

Interview with Nancy E. G. McHugh
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Laura Derr (LD): This is Laura Derr, on Saturday February 1, 1997. I'm going to be conducting an interview with Nancy Elizabeth Green McHugh in her home at 167 Dows Lane S.E. Nancy would you give me your full name and your residence, and that will give us a start.

Nancy McHugh (NM): My name is Nancy McHugh, and I live at 167 Dows Lane SE in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

LD: Nancy, I'd like to start off by asking you to give us just a general background of your life in Cedar Rapids, when were you born, who your parents are, where you lived.

NM: Well, I was born in Cedar Rapids on April 10, 1926. Lived here all my life with the exception of one year when I was in Des Moines when I was first married, in 1959-1960. I mean 1948-49 (laughter).

LD: That's okay, we've got that written down somewhere.

NM: I've been...I never have worked full-time in my life. It's always been a part-time job that I've had. I raised two children, and worked for the Public Library part-time for ten years while they were getting organized in school. And then went on to work for Stamats Communications; that was the Stamats Publishing Company, back in those days. I was editor of one of three syndicated magazines that they were noted for. The Building Progress Magazine, which was for building contractors, a few architects, and so forth. During that time, I became involved with the State Board of Architectural Examiners. I was appointed to that. Served on that for two terms, as a public member on a professional licensing board. I was in the first wave of public members on that.

LD: Probably one of the first women.

NM: Right, there were two of us. Two women came on the architectural board, and to the dismay of the architectural profession. They thought, "What are they doing, not only are they not architects but they're women." And to further complicate things, I'm, was the daughter of a civil engineer who didn't hold architects in very high regard. (Laughter) Thought they didn't know anything and so forth, and so some of that was kind of transmitted to me. I was kind of a watchdog of the examination process. We didn't have anything to do with the examinations except to certify those who had passed. But it was wonderful duty, and in that connection we traveled all over the country going to National Council of Architectural Registration Boards. I digress, I'm getting off the track.

LD: No that's all right. I'm interested. How long did you serve with that?

NM: Well, I don't know, it must have been about eight years. It was two terms I think.

LD: So they didn't intimidate you too much. (Laughter)

NM: Oh no, in fact we had wonderful times. We traveled with these gentlemen. And it was kind of funny, Margaret Apostle is the name of my compatriot from Grinnell. She had at one time been married to an architect. So she had background also. And was very active in the League of Women Voters in Grinnell and in Des Moines on a statewide basis. When we started we didn't know each other, when we were appointed. But we had to take these trips a couple of times a year. And so we would always get a hotel room and share a room. It wasn't until years later that we discovered that the men who were on the board, there were five of them, all had their own rooms. (Laughter) We never really knew that.

LD: (Laughter) They had a sort of a different ethic.

NM: Well yes, they did. We were too naive to know that's not the way you have to do things, but...

LD: Well I'm going to pull you back because, but I think it is a good time to talk about your father because he was a very prominent citizen of Cedar Rapids. Tell us about Howard Green.

NM: Well, oh my goodness, he came to Cedar Rapids just out of college. He went to University of Illinois, and he took his engineering training there. He came here and took a job with the Iowa Electric Light and Power Company, doing surveying for the Interurban Line--Grandic Railroad. And after he'd been here about a year married my mother, Stella Wolfe Green. They were married in 1914, and then started raising a family. He started his own engineering firm when...with J.T. Wordell, I think was his name, who was an engineer, with the head of the department at the Light Company. Called him in one day and said, and said, Daddy loved to tell this story, "Green, you're fired," he said.

"What did I do?" he said.

He said, "Nothing. You're going to start your own firm and don't say no. I've got you your first client. There's a small office downtown, I've arranged to have you rent that space. And you get over, your first appointment with your client is at two o'clock this afternoon, so get down there." (Laughter) And that's how he started his firm.

LD: (Laughter) That's a mentor all right.

NM: That's a mentor. So from that point on, I don't know who the one client was, but that launched him on his career. One of his early jobs was the supervision of construction, the Superintendent of Construction for St. Paul's Methodist Church, the round church, the one you belong to.

LD: Of course he was. He was on that Board of Trustees, or he worked with the Board of Trustees.

NM: He wasn't on it, he wasn't a Methodist but he, he was hired to be the on the job superintendent.

LD: His name keeps coming up in the minutes. I did some research about the rather, well, shall we say, there was a lot of conflict during that time.

NM: Yes there was and there are stories connected with the erection of the cross on top of the church. The Catholic priest from down at Immaculate Conception Church challenged the minister at St. Paul's, and said "You have no right," in an Irish brogue of course, "you have no right to put the cross on top of the Methodist Church. It belongs at the Catholic Church." There are a lot of stories in that connection. He went on to operate that firm for a number of years, and very successfully, quietly, developed a very fine reputation in the engineering profession. He served on the Engineering Registration Board. And so I was familiar with that process. So when it came my turn to do the Architectural Board, it seemed like a natural thing. When it came around to the time of World War II, that's when the firm really, really got into some major work and did a lot of contracting with the federal government in the design and construction of airfields and prisoner of war camps.

LD: Was that all over the nation, or here in Iowa primarily?

NM: Yes, it was all over. And they were called upon to do these things in a great hurry.

LD: Yes.

NM: Which was unheard of, you know. Create a whole airfield, for the Air Force in Lincoln, Nebraska and do it in six months. And so the firm went from about twelve employees to four hundred. And that made him, my father, very uncomfortable. He didn't feel that he had control over everybody. But indeed he did. And so then when all that work was completed, they reverted to a small firm again, and were very comfortable. So, then the firm continues to operate today and is doing extremely well. And I kind of keep tabs on them. I say if they're gonna have my father's name connected with it, they'd better do heads up.

LD: Do it right.

NM: (Laughter) Do it right, you bet.

LD: I think they are. Yeah. Tell us a little about the neighborhoods that you grew up in Cedar Rapids and where you went to school.

NM: Well, I lived at 2003 Beaver Avenue S.E. It was a house that was on a hill, sort of, and of course that hill seemed very large to us as small children. And it's still there today. I don't know who lives there now. But anyway, that was the neighborhood, and it was within three blocks of the old Johnson school. So, all of us Green kids, attended the old Johnson School.

LD: And you might name who the others are in your family.

NM: My brother Bill. William Howard Green, who was born in 1914, is eleven years older than I am. Currently, still living in Loveland, Colorado. He's an electrical engineer by training at Iowa State. My sister Polly was two years younger than I. She was born in 1928. She died in 1989, at the age of 60. After having been married, and she lived in Tipton for a number of years. And she and her husband retired and moved to Arkansas. Now, they raised seven children, an eighth child died in infancy. And so that's the, that was the family.

LD: You have lots of family as the result of that.

NM: Yes.

LD: Ok. And you were, you were a student at Johnson, that would've of been the old Johnson school.

NM: Right.

LD: Before the new, which I hear was a much nicer building. But I never saw it. So... (Laughter)

NM: Well, I would say it was kind of a conventional design, and in the style of those days. That school was built in 1910, I believe. And it had, each classroom had its own cloak room and own restrooms. One for boys and one for girls. And every, every, classroom had that arrangement.

LD: Kind of a state of the art thing. I mean, they don't do that anymore. (Laughter)

NM: No, no, they sure don't. And then I went to Franklin Junior High School and Senior High School. At that time it was a six year program there. Malcolm Scott Hallman was the principal of the that school and he was a tyrant.

LD: (Laughter)

NM: And we, there was no fun there, except of our own making. It was all work. And we had a lot of homework in every class that we took. Good education.

LD: Mm-hm

NM: I always felt that it was better than any college education that I got after that.

LD: Very disciplined.

NM: Very disciplined.

LD: I don't think that's the philosophy anymore. (Laughter)

NM: I don't think so. It's just amazing to me what kids don't have to do. But in about 1940, we built, my parents built a home on Forest Drive, which is just down the backyard from where I live now. And so it was a very short walk through Brucemore over to school, and back and forth for lunch. It was very easy.

LD: So you, you went through Brucemore coming home?

NM: Yeah, that was my childhood acquaintance with Brucemore, as a short cut.

LD: So the lions and dogs never worried you. (Laughter)

NM: The dogs didn't like it very well. The lion was very much in evidence and in sight and sound during those times because the pen, where I am sitting right now talking to you, I can see where the pen was. It was right along side the carriage house.

LD: Back along Dows Lane?

NM: It was along the east side of the carriage house.

LD: Oh, OK.

NM: It wasn't called the carriage house then, it was called the barn.

LD: (Laughter) Well we've toned everything up.

NM: (Laughter) Yes, yes, it got kind of fancy. And every, every, evening that lion would, didn't roar, he kind of grunted. But he would grunt you know (grunting) like that. Very loud, and he would do it maybe 35 to 40 times in a rapid succession. So, and you could count on it. We would sit down to supper on the back porch, down the back yard here, and, there he'd go, you know. My dad would always pull out his pocket watch and say "Yep, yep. He's right on time."

LD: (Laughter)

NM: So that went on for a long time.

LD: It was a different era.

NM: He had an untimely death, the lion, I mean.

LD: Yes, I know. So you knew the Halls and your family knew the Halls.

NM: Yes, my, they were friends of my parents and I knew them in that connection. So, then from Franklin school I went to the University of Iowa, after briefly thinking about Northwestern. I was admitted there, but I didn't know anybody there. And I was a little bit afraid to go that far from home all by myself.

LD: A challenge.

NM: So, I didn't do it. And so I was at Iowa for 4 years and I had a pretty standard experience there. I was a member of a sorority, Kappa Kappa Gamma, and got into a lot of activity things through that connection.

LD: That would've been during World War Two.

NM: Right at, well, 1944-48. The war was on when we started. And I was there when the troops came home. And they made it rather difficult in the classroom. Because they all were flocking back from war.

LD: The GI Bill.

NM: The GI Bill. And they were in a hurry to put their lives together and it was pretty challenging.

LD: That's interesting. So you were competing with them at that point in time.

NM: Well it turned out that way. We started out having a pretty nice ride the first couple of years, mostly girls in the classroom.

- LD: That would be an experience. Your degree is in Journalism?
- NM: Journalism with a certificate in Advertising. That's the way they put it. It was a, actually I was in the first program where advertising was offered. And I think the program is probably a lot more sophisticated now than it was then.
- LD: They've come a long ways, in that regard.
- NM: Yeah.
- LD: That was a fairly new field.
- NM: It was new. Well, it, yes it was new to academic world. So it involved a little marketing and all of that.
- LD: Then you came back to Cedar Rapids.
- NM: Then I came back to Cedar Rapids and went to work at the Cedar Rapids Gazette. I had had summer jobs with them prior to graduation. And then worked there for a while until I was married and then we moved to Des Moines. I married Peter McHugh. (Spells name) Peter Francis McHugh was his name. He was a graduate of,-- a Cedar Rapids resident. I think he'd been born in Grinnell, but lived here all of his life. And he was a graduate of Carleton College up in Northfield, Minnesota. And also attended Coe for a time. So we were married for ten years. Lived in Des Moines that first year, where he was with Etna Casualty Insurity Company. He was a field representative. And then we moved back here, and raised two children. And in 1961 we were divorced. And so I've had the full responsibility for raising my children, with the help of my parents who were close by.
- LD: So you say you never worked full time. But you worked all the time.
- NM: Well, it was a...that's a horse of a different color.
- LD: I want to really focus on the things you have done beyond your career. Because those are the areas that we are most interested in with the library work, and the Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation, the Brucemore, the St. John's work. And I'm sure there's lots more that we haven't even put down on paper. But I do think it's too great an opportunity to pass up. I'd like for you to talk a little bit about your work with the Gazette as Social Page Editor or on the Social Page Desk.
- NM: I can't believe, looking back on it, I can't believe that I did those things. In those days it was fashionable to have social notices in the paper. And if you had a party, if you had, if you were going to take a vacation, I can't believe this, but, or you had an out of town guest. All those social occasions were routinely reported in little one or two inch items in the paper. All week and on Sundays there were lots of those. We had some that we considered "good position" ones, that if they involved prominent families, we gave those up front play. And that was my job, to be on the phone all day calling people I knew and people I didn't know. One thing would lead to another, "You have any news?" "Well yes, my sister's coming to visit" or "My old college roommate will be here and we're going to have some parties."
- LD: That's how people kept up with each other.

NM: That's right, that's right.

LS: And impressed each other, I'm sure.

NM: And no thought of safety.

LD: No.

NM: If you were going on vacation everybody in town knew about it. But, it wasn't a threat to your home safety.

LD: To a certain extent that may be an advantage if everybody knew. (Laughter)

NM: Maybe so.

LD: Yeah, but that is a different world. And it assumes one community, I think more than we do anymore. When did they give up the Social Page, do you know?

NM: Oh, it must've been...must've been in about 1960 maybe. I really don't, I never, I didn't pay any attention to it after I left that.

LD: They still have one at the Cynthiana Democrat, believe it or not, where I grew up.

NM: Is that so?

LD: On a weekly basis but, so you can see some things die hard. And, go ahead.

NM: Well, then when I started having my children, then I used to say I couldn't reach the typewriter so. (Laughter)

LD: You had to give that up. (Laughter)

NM: Yeah, I had to give that up. So that then I stayed home for awhile.

LD: And as a Stamats editor, you were, this is interesting to me, you were more than the editor, you were the staff, were you not?

NM: There was just one. With the secretarial assistant who served all three magazines. We were all officed together and had little cubby hole offices. And there was, Perfect Home was one of the magazines, that was the oldest one. There was One-Ownership and Building Progress was the new kid on the block and was the one that I did. Dick Penny was our creative director who supervised, he thought he supervised us. We were a renegade bunch. (Laughter) And did pretty much, we had a lot of autonomy in what we did.

LD: So that was an advantage in some ways.

NM: Oh sure. And, so as an editor, all I did was assemble, look for, story opportunities and assemble that material by contacting architects and contractors. By looking through other professional publications, architectural magazines, journals, newspapers, looking for what I called and I thought were good looking projects. Or something that had some unique characteristic that would make an interesting

story. That's how I did it. So, a lot of photography involved.

LD: Did you actually go out to sites and do the writing?

NM: Nope, I didn't have to do that. I did it right from my swivel chair. And a lot of correspondence, a lot of phone calls. And put it together. But it was, good, and it really cultivated in me a real taste for architecture and...

