8-24-1989

ten Hoor, Henry Oral History Interview: History of the Hope College English Department

Christine Modey

Interview with Henry ten Hoor, English Department
Interviewed by Christine Modey
August 24, 1989

CM: ...After the war, I'm interested in knowing what it was like.

HtH: It was busy. I came, in fact, a little bit late. I came in 1946, and I got there in October which was a couple weeks into the semester because the veterans were coming back. I was a veteran coming back too, for that matter. I had just finished my masters degree at the University of Michigan that summer, and the head of the English department was Dr. Clarence DeGraaf, who was my principal when I was in this high school. So we knew each other. While I was still in the Navy and contemplating getting out and finishing my masters, I had written him a note or two and said if he had any spot for me, that I would be interested in taking it. I got no response to that, and so I took a job at the Flint Junior College teaching English. One day when I got out of my classes on Friday afternoon, there was a telegram for me from DeGraaf saying if I wanted to come to Hope College, I could have a job there. So I went home and talked it over with him. I hadn't signed a contract over in Flint because I couldn't find an apartment, I couldn't find anyplace to live. I didn't want to commit myself if I couldn't find a place to live. So I was free to take this job over here, which I did. That's where I lived for the rest of my life practically. When I got my assignment, it turned out to be five classes of freshman composition from eight o'clock or eight thirty in the morning, right after chapel. Chapel was the first thing, and everybody went. The faculty sat in the front row. Every once in awhile you had to leave it too. Right after chapel, we began classes and I had them straight through until twelve thirty, five sections of freshman comp.

A little bit of a variety because two of them were supposed to be somewhat advanced. We did some more fun stuff in those. This meant that every week I had close to a hundred and fifty themes that I had to look over. So I did this on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On Tuesdays, and Thursdays, and Saturdays, we did have classes on Saturdays at that time, but on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, I could grade papers. That was pretty much my life the first year. Five classes of freshmen was not very inspiring.

CM: I can imagine. Did you end up teaching any of those ones that were doubletime? Or did you manage to escape that?

HtH: No, I don't believe I did. Three were the regular ones with people who were placed if they had normal kinds of entrance scores, and then the other two were a little bit higher, they got into...

CM: Were those classes given a name, like honors sections or anything?

HtH: No, this was English 11, I think, and certain sections of them, G, B, or H were one kind. Everybody on the English staff taught some freshman comp. That was the usual thing. Later, we all also got a section of sophomore literature, which was world literature, which, when I first got into it was a first semester of a variety of classics. We did a Shakespeare play, we did a little volume of poetry, we did Homer's Iliad and Milton's Paradise Lost. Then I think another semester we did a kind of a world literature survey from the beginning as far as you could get in one semester, which wasn't very far. That later was modified and we had two semesters of world literature, and the one went to the renaissance and the other from the

renaissance to the modern period.

CM: Those were still both required at the time, weren't they?

HtH: Yes, those were nice courses to teach. I have been asked from time to time to do a section of that, but that takes a lot of re-reading. I don't care to get stuck in that sort of thing or freshman comp either. It's a four-day deal, you know, and all of that paper work. I have paid my dues when it comes to that. (laughs)

CM: Why did you enjoy teaching world lit?

HtH: Well, in the first place, it's good stuff. If you're going to be humanely educated as Hope College says it does for its people, this is basic stuff. If you don't know anything about the Greeks or the Romans, or the literature of the middle ages, or the various kinds and types of literature, and you don't know anything about the certain ideas that seem to worm their way through all of these eras with different sorts of treatment, how the idea of the hero changes from one era to another era, and how the pendulum swings from being rational people to being emotional people and back to being rational people, the romanticism, the realism, and the naturalism, which has always of course been there. We just have different names for it. If you don't understand that, you don't understand much of the world that you live in, and you can't interpret much of what is happening around you. And it helps you with crossword puzzles. (laughter)

CM: Well that's a good enough reason to take it, I suppose.

HtH: But almost everything hangs on your understanding and development of ideas from, well, we dealt with the western civilization. When we got, as we did for a number

of years get quite a few Arabs into our student body, we were always complaining on that _____ that we didn't do enough Arabic stuff. They do have a strong influence, but we ignored that. We did a little bit of Chinese once in a while, but never that kind of stuff. I think it's a good thing that they keep that one in there because that's a good core course. All of the good schools are going back to this core curriculum. Harvard is going back to the core curriculum, and so forth. I don't see how you can put together a proper liberal education without having that organization.

CM: You have to force some sort of distribution, or people like me would wind up just taking literature classes to fill our core elective requirement.

HtH: You have to have other things too. If you're going to have an English major who's worth his salt, that has to be at the bottom of things and then you can build on it. Of course, that means a little bit of science, although scientists have caused a lot of trouble in this world. They don't always clean up the messes they make, you know? They get all of the money for science research by sophomores.

CM: What about research in English?

