the first question.

AH: Reflecting on the scholarship that you've produced, how has your own study and practice of history changed?

Winton Solberg: How does my own what?

AH: Your own, like, studying and practicing of history changed?

WS: I'm not sure of the question, I'm not, you mean, say it again because I don't...

AH: Yeah, so when you're looking back on how, on all of the work you've produced since you started as a historian, how has the way that you've studied history changed whether that's just through like the technology that you use or the kind of questions that you ask.

WS: That's a difficult question, I don't think my basic approach or technique in studying history has changed over the years. You're faced with, [unintelligible], any historian is faced, you identify a problem, you try and find the relevant documents related to the problem, you set it up [unintelligible] and put the documents you're working with in a broader, intellectual and cultural context, and go ahead. I think the method, the methodology is fairly basic, and I don't think I've changed much over the years. I might have become better at doing it than I was when I started, but the approach, the methodology [unintelligible] would not have changed much, I think.

AH: Mm hm. And, uh, before coming to UIUC, you taught at a variety of institutions...

WS: Right

AH: ... including West Point and multiple foreign schools, what were those experiences like and how did they inform you career at UIUC?

WS: Well, I taught in quite different places; first of all, after leaving graduate school, I taught at West Point, at the military academy for three years, during the Korean War, and it was an

¹ **Transcriber's Note:** Some "filler" words – "Um," "Mm hm," and others – were not included in this transcription. I endeavored to write a transcription as faithful as possible to the conversation between interviewer and interviewee. That said, there may be some errors, so anyone considering citing any part of this interview is encouraged to listen to the relevant part of the conversation and make their own determination of what was said.

interesting experience, but I concluded when I was there, that the way in which West Point taught history to cadets was not a very effective approach. The classes were small in size, and the West Point had, may have 18 students in a class which was good, and every so often at intervals the system called for reclassifying the students. The best students were put together in certain classes and the weaker students were segregated also. The best students at West Point were called engineers, uh the uh poorer students were called goats. That may be a good system but the basic problem, I think, was that West Point relied upon textbooks, and you had frequent exams, shorter exams or longer exams, but textbook instruction has its limitations. And my experience was that cadets, the best cadets were very good at learning little snippets, and you had either what was called a partial written exam or a fuller written exam periodically and then students forgot the information. It was never, I thought, a method of saying OK now you've studied this material for a long period of time, write and you have questions, they have, write essays to answer them. Uh that was a very very serious weakness I thought, and I made my views known but it was hard to change the system. It may have changed by now, of course, but I was there a long time ago.

AH: Yeah, yeah. What classes were you teaching?

WS: What?

AH: What classes did you teach at West Point, like what kinds of history?

WS: I taught, I didn't teach American history, I taught American government and European history.

AH: Ok.

WS: West Point curriculum was based on the idea that, well, students had had American history in high school, they didn't need it. Well, I also taught Far Eastern history. The professor, the colonel who was in charge of the social sciences program saw, he thought that America's gonna be involved much more in the Far East than they were now, and therefore what we should study was Far Eastern history. So I taught courses, essentially, Chinese history.

AH: And what, so you also taught in Italy and in the USSR and Japan, what were any of those experiences like?

WS: Well, let's see. Italy, in Italy I taught at the Johns Hopkins Center for Advanced Research in Bologna. My students were a collection of people from various European countries, European universities. That was on the whole a very good experience. Some of the students were very smart, they were willing to learn, [unintelligible] really have much detailed comment beyond that. It was on the whole a positive experience. Now in Japan, I lectured, I had small classes and I, my students I taught in Japan presumably knew some English, but their knowledge of English probably was not sufficient so that I could lecture straight through, let's say, a given class period without stopping. So there I would lecture for about 5-8 minutes and then I would stop and my host professor would give an overview of what I had said. I think the students would have understood a fair amount of it, but they certainly would have been helped by this [unintelligible] so forth.

They were very interested in learning, the Japanese school system, I visited some of the primary schools, and I also visited schools in Moscow when I taught in Moscow, and I think that Russia, then the Soviet Union, was much more effective than Japan in teaching a foreign language. In Japan there were too many kids in one class, they did things by rote, I think. You would meet Japanese students on the streets, and they were eager to say hello – Hello! – they can't pronounce their L's very well. They were pleasant, but I thought the system was really quite inefficient. The Japanese wouldn't want to hear that, of course, but I have no reason to do other than say what I think my reaction was.