LD: Which was going to come in handy in a lot of other projects.

NM: Yeah, and that kind of, yes it did, and it kind of led me into that Architectural Registration Board duty. So I knew the parlance, but I didn't know the technology, of course.

LD: It occurs to me so many of the things you've been talking about, you never know when you're living your life, when it's going to prepare you for it. But certainly, it gave you the kind of background and confidence to take the active roles.

NM: Well it was very gradual, very gradual.

LD: It always is, but--

NM: And never according to any plan. It just kind of, things just kind of came along. Doors opened and you just kind of tentatively walked through them.

LD: You do walk through. That's the important thing.

NM: And sometimes you're pushed through.

LD: Which leads us to the library. (Laughter) And you actually had a position where you were employed for a certain length of time with the library as a consultant.

NM: For ten years, and I was called a Communications Consultant. And that was euphemism for publicity person. And in those days, and even today, you can't use publicity or public relations. You have to be a specialist or have something to do with communication.

LD: The connotation is a...

NM: Community representative. And they're couched in all kinds of terms. And just recently the superintendent of Cedar Rapids schools discovered that you can't say publications--publicity--public relations.

LD: Yes, that was the term.

NM: You have to find other terms. And he got into some hot water by saying that they needed to hire someone for that kind of work. We just do it. You don't have to label it.

LD: That's right. Which is essentially--you were trying to raise the image of the library.

NM: Yes and it was really. Libraries did not have people in that capacity. This was kind of

an innovation, and it came about because in 1957, the library director at that time was Jim Marvin (spells last name), James Marvin. I think he was related to the family that owns Marvin Windows up in Warroad, Minnesota. But anyway, that's not neither here or there. But he was a very innovative fellow and the Cedar Rapids Public Library had undergone some expansion and remodeling under the direction of J. Archer Eggen (spells last name), who was his predecessor. And Jim Marvin came on the scene and he wanted to do something to increase public awareness of the library and so forth. So he hired Joan Liffing, who was a local photographer of some note, to take some pictures and get something done about a printed annual report. Well, this has never happened before, and probably not much around the country. She didn't want to do any of the writing. I had gotten to know her both at Iowa, we were in Journalism program together, but mostly when we worked at the Gazette together. And her husband was a reporter and she was, sort of a reporter, but mostly a photographer for the Gazette.

LD: And she has some wonderful pictures.

NM: Yes she does. And I used to go out with her on stories occasionally, and hold the flash gun for her when she was taking pictures. So I learned a lot from her about photo journalism, and so forth. Anyway, she asked me if I would like to help her with that annual report. And that was so much fun to do. And it kind of got me into the, working with Jim Marvin, who was a wonderfully creative fellow for a librarian.

LD: He had some vision, too.

NM: Yes, he really did. And so I got well acquainted with him, and so we ended up doing a lot of work together. And so that led to this part time Communications Consultant position, which was maybe twenty hours a week. And it kept growing, I mean you could do as much as you could think of to do. And it involved doing brochures, and displays and publicity, press releases, and so forth.

LD: To really get the library into the minds of the general public.

NM: And before long we had won a couple of, two or three, John Cotton Dana awards for library promotion. And so it was fun. Whatever we could think of, we tried to do within the limits of a small budget, but, it was, was a very enjoyable time.

LD: I'm curious, were you involved at all with the Evelyn Zerzanik Illustrations that...

NM: She, that was her baby. She, but I worked closely with her on all of her programming, and the Summer Reading Program that she developed, and each year was a different, a different kind of program. Always very imaginative, involved original illustrations that she would commission somebody locally to do. Very bright, wonderful, colorful programs, with awards, ceramic awards. She'd always have something for a giveaway to entice children to keep on reading.

LD: It occurs to me that the library was really lucky in attracting those kinds of minds, Evelyn, and Mr. Marvin that focused things.

NM: Evelyn, Evelyn was here forever. I mean, she was many years on the library staff. And she was, she had her own little world within the library.

LD: She ruled in her kingdom.

NM: She ruled in her kingdom, and she was fiery about it. And everybody lived kind of in fear of her, even the library director. You know "Don't cross Evelyn, because she can get madder than the Dickens," you know. And she'd get her way. And, oh my goodness, she was something. And she developed that collection of illustrations simply by dogged persistence. Writing to children's book illustrators and saying, "We would just love to have a picture from that book." And they almost always came through.

LD: It's amazing, it's terrific.

NM: So, there are hundreds of wonderful illustrations.

LD: They're finally beginning to show them. I know some of them, a number of them have been framed.

NM: Yeah. And it is, it is an invaluable collection. And along with that, she collected recipes from those people. She was always going to do a cookbook. Never got it done, but the recipes are still there.

LD: Something could be done with that, speaking of marketing, right? (Laughter)

NM: Right, we never got that put together. But--she had family, family film nights, story hours every week that the children flocked to. There were thousands of children who were influenced by her programming.

LD: So the programming area has been going on for many, many years. That's not anything new. The library has always reached out to young people, and children that could need any help.

NM: She was the leader in that.

LD: And you, did you actually help create to the Friends group for the library, or how did that evolve?

NM: The Library Board, and Jim Marvin wanted to establish a Friends group, I think it was in his time. The library board had been having difficulty getting adequate funding. It was always a battle with City, with City Hall.

LD: Yes, I've heard many stories about this.

NM: It's never been easy. And, so it needed more public support, and so a Friends organization was a logical way to go about achieving that. So there were, there was an initial board that was established and I was a member of that first board. I guess maybe at that time I was no longer working at the library, but I continued to have an interest in it. And so...

LD: When was that, do you remember?

NM: Well, it was in 1971 or 2, maybe?

- LD: And this was the Friends Board, not the Board of Trustees, or the Board of Directors, I'm not sure which it was.
- NM: Friends Board, right. Now, I'm not sure about the dates because I just kind of have always been involved.
- LD: Runs together.
- NM: It just all mushes together. So, you know, then we started to organize and point toward a fundraising with the annual book sale. And it's been very successful over the years.
- LD: It's a major thing, at this point.
- NM: We were advised at that time by other libraries around the country, "Watch out if you establish a Friends Group. They can--the tail can wag the dog. And you don't want to give them too much leeway because they can get in the way of the library administration." That never really happened here, except there was one little flurry, I think maybe more than I know about, because I haven't been connected with it in recent years. But at the time we were moving into the new library building, finishing the design for that. There was great disappointment voiced by the Friends organization because we had not provided space for storage of all their books that they were accumulating for the book sale, and "Where is our office?" And we had not provided that. So, in order to keep peace in the kingdom, we converted one of the study rooms on the main floor of the new library.
- LD: It occurs to me there is a place now, with their name on the door.
- NM: There is a place, yes, I think so. And that's how that came about. I don't think it gets used as much as, in the beginning anyway, it was not used as we thought it would.
- LD: What do the Friends do besides fundraising? Are they involved in actually volunteering in the library?
- NM: Yes, I think so. And they, they've had a books by mail project that they have administered.
- LD: Where they actually send books to people who can't--
- NM: They would deliver them, I'm not sure. I really can't speak for that right now because I don't know what the program has been.
- LD: Do you have any idea how many people are involved in?
- NM: Well, there are probably, the membership is probably, I would guess maybe five or six hundred. I always thought it should be, should get to be in the thousands. And of course when we started seeking funds for the new library, we were, we were challenged by the Hall Foundation to raise a million dollars from the community. So it turned out that we had eighteen thousand Friends. They weren't card carrying Friends, but there were eighteen thousand contributors to that effort.
- LD: That's good, and I want to talk about that process, but, let's back up just a little bit.

What led into your presence on the Board of Trustees at the library?

NM: Well, it was kind of an outgrowth of Friends involvement. I just found myself spending a lot of time at the library, on various projects. And then I was appointed, I think when Ralph Clements, who was a long time member, I think he had been on the board for maybe thirty years. And when he retired, for reasons of health, I was asked to fill out his term, or replace him.

LD: And do you remember what year that would have been?

NM: I can't (Laughter) No, I don't know, probably 1972 or 3. I'm terrible on dates. So, yeah, they'd had a bond issue where... a bond election or two, one I guess, that had not been successful.

LD: For the purpose of raising money to renovate? Or to?

NM: Well, to build a new library. And that was not, that did not go. And so there was going to be another effort. And I think I came into that process about the second bond election. All in all we had, there were five that achieved a good majority, but failed to meet the super majority of sixty percent, which was required by, still required by Iowa law.

LD: Yeah, I think the last one was just at the time we were moving here. It was around 1980. And I was amazed that there had been five attempts. And I'm sure the Board of Trustees at, by that time was a little tired.

NM: It was very exasperating, and it was due, I have to say, it was due largely to the negative leadership of Robert Armstrong.

LD: Yeah I want to talk about those issues. What kept this from going? Now I've often heard, "Well it was the people on the Southwest side that voted against it," but?

NM: Well, they traditionally, they voted against everything in this community for a long time. You just count on that.

LD: So that's a given (Laughter)

NM: That's a given. And of course Robert Armstrong gave them something to latch onto, so that it was okay for them to vote no.

LD: Was Robert on the board?

NM: No.

LD: No, but a downtown presence?

NM: Yes, he was a formidable presence in everything that had to do with downtown. The old Carnegie Library was very dear to him. He did not want to see that abandoned. And so he made it very difficult for any campaign that was mounted. He would always say, "We shouldn't have to leave that building. We have a perfectly good building. All you need to do is remodel it."

LD: Why wasn't that a good option?

NM: Well, there were a lot of reasons.

LD: I remember the building, but I'd like to get your point of view.

NM: Well, it was impossibly crowded. I mean, the library collections had simply outgrown that space. There were concerns about the floor loads because of the weight of books. Handicap accessibility was a major flaw. And there was no reasonable way to achieve, to improve that, in that location. There was no parking, and of course that was a dirty word, then too. "Well, we're in the library business, we're not in the parking business." I heard that too many times. We also did not have any support from the City Council, all through that whole process. There was some lip service given to it, but they had other priorities, and they wanted to, they wanted to see that the Five Seasons Convention Center was built first. And they'd say, or some of the people with a lot of influence would say, "Well, you, you just let us take care of these other things first, and then you just tell us, you know, then we'll just build your library for you. We'll just take these buildings right next door, and remove those and we'll add on. And it'll be just fine." And that just set me off. Because that was putting us off and saying "You can't do this." And they were in essence dictating where the new library would be.

LD: Without public input.

NM: Yeah. And that was just kind of an assumption that was made. And I... "Well, how do we know we want to stay in this location?" And that's what really got me involved. I read somewhere the other day, it said "One of the greatest pleasures in life is doing what people say you cannot do." And that really, probably, was as enticing to me as the need for a new library. (Laughter) I mean, the challenge of the whole thing.

LD: So whatever means got to that end, it was good. (Laughter)

NM: Yeah. So we formed a study committee and really went at it. Had a Site Study Committee and so.

LD: You did mention that Robert Armstrong actually had some architectural drawings made. Was he submitting it to the Site Selection Committee?

NM: Well, his idea was to add on to, to keep the Carnegie Building as is, to add on for the additional space that we needed, and then link the two buildings with ramps, and interior and exterior rampings. Actually what happened after we left that building, and the Museum of Art moved in there.

LD: They did a nice job.

NM: They did a nice job. They did, but that ramp that's in the front is virtually useless. You never see anybody using it. That was very much a part of Robert's plan. He had a store designer he had used, somebody from Minneapolis, I can't remember his name. He wasn't an architect, but he was a store designer. And he had...

LD: ...like windows and settings? Oh, he actually designed the interiors of stores?

NM: Yes, and so he actually engaged this man to draw up a plan that expressed what he had in mind. And he presented it to the library board. Well, we didn't like that plan. And that was a very bad thing, that we had to turn him down.

LD: And that's where the animosity continued to grow.

NM: Hell hath no fury. He was furious. And he wanted us to pay this man. I shouldn't be telling this, but anyway.

LD: Well I think at this point, it's in the interest of local history.

NM: Well, he wanted us to pay the fees to his designer, but he would give us the money to do it.

LD: I see.

NM: Now, you see?

LD: It begins to develop a dependent relationship.

NM: Right. And we turned that down as well. And it was, and he was very embittered by that whole scenario. And so the next time we went up with a bond election, he sent a mailing to every household in the city.

LD: Wow. I was not aware of that.

NM: Which would be; well, there are forty-three thousand households in the county, now. so it was several, many thousands of fliers that went out. And they were delivered the day before the election. And it was full of, untruths. I mean, it just wasn't accurate information. But there was no opportunity for us to refute.

LD: To react, right.

NM: And the campaign had gone that way. Lots of, lots of accusations were hurled at us and we were in a position of having to defend all the time. And that's what really did us in.

LD: Yeah, because everybody's going to react to that, though, sure. Especially if you weren't too interested in the idea in the first place.

NM: "It's going to cost you some money if we build a new building," and so forth. But it was all going to be built with private funds. It didn't make any difference. So, I think the last vote was something like fifty-eight percent approval which was wonderful. It would certainly elect presidents and governors.

LD: That's right. And you needed sixty, right?

NM: So five times we had a majority. somewhere in the range of, like, fifty-three to fifty-eight percent. Very disconcerting. But along in there some place, a couple of the members of the Library Board, my compatriots, went to the Hall Foundation; and asked for something like eighty thousand dollars, to help with design work or something like that. And I knew, I had heard about this after they had done it. I did not know they were going to do this.

LD: Oh?

NM: And I just went to pieces when I heard about this, and so I said, "Well, I can't let this go. I'm going to go talk to Bill Whipple," who was the President of the Hall Foundation. And just visit with him about all this. And so he was very receptive. And he said, "Well, what can I do for you?"

And I said "Well," I said, "I'm just, I am embarrassed that my fellow board members came to you, and asked you for eighty thousand dollars."

He said, "Why does that bother you?" You know, and said "That's all right."

I said, "No, it's not all right." I said, "That's just terrible."

He said, "Well, what would you have done?"

And I said, "Well I would have asked for a lot more."

And he said, "How much more?"

And I said, "All of it."

And he said, "All of it?" He said, "Tell me more."

And so I said, "Well, I mean look at it, look at what's happened to us. We're not ever going to be able to get this across."

And he said, "I'm very interested in that. Will you put together some figures?"