HtH: I think they're doing some of that now. I don't know, when I was there, I was never involved in that with any student. I had a student assistant once in awhile who would do some things for me, and compile for me the stuff that we had on certain authors or in certain areas in the library so that I could put together a kind of comprehensive bibliography for people who were interested in doing a special project in some area or some author and so forth. But so far as doing proper research, I have never been

involved in that with anybody on a significant level. Always of course, the freshman people had to write a research paper and that was a kind of a baptism of fire for some of them. It's very elementary and limited, you know. They did get some notion of what the tools were and how to deal with and how to put their findings together a little bit. A great deal of research is, I think, somewhat arbitrary and doesn't yield a whole lot of worthwhile goals. Maybe the process is worth something.

CM: What was it like having to work with Clarence DeGraaf after having had him as your high school principal?

HtH: Oh, we got along fine. He never bothered me. (laughs) He disciplined me one time when I was a high school student--carrying cigarettes to school, he didn't like that very much. But, no, we got along very well. He was a good administrator and he passed out the assignments, but he never poked his nose into your business. He assumed that you knew how to do your job, and you did it. Nobody ever fired me, so I guess it turned out okay. This was very good. It was somewhat of a downfall for him that he was kind of a hands-off administrator because we did get some people into the department during some of those years who were not very well disciplined themselves. I remember when we hired a person who, before he ever set foot on the campus, sent a note to DeGraaf saying that he should not be scheduled for any classes before ten o'clock. If I had been DeGraaf, I would have sent back a note and said your contract is cancelled. (laughs) Well, we worked with him for awhile and he couldn't even get there at ten o'clock. He was the kind of person who would

cultivate certain students who couldn't really cut it in regular classes, who needed a whole lot of special attention for their egos or something, and set them to work on strange little projects--the imagery in a Shakespearian play or something like that. Eventually he found that things were not very...he didn't really fit in this school. Often he would call in in the morning and get somebody who was teaching in the room next to his to explain to his students that he wouldn't be able to make it, and that sort of thing. As I say, DeGraaf was a hands-off administrator. In a way, this was his downfall. Not downfall, but it made things difficult for him eventually. Then Dr. DeGraaf's wife died, and this left him very lonesome. So he kept on teaching longer than he should have. He had to have something to do. He couldn't face these days with nothing to do. He kept on teaching longer than he should. I had a daughter who was in one of his classes. He would assign a test and then on the day, he wouldn't be there. Or he would not assign the test, and then all of a sudden turn up with one. He was suffering from Parkinson's eventually. That was very pathetic to see him disintegrate because he had been such a sharp _____, a good mathematician too. He just kind of disintegrated.

CM: Do you think he helped to shape the department? He was chairman for thirty-some years.

HtH: Oh, yes, I'm sure he did. He was great on this core curriculum and these basic courses, the freshman composition, and the world literature. Then there was a good spread of other courses. He made provision for students who wanted to do something in English but were not intending to be English majors. For awhile I

taught two little courses, two two-hour courses. One was called "Reading for Comprehension." Did you ever see that?

CM: Yes I did, and Dr. Hollenbach said, "Make sure you ask Mr. ten Hoor about that."

HtH: Yes, in which we did mostly essays and things, not imaginative literature particularly. There was a great emphasis at that time on speed reading and reading for comprehension and so forth. I didn't have any special training in that. We did that course, and then we did a kind of a companion course which was "Reading for Appreciation," in which we did a few types of literature: some short stories, and some poems, and I guess a play or two, something like that. That was a nice little course. It was a kind of fore runner of the course which I think they have now, which is criticism course, criticism of poetry.

CM: The nature of poetry.

HtH: The nature of poetry, yes.

CM: And prose, and fiction, and drama, also.

HtH: Okay. That was a kind of a forerunner of that sort of course. Later, I did teach a course also in what was called the criticism of poetry, which we just had a little book and then we took apart the poem and its elements and how it achieved its meaning, and how the sound patterns and the rhythm and the imagery and the whole works came to make one piece of art. I liked to teach that course. A lot of curtains went up, and a lot of eyes were opened. Many of these students had never run into any poetry or dealt with any poetry significantly. The only time they heard poetry was when they sang _____. (laughter) So I always enjoyed doing that. I

would like to do that here sometime with the group of people, have six sessions or so, and deal with two or three poems each session. I'd have different kinds of qualities about them. Some for their form, and some for their content, and some for their sound patterns, and so forth. Those were rather _____ courses. Then I remember Dr. DeGraaf asking me one summer when I was going regularly to the University of Michigan to their summer school to load up on the 18th century. Then I would teach an 18th century course the next semester, which I did. I took three 18th century courses that summer. I tell you, I was so fed up with 18th century coming out of my ears.

