

CWU LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

James Nylander

(Transcription of Tape 1, Side 1)

LL ... [DATE?], head of the Physical Education Department. And the interviewer is Larry Lowther. And the technician is Jake Jacobson.

Jim, before we get into your Central career, would you just give us a little background on the family you came from, hometown, early education, where you got your degrees, and any career you had before coming to Central.

JN All right. I was born in [inaudible] of Chicago, Blue Island, Illinois. My father was a railroad man on the Rock Island. My whole family was pretty much from the Chicago area.

We moved around quite a bit, as you might expect a railroad family to do. Lived in Chicago, lived in Oklahoma, lived in Arkansas, went to ... lived in Peoria, Illinois, and a variety of places. My public school career was in all those places.

Then, I went to the Navy, and towards the end of World War II, I got out of the Navy. My folks were living in Peoria, and Bradley University was right across town. So I put the G.I. Bill into effect and went to Bradley University, just as a commuter across town, and did my undergraduate work at Bradley.

After Bradley, my first teaching job was at a military academy in Chicago, a private military academy, which was – to put it mildly – a disaster. [chuckles] I never want to do that again.

But then, I went to Grantsburg, Wisconsin, largely because at that point, I married a [inaudible] who was from Wisconsin, and both of us went to Grantsburg, Wisconsin.

I taught in the Grantsburg High School and she taught in the elementary school. We were three years, and I coached and taught Social Sciences.

From there, I went to Greeley, Colorado, where I got my master's degree. From there, I went to Evergreen Park, Illinois, where I taught in the high school there, quite close to where my home had been in Chicago. And I taught three years there.

One little point of interest about Evergreen Park that's come up recently. The Evergreen Park High School, where I taught immediately before coming to Central, was the high school of the now-infamous Unabomber. And I had the Unabomber in my classes there. I don't know whether to brag about that [laughing] or how to put that.

But I remember him very well. Just a nice, quite little kid in school that I knew. But he certainly has gotten a lot of attention.

LL The person indicted in [inaudible].

JN Right. He's the alleged bomber that has taken on the name of the Unabomber. And, of course, that's still in the courts, and that's still to be decided.

But then, after three years there, I got the opportunity to come to Central, and came to Central in 1957.

LL Jim, when you were an undergraduate in college, did you participate in athletics; and if so, which ones?

JN To some extent. I played a little bit of football and a little bit of baseball in college, and had done the same in high school. And the reason I say it was a "little bit" of football and baseball is, for one reason, that I really wasn't really very good. [laughing]

And it took me years to admit that. But I had some fun playing, but never got too serious about it; because, as I say, I wasn't particularly good, and I had other interests besides.

I majored in Physical Education because of my interest in sports at that time. I also had a second major, in History, at that time. And that has probably become far more important over the years.

LL Did you combine those two interests in your graduate work?

JN To some extent. Although grad work was [inaudible] to do. I got my degree in Physical Education because that's where most of my teaching was.

And, although I still had an interest in history ... some people say you can tell for yourself what your real interests are by looking at your bookshelf and seeing what books you have there. And as I looked at my bookshelf, I found more history than anything else so [laughing] ...

LL Well, you can't be all bad. [laughter]

JN Said the historian! [laughter]

LL In what year then did you come to Central?

JN I came here in 1957, as a baseball coach and an assistant professor of [inaudible].

LL OK. And what kind of teaching assignment duties did you have as a professor?

JN The teaching in our department at that time at the undergraduate [level] was a lot of Physical Education courses. But we also had what came to be known as "leisure services." I guess we called them "recreation" classes in those days. And I taught those.

And taught some Health, because the department was known as Health, Physical Education and Recreation. And [you] taught just about anything they asked you to teach. Which was kind of frustrating at times, because you really didn't have the background to do so the things you were asked to do.

But the emphasis at that time, when I was hired, was on being the baseball coach. I guess that's one of the problems at that time. And it really became apparent. I taught some Recreation classes. I can still remember almost falling asleep during one of my lectures. [laughter] Recreation class wasn't a really tricky thing to do.

LL You came in as an assistant professor. What year did you retire?

JN I retired in 1994.

LL And what rank did you hold at that time?

JN Professor of Physical Education.

LL And did you teach in any department other than Physical Education?

