

## Getty Preservation Grant Interview

### LES LINDOR INTERVIEW

June 22, 2004

[Second of two interviews with Les Lindor]

Les Lindor  
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[Transcriber's Note: Les Lindor attended WCSA from 1934-1938. He was an instructor in the Ag Engineering department and was superintendent of buildings and grounds from 1949 through 1959 for WCSA, and for UMM from 1960-1965.]

Transcriber's Key:

LL: Les Lindor  
SG: Stephen Gross  
FM: Frank Martin  
... Incomplete sentence  
[xxx]: Unable to transcribe

Interviewers: Steven Gross and Frank Martin  
Interview Location: Lounge of Camden Hall

*Tape 2: Side 1*

SG: Today is June 22, 2004. This is Steve Gross and I am speaking with Les Lindor and Frank Martin in the lounge in Camden Hall on the campus of the University of Minnesota. Les and I have spoken before and one of the stories he told me before had to do with reinforcing buildings on campus that had been compromised during the drought years of the 1930s. And I just interrupted him a minute ago after he started to tell the story again, and so I'm just going to hand it over to you and let you describe that process because it was a fascinating story.

LL: Well, our theory was that after the drought years soils shifted -- probably from the [xxx Corvallisxxx] Hill coming this way -- and there was a lot of movement and Senior Hall, the corners of that, cracked out at about a 45 degree angle. So the move then was to try to go to the legislature and get some funds to correct that. They came up with, I think, \$25,000, and when the contractors got looking at it they were very, very reluctant to dig into that because there was really no way of figuring whether or not the job had been accomplished. So they were very reluctant to bid on it. So what happened then, somebody... I don't know who did this... They contacted a firm, I think out of Chicago. They called themselves Etrusion Prepacked. What they did, then, they pumped grout underneath the building. They drove, I think, maybe a one-inch pipe; the first line was out about fifteen feet from the building. And as they drove this pipe, they logged how much movement there was from each drop of this heavy weight. The theory, apparently, was if you moved perceptively, then it probably was a porous material, so they logged where that went. I think they went down about 43 feet, and then they pumped in grout, cement. And I think they mixed it with, as I recall, ash or an additive that made it somewhat more fluid so that they could push it. All right, as they came back up then, they filled each one of those voids and so when they got to the surface, then theoretically, it was done. Then they moved five feet closer to the building -- so they were out ten feet -- did likewise, and five feet from the building. I think their bid on that was \$10,000, and I think the legislature appropriated \$25,000, so that left us with some extra money. So they decided... well we got some more of that. So they started going around to these various buildings. The

downside of that was, when we were poking down these pipes, we really didn't have a good record – it was engineered way back when – so once in awhile we'd hit a heating main or a pipe. So I wound up with a bunch of that grout down in the heating plant. We plugged some sewers. Before we got done then... We pretty much just kept on going. We pumped grout under practically all of those buildings.

FM: What year was this, approximately?

LL: In the '50s.

FM: In the early '50s?

LL: Yeah, well it wouldn't be that early because you see I didn't get really doing that until about '49. So I'm going to guess that it would be about the middle '50s. So it wasn't a huge success in that we got grout... Grout got into the sewer system, the heating system and so on. When we got down to the gymnasium there, we had some problems with that. It wasn't very stable, so we had to tie the north wall to the south wall with one-inch tie rods to keep the thing from... When they pumped... They tried to keep the pressure down below 2 psi and so they got that moving a little bit. So that gave us a little concern. Then we were building what we call the new home ec building and then the decision was made if the subsoil was unstable they would build it on a slab. So they put about a two-foot slab underneath that building, and before they left they drilled through that two-foot slab and pumped grout underneath, and thought they'd stabilize it.

FM: Did it work, though? Did the cracking stop?

LL: It seemed to... it seemingly stopped. This building was one of those that were damaged when we had the fire, and we really don't know that much about it. The fire happened during the middle of the day. I came back from my noon break about one o'clock and it was just over here. I could see the smoke coming out of the windows. I still haven't completely figure that out, because when the thing finally got out in that southeast corner there, three stories up and you could look right on down, and in the northwest corner you could do likewise. To me it seemed like that if it was a centralized fire there should have been a hole there. Why there was a hole there and a hole there, I haven't figure out.

FM: What year was that?

LL: '49.

FM: Is that when the third floor was removed?

LL: Yes.

SG: Is that before or after the barn fire?

LL: No. We were finishing up this structure here when the barn started on fire.

SG: Okay. That earned you the name "Torchy," right?

LL: Yeah, I came on in '49 and I had a fire within two months, and the second fire within six months.

FM: That must have been a little hard.

