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Muiderman, Anthony Oral History Interview: Retired Faculty and Administrators of Hope College

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ML: Can you tell me where you were born, where you grew up and your education.

AM: I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1927. My parents had moved to Grand Rapids from, I believe, Minnesota, and they lived for a few years in Iowa and Minnesota. And prior to that time, having come from the Netherlands in 1919. And two sisters and a brother were born in Iowa and Minnesota, and I was born in Grand Rapids. So I was educated in Grand Rapids- grew up there. I spent my first sixteen years in Grand Rapids through the Christian School system in Grand Rapids.

ML: Was it the same Christian school system they have now?

AM: It’s the same school system- the Grand Rapids Christian school system. There are a few elementary schools and middle schools around town, and I went to a school called South West Christian School, I think it’s still there. And that was my elementary and junior high school, which is now called Middle School, I guess. I went to high school- tenth, eleventh, twelfth grade- at Grand Rapids Christian, which is on the corner of Franklin and Madison. And the buildings there were very old, I think built in the 1870’s or something like that. It looked like a castle. But anyway that was high school. So that was my education in Grand Rapids.

ML: What did you do after that?

AM: Well, when I was just seventeen I joined the Navy- WWII, 1944. And I spent two years in the Navy before the war ended- so I was discharged from the Navy
because they were discharging everybody. They didn’t need millions of men
anymore. So, I was discharged in 1946- I was just nineteen. I spent two years
overseas practically. And then I returned, and in 1946 I enrolled in Calvin
College. I went to Calvin College for three years, and then I went the University
of Michigan in the late Forties through 1950, I guess, then I returned to the
University of Michigan later in the Fifties and spent another three or four years
there.

ML: What was your focus when you were there? What did you major in, and you got
your Master’s?

AM: I majored in engineering, and... let’s see, it goes something like this. My parents
being immigrants and certainly favored education and so forth, really had no
concept of what education meant other than you might get a good job. I never
had an advisor in high school or college- something you just didn’t do in those
days. Our schools didn’t have any counselors and so forth. So, probably as I look
back at it, maybe my biggest influence was the principal in my junior high school-
memorand and junior high. He said to me one time, ‘Tony, you’re good at
arithmetic. You ought to be an engineer’. So, I went ahead and I became an
engineer. And probably knew that I really didn’t like engineering- it wasn’t a big
deal for me, it didn’t possess me- but I did it. But, one reason I spent so many
years at the University of Michigan is because I didn’t focus on engineering. I
graduated in engineering, but I was taking courses in the Business School- I was
taking courses in the Lit School- I was taking in coaching of sports- I was taking
courses in philosophy and literature. I needed about 120 hours to graduate
undergrad, I think by the time I put a degree together, I had about 196 hours. And it was largely everything else. And there was more of me that was a philosopher or a literature person or a bit of a poet, than there was engineer. Later I got an MBA in business. I had started some courses at the University of Michigan. But, my focus was mainly engineering, and then later on I picked up an MBA. I went to work in engineering when I finally settled down and got a corporate kind of job- it was in engineering. I was considered a good engineer, but it wasn’t where I really was, but people thought I was great. I used to tell my wife that I think my promotions probably had more to do with my philosophy background than with my engineering background.

ML: Why’s that?

AM: Well, I think that you could make a very strong case for a liberal arts education. I think people in responsible positions, good people in responsible positions, have a strong sense of liberal arts- maybe not consciously so, but they have a bigger framework and they can connect events and so forth, and ideas, and put them into a broader framework perspective. I do think that that shows in leadership and so forth. I do think it sets people apart. And you need the technocrats and the people who are very good at things. You need people who can bring closure to everything- good manager kind of people. But you need some people who are sort of on a different direction, maybe the creative people- the people who are maybe a little bit more unstructured, and I think I was. People who think maybe not so linearly, but maybe think in terms of circles. People who don’t see things, necessarily, by dichotomizing events to all the little parts- they go from A to B to
C to D. And get it all done in a nice fashion. You know, we have to do that, but if that’s all you do- you probably miss something. I think there’s time to... you know in problem solving or problem finding to bring in new thinking. Get a group together and discuss things and get a synergy of ideas and so forth. I think I was able to do that more than a lot of other people- whatever that meant, I don’t know, but I never had a problem with any promotion. And I used to think, it’s not that I’m just a hot engineer- I think it’s because I can do other things. I can talk to people and I can sense what the issues are- beyond the technical issues and so forth. That’s where I was, and I spent- I was in engineering until I was about fifty years old. I spend about twenty-five years in the corporate world. Then I came to Hope College, and I started teaching.

