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Harold Fahl: Harold Fahl. Harold W. Fahl. F-A-H-L. My actual title when I was here was superintendent of plant services. That was 1968 to '93. Retired in '93.

Chris Butler: Why don't you start with the time you went to school at the West Central School of Agriculture. Why did you choose to attend there?

Harold Fahl: Well, my oldest brother went here in the early '30s, and then my next brother went to high school in Benson. And my oldest brother, John, ended up on farm, worked hard on the farm. My brother Jerry [ph?] didn't really care whether the farm kept or not. So, come my turn, I didn't have a choice. My dad said, "You go to the aggie school in Morris." And I told him one day I thought I wanted to go to Benson High School after talking to a Benson football coach. So my dad, that's when he said, "If you don't go to the aggie school in Morris, you don't go to school at all."

Chris Butler: Do you remember how you felt about that at the time?

Harold Fahl: Well, Dad had really-- I knew I did what my dad wanted me to do.

Chris Butler: So by that time, the agricultural school was already 30 years old. So you must have known about it. What were your impressions about the school, before you went?

Harold Fahl: Well, I thought it was-- I was up here, I mean, as a kid, when my brother went here, so I knew about it. I guess I had come to some 4-H encampments up here, so I knew a little bit about the campus.

Chris Butler: What do you remember about the experience of first leaving home at the age of 14 to live on campus?

Harold Fahl: I don't know. I thought it was going to be fun. I guess my dad brought me up here and checked me into a dormitory, and from there on, I was on my own. Registered for classes, and met some kids.

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Chris Butler: Who were the professors, or the classes that stand out in your memory from that time?

Harold Fahl: Well, one was my football coach, A.C. Heine. He also taught physics. He taught aeronautics. He taught electricity. Another one of my favorites were Edson. Edson taught poultry and first aid and, I don't know, a little bit of everything. He was a great guy.

Chris Butler: You attended West Central School during World War II, almost exactly those same years, 1941 to '46. What do you remember about how the war affected what was going on on campus?

Harold Fahl: Well, I don't know, we kept track-- I mean, most of, a lot of the people that I knew were going into the service, being drafted. And one thing, it was the year I started, was about the first year almost all younger students went here. Because prior to that, a lot of kids went here after they got through at high school, or waited until they were 16 before they started school. So we were high school-age kids when we came here, which changed the complexion of a little bit of everything. In fact, our football team, we had one letterman back from the year before, and the season was short. School started the first of October, and football practice started the first of October, and I think my freshman year we played three games. Played _____, played the alumni, and Morris High School in Crookston.

Chris Butler: That's quite a lineup.

Harold Fahl: And the high school beat us that year 84 to 17, I think. We never played them again.

Chris Butler: I don't think I understood that before. So you're saying before '41, there was a larger mix of age in the student body. You might have some 19- to 20-year-olds.

Harold Fahl: Yes.

Chris Butler: But when War World II came along, they were drafted, so it was strictly

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14- to 17-year-olds.

Harold Fahl: Right. See, actually, it was kind of a technical school, because high school graduates could play on the athletic teams, because there was no high school. It _____ in the high school conference, they were at Ag school conference with Crookston, Grand Rapids and St. Paul campus. So there was four schools in the conference.

Chris Butler: World War II was also a time of rationing supplies. Do you remember that affecting operations day to day?

Harold Fahl: Not really. I remember-- well, we lived on a farm, so we got gasoline for the tractors and so forth, and got minimum gas for cars. But we did put some of the tractor gas in the car. A lot of people did that. Sugar was rationed. I remember we cut down on sugar. In fact, I think I quit using sugar in my coffee.

Chris Butler: During <inaudible>? Where did you live during your years on campus? What was your dorm?

Harold Fahl: I started out in this dorm here, up in the top floor in the northwest corner. First year I lived there.

Chris Butler: Can you just say that again, but say Spooner Hall? "I started out in Spooner Hall."