LL: I think what happened... We were putting hay in that barn, and the town kids liked to come out here and play in there and I'm sure they must have started the fire. I'm sure it

- wasn't internal combustion, I'm sure of that. I think somebody must have started the fire. And I think, if I'm going to guess, I think in this building here when the girls came they unpacked their bags and they took them up into the attic for storage. My guess is maybe one of them sneaked a cigarette or something and it started. That would be my guess because there was no indication of an electrical fire or anything else.
- FM: So you served in this role from 1949 to 1960?
- LL: Yeah, until 1965 actually. And then... well what happened, Briggs was here and Ralph Smith was the superintendent up there and so they decided to separate the two units. At one point in time they were together you see, and so they separated that. When they separated that I had to make the decision either I was going to go with... here or stay here, or go with the experiment station. I was advised by Roy Lund, chief engineer at that time, this was not a faculty position, plant service director. If I went with the experiment station that was a faculty position. At that point in time I had about 16 years of tenure with my [xxx]. So that's what I did.
- FM: So then you worked at the experiment station, and when did you retire from that?
- LL: '86. And basically, through the end of... It would be the fall of '65 when I got out of here. I think the '67 legislature appropriated funds to buy the land up there for the experiment station, and we were on the way to getting that established.
- FM: I didn't realize that. That it was separate. I didn't realize that was not until 1967 that that was across the river.
- LL: Yeah, yeah. Then we moved over with our administrative offices in '73.
- FM: Do you remember... We were wondering who designed the building, the new experiment station headquarters – the architect?
- LL: I did everything. I was in charge of the construction other than the administration building. Ralph -- the superintendent -- he wanted to do that. I don't remember who the architect was on that.
- SG: That's interesting. You were here during those critical years when it was essentially transforming from WCSA to the university. What was it like? Was it chaotic? Was there a plan? Was there a new campus master plan done in 1960 when this transition happened?
- LL: You hit the right word when you said chaotic, and it was. Because I think what happened... I don't know if I want to be taped about this or not... There was a bit of a battle going on between Briggs and Smith. He was superintendent of the station and Briggs was provost here. So I think that maybe it wasn't as smooth as it might have been. I wouldn't want to place the blame for either one... I think that Briggs had almost an insurmountable job trying to get this thing going and Ralph was trying to protect his turf.
- FM: And ultimately they didn't have their own campuses. They split apart physically. They had always been so enmeshed before that.
- LL: Yeah, and you see... Basically, if the university wanted any land they had to go through the experiment station because all the land belonged to the experiment station. So they had to prove their need before they could get any land. That was a bit awkward.

- SG: What was lost by that divorce? Was there... what did the community moods... what did the campus moods... Because obviously it had to have changed the entire mission, profile, and function of the campus.
- LL: I think it's rather hard to define. You see we had been here so long that we had pretty good rapport with the community and most anything we wanted to do here was almost automatically granted. And, of course, with all due respect to Rod Briggs, he had a difficult job in trying to get this staffed. Basically he wanted to bring in people with PhDs and so on. When you look at it from that point of view, from the guy looking at this, a little college on the prairie... Why should I want to go out here to start up... So he had a difficult job in trying to recruit the personnel he wanted to. His job was tough. And Ralph then was... He looked at it like he was more or less kicked out, you know. And went up there and started that.
- FM: I was interested in going back a little earlier, in the '50s, when you were working here. How were the kids in the WCSA involved in the programs from the experiment station? Were they out planting things, doing research, were they helping with the research?
- LL: Nope, really not. But you see what happened... We went to school six months, and they had summer projects, and they were supervised projects. So the faculty then, a number of those, were employed in the summer and they would go around then and visit these kids who had projects. Projects might be raising hogs, raising beef cattle, or raising a crop...
- FM: And would this be done on their farms, in their hometowns, or would they be here?
- LL: No, no, they'd be at home. They were home projects. And the gals would be sewing projects, and canning...
- FM: And the faculty would actually go out and visit. The faculty from here.
- LL: Certain people would be designated as project supervisors. I think that is what they called them.
- SG: I think there was actually a newsletter. We don't have copies of it, but the Minnesota Historical Society does, called West Central School of Agriculture Projector. And the newsletters describe the summer projects that the students were working on. We need to get copies of these.
- FM: Wonder if they are in the archives at the station?
- SG: There is nothing there now. We have them now. We have it all now.
- FM: That's interesting. What we've been wondering – Sue and I – is... We know, starting in 1916, the experiment station used the campus as a laboratory for testing windbreaks and ornamental shrubs and they documented that every year in the bulletins. The question is, how were the high school kids involved? Were they involved at all in this up through the '50s up until the end? Were they involved... Was there a real separation between the work of the experiment station and the work of the WCSA, though they shared the campus?
- LL: Well, I don't know just how I want to answer that. I guess I dare say that I don't think the students were really involved at all. Like a guy by the name of John Anderson was the music instructor, and he was a horticultural buff you know. So way back when he did a lot of the planting. He was a photographer, so he was sort of artistically inclined. He played the violin. He was quite a guy. And Ted Long, another guy, he was an English