ML: Did you apply or did somebody ask you to...

AM: Most the things I’ve done in my life have been by accident. I don’t think I led a planned life. I don’t know if I’d recommend that, but maybe it’s okay too. You know, I often see these students come to campus, and they’ve got their whole life planned and they hit the road running as freshman. They have a lot of focus, and they got out and they’re doing what they said they wanted to do, except five years later they’re doing something else- ‘well, it’s not really what I wanted’. I see a lot of that. So, it never bothered me to see people kind of searching and so forth. I guess I did a lot of that- maybe too much of it. This is the way I got into teaching- I never intended to go into teaching, it never occurred to me. I was between jobs. I was changing jobs, and I was at a little interim phase there. This was in the early Seventies and there was a recession going on. And I had been
with a small company, and it was undercapitalized and it just decided to quit. And so we were out of work, and I was one of the top managers in the company.
And so, looking for another job at that level during a real recession—this is the time when the energy crisis was a big thing, and gas went from thirty cents a gallon to a dollar fifteen a gallon and stuff like that—and so it was a real crunch.
And this lasted for a couple of years. Jobs, for me, were not very plentiful. And even though I said, ‘well, I’ll take a different kind of job—I’ll take a lower level job’, that wasn’t too appealing to employers because they’d say, ‘well, you’ve been at this level and…’ and I think when I left I was the vice president of some company. ‘You’re at this level and you take a lower level, and as soon as the economy wakes up again—you’ll be gone, so we’ll just hire somebody at a lower level who will be content there’. So that’s part of it. And, the jobs I could get were in various parts of the country. I thought I’d like to stay in West Michigan, but I got some good job offers in California and other places out East—New York City and so forth. And it didn’t highly appeal to me because I had four children, they were all in elementary school to high school, junior high—somewhere in there. And I said, ‘you know, this is a big uprooting’. And also, my parents lived in Grand Rapids—they were very old, we had their only grandchildren—they needed somebody to kind of keep an eye on things. My wife and I said, ‘you know, it really would be wrong to move’. So, we kept looking and I did a number of things. I did consulting and painted houses. I just did a lot of stuff—that was okay. One day, our sixth grade son had his buddy over after school, and his buddy’s father stopped by to pick him up. He was the chair of the Business
Department at Grand Rapids Junior College—now Grand Rapids Community College. He was a person I knew pretty well. But anyway, he came to the door and we chatted and he came to get his son, and while we were waiting he suddenly said, ‘you know, Tony, you can teach’. I said, ‘Chuck what are you talking about?’ ‘Well,’ he said, ‘I need somebody to teach a course that you could teach, and the person I had engaged for that course’,- adjunct faculty, one night a week kind of a thing- he said, ‘he just called me this afternoon and said that he was being transferred out of town, and the class begins in two days’. I said, ‘Chuck, it’s something I can’t do- never thought about doing- I wouldn’t know what to do’. So, half-hour later he came and said, ‘here’s the book’. He said, ‘you’ve got the time, you’re not working and you can just do this nights and so on’. And so I said, ‘okay, I’ll do it’, and that was my first shot. I worked awfully hard at it- one night a week, four hours straight. That semester ended- this is a time when every college and university was really hard up for people to teach in business- I mean, they were desperate. By the end of the semester, they had asked me if I would teach another course the following semester. And, Grand Valley got a hold of me and said, ‘you’re teaching at Grand Rapids, will you teach for us?’ So I agreed.

ML: Word started to get around.

