ORAL HISTORY

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Interviewer

Address: ____________________________
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Address: ____________________________

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1/90
Q: Yes, Dr. MacVicar, Kimball here.

A: Yes.

Q: Well, I trust it's convenient for us to chat.

A: It certainly is for me.

Q: I'm delighted that we were able to work this out. As I've interviewed Vice president Ruffner and Vice president See and I'm delighted to have the chance to interview you over those four critical years you were here 64-68, I believe.

A: That's correct.

Q: And we can get into the a little deeper as we move along. You had a most unusual background. I believe you are a biochemist and you were a Rhodes scholar and Phi Beta Kappa and an advisor to many government agencies in the capacity of a chemist I presume. Is that correct?

A: Chemist and Science Educator I would say.
Q: Let me start out then with a rather simple, direct question. Why did you come to SIUE in the Fall of 1964?

A: Because Mr. Morris would not take no for an answer.

Q: You were in Oklahoma I believe at the time.

A: That's correct. I had been Vice President for Academic Affairs at Oklahoma State University for a number of years when I was approached in 1964.

Q: Where and when and how did this arrangement with Delyte Morris take place?

A: Well I suspect that it started when I had a visit from a Vice President of Southern Illinois University who came by my office in Oklahoma and said that he'd like to chat for a little while about various things, which we did. I think he was doing a little head hunting for Dr. Morris on this trip that he was taking.

In any event, the subsequent occurrence was sometime after that. I'm not quite sure how long, but several months. Maybe even a year and a half or two years. I got a telephone call and in Mr. Morris' intimidating fashion he said, I'd like to send my airplane over to Stillwater and pick you up because I want you to see something about the University here in Illinois. With that kind of invitation it gets very difficult to say, no I won't even get on your airplane.

Q: Oh, yes.
A: Although I must say I knew almost nothing about SIU except what I had read in the press at the time about its very rapid growth and something less than totally complimentary commentary. In any event, I did visit and when I got there I found out that what he really wanted to do, what the purpose of that trip was was to show me what was happening at SIU with the view of my becoming what I believe he called the comprehensive university, what did he call that?

Q: Well one of the expressions was one university, two campuses.

A: Yes, and there was another single word that he used to describe it, but in any event, he was looking for someone to provide academic leadership for the vision that he had of that dual campus arrangement that was then in being and it was just getting under way; the idea of a single faculty that would be periodically together had actually taken place.

Well I was impressed in many ways, but I was not persuaded and so I went home and I don’t remember exactly how I said it whether it was in a letter or a telephone call, but I said I’m very satisfied where I am and I have many interesting things to do and it certainly was a great pleasure to meet you etcetera, etcetera, but don’t bother me.

He didn’t pay any attention to that and after a discrete interval, and I don’t remember how long that was, but not too many weeks went by, and there was another call and you know another airplane ride and this time Mr. Morris himself was in Kentucky Lake
at his summer place there. I did agree to come back and I was taken to Edwardsville and saw Dr. Stevens was the chief officer at Edwardsville at the time.

Q: Clarence Stevens.

A: I talked to Stevens and looked at the campus in development, where it was going to be. It was nothing basically, but a bunch of raw land at the time with almost no construction. I think maybe there was some limited construction under way but you know you had a vision of a magnificent site and what could be done there. Then I went down to Carbondale and had a long conversation with John Rendleman.

John had, of course, already been designated to be the Vice president for Business Affairs for the combined university. I talked to Charles Tenny and others and then went on to Kentucky Lake and Mr. Morris was at his persuasive best saying, you know you really are making a mistake if you don't come here because first you know we really need you. We need somebody like you. We're weak in the sciences and we need to strengthen it and we need to develop the ancillary professional areas like engineering and medicine and dentistry and you can help us do this. He painted a vision of what he saw SIU of the future was going to be and so I went home still undecided and I changed my mind.