AH: What about your experience, was it, were you at Moscow State University, is that correct?

WS: Moscow State University, right.

AH: Was there anything there that was particularly notable?

WS: Well, there I lectured in English, and I think my students could follow me quite well, and when it came to the end of the term, I was to examine the students. They had to write a paper for me, a research paper, and then I was going to have an exam. The Russian system of examinations was the professor met two students at a time. One was the student being examined and the other one was the student who was next to be examined. My host professor asked, "Do you mind if I sit in on your exams?" Well I couldn't say anything other than, "Sure, I'd be glad to have you."

The students came in, and they were very eager to talk about the paper they had written for me, they were not too eager to talk about the content of the course. And my priorities were just the reverse, I wanted to talk about, look I've been talking about this, what did you learn from it? So there was a certain disparity between our different approaches. And at the end of the oral exam, you told the student what grade you would give them. As I recall the grades ran up to about maybe the early 20s, and I'm not sure I remember very well. But you had to have 17 to pass and below that, as I recall, I don't, didn't feel it was my job to flunk any of them. But it was a very curious experience. I remember one of the students, when I went on trips my hosts provided a guide to take me, say to the opera, to a museum, or to the circus, or something like that. But they always went in two, that way, you could not have secret conversations with one because there would be another person [unintelligible].

After I had been there, a year or two later, I got a letter from one of my students, a woman, she married a man, a Soviet citizen and he had been sent to Geneva by the Russian government, Soviet government and from there she and her husband left the Soviet Union and went to Israel. I didn't know she was Jewish, she was a VERY good student, she wrote me a marvelous letter saying that she didn't know that she could or should write me, but she just wanted to say how enlightening it was to have a foreign lecturer because she had never had an exposure like that before. I have the letter someplace [unintelligible] but it was a very very very heartwarming letter saying how valuable the experience was. And then I wrote a piece called "Teaching the Soviets American History," it was published in a journal, I forget the name of the journal. A one-page article that, and I think somehow that information got back to Russia, and they were not totally happy that I said all that I should say.

AH: Yeah. And, let's see, do you have any professors, coworkers, friends or anyone else who you would consider to be a mentor who influenced your work as a historian?

WS: What is that, do I have any...

AH: Do you, have you had any professors or coworkers, friends, acquaintances who have been influential in your work as a historian? Or that you would just consider to be a mentor?

WS: No, uh, well, as an undergraduate, I had a teacher who was a Harvard PhD, who was a stimulating lecturer. He made very dramatic statements, which I would never have done the way he did. For example, during the election, I was in college from the late 30s, [unintelligible] Wendell Willkie was running for President, and I can remember this professor walking up and down in front of the class, small number of students, something like [WS exclaiming] "30,000 people might flock to Sioux City to hear Wendell Willkie, but Franklin D. Roosevelt is still the champion of the people!" Very exciting, but this was a course in Greek and Roman history that I had. That's, at any rate, he was a Harvard graduate, and I had thought I might go to law school, and I finally decided I would go to graduate school, and he wrote a letter for me, and I'm sure that hearing my, a young man from South Dakota, he says "Take him!" he said to Harvard, and Harvard took me. It would not be a chance circumstance, but it's a career altering circumstance too. If I had not had that professor, I probably would never have been admitted to Harvard.

But when I went to Harvard, I was not as well-prepared as many students who had grown up in the East, had gone to very, prep schools, very good colleges. They were much better prepared than I was. Uh, so I had to work, and I'm still working. [Both laugh]

AH: Can you talk a little bit about your decision to pursue a graduate degree instead of going to law school?

WS: Well, I think by my age and the things that were going on in the world, I was caught up in World War II. I'd had an ROTC program at South Dakota, and, uh, when I graduated, mid-year I had to go in summer school so I could graduate a semester early. I graduated on a Saturday, and was inducted into the Army on Monday. The Army had had a bad experience years before I graduated with graduates of universities' ROTC programs. Up to the time I graduated if you were an ROTC student you were commissioned when you graduated.