AM: Word started to get around real fast. And so I did that for a couple of years. I taught a lot at Grand Valley. In fact, I taught more than a full load for part-time wages- they were that hard up. I taught everything business- I taught a lot of things. I did this for a couple of years, maybe two, maybe three- along with other
things that I was doing. I took a couple of courses where I had a chance to see other Prof.’s in action. And I thought, ‘well, gee that’s pretty good- I can do what they do, or maybe I’m better than they are. I don’t know’. My reviews from students were pretty good, but I still didn’t think about teaching- I was just sort of marking time. I was interviewing for various jobs, but they really weren’t local jobs. And the upshot was- well I guess I did have one local job in another little company for a little while, and that was on an interim basis to straighten something out over there, sort of a contract basis. And then I was teaching a course in the graduate school, a course in the graduate school over there, and there was a Prof. from Hope College taking the course. He asked me a few questions one day. And I said, ‘I’m just doing this as an interim thing, and I’m looking for a job and marking time’. And that ended up in him telling the chair of the department that... Hope was desperate for somebody. They had made an offer to a couple of people and they got turned down, and their next semester was gonna come up and they had nobody. This person told the chair about me. I think it was Barry Richardson, was the chair. And the Prof.’s name in my class was Roger Lutrell- taught accounting. And he told Barry that there’s a guy at Grand Valley who might be available and he can teach. So Barry Richardson called me, and I came down and chatted. The same week, Grand Valley offered me a tenure track job there, and Calvin College called me with a tenure track. And within a week I had three offers. Grand Valley was the best offer- state school- I probably would have made twice as much money there as at Hope and Calvin, but I didn’t want to teach at Grand Valley. And I interviewed at Calvin. Calvin was a good place-
just a lot of restrictions about what church you would attend and what school your
kids would go to. And they were very up front about things like that. They
wanted me to come there. I said no to that one. I didn’t know a whole lot about
Hope College, but gee, what a great place. So I’ve been here ever since.

ML: What was the interview process like? Did you have to interview with the
president?

AM: Yeah. It must have been in June when I interviewed all these places and all in one
week. Well Grand Valley didn’t really interview- they knew me and they liked
me, and they just made the offer. And Calvin, I spent a whole day at Calvin- got
to know those folks over there- interviewed the president over there. And when it
came to Hope College... you know, today we usually have a candidate spend the
day and teach a class, do a seminar and things like that. This was June- nobody
was around to teach a class to. And I think they just- I didn’t know anything
about academia really. I didn’t know how all these things went- what the
procedures were. As I look back at it, I think they were so hard up, they didn’t
want to risk losing a candidate because they just didn’t have any candidates. So, I
interviewed- I spent some time with Barry Richardson. Barry was a good guy,
and I liked Barry a lot. He was a good guy for me to work for- knowing nothing
about teaching and academia. He was a good mentor for me. I had to interview
Lars Granberg. Lars is a retiree. He was the Dean of the Social Sciences-
psychologist- great person. And we just had a nice warm chat about nothing in
particular. And then I had to interview the Provost who was David Marker.

David Marker and I... you see these interviews, I think they were okay. Other
people would say, 'you mean is that what you talked about?' sort of thing. But, I think most decisions are made in about a minute when you’re having an interview. It’s not about whether you are technically competent, it’s about a whole lot of other things. And just conservation sort of brings out whatever they want to find out, I don’t know. With Lars, we just chatted in general about a lot of stuff and nothing in particular. And I think we both felt really good about our conversation and getting to know each other. Talking with David Marker, who was the Provost, and his office was in Van Raalte- the place that burned down. The only things that were in that building were the President’s office, the Provost’s office- I think the Registrar was there, and there was a copy room. And maybe there was a couple of other things there- there were no student classrooms and no faculty offices. It was basically a condemned building as far as the fire department was concerned. You couldn’t have students and you couldn’t have things like department offices, this sort of thing. But anyway, David Marker had his office there- as did the president. And David and I talked about organizing one’s office. Basically he said, ‘you know, I’ve just got so much stuff around and it’s hard to find things, and I can’t keep it all straight’. And this whole business of organizing an office- so we chatted about that. I had been in offices- I guess I knew something about offices. And I think through a conversation like that you get to know each other a bit. You don’t have to talk about teaching and a whole lot of other stuff- a few questions about that. But we talked about organizing his office. I don’t think I gave him any particular advice, but we talked about the problem. I had to talk to Gordon Van Wylen and Gordon and I talked about...
when I was in Ann Arbor, he was in Ann Arbor. He was the chair of the mechanical engineering department.

ML: So you knew him then?

