

Getty Preservation Grant Interview

HAROLD FAHL INTERVIEW

May 4, 2004

[First of two interviews with Harold Fah]

Harold Fah
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[Transcriber's Note: Harold Fah was a WCSA student from 1942-1946, and superintendent of Plant Services at UMM, 1968-1993, when Lowell Rasmussen succeeded him.]

Transcriber's Key:

SG: Stephen Gross

HF: Harold Fah

... : Incomplete sentence

[xxx]: Unable to transcribe; dialogue not clear on audio tape

Interviewer: Stephen Gross

Date: May 4, 2004

Tape 1: Side 1

SG: In Glenwood, Minnesota, and today's date is May 4, 2004. I'm just going to start by asking a few general questions about your background. So, could you tell me when you were born, and where.

HF: I was born on May 27, 1928, in Swift County, rural, just east of Benson.

SG: How far east of Benson?

HF: About 3, 3½ miles east of Benson.

SG: And your parents were farmers?

HF: Farmers, my dad was a farmer.

SG: And how many brothers and sisters?

HF: Two brothers and two sisters. I was the youngest. My parents emigrated from Sweden. Both of them were born and raised in Sweden, from different parts, but met at Benson.

SG: So how's your Swedish?

HF: Pretty good.

SG: Good. I do immigration stuff, so it's something I'm...

HF: I can get along when I need to.

SG: Swedish...I also think of Benson being half Norwegian and half Irish.

HF: It was a small -- scattered with -- just east of Benson, right around, close to Benson, some Swedish settlement.

SG: I thought of Kerkhoven...

HF: Kerkhoven?

SG: Yea. As being Swedish, isn't that right?

HF: Kerkhoven, Murdock, just north of there. Yea, it's Norwegian and Irish.

SG: Your dad was dairy farming or mixed farming?

HF: It was mixed farming.

SG: Where did you go to elementary school, then?

HF: I went to grade school, district 93, which had about 28-30 kids...

SG: All ages.

HF: All eight grades, two good teachers.

SG: Two teachers, eight grades.... How did you end up at West Central?

HF: My oldest brother had gone there, and he came home from the Ag school and enjoyed farming, and my dad thought that was the place for me to go, too.

SG: So the idea was that you were sort of programmed to be a farmer.

HF: Yes.

SG: Was the expectation that one of you would take over the home place, or...

HF: Possibly, although my brother that had graduated had more or less started out farming on his own on rented land. Actually, until my brother graduated, my dad farmed with horses. The first tractor was the one that my brother had gotten from my uncle, had got a tractor and plow – an old Ford ... Then my brother went on, bought his farm later on.

SG: It's part of the logic for West Central was that young farm men would go learn something about scientific farming and then come home and teach their parents about this. That really played out in your case.

HF: More or less. My brother, from that time on, the farming expanded.

SG: It sounds like your dad was really supportive of this.

HF: Oh, yes. Actually, my dad's background was carpentry, and he'd done his apprenticeship in Sweden. He didn't start farming until he and my mother were married, in 1907.

SG: Was he raised on a farm in Sweden?

HF: No, he grew up, in a rural area, in a wooded area.

SG: So how did they end up on the prairie?

HF: That's a long story. Actually, my mother's two brothers had settled in Benson prior to that, and then my mother came over to be with one of her brothers. My dad ended up in

Benson doing carpenter work. My dad was working on the barn at my mother's sister's place, and they met.

SG: He was supportive of West Central...

HF: Yes, very much.

SG: And that whole experience. Was he a well-educated man?

HF: No. He'd gone through the sixth grade, like most people in Europe did.

SG: He sounds progressive and intelligent that he would...so your brother introduced the tractor.

HF: My brother bought a new tractor in 1936, and he still has it, although he's retired from farming. His nephew and my nephew are on the farm that he had [xxx].

SG: Any other kinds of innovations that he introduced?

HF: Just basically, expanded farming.... My dad had hogs, and then beef. Our family has always been, we're livestock men, full farm with livestock and land, and so forth. My nephew still makes...is farming, and raises beef and raises most of [xxx] beef.

SG: So it was really quite natural for you to end up at West Central.

HF: Yes, it was.

SG: Could you describe your first day on campus, or your first impressions of campus?

HF: Well, I'd seen the campus before, but my folks brought me up there, got registered, and got a room assignment in Spooner Hall, from there was kind of a gathering of everybody, and then we went to register for classes and get all signed up and get into our rooms and...find something to eat.

SG: Sounds like...you were 14, right? Sounds like a 14-year-old's priorities. Were you nervous?

HF: I can't remember that I was. I'd been expecting it all along, that I would be going there.

SG: Had you been away from home at all?

HF: No, I hadn't, basically, half a week I went to bible camp once.

SG: Did you feel you were well prepared by the country school for this?

HF: Definitely. I was very well prepared. I never worried about it. I had classes in History and English, and of course, farm courses.

SG: In these days, the course started about October first, October fifteenth?

HF: The first part of October. Had fall quarter, then winter quarter, which ended then the end of March.

SG: I've always been sort of confused by this because I'm not a farm kid, but I grew up in a small town, and from my recollection, people were always in the field well into October and November.

HF: By October, most of the harvesting had been done except for the corn. I mean, silo filling hadn't been done. We raised potatoes, and the raising of potatoes kind of went into the school year a little bit. Most of the work was completed.