I went on vacation shortly after getting back. This was in August. I went on vacation to western Colorado where I have the habit of going and while there I decided that he was right and I was wrong and I called him and said, I accept your offer, but I would
have to go back to Stillwater and tell my president what I am doing although he had known that I was making these trips. Mr. Morris said, I understand. I will make no announcement until you let me know. So that's the story.

Q: That's very interesting....

A: It was Delyte Morris deciding in his wisdom, or whatever motivated him that I was the person he wanted and he was not about to take no for an answer.

Q: Well he was persuasive of course.

A: Oh, he was absolutely you know, when he wanted you to do something it was almost impossible to tell him you wouldn't do it. He was most charming, most persuasive, most eloquent. You know he used all of the skill that he had learned as a teacher of speech and elocution and argumentation to do the things he did.

He was truly a great leader in higher education in the 1950s and 60s. I suspect that he did not receive the credit that he really deserved for what he accomplished there in southern Illinois. Anyway that's how I happened to end up having an experience that was a very exciting and interesting one indeed, a lot of things that I will never forget.

Q: Well, let's document that now please.

A: Well now we're talking mostly about Edwardsville.
Q: Well, yes, primarily Edwardsville and during this four year hitch here, what would you consider your most significant contributions to either Edwardsville or the one university concept?

A: Well the one university concept was something that didn’t work so I guess my contribution to the one university concept was that I worked very hard for four years to be two people on one salary. I used to say to myself somewhere and I can’t remember precisely where the mid-point was between Edwardsville and Carbondale as I went back and forth in the air or on the ground.

Q: Marissa?

A: I would give myself a little mantra by saying, it’s not the same place, it’s not the same place, it’s not the same place and all that ten times and by then I hoped that I had convinced myself that I was dealing with a different environment, that I was dealing with a different situation and what would work in one place would not in another.

The needs of one were different than the needs of the other. None had had a history and the other was building it’s history so I think that the four years that Ruffner and myself, and Rendleman worked together with Mr. Morris and Charles Tenny and many others, we made it work. The institution surged ahead dramatically in those years both in Carbondale and in Edwardsville. There were dramatic improvements in both places.
Those were great years of enrollment growth and money flowed like crazy both from the state funds and federal funds. So we had the challenge basically or not, where do we get the money to do what we have to do, but in many instances how do we use wisely these exploding resources which are hitting us. So I'm not sure that's a proper answer but I think I would say and I hope Ralph Ruffner would agree that for four years the three of us and Mr. Morris made it work, but quite frankly I didn't try to be a one university Vice President for Academic Affairs trying to create a common curriculum and to some degree that was subversive I suppose to what Mr. Morris' vision was but rather to build in Edwardsville the kind of orientation that I thought that institution should have.

Q: And what was that? What did you feel it should have?

A: That it should be oriented toward the needs of the people of that metro region and we need to remind ourselves that at that time there was no public higher education in the greater St. Louis area. For all practical purposes there just wasn’t any except SIU so we not only were serving the Illinois side, but we had a very large contingent of students who came from the west side of the river.

Q: Now you initially were in charge of Instructional Research and Publications. Did you do that primarily? Walk us through the four years of the various assignments you’ve had including Instructional Research and Publications.
A: Weil I was also the, for all practical purposes, the Executive Vice President.

Q: Of Academic Affairs?

A: Only when Mr. Morris was not resident in either Carbondale or Edwardsville, the decisions had to be made and there weren't very many that were more than routine ones.

Q: Well, then that would be above and beyond the traditional role of a vice president of academic affairs. That would be a surrogate or pro-tem president.

A: That's correct. But I would be honest and say that I tried very hard to not do anything that I knew Mr. Morris would not have approved of. I took care of the routine things, things had to be signed, documents had to be prepared and submitted so on and so on. Occasionally Mr. Morris would even be traveling when the Board of Higher Education would meet, although I think he rarely if ever missed and SIU board meeting.