JN Yeah, I taught mainly in different Honors programs during all the years. Most recently, the Douglas Honors. I've been active in that almost since its inception, which is about 16 or 17 years ago.

But prior to that, I did a couple of other Honors programs. One was run by Ray Smith. Taught in that. Another one was run by Ray Heimbeck and I taught in that.

So it seems that I got caught up in different Honors programs. I had an interest in that. And these were almost always kind of non-credited, I mean, non-credited for the professor. You volunteered because you enjoyed it and had an interest in it.

LL What was your impression of the quality of the Honors programs at Central?

JN Well, I value the Douglas Honors experience very much. The other programs, I think, were very good. They were short-lived. Really having nothing to compare them to, I would be hard put to evaluate very closely.

But I think they were good programs. They had people in these programs who had a real interest in the different subjects.

I remember Ray Smith – I got acquainted with Ray, and he knew I had an interest in some aspects of sport that were not quite the same as everybody else had. Frankly, I was very critical of a lot of what went on in sports.

And these were days when there was a lot of criticism of sports. This was the time of ... oh, one famous person, Jack Scott, had written some books. And they were quite critical about I guess what you'd call the over-emphasis on sports, and the exploitation of college athletes, and even professional athletes. Although it's hard to imagine a person who's making that much money being exploited.

I had some rather strong feelings along those lines, and I was asked if I had any ideas about teaching classes. And I did.

In fact, I'm teaching right now. I'm still teaching in Douglas Honors. My teaching partner is Ken Munsell from the History Department. And he tells me that a good many years ago, as a freshman, he came here and took one of my Honors classes that many years ago, and here we are sitting down teaching together many years later. Kind of interesting.

He said I said things about a sport that he had never heard a coach talk about before and thought that wasn't going to do him any good. [chuckles]

LL What kind of problems did you perceive in the athletic program? You mentioned exploitation of athletes. In what way were they exploited?

JN Well, I always felt – and still do feel – that college sports, even high school sports, are overemphasized. And they simply demand too much time, too much energy, of the athletes.

And particularly, this happens in college, where athletes are brought into college, given so-called scholarships – and many of them are not really scholarships, they're just help to get you into college, and enough help to take care of the oversized egos that some high-school-about-to-be-college athletes have. And so they can just say they have a scholarship.

And it just – it becomes the most important thing that they're doing in college. And this deprives them of a good education in many cases.

This has gone on for a long time. Almost every decade, we see movements toward correcting that, which do absolutely nothing that I've seen yet to correct it. Makes for a lot of big talk.

But I feel for the most part, colleges simply demand too much. And I have to say – and I could get in trouble from some of my colleagues for saying this but that's all right, I usually do – some of the people who are coaching, and some of the people who are coaching and teaching, really don't have the background to be teachers.

And they hire them. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, I was hired to be the baseball coach. I was put into classes that I was simply not prepared to teach. And I know that that has happened ever since, and it's still happening today.

Some people claim that's not true. I have been there, I've been pretty close to it, and I think it is true. This is one of my complaints of that nature.

LL Have you personally observed quite a number of athletes who have used up their eligibility without being prepared for any career?

JN Yes, I have. I think they're working toward lessening that possibility now, because there is a lot of attention being given to schools, colleges and programs that graduate their athletes. They're keeping score.

Like Bill Bradley and some of the people in the Senate have actually attempted to initiate a system where universities and colleges are evaluated partially on how many athletes graduate. And I think this is certainly a step in the right direction.

But in the past, there wasn't that emphasis; and over the years, you saw many, many athletes finish their eligibility and head off down the road, maybe back to the same community where they had lived, and they are really quite unprepared.

Of course, this is not all the cases. There are some really fine students. Some people come to college and get good educations that are good athletes, so it's always dangerous to try to say this is the general rule, because it's not general. But it happens over and over and I want to stop this.

LL Do you think that this is something in the control of the university and the college, or is it a consequence of the demands of society that the university can't resist?

JN Well, I would say that they are demands that they can resist if they did want to resist. Yes, I think it is in the control of the colleges and universities, and it's right square in the hands of the administrations.

College presidents are probably the ones who could do the most, but they are under all kinds of pressures to raise money. Everyone talks about the year that a university has attained [inaudible] or has an outstanding season. The amount of money given by alums that year is far greater than other years. So they manage to tie those things together.