Harold Fahl: Spooner Hall.

Chris Butler: I'll ask the question again. So where did you live when you were on campus here?

Harold Fahl: Freshman year in Spooner Hall, and that was on the top floor, northwest corner room. And the second year, we lived in Junior Hall, which was over in the northwest corner of the campus. And then the third and fourth year, I lived in Blakely Hall, which was called Senior Hall.

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Chris Butler: Who was your first-year roommate?

Harold Fahl: I fellow by the name of Silas Johnson [ph?]. He was from Benson, _____ . And second year was Bruce Anderson [ph?]; he was from Benson. And after that, after Bruce was-- in my senior year, Bruce was drafted, and then I moved in with Stan Benson, and we roomed with him for the last part of the third year, our advanced year.

Chris Butler: A lot of alumni say that when they came to school here, it really expanded their world, because they were used to just their little community. Did you have that experience?

Harold Fahl: I don't know. Everybody was friendly, and just-- I never got homesick. Actually, I didn't get homesick until my fourth year. On Sunday afternoon, nothing going on, all the friends had gone, and I actually was thinking about hitchhiking home. But that was my fourth year. Never got homesick before.

Chris Butler: Did you hitchhike home?

Harold Fahl: No. I stuck around.

Chris Butler: Tell us more about the football team. What was your position?

Harold Fahl: I played in the backfield. I guess I played-- actually, our freshman two first years, <inaudible> switch-- played the old-style football with single-wing. And then my third year-- we started in the second year, and third year, started with a T formation. So that was-- the single wing, that was all heavier people and so forth, and those lighter people _____, so we switched to a T formation. So I was in the transition of that.

Chris Butler: In those days, were you considered heavier, or lighter?

Harold Fahl: I was actually-- I don't know. I never thought about that. But I only

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weighed about 160 pounds. I played fullback, I played halfback. But then in single-wing, I played right halfback, which would be a wide receiver. So I played all three positions all three years. I played on the varsity.

Chris Butler: What kind of coach was A.C. Heine?

Harold Fahl: He'd been coaching a number of years, and...

Chris Butler: Can I ask you to say, "A.C. Heine had been coaching..." Sorry. Go ahead.

Harold Fahl: Yeah. A.C. Heine was the coach, and he'd been coaching a number of years, and actually, after the year we finished, we quit coaching. He resigned from coaching and went to full-time teaching. And of course it was during the war, and he had trouble working with us young kids, because we were all pretty green.

Chris Butler: I'm guessing that a lot of people on campus at those times had family members who were in the war. There were quite a few dead.

Harold Fahl: What do you remember? Do you remember anyone receiving a notice that someone had been killed, and how people <inaudible>?

Chris Butler: Well, I guess-- I did. I mean, I had four cousins that lived in Duluth, and all of them were in the service, and two of them were killed in action. My one cousin, Vick [ph?], he was shot down over Germany, and everybody survived but him. I heard from a family that his chute opened but they never heard from him since, and he's buried in Belgium right now. And then his brother, older brother, was killed in a jeep accident in Persia, which is now Iran, and he was there guarding the oil fields in Iran in World War II. I never knew there was oil fields there until then.

Chris Butler: On campus, how did you get news about what was happening with the war?

Harold Fahl: Radio. Radio. Newspapers. I was never much of a reader, so I listened to the radio.

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Chris Butler: Do you remember talking about the war much with your classmates? What'd you talk about?

Harold Fahl: Ah, yes, we did. Somewhat. But I know my advanced year, then we had a couple veterans come back to school and finish school. And so got acquainted with them, and I got acquainted afterwards with a number of people that had been in World War II.

Chris Butler: Those veterans who came back to school, what do you recall about them?

Harold Fahl: Well, these two good friends of mine, they had dropped out of school when they were juniors in high school, and joined the Navy, and they were in the Navy at the end of the war. And when they came back, back to Benson, they both enrolled back into high school and finished high school in Benson. Then one went on to college. So they were good friends of mine.