SG: The potato harvest, was that really manual labor?

HF: That was manual labor. Everything was labor. We raised potatoes, and actually, we raised potatoes in the four years I went there, and when my brother went there, we furnished potatoes to the school. We brought potatoes to West Central School once in a while. We ate our potatoes year-round.

SG: What was the curriculum like?

HF: It was like English, History, didn't start mathematics until senior year, and went into [xxx]. Freshman year we took farm arithmetic and farm management. I think we took Broods and Brooding, and general science and so forth. Next year we got in to Physics and Chemistry. Of course, we took carpentry, and we took Forge. We had to forge and learn how to weld with a forge before we could take welding, before we could take gas welding. Gas welding was a prerequisite for electrical. We had to learn how to weld on a forge.

SG: It was that way when I was in high school taking shop.

HF: We had to learn how to weld with a forge before we could, so...carpentry, we had an older fellow named Julius Feld, taught carpentry. He taught carpentry when my brother went there. Everybody made a footstool and made a tenon joint, sanding block, bookcase, and before Christmas and after Christmas [xxx].

SG: So the idea, you bring the bookcase home for your parents.

HF: Yes. It was just a small bookrack. Then after that, around Christmas there was a bigger project, most of them made a writing desk or a cedar chest. I made a cedar chest.

SG: Did you do shop all four years?

HF: Not mostly...most of the shop was the first two years.

SG: History, English all four years?

HF: English was all four years. History all four years. Correct.

SG: They don't do that anymore, unfortunately.

HF: Had kind of a marvelous English teacher. Ted Long, who taught English at that time, and he continued on and taught English and Theater for UMM at the beginning.

SG: [xxx]

HF: Mathematics didn't start until our third year, which was senior year. Algebra, and the next year for advanced year, it was plane geometry. That was the only -- when I went on to college, that was the only area that I had troubles...lack of. English, and Physics, no problem. Wonderful group of teachers and Heiney, A.C. Heiney, taught Physics, and he also taught Electricity. A.C. Heiney also taught aeronautics and was the football and basketball coach. A real nice guy. Most of them were [xxx].

SG: It sounds really very well integrated and really broad, and I've had conversations with people who've been working on the Getty Grant, we're working on this photo display thing, and try to come up with central themes, and one of them has to do with the curriculum really addressing the whole person. That really seems to be the case. Were they conscious of that? Did they talk to you about the philosophy behind what they were doing, or....

HF: We took, we had landscaping courses, auto mechanics, farm mechanics, meat, learn how to butcher, which we had met two afternoons a week in the butchering class on Tuesdays. We killed either 4 hogs or one beef. And then on Thursday we came and cut the animal up.

SG: This was before the

HF: This was second year.

SG: So this was before the cow palace.

HF: Before the cow palace.

SG: This was in the basement of the Ag building?

HF: This was in the basement, yes, where right now.... In fact, the eye is still imbedded in the ceiling in the meat lab where we did the killing of animals, when they hoisted the animals up. It's still in a storeroom.

SG: Interesting, interesting. I hope they save that.

HF: It's in a storeroom, and I think it's marked. It's a ring about 4 inches in diameter.

SG: Lowell knows about this, I hope.

HF: I think he does.

SG: That'd be worthwhile to save. That's really pretty cool.

HF: That was the butchering [xxx]. Basically that was below where the washrooms are now. And then room 45, that's way at the south end, that was where we cut up all the meat. And in between that room, that was the cooler. Brought the animals in the back door, which is actually the door that ... the entrance door now on that side of the building. Then, what is now the [xxx] to the north of that was a room where they had stock judging and so forth, some bleachers in it and a dirt floor. That was before the cow palace.

SG: We have some pictures of that, that Harley Hanke gave us, and of one of the lamb's days...

HF: ...where they'd bring in, they'd bring in sheep. We'd have to judge... and cattle to judge. Horses we would judge. That was at the north end of the Social Science building.

SG: So you would, each quarter, each semester, you would do how many courses?

HF: Must have been 7 or 8. Because I know one year, I had 3 classes in a row with Edson. One was landscaping, one was first aid, and one was rural sociology. I can't remember which year. I think it was my senior year.

SG: So what was the landscaping about?

HF: It was landscaping, what to plant around a house...

SG: Horticulture, that sort of thing?

HF: Horticulture, what kind of plants...

SG: It's interesting that they thought that was appropriate for farm boys rather than....

HF: [xxx]

SG: Interesting, and that was farm families being sort of, not segregated, but that one'd have the barn yards, and one had the garden, and...

HF: I had Edson for quite a few classes, landscaping, first aid, sociology, and poultry classes -- Broods and Brooding, and Management of Laying Flocks.

SG: Interesting.

HF: Animals, we had, we called it Animal Science. There was general anatomy and a course called Breeds and Breeding. That's where we got our sex education.

SG: As if farm kids really needed to know.

HF: I think kids growing up on a farm back then, just being on a farm, was sex education.

SG: At least the mechanics or the biology of it.

HF: That varied from family to family.

SG: Probably varied between boys and girls. Again, sir, back to this question about [xxx] were you really aware of the philosophy behind this kind of education or did it just not concern you....

HF: [xxx]

SG: Did they talk about what they were trying to do?