And not enough, the Army's experience was that these had a lot of poor officers. In my class, we were sent down to Fort Benning Infantry School, and in my class there might have been 20-30, I forget how many students. We went down there and had a program of 3 months. I went down the 1st of February and graduated on May 27th, and of my graduating class from South Dakota about half of them were not commissioned. This new program, in other words, having tested them at Fort Benning the Army decided they would never make good officers so they were inducted as corporals, I think. I think by this time I had decided, well I'm not sure. I was inducted into the Army, and landed on Omaha Beach but not on D-Day, I fought from early October of 44 to the end of the war, at the end of the war, the Army had set up a school in Biarritz, it was called Biarritz American University. I went to that, and studied, I took two different courses there, and one of the visiting faculty members was from Dartmouth, and I can

remember talking with him. And I wasn't certain at that time that I would go to graduate school rather than law school and he said to me, "Well, where did you go to college?" And I said, "The University of South Dakota," and he said, "Oh, that doesn't count." Can you believe it?

AH: Oh my gosh! Oh my. I can't, yeah that's quite a statement.

WS: As you can tell, I certainly remember it. It was a very crude thing to say.

AH: Yeah.

WS: And yet, there was a certain truth to it. That is, South Dakota State University way out from the West Coast, the East Coast, is not Harvard or Yale or Princeton or Dartmouth and it's not a prestige school. So, then in a sense it's true. That doesn't count. And I had to make my way, despite that handicap. And I, looking back, I'm, I am very critical of much of the educational system. The high school I went to, from that standpoint, their teaching, they're dealing with a lot of young people, men and women, who had, don't have big aspirations to go on, maybe not, not all of them will go even to college. And if they do, they'll go to a teacher's college, they don't think very [unintelligible]. And everything is geared to, I think, a low level. And then this preoccupation with sports, college sports, well [unintelligible] football, my older brother, a year and half older, one year ahead of me in school, he was a very good football player, and he made a name for himself in the last game of the season when he was a senior, he caught a pass that won the, a touchdown, and my team was state champion. I think it ruined him. He wanted to be a football player, and he went to the University of South Dakota, I think he probably got a scholarship, he was a terrible student, how he got through I don't know. But, no, he's a very nice guy but it's a false set of standards. And, so I'm extremely critical of it. But in there, there were the, uh, this book *Creating the Big Ten* [Note: *Creating the Big Ten: Courage, Corruption, and Commercialization*, by Professor Winton Solberg, was published by the University of Illinois Press in 2018, just before this interview took place.] I'm a historian, I'm not out as a propagandist to say how good or bad things are, but to deal with the fact, and the fact is that what *Creating the Big Ten* shows is that preoccupation with athletics is adverse to, uh, academic standards.

So in a sense I'm a missionary, does anybody care? Well, a few people care, but not, you know, for example locally, Loren Tate, who is a big sports columnist at the *News-Gazette*, he would probably hate my book. But let him find evidence that counters it.

AH: Well, that is, that is true.

WS: Yeah.

AH: And so, seeing all of these things happen, sort of turned around into your decision to pursue history and question these institutions?

WS: Yes, I think my experience in the, in combat, in the Army during the war was, I really wanted to understand why societies act as they do, why do they go to war. I want to understand rather than say, deal with wills and estates and, uh, grievances and all the things that a lawyer does. I might have made, who knows, a good lawyer can make much more money than a

historian. But, no, I was willing to do what I thought was the best for me, rather than trying to maximize my returns, so I was a good boy in that sense.

AH: Uhm, so you talked about, with *Creating the Big Ten*, and your brother's history with that, do you have a somewhat personal connection to a lot of the topics that you've studied?

WS: Well I certainly have a personal connection to football in the sense that here I grew up an ordinary kid in an ordinary Midwestern town, and we had a football team and you go to the games. When I was at the University of South Dakota, I went to the football games. When I was a graduate student at Harvard, I never went to a football game. Harvard had a team, they had a big stadium, but an awful lot of students didn't take it too seriously. Uh, so that was kind of my approach, I was aware of football, and I suppose, looking back, I had to free myself from what I think is a mistaken notion that, oh, the team is really important and the guys who catch passes and win games are heroes. Nonsense! And, you see, close to me too. Here was in my family so I gradually emancipated myself from that set of values.