CM: You were in no mood to teach that class, probably. (laughters)

HtH: I put together a course and I was going to teach it, and then the man who was teaching Shakespeare left. So DeGraaf asked me if I would teach the Shakespeare course. So I dropped all of that 18th century stuff, and as I went along, I had to bone up on Shakespeare. But I had had some good courses in Shakespeare at the University of Michigan. In those days, the Shakespeare course was in two sections, two two-hour sections. The first semester was usually the comedies and the histories. We selected a number of comedies and a few history plays. I think we did "Richard the II" and the first and second part of "Henry the IV." Maybe I asked them to read "Henry the V." Then the second semester was the tragedies. We did quite a few of the tragedies. That was a rather nice arrangement because some of those were required courses for English majors. But a lot of people like to get in one or the other of those courses, seeing it was just two hours. They could fit that in. I had

classes of 80, 85 people. We held them in what used to be the chapel.

CM: Wichers Auditorium? No. Winants.

HtH: Winants, when the rows were like this and the high platform up in front. Then the North Central Association came through. They had a kind of a burr under their saddle. You had to have long courses. You shouldn't have short courses. That divided the students' attention too much. So you want to give them about three or four, three or four-hour courses. So I had to put those two together. I thought that was ridiculous because what happened, was that now only English majors would take these and nobody else ever got to look at them because they just couldn't afford four hours of an elective.

CM: In one semester.

HtH: That's right. Then what this meant was that I had to teach this four-hour course twice a year. That was no _____. These crazy educational outfits. These notions now and then. If they had come in and seen what was going on, you know. But I complained about it, but it didn't do any good. After awhile they'd come through and they'd have to accredit you. You have to be very careful not to step on their toes. But I think it would not be unwise to do that kind of thing again, with certain kinds of courses that are really somewhat important to a well rounded, general education, and leave them open for electives.

CM: I think the Shakespeare class is not generally taken as an elective now.

HtH: Of course not.

CM: Why do you think it was so popular when you were teaching? Not just because...

HtH: Oh, it was such a good course. (laughs) No, but mostly because it was a two-hour course. And people were saying that this is something that everybody ought to know something about. After all, they had heard about it in high school--they maybe hadn't read much of it--but they'd heard about it and taken tests on it. So here they figure they could get a couple of hours. I had a number of people who were history majors, and philosophy majors and so forth. They'd come in and take these things. This was part of the grist for the mill. For some, it was just a convenient two-hour elective. For some of the majors and so forth that we were offering, for composite major, for instance, you might want to have so much history and so much English. It was a nice two-hour course to shove in there. It was good stuff. Shakespeare's stuff is respectable, academically respectable. I thought that was very profitable to have those two two-hour courses. It kind of kept me hopping, different tests all the time. This has nothing to do with this, but yesterday I watched, oh boy, who is the black man who has the family comedy?

CM: Bill Cosby?

HtH: Yes. Bill Cosby. His kid had to read "Macbeth." There was a test on "Macbeth," so he thought he could get away without reading it by playing the record. When they couldn't understand the record, then they tried to find whether it was being acted anywhere in town, and it wasn't. Then they finally got to getting their notes, what are they?

CM: Cliff Notes?

HtH: Yes. Tried to make out with the Cliff Notes. I think that some kids have gotten

through high school that way, without having really read it. The kid said he took his test and half of the questions he could answer from the Cliff Notes. But my tests were always in quotations. You can't get that out of Cliff Notes. You must have read the play or listen pretty well in class. Well, those were nice classes to teach. I always enjoyed them, and the world lit, too, for that matter. World lit was mostly, people were required to take them. A lot of people there had no ear and no mind and no heart for literature. We had to work on some of those kids. But this is where you also discovered the good minds and good appreciative kids. I remember one time, nice boy, big handsome fellow. He was a sophomore. He played football. He was a good football player too. I handed back his test and it was a B+. He came in to me. "Yeah, I thought I had aced that. Will you sit down with me and tell me what I missed?" "Well, that's usually somewhat futile. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get you a test that I gave an A to, and you can compare the both of them." There was a gal in the class who always got everything. I had my daughters in Shakespeare class too, and they always got everything, but I think they _____. (laughs) So I came up to my office and compared the two. He was a good kid. He worked hard at it, he just didn't have the facility. He came up to my office, and many of the years, in fact until the English department moved to Lubbers Hall, I never had an office alone. The first years that we were there, we didn't have offices at all. So if you wanted to meet a student or some meeting, then you had to find an empty classroom or go downstairs to where the coffee Kletz was, the little unventilated room, something like that. We did get offices, I remember, out