HF: We, in farm management, we took record keeping of planting and so forth and, of course, your grains; I mean [xxx] recommended, so it was strictly farming, but then you got the shop courses, and of course, at that time, most farmers took their own machinery and so forth. But then you had a general education along with that because I took typing. I took bookkeeping. Had chemistry. Actually, until my... through my first three years, I had no intentions of going on in school. I had no intentions. My brother only went three years. My dad said, well, you'll be going three years as well.

SG: So you started as essentially a freshman?

HF: Freshman, junior, then senior. So your three year program, you're a senior third year. If you went back for the fourth year, that was an advanced course. I had no intentions of going back for my advanced course.

SG: So then, the third year you'd officially graduated [xxx]?

HF: Yes. You got a certificate and graduation. The reason I went back for my fourth year, I still wanted to play some more football and basketball. Anyway, we were [xxx] and

Edson came out to our place, about 2 weeks before school started. He had to check on the potato crop, and then asked why I hadn't registered for, hadn't signed up for a room. I said, I hadn't planned on. He said, well, you ought to send in your room, send in for, reserve a room. So I ended up doing that. I talked my dad into, if I stayed home from school the first week of school, we could get the potatoes all harvested. And the fall was so that we had all the plowing done basically before that, so then I could go back to school. Then at corn picking time, I could come home for a week and help with corn picking. That worked out real well because that was between football and basketball season. That's how I ended up going to fourth year.

SG: What did you play?

HF: In football, I played fullback. My last two years, I played three different positions. The Gophers had play ... switched from quarterback to wide receiver to full back to running back. I played quarterback one game.

SG: Was the team good?

HF: No. We won, I think...the thing is, we didn't start practice until October first, and we played Crookston, Morris High School. My first year we played Morris High School, Crookston, and the alumni, and we lost all the games. I think in the four years I went to school there, I think we won, beat the alumni once. Crookston beat us all the time.

SG: Wes talks about their teams being really good, but he also talked about having players that were 19, 20, 21, and by the time you were there, these guys were all in the military.

HF: Yep. So it was just young kids there.

SG: What was the curriculum like for the girls?

HF: Basically, they took the same English, history, and business courses that we had.

SG: So the history and the English, these kinds of general courses, the class would be integrated.

HF: Integrated.

SG: So, then they would go off and do Home Ec.

HF: That was about the only classes we had with the girls at that time. There was math when we got into that. Chemistry. Girls can take Physics, but they took home making courses and so forth. Plus they'd take more business courses. It was a good line of business, actually. It was like a junior college.

SG: Were the boys almost uniformly farm kids, and were the girls farm kids but also from the smaller towns, too?

HF: Most of them were farm kids... both the boys and the girls, although we had, in our class, we had two brothers from Golden Valley. The one was older, and he just went to one year, but the other one went all four years. They played football and basketball, ended up being, he ended up going into the air force, being one of the first jet pilots. He ended up going into the air force. Was a member of the Blue Angels until they found out he had hay fever [xxx]. So there were some city kids, but mostly...

SG: What did it cost per year?

HF: Board and room, when I was a freshman, was \$22 a month. Tuition, see, was paid by your school, your farm school, your school district. Tuition, it was just board and room. Anybody that did not live in a high school district, their tuition would be covered. Anybody who lived in a high school district had to pay the tuition, [xxx].

SG: What about the older students? Would the high school districts also pay for those?

HF: I would imagine they had to pay [xxx]. Advance students or special students paid tuition.

SG: I know from our records from in the archives that there were a number of scholarship programs, too, available, so those would just cover...

HF: There was scholarships, but I'm not sure how...

SG: Was the expectation that you would work on campus? Did most students work?

HF: No. When I went there, there were very few students who worked. When my brother went there, he worked just about all the time to help pay for the board and room. For my dad, he felt that \$22 a month – that was my first year - \$27 a month for my last three years, he felt it was cheaper to have me live there than it was at home.

SG: I can imagine.

HF: I ate a lot. It's a farm family.

SG: Part of the expectation was that you would do summer projects, right?

HF: Yep. There were summer home projects.

SG: What were those like?

HF: I took one, had oats. I had to keep track of acres, how much, when it was plowed, how deep we plowed, seeding, what kind of oats you planted, and then actually you kept track of what the yield was, how much rain you got. Another one I took another summer was tractors. Kept track of changing oil and all the measurements, how much fuel, how many hours the tractor ran and so forth.

SG: So you'd have to write this up in a final report?

HF: You'd have to write a report.

SG: So you'd be visited by the instructor over the course of the summer?

HF: Yep, somebody came out once a month.

SG: They kept these guys busy.

HF: Yep.

SG: These guys were also scientists, so they were also doing other stuff around here.

HF: Yep. Actually, summer programs tied in with research.

SG: So, when they would do oats, for example, was this part of a larger project where you'd have an agronomist who was working on oats?

HF: Not necessarily. I can't remember that they recommended anything. You just came up with a [xxx].

SG: Would this be something you developed on your own?

HF: Well, they just, we had a kind of form to follow and fill out [xxx]. Between my senior and advanced year, I did not take it. I had no intention of going back, but I think I had to take, I had to have 5 extra credit hours, I mean, to take the place of that. Evidently, they called that 5 credit hours.

SG: Let's talk a little bit about campus life. You said you played football and basketball.