Q: Well, the statement you made a moment ago about being very careful to carry out his wishes was of course most prudent because I'm sure you know what happened to Harold See, who had ideas and an agenda of his own.
A: I'd be honest and say I really don't. My contact with Mr. See was very limited. My memory was he was somewhere in Wisconsin when I came and I believe I did talk to him on the telephone on some issue or another that I can't now recall, but to go back to your main question what do you think I did. Except for doing four crucial years on the development of SIU Edwardsville sort of in a very key administrative position. I guess I would say that I left behind in 1968 an administrative team which wasn't necessarily all bad. I don't mean that it was perfect. But it included Jim Brown, and I read in the paper that Jim has come out of retirement to be the Acting Chancellor.

Q: Yes. Larry Pettit got himself into some difficulties and he was given a years leave of absence for professional development at full salary. And in the interim they brought out of retirement Jim Brown, who will function until in their collective wisdom they decide whether their going to keep the chancellor system or not. And if so who will be the new chancellor and its a rather exciting little time down here.

There's all kinds of ideas floating around that probably Lazerson might become the new chancellor and then we would need a new president. And we're envisioning a game of musical chairs down here, but your information is quite correct and I interviewed Jim Brown who about six weeks before this surprise it was rather interesting to get his views on tape prior to being brought back in harness so yes.

A: Well, I can't remember just quite where Jim was. When I came in 1964 he was I think in the English faculty.
Q: Well, yes, he was an plain ordinary professor of English. And then he got a chance to start working with the Board.

A: Well, the reason he got started was he was selected to be one of my hench persons on the Edwardsville campus.

Q: That ties that in.

A: And there were a number of others. Some of whom went on to other administrative positions and some who stayed. We put some deans in place.

Q: Well, that's certainly part of the MacVicar legacy.

A: And some of them I think are still there. The Dean of Education since the last I knew was still. He may have retired recently.

Q: I suspect so. This is interesting that you partially trained or fully trained a man like Brown who served nobly for years and then in the breech we go right back to him.

A: I don't take all the credit for all the thing Jim Brown has learned and was able to do. I would like to point out he was selected by me, given the opportunity to get involved in administration, and was successful at it and liked it and stayed on for a career basically in university administration. So I think that is the legacy. That has had an impact on he whole university for that matter for quite a long while.
Now I don't say that we didn't make any mistakes in selecting people you don't hire a lot of folks without making mistakes, but I think by in large we did a good job on that score and in that in that particular area Mr. Morris wasn't particularly interested. And he didn't play a major role in making those decisions on the academic side and I guess I would say the same thing was true in the area of business affairs.

John Rendleman pretty much made the decisions in terms of personnel. And Mr. Morris was, of course, deeply interested and very very personally involved in a managerial sense in the constructional of the physical facilities both in Carbondale and Edwardsville.

Q: Yes, there are stories around how he would sit and study blue prints and look out the window to be sure what was going on was according to blue prints and one time he decided that it wasn't and he asked someone to look into it. And there was suppose to have been a good reason, but of course Morris did not accept it and the contractor had to fulfill that particular item as Morris dictated.

A: To add to your anecdote about looking out the window and seeing something that wasn't being done in accordance with the plan, I have seen him personally, with a stack of blueprints pick out an error, something that was not done correctly in the planning. A door where there shouldn't be a door or a window where there shouldn't be a window or some other defect and embarrassed the architect with his amazing ability to sense what the physical structure is there on paper was going to look like and what it was going to be used for when it was completed.
Well, anyway that's one thing I didn't have anything to do with. Even the academic aspects of planning of the Edwardsville campus which one might argue that the academic vice president would have something important to say about just wasn't on the agenda.

I want to add one more thing. That is you said what do you remember positively that you have left behind? And one thing I do remember is that even though Mr. Morris and I did not always agree, we never disagreed disagreeably. And in the six years that I worked with him in a real sense for him more for than would be true in many situations. We just never let ourselves get involved in the personal difficulties that other people did.