So the rest is kind of history.

LD: Isn't that incredible? It really is true that you should not make the mistake of not asking for what you need. This would have been probably in the early eighties.

NM: Yes, I can't remember the date, but we were, we were in bad shape. I mean and so then they came up with "We'll put two million into it, and the city will pay the rest." That didn't fly. So, then we went back to the drawing board again. But this time we had worked out definite architectural planning. And then, when the last bond election, when that failed, they came through with six point eight million dollars.

LD: It was incredible.

NM: And a, with a one million challenge. I mean, we had to raise a million in the community, which was duck soup by that time.

LD: The city then, really did not...

NM: The city had to commit.

LD: ...put any capital into it?

NM: They had to commit to providing the site.

LD: OK.

NM: Which they did.

LD: And continuing to pay the operating budget.

NM: Yes.

LD: Which would increase obviously at a new site.

NM: But what this meant was, that in essence the building would be built with private, totally with private funds. When, and they used tax incremental financing.

(End of side one)

(Start of side two)

LD: (We have been discussing) issues surrounding the funding for the new library. And, tell me, I want to back up just a little bit, because one of the things that I think is, people may not be aware of now, the Hall Foundation was a fairly new foundation at that time, was it not?

NM: It had been going for some years. I don't know when it was founded, but they were well established.

LD: Okay. But it had probably had started at the point of Howard Hall's death I would guess.

NM: I...I...don't know that.

LD: I don't know either. That's something we'll have to find out. I was just curious as to how?

NM: It must've started before that.

LD: How focused they were in the kinds of projects that they supported? Because obviously you were able to make an impression on Bill Whipple. Or perhaps you were just able to reinforce an interest he already had.

NM: Bill Whipple used to be a member of the Library Board. I'd forgotten that.

LD: That's helpful.

NM: But not, well I guess he was while I was working there. And his wife was a great user of the library, and was around a lot.

LD: So he had an appreciation of the value of the public library.

NM: Oh indeed. And, he was on the Co-board of Trustees for a long time. He had a great interest in education, and particularly self-education. So, and I also knew him personally, as an old family friend. So it was very easy for me to talk to him. And otherwise I would not have felt comfortable going in like that, like I did.

LD: And he actually was the director, was he not?

NM: He was president of the Hall Foundation, for many years. So, he was very receptive. Just generally he was a very cordial man anyway.

LD: Did, once you actually had the funding, were all your troubles over?

NM: (Laughter) Oh no. We had, we had to make sure that the project was completed within the budget that was established. Jack Evans was very instrumental in the management of all of that.

LD: Was he on the Library Board at that time?

NM: No, he was on the Foundation Board.

LS: So he worked hand in hand with you.

NM: Yes. And he and Chuck Cebuhar together kind of worked, as I understood it. As I recall, they worked out this creative financing method that made it practical for the Hall Foundation to participate. And to fund all of this over a ten year period. The intent was to retire the indebtedness that they had incurred through the bonds that were issued through the city. To retire those early so that they would then turn the library over to the city.

LD: So the city actually floated bonds and?

NM: Well, now I'm getting out of my element, because, I can't remember the terms.

LD: But it wasn't--there was some involvement in the city, and there was a way in which they did it so the city actually sold those...

NM: The city issued, I mean they permitted the issuance of the bonds. They had to agree to that. They had no obligation on them, cause it was...

LD: But that was preferable to simply having the Hall Foundation write checks for the whole process. And I'm sure they were, the Hall Foundation at that time could not have had the resources that it has now. So I'm sure they had to...

NM: Well they had those funds, but when they're endowed funds, you know, and you just spend the income.

LD: You protect your principle. So that was what they did. It always occurred to me, or seemed to me that that was a very courageous thing that they did. To actually commit that strongly to that single project.

NM: And not only that, they, they left the details entirely to the Library Board.

LD: So you had some responsibilities.

NM: "You have your design. You know, it's up to you what you want, we're not going to participate in that at all." The city had no say in it, except for the site.

LD: Who was your architect?

NM: Brown Healey Bock. Um, Herb Stone was the lead architect and it was in association with McConnell-Steveley-Anderson. That was our idea, because we had, we had entertained proposals from several different architects. I think we had seven or eight we interviewed. And we liked certain things that somebody from McConnell-Steveley-Anderson introduced to us, and but we also liked Brown Healey Bock. And so we asked them to go together. Well neither, they did not want to do that. I mean no architect wants... They wanted to have the whole thing. But they acquiesced and said "Well yes we've worked together before, we can do it again." So so they did work it out very well. Craig Anderson was the lead representative from McConnell-Steveley-Anderson and Herb Stone from Brown Healey Bock.

LD: How do you decide what you need in a new library?

NM: Interesting process. They decided, the architects said, "What we need to do is a, design charrette." (spells the word)

LD: I think you're right, I think you are, where people actually make designs and compete with each other.

NM: What that entailed was, well first of all, first of all, we hired a consultant. A library consultant, from Minneapolis, who helped us develop the building program, so-called. That specifies generally how many feet of shelf space you must have in order to accommodate present collection and the projected growth. And it tells you how many rooms and how, whether you want everything on one floor, or can you have things on two floors or three, some handicap accessibility questions. Where are the technical services, how all that would work, the physical and technical arrangements of the library. This man had, I can't remember his name now, hadn't thought about him for quite a while. But he was a director of the Hennepin County Library System at that time.

LD: So he helped you work out the numbers essentially.

NM: Yeah, and working primarily with the department heads and with Tom Carney, who was the library director at that time. So we kind of get that kind of put together. And then the architects move in, and they set up shop in the basement of the old library. And they, there were four or five of them that came in. And they set up their drawing boards, their drafting tables, and everything. And they just moved in, and they worked around the clock. And they brought in, they'd interview various members of the staff. They'd bring them in and talk about their departments and what they like and what they didn't like. What they envisioned and, then they started drawing. And then, they'd get together and they'd combine what they'd learned from each other, and came up with two or three concepts. And then they had a building committee.

LD: These architects were the charrette architects?

NM: They were from both firms.

LD: Okay. At this point you had hired them and they began to draw...

NM: This was the way they wanted to begin. And sometimes projects do start that way

when you have to have input from a lot of people. And so that kind of put us on a track. And then the city was very insistent that the site be right where it is now, down on First Street. One of the big stumbling blocks to building the new library was our interest in locating down along the river. And Robert Armstrong raised a lot of questions about flood way and flood plain. And there were many regulations. The city raised Cain about that too. And you have to build for the hundred year flood. And so one concept we looked at was, on that site, was a second level library. So the first level would be all parking, and so that if there were a flood, it would flow right through the parking area and the building would not impede the flood water. Well, we didn't like the idea of being on the second level.

LD: Of everybody having to go up to the second level?

NM: Yes, you have to go upstairs to the library, we just didn't like, even though it was going to be on the sky walk system. That was promised, that we would be on the sky walk system, but the city never delivered.

LD: Well, maybe in the new sky walk system.

NM: Well, maybe so. But it only went over to the parking ramp and to the Ground Transportation Center. Which is not much of a destination for it, because the parking ramp, which had been promised to us, that we were going to have plenty of parking, that was given over to monthly parking for people who were in the...

LD: Businesses, the APAC type.

NM: Yeah, APAC.

LD: Well, now there is a sky walk that goes to the GTC to the Library now.

NM: Yes, there is a connection, but in order to get over into the central business district, you have to go round Robin Hood's barn.

LD: Yes, exactly. And you couldn't park easily in that parking. As you said, there's no room for people who would be using the library in that parking.

NM: No, not transient parking in there, there's very little. So anyway that site was on a steam line. And they thought that would be good to have it use city steam and also it would be... Well that was the idea. It turned out that the city steam line, the city maps were not correct and the steam line was a block away. And it was on the other side, it went down Fourth Avenue, so that it, it was blocked. Our access to it was, by that time, blocked by the Ground Transportation Center Building which was already built.

LD: So that economic advantage went away.

NM: We were a little misled by the city on that aspect of it. So, we don't use city steam.

LD: Who did you primarily work with in the city?

NM: Tom Aller.

LD: He was, at that point, he was the Mayor's assistant.

NM: Yes, the Mayor's assistant, and he was very frustrated, (Laughter) because he didn't have anything to do with the project.

LD: Yes, I'm sure that was difficult. (Laughter)

NM: It was very difficult for him. And he had, had a heavy hand in everything that went before. We tried to schedule bond elections, and then the City Council drags its feet. "Well, we gotta clear up this legal matter, we gotta clear this up." So you lose all the advantage of a lead time. And, it shrunk to practically nothing, and it was very difficult.

LD: The building, a marketing program?

NM: Yes. So it was almost, at times, I knew we felt it was deliberate, but it probably wasn't.

LD: It was just a mind set more than probably as much as anything else, but...

NM: It just didn't seem that important.

LD: Exactly, it wasn't their priority.

NM: Well, when the Hall Foundation came through and the whole thing can be built privately, that's just unheard of.

LD: It really was.

NM: I don't know that's happened anywhere else.

LD: I think it's an anomaly. And, I mean, it's a wonderful one. But that's one of the things that I was most excited about when I moved to Cedar Rapids. That this community could do something like this.

NM: And the advantage to us was, that we could design it exactly the way we wanted it. And if we wanted something, we didn't have to do bare bones planning. We had to be careful. And there's never enough money to do what you want to do. But, I can remember the discussion about whether or not we have a brass railing on that major staircase. And we just gritted our teeth and said "Well, it's going to be eighteen thousand dollars." For that stair brass, it runs down both sides. And we said, "But it needs to happen."

LD: Aren't you glad you did it?

NM: Yes, you just, and we never in the world could have done that if it had been done with public funds, couldn't justify that. And that whole staircase was a work of art, from an engineering standpoint.

LD: I've heard that, that was, they had to recreate the concept, or had to build a special mold.

NM: Oh, it took six months to build the wood frame work for it. And, there were contractors who, specialists and poured concrete, creative things like that, who

wouldn't touch it.

LD: Said it's going to fall down, huh?

NM: Yes, he said, "Uh uh, I've never done anything like that and I'm not gonna touch that one." Cause if there had been one crack in that whole structure when they started pouring, it had to be a continuous pour. They had to do it all in one day.

LD: Oh, of course they would.

NM: And if it ruptured anywhere, it would destroy the whole thing. And so it was a very delicate process. I think it's beautiful. If you look at the underside of it and you can see. I don't know whether you can see all of that.

LD: You can see the mold.

NM: There was a parabolic, I don't know what the terms are, but when the, I'm waving my hands, can you see that? (Laughter) And it kind of does a reverse curve underneath. It's just beautiful.

LD: It's a remarkable, and I think the beauty of it is, it opens up that whole structure and lets in the light. It's the kind of environment books should be in.

NM: Yeah, well, it's user friendly, I think.

LD: I'm curious about, you had mentioned that originally you thought that you had access to a parking garage. Is that why the parking issue has continued to be, well, significant down there, because there really is no access to...

NM: Well the part of it is that the usage is so high.

LD: That's right. It's the most used library.

NM: It's a happy problem to have, really.

LD: That's right, yeah.

NM: I think there's, what, 42 or 43 spaces that are on site. And that's all the site would accommodate. Now they're experimenting with some diagonal parking to try and get a few more spaces. So there is a lot of parking around the library.

LD: Oh yeah.

NM: But, but it's not anything like what we had anticipated.

LD: That's an interesting aside. I was not sure what you thought you'd have originally.

NM: Well, we thought we could, the people, it wouldn't be any problem. And the staff was supposed to have, maybe the top floor of that ramp for monthly parking. That was an issue. But it was then a dark, not very reputable part of town at that time. It's cleaned up a lot now, but at the time, it was not safe there at night. The staff was worried about that. That didn't materialize either, so I don't know what the staff does.

LD: At this point. How long did it take to build the library?

NM: It must've been a couple of years. It took a lot of years, if you begin at the beginning.

LD: I should say to construct the building. And it was dedicated, as I remember, in 1990.

NM: Well...no.

LD: No, it was earlier than that. It was '85.

NM: Because it's now, I think, it's now 12 years old, so '85, I think it was '85.

LD: As a matter of fact, I'm sure I have it written down, February 17, 1985.

NM: Yeah.

LD: So when you poured that concrete, it probably wasn't in the winter time. It was probably in the summer time.

NM: Well by that time, it was all enclosed. The building, it was well enclosed. Of course and the whole structure was up.

LD: Did you stand there and watch it?

NM: I went down. They were all so uptight about it, they didn't want a, any audience.

LD: I wonder how much concrete is in that?

NM: I don't know. I'm sure the figures are available. But it was the wood structure that had to built before the forms, you know before they poured it, it was just beautiful. it was a shame.

LD: To have to take it down before they poured it.?

NM: To have to take it down. But it was a beautiful piece of work.

LD: We've mentioned some names of people that were really significant in this whole process of making it happen. Are there other leaders that helped either to raise the funds, because obviously the Friends and the community did support that one million dollar match. Other people that really did make a difference during that process that we may have left out?

NM: Well, there, I maybe have mentioned Jerry Elsea, (spells name) who is the editor of the Editorial Pages of the Gazette now, and has been in that line of work for a long time, was president of the Library Board, and he had a whole lot of responsibility. He'd keep all of it together. And so he was just very much immersed in all of that. Chuck Cebuhar, banker, was largely responsible, I think, for making that financial arrangement possible. Curran Rosser was on the board, was on the building committee. And still is on the board. And I think about the leaders in the capital campaign and everybody was involved. I don't know that you could single out any one person. I remember Betsy Cutter, Elizabeth Cutter, who writes for the Gazette now. And she was doing some writing at that time. And she was the first

person who contributed to the library campaign when it was launched. She's the one who stood up and held up, held up her check and said, "Here it is."

LD: You know I think that there was such a pent up frustration on the part of so many people that there was, everybody was happy to be part of that.

NM: We opened an office downtown, next-door to Armstrong's, (Laughter) across the alley. And it's on Third Street, so it was a storefront location, it was very conspicuous. And people would stop in there and drop off donations.

LD: And I remember it, went out into schools. There was lots of speaking, different meetings and things where people stood up. Yeah, it was a very wide response.

NM: It was very positive, and I think the whole thing was accomplished, and we raised about one point three million in about three months. So, that was pretty good.