HF: One thing, social life, when I was a freshman, they had a dance first Saturday night, had a dance for all the freshman kids, boys and girls, taught us how to dance, taught us the two step, taught us the waltz. Ted Long played his banjo, John Anderson, who was in music and also taught Chemistry.

SG: And did a lot of the trees, from what I understand.

HF: He did a lot of the trees. He played, then usually a female instructor. So we had dances, and they taught us how to dance, how to two step, how to waltz, which, of course, the boys outnumbered the girls. They really [xxx] boys danced with boys. They had to.

SG: There's probably that.... never mind.

HF: At that time...

SG: Nobody would have questioned it.

HF: Any thought about gay situation...

SG: I'm sure there was just not, it would not occur.

HF: Boys [xxx] girls.

SG: It would not have occurred to anybody.

HF: No, it didn't.

SG: I have a story I'm going to share with you, but I'm going to stop this.

--- *Tape interrupted*---

HF: As far as dancing then, usually the classes, each individual class, had a class dance once a week. This would be one evening...

SG: Would this be open to everybody?

HF: Well, they'd have class dances, but mainly... we had for the freshman to begin with, but afterwards they would have an all school dance, when there wasn't a basketball game and so forth. Occasionally, I would say, probably couple times, once a month they would have an all school dance. The band would play, and we were dancing.

SG: Was this voluntary or mandatory?

HF: No, this was voluntary.

SG: What about football games, basketball games?

HF: Nothing was mandatory. I went out for freshman football. Then, I practiced with the varsity. I got in one game, Morris High School ball carrier went by me, and coach took me out. My next year, I started. Then basketball, usually basketball practice was after supper.

SG: The court in those days, was that still in Behmler, or was it....

HF: No, that was in the gym.

SG: So when was the gym built?

HF: 1931.

SG: So before that...

HF: Before that, it was in Behmler Hall, on the second floor. Then, that was before they added the third floor.

SG: The dances, were these exclusive to the school, or could people bring guests?

HF: Most of the time, the dances were in the dining hall. They'd move all the tables, so that'd be in the dining hall.

SG: Would people bring dates, say from Morris High, or...

HF: If somebody invited them, they could come. I don't think anybody would have kicked them out. There was definite separation between the high school kids and the ag school kids.

SG: That's always been interesting....

HF: Not in the animosity, or anything, between them, but that was just...

SG: Different worlds.

HF: I got quite acquainted with a lot of high school kids.

SG: Was there any sense at all that they looked down upon the...

HF: I didn't, I never felt that. They just, like that one football game I played in, the high school beat us 81 to nothing.

SG: So they couldn't have been too angry with you guys. Maybe vice versa.

HF: We were pretty poor. Morris High School was good.

SG: They had that tradition.

HF: Then basketball, went out freshman year. I remember, we lost every football game, every basketball game. Lost to Crookston, lost to Grand Rapids, we lost, too.

SG: That, I understand, was a bit of a rivalry.

HF: Crookston, yeah.

SG: No, actually, Grand Rapids.

HF: Grand Rapids, that wasn't as much of a rivalry in football or basketball. We ended up, my last two years, I know we usually beat Grand Rapids. Crookston no.

SG: We have a letter in the archives – I wish I could remember the date, but it was from the Superintendent in Grand Rapids, saying they were reluctant to play Morris because the year before, the game was too violent. It was too tough. [xxx].

HF: Must have been after me.

SG: Or before, when they had these older kids. So, how often would you get home during the course of the school year?

HF: Actually, my freshman year, I got home at Christmas time, and then I got home after the basketball season, then I came home a couple weekends. I remember prom was usually held about two weeks before school ended. I remember that I was home, I didn't stick around for the prom that year, which probably I was lucky that I didn't because I'd probably been suspended or something. I might have taken a drink. But anyway, there had been some drinking at that prom. There were 6 or 7 kids that were expelled completely, and then the superintendent called everybody in and talked to them, every individual that was on campus that weekend, and asked them if they went to a dance and if they had a drink. Called every student in there, anybody, most of the people, Fenske, very nice fellow, and so forth, but you'd look him in the eye, and you couldn't tell a lie. I probably would have had a drink. I don't know. Everybody said to him, they, their parents got a letter from the school, and from then on, that was anybody that went to the dance, if they left the dance, they couldn't get back in, years following that. They usually had [xxx] 6 or 7 kids were expelled two weeks before they could graduate.

SG: Fenske sounds a bit tough.

HF: No, it wasn't Fenske so much, it was Edson. Edson, he wouldn't stand for it. Fenske ... Edson was the assistant superintendent then. Fenske was more tolerant than Edson.

SG: Was there a behavior code?

HF: There was just ... there was no law that said you couldn't drink, but normally you don't. Nobody ever said you couldn't drink, but everybody just understood that you couldn't. Just like one big family.

SG: For so much of the period, they had such a wide range of ages on campus, from 14 year olds to people in their 20s, and I've just been curious as to how they maintained discipline with kids of this....

HF: Living on campus with kids like that, you got to be friends with a lot of people, and that really was one big happy family. I think that if we'd heard that one of our classmates, a girl, one of the girls in the class would have been assaulted, I'm sure that all the boys would have really ganged up on that person. It was just one big happy family.

SG: Everybody I've talked to have talked about how serious the students were and how hard they worked.