Chris Butler: Did they talk much about what they had seen in Europe?

Harold Fahl: Quite a bit. They were on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific, and they talked about, one time, before the war ended, that one of the planes had taken off and came back, and touched ground in Japan, and had some mud on its wheels, and come up, and landed back. And so people were scraping mud off the wheels of an airplane.

Chris Butler: Interestingly, you said your father insisted you go to West Central, ideally that maybe you would become a farmer at some point. But you didn't do that at all.

Harold Fahl: Well, I did. I did. When my middle brother came home from the service, my dad had retired from farming and went into the construction business, and so my brother and I farmed together one year, and my dad let us use his machinery and furnished the seed, and we got half of the crop. But prior to that, my dad had me buy some livestock. So at the time I started college, I had nine heifers and a half interest in a bull, and when I decided to go to college, I sold them to my brother, and he owed that to me for a couple years, and then I collected my share of the-- actually, I let him have all the crop if I could have half of the income from the pigs when they were sold.

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Chris Butler: Tell me about how you were hired at Minnesota Morris.

Harold Fahl: Well, I was working in Sioux Falls for an architectural firm, Harold Spitznagel & Associates, in Sioux Falls. And I saw an ad in the paper, Minneapolis paper, that they were looking for a superintendent of plant services on the Morris campus. So I applied for it, and had a series of interviews, and I ended up being picked for the job, and enjoyed coming back. I'd worked for Spitznagel's five and a half years. So I was hired by the director of plant services on the Minneapolis campus. Actually, he was assistant vice president of plant services for the university-wide. And so he was my boss to start with on the campus.

Chris Butler: Who were your supervisors on campus here?

Harold Fahl: I was my own boss. I mean, I worked with the dean at that time, before that position became provost. I worked with Dean Briggs-- Rodney Briggs-- and I did my best to work with the dean, Briggs, and his people, but I did work for the director of plant services on the Twin Cities campus.

Chris Butler: Let's talk about Rodney Briggs. You said to me earlier, you said, "I don't think anybody else could have started this campus but a Rod Briggs."

Harold Fahl: I believe that firmly, because Rod was very outgoing, and knew what he wanted. And it took a man like Rodney Briggs to start a campus like this. He had a goal...

Chris Butler: So tell me about that. "A man like Rod Briggs." What were his characteristics?

Harold Fahl: Well, he was forceful in some ways. However, I found him easy to talk to, visit with, and so forth. And we had some disagreements, but I think everything worked out well.

Chris Butler: I understand he had a lot of energy.

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Harold Fahl: He did have a lot of energy. Very energetic person.

Chris Butler: When you came into the job in 1968, you presided over a large expansion of the campus.

Harold Fahl: Well, I was in charge of maintaining and operating the buildings and grounds. And so I had-- the heating plant was under my jurisdiction, and all of the utilities, electrical, solar _____, and carpentry crew, plumber, electrician. So I had a good group. To start with, we only had seven people on the staff, and then I had a secretary that-- 17 people on the staff.

Chris Butler: What were the buildings that were constructed or renovated when you first came here?

Harold Fahl: Actually, Gay Hall was built when I came here. And then when I came here, Library Phase 1 and Science Phase 2 and 3 were under construction, and they were finished by the fall of 1968, and in service by that fall. And since then, a number of buildings have been built. I'll just kind of read through what--

Chris Butler: Sure. Go ahead.

Harold Fahl: The PE center was one. Heating plant. Food service building. Johnson Hall. The apartment complex. Library Phase 2. Humanities. FHA 1 and 2 were built. They were built in two phases, however finished at the same time. And the swimming pool addition to the PE center. Student center, and also the north entrance and the east entrance were constructed during my time. Actually, the north entrance and the east entrance tied into what was a planned ring road that went around the campus. Roger Martin had developed a campus plan before I came here, so a lot of the construction with Roger Martin's plan followed that. So part of the ring road that he developed was the north entrance, and where the east entrance tied into the campus. So a section of the ring road is from Fourth Street to Seventh Street, and then again from where the east entrance road comes into the campus, and then part of the road coming in up to, I guess, the environmental health building-- environmental building. I mean, that was part of the-- that's as much of the ring road that ever got constructed.