in Van Raalte Hall. You've never seen Van Raalte Hall, have you? That's where I've spent most of my life up in Van Raalte Hall, up on the third floor of Van Raalte Hall. Every once in awhile, in the morning in the wintertime, you would come to your office and find all water streaming out of the door because the radiator had gotten stuck or something. The little valve had gone haywire. So you'd wade to your desk. But the first that we had an office, it was shared by five people. There were five desks. You can't talk to a student in a place like that either. You could keep some of your stuff there, do a little bit of your correspondence that you had to do and so forth, but it wasn't a good arrangement. Then, after awhile, Mr. Prins and I got an office together. For many years, we shared an office. We had graduated from this school, both of us, and had gone to the University of Michigan pretty much together. We both got our doctorates at the same time at the University of Michigan. So we were pretty well in tune. We got along together well. Even so, it was a little bit difficult to talk with students, really privately unless one of us happened to be gone. That was a little bit of a difficult situation. Then when the department moved to Lubbers Hall, even though it kept all of its chemistry symbols on the outside, and became an institute of humane learning, we each got an office. By this time, Mr. Prins and I were pretty well senior in the department, so we got a nice choice of offices. We got new desks, and new bookcases, typewriter tables, swivel chairs, the whole works. That was quite pleasant. We had thermostats. We could regulate the heat. We had finally come into the 20th century. That was very pleasant. All of this is not germane, but senility creeps in. (laughs)

CM: Well, the conditions under which you were teaching certainly affected, I would think that it would affect your attitude.

HtH: Oh yes. It was a great deal of troubles with the floors. In Van Raalte Hall, with the steps...this was all wood, you see. The steps creaked when the floors creaked. The floors creaked in the classrooms. Then they tried to do something to it. They spread cement over that, and they put down asphalt tile. Then the cement under the asphalt tile disintegrated, and the tiles came up. That was not the best. Within the classrooms was better than in the halls. The place was a real fire trap. The big wide wooden stairway right up the three stories. If that thing had ever caught fire, everybody would have been killed. So we had fire escapes. DeGraaf's office, which was on that end, and then Lampen's office which was on that end. The big room on the third floor which was on that end, there were fire escapes and so forth. But the windows rattled too. On a windy day, the windows would rattle. The room would be hot as blazes. If you opened the window, the curtains would flap out, you know. (laughs) There was a lot of interference. Quite true, the environment was not ideal. We had some fine classes in there just the same. Particularly, right after the war ended, when we had a number of veterans who really had matured. They were a little older. They had certain objectives in mind, and they were interested in achieving those quickly. I had some really good students. One of them I had in my classes was working 40 hours a week and got straight As. He's now a local broker. A lot of good people. What I usually found, was that my best students sat in the back row and didn't talk during lecture. (laughter) They were the ones that picked

up a whole lot of stuff and turned out to be pretty successful people. One of them is right on the campus now. A philosopher, Jentz. He sat in the back row. There were a lot of those people. Very interesting when you had a discussion class with a number of these veterans, and the little freshmen out of high school who were also in those classes. They didn't talk very much. They felt somewhat inferior. It was also interesting that these freshmen picked up some of the G.I. vocabulary from these veterans, and they would sometimes incorporate these expressions into their themes. Some of this G.I. language was not of the most modest or refined. These kids would use it without knowing what it meant. So rather than explaining it to them, I would say, "You better ask your veteran brother or whatever what this means, and once you know, you will not use it again in a theme." (laughs) They didn't know how embarrassingly they were speaking, and it was almost impossible to explain it to them in a social situation. But those were the years when we had really big classes. I remember when some of the newer people on the faculty came in and began to scream when they had 21 people in freshman comp class. Twenty-one? That one person could break the camels back. Shucks, those first years when I was teaching that, nobody had classes that were small. In fact there were too many people. Here was this college which recently had been 500 students, and now had 1350. You didn't even have a place for them to sleep except in those barracks out there. They had a hard time finding a place to feed them. They fed them at the Masonic Temple. They couldn't all get in, and even if it rained or snowed, they were all like a soup line outside in bad weather, waiting to get in. So my composition classes always ran

thirty or more. Sophomore literature classes ran to 40 and 45. I remember the days when we met for the first time, and looked through that whole list of 45 people, and a few extras would turn up, and add more on to the list. There weren't enough chairs. There weren't enough seats. We had these nice rows of seats, with four places and fixed arms. So if you were left handed, you were out of luck. You'd have rows of those, but there were not enough, so you'd have to move in chairs. Sometimes there weren't enough chairs. I'd turn over the wastebasket and someone would sit on the corner of the wastebasket. I never had a chair, because that was always in use by somebody else. Just the same, there was a kind of an excitement. All of these new people coming in. There were some good people.

CM: Did that change after the veterans were gone?