instructor, and he worked summers on campus. He'd control the dandelions, do the mowing, trim some trees... I think the thing that distinguished the cooperation was that it was sort of operated like a big family. You never paid much attention... There was no such thing as a job description. If somebody got sick, why the work was out and you just went over and filled in for them. Like in the wintertime then, with the farm crew, they couldn't be out in the fields, why I'd get those guys and they'd just come on down and I'd put them to work, you know painting in the tunnels, doing work like that – that wasn't too technical but it was still time consuming. We just did it that way.

SG: So you were borrowing people from the station farm crews to come and work on the campus.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

SG: Les, you were describing to me in an earlier conversation about Art Shore?

LL: Schiller.

SG: Okay. He was the fellow who was in charge of chickens. He also worked with the trees.

LL: Art apparently did not have any relatives. He had a niece over in Wisconsin. He lived in the basement of the chicken house. Real eccentric type of guy, haircut twice a year whether he needed it or not. In the dining hall, they had what they called "farm table" and fed all the guys there at the long table, maybe twenty people at it...

FM: This was in the student dining hall, over in Behmler.

LL: Yep, yep. He lived in the chicken house and at night he'd go down to the heating plant and he'd read the paper. He'd be a week behind. He'd said that "Time didn't mean nothing to me." He'd read the paper. We had a bathroom and shower. I don't know that he ever used the shower, but it was there. At one point in time the University business office called and asked him if he would please cash his checks. He had two years of checks that he had underneath the mattress.

FM: This was in the fifties?

LL: Yep, yep.

FM: Did he plant any trees? Did he somehow adopt trees?

LL: Yeah, he did that. Like down at the state park, he'd go down on Saturdays and he'd plant trees. I don't know what percentage of those trees he planted, but he planted a lot of them. I don't know that he did much on campus. That I'm not aware of because I think John Anderson was pretty much... You know, before Wes got in.

FM: I heard about him from Sue. What do you know about John Anderson?

SG: Yeah, he's this renaissance guy. I'm trying to recall a conversation I had with Wes. If I recall from Wes, that there really wasn't a crew, that there was not a professional crew. It was Anderson and whoever he could recruit. And I believe Wes, or perhaps it was you Les, talking about how there was a faculty member who... As soon as school ended grabbed a rake...

LL: Ted Long.

SG: That was Ted Long, and he'd rake the entire campus.

LL: It was all together different. In plant service, I think we had about four guys, that's about all I had. And we couldn't really get any hauling done until Slim Hokanson got done feeding his cows, so he could pick up a truck. We didn't even have a truck. We had a cart with big wheels on it and we'd haul our lumber on that.

FM: I'm interested a bit in the politics of all this and how intrusive Minneapolis and St. Paul was in all of this and to what extent did they dictate, or did they leave you guys alone...

LL: Pretty much left us alone.

FM: How about the student's food? Did you grow a lot? The cows, for instance... Was the milk for students' dining hall all from the farm here, the produce and everything?

LL: I think we got a case of scarlet fever here in about 1940 and that took care of that because the milk was not pasteurized.

FM: What about the produce?

LL: Eggs, we got the eggs down there and then we had a butchering class so I think some of that meat would wind up in the dining hall.

FM: That's what we're sort of interested in is how did the education of WCSA overlap with the experiment station research and projects, in any ways whether it was student projects, or volunteer crews for the landscape...

LL: I think what happened was the school was the primary deal, and then I think the experimental work was sort of people that were freed then, time on their hands and they started in doing the experimental work.

FM: Les, I believe you told me an earlier story about when you first started as a student in 1934 that you were assigned work in the orchard, and on one Saturday it interfered with your pheasant hunting. Will you tell that story?

LL: Yeah. I think what it amounted to, if you were employed, your job description wasn't at all specific. I mean you might work here, you might work there, so on and so on... He was referring... There was the orchard down by the rec center. That was, I think, about 10 acres at one point in time. I think it was planted roughly about 1930 and the trees were about three feet high. John Anderson, at that time dictated that he wanted those trees wrapped. So we wrapped trees...

FM: How did he get the students out there working? Did he just tell you to go out there and do it?

LL: We were employed by the NYA – the National Youth Administration.

SG: Oh yes, our friend FDR.

LL: Yeah, yeah, it's an interesting...

FM: Did that help the pay? Were the kids that came here... I mean it was the dust bowl, the Depression... '34 was pretty much the trough of the Depression...

SG: And out here it's [xxx] of the drought, it was incredibly dry out here.