HF: [xxx]

SG: Was there really active club life besides sports?

HF: Not really. Some dating was going on. A lot of times, dates went down to the movie downtown, or went to the lunchroom.

SG: How often did you get off campus?

HF: We could weekends, Friday and Saturday nights, you could go off campus. You had to be in Friday night, I think it was, for the boys 10:00, and Saturday nights, I think you could stay out until midnight. Girls, I think they had to be in all the time by 10:00. During the week, normally, you could go out one night. That includes Sunday. Depends on your grades. If you were on the honor roll, you could probably go out 2 nights. Anytime you left campus after supper, they had a check out. You had to check out anytime, anytime you left the campus you had to check out.

SG: So there'd be a proctor...

HF: Yep. Any time you left the campus, you checked out. If you went home for the weekend, you checked out home. Went down town, you checked out for down town. Checked in. Girls, after supper, they had to check out any time they left the dormitory. If they went to the library, they had to check out. If they went to the lunchroom, they had to check out.

SG: Pretty close watch on those. It was like that my first year of college, too. It's only in the past 30 years that things have really changed. So, what was the campus like? How was it different than today?

HF: Basically, the campus itself, it was Edson Hall. I mean at that time, there was an older auditorium on the other side of Edson Hall, before it was made into the Student Center. The old auditorium and office building, library, were the same where Edson Hall was built, but it was turned 90 degrees, so the entrance to that was on the north side. Then, of course, you've got old music hall, which there was a mirror building set across ...on opposite side of mall... that was the Home Ec building. So the campus, Spooner by the health service, which is Education. Spooner Hall, Senior Hall, which is Blakely Hall. Behmler Hall, which was food service and junior girls dorm. Ag hall, which is Social Science. Camden Hall, which was the girls' dormitory.

SG: Community Ed was still there.

HF: That was. There was an old sidewalk that went straight across, straight out from music hall, straight across to the Home Ec building on the other side. The campus itself, everybody would recognize it. Then of course, where HFA is now, that was the Superintendent's residence. Pine Hall was always there. Then in between the Superintendent's residence and Pine Hall was the home management house. That was something that... 6 or 8 senior girls lived in that for a quarter. And then they did cooking, they took care of everything. There usually was a foster child in there that they took care of. The senior girls were there. Junior boys lived in there. They were a year younger than the girls were, but they'd usually go over there and sample, and then we'd be invited over there. Usually boys spent some time there. Those girls had a little more freedom, but they still....

SG: They could entertain you, but this all had to be supervised.

HF: And they had... they had their own rooms in the house. They had Fern Johnson that lived in there all the time.

SG: My understanding that the Mall, it was called the square, right?

HF: I can't remember what we called it.

SG: That was off limits. You couldn't walk on the grass.

HF: I cut across it.

SG: There are rules, and there are rules.

HF: Every year, we would play baseball and softball out there, on the mall. You didn't run over the flowers beds...

SG: The football field was below the gymnasium.

HF: PE, yep. That football field, we practiced and played on it, the same field.

SG: According to this map that we were talking about, there's a skating rink, I think. That's down where the trailers are now, right?

HF: Yep.

-- *Tape is interrupted* --

SG: Some yearbook, I have a map of the campus from the 40s.

HF: That's still there. That's still there. That's still there. And this is still there. So it's just this area that really had changed.

SG: The old skating rink.

HF: Yep, skating rink.

SG: That's the old...

HF: That's the Engineering or the Community Services Building.

SG: And between these two wings, there's that little reflecting pool.

HF: Yep. That was there. Anyway, one thing that I think is very interesting, this building right here.

SG: That's the wing of the [xxx].

HF: That wing, of Education. Pre-1900. This part right here. That building stood by itself. That part of the building, the stucco building, you notice there's some arch. That was the blacksmith shop for the Indian School. Then in 1917, this building was built, and they built it as an addition to that building. Where they're now making into faculty offices. That was the blacksmith shop for the Indian school.

SG: That might be the old ...

SIDE ONE FINISHED

SIDE 2:

HF: And finally, looking at the plans for this building. It was there, and then yes. I'm sure that photograph is still around.

SG: Yea, we do have, yea...

HF: Of this building standing by itself.

SG: Yea, we do have that.

HF: And then there was the weather [xxx].

SG: That's amazing. This was sort of a miniature weather station. This was by the....

HF: They had the weather station out there. The barn was there. The barn, of course, the original barn burned down and then they built.

SG: This was dairy or horse?

HF: That was the dairy barn. The heating plant, where...

SG: That's directly behind Behmler.

HF: There was a spur line that went by there, and went out this way. In fact, that opening in the trees back over here is where the...in fact the road going in to the central parking lot, that was where the railroad tracks went. That's where the railroad tracks were. That road going into that...

SG: Whatever happened to the flagpole?

HF: The flagpole...

SG: This was in front of.....

HF: The plaque for that is up at West Central. The flagpole might actually at one point....we were going to put it down there, and then it was moved down to the athletic field.

SG: This was the flagpole that was dedicated to the World War I vets that stood in front of the administration building.

HF: The plaque is up on the experiment station.

SG: That's interesting. I also like the fact that this road which goes by Social Science and Behmler....

HF: This continued all the way down. Gay Hall wasn't built in there.