HtH: Yes, it did a little bit. It got tame for awhile. But then the '60s came along. That was really a bad time, and I think faculties should be held accountable for a lot of the junk that happened. They capitulated to this nonsense. The kids knew better what they should be taught and the faculty didn't. The kids got this notion that they were the college. Kids aren't the college, the faculty is the college. Always, the faculty has been the college. Kids come to college, they don't make the college, they come to the college. You couldn't get that notion out of their heads. I've seen them in their revolutionary meeting and so forth, in the chapel, lined up on both sides, smoking cigarettes, and stamping out their cigarettes on the floor of the chapel. Nobody, no chaplain or anybody said anything to them about this. They let them do that. I don't think that was fair to them to let them do it. They got a whole wrong

notion of how everything was put together. They'd write their signs on everything, use bad language in class, girls too. If you're a romantic at heart, I guess you always expected girls to be somewhat more refined and genteel and pure than the men. But they were using bad language. The worst thing about this was that I don't think the motivations were genuine. The motivations were too lenient. They could get out of things this way. I remember sitting on the Student Appeals Committee, and we were always on a committees, sometimes on two, sometimes on three. What brother Hollenbach didn't like about Jim Prins and me, was that we were never enthusiastic about committees.(laughs) He laughed at us from time to time and tried to be a little bit more enthusiastic. He was a company man and we were _____. These kids got out of things this way. It's what they wanted to do. Not that getting out of it is good for them, but it was easier that way. I remember sitting on committees when they wanted to do something about the chapel requirement. It turns out that the student representative who was there had made a bet with somebody that he could get this changed. It wasn't a matter of principle. It was a matter of convenience and a kind of a challenge to the system for no good reason, just to challenge the system. They would have been kicked out later on. He might better have been spending his time reading his Shakespeare rather than doing that kind of nonsense stuff. Then the important people from Chicago riled these people up and talked about injustices, which nobody on this campus was subject to.

(end of side A)

(start of side B)

HtH: ...sporadic thing I think is what mostly you can say about it. This was a thing that DeGraaf was great about. We would get together now and then in faculty homes, and this is what the kids liked a lot. I ran into somebody last summer in a restaurant in Grand Haven. She was an alumna, and she married an alumnus who turned out to be a doctor, a very successful doctor somewhere in the south. She turned out to be a member of the Board of Trustees too. She said, "I remember that the only time during that semester that I was in a faculty home was when we were at your house. We had cider and doughnuts." It must have been around Thanksgiving Day. We read some poems and those things, and talked about them. Sometimes somebody wrote a book review, and we talked about it. We sometimes all read the same book, like East of Eden, or something of that nature which had some kind of interesting symbolism in it, and we would talk about it. Then we would have refreshments. Everybody would bring a poem to read, something like that. It was just to make this business of being an English major something other and more than just an academic bore. I don't know what happened to it. It just kind of disappeared in the '60s, I guess, when there were more exciting things to do than that. They were enjoyable for a time. Sometimes a faculty member would read a paper or make some kind of a report or some sort of a statement. I had those at my house, sometimes we would have them on campus. We had them at Dr. DeGraaf's home. He had a house over there on one of the bays on the lake. You could see across the lake, called it green shadows. It's not to be mixed up with this long television serial which was called, "Dark Shadows." Did you ever see an episode?

CM: No.

HtH: It was a gothic tale. That's about all I remember about that English majors club. I suspect that we had officers, but I don't remember who they were. There must be pictures of them in annuals, in yearbooks. If you go back to the middle '50's, late '50s, I think maybe you would find that stuff.

CM: How many people do you think were members?

HtH: I would imagine somewhere between 20 and 30. At one time, the English major was the leading major on the campus. We had just oodles of them. Partly because it was an easy major to get if you were going for a teaching degree because you already had to have your ten hours of English, four hours of composition, and maybe sometimes six hours of composition and six hours of world literature. Another three hours and you had a minor. There were a lot of English majors and minors. I remember one year when Hope College got nine Ford Foundation fellowships. Hollenbach could tell you more about this, maybe, because he was on the administrative end of this. Eight of those were to English majors. The other one was to a combination psychology and English fellow. We did pretty well. In fact, the school was doing well. Ford Foundation sent people over to Hope College to see how they managed to nail down nine of these things. That was pretty unusual. That was about the same time when the Chicago Tribune got us among the first ten of the best small liberal arts colleges in the nation. I remember President Lubbers getting up in chapel the night after that had happened and said, "I wonder how the college feels which is number 11th?" (laughs) They didn't get any publicity at all. That was a great stroke

for Hope College to be placed there without exerting any pressures on anybody.

CM: Do you remember the changes in the department that happened in the late '60s, early '70s, when just a whole block new hiring happened?

HtH: Yes, I think so. One of those was this person I was telling you about who couldn't get up until 10 o'clock. As I say, I don't have a very good historical mind when it comes to pinpointing when things happened. We did get a number of women into the department at that time. At least four that I can think of, and some of them stayed for quite some time, and some of them were fairly temporary. Some of them were very good, too, and some of them were troublemakers. Finally we had to get rid of them. As the curriculum became a little bit more refined, more choices here and there, we had to get more people, so we got American Lit people, and Renaissance people, and we got drama people. Some of that hiring was not done with the greatest care. It was not only in the English department, but I remember that we hired somebody in the English department who had been teaching at a college out east. A former student of mine who had also been teaching at that college came to see me one day and said, "I wonder how you managed to hire him because nobody took his courses over there." It was the same thing at Hope College eventually. In fact, he was going to teach a course in the Renaissance or something like that and advertised it, and got two people to sign up. So he cancelled it. Then the next semester he tried it again because they said it hadn't had enough publicity. The registrar had to find the room for these people. You had to list a room, and they suspected that the class wouldn't go. This time it got no registrants at all. The registrar didn't care