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Chris Butler: Tell me about the PE center. That's a rather large and important building. What year was that completed?

Harold Fahl: That was completed in, let's see, 1972, I think. No.

Chris Butler: I imagine at the time it was a very large building for this campus.

Harold Fahl: It was a very, very large building, and it was included in that, of course, development of the football fields and track area. I recall-- I can't quite remember what the thing cost, but I know that total building cost less than the remodeling of the Edson Hall made into a student center.

Chris Butler: Yeah, prices have gone up quite a bit haven't they?

Harold Fahl: They have gone up quite a bit, yes.

Chris Butler: Preserving the campus design and the architecture that you have in place has always been important to you. Why is that?

Harold Fahl: Well, I felt that I remember coming onto the campus, coming in on the Fourth Street entrance, the Y and the mall, going around the mall, and I always felt that that part of the campus really should be preserved, and the mall especially. And I felt that nothing should be built between Edson Hall and the mall. However, when the student center was built, the architects come up with a very good plan, building the big auditorium on the east end, and it really didn't deter from the mall. The mall was basically the same as it always had been.

Chris Butler: What do you like about the mall? Describe that to me, because that really is a central part of the campus. I mean, literally and figuratively. Why do you like the mall?

Harold Fahl: Well, when we were high school students here, it was a playground for all of the kids. I mean, in the spring of the year, we would play softball or baseball on the

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mall, played games on the mall, and it was the center of everything and, I thought, very important.

Chris Butler: There's something about the way the buildings are laid out, they sort of encourage a social behavior in that <inaudible>.

Harold Fahl: Yes. One thing that-- I mean, the old buildings are around the mall, and I think the architects have done a great job of-- like the science building I think blends in very well with the older buildings, and then of course Spooner Hall, Senior Hall or Blakely Hall, and the food service building, and social science building, which was Ag Hall; Camden Hall, which was the girls' dormitory. I mean, they all show up from the mall, and it basically is-- you look in the middle of the mall, familiar to the original campus I think has always been very important.

Chris Butler: You mentioned the student center. I know that was kind of a special building for you to be involved with, because it had a lot of student participation. Can you tell me about that process?

Harold Fahl: Well, I don't know. I think our committee-- I met with students I think for at least six or seven years before it was built, and I met with them-- I'm sure that for a couple years before there was any for sure that it'd ever be built. And one thing that I mentioned to the student body, I said, "You know, when I was in college at MDSU, I was paying seven dollars a quarter, and for a student center that would be built at some point, and I think it'd be good if you students would volunteer to pay something into a student center, and probably you'd get some action." And they chose to do that, and they started then-- I can't remember what they started out with, but it was like probably three dollars a quarter or something like that, or five dollars a quarter that went in for a future student center. And that took a while. And at that point, then I really feel that the administration felt, "Hey, the students really want this." So they started backing it, and then we-- I worked with the students on developing a program, and I told the students, I says, "Hey, plan in here what you think you need." And a lot of times, I found that the students were too conservative. I mean, they-- "Well, that'd cost too much. That'd cost too much to do that." And said, "No, plan what you want, and then from there we can back off." I mean, it went good, and we got the building done.

Chris Butler: So I don't think I understood that before. They were saving for this building before the administration was even committed to it.

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Harold Fahl: It was. I mean, they did. Yeah. Well, I think the administration agreed to let them pay, but the students went to the administration and said, "Hey, we would like to pay for a future student center."

Chris Butler: So what year was that student center erected then?

Harold Fahl: It was completed in '92, '93 or-- I retired in '93. I think it was completed in '92.

Chris Butler: So they started saving in the mid '80s then, if you track back.