I want to make it absolutely clear that as far as I'm concerned the vision of Morris about higher education in Southern Illinois as an underserved region in the United States was a vision that just from almost an perspective that you would want to imagine just wouldn't ever have happened. The Edwardsville campus the Carbondale campus it is a very real sense, a kind of educational miracle and it's of course his skill and his ability and his vision that developed with the help of a lot of other people including some very important Illinois politicians. And with the skillful assistance of John Rendleman who was a wizard of his own in his own right. And I think again that in the 4 years that I had something to do with Edwardsville we left an impression there that was an institution that was to serve the under served. It was to serve the need of an urban community. It was not going to be a liberal arts college perched on the hill overlooking the waste land of the Mississippi Bottoms.
Q: I want to stay on this, but I want to fine tune it a little and give it a little different focus that may be helpful regarding your satisfactions here.

A: Well I think I've already talked about that in saying you know what did I leave behind. I think my greatest satisfaction about Edwardsville is not the physical plant because I can't claim that I had much of anything to do with that but I did leave behind me a lot of people some of whom are still there and I think they have contributed enormously to the development of the institution and to the degree that I was able to influence the choice of not only administrators, but many faculty.

We were always recruiting and I was trying to be persuasive. I was trying to convey this vision and in some instances I was successful. Certainly the Lovejoy Library is a monument to the investment of enormous amounts of resources, not only in the physical building which I didn't have anything to do with, but I'd be frank to say that I don't think it was ideally planned for the university of the 90s because it wasn't possible then to visualize what was going to happen in the area of computers and communications.

Q: Yes.

A: But the investment of very great resources in the collection is something significant. I left a dental school at Edwardsville even though at the time that was done I wasn't at Edwardsville. I was in Carbondale, but I was on the committee that was doing the planning for expanding medical education in the state of Illinois and I argued
persuasively that there needed to be two dental schools. Now maybe today one could argue that’s one school too many even for a state with the population of Illinois. But anyway it’s there because I thought it ought to be there.

I thought it was a good decision and I guess I still think so. Having only one dental school and having it in Chicago would not have rendered the service to the greater southern Illinois area including St. Louis.

Q: Not at all, because of that miserable Cook County attitude that nothing south of Joliet matters.

A: Well the University of Illinois is a very snooty place. It has every good reason to be snooty. It’s an enormous intellectual engine, but it really historically has not paid much attention to anything south of Highway 40.

Q: Now I want to briefly pick up on a couple of things, or briefly on one and a little longer on another. You, part of your success and part of your fond memories, you were here during the halcyon days and you have mentioned several times the great resources which was wonderful. I presume you know that now and for the past several years Illinois, on per capita spent on education, is in the forties. That is among the lowest of the forty eight contiguous states and it’s really a very sad situation now. The library, yes it’s tremendous what we were able to do. Now we not only can’t order journals. We get hit lists and we’re asked which of these can we get rid of that will hurt you the least. It’s not a very pretty picture
right now. But having said that, let me flip the coin clear over or let me throw in a completely new coin and let’s look at some of your greatest frustrations during those four years.

A: I don’t have [un]happy memories about the going of Dean Going.

Q: Ah, yes.

A: He didn’t see what I saw the need was. He didn’t agree with me that we should not build a liberal arts college and even though he was a fine human being and an excellent scholar, I think probably for a liberal arts college was a superb dean, we just didn’t see eye to eye and he withdrew. There was no blood on the floor that anybody knew about. At least that’s my impression that he just said, well we aren’t going to make this, we don’t see this the same way.

That’s something that I don’t remember with pleasure, because as I say I think he was a fine human being. I think he was a good administrator in the wrong place. Now maybe I was wrong and he was right, but that’s a memory that I would rather not have and I would like to think that the rest of his career and I guess it was spent at Edwardsville so far as I know...