because he had assigned him a broom closet on the first floor of Lubbers Hall. (laughter) It didn't make any difference whether they had a classroom or not. As I said, some of this hiring had been done with less than required amount of investigation. We had some trouble, some _____ times. We had people on the faculty who were trying to cultivate little groups of students as being special. We would not want to take the regular classes in this or that because these other people were much more capable and so forth. There were some bad feelings for awhile there. One of these was a woman who very much, with a very tender social conscience about social equality and all of that sort of thing. I remember getting as a sophomore into my world literature class, one of the black boys from the Reformed Church thing down in, where is it? I don't know, but they have a school there, and this black boy had come and had taken her freshman composition and got Bs, thought he was a pretty good kid. I looked at his first test, and there was not a complete sentence on the paper, and every other word was misspelled. But this woman, out of her sense of social responsibility, was giving this kid a B. That's no fair way to treat that kid. He wasn't getting an education. So he flunked my course. I guess he dropped out before the semester was over. It was a hopeless case. It was this sort of thing that made tension within the department. There was a personality cult going around. No interest in principles or sound education. Some of these people were just trying to wield their power, or tried to develop some power. Little groups of students would then become vocal. That didn't last very long, but unpleasantness was a result of it.

CM: Do you remember how the fraternities and sororities changed?

HtH: I never had much to do with fraternities and sororities. No, I was a sponsor of the Fraternal Society for one year. I found that very disappointing. The kind of things they did in what they called their literary meeting and so forth. Not reappointed for a second year, which pleased me and I think pleased them. I always thought that these things interfered more with school than it did anything. I was not a real great fan. I never knew really what they did. They put on the Frater Frolics once in awhile, and that was alright, but again, that interfered with...These kids would skip school for two weeks in order to get all of this stuff straightened and put it on night after night after night. It had no educational value, not an entertainment value for some people.

CM: Do you have any recollections of the English department's role on student publications? I realize that most of them are independent now.

HtH: Yes, I think the Anchor was at one time under the _____ of the English department. They had an English department advisor, and I think for many years that was Ed Grand. Then they could be held responsible for spending their money right. Now all of that has changed, and I think we have some kind of a strange interpretation of the First Amendment of the Constitution. So these kids can spend the college's money to grind their own axes. It doesn't make much difference. Usually I think there was a member of the English faculty who was the advisor to the Milestone, too. I did that for a number of years, I remember. It was not a very satisfactory job, because you could never get these kids to get their stuff in on time.

CM: It's the same way now.

HtH: Oh sure. It's the same way. But we put out a couple of pretty good books. I remember that when I was a sponsor, we struck a blow for freedom, and called a dance a dance. I got the Dean of Women down on my neck. You didn't want to make waves amongst the people who felt that that was bad business. Here we were having, not on the campus in those days, but off campus we were having them. My wife and I, what do you call those people who come along to see that everything goes right for the dance? We had done that at various dances in Grand Rapids and various places, Spring Lake and all over. They were rather unexciting things in which they turned down the lights and turned down the music and people clung to each other and swayed a little bit in the middle of the room. We never referred to these things as dances, you see, but in this particular edition, we did. Ever since then I think they did too. But I had to take a little heat for that one. I said, "I thought it was better to be truthful about these things." Since she was a good Reformed Church lady, she had to agree with me finally. Truth was a virtue. So we settled that. I don't know when that stopped, that the English department sponsored or kept an eye on these things. I don't know when that stopped. What happens with the yearbook now, do you know?

CM: I don't know that they have an advisor now. It may be entirely student run. The Anchor has an advisor, and the Opus has an advisor.

HtH: Okay. I've been that too, on occasion.

CM: How do you think the literary magazine changed, do you think?

HtH: I don't know that I can answer that question. I suspect that it changed from being somewhat scholastic, rather tame, normal poetry that was not very innovative, and essays which were on nice, acceptable topics, and so forth, and short stories and so forth which were pretty good. I remember getting into trouble one time with a story that was written by a boy who came to be an English major in the last semester of his senior year. He had been a pre-med up to that time. He had a lot of making up to do, and a lot of us helped him after school hours and so forth to get through a lot of stuff. He wrote a story which was not a very good story, I must say. I don't think that I was the sponsor of the thing at that time. President Lubbers got all exercised over it because it was a story about these good-hearted, free-giving prostitutes with hearts of gold. It was really a bad story because she was really a very stock character out of cheap literature. He thought he was doing something good. He got into trouble with that one. I think maybe that was a kind of a start in the change of the tone of these things. What I find now is that, I don't see an Opus very frequently, but I find a lot of very subjective kind of poetry which doesn't have a great respect for form, relies heavily on images, but has no disciplined form. I think that the great change, if my memory serves me right, is from a respect for form and traditional kinds of things, to this kind of beating against the limitations and trying out new kinds of things, which I don't suppose is bad for a college paper where kids are trying out their stuff. The only danger is that they don't know what the forms are that might help them out to say what they're trying to say, because those forms weren't devised just as things to be asked test questions on. They really were a

creative device at one time, and maybe still can be. It's good for them to know what's available to them before they try to invent all of the new ones, which likely aren't very good anyway. That's all I can tell you about that.