And, of course, colleges and universities are very much in a money-raising mode. They are clearly looking for ways to raise money, and ostensibly, I guess, do good things with it.

But if you have to do that at the price of exploiting young people – and now, of course, that's grown to include, in recent years, women. Women's programs have become exactly the same thing.

Actually, just in my last few years, the influx of women students in the Physical Education departments becoming the so-called jocks in the department, like male athletes have been in the past.

And now, some of those people are here because they're athletes. But I'm afraid that they're made up of the same mix. Some are serious students, some are not.

LL Is part of the reason of the failure is that athletes are recruited who do not really have the intellectual qualities to succeed in college?

JN Absolutely. I think they are recruited because they have been successful in high school.

And, of course, this taking advantage of these young people starts in high school. High school coaches are often judged by how many of their athletes get college scholarships. If a high school coach can show that a large number of his athletes – and now, "her" athletes – go to college on scholarships, that's a sign that they must be a pretty good coach.

And I'm afraid that that, in my mind, is very unfortunate.

LL Did you feel then that you were a voice crying in the wilderness, or were there other faculty members of administrators who felt the same way, and gave you support in your complaints?

JN There were some perhaps, but not very many. Yeah, I didn't feel that way. It never worried me. I just went ahead and said what I had to say, and had a lot of people upset at me much of the time.

It got to the point where I felt if half the faculty wasn't mad at me for something, I wasn't doing my job! [laughter]

But it never got bad enough to where I had to leave. In fact, I had many talks with friends that were coaches. And they disagreed with me, and that's all right. That's what my calling them was all about, both discussing and disagreeing. But I did [inaudible] and still do.

LL Were there other times with problems in the department that you'd like to talk about?

JN Oh, I suppose you could get into such things as ... some of the classes that were taught in the Physical Education Department were less than things that ought to be taught in a university setting, I thought.

When you are using an associate or full professor to teach a class in weight training, I have to question that. Is that really a good use of faculty talent?

Of course, I don't know how that person got to be an associate or full professor. Maybe he did because he was really good at weight training. But frequently, these classes were tied very closely to building up the strength of certain teams. And I was not sure that the [sigh] that the goals that were sought in these classes were really university/higher-education caliber.

And other classes, too. I mean, there was a great many activity classes, which I very definitely do believe in. I think those are good classes for young students to take. If they have an interest in those things, and they teach recreational skills, they help.

And I've had students say, "Boy, I have a rough week in my schedule. I just look forward to come to this class and relax."

And maybe it's a very simple class in bowling or basketball. That's sort of the purpose. It doesn't take a great deal of time or energy. And used in that way, it's a good benefit. As I say, overemphasis of who the faculty is that's teaching some of those, that does no [inaudible].

LL Did you notice over time that there were improvements in regard to these [inaudible]?

JN I'm not sure I've seen an improvement. Use of those kinds of things have perhaps become more sophisticated, but I think [inaudible].

LL How would you evaluate the Physical Education Department and the Athletic Department as compared with other college programs of institutions of this size?

JN Oh, first of all, I haven't been around enough to be able to compare a lot of them, but I have been to some.

I feel that Central had a real advantage two years ago, when the Athletic Department and the Physical Education Department were combined. We were in a small-college situation, and we had people doing both. And they had some control, a little more control, over the kind of people that were teaching and coaching.

A few years ago, as has happened at many colleges of our type, the athletic programs wanted to go more "big-time," which is the word that's often used to describe it. Coaches became more highly specialized, and there came a separation between physical education and athletics.

That is very much the case in our department. A few years ago, I can remember, we had a football coach that was very successful. He – I won't get anybody in trouble here, so I'm not mentioning names – but he spent a lot of time recruiting. He'd take off and he'd recruit. Well, he had classes that he was assigned to, and these classes just did nothing.

And the department chairman at the time said, "You can't do that. You're assigned to classes. Part of your salary is dependent on these classes."

And he said, "Look, I've got recruiting to do. I've got to get the right people on that football field next year, or I don't win."

And, as ridiculous as it sounds, as the department chairman put pressure on him to be there, he went to the president of this university and said, "This department chairman is giving me trouble. I don't have time to teach those classes."

Whereupon the college president called the department chairman and said, "Lay off that guy. He's got to do recruiting."