AM: I knew who he was. I never had him for a class, although I used his textbook in thermodynamics, which was about that thick, and it was the most widely acclaimed textbook in thermodynamics. I think it’s still in publication—probably in its fifteenth edition— it’s translated in many languages. It was a classic. And he was the head of the Mechanical Engineering Department while I was a student there. I was a little old as a student when I went back the second time. But we had a lot of things to talk about—about Ann Arbor and about the University of Michigan. After I had left and prior to his coming to Hope, he had been the dean of the School of Engineering at Michigan, which is a pretty prestigious job. In their history, they probably had about three or four deans and they lasted forever—they’re pretty important people in this world. He was the Dean and widely respected guy and just a great human being. We talked about our life in Grand Rapids. I lived in a Dutch community on one side of town, he grew up in a Dutch community on the other side of town. And I think I said to him— you know, his job was sort of to get at your faith base and all that stuff to see if you fit the college and so on. And this was not really overt questioning about that, but it got into the discussion. And Gordon was a little older than I am—he was about seven years older, but he was in WWII on a submarine. He recently wrote a book a few years ago—he wrote a book about having met a survivor, a Japanese man, who was a survivor of one of these ships that his submarine torpedoed down in the
South Pacific. And they had met and I don’t know if they co-authored the book, but it was really a very touching kind of thing- and Gordon’s capable of reaching deep that way. We talked about our educations in Grand Rapids. I had gone through the Christian school system- I’m not so sure that he did, and I don’t think he went to Calvin College either. But anyway, I said, ‘you know, I’ve spent all this time in this Dutch community and all the Catechism and Sunday school classes and going to church two or three times on Sunday in this conservative community and so on, and all my Christian school education, the Bible classes that I took’. I said, ‘you know, somehow when I got into the Navy, I wasn’t so sure that all this religious background prepared me for what real life is all about’. He said, ‘you know, I had the same experience’. And so we talked about it. We kind of shared, you know, where you really came to grips with your faith. And he said that it wasn’t until he had gone to Duke University, I guess, where his wife was a student- at Campus Crusade for Christ, or something like that, is where he came to grips with it and so forth. So we were talking about growing up in a narrow religious community, and whether that’s really the basis for making choices in life and so forth. And that’s sort of our interview was about. And we’ve been friends ever since. And I think that through those kinds of interviews, you get to know a lot about people. I guess he decided that I would be a person that they could bring to Hope College and I would fit. I think that’s what interviewing is about.

ML: Did you move to Holland from Grand Rapids when you started at Hope?
AM: You know, I said a really dumb thing to Gordon. He said, ‘well I think we’d like to have you seriously consider coming here’. I said, ‘well Gordon, I hadn’t planned on going into teaching. I think I’d like it because I’ve had a couple years of experience at other places now and it feels pretty good. I think I could do it as my main occupation. I’ll tell you what I’ll do- I’ll try it for a year and see if I like it’, completely oblivious to the fact that they were saying to me, ‘we’ll try you for a year and if we don’t like you, why you’re not gonna stay’. So anyway, he didn’t comment on that, so they kept me here. They could’ve cut me loose anytime, which they do to a lot of people after three years. You’re hired basically on a tenure track which says, maybe after seven years you can be considered for tenure. And if you’re tenured, it means that you’re a good person professionally and contribute to Hope College, and you’re just a good fellow all the way around. They review you periodically along the way, and usually after three years they tell you pretty much ‘hey, you’re not gonna make it’. They give you a year to look around, but after one year- then you’re done. So, in some ways, that can be just kind of brutal. Just because you get a job doesn’t mean you can keep the job. And that’s why there’s a lot of coming and going in academic circles. Part of it is new opportunities, part of it is they don’t want to keep you any longer. It may be for good reasons, but I think that’s sort of the culture of the industry, and everybody knew it except me. So I learned a few things along the way. I was brand new, you know. I could understand what they would be saying in the corporate world, but in academia- it’s a different ballgame.
ML: Since academia was so new for you, how was the transition then from the business world into the academic world?