Q: Yes. He retired from here some years back. Lives in Edwardsville. Still lives here.

A: So I would not be surprised if he didn’t have some negative memories. I mean some personal memories also that he would say well I wish it hadn’t happened and he may very well say that was a
mistake, we shouldn't have had dentistry and we shouldn't have had engineering and we shouldn't have had business and teacher education shouldn't have been so important. You know we really ought to have had the good ol' stuff. You may remember Going because you were there at the same time.

Q: Yes. He was one of the persons I interviewed in August of '59. He and See for example and there's a little pathetic witticism down here and those that have been around as long as I am, we will sometimes talk about Dr. Saw and Dean Gone. I remember them both very well and I repeat Going did stay on and eventually retired here although he's getting ready to leave air long and go back down south where he's from. Anything else along this frustration line I'm on?

A: Well the frustration of attempting to deal with one of the worst urban problems in the world.

Q: Oh yes.

A: East St. Louis is clearly, in my opinion, one of the very, very severe evidences of prolonged corruption, bad management, poverty. Everything you want to say that can destroy the human spirit exists in East St. Louis in abundance. The struggle to do something significant about that, try to cope with it, was in one way an incredible challenge and in the other, an incredible sense of frustration. Katherine Dunham was brought to East St. Louis in an
effort to try to do something and motivate young men particularly and young women too, to escape from the trap that otherwise they were in. I guess from all I know she’s still there.

Q: Well her program is. She spends most of her time in the Caribbean now.

A: Well of course she’s a rather elderly lady.

Q: Yes.

A: You of course know the story of the Center for the Study of Crime, Delinquency, and Corrections, an intellectual effort to try to grapple with the problems and I would say I don’t think we did that. We did very successfully do some very interesting things and, indeed, some radical things in the years that I was there that I think today would be regarded as pretty far out.

Q: We haven’t solved those problems yet.

A: Oh I’m sure. But the point is that rather than saying we’re going to move out on the hill and leave that area to whatever happens, that’s not our business. And that was one way to go. I tried every way I could to see that that didn’t happen and I don’t think that I was very successful. I don’t know that anyone could have been successful.
Q: Well no one has found the answer yet. We had a charismatic mayor for about twelve years down there, but we finally got rid of him. And so there's a little hope. The new mayor, Mayor Bush, is one of our graduates.

A: I feel better.

A: During those four years there was never a time when we gave up. We kept trying different things. There were people that tried to grapple with this in a variety of ways. Dean Simon from the Carbondale campus exported the vocational technical institute from Carbondale to East St. Louis. He tried for several years to educate people in the area of vocational technical subjects, not really at the collegiate level, but more like a community college. At that time there was no community college in the East St. Louis area.

Q: Yes and the one that's down there now is in very serious trouble.

A: Oh it's always been. When they develop that community college district, they conveniently left out East St. Louis and it's immediate environment and picked up all of that enormous complex of industrial wealth that stretched north you know along the river.

Q: Yes.
A: That's one place where Mr. Morris and I did not agree incidentally. He opposed the development of that community college and I supported it and we both went our separate ways. We didn't ever discuss it very much. In that particular case, he lost and I think wisely in the history of the needs for higher education. I have about 10 more minutes before an appointment.

Q: Let's wisely use those ten minutes. You left in '68. How did that come about?

A: Mr. Morris told us, Mr. Rendleman and myself, what we were going to do.

Q: And that was?

A: That Rendleman was to be the Chancellor at Edwardsville and I was to be the Chancellor in Carbondale. You know that's the way the place ran for all the years I was there when Mr. Morris was president.

Q: All right. Then when did you go to Oregon?

A: In 1970.

Q: How did that come to pass?
A: Well that's a long and complex story, but let me say that I did not believe that the board that governed Southern Illinois University would recognize what was happening to Delyte Morris and that they would not take the appropriate action to deal with the problem and that the wise and discreet thing for Mr. MacVicar to do would be to find another position so that the inevitable confrontation that was developing would never take place.