The department chairman was rather amazed [chuckles]. But they found T.A.s, they found students, to take some of these classes.

And he went recruiting. He won a lot of games. He's now back East at a larger university. Those kinds of things are a little hard to swallow.

So, I think until the separation became very clear that there's an Athletic Department and there's a P.E. Department, that's not quite as likely to happen. Because you were hired to do both.

You were hired to coach, and maybe you'd coach one season a year. And then, you taught. And it still has its problems, but it's become ... to me, it's become worse. But some people think it's better, separating them.

LL Did you think that the courses taught in the P.E. Department, other than the activities courses, that those courses should have solid academic content? Should we intellectually challenge them?

JN I guess I would have to say some were, some weren't. And naturally, I didn't – I think to ease my way out of that, I would say mine were. [chuckles]

But I'm pretty sure that some of the courses taught were pretty watered-down courses. I mean, they were not classes that had much academic substance to them.

And I – that always bothered me. I wondered what to do about that, and never really figured it out. I just had the best thing I could with my classes.

I guess one of the things that I did appreciate over the years is that I had the freedom to do that. I could teach the kind of classes I wanted.

And one course was the History of Physical Education, which went right into my interest line. It was both physical education and sports, and it was history. And I thought those were pretty good courses.

And although they were very tough courses, I suppose, nobody ever complained about it. I mean, the Administration didn't come and say, "We've got to ease up on some of these athletes."

It was apparent, in short order, that the athletes never took the classes, which I found kind of interesting. Except for a few.

But that's one of the kinds of things that I never really did figure out. Again, I felt fortunate in that I could run my own class the way I wanted to, that I could go out and teach the [inaudible]. And I could say what I wanted to without any people mad.

LL Did you require your students to make much use of the library?

JN Oh, yeah. They had good, long reading lists. In fact, I never used textbooks. All their reading was from the library. And they wrote term papers, they wrote blue book tests.

And I used to get a kick out of when seniors would take the class and I'd give them a blue book test and they'd say, "What's a blue book?" That would tell me something right there. [laughter]

But, as always, there were some very good students in that group. And there were some who simply weren't great, who had never been pushed.

We would have transfer students come in from other places, community colleges and other universities, and they just weren't used to being – they didn't even want to come to class.

And when I let them know that they did have to come to class, and that they had certain things they had to do, they kind of went back to their head coach and said, "What's going on with that guy?"

And that guy usually would say either "Well, just ignore him or put up with him," which was the way it went. But then, that made it interesting for me.

LL If you have a grandchild interested in physical education, would you recommend that they go to Central?

JN I could do that, as long as I had something to say on what classes and what professors they took.

I said that about Central, and I've been here a long time. I knew the faculty quite well, and my feeling has always been that you can come to Central and get as good an education as you can get anywhere – actually, *anyplace*. But you've got to have somebody advising you what professors to take.

You could also come to Central and take classes that appear to be good, and you could get a bad education, just miss out on the whole thing here at Central. I mean, there are some people here [chuckles] that don't expect anything. And I think that's so bad.

But I have advised many students on that very thing. "Who should I take this class from?"

My first job is to ascertain why they're asking the question. Are they looking for an easy way through, or do they want to get an education? If they're looking for an easy way through, I say go ask somebody else. I don't have time for it. [chuckles]

LL Did you notice any change in the kind and quality of students that have come to Central over the years?

JN I think so. That, again, is a hard thing to make sure of. And it seems like it changed at times; it would get better and then it would get worse. But I think generally it has been better.

And, of course, to try to judge the caliber of a student at Central by the students who got into Physical Education, that would be difficult, too, because they were [inaudible]. Just as the students in [inaudible], there were outstanding students there. But they're not [inaudible] Central students either.

I think generally, they have been. And that's just kind of a vague perception, although I couldn't tell you exactly why.

LL You came in 1957, right at the end of Dr. [Robert E.] McConnell's tenure. Did you get to know him at all?

JN He hired me. And I was under him for maybe a year or so, as I recall.

Yeah, I came out for an interview. I remember, I was standing in the school office back in Chicago, and I got a phone call from him. And he said, "Would you pay your own way to come out to Central for an interview?"

Well, I thought that was kind of hard. It was kind of an expensive trip and I said, "Well, I don't know. Do I have a pretty good chance of getting the job?"