AM: Well the question you asked a few minutes ago was ‘did I move to Holland right away?’ I didn’t- I stayed in Grand Rapids for two years and commuted everyday. It worked okay- it was about a thirty-mile commute. I think the transition was all right. I think my wife was very supportive of the move- we scaled down our lifestyle and so forth because colleges didn’t pay very much money in those days. They certainly paid me less than I had been making a couple of years earlier. But I was all right- the main thing is feeling like you fit, and when I was in to teaching, it felt good. So I came to Hope. I got busy- they gave me a full load. Classes were sixty, sixty-five kids... anywhere from fifty to sixty-five. I think I had a couple classes that held maybe forty, forty-five seats- they were filled, both sections. And I was in a big room and maybe you could get sixty people in there, or more than that. So, I had well over two hundred students every semester. You just did it, and I didn’t know any better. Today why, everybody would squawk about that, but we just did it- you know, just got in there and did it. It was no problem- I liked what I was doing and thought it was worthwhile. When I was in the corporate world, I think that... now here we get around to the liberal arts or being the non-technical kind of person at heart- and I think relationships was the, not that I consciously tried to develop relationships- but I think the workplace is a place where there’s a lot of human interaction. And you don’t come to work and you leave all your personal life outside the gate- it all comes in. And you work close with people and you discover that everybody is carrying a cross-
everybody’s hurting. There are little ways, not that you ask about it, but people carry a lot of pain, and I think I could always be sensitive to that. I think that’s maybe what made me different from other people, because I worked with bosses who really didn’t care anything about except why you’re here and that’s to do the work- and not interested in hearing anything that’s bothering you personally. But, there again, I never thought twice about that. I think the important thing in life is relationships. And that’s true on the job, and I think it’s true on a college level. I think at the college level, with students- I could relate to adults, older adults in the working corporations and so on. And families and marriages and trauma in their lives- facing all kinds of problems and say, you know- that’s part of life. But, it didn’t take me long to find out that there’s nothing different amongst the students. Basically, students are also a hurting population. They’ve all got their crosses to bear and live with a lot of pain in their lives through relationships or family or who knows. And I’m not a person who solves problems, but I think I can bend the rules a little bit. I can make concessions, I think I can hear them. I don’t look for problems, but if anybody comes to me and wants to talk- why, I listen. See, I always thought that my work was part of my ministry. Whether I was in the corporate world or in school here- I think a ministry is what you do. That’s where it is for me. And so that probably works out in different ways. I think every Prof. has students who appreciate them for certain things. So I just did my own thing my own way. I think as a teacher with no experience and not understanding anything about working in college. And I think it’s still true today, people who get hired here as young teachers, new teachers- spend a lot of their effort, which is
anxiety, in trying to figure out what counts and what’s acceptable- what are you supposed to do, how are you supposed to do it. And I guess I worried about that for a couple years. It’s natural- you do that on any kind of a job. What do I do to get a raise? What do I do to keep my job? What do you do to please the institution? What’s the accepted way to teach? Who knows what. All those kinds of questions and I think in the corporate world, you might have somebody who would tell you that but in the academic world, nobody tells you that. Everywhere I’d go, whether I was a junior in college or Grand Valley or Hope, people would say ‘oh hey, we’ll help you with this. Don’t worry, we can get ya- I’ll be right there’. Nobody ever helps you. Everybody’s too busy. Its not that they don’t care- they’re not intending to deceive you, but you’re really on your own. A few years after I was here, I was in a little session about education or teaching. We had a Woodrow Wilson fellow here- I remember it very well. Every year there was a Woodrow Wilson fellow who comes- there’s a Woodrow Wilson foundation, and you can apply. And Hope College, every year, gets something for a week or so. And, we had a man named Mr. Richardson who was an executive at Mobile Oil. And I had some interactions with him. I went to some announced program, and there were only three people there besides Mr. Richardson. It was myself, David Martin- the Provost, and Gordon Van Wylen- the President. And that’s all that showed up- not unusual- people don’t show up for all these little things. But we were talking about teaching. And this guy said that one thing you had to remember- maybe it was David Martin who said it, but it made an impact on me and maybe everybody knew it, but I didn’t and I was
glad he said it. Maybe it was David Martin who said it, but that was the occasion. He said, ‘I learned that when you close the door to the classroom, you’re in business for yourself- you can do it anyway you want to’. And it was kind of liberating for me. So I figured, okay, nobody tells me how to do it- I’ll just do it. I just did it the way I wanted- not only in teaching, but in the hours in my office and what I did for students, with students and so forth. And I think that was basically my life.

ML: What year were you hired at Hope?


ML: What was it like when you came? You already mentioned Van Raalte Hall was here, things like that and student body.

