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## TRANSCRIPT

## TIMECODE

Q: Any time.

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Alright, my name is Bill Rickmeyer; just a little over 40, about 42½ years. Yep we came in and we bought a coast to coast hardware store after having worked for the JC Penny Company for just about 22 years.

Q: What did you know about the university when you first arrived?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Well that's one of the reasons that we moved to Morris, we had five children and some of 'em were in high school and we thought well this is an opportunity to buy a hardware store in a community that has a college so we can kinda take care of a couple of things at the same time and some of the children did go here, they didn't all go to the university in Morris. But my wife even finished up one of her degrees here at the university in Morris.

Q: You know that's funny you say we could take care of a couple of things and you said your wife went to school here, a couple of your kids but what else did you find appealing about having a university in your town?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Oh there's so many-- okay for example we had John Denver here, one of the first years that we were here, when could you ever see somebody like this when he was coming into his early stardom and he was here and we got to see him before he made the big, big time and we go to a lot of the different performing arts series things and along with the university, the university gardens. My wife doesn't know how to drive home without going through the university gardens before she makes it-- she can only make right turns. But there are so many things that we've enjoyed and now with the RRC we've been-- I guess we were some of the original members trying to help get the annex built and the PE center going and we are both still using it.

Q: I'm guessing in a lotta ways but I wanna hear your opinion, I'm guessing in a lotta ways the university has benefited by getting in such a friendly and open town like Morris.

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**Bill Rickmeyer:** Yeah the university has and the students are great and they're great for the community. In fact I have to tell you a little tale about the university students. When we first moved to town we had a small hardware store which is we're part of the Bank of the West is, used to be yeah Bank of the West. The area in closest to Jervay [ph?] Jewelry and we had a 25 foot start was too small, so we rented a little bit of space under the Merchants Hotel which was next to us which now was torn down and we had to when we bought it, there were still university students living there because there wasn't enough housing on campus. So we got intermingle with some of the students for a short time when we first owned the old Merchant's Hotel; which was kinda neat and they had a cougar room down in the lower level of the hotel and they had, I can't remember, it was pool tables or foosball tables down there and quite an activity center for the students.

Q: What was your general impression of the students, you know, what characteristics did they have?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Characteristics of the students, quality, the quality, excellent quality, the programs that we have, you know, the arts that was one of my oldest daughters was great with the-- actually art programs and the theater arts and everything and the music programs I think are just fantastic. Ken Hodgson the greatest thing that ever happened to the University of Minnesota, Morris that we didn't miss in all the years, we missed one of his concerts because we were out of town; we were out of the state in fact. But the camaraderie between the students, we try to help 'em when they come down and when they're in there, I've never seen a disrespectful student and we've had over the years, I couldn't tell you how many students that we've employed over the time at part time, I'm helping about in fact right now Joe has two students from the university and we just had one that got a fantastic job teaching up at the Morris Area High School because kinda helped to have a little push from someone. He had worked for Joe for like three years at Ace Hardware and Joe Peterson, the owner and they put in a plug for him and Kevin Pope is his name and he's just-- I thought he was a fantastic student, a fantastic worker, you know, when you can get students that work between the community and they put a plug in for the store and we put a plug in for them and it all helps.

Q: I'm seeing a connection, tell me if you agree with this, you know, you run a small town hardware store and we were talking about some of the benefits of that, you get special service, you know who owns it, they do extra things for you. A lotta people say

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the same thing about being a student at Morris, it's a small campus, the teachers know you, they'll do extra things for you; do you agree with that?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Oh absolutely and you visit with the students and they, you know, they have a class of 20 students or how many, you know, where if there were down in the Minneapolis campus they'd be one of a hundred or more, you know, so we hear a lot of good reports on that. The class size and the one you'll see the students meeting professors like in the store, professors or the instructors will be down there and the students come in, well "Hi, you know," and it's great, it's great.

Q: You know, you mentioned the arts, you talked about John Denver coming before he was big and that's one of the things that the university lends to the campus, what else can you think of that you've appreciated that, you know that the university contributes to the community?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Well you look at all the rental houses, it does a tremendous-- there's income generated by the students living off campus, you pass those dollars around, they go to the landlord, the landlord comes in to get something fixed or the hardware store, the lumber yard or the theater or the restaurant. Those dollars get passed around and around and you looked at the university payroll what that does for the community is fantastic, you know, and I'll have to say the university instructors, personnel whatever you wanna call 'em employees have been pretty darn gone loyal to the city of Morris and we hope and generally speaking the majority of the merchants on Main Street are pretty loyal to the university and whatever they can do financially or verbally. Never hear anybody talk it down; I've never heard anybody on Main Street talk down the university.

