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Brian Williams

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Interview with Frank Quiring, Chemistry Summer Institutes
Interviewed by Brian Williams
July 29, 1987

BW: How did you become acquainted with Hope at first?

FQ: The first summer that I came up here was when I became acquainted with Hope. I could tell you the whole story about how it happened that I came up here. That dates back to my association with the University of Kansas when Dr. Vander Werf was professor and chairman of the department at the University of Kansas. Do you want more on this?

BW: Yes, a little bit.

FQ: When we got our first institute here in '64, he had actually written the proposal for the University of Kansas. Then during that academic year, '62-'63, is when he submitted that proposal. The summer of '63, he was informed that it was accepted, but by then he was up here. I had been teaching in Kansas City, Kansas, and like I say, had known him and been in touch with him from time to time. When he was given this grant, then he contacted me and asked me whether I would want to work here in the capacity that I had worked there. I was at the University of Rhode Island doing research in the summer at the time. I'm sure that's extra information.

BW: How did he get a hold of you then? At Kansas he did?

FQ: No, he found out where I was somehow in the letter. He came to me at the University of Rhode Island.

BW: So he had known you before then for awhile.

FQ: Yes.

BW: Just what is a summer institute? I'm not sure, I'm not clear on everything.

FQ: It's a summer institute for high school chemistry teachers. It's no longer called the institute. You better interview to get Gene because the name of it has changed. Starting out they were called summer science institutes. It's for high school chemistry teachers of advanced placement and second year chemistry. We tend to, behind the scenes, always call it a summer institute, which it was the first few years. Later on it became an honors project. Now it's called a project, or something like that. I can look this up. We shouldn't, according to National Science Foundation nomenclature, we shouldn't call it an institute anymore. But you'll also talk to Gene, I suppose?

BW: Yes. So it's all through NSF?

FQ: Right, always through NSF, funded by NSF.

BW: Was chemistry the first one? There has been a math one at sometime or another.

FQ: There have been quite a few math ones, and there was even a geology one, one time for a year or two.

BW: Has this one been continuous?

FQ: No, we've missed four summers. They were the summers '76, '77, and then two more recent ones in the '80s but I'm not sure which ones they were. You better get that from Gene. Maybe '82, '83, or '81, '82.

BW: Are there other institutes like this?

FQ: Yes. When we started in '64, there were lots of them. When you say like this for science teachers, but as for AP chemistry, at different times there had been maybe one or two others across the country somewhere.

BW: How have they been able to keep this at Hope for so long?

FQ: I think the answer is that we've done such a good job. When Gene writes the proposal, he writes it so carefully and so to match their guidelines so carefully. I think the NSF has received good reports on our institutes.

BW: So it's not an automatic thing then? He has to resubmit that every year?

FQ: Well, not every year. There have been times that we have been given a three-year grant, but then even that you have to reapply for. One time we were given a three-year grant, we had the first year, and the next year they cut them all off all over the country. There were none at all. It's one thing to have your proposal approved and then given the grant. It's another thing to get the money. When they approve your proposal, they still haven't funded you yet. So the moment of truth then is when the funding letter comes in. Congress, you better get that from Gene too, but NSF gets their money from Congress for this kind of thing, some of it earmarked for this kind of thing. But one year, the Office of Management and Budget, or the other way Budget and Management...

BW: It's OMB I think.

FQ: Nixon told them just not to fund these things. I didn't realize he could do that after Congress had already set to fund them. But he did. We weren't funded, and neither was anyone else. He just cut them off.

BW: So did you have them those years?

FQ: There were four years that we didn't have ours. And in the years that we didn't have ours, no one in the country had them.

BW: Vander Werf, did he teach at any of these?

FQ: He taught one week as a guest lecturer. He did that for quite a few years. I wouldn't guess just how many.

BW: Has that always been the policy then, guest lecturers?

FQ: That has always been the format.

BW: Do any of these teachers repeat? Can they come back?

FQ: The guest lecturers?

BW: No, the high school teachers.

FQ: High school teachers, we've never had anyone repeat.

BW: So even from the early years you haven't?

FQ: That's correct. The rules are written now in such a way that we could have someone come back that was here, say five or ten or fifteen, or even twenty years ago. We've always had plenty of applicants of teachers who have never been here, and we've just felt that it was never appropriate to take anyone that had been here before.