LL: We didn't even harvest the crop in '34. Never took the binder out of the shed.

FM: On your farm?

LL: General – in this area.

SG: Wes has an anecdote, it's second hand. We can ask him about it. One of the windbreaks consisted of 400 spruce, and only three survived the drought years.

LL: What was that?

SG: One of the windbreaks consisted of 400 spruce and only three survived.

LL: Okay, okay.

FM: And that was sort of the purpose of what they were testing.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

FM: Going back to the NYA and all, so a lot of you kids were coming from farms where your folks didn't have a lot of money. Did you send... Like the CCC boys who sent money home... You must have known CCC people.

LL: You see what happened, a lot of the kids who came were through... They sort of run through that program [CCC] and didn't have anything else to do so they came to school. Our freshman football team averaged 209 pounds on the line. I was a 14-year-old...

SG: How old were these boys?

LL: Some of them were twenty.

SG: So they had been CCC enrollees.

LL: They had nothing else to do.

SG: So they were coming back to school at the age of 18, or 19, or 20.

LL: Yep, yep. I think we were paid... I mean it cost us \$20 bucks a quarter, I think. I worked off maybe \$15 of that.

FM: So you were NYA. Did you send any money home? Did you work here send money home?

LL: Well, I don't know that they sent any money home. You see money was almost nonexistent you know. We couldn't raise any money out...

FM: It was almost like the barter system, wasn't it?

LL: Yep. I think I came up with about \$5 bucks a month.

FM: A month. For your own expenses? \$5 bucks a quarter for tuition...

LL: Twenty.

FM: Twenty, but you got \$15 from the NYA...

LL: You got fifteen from the NYA, got to come up with five myself. I had to raise five bucks.

FM: What other sort of NYA projects were going on on campus. Or did you do work in town, did you work at the parks?

LL: I don't know how I'm going to answer that. See I had a job as a janitor in Spooner Hall, and that is how I did my work.

FM: And that was your NYA job.

LL: Yeah, my NYA job.

FM: Was NYA for people under 18? For kids like 14-18, or was there some age....

LL: I don't know that I ever knew that.

FM: Interesting. So how many students were in NYA? All of them or most of them?

LL: Oh, I'd say maybe 75%-80% at least. I remember a contractor over at Dumont had two boys who came down, played football. He'd come down every Friday and give them each \$20. The guys, our mouths just watered looking at that. \$20.

FM: Did you play other high schools in football?

LL: Yeah.

FM: It doesn't sound fair.

LL: Oh we got creamed. Those guys were full grown men. And here I was wringing wet about 130 pounds up against these guys 200, 210...

FM: But you were formidable as a team for other... I just think this whole Depression era is an untold story. How did the campus... can you recount... my uncle grew up in Huron or Mitchell... What's the town Hubert Humphrey is from in South Dakota?

LL: Mitchell.

FM: My uncle's family had the other drugstore. And Hubert... My uncle took Hubert's Muriel Humphrey to the high school prom. And he always said Hubert was quite a talker. And he remembered... He went to Northwestern University his freshman year, and he had to come back in '34 to help his father run the drugstore, or his mom. I think his father died. He needed to come back and he said he remembered coming back to Mitchell and he got off the train and it was just this cloud of dust. Was it like that here? Not that bad?

LL: I remember coming home from school, my mother had me take the coffee out to my dad – he was out in the field – it was about four o'clock in the afternoon. He couldn't see the horses, so he had to quit. And fences... We'd get Russian thistles that would come blowing across, come up to the fence, and then the dust would blow and they would be stopped there so there'd literally... Where the fence used to be now had a mound. So you could walk right across. And some of those mounds are in existence today, eroded to some extent, but it is very obvious...

FM: So there was a mound of sort of topsoil, brush that would... Umm, what about the campus? How did that hold up during this drought? Were the trees stressed, were the shrubs...

LL: I'm sure that they were. I don't know that they ever had an extensive watering system.

SG: But you weren't around during the summer.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

SG: October through the middle of March.

LL: Other than if we came to town, and that wasn't very often, we might swing on by. One of the things that was interesting to me... We had a bunch of horses here, and they were excellent horses. Of course every farmer was dependent on horsepower then. So they'd come to town to shop, and they'd make us swing on by. The horse pasture use to be just right across here where the parking lot is, and everybody would line up and look at those beautiful big Percheron horses.

FM: Were those part of a breeding program, or what were they used for?

LL: Primarily for farm work. Then they'd show them at the Chicago livestock exhibition.

FM: Now this campus was known for its lamb program, wasn't it?

LL: Yeah, right, I think that's probably right. And I think to be honest about that, probably they had a better publicity program with the lambs than what they had with some of the other.

FM: Oh, it was sort of like who talked the most. This is interesting too... Tell us a bit about – what'd they call them, "Field Days?"