SG: I run, and I always run this road, so I really like on this map showing the track team... What were all the references to the "best in the land"...

HF: It means they had some hogs, they took a lot of pride in their hogs.

SG: This is Pig Town, right?

HF: Yea. The carpenter shop was in here at that end. The whole end here was carpenter shop. This was auto mechanics, and this was kind of a machine shop.

SG: The blacksmith became welding.

HF: These two houses, they were taken down, after the apartment complex was built, and the men that worked on the experiment station lived on the second floor, and then...

SG: There was a herdsman...

HF: This was a herdsman house. Hokansen lived downstairs. His family lived downstairs. Nick Rose folks lived in that little house there. Nick Rose grew up in that little house behind here.

SG: Is this a house, also?

HF: No, that was the chicken coop, I think. There was a greenhouse here at one time.

SG: This was where....

HF: The cow palace.

SG: The cow palace is...

HF: The carpenter said you learned by doing. Julius Feld's favorite's saying. You learn by doing.

SG: And he was the...

HF: He was a carpenter guy. Quite a comedian.

SG: I had a shop teacher like that.

HF: He had a moustache... and an old time Swede. One thing... that we made a footstool, then we put it all together, and when we were putting it together, he said, "Well, before we put in these [xxx] screws, before you do any more screwing, you spread the legs a little bit." Had everybody busting out laughing. He said, "Boys, get your mind out of the gutter." I guess he did that....

SG: He probably did that every year, yea. He was waiting for that reaction.

HF: It was all 14-year-old kids.

SG: Yea, you thought this was great stuff. So you came back in '46...

HF: Yea, came back in '46.

SG: And then what?

HF: I went back, and then that year, I...my dad got sick during the year. I hung it out, and then, actually I farmed on my own. I [xxx] work with my dad, and we didn't rent any land that... and my dad was sick with the ulcer, so, [xxx] shortage, get off the farm, we didn't rent any land. He started building houses in Benson. I would help him do the farm work and I would even help him do the carpentry. Then my brother, middle brother came home from the service the following year, and he got married, then he started farming. Then we farmed together that particular year. I could not get excited about farming, then two friends of mine who had been in the service – they joined the navy when they were juniors in high school – they came out and went to high school that particular year, and

they were going out to college. I ended up going down and registering just to see if I could get in to college. No intention of going to college.

SG: This was St. Paul.

HF: That was Gustavus Adolphus. I was farming...

SG: Where else would a good Swedish-American boy go to college?

HF: ...farm. I had no intention of really going. They were going to go to school. One decided to not go to college, and the other one decided to use some college. A family friend was visiting on the farm one day, and he never went on to college, and he said that if he would have the chance, he said, you should go. I thought about it overnight, and the next day my dad came out to the farm, and I said, "You know, I don't think I want to continue farming." I said, "I think I'd like to go to college." My dad looked at me with stern eyes, and said, "I'll help you start farming, but if you go to college, you're on your own." Being the stubborn Swede that I was – he was stubborn – that was ok, so I sold everything I had to my property. My dad had me save money before that, so I should have money, so I went off to college without asking my dad for it. The day I graduated from college, he became the proudest dad then.

SG: How old were you when you...

HF: I was 19.

SG: Sounds like you were an awfully mature 19-year-old...so you went to Gustavus...

HF: One year.

SG: One year.

HF: And then a friend of mine had a catalog from North Dakota State. They had an architecture program. I thought, golly, that looks awfully interesting. If I keep going to Gustavus, I'll be just... you become a teacher, preacher, whatever [xxx]. I thought that the night I registered for classes, so the next day when I registered for classes, I said I'm going to take pre-engineering so I could transfer to North Dakota State.

SG: So this was... '49?

HF: No, that was in '47.

SG: So you were at NDSU for 3 years.

HF: I went 2 years, and then I got kind of tired of it. Then I took over my dad's construction business. Then I got caught up in the Korean conflict. Ended up being married. Didn't go back to college until 1957. A friend of mine who graduated the year I dropped out always was trying to talk me into going back to college. I didn't want to go back. The office she was working out had a...I worked in a [xxx]. The office she was working in had an opening I would fit into nicely and so forth. Moved back to Fargo, went back to school, finished up, worked full-time [xxx]. That was a year and a half.

SG: Good for you. It's hard to go back, especially when you're married, and...

HF: Two kids.

SG: Yea.

HF: There's no getting away from this [xxx].

SG: I'm interested in how you got back here.

HF: Back here then... I worked 5½ years in Fargo [xxx] and then...being architectural engineering. I basically put two... two and a half years into straight architecture, and then after that, it was in civil engineering department. Then the office that I working in Fargo seemed that it was going down hill, so I saw an ad in the paper for a structural engineer in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. And then I got the job in Sioux Falls, SD. Worked for probably one of the best organizations, architectural firms...the best one in South Dakota. One of the better ones in the country. Had a chance to work under an excellent structural engineer. Got real antsy....

SG: I can image that would be high stress.

HF: It was quite high. But it was relaxing in a way. I was working there, and I quit smoking.

SG: That's hard to do in any conditions.

HF: Then I saw a job open up in Morris in the Minneapolis paper. Applied for it, and got it. Which is how I ended up in Morris.

SG: That was '68.