CM: What do you remember about the evolution of the writing program?

HtH: Not very much. You see, I've been out of that place for ten years. I understand now that every course has to have a certain number of papers or at least a paper. I think that's good. Then they had these seminar things. In any course I taught above the sophomore level, whether it was a departmental requirement, always required certain papers. No, I can't tell you very much about that. I think that was beginning about the time that I got out of there.

CM: So you might have taught world literature without a paper?

HtH: Yes, I might have done that. What I usually figured when I laid out my syllabus for world lit, I generally planned that they would read 25 pages a day, 25 pages for each assignment, which, of that kind of stuff, was not a little bit. Figuring that they had besides those three hours, another twelve hours for which they did presumably some reading or some kind of homework or so. Then there were four tests and a final examination. I thought, as an underclass kind of thing, that that was a rather respectable requirement that they do that. I understand that it would be good if they could write about that. But most of my tests were essay tests, so that I got some notion of how they wrote. I never gave true false tests. Usually quite a few identifications, and then there were quotations and essay questions. The quotations had to be dealt with in an essay fashion too. It was not just who said it in what

work, but then they had to indicate the significance of that quotation in relationship to the work, or in relationship to the character maybe or something like that. So for me, they did on those occasions quite a bit of writing, but I don't think I often asked them for a paper. I gave them suggestions for outside reading if they wanted to go on and do something extra. I think that's an accurate memory but I'm not sure.

CM: You received an Den Uyl grant for the Stratford Festival. Did that help your Shakespeare course, do you think?

HtH: Yes, I think it did. I went to Stanford University that summer, this was in 1964, and they had a Shakespeare Festival there. They had some great Shakespeare scholars, and they brought down the Shakespeare players from Oregon. I don't even remember what the name of it is anymore now in Oregon who put on a lot of the plays. I took two courses there, not for credit, but it cost me just as much. One of those courses was a very good course by a fellow by the name of George Sinsibo who was a great drama man. He did this drama right from the beginning, right through Shakespeare's stuff. That was a really helpful course to me, it put a whole lot of stuff together for me and brought me into contact with a lot of books and things that I hadn't seen the significance of before. He was a very nice man. I had some nice conversations with him and so forth. They also imported another guy from England by the name of Davies, and I think he was supposed to be a great Shakespeare scholar, a drama scholar, and he wasn't worth two cents. I never found out what he was talking about and neither did any of the other people in the class. He would jump from one thing to another thing and nobody knew the connections.

He gave tests and nobody knew what to study for. I felt so sorry for some of these kids who were sophomores. This was the first Shakespeare course they had and they didn't know from nothing, and he was not clarifying it one bit either. That was very bad. But they had nice lectures, and they had beautiful concerts with Elizabethan and Jacobean instruments and that music, and recitals of that sort of thing. They had all kinds of exhibitions. They also built an outdoor stage which was 80 feet long, modelled somewhat on the Globe Stage. They put on their plays there on the grassy bowl, and you just sat on the ground with the jet planes rolling over head. The funny thing was that most of the plays that were done on that stage were done by a San Francisco company that played for television. Here are these people, one over here, one over here, but they couldn't carry it off 80 feet apart. So they finally got right into the middle of that 80 foot stage and that's about all that they used, for pretty much of it went to waste. There were some very nice productions of Shakespeare's plays. Then in the afternoon before the production, there were lectures on that particular play. This was very helpful for me. I still use some of that stuff.

CM: How do you think the role of the English department in the college has changed over the years?

HtH: I really don't know. Certainly, it has become less important as a producer of English majors. There's getting to be more now I understand again. I think perhaps it's looked upon a little bit more as a kind of service department that give people certain skills that they ought to be able to use in other kinds of activities. This is off of the

top of my head, and I can't give you a whole lot of evidence, but I have a feeling that in most of the years that I was there, the English department was a very strong department in its own right. It turned out good people who went to various places and were professionally successful in the field of English. I think that that has diminished greatly. One strange thing about Hope College is that it has not produced any really noticeable writers. Calvin College has got a lot of people, Peter DeVries, and what is his name now, he lives in Minnesota? He changed his name, and I've forgotten both of them. (laughs) He was at Calvin College when I was and wrote about his years at Calvin College, but also writes about Indian lore in the Minnesota area. He was a kind of a protege of Sinclair Lewis at one time. He published a lot of books and he's a recognized American author. Cornell DeYoung, who was an Dutch immigrant and landed in Grand Rapids and went to Calvin College. He has books out about this life as a Dutch immigrant, Belly Full of Straw, and so forth. He is a recognized American author too. We don't have anybody from Hope College. I don't know why that is. A lot of smart kids went through. I guess they were just more academic than creative. We never inspired them to great poetry.