LL: Yep.

FM: And those really started right at the beginning, didn't they? 1912, is the first one I heard of.

LL: What happened, it actually turned in to a sort of summer campout. It'd maybe run for two days -- and I'm not sure if it ran for three – but it maybe ran for two days. And they would maybe barbecue a couple of beef and ma and pa and all the kids would come and they'd bring blankets, and they'd spread them out on the lawn.

FM: Interesting. Where would they sleep?

LL: Where would they sleep?

FM: Yeah, where would they camp?

LL: Down at the square here, where you come on in to campus, where Briggs library is now.

FM: Oh yes, down here.

LL: It'd be back... yeah, in this area in here. [Transcriber's note: Apparently looking at a map.]

SG: So west of the library.

LL: Yeah, west of the library. And Jordan would have his barbecue stuff back over on that side...

SG: So where the annexes are now.

LL: Not that far...

FM: Who was Jordan?

LL: P. F. Jordan, he was the livestock man. He was in charge of lamb feeding.

FM: How did you spell his first name? Peoff?

LL: Yeah, Phil, Phil Jordan.

FM: Oh, Phil Jordan.

LL: Bob Jordan got to be his son and I think he [xxx].

SG: Harley Hanke succeeded him.

LL: Yeah, Harley Hanke succeeded him.

FM: So Phil Jordan, who worked with livestock, he'd sort of run the barbecue. I've seen, we have... You know what would be interesting, looking at these... We have 500 images from different archives and there are several of – this is a wonderful one here – and there are several of the barbecues on the field days.

SG: Harley Hanke donated a number of them.

FM: Like this one, maybe a field day, but we're not sure.

SG: No, that's much earlier.

FM: It's much earlier...

LL: But you see there would be lots of people. There may be 200-300 people – ma, pa and all the kids. And then they would invite a politician to come in and give a speech and...

FM: Do you remember any of the politicians who might have come?

LL: No, nope. I think at that point in time I wasn't too interested in politicians. So they'd come in and give a speech and then the band would play. So it was sort of a device to encourage some of the students to come.

FM: Where was the band playing? On the mall?

LL: Yeah, yeah. On the mall.

FM: And there would be like lectures too, wouldn't there, on farm techniques, or they'd tour the chickens and the cows and tour the barns...

LL: Well see that was really at Summer Field Day. See this was not... I think this was primarily a recruitment tool, as I look at it. Try to get students... Have a local politician...

FM: Oh really.

SG: I'd heard you'd had up to 8,000 people at some of these field days, where people would come to campus and they'd tour the... Sort of had an extension purpose to it.

LL: I don't know that I'd say there were 8,000 people, but there were lots of people. And you see, where the difference came in, at that point in time we were pretty much it as far as coming out with any technical information. What has happened in the meantime now, like Cenex and all those people, they have hired all their own agronomists and soil specialists, and so on. And they take our money and put on a big feed for everyone, free of charge, you know. So they have pretty well stolen that population away from us.

FM: So the pride of the growers, the ag companies...

LL: Yeah, they've pretty well taken that. But if you go back, like when I started out, if somebody had a question on agronomy, or a ration for cattle, or a feed additive, whatever, they just automatically came up here.

FM: And you had extension people who could answer those questions. Some of these pictures you might have some comments on. Now that was behind engineering, who planted that?

SG: Let's keep in mind that the tape recorder is blind.

FM: That's right, we should define...

SG: So, we should probably talk a little about what's depicted.

FM: This is image 084 – ornamental garden behind old engineering.

LL: I think...

SG: Sorry for being a pain.

LL: I think Wes pretty much... that was Wes' project.

FM: We'll ask him more about that.

LL: He'll fill that in for you.

FM: He had a goldfish pond. Let's just look at some others and if you want to comment. We'll say the number of the photo and what it is. Now these... We are looking at photo 129 of the barns. What were these small barns? They look like calving sheds.

LL: They were hog buildings.

FM: Hog buildings. Do you remember when those might have been constructed? I think the photo is showing early in the '20s maybe. It's interesting how they were built in a line like that going out, like a city street.

LL: Yeah, yeah. And you see the reason for that then, when they would dry down between them we'd be able to service the feeders and...

FM: They were long gone – now we are looking at the big black and white picture – they were long gone by 1960.

LL: Yeah, yeah.

SG: I recall someone telling me that there is a name that was attached to those. It was called "Pig Town."

LL: Yeah, Pig Town.

SG: I also recall that it was mobile, that they would move those every year.

LL: Yeah, sure. There was no base, they just sat on skids – maybe 6x6 skids.

SG: So what was the function of moving them?

LL: Really, nothing in particular. They would line them up and...

FM: Pigs are terribly destructive of the environment. Was that part of it?