HF: That was in 1968. And by that time, I'd got my structural engineering registration. It was then that I got to Morris. At the time, it was growing, and we were maintaining -- when I started -- we were maintaining just under 300,000 square feet of buildings. Library 1 and library stage 2 and 3 were under construction. That square footage didn't include those buildings. By the time, by 1974 when HFA was completed, then it was the Food Service Building, Independence Hall and part of the complex, PE Center, the Heating Plant...and the apartments were in 1974. That had grown to 710,000 square feet.

SG: Sounds like not a whole lot had changed from the time that you left.

HF: The only thing that had changed, Gay Hall hadn't been constructed and Phase 1 of the Science, that had been built. Gay Hall 2 had just been completed in the summer of '67. I was there, I was able to grow with the campus.

SG: Was Jack provost then?

HF: Briggs was.

SG: Briggs was.

HF: The Provost was [xxx], and Briggs left, 1970, I think it was. I was hired... when I was hired, I was hired by the Director of Physical Plant on the Twin Cities campus. He was Assistant VP of Finance, named Roy Lund.

SG: Another good Swede.

HF: Probably why I got the job.

SG: Yea, right.

HF: We had a lot of supervisors who were Swedish. Anyway, then, there was always the rumor that plant services would come under a provost. But it wasn't until Briggs resigned and retired from the University of Minnesota that they turned the Physical Plant under the Chancellor. So when Jack was acting... he was acting provost because when I started, they hadn't established the name of provost yet. Briggs was still Dean. When Imholte took over, then plant services showed up in the annual budget. Nobody ever said I was no longer working for Roy Lund. Jack called me into the office one day and [xxx]. He said, "Harold, you'll be working for me now." I made a point when I was working... I always made a point that once a week I would go in and talk to the Dean [xxx] to go over anything [xxx]. Jack told me that [xxx]. I'd like to have the guy that hired me tell me this. I went down and talked to him, and he said he didn't know anything about it. So I was kind of in limbo on that. Jack kept me on. From then on, I worked [xxx]. That had to be in '69.

SG: I can't remember when Jack...

HF: But anyway, that's when I became, started working....

SG: What was the big issue about campus development, design, growth, this kind of thing?

HF: Under Roy Lund... Basically, a lot of people within the University system listened to what Roy Lund said and his recommendation as far as construction. A new vice president came in and changed all of that, and virtually took all responsibility away from Roy Lund. But one thing about Roy Lund -- I enjoyed working for him. He always... he had probably more power than he should have had, but every decision he made was for the best interest for the University as a whole. Whenever they needed any money on the Morris campus, he found money. He had money put away. He saved money [xxx].

SG: He saw an incredible amount of expansion and growth.

HF: Roy Lund started in the University way back in 1929, I think it was, 1930. Found a set of the sewer lines leaving the campus and going in to the city, and he designed that back in 1930.

SG: When were they having this conversation about essentially doubling the size of the campus.

HF: That was by 1974. 750,000, more than two and half times...

SG: I've seen plans where they were actually thinking about growing the campus like 4,000 students.

HF: That was a study made... a couple studies, but one that was the Roger Martin plan. That went, I think, up to 8,000 students. That was cut way back, and at one point we asked Roger Martin to lay out a plan for 2,000 students. Then it was cut back. From that, the ring road, or the north entrance was put in from that, and actually goes around...it's supposed to be part of the total remodeled [xxx].

SG: What are you most proud of?

HF: I don't know, I guess I feel that I was able to keep the mall fairly clear and keep the integrity of the old campus. I was a little bit leery and somewhat hesitant when the Student Center was designed with that great hall then encroached on the mall. I felt the architect ended up doing a good job of being able to tie that in and make it similar to the rest of the campus. [xxx].

- SG: Was that a battle? Were there people who were advocating, in the '60s, 70s, that what we really need to do is tear down all these buildings and start anew. We'll put up stuff that's more modern, and ...
- HF: No, no. Because all of the buildings, when they started out, were set back. Gay Hall was set back. Science building was set back. The gymnasium, the old gymnasium was taken down in front of the Science Building. That building wasn't really that compatible with the original Johnston architecture and it was in poor condition. The foundation was poor. I recommended that that building be taken down.
- SG: Les Lindor told me stories about how they tried to solidify all these buildings.
- HF: One thing that was talked about was pedestrian tunnels. It was Briggs' idea, and I concurred with it, it should be left an open campus without tunnels.
- SG: That's going to be a big controversial.... It sounds like there's always been this consensus that they need to preserve the mall area, and they need to preserve the historical campus.
- HF: I feel that. I have written down some things. The one thing that...this summer reunion they have now, that dates way, way back to the time my brother went to school. In fact, they'd have a big celebration for alumni and for students that came back in July, and they would have a big hog barbeque. I remember... that was before my time, Les Lindor would have information. What I remember when my brother was coming up for that, coming up for [xxx].
- SG: So it's a tradition. We have pictures from Station Days, which is different. But they would also do a big barbeque.
- HF: Yep. [xxx]. It was started again in 1946. There was a conservation crew, usually about 12-14 boys along with key faculty, would take this trip in the summertime. I got in on that. Normally, it was just seniors, but I [xxx]. I think it cost us \$20 a piece to go on this conservation trip.
- SG: So where did it go?
- HF: It went up to Duluth, up into Canada, and went a whole week. The first day, we left the campus and then they had a pick up that belonged to the University. Otherwise, personal cars were driven. Edson drove one, and Fenske drove one, that particular year. Bert drove the other one. But then we had the pickup, and one of those had to drive the pickup. [xxx]. A student would be driving a faculty car. I happened to be the one that drove Fenske's car.
- SG: What was the purpose of this?
- HF: It was for seeing nature and so forth. We went from here and camped [xxx].
- SG: Oh, great fun.
- HF: So we went from here, and then we went to the Duluth campus, which at that time, I think it was the Junior College campus or something like that. It was not the UMD. And we stayed in the gymnasium that time. From there, we drove up as far as Grand Marais, and then on the fair grounds there, we set up camp in one of the fairground buildings and stayed there then all week. From there we traveled into [xxx] Falls and up into Canada into what was at that time Port Arthur [xxx] up in there. Went up from there, looking at streams and so forth.