CM: Tom Andrews. He graduated in '86, maybe. He has just been selected by the National Poetry Service.

HtH: That's nice to know. He was after my time, considerably. Well that's nice. I'm glad something has happened.

CM: Do you have any recollections of Edward Savage?

HtH: Oh yes, I surely do. That was the guy I was telling you about who couldn't get up

by 10 o'clock. He was one of these people who liked to cultivate a few students. He was very rude to Dr. DeGraaf who was the chairman. He wanted to change everything around as soon as he set foot on campus. Then he wooed and won another young lady, not young any more, neither one of them was young, in the English department. That turned out to be a great fiasco. This is almost gossip, isn't it? So he left, and after awhile she left. She married a nice man somewhere down south. The last time I saw her she was very happy. She got romantically swept off her feet and she didn't know what she was getting into. No self discipline and a lot of selfishness. What did you expect me to say?

CM: I try not to come in with expectations. Do you remember Zoe Murray?

HtH: Oh yes, I remember Zoe Murray, the Earth Mother. She was a southerner and I think Mr. Jellema knew her better than I. She had I think a very colorful past. Married at 18 or something like that, and where she got her literary training, I don't know. She always said "literature" as people in the south say. She apparently got along well with the kids and was interesting. She had a lot of family troubles. Had a son who was not very amenable to academic discipline. I had him in class for awhile. She was rather pleased with the way he responded to me. But I never thought that he made a whole lot of progress. She saw life, the world, what's the poetic expression? Clearly and solid whole, something like that? Matthew Arnold said it. She was a realist. And as I say, she did not have a very pleasant life. She was widowed all of the time that she was here and had some health troubles. Smoked like a fiend, constantly. She carried her own little ash tray with her so that

wherever she was...and the little squirt thing. She was the essential realist who had to come through life the hard way.

CM: Do you remember Delwin Sneller?

HtH: Yes, I remember Delwin Sneller. He was a poet of some kind. Yes, Delwin Sneller was an independent sort of person. He wasn't always pleased with what I made him do in Shakespeare. He thought he had some real creative notions about Shakespeare, and that's okay. He taught in a little school somewhere down in Indiana. He would come back every once in awhile, and then he came back and took a different kind of job, didn't he? He quit teaching?

CM: He worked in a mill or a factory.

HtH: Yes, that's right. He took some kind of a job in the factory. I guess he's still turning out some poetry. I don't know that it ever gets very far, does it?

CM: I don't know.

HtH: I don't think so. Have you talked with Mr. Prins?

CM: No, I didn't get him on the phone yet.

HtH: You'll have to talk to him about Sneller. They lived in that area together. I know that he sometimes complained that he couldn't get all of his papers graded because Sneller turned up last night and wanted to talk and talk and talk. He taught in a little college, a Catholic college of something. They weren't paying him very much and he had to work pretty hard and getting no recognition. He quit that. Yes, he came back and did some kind of silly _____. He used to write lots of poetry for the Opus and so forth. Kind of free-wheeling stuff if I remember right. I don't

remember well enough to quote from it.

CM: Do you remember Emma Reeverts?

HtH: Of course I do. She was the Dean of Women that got on my neck for using the word "dance." She was a nice, gentle lady. As the Dean of Women, she was very much concerned with, what did she call it? Something like the "social niceties." She wanted to get students into social situations in which they would develop some poise and some sensitivity. Also in her classes, she wanted them to memorize poetry to put that in their "storehouse of memory." That was one of her terms. So she arranged on Friday nights I think it was. Faculty would come in to the college dining hall and they would be guests of a particular table at which a student then was the host or the hostess. This would do something for that company rather than their all slobbering through the line now and licking on their ice cream cone as they leave. This was a matter of doing things properly, you understand? It was kind of hard on us faculty people to be that way. I think it was a good idea, but I think it was an idea whose time had passed. The social graces, that's what she was interested in. She tried that. I don't know, I think maybe some kids profited by it a little bit. There was some other way to do this civilized thing besides tossing bread across the table from one end to the other. She taught English, and she was the Dean of Women. She had a way of using certain stock phrases, "in terms of," and so forth, which of course is a stock phrase with almost anybody lately. We don't know what it means anymore. I remember being on a committee with her. She was the chairman, and it was some kind of a committee for student activities or something

like that. We were contemplating getting some rollerskates so that the students could borrow these and then have an evening of rollerskating in the old gymnasium. I remember her opening the meeting by saying, "I thought today that we should think in terms of how many rollerskates we should buy."

(end of Side B)

(end of interview)