AH: And so, when, after you graduated from Harvard and you were teaching, how did you make your way to the University of Illinois?

WS: Well I taught, I was called back into the Army during the Korean War, I taught at West Point for three years. When I left West Point, 54 I think it was, I had a wife and one child and I had no job. I remember going, being discharged from the Army, and I got a call from the head of the History Department at Yale, asking if I would come over for an interview. I did and I was hired. I'm sure if I didn't have a Harvard connection, if I had a PhD from South Dakota, he would never have called me.

AH: Right.

WS: So I went over and I spent four years, I enjoyed Yale very much, I was there for four years. And then I got an offer of a named chair, a professorship, at Macalester College and I went there. It was not well-run, it had many flaws I think, and most of the faculty there didn't have much mobility, so they let the president of the college do what he wanted to do. He was not a nice guy. That puts it mildly. And therefore without thinking about it, I was faced with a decision. Do I sit back and let him do things that, for example give honorary degrees that are disgrace, rather than a source of pride; like most of the faculty they didn't have much mobility, and they were not going to challenge him. But I was young and bold and maybe I was foolish, but he did things, I questioned it. And therefore I was a marked man, and I decided, you know, that after a while that this is no place for me to say.

AH: Mm hm.

WS: And then I got a call to come here, and so I came.

AH: Yeah.

WS: That was in, what year, 62 or 3, yeah and I've been here since.

AH: Mm hm.

WS: Then I, but I, while here I taught in Italy, on a sabbatical, I taught in Russia, I taught in Japan, and then I did some going around not for long periods of time but rather short periods, a bunch of different countries. So I had a good, broad exposure to the educational world in different countries, I think.

AH: And this backtracks a little bit, but, when you were in high school, and getting ready to go to undergrad, what made you pursue history?

WS: I can remember being in college, I was thinking early on in high school I was thinking of being a lawyer. And I think I can remember a movie in which the hero was a lawyer, and oh boy that's great. When I went to college I didn't, the University of South Dakota, I wasn't sure at all what I would study. But I can remember on one occasion writing a term paper for something, and walking across the campus, and then I thought this is really enjoyable, this is fun. And I think probably, that's the time I thought of the possibility of being an academic rather than a lawyer. But I wasn't decided, I was toying with both possibilities, law or history.

AH: Yeah. And, then going back again to your time with U of I, what was the most enjoyable part of your time as a faculty member here?

WS: Oh, I would say the most enjoyable was working with students. Most of the students I had, [unintelligible]. I took students, I took my responsibilities to the students very seriously. I know there were some faculty members who don't, who play the game and say, "Look, students are not going to help determine whether you get tenure or a promotion or that type of thing. Ignore them, don't do anything, don't bother with students at all." And that's, I think a totally unacceptable response. I took students seriously, and I enjoyed working with them. And in most cases, I, well, on the whole I liked the students I deal with. I can remember to this day one student, an undergraduate, came to me and he wanted special consideration, uh, about being gone or not coming to class, something like that. And uh, when I wouldn't give it to him, he said, oh, why are you so difficult or something like that, he said to me. Well, I don't mind being difficult with a guy like that. But, that was, experiences were very rare.

On the whole, I took teaching seriously. And I still keep in touch with a few of my students, going all the way back to a student I had at Yale, when I taught at Yale, that was a long time ago. And students at West Point too, a man, one of my students became a Major General, I think, I don't, I'm not in touch with him now but I was for some time.

AH: And, what classes did you teach while you were here?

WS: Well, I taught the survey course once or twice, but normally I didn't. I taught a course in American intellectual and cultural history, and then I gave seminars, that, some, most of my work was at the 300 level.

AH: Mm hm.

WS: Intellectual and cultural history.

AH: Alright, and then when you were hired by the University, you were to write a book on University history for the centennial?

WS: I agreed to do that when I came here, yeah.

AH: Yeah.

WS: I think, when I agreed to do that, I think the President of the University had the idea that, well we'll get a one volume history that could be used for ceremonial purposes. You have a visitor come, and you want to give him something, say you give him this history about the University.

And I thought maybe, well there was no clear understanding, but I think probably the President at the time thought that that would be what I should be doing. When I started doing my work I realized that I could not honestly write a one volume history that would be valuable in any way. But there was a great opportunity to write seriously about the University. Illinois was the University out of all the midwestern universities that had never been seriously written about. There was no history of it.