LD: It was amazing.

NM: It was kind of a blitz. Get it over with and get it done and get going.

LD: Well, obviously Jerry was key as President of the board, but everybody that I've talked to thinks of the library as Nancy McHugh's building. (Laughter)

NM: (Laughter) That is unfortunate, because what I contributed to that was just kind of to being, being determined. And not, you know, when we'd lose an election, I'd say, "Okay now let's get going, and get back in the saddle, get back up on the horse." So it really--I mean there were a lot of people involved, and I don't like to have any focus on me diminish what they did.

LD: Oh I understand.

NM: Every meeting I went to, there were other people at those meetings.

LD: I have the impression you probably almost played the role of a paid staff person through husbanding that process.

NM: Well, I spent a lot of time on it.

LD: You never counted those hours?

NM: Didn't count those hours.

LD: It's better not to.

NM: I can remember when I was at Stamats, I never knew which job I was doing. It was even Steven. So, Thelma Grover was another very, very important person through all of that. And she retired and didn't really serve there after that.

LD: She didn't go into the new library did she?

NM: No she just, but she was, she was a force unto herself.

- LD: I have heard that Thelma often times took more of a role in working with the City Council to get budgets that were needed than even the director did.
- NM: Yes, And there was--maybe I told you this--that wonderful censorship story. When she was the assistant director under Jim Marvin. And when he took a leave, a year's leave to go do some important assignment--I don't know, for the government, library work--in the Philippines. And she became acting director. Well, during that time there was a disgruntled parent, who stormed into the library and demanded that a certain book be taken off the shelves, and he didn't want his child reading that kind of trash. And demanded--and she said "Well, we can't do that." And so he ended up going over to see the Mayor, who at that time was Bob Johnson. And, the Mayor was sympathetic.
- LD: A taxpayer, after all.
- NM: A taxpayer complaining. And so he called up Thelma Grover and said, "Take that book off the shelf. Got an unhappy parent here." And she said, "Over my dead body."
- LD: That really is remarkable.
- NM: And she just stood right up to him and refused to do it. And she was backed by some pretty solid policy making by the American Library Association, and they have Patron's Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence, you know, and all of that.
- LD: But she was still the face that...
- NM: Yes, she stood up, and the Library Board had endorsed all of that too.
- LD: I did have someone else mentioned that that we interviewed. And I suppose subsequent to that there was a process put in place whereby complaints could be made.
- NM: But in the old library, there was a little, it was so crowded, but in the office area there was a little conference room area. Part of a room, and it was kind of set apart by some high shelving. And there was a conference table where the board met. Well, in that room, it was lined with books, of course, there was a shelf for dirty books. (Laughter) And this was Miss Grover's. I mean, you weren't supposed to know about this. But when books were controversial, they bought them because they needed to see whether or not they needed to add them to the collection. But they'd just buy one copy. And, of course, that's pretty naive, now about anything goes. Anyway, there were probably 15-20 books that were shelved and that were in this corner. And I knew where they were. And they were always shelved with their spines to the back of the bookcase, where you couldn't even see what they were. They were hind sight too.
- LD: So they were books that didn't make the cut?
- NM: They didn't make the cut. But they were there, in case there were any complaints or anything.

- LD: Oh, that's interesting. So there was some, obviously, a very professional evaluation that went on.
- NM: Oh, they were determined about that. That's where the library profession has pride themselves on, fairness, and openness, and all that. So...
- LD: When you were a child, did you grow up going to the Cedar Rapids Public Library?
- NM: Oh some, some. I had an aunt who worked at the library in the early days, and oh probably into the twenties. And so I knew she had had a strong connection with the library and so, you know, I always had heard about it, and grew up hearing that.
- LD: Well, I'm back tracking because there's an area that we did not discuss, and that's the days of the Bookmobile. And you had mentioned the Friendsmobile, and that's something I have great nostalgia for, are the Bookmobile days, because I was a country kid and that Bookmobile was real important to me growing up. I know that the Bookmobiles finally had to be retired, because, well people changed too. They were able to get the library more easily, but...
- NM: Yeah, just the patterns of use changed enough that that was an outmoded system, and those were worn out vehicles. They needed to be retired.
- LD: Oh yes.
- NM: And not replaced.
- LD: And the Friendsmobile was, kind of a substitute, was that to avoid buying a new bookmobile?
- NM: No, no, it was just, there wasn't any particular need demonstrated for it. I just thought of the idea.
- LD: (Laughter) And this is when you were in the board in the 70's?
- NM: Yeah
- LD: Yeah
- NM: Maybe I was on the Friends Board. I can't remember when that was exactly.
- LD: I think...I have a note about that. How did it work?--1978 when you were the Friendsmobile Director.
- NM: I was working at Stamats and I had a little teeny office. It had one window in it and everyday as I was standing at my filing cabinet and looking out the window, I would see one of those Canteen trucks. What it is, is a pickup truck fitted with a little cab thing on the back end that was adapted for food service. That mobile food service that they take it around to industrial plants and to small businesses for the benefit of employees. They'd go out there at a set time every day and get a sandwich or donut and cup of coffee or whatever they wanted, candy bars. And I would see that thing drive up at the Pepsi-Cola plant across the street and employees would come out and take what they wanted. And it looked like such a convenient thing. And I

would think about--and the sides lifted up on both sides and the back to reveal all this food and beverage equipment they had. And I thought wouldn't that be fun if that, that carried books instead of food. And so I called the local Canteen people and I said, "Where'd ya get that truck?" And they referred me to somebody in Waterloo, the headquarters. And I called them and I said "Who manufactures that, that unit" and they gave me the name of the manufacturer and somebody in Chicago, a little, just a little place. So I called them and said, "Do you think you could ever outfit one of those things and design it to hold books instead of food?" And the man said, "What an interesting idea. Yes, I think we could." So we corresponded with him a time or two, and made arrangements to go into Chicago to the plant to talk to the man who was in charge. Tom Carney and I flew in one day, just for the day and we got a cab and gave them the address of this place. And it was somewhere near Cabrini Green. You know that bad area? And the cab driver said "I don't wanna drive there."

LD: I don't think so. (Laughter)

NM: But we have to go there and he said "Well all right, but I'm not getting out of the cab."

LD: What an adventure.

NM: Yes it was and it was just, it looked like, it was just a one little door leading into a warehouse. I mean that's it. There was a little sign outside and that was it. So we went in and it's just one big, it was like going to small car repair place and they were manufacturing these units. They were all over the place in various stages. So we talked to the manager and he was expecting us. And we walked around and we measured and we measured and we looked at things. And he came up with a basic design, just in conversation. And so we followed up with that, and yes indeed, it was going to be feasible. And it was going to cost something like nine or ten thousand dollars. But first you had to buy the truck.

LD: Right.

NM: And then this unit was going to be--oh I think maybe the whole thing we could get or maybe sixteen or seventeen thousand dollars. And the friends were going to pay for it.

LD: Right.

NM: So, everybody thought that was a good idea. And we had it wired for sound so that you could drive it into a park and set up shop and show movies off the back end.

LD: So it was a real, it was a programming opportunity too.

NM: Yeah, Yeah. And I had envisioned that it could even drive into an industrial plant if you take a special collection of books on self help kinds of things and job improvement. All kinds of, I mean you could tailor the collection that you take out to the place you were going. But it turned out to be rather cumbersome to keep changing the content, the books and all that.

LD: Where did it generally go then?

NM: Well then, it ended up going primarily to preschools, taking boxes of children's books to preschools. They'd take them out, deliver them and pick them up the next round. Maybe every 2-3 weeks, kind of a loan cycle.

LD: Right. Well that's still a great service.

NM: It's a good name for it isn't, a loan cycle. (Laughter)

LD: Yeah, a loan cycle. (Laughter) That's interesting though. That was an idea that you saw, you explored and you researched, you drove.

NM: Yes and we invented it.

LD: Literally invented it.

NM: And then the manufacturer started trying to market that idea other places and we never protected ourselves.

LD: So it was "his" idea.

NM: It became his idea and we had no more to do with it. So it served a purpose there for a while. It never did quite measure up to what I had hoped it could do.

LD: Well I, from talking to people who drove those vehicles, the wear and tear on them was a tremendous thing.

NM: Yeah--the wear and tear on the individuals.

LD: Well that's probably true.

NM: Because they ended up, have to tote tote boxes into places and that's, that's very difficult, especially when you have women drivers. We'd have a paid driver and then we'd have a volunteer go along for a while, so it's--it was a good idea anyway.

LD: Well it served its purpose in the time. I think probably we'll tie it up for today. Is there anything else that I have not covered that you really wanted to touch on in relationship to your involvement with the library over the years. And we can certainly...

Start of second interview.

LD: This is Laura Derr on Saturday February 8, 1997 and I'm again in the home of Nancy McHugh at 167 Dows Lane SE and we're continuing with an interview regarding the Cedar Rapids Public Library and other areas of the community that she's been active in over the years. Nancy, one of the areas that we did not really cover in our last meeting has to do with the librarian staff that you worked with in those years when you were very involved with the new building and on the Board of Trustees. And I'd just like for you to share any memories that you have of those folks and their commitment to the library.

NM: I realized after we talked last time that I had not--I didn't, I didn't feel good about not mentioning some of those folks because they really were the heart and soul of the

library. I just kind of came in and worked around the fringes. Professional librarians are a special breed. And there were some very special people connected with the library during the years I was there. Before that, I never did know know the librarians who came before Jim Marvin. Archer, J Archer Eggen, I believe we mentioned that he did a great deal. He was the director during the years when they remodeled and added on. Did some nice improvements. And, but my history begins with Jim Marvin and then Tom Carney and Tom Armitage. Before that there was--I have fond memories of a librarian who was on the staff for many years and her name was Mary Burkhalter. And she was a wonderful woman, but kind of eccentric. And she used to walk up 3rd Avenue striding, always with kind of a black hat on and her purse swinging by her side. And she had a wide stride you know, very purposeful walk. Everybody liked her. She was a great salesman, sales person (Laughter) for--She was a salesman in those days.

LD: In those days, yeah.

NM: And helped to increase the use of the library just by, because she was a good person.

LD: What area was she in?

NM: I...probably Adult Services, I don't know. They didn't have it compartmentalized so much. It was either Adults' or Childrens'. And then I mentioned before, Thelma Grover who was the assistant director. Thelma Grover was the assistant director and she did fill in, did I talk about his before? She did fill in as an acting director for a year when Jim Marvin took an assignment in the Philippines.

LD: I think you mention that she was a very...good leader--

NM: Stern. Yes she was stern and Ruth Richardson was right there with her. And then there was Dorothy Thomas who was head of Extension Services and that means the bookmobiles. That was her, her province and she was a, she was a lot of fun and a good librarian. Agnes Hibbs was at, was head of technical services for a long time. And she had, before that, had been a librarian at Franklin High School when I was in school. So I kind of followed her through.

LD: So these ladies looked over your shoulder all your life.

NM: They were stern. They were stern people and, I mean there was something of a teacher in all of them. And Evelyn Zerzanik who was a powerhouse of a woman and very determined in administering her department and very innovative. So those people were the heart and soul of the library. Really worked hard to build it up. They didn't get paid very much either, I'm sure.

LD: No, in fact in talking with some of them, most of their careers came before any unionization or standardization of wages and they said actually they never knew what each other made because it would not have been appropriate to have asked. It wouldn't have been polite.

NM: Well absolutely. And of course, these people were all department heads so they were managerial and the union rules didn't apply. It was, there were a lot of problems connected with the unions and the, they didn't like volunteers, volunteers

- threatened, they were going to do "their" work and they were very suspicious of that. I think they've gotten over that now.
- LD: I was going to say that has had to changed, hasn't it?
- NM: Yes, yes it has.
- LD: Because of the demands of the new library?
- NM: Uh huh, and the, then some of them got their start by just working as library pages, student assistants. I think Tom Carney began his career...
- LD: He was a page?
- NM: I think so. I think he started out as a page and then went to library school down at Iowa. Nice, nice young man.
- LD: So he came through the system.
- NM: He came through the system. And became the director at a very young age. I think he was only probably 27, 28 when he took that job, I imagine. And he was, had a lot to do with the design of the new library, working with the library consultant and developing some of the design parameters. And so he deserves a lot of credit and he does not get it. He left a year or so after the library was open and...
- LD: Well that's not uncommon. I think that the stress of capital campaigns and building programs.
- NM: Absolutely. And I think it kind of got to him and he needed to get away from it. And so, but he left quite a mark and that needs to be said.
- LD: Do you, do you remember whether or not in that process of building the new building, did all of the staff, I think you had said this earlier so I may be repeating myself, they had input into that process.
- NM: A great deal of input; and all through the process of developing the building program, which is the written document that guides the architects. So every department had extensive conversations with the planning committee, with the building consultant, who came down from Minneapolis, and, and also with the architects in the, in the earlier stages.
- LD: One of the amazing things to me about that process was how quickly the move took place. And I'm sure that's because there'd been months and months of planning.
- NM: Well it was beautifully orchestrated.
- LD: Who was in charge of that, do you know?
- NM: Well, I think Miss Grover and, I always called her Miss Grover, I never called her Thelma. She was the only one. The rest, well Miss Hoover, Miss Hoover kind of ran the office and you called her Miss Hoover, I called her...I never was overly familiar. And Miss Hems, I never thought about that.

LD: You grew up when they were already grown, so. (Laughter)

NM: Yes, yes. I, it was sort of a student teacher relationship. You didn't overstep your, your bounds. So they've kind of done away with that formality now, pretty much.

LD: For better or worse, right?

NM: I don't think it's for better actually.

LD: But that, didn't the move actually take place within a week or over a long weekend or?

NM: Well, maybe two weeks totally but what they did was convert to the computer system. The...

LD: The computer card...

NM: Computer card catalog.

LD: I guess that's an oxymoron, the computer catalog.

NM: Yeah, that's right. And that was kind of a horrendous change. The public was slow to accept that. And the staff had enough trouble with that too.

LD: Well as I remember, there really was, initially there were, there were not enough volunteers or people available to really help train people on the new catalog system, so there were some stress moments.

NM: Yes, Yes. I never did master that. (Laughter) There was another person too who came in kind of late in the game. But it was Roy Kenagy, who was, oh I don't know. I guess he came in as head of adult services eventually, replacing Ruth Richardson when she retired. And he was instrumental in getting the new library off to a good start.