He said, "Well, let's do it this way. Would you fly on your own to Denver? And I'll fly to Denver and you'll have an interview there."

And I said, "Yeah, I would do that."

He said, "Good. I'll pay your way all the way out to Ellensburg."

He was just testing me to see whether I was willing to put forth my own money. [chuckles] And I should have known at that time that this was a tricky deal they were giving me here. [laughter] But I did, I flew out here for an interview and liked it.

LL Was it customary for Dr. McConnell to do the hiring for different departments?

JN It was strange, and I wondered about that myself. Leo Nicholson was head of the department at that time, and he was, I know, he was on a trip. Because he even said, through some correspondence, that he may stop by at the summer camp where my wife and I were working. But he didn't. So he was gone, so possibly in his absence.

Also, I think there was a little – I didn't find this out for years later, several years later – that there was a little bit of a tiff going on here between the hiring of two people. And I think that Leo Nicholson, and maybe some other people, wanted one person hired, and someone else wanted somebody that wasn't well known among the people here.

It's funny, because I learned later that person who was ... was Adrian Beamer – Bink Beamer – and they wanted to hire him or they wanted to hire me, and they were arguing about this. And they ended up hiring both of us the same year.

And since that, Adrian and his wife have become very good friends of ours, and we laugh about it now. But I think there were certain people that wanted Beamer because they had known for a long time that he was a good football coach.

And I came, of course, as a baseball coach, replacing Warren Tappen. And I think they were having a little snit about that or something, and that's why McConnell got into it, into the act. But see, I didn't even know that at the time.

I did think it was interesting that they went all the way to Chicago to hire a coach.

LL Were you coaching at the college level at that time?

JN No, high school.

LL High school. And they knew about you. What had you done –

JN I had applied. I had seen the job. The job had been listed at Colorado State in Greeley, where I was doing graduate work. And I just thought this was – I wrote and applied for the job. And they wrote back and said they were [inaudible].

LL Do you have any other recollections of Dr. McConnell that you'd like to share? Or any general impressions of him as a college president?

JN Not really too much. I knew him such a short time. I found him to be a real gentleman. I really don't have much complaint about him. I have heard a lot of things that make me think that if I had worked under him for a number of years, I may have had some complaints.

I remember the librarian at that time griping that the main thing she had to do to keep Dr. McConnell happy was to finish the year with money left in the book budget. And I remember thinking that was strange. [laughing] I always thought the librarian [inaudible] more money.

But it seems like he apparently had some very conservative views along those lines. But I really had no complaint about him. He hired me and treated me fine. And I thought he was a real gentleman.

In fact, my wife and I, the first day we came to town, we stayed in the old Antlers Hotel while we were finding a place to live. And he came down there to greet us and I thought that – that really impressed me, a college president coming down and saying hello. I think that was the middle of September, maybe a couple weeks before school.

LL Some have spoken of Dr. McConnell as somewhat paternalistic, suggesting that there may have been too much interference in the way he practically did the work or [inaudible].

JN Yeah.

LL Did you ever sense any of that?

JN I sensed it. I heard it. I'm quite sure it took place. But it never touched me directly, so I have no experience with that to verify it.

LL Now, think back over the years, both with him and the P.E. Department. Are there faculty or administrators that stand out in your mind as particularly excellent people?

JN Well, I ... it's always hard to put names to something like that; but yes, I did find ... I found being at Central a very rich experience, because of the very thing you mentioned. I think there were some outstanding faculty here.

I got to know people in many departments. In fact, at that time I took classes for credit. During that time, I took classes in the History Department, Philosophy, Political Science. I even took a course from the Air Science Department on navigation. At the time, I was interested in being a pilot.

And I took many classes, and had friends in a good many departments. And this was a rich part of the experience. I didn't have quite as much to do with administrators. I don't know whether I tried to avoid them or not. [laughing]

But almost every faculty member finds himself at times rather irritated because of decisions that come down from on high.

One administrator that I really hold in high regard, and a fairly recent one, is Burt Williams. I just have a high regard for him. And partially, that was because of his [involvement] with the Douglas Honors College.

The Douglas Honors College figures very strongly in my feeling about Central. It's just one of the richest experiences that I've had.

He was very supportive of the Douglas Honors College, as I'm sure you know. And he was the kind of administrator who was not afraid to go to bat for a program or for people.