LL: Really, no. I think they probably wanted new ground, try to get away from some diseases that might build up. But generally speaking, that whole area – and that would be over here [apparently pointing to map] – and it would maybe be a quarter of a mile long. Then there would be individual pens, and they would be looking at different formulations, feed formulations.

SG: So that would be east of the dairy barn and the horse barn, 100 yards or so? Not that far?

LL: More than that.

SG: More than that. Okay.

FM: And then there are some of these photos. This is a slide that Wes Gray gave us. We are looking at the garden behind Social Science. This was the annual garden behind Social Science in the '40s. We believe it was eliminated when they built the cow palace, which would have been about the time you... Actually it makes sense you wouldn't remember it, because it is about the time you came.

LL: Yeah, yeah. This had to be prior to 1949, I know that, because that's the addition on to the...

FM: Here's a question, too, for our architects. One of the issues we are interested in is the removal of the old balconies on the Clarence Johnston building. And this is an image, I believe this is Spooner, I may be wrong. Were you involved in removing any of the balconies or porches? Was there a structural reason they had been taken off?

LL: No, that would have been after.

FM: After '65.

LL: See like with the dorm here, where we came in, the entrance is still here, you had a similar one across from Spooner Hall and that was taken out.

FM: One of the big interests is how we are going to possibly restore some of these, or at least not remove any more. You can comment on some of these pictures that we are looking at. Now Edson Hall and... It's interesting this is a view... We are now looking at image 263, looking from the south, this is looking from xxxMiller Hillxxx towards the mall area, old education, Spooner?

LL: This one throws me a little bit. If I were going to guess, I'd guess I'd say that would have been Spooner.

FM: I think, [xxx] that it's looking from here, now we are looking on the south towards the mall near the football field.

LL: This, then, would be Spooner Hall, then this end would be what we called Music Hall, then back here doesn't really make sense to me what that is back there. And here is another building that, you know, that doesn't really belong anyplace.

FM: One thing we're really interested in learning — now this might not be your area of expertise, this one for Wes — [xxx] landscape, we are interested in knowing when these groves of spruce were planted and [xxx] woodlots, and we are looking again south through the mall.

SG: So Les, do you remember if those woodlots were there when you were here as a student?

LL: Oh yeah...

FM: Especially this large woodlot near where the current campus dining center is now and here, but this area is near the new dorms — Gay and Independence Hall.

LL: Yeah, and those were chicken houses back then.

FM: Oh really, chicken houses to the southeast of the mall.

SG: And those trees, from my perspective (and I'm hardly an expert), they look like they're coniferous. Right?

FM: These guys are, that's the spruce. This very solid woodlot, do you remember going in here? Was this used for anything? This whole square, or would students go back there and smoke cigarettes? Because that's a pretty private place.

LL: The sewer came on through, right on through here.

FM: Underground sewer.

LL: Underground sewer. No, that was heavy woodlot there.

FM: Heavy woodlot. Can you tell us a little bit about the windbreaks now, your memory of those both as a student... Did NYA students, for instance, work on maintaining and planting those windbreaks to the north?

LL: I think I'd have to defer to Wes on that because that would be his area. So...

FM: Again, help me here because I don't know that much about the building history. I'm working on the landscape. But one question I think our architect friends would be interested in is, were you aware that the buildings were designed by St. Paul architect Clarence Johnston, and did you have his original blueprints that you referred to...

LL: No, no.

FM: Never had those or anything like that?

LL: What really happened as far as blueprints and records... Almost nonexistent.

FM: Really.