So here's a great opportunity and I got started and of course I'm still at it. That was a long time...

AH: Yeah, that's quite an undertaking.

WS: But uh... Yeah, it was a big undertaking. And I don't think I knew how demanding or challenging it would be when I took it on. But the University of Illinois is a very important institution, and it has its ups and downs, I'm writing now, I have a manuscript done that uses the administration of a man named James, President James, who was president from 1904 to 1920. So I have invested a lot of time and energy on that. And that's at the press now.

AH: Mm Hm.

WS: And then I've got a, I have another manuscript about, uh, an expedition to the Arctic in which Illinois had three people, and I'm waiting to hear from the University of Alaska Press about that.

AH: Ok.

WS: And then I'm going to stop. Because it's harder, you know, I don't have the staying power now that I had when I was younger.

AH: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I think most people don't even publish one book, so I would say you're well ahead of the game.

WS: Yeah.

AH: And, I just forgot what I was going to ask.

WS: Pardon?

AH: That's terrible, I just forgot what I was going to ask, that's terrible, I should have written it down. Where were we at? So yeah I guess we'll just jump in with the things then that you've sort of written about and covered in that amount of time. So one of your books talks a lot about President Draper and Thomas Arkle Clark who was appointed by Draper in 1901 as the Dean of Undergraduate Students. Prior to that appointment, Clark had served as an assistant professor of rhetoric and later acting Dean of the College of Literature. Fred Turner described...

WS: No, I don't think Turner was [unintelligible]

AH: Oh, no no I'm sorry. So, no, that in the next sentence, much later when talking about Clark, Fred Turner described him as a man that people either really liked or did not like at all.

WS: Wait now...

AH: Yeah

WS: Clark, oh, Clark.

AH: Mm hm, yeah. Fred Turner said that describing Thomas Arkle Clark.

WS: Fred Turner... ok. All right.

AH: Why do you think that President Draper favored Clark?

WS: There's some evidence to indicate that Draper had a son who was not at all a good student, and maybe not a very responsible young man, and that Clark took him in hand and kind of got him straightened out. And I think that probably helped, contributed to Draper's favorable attitude toward Clark. And that was, it was very bad in a sense that Draper favored Clark in salary increases. And most of the rest of the other faculty was very annoyed at the, Draper's action in giving special attention to Clark.

They ganged up and told James about it when James came, "This has got to stop."

On the whole, Draper was not a good choice for the president. And I think some of the trustees felt that, "Oh, here's this guy who is very decisive, he's been superintendent of schools in Cleveland, and he'll tolerate no nonsense." He held the University back. At the time say University of California and Johns Hopkins were emerging as important universities at a University level. And Draper's running this place as if it's a glorified high school.

So I'm not very favorably disposed to Draper. I have a volume about, on him. But the end of, the deans in the college under Draper were all just waiting for him to go.

AH: Yeah.

WS: And they welcomed James. I think of all the Presidents the University of Illinois has had, James is the best of all. And a number of the other presidents have not been very good.

AH: Mm hm. Mm hm. In the same vein with Thomas Arkle Clark, he was succeeded as Dean of Men by Fred Turner. Clark and Turner shared an interest in fraternities, particularly their shared Phi Eta Sigma, Eta Sigma? As a doctoral student, Turner wrote about the history of Illinois Industrial University until 1885...

WS: Wait a minute, as a, Fred Turner succeeded Clark as Dean. When I got here Fred Turner was still here. He was not, put it negatively, he was a good example of the old regime. Keep students under control, don't treat them as serious adults and so forth. Yeah, he followed in the pattern of Thomas Arkle Clark. I knew him, he was still active when I got here. I remember going to some function shortly after I got here, some dinner or luncheon or something like that, and Fred Turner made an obvious effort not to sit near me. I think he, "Here's this man coming in, he's not a good old Illinois boy who will..." I'll broaden my point. After James left in 1920, I think the University went downhill, and to a large extent identified the President, the Deans, the older, established people here took a narrow view and of football, they didn't like outside criticism. "We're good old boys and we're going to do it our way," having a very narrow point of view.