I just have maybe say one thing that bothered me about some administrators, that they were always so cautious. I'm not sure whether it involved their superiors, or actually their own lack of courage.

But it just felt like so many administrators played things so cautiously. And Burt Williams didn't. As far as I know, he was not a cautious type. He said we had [inaudible].

He made some people mad, which goes without saying. But he did battle and fight for things that I thought were important, and other people thought were important, to a college. And they were usually along academic lines. And I hold him in very high regard.

LL Do you remember any problems that existed between the teaching faculty and administrators?

JN Vaguely. I remember that there were problems, but I'd be hard put to tell you just what they were. There were always people who were dissatisfied, and [about] things such as classes that were given, the schedules that were given, promotions, lack of promotions.

These were things that are kind of the everyday work of a college community, at the departmental level or higher. And I'm sure that there were people who didn't get promoted when they felt they should.

I fall in that category myself. I remember one year I thought I deserved to be promoted, I was not promoted. And I sounded off rather lustily to several people. And just, again, decided that I could keep this to myself; but I'd never feel very good about that.

And I have to say that I was actually promoted the next year. [chuckles] I don't know if it was because of that or in spite of it. But those kinds of things happened.

I can't really put my finger on a precise problem that took place. I know there were some.

There was a big thing that took place years ago in the Foreign Language Department, which really got a lot of attention. The chairman who was brought in who was ... how can I say it? He was a little goofy.

LL Unstable?

JN Yeah, and he did some things and really caused an uproar. That happened to be the year that I was chairman of the Faculty Senate, and so I knew a little more about it than I would have had if it had not been for that position.

But many of the faculty members came to me seeking some kind of relief from what was happening to them. And, of course, in the beginning, I didn't know how to help them, but I went to work and found out.

For one thing, I was able to get them an attorney to represent them that was not connected to the college in any way. Well, the college – the University – really was upset with the faculty for doing that.

They said, "Well, we have our own legal advisor. We can't just go out and hire our own attorneys."

I said, "You *will* hire an attorney for these people, or I will raise so much hell, you will wish you'd never seen me."

I had no idea what I was going to do. I just knew I was going to raise hell somehow. And I also felt that I was right.

And in very short order, they hired an attorney from off campus – he had nothing to do with the campus – to represent these people. He represented them very well, and took care of the matter in very order.

And the Board, as I remember, paid that man the money he was worth, to partially get him off the back of the University. But that seems to be something that institutions do.

But the thing was worked out very well for all the people concerned. And many of those people are still on campus that were aggrieved by this man they brought in. And it was unfortunate. We had some real problems with this man that was brought in, but it was taken care of.

There were those kinds of problems, and I'm sure there were others that I had really no knowledge of.

LL Jim, I should have asked you this earlier, but you completed your doctorate after you came here, didn't you?

JN Yes.

LL And do you remember the year in which you were awarded your doctorate?

JN Yeah. I got my doctorate in 1966.

LL From?

JN From the University of Northern Colorado [inaudible].

LL Did you find that things such as promotion, merit increases, were easier after that?

JN Yes, they were. But I knew that all along. That was the stipulation under which I functioned.

In fact, as I was leaving my high school job back in Chicago, the superintendent of schools back there – who had a Ph.D., and was very supportive of very high levels [of education] – I talked to him [when I was leaving] and he said, "Now, let me give you one little piece of advice. When you take that college job out there, you get to work on your doctorate *immediately*."

And it wasn't something that I was thinking about at the time. I said, "Really?"

He said, "Oh, *absolutely*. You get to work on a doctorate right away."

I remember thinking, Well, when a man I think that much of and is that successful gives me that kind of advice, I think I'll just take it.

And it worked out. And, of course, at that time you knew that to get promotions here, it certainly was to your advantage to have a doctorate. And yes, promotions came much more readily after that. And let's say I knew they would.

LL OK. [End of Side 1]

(Transcription of Tape 1, Side 2)

LL What do you remember about student-faculty relationships? Were they pretty solid, or were there times when there were real problems with the student body?

JN Well, I think the relationship was very good the first few years I was here. The big problem that I recall – and most of the people who live around here would say – were the Vietnam years, when students became very upset at the government and at colleges and universities. And racism became a part of that.