BW: So there is a maximum number that you take out of the given number of applicants?

FQ: The way that works is that we apply for funding for forty teachers, and we have always taken more like forty-four or forty-five. The reason that Gene can work that out, is that he'll take forty that are fully funded according to our proposal, and then he'll take usually four or five more that are tuition-only funded. No, I probably said that wrong. They are tuition free, and that's the only break they get. They don't get any money from NSF at all. But Hope waives their tuition for NSF coverage of tuition. I'm not sure which. Sometimes it works out that during the course of the summer, someone that was funded drops, goes home, gets sick, or something like

that, and then Gene has spread that money around a little bit. But typically we've had forty-four people, I would say was the average for our program, although NSF has funded us for forty. We always write the proposal for forty people. You might be interested in the fact that the length of the program has changed quite a bit over the years. We used to have nine weeks. In the very beginning we had nine weeks with nine different topics. Then it got as short as four weeks, I think, when the last time they cut us off, in the early '80s, and then we started up again, the maximum number of weeks we could have was four. So that's what we applied for and that is what we got. Now we have crept back up to five weeks. Things that have differed over the years, too, are the geographical distribution of our participants. There were times when we could have only people within a six hundred mile radius. Then there have been other times when we could draw from anywhere in the country. Right now, this year and last year, we have accepted applications and accepted people from all over the country.

BW: What is the number of applicants you get? Do you have any idea on that?

FQ: A lot of these questions you would be better off to check with Gene. I think we had a hundred this year.

BW: For the forty-four.

FQ: I think last year it was more like eighty. There were years back there in the late '60s and '70s I think when Gene had as high as three hundred applicants.

BW: How do you get the word out to these teachers?

FQ: One way is through our network of previous alumni. Then another way is, we get a

mailing list from College Board of all the high schools that submitted Advanced Placement chemistry tests.

BW: Has it always been AP teachers?

FQ: It's AP and second year. Sometimes the word honor's course was thrown in there. If you had a special first year honor's course, you could be considered eligible to apply.

BW: They actually do the labs, like today they were doing a lab. They are actually evaluated on that?

FQ: Yes, absolutely.

BW: Are they given a grade at the end?

FQ: A special lab grade? No, they just get one grade for the course.

BW: But there is a grade?

FQ: There is a lab contribution, yes, it's pretty heavy.

BW: What is their incentive for that? If they do well, will they get a pay raise or anything?

FQ: Well, many school districts grant extra salary increments if you get thirty hours beyond the bachelors, or even thirty hours beyond the _____.

BW: So this counts as credit?

FQ: Oh yes, they get college credit for this, and they can even get graduate credit. Hope is authorized to grant graduate credit, which then at least in most Michigan schools...like if a guy was working on a masters at Michigan State, for example, he might be able to get credit for this course on his masters degree.

BW: You have a son that went here?

FQ: Four children that went to college here.

BW: I saw your last name on the Lampen Award, Samuel.

FQ: Four children. My whole family has come with me every summer to this institute.

No, that's not quite true. Later on, the oldest boy stayed home a couple of summers.

But at least in the beginning, they all came up, all four every year. They spent their summers here. Those were nine week and eight week summers. They picked

blueberries and worked in the food service. They all ended up coming to college here, all four of them. Three boys and a girl.

BW: How many went into science?

FQ: None. They all went into computer science. Math and computer science. Well, actually, our number two son, Sherwood, got a bare minimum chemistry major. But by the time he finished that up, he was not any longer thinking chemistry. He was thinking computers, and that is where he ended up. But it was too late for him to get...I don't think they gave a computer major at that time. It was too late to get a different major, so he just kind of went through the motions of finishing up that chemistry major.

BW: Does it look like this is going to continue, _____ back to these institutes?

FQ: Congress has funded NSF pretty well the last few years. I would say in the last two or three years there has been a little growth in this area, and we're thinking that it's going to continue. Gene just put in the mail this week Monday, a proposal for a three-year continuation.

BW: And you've been here every year that they've had the institute?

FQ: I have been here every year that they've had the institute. This is the twentieth year.

Twentieth year we've had the institute, and I've gotten to serve in this capacity every year.

BW: I guess that's about all I have to ask. Unless you can think of anything else pertinent?

FQ: Not really.

BW: Alright, thanks for your time.

FQ: You're more than welcome.