- LL: You see they had a guy by the name of Albert Anderson who was sort of a handyman. He headquartered down at the heating plant, and if you had any problem, why you got a hold of Albert and he would fix it. One of the things that was always interesting to me, I'd bring something down to have it repaired and put it on the bench. He'd never work on it when I was there. He didn't want to be supervised, see. You just sort of left it alone and it worked.
- FM: The buildings, though, during your tenure in the fifties, especially the mall buildings, what were some of the... You kind of addressed the cracking and settling problems, did you have problems with roofs, tuck-pointing, plumbing, because at that point the buildings were 60 years old and beginning to give out.
- LL: All of the above. Particularly, as far as the heating was concerned, tracks weren't maintained. When I look back, like the girls dorm -- this building we're in here -- you'd go by in the wintertime and a lot of those windows would be open, you see. Had no control over the heat, so they just propped them open. So what happened from the monetary standpoint, the main campus took care of that. They supplied the budget. But I think at some point in time they gave us 'x' number of dollars and you had to run it yourself, you see. And that made believers out of us.
- FM: What was the sense on campus? Did the people in the [xxx] think that boy, it would be really nice, if we could score a lottery winning worth of money so that we could tear all these things done and start anew, or was the sense on campus that these buildings are really pretty interesting even though a little worse for wear, and it would really be nice to fix them up, clean them up, maintain them properly.
- LL: I think what happened, I think most of the people were products of the old Depression days, and maybe better than they ever had as they were growing up. I don't think there was a move afoot to really tear down the old and put up new. That was not the way they were brought up.
- FM: You used what you have. They were sort of moral about that. Did people see this campus in the fifties and sixties as historic, or did they just see it as it has been here, that it's used...sort of used car...
- LL: I think that it's part of the countryside... I think that we enjoyed a good reputation. This goes back to before my days here, but whoever put this thing together in the first place did a masterful job as far as picking together people of good moral character. As I look back on some of the guys that were here like Allan Edson, Ted Fenske, xxxPiney Prickett and you go right down the line, were just really great, great guys.
- FM: These were the university people?
- LL: Yeah, the West Central staff.
- FM: They were sort of drawn here weren't they? They...
- LL: Yeah. Some of that, you see they didn't have the process they have now -- no interviews and all that stuff. One of the guys, xxxCalvin Rolfxxx, ran a little resort in northern Minnesota, and the guys were up fishing and so on, and the car broke down. So as a passing shot, "Cal, if you ever need a job look us up." So two weeks later here came xxx Rolfxxx with a suitcase.
- FM: Well, it's an extraordinary campus and it's so unusual, too, this whole history of the Indian school and the WCSA. Were you very aware of the old Indian school chapter here, or didn't you know about it at all?

LL: Oh yeah, I think we knew about it. We knew that there'd been an Indian school because my dad was born and raised over north of Hoffman and there were some Indians that broke away from the school and wound up in that general area.

FM: It was something you celebrated or...

LL: No, no. You see, actually what happened the way that thing was written up that the Indians could go here tuition free and so on, very, very few of them took advantage of that and so on. I think like Grand Rapids...

[side one ends]

*Tape 2: Side 2*

[xxx]

FM: Oh, very interesting. When it changed to the university and these people came out – like Briggs and Granger and so forth – I understand there was some tension when they came but a lot of these young professors were sort of idealistic and wanted to create this sort of liberal arts experience, small college... Did you find that the campus might have been some ashamed of its agricultural roots, tried to cover them up, tear them down, erase them?

LL: Yes I think so. I don't think there is any question about that. Because generally speaking farmers didn't enjoy a real good reputation. They were dumb, and you know, just hard working, not innovative and so on. I think that existed and the university crowd was somewhat different from that. I think with all due respect to Briggs, the first criteria he was looking at was that they had to have a PhD and they may have a personality that may not fit...

FM: You mean the teachers.

LL: Yeah, the teachers. I think he was right in order to establish the college he needed to have a faculty ...

FM: I think they needed that for accreditation too, on some level...

SG: [xxxRolland Guyockxxx] who teaches history here, at some point you might find it interesting to speak with Rolland and he's... Rolland's expertise is the history of education and Rolland talks a bit about this sort of cleavage among the first university faculty here between those who really wanted to turn their backs on that tradition and heritage and others who really wanted to embrace it. Both were equally almost idealistic -- those who sort of wanted to civilize the countryside and those who were really sort of sensitive to the populist tradition.

FM: The populist tradition, which really [xxx]. As far as the populist tradition during the WCSA era, did you guys think of yourselves as populists?

LL: I don't know... I think we were just survivors is about what it amounted to. I think that we wanted to go to school... It was pretty obvious when you're born and raised and went through those Depression years, that didn't have a lot of appeal to us. So we wanted to move on and so on.

FM: But farming might not be a very secure future so you valued education, you valued the opportunity here.

LL: We knew that if we wanted to have the better life we had to go to school.

FM: Were people out in this part... You see I don't know this not being from here... Were people out here in the thirties and forties pretty DFL, Democrat? Or were there a lot of Republicans? Were they pro-FDR, pro...

LL: I think the farmers were basically pretty DFL and maybe the bankers and some of the businessmen were....

SG: It varied county by county. Swift County was more DFL and pretty radical... Farmers' Holiday Movement... Stevens County was more conservative. It may have something to do with morals and the fact that you have a larger city here that could make it more conservative.

FM: What about Pope County?

SG: Pope County, my sense is, perhaps was more DFL. A lot of it has to do with ethnicity.

FM: Yeah, there were more Finns and Swedes...

SG: Yeah, Norwegians, yeah... You know, all the really great DFL.... Well, this is before the DFL, this is Farmer Labor, before the merger, which was 1944...

FM: That was Humphrey too, wasn't it?

SG: Yeah, yeah. But Norwegians tended to be more radical and more...

FM: The Finns were the worst.

SG: Yeah, yeah.