I'd love to be able to write about that, but I won't have, I won't be able to do that. But there's enough evidence to indicate that Kinley, who followed James as President, is very narrow himself. In many ways he was very good, but he's a man of the 1890s, not the 1930s when he took over.

And Fred Turner is just hopeless really. [Laughs.]

AH: [Laughs.] Do you know anything about his role in the Archives getting those papers?

WS: Getting what?

AH: The Thomas Arkle Clark Papers.

WS: Well I don't think he had any responsibility for getting them.

AH: Ok.

WS: So far as I know.

AH: Yeah. Well, I didn't know with his work if there was any sort of overlap. Because I think that he had previously been using the papers to do his own work.

WS: I don't remember that off hand.

AH: Yeah. And, let's see, and the next question. When U of I originally opened as the Illinois Industrial University, there was quite a bit of contention about the functioning of the school, whether it should reflect traditional college education styles or focus on technical education. One part of this was the requirement that students attend chapel despite being a public school. How did students react to this and what factors lead to chapel requirements ending?

WS: Well, you got several questions there. As for chapel, it was just understood at the time that, Universities have to teach values and values ultimately are shaped by Christianity and therefore nobody ever questioned that there would be chapel for a long time. Except there was one man, what was it, Foster, no, Foster North I think. He refused to go to chapel. He was a, dismissed from the University [by unintelligible]. I read about that, but, it was not till the 1890s, chapel had been established from the beginning. By the 1890s, it [unintelligible], everybody kind of felt that it's a, it's a bore. They go but, you know, the President might speak about something, it was not, it was an assembly not very chapel religiously-oriented and people felt that it has to go, and it kind of died of its own weight, but after almost 25 years. And, uh, as any, at that time, nobody was really, except Foster North was raising objections on the Constitutional basis. But now, in the 1890s one of the Trustees had said when somebody's trying to do compulsory chapel he must remember that we're not a Christian organization. We have to be open to Protestants, Catholics, Jews, everybody.

AH: Mm hm. Mm hm. And can you talk a little bit about the debate between whether or not Illinois Industrial University should follow in sort of, we'll say the more, like prestigious perhaps Eastern schools and the style of education that they were using versus the technical education that a lot of people were pushing for?

WS: Well, I think we got a choice between a traditional liberal arts-oriented campus and, uh, professionally-oriented thing. And I think the University's trying to find the middle way in which you have the best of both of those. And that, that is the guiding principle from the very early days in the history of the university. Probably in the 1880s, certainly in the 1890s.

So we can have them both.

AH: Do you think that the University has found that balance, or do you think that that's still an ongoing debate?

WS: Excuse me?

AH: Do you think that the University has been able to find that balance, or do you think that that's still an ongoing debate about where the focus of...

WS: No, I don't think there's an ongoing debate. It to a large extent has found that balance. I think many people in the traditional liberal arts fields, philosophy, history, sociology, and so forth, would not be totally happy with most of the resources going to engineering or to business programs. But they know that it exists and there's no point in fighting it, so [unintelligible].

AH: Right, right. And then a little later, just before you actually came, with the firing of President George Stoddard, and the involvement of like Trustee Park Livingston, and I believe Red Grange was also involved in that in some way? I don't think in, I don't think in any of the books that you've written that's been covered, but did you, I feel like I read an article or something that you had written?

WS: I wrote an article on that, yeah. Well, Park Livingston was a, was a trustee who [was] very, very eager to do things his way. And Stoddard came here in 45 or 6 at the end of World War II and Stoddard believed that the University was a sleeping giant, and it was. And he also believed

that it was his mission to awaken the sleeping giant. And he should have. But his trouble was he moved too fast. If you awaken a sleeping giant, you better be very careful because the giant is likely to lash out.

If Stoddard had followed the same plan and realized that, look, "I can't really achieve my results overnight, I've gotta take some time," he might have done very, very good work. But he was impatient, he moved too quickly, and therefore the old guard ganged up on him and said, "Out."

AH: Yeah, yeah. Which seems to be a theme in some, in some of the University's history that the, the old guard sort of shows up and makes changes.

WS: [unintelligible] definitely. A sleeping giant.

AH: And then, so this goes back a, to a little bit when Fred Turner was still active at the University. Maynard Brichford came to the University in 1963 to start the University Archives. What was your role in locating and developing the collections of departmental papers?