Harold Fahl: Yes. Yes. It was fun to work with the students. I really enjoyed it.

Chris Butler: What was your impression of the students on your committee?

Harold Fahl: Pardon?

Chris Butler: What was your impression of the students on your committee?

Harold Fahl: They were fun to work with. Really. I always felt the students were nice to work with, fun to work with. I always felt that-- tried to get the students to be conservative, but then let it all hang out.

Chris Butler: It sounds like you were also trying to get them to think about the school as being something bigger than themselves, something that was going to be here a long time.

Harold Fahl: Well, I guess-- I mean, I don't know if I did anything to make them think that, but I guess I felt that, "Hey, we're a very good college, and I'm sure it'll go on, continue on." I had the pleasure of-- one thing, Briggs, I never worked under him, but after he retired, then the budget for physical plant operation came under the acting provost, M. Holt [ph?]. And nothing formally was said. It was just that one day after the budget came out, M. Holt called me up and said, "I think you're working for me now."

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And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He says, "Well, my name is on top of your name in the budget, instead of Roy Lund [ph?]. So my next meeting with Roy Lund, I told him that I understand that I'm working under the provost, and he says, "Well, I guess so."

Chris Butler: I need to ask you about FHA, because when it arrived in 1973, it was so different than anything else we had on campus. How was it received?

Harold Fahl: I think it was received-- I mean, there was a planning that went in. It had a good architect; Ralph Rapson [ph?] & Associates was the architects for the firm-- well known architect-- and it was working with him. The one thing about that was probably the first building that deviated from the Roger Martin plan, because the Roger Martin plan had the FHA located over near the PE center, so it could be combined with-- parking lots could be used for both facilities. However, Donald Spring [ph?] was head of the humanities division, and he was quite emphatic about putting it over near the old humanities building, and they architect agreed with that. I think it was set back, so it didn't really interfere that much with that mall, but I would say different type of structure. But included in that under the plan, Camden Hall-- it was designed with the idea that Camden Hall and all of _____ would eventually be demolished. But they are-- after I retired-- I mean, both of those buildings were put on the historical list and remain. So a lot of changes of ideas and so forth.

Chris Butler: Do you remember people's reactions to the way FHA looked? People in Morris...

Harold Fahl: No, I guess-- I mean, I had worked 11 years in two different architectural offices. I mean, I felt it looked great. It didn't match the other buildings, but it fit into the campus very well. The interesting of the building worked out very well for the students. It was designed with a center street, the main corridor, with the art department on one side, theater and music. It was a great, great building. It was built before the energy crunch came about, so there was, I think-- I can't remember how many square feet of single-glazed windows, and I think some of them are still there. Some of them have been double-glazed since then.

Chris Butler: That's a good point.

Harold Fahl: Energy wasn't a consideration at the time that was built. I'm sure if would have been designed after the energy crunch, it would have been altogether different.

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Chris Butler: So when you come back to campus, what do you like to see? What are you happiest to see when you come back to campus?

Harold Fahl: I don't know, I just like to drive all the way around the campus. I guess the first thing I do is I stop in at either the heating plant or the carpenter shop or the plant service office in the basement of Camden Hall.

Chris Butler: What do you miss most about working here? Or what did you like most about it?

Harold Fahl: Well, I kind of hated to retire, but then I felt, with the people that were working under me-- Robert Thomason [ph?], and Peter Orr [ph?], and Lois Kintop [ph?] worked in the office, and then with Lowell Rasmussen [ph?] coming on board from Waseca-- I mean, I felt it was going to be run in fine shape, so I had no hard feelings about retiring, and I felt it would be in good hands.

Chris Butler: What did you like most about the time you did work here?