LD: He was very supportive of Oral Histories as a matter of fact.

NM: Yes, Yes, Right, we talked about that.

LD: Yeah, he's a good guy.

NM: So, it's fun to think about those people they were...

LD: I am curious. Who was responsible for getting the Ada Van Vechten window in the new library? That's such a wonderful piece.

NM: Oh, that was kind of a little nefarious gambit. (Laughter)

LD: I see--did you go in the dark of night? (Laughter)

NM: Because, the city, they really wanted to make that building into something. We had to, had to preserve it. The window had been moved into a library addition. It was kind of a mezzanine area, where the magazines and biographies were, and

newspapers.

LD: I don't even remember it.

NM: You had to go up 5 or 6 steps and the window had been relocated to the back, so that it faced the alley, behind the library. Well we didn't want to just leave it there because it was kind of a centerpiece of the old library. So what we did, I think Tom Carney was very interested in that. That was kind of his idea. We had it removed and sent to Dubuque to be restored because it was stained glass. And it did need some repair, the leading and so forth. And so when it came back it just somehow never got reinstalled.

LD: (Laughter)

NM: Had to do something temporarily, put another window in that space while the stained glass window was removed, while it was absent. So when it came back, it just kind of went into storage and then ended up in the new building.

LD: Ended up in the new building. And its in a wonderful position, because the light shines through it.

NM: Yeah, it's just, it's just right. I always wished that at Easter time, there are live plantings all along at the base of that window, at the top of the stairway in, in the new building. And I always wanted that to be filled with Easter lilies because in the stained glass window, at the bottom section of it, there are Easter lilies in that, in that window.

LD: That is a wonderful idea. Probably the city wouldn't pop for that though. (Laughter)

NM: Well, no, somebody else would have to do that. The city didn't have anything to do with what went in there, in the beginning.

LD: Well, I'm sure that you remember in a recent testimonial dinner, you were compared to Ada Van Vechten. (Laughter)

NM: Oh well yeah. (Laughter) She was a militant lady. I'd hate to think that....

End Tape 1, Side 2

Start Tape 2 Side 1

LD: This is tape 2 of an interview with Nancy McHugh in her home at 167 Dows Lane SE on Saturday, February 8, 1997. Well are there any other remarks that you'd like to make about your library experience or the library today, as it certainly is an incredible institution in the state of Iowa? I believe it's one used more than any other.

NM: Well, I would say probably in the midwest. I think it's been a leader in a lot of things and now, a leader in technology, which I know nothing about.

LD: Umhum--with the new catalog system and...

NM: The internet and...

LD: I noticed that they now have a whole bank of computers that provide on line electronic services down there. It's a whole new world.

NM: It's a...yes it is, it is, revolutionized and then the city, I think, has been generally supportive of all that.

LD: At this point, I think, especially with our new council, we'll have ongoing support.

NM: Yes.

LD: I do think that it's interesting. The library is sort of like the post office in a way. It's, it's the institution we love to hate. You know, we always find something that's not quite right about it. And yet, I think that over the years, that institution has served more people and changed more lives.

NM: The more benign the institution, the more trouble it gets into. (Laughter) It's kind of an inverse ratio or something.

LD: Especially if you're totally service oriented because, because then no matter what, there's going to be somebody you didn't quite provide the service to.

NM: Did I talk earlier about, about the Library Foundation?

LD: No and that's important because that's a fairly new organization.

NM: Well it was started, just about, a little before the time that I started to work there so it must have been about 1960...

LD: Oh, okay, that's older than I thought.

NM: ...five or so. Right around, I started in '67. Well I don't know when it was. But anyway I think it was Chuck Cebuhar that was instrumental in starting that. I think he was president of the Library Board at that time. And there was a lot of distrust between the Library Board and the City Council, because if someone left any money to the library and the city council knew about it, they would very likely cut the budget.

LD: Oh, just reduce it by that amount.

NM: Just reduce it. You know, "You don't need the money then." And so in order to protect those funds, this is what I was told anyway, in order to protect those funds a little bit, we set them aside so that no one could get at them for operating purposes. So, so that was what that was.

LD: That's when it began.

NM: And then everybody on the, all of the trustees of the library served on the, served on the board of the the Foundation. It was, it wasn't very active, but it gave some protection to contributed funds.

LD: Is that foundation...do you have any idea how well it's, is funded at this point?

NM: Well, I think some money came, came to the library about, during the building era,

- when the new building was being built. And so there were some funds that were placed in the Foundation. Gave it a pretty good base. I don't know what the assets are in that, but it's not bad.
- LD: Those funds are used primarily for equipment purchases or?
- NM: Well, special things that aren't, they're being beyond the budget and I don't know, I don't. There's a board, Jack Evans was president of it for a while and I think, I think now Gary Streit is president.
- LD: I believe that it was instrumental in bringing in for the centennial, for the anniversary.
- NM: The anniversary, they funded that.
- LD: ...the speaker. Bringing in...
- NM: ...the dinner and the ...
- LD: So it's wonderful to have an organization like that.
- NM: Yeah, and they have a development person that they hired, who works for the library.
- LD: To continue to build that. That's great.
- NM: Yeah, I think it's a part time position but so that makes it more intentional.
- LD: And it means that they are not constantly going back to the city council and the public for everything that needs, that they would like to do.
- NM: Yeah, it's my impression that they're fairly well funded now, as a public entity, so that's good.
- LD: I think maybe you've got them in place for the next century. (Laughter)
- NM: (Laughter) Well, I hope so.
- LD: We'll see what happens to them. Well actually we probably won't.
- NM: I did not, I did not do it single handedly.
- LD: Oh I know, I know.
- NM: There were many, many, many people involved.
- LD: And that's always the case of an achievement like that. But I think that might be a good segue into another organization that you've been involved in over the years, which originally was called the Community Welfare Fund. Can you share with us how that, how that fund was started and how it has evolved?
- NM: Well the Community Welfare Foundation was founded in 1949. There was a small group of prominent citizens decided that the city should have such an institution. And

they were, the earliest, the founders were Robert Armstrong, Ed Evans, John T. Hamilton, Van Vechten Shaffer, A.L. Smulekoff, Frank Welch, and the prime mover was Ty Ingersoll. T.M. Ingersoll who was the founder of the law firm of Shuttleworth and Ingersoll. So they had a small group of funds that they administered. It kind of met once a year to make little distributions here and there from the income from their funds. And in 1972 at the behest of Ty Ingersoll, there was a woman named Minnie Rubek who was a night cleaning woman or janitor at the light company. She had inherited a substantial amount of money and had no relatives to leave it to. So Ty Ingersoll convinced her that leaving it to the Community Welfare Foundation would be an appropriate place to leave her funds. So she did that and it was like \$300,000 which was quite an infusion of funds into the foundation. It grew, the foundation grew very little after that and it, but the board continued to meet once a year, have cookies and exchange pleasantries and then dole out the money.

LD: Which would be the interest off that.

NM: Right and usually suited the interest of the individual board members.

LD: Oh, so there weren't any set of public criteria for...

NM: Not really--in fact the less said about it publicly the better. They would give a lot of money for camperships. Well they didn't have a whole lot to work with. It might be between fifteen and twenty five thousand dollars a year that they would give out. It was not very imaginative grant making, but it got the the job done in one morning and that was it. And so, I don't what year I went on that board. It was probably 1980 or around there. Ted Welch, who was then president, had been president for fifteen years or so.

LD: Who's the son of Frank.

NM: Son of Frank, yes. Frank Welch was the president and chairman of the board of People's Bank and Trust Company, which is now Norwest Bank. When he died, his son Ted inherited the CEO position and also the presidency of the Welfare Foundation. Well, they wanted to do a little more with the foundation and he came, Ted Welch came to see me one time when I was working at Stamats. And said "We'd like to do a very nice annual report that we can distribute, and use that as a marketing tool." He didn't call it a marketing tool, but that's what it was.

LD: Oh no.

NM: And wanted, wanted me to help put that together and so I remembered, he was sitting in my little teeny tiny office, over at Stamats.

LD: He's a big guy too.

NM: Yeah, so we both squeezed into that little office and I looked at some of the information that he had brought over and I said, "Well you don't have any women on your board." I'm just kind of tweaking him a little bit and he says, "No, I guess we don't." And the next thing I knew, when, I think Jim Coquillette had been on that board as a representative of banks. When he resigned from that position they asked me if I would like to go on. Well this was, this must have been right after the library was built.

LD: (Laughter) So you had time on your hands.

NM: And so it must have been about that time because Robert Armstrong had been such an adversary and it left a bad taste in my mouth. But anyway he was on that board and there were only, it's a seven member board and I thought well, I don't know how this is gonna work, but we got along fine. Every time there was a discussion of a grant to the library, he would oppose it.

LD: Predictably.

NM: "Well that's a tax supported institution and we shouldn't be giving money to tax supported institutions." And finally someone else on the board, don't know who it was, "Oh Robert, for heaven's sake, get off it." (laughter)

LD: (Laughter)

NM: And so that was kind of the end of it, and so. From that point on, he got his camperships for the YMCA and I got grants for the library now and then. The other people on the board at that time were; Lew Van Nostrand, Bruce Gibson, who was president of the Guaranty Band, Ted Welch as I mentioned, A.L. Smulekoff, Russell Hess who was a lawyer, who had been, had been in the trust department at Merchant's National Bank and then me, I. So, so that was kind of a...

LD: It was an interesting group.

NM: It was an interesting group and I, I really was well aware that I was a token female on that board. And we didn't meet more than once and twice at the most per year.

LD: Were you actively soliciting to build that fund at that time?

NM: No, no, no we didn't do anything like that.

LD: You were just administering the interest?

NM: Well just--If somebody died and left some money that we, that was graciously accepted.

LD: Okay

NM: And um, so there really wasn't a whole lot of work done with that. Well, I think it was in 1987 that Lew Van Nostrand's very close friend, Bill Quarton said, "I think you people ought to do something more with that foundation than just sit on it." And so he convinced Lou and then Ted Welch asked Lew Van Nostrand and me to do something about that. (Laughter) So and to see what we could do to help it to grow because Bill Quarton didn't want to establish...He had, he had tremendous wealth at the time, and still does. He did not want to establish his own foundation, a private foundation. There's a lot of limitations in doing that. He wanted a public foundation that would assure maximum tax deductibility. And the way to do it was to convert the Community Welfare Foundation to a pub...from a private foundation to a public, which entails a lot of legal work to accomplish that.

LD: I'll bet.

NM: And there are some very, there are some pretty stiff criteria that have to be met for the government. So we started looking into that and he said he would give us, I think it was four hundred and fifty thousand dollars, if we would match that and change the name, take the necessary steps to convert from private to public and be on our way. So the board decided. He didn't care what, whether the matching was in pledges or actual cash or property or what, and he wasn't concerned about that. Well we, we--I didn't, I'm not a solicitor so, I'm not good at fund raising so unless I go off, make one call and ask for it all, you know...(Laughter)

LD: You get six point eight million. (Laughter)

NM: Yeah, yeah, that was my, my crowning achievement.

LD: Well that's the way you ought to be able to do it...ideal.

NM: Yeah, yeah. So the board met the challenge in fairly short order. We contacted the Council on Foundations for some help with restructuring. And got very interested in what they had to offer. Took out a membership in the council and that led us right into an on site consulting program which was available to emerging or revitalizing foundations. That's kind of the way they referred to it. And so, we were able to get a grant for an on site consultant, who came from California and spent several days with us and outlining the procedures that we had to follow if we were going to be anywhere nearly successful. We had to open an office. We had to hire a full time director. We had to hire a secretary.

LD: To be accessible to the public?

NM: To be accessible to the public. And so we agreed to do all of this. And also we needed to start an administrative endowment, so that we wouldn't have to go out and raise funds every year.

LD: To pay salaries?

NM: To pay salaries, to pay our overhead.

LD: Sure.

NM: And we weren't very successful in that, that endowment. He recommended half a million dollars to start with. So we went right to the Hall Foundation and said, "Hey, how about giving us a half a million dollars and then we'll be on our way." "Well," they said, "well, we don't give to other foundations." And so that was a dead end. So...

LD: Good try. (laughter)

NM: Yeah, gave it a good try. And so we did everything that we were supposed to do. We got the legal work accomplished and over time. And Bill Quarton of course made good on his promise to put some money into the foundation. And he's continued to provide funding and using charitable...

LD: Over the years, even more.

NM: ... remainder trusts and other devices. It's been very useful to him and certainly to us. And so then we were able to get another grant from the Mott Foundation and to help us with some operating expenses. So then we were on our way.

LD: Is the Mott Foundation a local foundation?

NM: No it's Michigan, but it's, they operate nation wide. So we advertised nationally for a director and ended up with Malcolm Peel. Who really, was so instrumental in constructing the shape of the new foundation. And we enlarged the board and did a lot of organizational things. Weren't particularly fun, but they were very necessary to do.

LD: To lay the groundwork.

NM: Yeah--then we got a second consultant that came in, I can't--names I can't--I'm lost now. But he was very instrumental also in moving us forward and building fires under us. Must grow this foundation very rapidly in the early years to give it some momentum. And so we went from four hundred and fifty thousand dollars to nine hundred very quickly when we met the challenge. This was starting with a full organization in 1989 and it's now, depending on how you count it, between eleven and fourteen million.

LD: That's remarkable.

NM: So and, and a lot of commitments were future funding, so it has great potential.

LD: I know a lot of people are now doing, as part of their estates, they plan that there will be a gift. You do probably have a tremendous future.

NM: You'll have an, insurance policies have been given to us and some property so there, It's a wonderful device for giving that insures funding in perpetuity.

LD: Nancy, what kinds of things or causes are you funding at this point in time?

NM: Well all kinds. I think we've probably funded seventy or eighty different organizations over the past few years. The old predecessor foundation probably funded forty different organizations. All non-profits, we don't fund individuals. I think we probably could, but we do not do that. But there are scholarships that are available.

LD: So educational, as well as cultural, as well as, any human services?

NM: Economic development is fair game. There's seven areas that the foundation, it covers everything. You know, human, health services we don't get into as much as the others because that's well covered by United Way. Mack Peel used to call, refer to, I don't think he made this up, but he used this a lot, that United Way is the community's checking account and the Foundation is the community's savings account, so..