SG: So was this your first experience off the prairie?

HF: Not quite. I had a chance to go with my folks to Minneapolis when I was 6 years old.

SG: See the Foshay Tower.

HF: It was a great experience.

SG: How did they choose the students?

HF: I think we basically signed up. I know I signed up [xxx].

SG: This was during the summer.

HF: This would be in June, second week of June or something.

SG: Your dad, for being a hardheaded old Swede, was pretty tolerant.

HF: It was between seasons. Probably just after haying or just before.

SG: It really does sound like the campus was used a lot during the summer.

HF: Yes, the summer sessions.

SG: I've often wondered if it's something we don't do as well as people did during the West Central days. I almost have a sense – and you can correct me – but I almost have the sense it was more the center of larger community then than it is now.

HF: Some of the faculty at that time were 9 month [xxx]. Ted Long, John Anderson... and they worked on a ground crew in the summertime. And there were different activities. Miss Jelsup...she taught math. She worked 9 months out of the year. She was around there for the 4-H days in the summertime.

SG: What were 4-H days?

HF: That's, I can't remember what they called it, but kids could come up there and stay in the dormitories and come up 3, 4 days, and go to classes, and they had things going on. They usually put on....

SG: So it'd be a larger, regional group of 4-Hers.

HF: ...kids from...well, it'd be the same every year.

SG: They'd also do Women's Week.

HF: They had Homemakers for Women, and that was where the women would come.

SG: We have fairly nice group of records from that, complete with programs and that sort of thing.

HF: They'd have quite a curriculum for women to go to. That was put on basically by the extension services, through the ag school.

SG: I think we should wind this down a bit. Let me just ask you a couple last questions. So, looking at the campus today, what's your favorite part?

HF: The southern part. Oh, I don't know -- I like the whole campus. I should show you what they did for me for my retirement.

SG: I'd like to see that.

HF: I'm kind of proud of the whole thing.

SG: You should be. It's a lovely campus.

HF: There was one time when, it had to be in the early '70s, when we planted 1,500 trees. Had a kind of nursery here that could be moved on to the campus when they got bigger. Most of those were transplanted on the campus, so didn't have to buy expensive trees from a nursery.

SG: One of the things that has come out of the Getty thing and talking especially with Les, and also Wes Grey, I guess... the campus was always... the landscape was always sort of experimental. Even though there's this Morell and Nichols master plan that came out of the nineteen teens, that it was still experimental, and so the ag school would ship up trees and would say, why don't you guys try these and see what happens. Was that still sort of your sense when you were...

HF: They tried to ...is that running now?

SG: I can turn it off.

---TAPE RECORDED IS TURNED OFF

SG: So we were talking about your biggest satisfaction.

HF: I feel that one of my biggest satisfactions is the cooperation that developed between the experiment station and UMM. That was long in coming but it's working out very well at this point.

SG: What about... I can turn this off again if you want me to. What about the relationship of the campus to the larger community.

HF: I think that it's all come together quite a bit.

SG: Was there a lot of tension in the 60s and 70s?

HF: The community and the campus are working together very well. The one thing that I felt after the PE center was built, it was underused by the University, and I felt that there could be more use if the city, community education could find use for it and could find the support to oversee anything in the PE center, that it would be possible. It wasn't until the Regional Fitness Center came to be, a long time in coming...

SG: Now they're also talking about the biomass plant, which certainly the community needs also, which is pretty amazing.

HF: I always felt that, and I suggested at one time, that we provide steam for the high school and also for the hospital. This was in the '80s, kind of when energy and so forth... However, the hospital felt it would be feasible, but the high school assumed their equipment [xxx] and they didn't feel it would be the time to do that. They didn't encourage that at all. But it's coming about.

SG: What one aspect of the physical make-up of the campus – buildings, landscapes, etc – would you fight the most to preserve?

HF: I think basically the center part of the campus.

SG: The historic landscape in general? Anything that you would like to get rid of?

HF: It would have been nice to see the windrows complete. That would have cut down... the way it should have developed, that there be no straight through traffic anyplace through the campus. I mean coming in to the campus, you had to turn one direction or the other... from 4th St., from the north part of campus, and from the bypass.

SG: Anything else you'd want to add.

HF: There were other things that, when I first came on the campus in 1969, there was the first phase of high voltage 41-60 volt came out to the campus, and in the following year, phase 2 of that so they could feed the campus from all directions without a power outage.

SG: Thanks.