In fact, I was very much in the middle then again, because that year, I was chairman of the Faculty Senate – in 1969 and 1970. In fact, I still feel that I hold an all-time record for having the largest audience at a Senate meeting that this institution has ever had, and probably ever will have.

We filled the Nicholson Pavilion with faculty and students. [chuckles] It was a day to remember. I have an idea you two gentlemen may have been there.

And we – the first discussion that day was be to whether or not – and this was probably in May, early May – whether or not the institution should release students early, so they could participate in some activities that were going on that students were getting into then – the demonstrations, the strikes, things like that type.

And some people felt that students should be released, they should have other ways of finishing up their classes. Others felt that that would be terrible, that nothing should interfere with their academic progress. Well, you know, it was a pretty short period that they were talking about. In less than two weeks, they would be dismissed from classes.

And so a system was arranged for the students that did want to participate in some of the political demonstrations and political work. [They] could make arrangements with their professors to finish up the class and so forth.

And, like I say, the Nicholson Pavilion was packed. And people were lining up, standing up, to give speeches. And speeches pro and con were given by faculty, student leaders – a lot of different people.

And this went on for – well, I think it began about three, and by five o'clock people were beginning probably to think, Well, this is the time that people should start voting.

One of the characteristics of Central I've always noticed is that *whatever* meeting you're in, at five o'clock, people head for the door. [laughing] I guess they've got wives or kids to pick up.

But anyway, I remember it so well because it was quite an animated meeting. There was a lot of cheering and clapping and booing. And at one point, a campus character – best way I can describe him is he was a character that hung around the SUB, and he was a hippie in that day and had a straggly dog.

And he came walking in from the far corner of the – well, and the gymnasium floor was open and people were all standing – and he came across that floor and headed for the microphone where I was presiding over the meeting.

I remember sighing and thinking, Aw, now what's this clown going to do?

And he was a real character. And he got over there and he wanted to talk. And there were about five people lined up and I said, "Well, get to the end of the line. You shouldn't be at the head of the line."

Well, he didn't like that very well. But he did, he got to the end of the line.

And people gave their little spiels. They were mainly students and were keeping it quite short.

And finally, he got up to give his speech. And all I can remember is that he just began to swear at everybody in there. And, of course, in that day and age, that was they were supposed to do, was just use the worst possible language that you could come up with.

And the students there began to cheer for him. [chuckles] But he was just screaming obscenities. Well, I took the microphone away from him.

About that time, a couple people – and I clearly remember one of them was Larry Danton, a deceased member of our faculty. He was at the top. I think he was ready to go anyway, and he decided this is the last straw. And he started down the steps.

And if you've ever walked down the steps in the Pavilion, every time you take a step, it's very loud. It's *CLUNK! CLUNK!* Because the boards are hitting.

And that just started the whole place. He just about emptied out the gymnasium with his obscenities, and he didn't add anything. But that did finish it off. It probably went about only 15 more minutes.

And, you know, I can't ... I think students that wanted to go through that procedure of getting off were allowed to – there weren't a great many – and the quarter finished.

LL Was this after the Kent State affair?

JN Kent State was one of the big things. But that's the – that was the trigger that just really set things off. And everybody was wondering, where was the next Kent State going to be? Jackson State was at about that same time, too.

Those were exciting times. I have to say that I picked a great year to be chairman of the Senate.

LL Oh, yes! Well, yeah, you've mentioned your chairmanship of the Faculty Senate a couple of times. Anything else in connection with that tenure as Senate chairman you'd like to –

JN I can't really recall. As I say, it was – I'd never done anything like that before. I was rather stunned when I became president, or chairman, of the Senate.

I had some excellent people on the Executive Committee that were good guys. And it was an exciting year. Those kinds of things were happening. But other than that, it was fairly routine.

But it was a Senate – we had a lot of people on the Senate at that time who I would regard as good people, people who came with ideas and weren't afraid to talk about them.

I had served on the Senate, and I have served on the Senate since that time. There were a lot of people on the Senate who, I think, the department just said, "Oh, who could we send over there? Because we have to have a Senator."

And some of them didn't really have an idea they could call their own, and they never said anything. And that kind of a Senate didn't amount to much. And I would say that the Senate has kind of risen and fallen by the people who are in it. Sometimes, it works and sometimes, I'm not so sure.