AM: Tuition was about seventeen hundred bucks, I guess. When I was cleaning out the office recently, I came across some references to what tuition was when I started. It must have been under two thousand dollars. But then again, the first year I went to University of Michigan and tuition was seventy dollars a semester. My room and board was, I think, nine dollars a week, so five dollars for meals- four dollars for room. So in 1977, it was relatively inexpensive compared to today. There must have been about 2100 students. They were good people. I don’t think there was a lot of difference between the student body then and now. I think, maybe, SAT scores might be higher today. I’ve thought about this before, and there are differences in what kids do and what the culture is and so forth. But basically... kids wanting an education, kids wanting to do good things in this world, concerned about the right things. I think it’s a little tougher to grow up
each year. All the forces really influence those kids and it's not easy. In '77, Hope College had gone through the Sixties. I think there were some significant changes on campus because of that- that era. I think students today probably have more environmental concerns. I don't know if they're more active or if they're more interested in some of the social issues- maybe. It's kind of hard for me to gage that. I saw the students then and now who are really wonderful people. They want to be responsible people- they want to make a contribution in their life- they may not know how, but they want the right things. And then now they- and I think I can speak on some basis because in my class, in particular, is the senior seminar but also in some other classes- I give a lot of assignments where they write personal kind of things. Some of these personal things are how to live their life and what's important to them and so forth. I think for kids then and today, they are looking for stability in life. They envision themselves as having a strong family, and they value family ties and relationships- and they intend to have that either because their parents modeled it or because they went through hell with a dysfunctional family. They know what they want, and they can say so. A lot of them want to be very rich, until they take my Senior Sem. and then they get some other perspectives on what success is all about. But they basically want to be successful, and I think there's always some confusion in these college years because they equate...

[end of side one]

... a good many of them and I think because of the liberal arts exposure.

Exposure to a lot of professors who raise different kinds of questions. It's not
how you provide the answers, I think it’s the questions you raise that are the most constructive. And some of them aren’t so sure anymore, and they’re saying that maybe I just want to find what my calling is and do it well and rewards- monetary rewards- aren’t the most important thing. I see our graduates, from when I started and now, doing good things- making good contributions in their field to society.

ML: One of the questions I’ve had, and you’ve hit on this already- in the catalogue it says Hope is a liberal arts college in the context of the historic Christian Faith. What does that mean?

AM: It means to me that- the context of the historic Christian Faith does not infer that we’ve got a dogma that we’re gonna jam down your throat. I think it’s good, I think it’s right if an institution wants to have a philosophical or a religious orientation and be right up front about it and say so. And Hope College is one of those that says, ‘we’re gonna affiliate with the denomination of the Reformed churches of American, and we’re up front about that’. Calvin College is up front and they say, ‘this is who we are and this is what we believe, this is who we want our faculty to be’. And I appreciated that about them when I was interviewing there. I could understand completely. I didn’t want to join that for some of my own reasons, but it’s okay. Wheaten College, don’t they have their thing. I think at Hope College it means to me that we can model the Christian faith as professors or staff or whatever. I’m not sure that I’ve gotta preach to them. It’s not a matter of conversion. I think it’s a matter of providing an educational environment in which students can discern issues and make informed choices, and the choices they make are theirs- not mine, not the schools. But as long as they’re
here, we can talk about Christianity and we can raise questions—maybe raise more questions than answers. Hope has quite a diversified student body and I appreciate that we have a somewhat diverse faculty. I would think that the mass of the faculty in a Christian institution ought to be Christians. I don’t know if they should all be Christians. I would think that part of education is… I think a person ought to read the columnist in the newspaper who they like the least rather than always follow the one that you really like, because you never get the other point of view. There’s good people who write in newspapers— I don’t happen to like Cal Thomas in the newspaper because he’s a very right-wing conservative and he’s got blinders on and sort of intolerant, but I read him anyway because he also represents a lot of people. And I think we moved from a context of framework of Christian faith on this campus where we say, ‘we’re proud to say we’re Christians and we can talk about it. We can relate faith issues in our classes when the opportunities arise’, some have more opportunity than others. But to me, it never meant I never had to be on a soapbox and give my testimony and all that stuff. It never meant that I had to focus on a person. Say, you know, my job is to lead this person to Christ. I think that to be Christ’s person- I think if you are Christ’s person, you can also hold the idea that probably the solutions to the problems of the world can be found in Christianity. There will be unique solutions because of Christianity. And I think it’s okay to talk about that. I think, too, that a powerful way in witnessing is through presence— Christian presence. Because again, if you’re Christ’s person, hopefully you would react in maybe more of a Christ-like way as situations crop up in everyday life in business or in
school or whatever. Maybe choices you make. And I think a presence can do that. I think presence is a very strong witness. I went to China one time- I went to China in about 1983- right after the revolution ended and Mao had died a few years before that. It was still a pretty paranoid country. I was going to a university where they were having an institute on business development or something like that. And there was a collection of people from around the United States, and some were young people and some were older like I was. And they were in different areas- agriculture and education and so forth. And there was one kid who had just graduated from college- from a Christian college somewhere. And I think he was interested in education. But we were going through customs and immigration over in China there in one of those cities. And he was at the table next to mine, and the man asked him to open one of his suitcases, and it was full of Bibles, testaments- illegal to take religious information into China and it’s illegal to pass it out. Those are the rules- it’s the laws. And so, I can abide by that- it’s the way they want it. And there was a pretty popular book in those days about Brother Andrew. He was a Dutch guy who used to go through the Iron Curtain to Russia with suitcases full of Bibles, and he went through all these checkpoints and never once was he asked or it was discovered that he was carrying Bibles. And the idea is, ‘well, God watches over you and makes sure He will get you into places where it’s been suppressed all these years’. So everybody wants to be Brother Andrew including this kid. So the customs guy said ‘look, this is what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna close this up and I’m gonna put tape and seals on this thing. And you can take it with you, but if one of those seals is
broken by the time you leave, I’ll arrest you’. He’d probably go to prison. I think that was the right thing to tell him, because I think that... I, and a couple of other people, said ‘you know, you could be a Christian presence and it gets attention’.