Now I didn't know then what I know now and most people then, almost everyone I think, didn't recognize what was happening, but what ultimately happened was in the late 60s in terms of Mr. Morris', I guess I would say mental health.

Q: Yes, 1975 Rendleman was dying of emphysema and Morris was incapacitated with Alzheimers. That was a very sad situation here. With time running out, I cannot resist asking the question, do you ever wish you had stayed on here?

A: Yes. I enjoyed enormously the people that I had to work with in both places. That doesn’t say that I have any regrets at the decision I made to become president at Oregon State. This is a wonderful institution and I have had nothing but a feeling that I came to do a job that needed to be done, but, yes there are times in which I ask myself what would it have been like if I had stayed on, what would have happened? Would I have become the president or chancellor, whatever the title might be of the, the chief officer at, would the board have selected me? Would the faculty have agreed, because we were beginning in those days in the late 60’s to involve faculty in the decision making process.
But I think I did say to you and I want to say again that if you know when the decision was made by Mr. Morris to who was to do what, he reversed what both people wanted and I suspect he did it with very good reason. I think maybe it was a very wise choice he made, but if he had given me a choice I would have said I would like to be in Edwardsville and I'm sure John Rendleman would have said I want to be in Carbondale.

Q: Has this campus met the challenge of Morris' vision and the needs of the area and would you be part of it again? Would you do it again?

A: Well I think the answer to the second part is yes. An unqualified yes. I don't want to appear to be smugly self satisfied but I think that the decisions that were made during the period of '64 to '68 in the area of the academic thrust of the institution were the right decisions basically pushed the institution in the direction that it ought to have gone and so I guess the answer to that one is yes. Now the first part of the question again?

Q: To the extent you can answer it since you have been gone, but I'll try it anyway, what is your perception of how we have kept the course you promoted?

A: I guess I would say so far as I know and I admit that my knowledge has diminished over time, the answer must be, basically yes.
Q: That we have met the challenge.

A: I think the leadership that you have had in your current president who has been there for quite a long while has been a sound and careful deliberate kind of developmental change so far as I can tell. The short visit I made about four or five years ago, things had continued to evolve and develop, maybe less rapidly because of financial circumstances but the total program of the institution was one that moved in the right direction and yes I think certainly more could have been done with more resources than with what has been available. I think much has been accomplished. A great deal has been done.

Q: Well on that happy note, Dr. MacVicar, thanks for sharing all of this.

A: It's been nice to talk to you and if there's anything that you come across that you want to ask, give me a ring.

Q: I will.

A: What you do with all of this mish mash that your collecting, I don't have the foggiest notion but if it ever gets down in black and white I'd love to, like to read it.

Q: Splendid. You're about the fortieth person I've interviewed. I don't know how many more I can go on the funds we have, but that's neither here nor there. As soon as one of the young lady typists -
this will be typed up in rough manuscript. I will edit it then I
will send it to you for your editing deletions, additions,
emendations or whatever then you return it to me. I re-enter it into
the computer and then the pretty version goes in the archives for
public use and the original tape and original transcription are
restricted without the written permission of the interviewee.

All of this is the result of the, somewhat your successor I
guess, Vice President and Provost David Werner, who decided that
somebody should gather the memories of the pioneers and so I was put
on the summer salary. I'm a nine month school teacher and I was
delighted to be put on summer salary to do this glorified oral
interviewing. But it will all be properly archived and I repeat
within the next few weeks you will see what we have just chatted
about and then can make whatever additions, changes, whatever that
you please. So we'll, I'll be in touch with you and once again thank
you very much.

A: You bet. Okay, Stan, give my regards to the crew that were
there in those four years.

Q: I'll be delighted to. I certainly will. Thank you.
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