LL Do you think that it's declined over time?

JN I'm not sure I'd say a decline. It was, as I say, a rise and fall, if anything. I hear pretty good things about it today, in fact. I'm not that close to it.

LL OK. Did you serve on any other campus committees?

JN It seemed like I was always on a committee, but most of them weren't particularly ... I was on the Graduate Committee. I was on sometimes some search committees for deans. I was always on the Symposium Committee when it was going on, or whatever the subcommittee is that does the Symposium.

I think one of the great periods of Central was when the Symposium was going on. For those five or six years – I don't know how long it was – it was great.

And I worked on the different Symposium Committees at that time. I couldn't begin to remember all of them. I was always on them. I really liked to be on what I considered interesting committees.

And as I got older and older on the faculty, I became more and more fussy about what committee assignments I would accept. Because some of them were just so boring, you could hardly stay awake. Others were very interesting.

And I thought, Well, I've been here long enough. I have a right to pick my committees! [laughing] And I did that, and it made it very interesting [inaudible].

LL OK. There aren't any particular incidents that stand out in your mind in connection with those committees?

JN No, I don't really remember any.

LL Were you a recipient of any awards or honors while you were here at Central?

JN Oh, I got a couple of ... I don't know what it would be called, but you get a little extra money in your paycheck in a year, because somebody thought you had done a good job or something like that. No real awards [inaudible].

LL What would you say was your most important contribution to your department, or to the college?

JN Well, to some extent, this is based on what other people have said. But some of the courses I taught, some of the approach that I used, some students seemed to appreciate that physical education could be academic.

I can remember one period, and it kind of came out of that same period we were talking about. Black students at that time were sitting in president's offices and demanding education and classes that were responsive to their plight.

And I began a course at that time in our department that was taught for ten years then, and several years later after a break, "Racism in Sports." And I always had had rather strong feelings along those lines.

And one of the demands that black students made at that time was they felt that every class – er, every department – should have a class that spoke to their situation. And I frankly agreed with them.

And although our department said, "There are no problems. There is no racism in sports," I did organize the class with quite a few of our black students at that time.

And I thoroughly enjoyed it. I taught that class sometimes as much as twice a year for a number of years. And still get comments on that class.

I was always looking for new classes to teach that had something to offer that I felt was important. Like I started course that's still taught, "Ethics in Sports."

People also said, "How can you teach ethics in sports? There are none." [laughter]

I said, "That's exactly why we're going to try and do something about it." But I really enjoyed classes like that.

LL Those are two courses that you innovated, then?

JN Yes. The "Racism in Sports" got better publicity. It was in newspapers all over the country. Of course, there was a lot of interest in that at the time, racism that was happening *in* sports, particularly on college teams.

So, we got a lot of publicity out of that, which is neither here nor there. But the class, I felt, went really well.

LL Jim, were there any other topics or incidents or recollections that you wanted to share? I know I've been kind of controlling the agenda, but I wanted you to have the opportunity just to say anything else that you wanted to.

JN Well, as a general comment, I would say that I thoroughly enjoyed my stay here at Central.

And coming out of a high school in Chicago, where faculty didn't say much of anything except "Yes sir" and "No sir," I found faculty to work with that had a lot more control over what should be taught, and how it should be taught.

And I have just valued my time here immensely. My wife, Donna, also taught. In fact, the year we came, we were probably the youngest people here. And she told me to mention this, and I think it's worthwhile. The second year I was here – she finished her degree here – the second year I was here, she was hired onto the faculty.

And that was still under McConnell, and either McConnell or somebody had a rule that said a husband and wife could not teach here. And she was hired as a teacher, and, of course, I was on the faculty.

And people just kind of like “What’s this? This has never been done before.”

And that kind of began it, and I think quite a few people did it after that. But he had a rather hard-and-fast rule about that. So we have thought, Well, that’s a good thing that we broke that rule.

And she taught in at least three different departments here at different times – the Physical Education Department, the Education Department and the Biology Department.

But we thoroughly enjoyed it – being here, raising our family, our friends. I feel very fortunate. And whenever people complain loud about Central, or complain about teaching, I just say, “Well, I guess my reason for feeling differently is that I just feel lucky to be here.”

And I’ve always felt that way. And I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it.

LL Well, thank you very much, Jim, for this interview.

JN Thank you.