LD: Savings account...that makes sense actually.

NM: See, an organization like the Hall Foundation is a family foundation.

LD: It's private still.

NM: It's private and there are no, no more family members living who can make contributions to that. So they have received all of the funding that they are ever going to get. Well, what they do to grow the foundation is, depends on their skill in investing. But with the death of Irene Perrine a couple years ago, that, that represented the last infusion of funds for that foundation. Now that, our foundation on the other hand, can receive funds from anyone and everyone. So it's everybody's foundation.

LD: Yes and my memory is that if there was also at one time and maybe there still is encouragement for individual organizations to, non profits for instance, to place their endowments or their funds...

NM: Right, we have, we call those agency funds and we have a number of those. And it really provides a good service, because we, with the more funds you have to work with, the better you can do in investing. And we have right now a wonderful investment team and managers.

LD: You have a new director.

NM: Yeah, yeah we have a new director. He is, who is very knowledgeable, coming from a banking background.

LD: Well, I'm curious about that. How did you entice David Roosevelt to Cedar Rapids?

NM: David Roosevelt. Well, we advertised nationally and then in journals of philanthropy. I don't know, there were two or three publications in the trade. We advertised. We got a number of applications from around the country. And all of a sudden one day a letter came from David Roosevelt and of course we got a kick out of that. "Well how in the world did this happen." Well it was a wonderful letter and so we followed up. We had telephone interviews and what not and got along very well with that. And he came out for a visit. He was living in Westport, Connecticut. And had been instrumental in establishing the Arkansas Community Foundation. It's a state wide foundation. And was working for Chemical Bank in New York at the time, was asked to take a leave from that job and go to Arkansas. So he went down there on a two year assignment and ended up staying eight or nine years, and loved being down there. And so then he was between, he was doing some consulting work, but he really wanted to be, to head up a community foundation. So he heard about, just by word of mouth, he heard about the opportunity here and was very interested. And so he came out for an interview and it worked out very well. And he said, "I would like to do this."

LD: And we might just say for the record, David Roosevelt is the grandson...

NM: The grandson of Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom he did not really know. He was only four or five years old when FDR died. But he knew his grandmother Eleanor Roosevelt very well and spent much time with her as a young boy.

LD: So we have a national figure here in that position now and he's also joined the Brucemore board. He really is a tremendous resource with his knowledge of what is possible.

- NM: Yes, he knows quite a bit about Washington and the ways of Washington. And his, I must say, is a friend of Bill Clinton, the president.
- LD: Well certainly with his Arkansas experience.
- NM: From the Arkansas experience, right. And his wife is now here. She took several months to sell their, rent their home, I guess, in Westport. They haven't sold it yet. But she moved out here last, last summer, summer of 86. She's an artist, a practicing artist in her own right and has had a number of her works published. She does wildlife art principally and some portrait work. Very nice, very nice work.
- LD: You brought assets into the community beyond the financial one.
- NM: Yeah, Her professional name, she uses the name Roosevelt, but her maiden name is Chopin.
- LD: I'll be darned.
- NM: Michele Chopin Roosevelt. And one of her books, well it was a book of something she did for the Smithsonian a couple years ago, last year received the Reader's Choice Award, I think for that, for her illustrations of that book.
- LD: Well once again. You know I feel compelled to point out here this was a very small privately run organization that has moved into a very public, growing, thriving energetic community organization and... Now are you still the token woman on that board?(Laughter)
- NM: Oh no, no, no, no. We have a number. We have a wonderful board and it's grown. We went from seven, we're now fifteen, and it's a wonderful board.
- LD: So much more diverse than it was originally.
- NM: Not as diverse, well it's not as diverse as it should be. I mean as far as minorities are concerned. That is a, that is a problem that we continue to talk about. We have not done much with it. It's frankly difficult to find minority representatives who are knowledgeable in the areas where we need the knowledge. And we don't wanna just be, indulge in tokenism.
- LD: Exactly
- NM: So we're continually looking for people who could really contribute to the growth. We started out the main focus was to grow it as fast as possible so that the people who are on the board, of course, with myself excepted, are people who have resources or influence where we need it. And...
- LD: But I think it has, it has only a bright future. It's wonderful for Cedar Rapids to be a community that has two major foundations and in addition to the other resources.
- NM: There's a major difference between the Hall Foundation, which is only concerned with expending funds, investing, holding, holding them and then expending them for a good purpose. And for the Community Foundation, we not only have to do that, but we have to raise the funds as well. So that they're kind of equal activities. So on one

hand you have to raise the money and on the other hand you've got to figure out what you're going to do with it once you've raised it.

LD: Right.

NM: And some are pass through funds that we do not hold in endowment, some are invested in that, unrestricted. We have a wide assortment of vehicles for, to suit whatever a donor's needs might be or needs and interests.

LD: Yeah, I know because you do have some named funds within that portfolio.

NM: Um hm, many, all, we have lot's of them. It's amazing to me how that's grown. Some of them are very small and some are quite substantial.

LD: It's quite an administrative task now.

NM: It is, it is. Without computers we'd be lost of course.

LD: We all would. (Laughter)

NM: Yeah, so we now have a program officer who directs the grant making efforts and a board committee that helps with the reviewing of grant applications. And we have a financial officer who oversees the management of the fund. And then we have an investment committee and investment professionals that we work with to achieve the return that we require.

LD: Minnie Rubek would be proud.

NM: Well, she'd be stunned. (Laughter)

LD: Yes

NM: Yeah, she wouldn't understand a bit of it, but she'd, she was a philanthropist, she probably wouldn't know how to pronounce it maybe, but...

LD: But...it went a long way, I mean that's wonderful to see.

NM: The point is that anybody can do it, anybody who is community minded, wants to see that money just doesn't go down the drain. And the government doesn't need to get it all.

LD: And that's the greatest challenge. (Laughter)

NM: (Laughter) Well, that's a motivation that's behind some philanthropy, a lot of it.

LD: Well I certainly don't want to, if there are other remarks that you want to make about that Foundation, I don't want to cut you off, but that discussion of the Hall Foundation, or the Hall, yeah Hall Foundation and the difference in those funds, I think is a good way to lead into the Brucemore involvement.

NM: Well, uh...

LD: And I happened to move to Cedar Rapids about the, I believe Margaret Hall's death occurred within a year. I moved here in 1980 and the announcement was

made that Brucemore would become a National Trust Property and it would be endowed with a trust fund for the maintenance of the property.

NM: Two million.

LD: At that point it was two million dollars. The Hall Foundation, of course, was a separate organization and it had already existed. But you were, I believe, one of the charter trustees of Brucemore.

NM: Right

LD: How did you proceed to turn essentially a private home into a public institution.

NM: Well, it was, that was an interesting assignment. And when Margaret Hall left the property to the National Trust, the first thing the trust did after everybody cleared out and there was no one living there anymore; they sent a representative out from Washington by the name of Rob Mawson. I think it's (spells name), to kind of spearhead that effort to structure, to create a structure where that would guide the development of Brucemore into a National Trust Property and community resource. So what he did was start out, I'm sure with the Hall Foundation, and talking to Bill Whipple particularly, and getting an idea of some people in the community who might be agreeable to serving on a charter board. And then he started interviewing people, interviewed around town for a couple of weeks I think. And in the meantime, taking up residence in the house, the big house.

LD: So this was the trust officer that made those decisions initially?

NM: Yeah and I have to explain that my house is just a stone's throw from, I'm kind of a back door neighbor of Brucemore. Living on Dows Lane which is kind of the back service entrance to Brucemore. And I've lived here since 1960. And actually the property of my house is built on, was Brucemore property.

LD: Originally.

NM: Originally, and it was subdivided in 1940. My father was the engineer who did the surveying of the subdivision and in so doing he picked out one lot for himself. And some other property right around it so that to kind of protect that investment. So I'm right, just across the alley from Brucemore, so I have a vested interest in what happens up there.

LD: Absolutely.

NM: So anyway Rob Mawson, I got acquainted with him, cause, just being a good neighbor, walking up there, yoo-hooing, and talking to him and having dinner now and then. So he asked me to be on the board and I was reminiscing yesterday with Peggy Whitworth who is the director and has been, she was the beginning director and is still on the job after..

LD: She's almost becoming a historical figure.

NM: Yes, she is. Fifteen years has it been?

LD: It's fifteen this last summer.

- NM: Yeah and Paul Shawver was the first president of the new board. Joe Hladkey, publisher of the Gazette. Joe Loufec, from Iowa Manufacturing, was a good friend of Howard Hall. Bill Elwood an attorney, who was closely connected with the law firm Bill Perrine was in. Used to be Terwin, Simmons, Perinne, Albright and Neff at one point. There were all those names in it. Ted Healey, an architect, Jane Cook who was also a neighbor and was just down the other other side, down on Crescent Street. Rhoda Hill, I think had been president of the Junior League or was very much involved with the Junior League. Scott Olson another architect. Tom Aller who was the assistant to the mayor, the City Council and we couldn't remember who else. There are one or two others, it could have been, at least there were some names came up that were very, very instrumental in those early years. Ann Oldberg, Julie O'Donnell, Jack Evans who came on, not on the original board, but soon after, the next.
- LD: He ended up serving as President.
- NM: Yes, yes and Peter Stamats was involved from early times.
- LD: He was president the first year I came on.
- NM: So there we were. We had, we, and Rob Mawson also hired the director, Peggy.
- LD: Oh, so the board did not do that.
- NM: No
- LD: That was chosen, okay...
- NM: And what we, what we had to do, we were established as a co-stewardship property. So that, what that meant was that we had, we were owned by the National Trust, but the estate was to be managed by a local board. We had quite a bit of autonomy. But we didn't have access to the funds.
- LD: The funds were administered through the trust.
- NM: Through the trust, and they held it very closely so we had to develop a membership system and start raising funds. We did have two million dollars that, we had the income from that trust, what they, what the National Trust would allow to operate the estate--was twenty six acres and a large staff of maintenance people.
- LD: Most of whom lived on the property.
- NM: Yes, but then they had seasonal workers. They'd have five, six, seven people. There were some economies to be achieved there. Buying better equipment and better management of what we had. And so over time the staff was pared down a little and there were some former employees of the estate who were given life tenancy in some of the properties. So it's been well managed, well tended, well maintained.
- LD: How did you decide what to do with the house? What, how when you're starting from ground zero? How do you decide what your programs are? What your philosophy or your mission is?

- NM: Well we just kind of had to work that out. We formed committees. We had a program committee. We knew Margaret Hall's will stipulated that it was to be a community center. There were to be no strictly social events. You couldn't have weddings there. Although that would have been a very popular and a very lucrative thing to get into.
- LD: Boy it would be.
- NM: But it was not permitted. But we just had to, to kind of feel our way. Well what kinds of things could we do? Well, of course, there was great curiosity about...
- LD: The house?
- NM: The house. And one of the first things that Rob Mawson did was open it to the public without much planning. And it, to me, it was an invasion of privacy. Not for me, but into the Hall family.
- LD: I remember those first times I was over there. It was still in the Hall era completely and there were still many mementos of the family that were out and portraits on the wall.
- NM: And there wasn't a chance to interpret it to the public. So that when they toured and see the Tahitian Room and the Grizzly Bar-bear-bar, you know downstairs, it was a source of ridicule. People, they laughed at it. And they, you know, it just wasn't, hadn't been interpreted.
- LD: Couldn't put it in any perspective in relationship to the history of the community or ...
- NM: No, here you have a Victorian mansion with a silly rec room. You know, people didn't understand it. Well over time, all that had to be interpreted. Then there were some, it was, um, very much a lived in place and it looked like it. The carpeting was kind of thread bare and there was old 1940's furniture in there that just didn't seem to fit. There was no ambience.
- LD: Yeah, uh huh.
- NM: And so over time, we needed to do some adaptive changes so that it could be used fully for community purposes. It's still limited to a great extent by the lack of a large congregational space.
- LD: Right.
- NM: You have to have, can't have a big audience for something unless it's outdoors and then you are at the mercy of the weather. So that problem still exists.
- LD: That's one that the current board is dealing with. And, well we were talking about those early years and the kinds of programming that occurred over there. I have seen a lot of evolution in terms of the way the house looks. Now were you involved with the decision to interpret it in a certain period?
- NM: No I was involved with the development of the second floor.

- LD: Okay.
- NM: And, um, that's adaptive reuse. I mean, I mean we weren't trying to be a Victorian mansion. We wanted rooms that people might use. I don't know that they've ever been utilized to the extent that we'd envisioned.
- LD: The corporate room where...
- NM: The board room, that's used. The, what used to be the Hall's, I guess it was Howard's bedroom initially. They had had their own rooms and so forth. But it, the one overlooking the garden on the second floor. And we wanted that to be a really nice, comfortable room. Henrietta Arnold, Henrietta Dows Arnold, agreed to underwrite the redevelopment of that room. It looked pretty shabby, with grass cloth on the walls and it was peeling off. It really needed to be redone. So we contacted, we had an interiors committee. We contacted Chuck Skokestead in Iowa City, who was the owner of The Mansion, which was an interior design firm. And asked him to, we interviewed several people, and selected him. And, asked him to come up with some ideas. Well it didn't take him long at all to say this just needs to be kind of a buttery yellow, kind of bright, and take advantage of the sunlight that streams in there. And so it's a very pleasant room. It's kind of makes you smile when you walk in there. It's not Victorian, but it's nice.
- LD: Well, I'm not sure that the direction will be for the whole house to become Victorian, but I know that the first floor now has mainly, is, going back towards the Douglas period.
- NM: Right, well there's some interesting things about the main floor, particularly with the pocket doors, with the uh Ring Cycle murals and...
- LD: That paneling....
- NM: The paneling, butternut, I believe it is. So there's some interesting things in an interpretive way that, that draw people in.
- LD: Well, it's, it's not strictly a museum, and I think that's been always the challenge in directing it. That it's to be used for cultural activities and so its always been a struggle as to how much the house should be used and for what purpose.
- NM: Yeah, uh huh, right.
- LD: I think that's going to continue to evolve in the future. But you had to create all the by-laws and constitution, and all that jazz.
- NM: Oh yes, we struggle through all of that. That's the unfun part of it. But, it has to be done in every organization. It's unending. Did it with, the library was all set, we didn't have to do too much with that.
- LD: With that one.
- NM: No, but with Brucemore we had to do that. Then with the Foundation we had to write all new by-laws.