FM: I have a friend who is coming to our conference xxxArnold Allimanxxx. You can meet him if you come and he's a geographer. He grew up in McGregor, speaks Finnish, second generation Finnish, his grandparents came over. He's more Finnish than he is American. But, you know, he's a communist. [laughter]

SG: They always distinguished between red Finns and white Finns. And the red Finns didn't go to church on Sunday and the white Finns were all good Lutherans.

FM: We'll have to ask Arnie which ones his parents were. Well, we could go on and on... Steve do you have any more questions about the... That would be helpful. Again, our report is going to look at the Indian school era, applied agricultural education, and looking at also the ornamental campus – the architecture, and then the liberal arts. The architects we are working with will make specific recommendations for buildings. They are the ones that should be talking to you because they could ask you about all the technical stuff that I don't know about. But if you come again, I hope you do come, you can meet them – xxxChuck Liddy and Michael Bjornbergxxx are very wonderful architects and very knowledgeable about everything. That would be very interesting talking with you as an engineer what you know about.

LL: Harold Fahl would feel right at home.

FM: Yeah, yeah. He should come too.

SG: Yeah Harold plans on being at the conference.

- FM: Harold's coming?
- SG: Yeah. Could I ask a couple of questions? One is a practical question because we started out today talking about the sort of underground fortress that was built around the key buildings on the mall. I'm curious, because there's always... There's these continuing conversations about ultimately doing tunnels, and I'm wondering about your impression about this, whether or not... The fact that you did all this grouting, whether or not that would have an affect on building tunnels connecting all these buildings.
- LL: I really don't think so because I think that when they put that grout in, probably 1½ [xxx]. I don't think there are any large voids.
- FM: What do you think in terms of the tradition of the campus, about the tunnels put between the buildings? And you know, since they are half out of the ground, basement level, they'd stick up between...
- SG: We know they'd stick up between Social Science and Behmler about five or six feet. Same down by Spooner. How are your feelings about that? Esthetically, historically, is that something we should be careful about – not intruding on the views between the buildings? How would people see that?
- LL: I think at Crookston they were built above ground. They wanted to do that here -- they wouldn't have any water problems. You could put your tunnel in and I don't think you'd have any water problems. Yeah, I really don't know. I think over time what they've tried to do is plant windbreaks to try to cushion the effect of the winter winds and the snowstorms and so on.
- FM: But now students go to school in pajamas. The windbreaks... There is a long tradition of windbreaks here, creating sort of a sheltered oasis here on the prairie. And it is appreciably calmer. We're hoping, as you... The tunnel between the student center and science is completely buried.
- LL: I think that was a good move.
- FM: It's harder, though, with these other older buildings.
- SG: The other question I have, and I asked a version of this when we talked the first time... Thinking about the campus we have lost, the buildings that have been changed and come down, and the landscape that has been changed over time, for good or for ill, what would you most want to bring back?
- LL: I don't know if I ever thought of that. As I look at it, a lot of that is still preserved. The dorms there, sort of that square area, I think the layout of the mall, an excellent addition, sort of ties everything together. I guess I would not be critical of the way it is now.
- FM: What do you thing is the most important thing to save now, that we have here? What is the most character defining, symbolic thing for campus, the institution, which should be saved? Is it the mall?
- LL: Yeah, it's the mall.
- FM: How about in terms of roads, entries?
- LL: Well, I think, traditionally, coming in from the "Y"...

FM: From fourth street.

LL: That's got to stay as I look at it. That to me really defines the campus, when the community made that route.

FM: What are your thoughts about the windbreaks? How should they be managed for the future? Should we cut them down and start over, just cut them down, just let them go?

LL: I wouldn't want you to cut them down. I think selective replanting should maintain them pretty well.

FM: What about the orchards? Would they be something worth replanting down around PE?

LL: Probably not. I think you've got some orchards up at the experiment station up there.

FM: At some point we hope to do a broader campus plan, looking at the Pomme de Terre watershed, leaving town and campus and the experiment station. The experiment station offers a lot of opportunities for bigger thinking about this campus. We're worried that there's going to be... When I say we I mean Sue Granger and some of us... We're worried that there is going to be like suburbs, houses built out here. Are you worried about that? Do you ever think about that? How the new growth out here might affect the campus? Have you any suggestions how we might plan for that?

LL: I'm a little disturbed with some of that stuff. For instance when you get out north of town where they are putting in 15-18 new homes in the best agricultural land that they've got. I really don't like to see that because you need that tillable land to grow food and so on. I don't think that should go into houses.

FM: There's some other plan that could be developed around the experiment station too that would be visible from the campus. So that is something we're addressing too and hopefully this will be done as an add-on next year, a larger [xxx]. I hope they talk to you again. I don't know what else to ask.

SG: I'm out of questions. I think we've ended. Thank you.

LL: You're welcome.