Harold Fahl: I guess working with my crew, my staff, and also being involved with the planning-- I was on the campus planning committee and working with the faculty and staff on that, and working with the students. It was a just nice campus. One thing that-- the person in charge of security, he thought the students were doing a lot of things that-- shouldn't be doing. I told him, asked him where he grew up. I says, "We were doing the same things when I went to the Ag school." I mean, students-- I guess the only thing that was different about students when I was younger and the students that-- we probably had more respect for our parents and older people. I mean, we were taught to respect them. But the thing is, newer students, I mean, they felt more freedom and so forth. But they were still nice to work with.

Chris Butler: You arrived at that time, right after Vietnam, when all those values sort of started to change.

Harold Fahl: Vietnam was going on when I was here, so.

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Chris Butler: Well, is there anything else you'd like to add, Harold? Any stories that we haven't told?

Harold Fahl: Well, I enjoyed my 25 and a half years here. I felt honored to be able to come back and work on the campus after going to high school here, and it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it. One thing that was-- I enjoyed when some of the old Ag school faculty would stop by and visit the campus and stop in and see me. I know Nana Gelstrop [ph?] was in charge of girls dormitory. She'd stop in and see me. And A.C. Heine, the football coach, stopped in. One thing that-- Ted Long was my English teacher, and probably we had probably the best English department of any high school around, but he was super. And I had him for three years in English, and he stayed on to UMM and was in theater for a number of years. He was a great guy. I enjoyed going to his retirement party.

Chris Butler: What I wanted to ask you is that I've noticed that West Central has a reunion here every summer, and it's extremely popular. It draws even more than the UMM. Why do you think West Central School of Ag students are so loyal?

Harold Fahl: Well, I think that students were on the campus, living together, and just learned how to get together, and we're basically one large family. And so we got to know a lot about each other, and it was just fun to come back and go to reunions. I remember when my brother went back for reunions, I went along sometimes. Back then, they had big hog roasts for reunions. My brother graduated, John, in 1935, and I graduated as a senior in 1945, as an advanced in 1946. So next year, 2010, will be my 65th reunion, and I'm trying to talk my brother into coming too. It'll be his 75th reunion. I don't think that any of his classmates are still living, but.

Chris Butler: It was kind of a big move to decide to go across Second Street and leave the core of campus. How did that expansion take place?

Harold Fahl: Well, it was actually part of the Roger Martin plan, that the ring road would go south-- I mean, all of what is now the PE center and that area. So there was no question about not moving across Second Street. And eventually, if the ring road would have been completed-- I mean, the present Second Street, going through the campus, would have probably been eliminated, or probably would have stopped in a parking lot at either end. So there would not have been a road, like between the PE

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center and the residence halls. So if that would <inaudible>. So that was one of the reasons they went across, made it across Second Street.

Q: I've got another question, Harold, and just go ahead and answer to Chris. The PE annex served as the physical education center for many, many years, until the PE center was built in the '70s, and we used it until it was just demolished about a decade ago. Explain to the annex and how it was used, and playing football at Miller Field, and that whole thing.

Harold Fahl: The old gymnasium was built, I think, in 1931 or '32, and an identical building was built on the Crookson campus. The athletic department moved into the old gymnasium, and by that time, a football field was south of the gymnasium, and the athletic offices were all in the basement on the west end of the building, the swimming pool in the middle, and then the girls' locker room was on the east end of the building in the basement, and the gymnasium itself was actually the same as when I went to high school here. In fact, when I went to high school here, a lot of the high school used to come in here for their district tournaments, played on the gymnasium there, and had a marvelous floor. I mean, maple floor, wood floor.

Chris Butler: Where was this building?

Harold Fahl: The building was located where Science 4 is built. And one thing that-- that building was built prior to people knowing about the poor soil conditions, and so there was a lot of movement in that building, and a lot of cracks in the building. There was one building that I guess I recommended to be torn down, and Science Phase 4 put there. I mean, prior to considering the gymnasium down, Science Phase 4 would have been out where the parking lot is, or west of the science building, and I felt that if we put the science building where the gymnasium is, it'd kind of bring the two together, old and new. And I think the architects did a great job of trying to match it in with the campus itself.

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