- LD: Then you write a mission statement and five years later you've got to rewrite that. (Laughter)
- NM: Well sure, and then long range planning and all those things that are all part and of that parcel of it.
- LD: How much staff did you have when you began?
- NM: We started, we had Peggy, we had, I think, Nile Dickon was around for a while. He had been kind of the house man for the Halls and has life tenancy of a property right on the property, a house on the property. And then that was it, I think, for at the beginning. And then we hired a part time secretary or receptionist and didn't have much money to do that with.
- LD: Now your original funds would have been pretty limited.
- NM: Very limited, and so it was kind of in fits and starts for a while. We had a, as we learned how to hire and carve out job descriptions and all of that. So also there was somebody in charge of, of the grounds, grounds maintenance.
- LD: When did the museum, or the gift shop begin. Was that in the early years?
- NM: Oh, that was in the early years. I can't remember, not right away. We had to remodel it a little bit down in the basement. But gift shops are very much a part of National Trust properties. So it was a natural thing for us to do.
- LD: Well, it's a tremendous resource in the community. I, I, I think if, if you look at their visitation, they are attracting wider and wider audiences.
- NM: We did get into a little difficulty right off the bat. When we were staffing, starting out, when we hired a young lady who was really not competent to do the job. And it caused a lot of problems when we had to let her go. And she, she was from a socially prominent family and it did harm to Brucemore, big time.
- LD: Because of the family?
- NM: Created a lot of bad feeling. Particularly directed at me and at Peggy. So (laughter) we, we really took it in the neck on that one.
- LD: It's a good thing you have tough skin. (Laughter)
- NM: Well, it wasn't that tough. It was very hard, very very difficult.
- LD: Those kinds of things are excruciating and sometimes just in terms of what happens to the morale of the interior staff, but, but in a community this size, it would be very hard.
- NM: So, so there was some other staffing errors that have been made over the years, but chiefly they were because that we had to hire people at, for the funds available.
- LD: People who were local that were not necessarily...
- NM: Were not adequate.

End Side 1 Tape 2
Start Side 2 Tape 2

- LD: We're talking about Brucemore and some of the activities the early days and so continue.
- NM: Okay, One of the early events that we had was a party, a gathering of some of the Hall's close friends and associates over the years. There was some hard feeling about having that final place being run by a bunch of strangers from Washington.
- LD: Yeah, that had to be hard. People who had been there at social events and...
- NM: And while they had to recognize that this was what, what the Halls had wanted. It still, it was there was a lot of nostalgia for them, connected to that place. And they weren't feeling very supportive of the whole thing. At least we felt that. So we made a list of all the that people we thought, whom we thought, were closely connected and would appreciate getting together. And we called that group The Coterie, The Coterie of Hall Friends. And invited them over for, I suppose wine and cheese one Sunday afternoon and had a very good turn out. There must have been forty or fifty people there. And we invited them to just sit around in the great hall, we had chairs brought in from all over, and reminisce. If they had something that they want to say about Margaret Hall or about Howard Hall or about their experiences visiting, playing there, just to talk about it. I don't think it was ever recorded, but it just gave them an opportunity to tell stories.
- LD: Kind of a memorial service (laughter)
- NM: Yes, in a way it was and it was very nice, gentle event. The intention was to kind of keep that group together and maybe once a year get them over there. But we never followed through on it.
- LD: But I'm sure...
- NM: I think it was sufficient to do it that one time.
- LD: It kind of gave them a sense of closure and that is, that's an excellent idea.
- NM: So, so that was a nice thing to do.
- LD: Yeah, you were dealing with a home that had meant a great deal to many people in the community and I know that over the years as people visit, they do still come and tell stories about when they were here visiting the Halls or invited by the Halls. And so I'm sure there is some nostalgia for the Hall era now that it's moving more back into the Douglas period interpretation. All of those are things that in time will work themselves out.
- NM: Well, there, there is, in that whole scheme there were the Douglasses, the Douglas Family people and then there were the Hall family people and they didn't necessarily mesh too well at times. So Peggy has had to be sensitive to that.
- LD: Yes, she has almost had to be a diplomat to the community.

NM: You can't over emphasize one to the exclusion of the other and there were a lot of sensitive feeling on the part of the Perrines there for instance, about the Douglas family and vice versa. So, but it took them both and the Sinclairs, all of those people to create that place.

LD: Well I, I have been interested. I finally got to go to my first National Trust Convention Conference last fall.

NM: Did you?

LD: And Brucemore is considered quite a jewel in the trust properties. And was used as an example a number of times of how things can be done and should be done.

NM: Well, all it takes is a little money.

LD: That's right. There's nothing like having some resources.

NM: That old saying about just what God would have done if he had the money.
(Laughter)

LD: That's right, (Laughter). But I think that's, that's well on its way to becoming more and more of a community asset.

NM: Well, all we need is for the hotel motel tax people to recognize the contribution it makes to the...

LD: How remarkable that you should bring that up. (Laughter) Brucemore receives zero funding.

NM: (Laughter) I know that, I know that. That's unthinkable, there should be a token plan.

LD: There is, yeah, there is a, there is a kind of a sense of noblesse oblige on the part of, or reverse noblesse oblige on the part of the city council right now.

NM: Yes, well, well, it's the same thing that we were guarding against at the library. I remember, I alluded to that earlier. That's why we established the foundation. We, I didn't do it. The foundation was established to protect funds from that kind of thing, that kind of thinking.

LD: Right, and it is unfortunate because Brucemore brings tourists to the community, no question about that.

NM: Yes, that's right, there are busloads. I know because they drive, they always come up Dows Lane and I can hear them. I know when the ground starts to shake, I know there's a bus coming.

LD: Well I have a feeling they'll be more careful about those allocations in the future, I hope.

NM: Well I would think so too.

LD: There's been a good bit of feedback. Any other stories or memories of Brucemore that you want to share with us?

NM: Oh, gosh.

LD: Before we move on? (laughter) Programs, activities that stand out in your mind?

NM: The visit of the Joffrey II Ballet Company. They did a performance in the driveway area right in front of the mansion. We never used to call it the mansion, but now I guess it's referred to that way.

LD: The mansion was the house.

NM: Yes, the house.

LD: And the carriage house was?

NM: The barn.

LD: The barn (Laughter)

NM: But we've got kind of, we've kind of taken the high ground on this so. But that was a stunning event and it was a beautiful, probably in June, I don't remember but it must have been about then. And it, they set up bleachers for people to watch the performance. And there was a wood floor that was brought in for them to perform on and it was a bright blue sky. You know later after or early evening and there was a hot air balloon that was kind of in the distance, kind of floating over and here were these wonderful dancers.

LD: How did you get them here?

NM: Well, they were in residence down in Iowa City...

LD: ... at Hancher.

NM: And they had built up the, Hancher I mean. The Joffrey Company had build up quite a relationship with University of Iowa and the dance school and Hancher Auditorium. They really liked, they still do come. They like to perform there and so they were, they're always royally entertained when they came. And these dancers are so young, fifteen, sixteen, eighteen years old, all with the same body types..

LD: Lovely.

NM: Lovely and very thin, long necks,

LD: Did they, was this a fund raiser event?

NM: No

LD: Was it, do you know how it was handled?

NM: I don't, I can't remember how it was handled. I'm sure Peggy would know.

LD: I don't know where I was.

NM: But it was a beautiful event. One of those special evenings. I mean the weather was perfect. Everything about it was perfect. And of course there have been others, Celebration of the Arts, every year. Really something people look forward to. And the Jazz and last year, beginning that theatre.

LD: Oh.

NM: The classic theatre performances with Medea was stunning.

LD: It's incredible to me what you can do on the grounds, even with the vagaries of the weather.

NM: Yes, Yes.

LD: Just a tremendous...

NM: Remarkable stage structure.

LD: And it was almost like you were in another world. I mean it was, it was, just had that luminous quality.

NM: Lighted by torches, it was quite remarkable. So we have that to look forward to, some more of that.

LD: Did you do the garden parties in the early days?

NM: Yes, yes, oh yes. We've had carriage rides and we've had pouring rain. This was always the big drawback. How to plan outdoors events and you can't have rain dates when you're setting up tents and doing...

LD: Two years ago the skies opened at the moment that the guests arrived for the garden party. However they were royally entertained. I believe it was a successful.

NM: You all went indoors.

LD: They all went indoors until we were able to move tents around and set things up. Finally it stopped raining.

NM: Well you know there's an old motto from the Madeira, Miss Madeira's school outside Washington, D.C. I don't, I never went there. I've never seen the place but I know of their motto and, uh, Miss Madeira's motto. And it's function and disaster finish in style. (Laughter) So when something like that happens, that what I, you think of.

LD: (Laughter) That's wonderful. Boy that should have been our motto for that. Well I also want to talk with you about your newest endeavor. Actually it's not new, you've been involved with St. John's Episcopal Church for, years.

NM: Oh yeah, well that's a, that's a whole horse of a different color. Yeah so, I joined the Episcopal Church in about 1986, something like that. And I joined St. John's church which was a, we call it the cute little brown church on 19th St. And it is a delightful little place.

LD: Picturesque.

NM: Picturesque, English style, very Anglican in appearance and it, it was a very small parish and that's what I liked about it when I went there.

LD: That's what attracted you.

NM: Yeah, and I had been circling around that for quite a while. Before I even got up the nerve to even go in the place. Had a good friend who'd been an Episcopalian and is in Omaha and I kind was a voyeur with her. I watched her enjoy her religion and her affiliation in that faith and I was kind of envious. I thought how do I get some of that. So I finally, finally joined and right away, it's a very small parish, so when somebody new comes in, you know, they attract notice. Right away I got involved. The minute I stepped in the door, the priest resigned.

LD: (Laughter) Was not connected with your joining.

NM: Well I hope not, I hope not because he was one of the big reasons why I wanted to go there. And so I became involved on a search committee. I thought, why, I hadn't joined yet. Would you be on the search committee for a new priest? So I did that. That was fun, you get your feet wet pretty fast doing that. And then I was asked to be on the Vestry which is the board of directors. And one thing lead to another and I ended being Senior Warden which is the chairman of the board and so that's kind of been the history of my relationship in that church over time. Over that last 14 years, I think I've been Senior Warden four times and I am currently Senior Warden now so.

LD: Well I want you to back up because we, you had told me a story earlier about choosing a new priest and your concerns about being qualified in contacting people in that regard and I thought you had, you had great advice on how to get them to come.

NM: Oh, yes, okay. Well the first, I have been on it twice, involved in the search. We had a couple of fast changes there. So when it came time to be in charge on the second time around, we were calling another new priest, it was my duty as Senior Warden to make the phone calls to the candidates who had been selected by the search committee, to come for interview. And they were from all over the country cause they, we use a clergy deployment office in New York which is part of the National Episcopal Church. And there's a big computer there that they do a match in the computer and come up with a whole list of names and then the Bishop in Des Moines selects ten or fifteen that he submits to the parish. Then you pick from those and invite the ones you want for interviews.

LD: You get to make the final choice.

NM: And I was to make, yes, we get to make the final choice. It's not like the Methodist Church.

LD: No it's not.

NM: No we have a great deal of autonomy there. The bishop has to put his stamp on it. All the way through it. But he's already approved, pre-approved them so. Anyway I was, I had to make those calls and I was kind of, I was dreading that duty. Because I'm not really well versed in churchy things.

LD: The lingo.

NM: The lingo. So we had one of the staff people at the Bishop's headquarters in Des Moines, the diocese said, "Now, I'll tell you how to do this. All you have to do when you call these people is say that you're calling, and there are three reasons why you're calling. One of them is that of course you've got the names out of the computer, that's kind of a given. The second reason is that it's really the prayer life of a congregation. You've been praying over this a long time. But most important reason is that it's the work of the Holy Spirit." And I said, "Oh I, I don't talk that way. I don't, I don't go around talking about the Holy Spirit." He said "Believe me you've got to do this because it works. This'll get them here. If you want them to come for interviews, you gotta, gotta tell em that. Just believe me now." The working of the Holy Spirit. Well, the words, I choked on the words. I was a Congregationalist before I joined the Episcopal Church. So this was an agonizing assignment for me. I had five people to call, because we wanted to interview five different priests. And so I, took me a week, I'd walk around my house at night and I would say "I'm calling because of the work of the Ho-Holy Spirit." And I'd practice saying this so that you know, say it over and over and over again, so that it would come out conversationally, (Laughter) and gesturing and stomping around. Finally got up my nerve and the first one I called, a priest in New Orleans. Now these people had no idea that we even existed so, I, it was a cold call.

LD: They had not submitted...

NM: Well their names were in the computer.

LD: They were in the database.

NM: Everybody's in the database, perpetually unless you deliberately say, I don't want anybody calling me. But there are thousands in there. And so here I come and it is like a bolt out of the blue. So I went through this little litany with this man and, "Oh yes, well yes, I believe I could come for an interview." So that was a heady success. I got one, you know. So I tried the next one. Went through that and I got, I got, I think it was four out of five.

LD: Not bad.

NM: Not bad. So something was working right. I don't whether it was the Holy Spirit or what. So one of the people who came was a man from South Carolina. Gary Coffey, who is today still our priest. This was ten years ago. And he came, he and his wife came for an interview. And so we had a Parish meeting. There were maybe thirty people in the room, who wanted to hear, be able to ask questions of them. And he said in the course of the evening, he said, "I have something I want to say about why we're here," he said. "We've had a very nice experience visiting here in Cedar Rapids and, but there's something you need to know. We really came because your Senior Warden, when she called, said that she was calling because of the working of the Holy Spirit." Well I couldn't let that go. And so I said, "There's something you need to know" (Laughter) and I, you know, related the story about how I had to practice in order to do that. And he looked at his wife, he was, you know, had a cute sense of humor, he looked at his wife and he said "Astrid, we have been had!" (Laughter) Well the upshot of it was that we extended the call to him and he accepted and that was, that was ten years ago, it will be ten years ago this spring.