Q: It seems like when you came in '67 that was the start of an interesting time, socially in this country right with Vietnam and the students growing long hair, do you remember <inaudible>?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Yes, yep the hippy era, the tie dyed and everything, yeah I try to block most of that out of my memory. But there was an era when there were a few rowdies in that era, there were, but it wasn't bad. The thing that hurt me was the Vietnam Vets being returning and basically getting spit on and this as a Korean War Vet that really hurt me. We didn't get any thank you's when we got home either but at least we did not get spit on which some of the Vietnam Vets physically got spit on.

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Q: You know what and that's <inaudible> a really good point, there's the relationship for the most part between the community and the school has been positive for the most part. But there's been some conflict and I wonder if now though when we look back we see that it has become a positive like there was a lot of conflict around Vietnam but now we've sort of-- do you agree with that?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** There was a little bit, I don't see any conflict now at all, I don't see anything at all.

Q: How many children have you had graduate from Morris?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Nancy and my wife and Sandy \_\_\_\_\_ she's a few credits short of graduating, I encouraged her to go back and finish up and son Bill when here for a while and that's it.

Q: Do you recall what Nancy and your wife enjoyed about being students here; did they enjoy being students here?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Oh they absolutely enjoyed being students here. Nancy with the performing arts and the studio art and thoroughly enjoyed it and she keeps in contact with some of the other students that were here. Stash Hempeck [ph?] there was a hippy and he was a friend of my daughters, they didn't date but they were just good friends but this goes out, some of the people are gonna recognize the name and I right off hand can't think of the other ones but Stash, he was quite a character.

Q: It probably exposed you as just an ordinary resident to-- you know, we were saying when you go to college you have your mind expanded to all sorts of different viewpoints but here's someone who was part of the city but yet you were coming face to face with this right?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Oh yeah, you know, when you have students or children that are students and the like yeah. Nancy lived on campus, lived in the apartments part of the time and lived at home part of the time but then, you know, shoe got a little tight at home so she had to go out and live on campus for a while just to.

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Q: Bill is there anything else that you'd care to share with us about, you know, your thoughts about UMM and the city working together?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Oh just how it broadens the horizon and brings the name of Morris out into the public and with the academic standards they have, high standards they have it's put Morris's name up pretty high on the totem pole and well it just brings in a great payroll for the community to support us people who have been in business over the years. I was not intelligent enough to have tape recorder to get Herb Perbs [ph?] Jim Unger and Louis McRoberts and a few of the other guys around to and tape the conversations that we used to have at the coffee table down in what used to be the Delmonico Café. Oh there were some-- we used to have quite a yeah and let's face it these guys, Jim Unger supported the university, Lou McRoberts did, Bud Rents [ph?] used to be on Main Street, great supporter, his son Paul has the agency, now the insurance agency; great supporters.

Q: Why do you think they did that?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Why?

Q: Yeah.

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Because they're promoting the city of Morris, they're working with the university, it help-- whatever you can do to build and that's why they were good businessmen is because they looked at the university as part of this business, if they can build that it'll build their business. So these Rents, McRoberts, let's see who else-- but those were the guys that were really-- we used to have a guy by the name of Willard McLeish that had the Golden Creamery in town here and he was a great promoter and helped; Ed Lefevre [ph?] as you all know Ed Lefevre [ph?] was one of the instigators and pushers to get the university in here and they were all great businessmen, did what they could to help promote and build the city and the communication between the two.

Q: It's funny you're talking about because, you know, the demographics at the time changed so much that, you know, there weren't these small family farm-- at the time you're talking about, the small family farm was going away.

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**Bill Rickmeyer:** Right.

Q: And suddenly where are you gonna find business to replace all the people leaving right?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Right.

Q: And then they were smart guys yeah.

**Bill Rickmeyer:** You gotta build a business, you know, the university is a great business, you know, so you bring that to town in a hope that it continues and do what you can to support it and I can't say enough about our university gardens which is part of the university system and some of your students do work out there in the gardens and get to-- we try to support the gardens and support the university both but again like I say my wife-- we drive up the hill, she's supposed to turn left to go home, she can't make a left turn, she has to go up and turn right into the university gardens, then she has to make a right turn to get out of there and she comes down the hill back to our little gravel road that takes us out to our house and then she makes the right turn again, she just won't turn left.

Q: Why do you like the gardens so much?

**Bill Rickmeyer:** Oh they bring people to town, they bring people to town, they have their tours, how many a couple of thousand people out there when they had their tour this fall, late summer I should say. You have your different scientists that come out and take a look and work with the different plants and I think it's just fantastic, just fantastic.

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