WS: Well, I wanted to use them so Maynard and I worked together. I needed documents and he could help me find out where they were.

AH: Mm hm.

WS: Yeah, it was much overdue, the archives had not been organized earlier. It was David Henry, the president, who decided to do that. And Maynard and I arrived at about the same time.

AH: Mm hm. What kind of papers were you looking for to help construct your history of the University?

WS: Well, any papers that gave you, talked about what was going on at various levels. Any papers that, whether the registration papers, memoirs, articles and so forth. Any source that was valuable in understanding what had gone on here at the University.

AH: Mm hm, mm hm. So Brichford came in 1963, about two years after you came, were you doing...

WS: Who was that?

AH: Maynard Brichford came in 63. So about two years...

WS: Well, then, no, Maynard and I came really at the same time.

AH: At the same time.

WS: Yeah. I came here, 63, I was gone, I went off to Harvard for one year, and when I got, I can't remember whether, I think Maynard came when I came back in 64.

AH: Ok.

WS: I don't think he had been here earlier, because I remember dealing with a faculty wife who had some experience in the archives. So Maynard and I then, really, and in fact started at the same time.

AH: Ok, ok. And did you ever, like, personally seek out papers?

WS: What?

AH: So, in the beginning of the archives, were you also seeking out papers, or was Maynard doing that more on his own?

WS: What, I'm not sure of your question.

AH: So when you were first starting with your, the university's history, was there someone who was locating the papers for you or were you going to departments and asking about any documents they may have?

WS: No, I didn't go to the departments. Many departments had not turned over the files they had to the archives, but there was a substantial amount of material in the archives and I worked down there. Yeah.

AH: Mm hm. And then with your recent book, about the Crocker Land Expedition, have you been working in the archives as well as the Rare Book & Manuscripts Library? Since they have a collection on the Crocker Land Expedition?

WS: Well, we have some materials, Illinois contributed some money for the Crocker Land Expedition, and in return we had three of our faculty, two of our faculty members, young men, graduates really, on the Crocker Land Expedition. So we have some papers here, and I've used those. But the bulk of the papers on the Crocker Land Expedition are not here.

AH: Ok.

WS: And I've used those in the other places, yeah.

AH: Where have you traveled to do research for that work?

WS: Washington, D.C., is one of the, Fitzhugh Green papers are at Georgetown. And in New York City, most of the papers of the leader of the expedition, Donald McMillan, are at the American Museum of Natural History.

AH: Oh, mm hm.

WS: So they're scattered.

AH: Yeah, yeah. And my last question for you today, and it's a little bit of a big question, but what's the most surprising or interesting anecdote that you learned about the University's history while doing research for your books? Or one of a few?

WS: I don't know. That's a hard question to answer. I can't, I can't think of any one thing.
[Laughs.]

AH: [Laughs] Yeah, yeah. You've written a lot, there's certainly a lot to cover and pick out. Maybe in the, with, so if we just look at the last published work, with *Creating the Big Ten*, was there anything that really stood out to you as surprising for that manuscript and book?

WS: I think that one of the things that would stand out there, the Big 10 hired a commissioner after they had been in existence some time. He comes, what is his name, Commissioner. He's really not just a conservative American, he's a reactionary, he's a, he thinks football is really a builder of men. And these professors, what do they know. I try to treat him fairly, and I hope I do, but he's not alone, he's one of a type of people who thinks that football is a builder of men, all these faculty members, you know [unintelligible]. Well you can read that book and you'll see.

AH: [Laughs.]

WS: No, I tried to be fair to him, but he's not alone, there are a lot of people like that. And he had, he had one good quality, one good action really, when Iowa was found cheating in order to win, he made it a point of trying to find out who was responsible for it. And I give him full credit for that.

AH: Yeah.

WS: But on the whole he thinks that most faculty members are radicals and not to be trusted and so forth, yeah.

AH: Mm hm. Alright, well thank you so much for being willing to meet with me today.

WS: Well, thank you.

AH: Is there anything that we didn't cover that you would like to include, any final words for this?

WS: I might think of something but it will be after you've gone. No, I don't think there's anything else to add. Okay, well then.

AH: All right, well, thank you.