- LD: So the Holy Spirit must have been in somewhere. (Laughter)
- NM: Well, it must, well I would, she must have been in there somewhere. (Laughter) So as a matter of fact, I just learned yesterday that, that in the Hebrew language, the word that was used in those earliest days, the word that was used for Holy Spirit was a female gender word. Did you know that?
- LD: I did not know that, but, I know that there is a tremendous kind of popular desire to see the Holy Spirit as more of a feminine spirit.
- NM: Well, it has a feminine gender word. So what does that tell you? Anyway.
- LD: Well there 's more there than they've been telling us for a lot years.
- NM: I think maybe, but you're going to have to learn Hebrew and Greek to figure it out.
- LD: Well and you're in a special situation right now.
- NM: Yes we are and for the last, almost the last ten years we have been wrestling with problems of an aging church. St. John's was build in 1910 and had a couple of additions which further compounded the problems of access. The building is virtually inaccessible to a lot of people because of short runs of stairways and there's no way you could get into that, into the property without going up stairs and down stairs so. And the bathrooms aren't located where they should be on the same level where the people are. No elevators, no and no easy way to accomplish that. So we've had study committees, we've had architectural studies done on three different times trying to figure out some way to adapt that building within a reasonable amount of money. To, uh, bring it up to date. We also were running out of room and the church, the congregation was very small when I joined and after Gary Coffey came in it really started to grow. But it kind of hit a plateau and couldn't get beyond one hundred fifty, one hundred sixty families. We had no parking and we didn't have enough room for classrooms and that sort of activities of the parish.
- LD: Build your programming.
- NM: Yeah, so we're pretty much locked in and no prospect of really growing physically. Which limited our parish growth. So we, a couple of years ago launched a whole new study. What should we do about this. Developed an architectural plan that would have accomplished what we needed to accomplish. Not parking and not additional classrooms but the accessibility question became the number one priority. But it was going to cost three hundred fifty thousand dollars to just to make it accessible. So the questions became what are the alternatives? We could, could possibly buy another church. St. Mark's Lutheran Church was available for sale or going to be, just a few blocks away, well located, well maintained, big enough, larger than what we had. Would have been very suitable. It was going to be eight hundred fifty thousand dollars for that. Another alternative would be to try and sell our church which has a limited market and build a whole new church which would have cost a lot more unless you put up a pole barn and put a cross on it. And another alternative would be to yoke with another parish or to merge.
- LD: That's a challenge.

NM: That's a challenge and so we talked about this, prayed about it and did all that.

LD: Waited for the Holy Spirit.

NM: Waited for something to happen and so we really got interested in this, when St. Michael's Church, which is a sister parish was, began a search for a new rector. Their man who had been with them had retired as of the first of in January of 96. So it was an opportune time to take a look at the merger question because we had a priest that we were in love with and he was about to start looking for another position. I mean ten years is a long time to be in one place for many churches. This would afford him a whole new ministry if he were to become the rector of a new combined parish, that would double the size of his cure. So we got together, with, our counterpart, counterparts at St. Michael's to talk about it. And there was certainly some interest on their part. They needed to grow. They had just come out of a building program, thanks to Irene Perrine who helped a great deal with it. They added a million dollar addition to their church and its a lovely physical plant, plenty of parking, plenty of room for everyone and then some. And our two parishes are of comparable size. Generally when churches merge because of weakness on the part of one or the other or both. That is not the case here. We are both strong parishes. They both had reasons for considering it, because they would both benefit and possibly be able to greater ministry together than we could each do separately. And we were duplicating each other's efforts actually. So the interest kind of grew. We, we were going through a great discernment process and meetings and meetings and prayer meetings and studies.

LD: At which, all through all of which the Senior Warden would be present.

NM: Well yes, I was very much involved in all, all of that. I mean the architectural studies, and whole thing so. And I was just wearing out. I thought this is the, we're just beating our heads against a stone wall here and so we'd better take a look at this and of course Gary Coffey, following the leading of the Holy Spirit was depending totally on that guidance, you know, and and that was his whole emphasis. I'm not doing for my self aggrandizement here. But I think that this is what we are being lead to do. Well not everybody agreed. But we went through joint meetings all summer last year and and finally came to the point in September when we'd better start having a joint service or two and see how it felt and and we took a straw vote to see if people were interested in voting. Are you ready to vote? We've studied this thing up one side and down the other. Are you ready to vote on whether or not we should merge? And the overwhelming response. Yes, we're ready.

LD: On the part of both congregations?

NM: Yeah. So what that meant we didn't know, but the bishop came over and met with us. We had a big joint meeting, lots of people there. And the bishop said, if this is what you want to do, it is all right with me, but you'd better be sure that you have a good strong majority on both sides. And some and somebody asked well what do you think is a good strong majority? And he said, "Oh, I think probably seventy five percent." So we kind of took that as a mandate. I don't know that he intended it quite that way but we said all right, we'll take a vote. I think it was on October 31 maybe we voted. And we had eighty five percent approval by the people of St. Michael's and sixty eight percent approval of the St. John's people. Well that was short of seventy five percent. Now if you were going to combine them, of course you

would, it was over seventy five percent. But that wasn't the deal. And there were people, the emotions were running very high.

LD: Oh, I'm sure.

NM: The smaller percentage of the St. Michael's people were very vocal about it and so were the St. John's people. Really a third of the congregation didn't want to move. Now these are largely people who are in the upper age bracket, just won't, resisted change. Why do we, you're taking my church away from me. It was very...

LD: Much nostalgia.

NM: Um hm and really not interested in the arguments about what it would do for the children, what it would do to attract younger families. How we could grow. What we really need to be, to evangelize, the big E you know. And Episcopalians don't talk about those things very much. But they are now.

LD: Well, I think all mainstream denominations are finally...

NM: As you see it dwindling and you're, you gotta come into the real world. But they're not. Some of those people were not interested in that and they're very much introspective about that. How they felt about their church. So this was a very difficult problem because here you had two strong majorities, two thirds of one congregation, almost four fifths of the other wanting to do this. And are you going to let a small minority, minority rule the outcome. And so there was a lot of self soul searching about that and more prayer. Oh, woo, my goodness and we finally decided to bite the bullet and reverse the rules. And say the majority and the will of the majority has to be listened to. The bishop concurred. And actually where we had erred in assuming that we were a congregational structure, where the congregation, where a popular vote determines everything. Now in the Congregational Church that's and in others, that's the way you do things. The Episcopal Church, it really is, the Vestry has the final say.

LD: So you were able to make that decision.

NM: So we said all right we're going to take back our authority, which we gave away when we said we'd do it by popular vote. Never should have done that. Nobody understood that but after we read the canons of the church, and researched it, made us feel better. It was done after the fact, but we did, we did reverse it. Which brought horrible criticism because, because we had to change the rule, in midstream.

LD: From your congregation, I'm sure.

NM: Yeah, well both, both, yeah that's not fair and it wasn't, it wasn't, but it was what we had to do.

LD: Well sometimes you have to listen to the Holy Spirit.

NM: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Somebody's telling us something here so anyway. We reversed it and said we have a two thirds majority on both sides and that should be adequate. And so we agreed to go ahead with the merger and we started worshipping together on the 5th of January of this year, 97. And in less, well a week

from Sunday we will be voting on the approval of the document, the Articles of Consolidation, that's the way the state law reads. And in there we will be approving the name of the new church, which will be the new parish, which will be Christ Episcopal Church. We did that by popular vote.

LD: Ah, that's probably a good plan.

NM: Yeah, well we had, we advertised for suggestions with rationale. We had fifty one names submitted. So people were asked to vote for their five choices and the Vestry would pick out of the winning five. The Vestry would make the final decision. Well that wasn't difficult because there was a clear winner so and (Laughter). We were dreading that too so, but that didn't suit everybody either, you know so there are some nay sayers whatever.

LD: No matter what.

NM: Whatever you do. So we have our joint annual meetings since we've been separate parishes up till now. We have, we've combined our two Vestries. We've been meeting together since early November so. And we have two Senior Wardens.

LD: I was gonna say, how does that work? (Laughter)

NM: Well, so far we're getting along fine. And it is our intention to stay together as a joint Vestry. There are sixteen members on it currently. Eight from each parish as it works out. It's very, very convenient. And we, we intend to stay on board until the annual meeting of 98, at which time we will all resign, we're all off and then there'll be an entirely new...

LD: From the joint?

NM: And then by that time, we'll have gotten to know each other. Right now half, one half of the congregation doesn't know the other half. And vice versa. And it's a, so we're trying, we need to get acquainted before we select new leadership and...

LD: And it's just a remarkable story. I, I...

NM: Well it's not over yet.

LD: I think it's an incredibly rare thing, that you can bring two congregations together.

NM: Well, we still have to have two thirds majority to, approval from each congregation in order to pass.

LD: For the final meeting, the final consolidation.

NM: The final, yeah, before it goes to the Secretary of State and becomes a legal entity and that in effect dissolves the other two, the previous ones.

LD: Have you, I suppose haven't decided yet, but do you have any ideas what will happen with the St. John's facility?

- NM: We have a committee, a very good committee studying that. I gave them your name incidentally as a resource person. Um, looking at different ideas for the use of that property. One idea that is intriguing them, I think is what they call a Jubilee Ministry that's sponsored by the National Episcopal Church. Um, very intentional outreach center kinds of ministry. With, one essential element of that is, that you, it has to be a worship center in some fashion. We haven't determined what that means.
- LD: Some type of service?
- NM: So there will be some services there, we... Part of all of this, because there were, there were people who absolutely would not go to the new parish, wouldn't go to 40th Street to worship, are remaining at the 19th Street location for 8:00 Sunday service. They're not very happy with that. They'd rather have it at 9:00 and ya know nothing's ever right.
- LD: They don't intend to drive to the new facility.
- NM: No, no, they don't want to get there that early. Well how about 10:30, we've got one over here, and so far the attendance has been just terrific at the new place in our combined services so you know we're getting 200 almost 250 people there and that's really, that's very good.
- LD: You can expand so, in so many ways. People will get excited about that. It's an achievement.
- NM: Yeah, so, it isn't done, it, it, it won't be accomplished until, until there's been a two thirds approval and it there's always the hazard that won't happen.
- LD: Well, there is, although I would, it sounds to me like you've laid the groundwork at this point by having the congregations work together.
- NM: Well, we've done everything we can do for it and if, if that doesn't go, I don't know, I think I'll leave town.
- LD: (Laughter) Let's see now, you've developed enemies in several different organizations. (Laughter)
- NM: Oh, that goes with the territory.
- LD: Well when you're involved in change.
- NM: And everything's gotta. I'm not interested in something if it doesn't involve change.
- LD: Well, that brings me around to a question that I sort of tacked on at the end of our outline here about Cedar Rapids. You have been a part of Cedar Rapids all of your life. And this is a community that it occurs to me has changed dramatically in the last 20-25 years of this century from a very oh not autocratic but it was certainly run by a few people who...
- NM: Very benign...
- LD: Very benign ones right, but that it has become much more of a egalitarian approach

to growth and change and including more people in the process. You've been a big part of that.

NM: Well in the nonprofit sector only.

LD: But that is the area where I think so many people are affected. Where the cultural values of the community lie and certainly the educational values. So many people are affected. What from your point of view, what makes Cedar Rapids the community that you have been willing to invest so much in over the years?

NM: (Laughter) I happen to live here. You do where you're planted you know. Not, not that I bloom much, but you perform where you're planted. I just, I think we've always talked about a work ethic and all and I don't really know anything about that. I do know something about work ethics in at the board level you know. It's it's things ah, I don't like some of the things that I see happening in the ethics department. Really softening of all that, I don't, I mean I can't cite any examples. I just, people are willing to take less than perfect behavior you know and accept that as that's just the way things are these days.

LD: And that seems to be happening a lot.

NM: Yes and that disturbs me a great deal. So I don't know what you do about it except when you see something like that happening you've got to be a little more, I've got to be a little more forthright about saying I don't like that. I don't approve of that. You know you can hate, you can love the sinner but hate the sin.

LD: That's right, that's right.

NM: That's a hard thing to remember.

LD: Well I see a general tendency for people to simply go along with what is, you know, and I think part of it is we're all running around involved in so much activity that we don't always stand back and look at it.

NM: That's right. On the other hand, you don't want people challenging everything and there's a lot of that. It's a litigious, I don't know if that's the way you say it, but people are really quick to jump into blame. And...

LD: Which wouldn't have happened in the past because most people wouldn't even have known how decisions were made.

NM: That's right and really this is a pet theory of mine, that that it's all due to communications, We know too much.

LD: We know too much.

NM: And it's too fast and we all know it at the same time. You know there's a lot of benefit in the lag time in an action and reaction. And...

LD: You know that's probably true because and that goes right along with what's happened electronically, you know and the terror that we might become so democratic that we could all push a button and vote for something at the same time.

That would not necessarily be a good thing.

NM: No, not necessarily. You need time to think about something before you react.

LD: And I think that unfortunately there are, most of the people who are dedicating themselves to studying institutions these days have an ax to grind more than to just to be good public citizens.

NM: And conflict of interest is something else that bothers me a lot. That is a, I guess that comes into the ethics department too. And there, I see so much of this where people do not perceive that they have a conflict of interest. You see it all the time in government. You see it in business. You see it in, in the way non profits operate. And that's very disturbing.

LD: Well, I hope you continue to serve as long as you possibly can. (Laughter)

NM: (Laughter) Oh, I don't know. Some days you would say oh for heaven's sake, hang it up. But as long as there's something you see something that's interesting that needs doing and you've got the energy to do it, you ought to do it.

LD: And sometimes the challenge is somebody tells you it can't be done?

NM: Right, right then that's all the more intriguing.

LD: Reason.

NM: All the more reason.

LD: Well, Nancy this has, I really enjoyed this interview and actually if there are any other remarks that you want to make I'm certainly not closing it abruptly. But I think we've got some wonderful memories and guidelines for community service that people can really respond to.

NM: I don't know. It's just important to know what you're talking about before you get into it.

LD: So a little lag time is good? (Laughter)

NM: (Laughter) I think so.

LD: Between responding to what's going on for you. That's a good point. That's an excellent point. Well thank you.

NM: Thank you, I've enjoyed it.

LD: It's been fun and thanks, I'm sure, on behalf of the community for all the service you've given over the years.

NM: It's fun to do, fun to have done it. It's like having a baby you know.

LD: Yeah, you can look back. You get some good stories out of it. That part of the communication...

NM: Yeah.

LD: Okay.

NM: Thank you.