And he asked us exactly how it worked. I think you can be more of a presence here, a Christian presence in a school- I don’t think Van Wylen was interested in what the headcount was- how many souls were saved. I think it was real important to him that good things happen, but this is not why we were here. I think the emphasis has shifted in the last few years, and I have a problem with that emphasis. And I’m glad that the Chaplain thing is being reorganized. I think maybe we’ll get back to what, and a good many people see as, liberal arts taught in the context of the Christian faith. I think you have to be pretty careful with that, you know, how you interpret the context. And clearly, in the last few years, you see the context as- from my observation point- as a headcount and the real purpose here is to lead souls to Christ. I think the mission kind of projects that kids went on are good because, I think, that’s what Christ really talks about. You know, in Mathew you talk about ‘if you’ve done this to the least of these, you’ve done it to Me’. I think that happens all day every day, and with every encounter you have with anybody at work, with a student, all the time- you’ve got an opportunity, there’s a learnable moment, there’s an opportunity to make that person’s life a little bit better. I don’t know how you do that, but in the Christian presence you do. Sensitivity, I think that’s helping, that’s listening- there’s so much you can give to somebody because you’re a Christian. And you do it just in everyday little things that you don’t even know if they count- but they do- you
just do them. You just do them because that’s what Christian’s do if you’re a
Christ person. I think that’s the context of the Christian faith. That’s classroom,
that’s what happens in your offices, that’s interaction with students, and
sometimes it’s leading a student directly to a conversion. Who knows what, but
that’s not all it is. I think by doing the everyday things that make life better, or if
not better- at least sensitive, I think that has a strong message. I think people
would say ‘is that what Christianity is about? How does he get that way? Maybe
because he’s a Christian, I don’t know’. In China, we were crowded in a
restaurant one day and there’s a shriek behind me and there was a young man, a
college age kid, he’s stretching on the floor and he’s having an epileptic seizure.
He started kicking and thrashing and biting his tongue and everything.
Everybody is standing there, and I went over there and helped him. I grabbed
some napkins and sort of put them in his mouth and I cradled his head and I did
this and that. I was there with him. You would be, any kid around here would
be- you just do it, but not in China. It’s none of your business. You don’t do that
because you wait for the authorities to come and let them decide. That might take
twenty minutes or a half hour before you can get anybody over there maybe. But
anyway, he couldn’t speak English- I couldn’t speak Chinese very well. But for
the next few days around that town- it was a town of a million people- I was
amazed at how often somebody would walk up to me and say in English, ‘oh
you’re the man who helped this young boy. I want to say thank you, why did you
do that?’ There were a few instances like that in our time in China where we just
did some things to help people just because they needed some help that’s all- little
things. And how often that came back in comments and people noticing that it was different. Why would they do that? Well, we weren’t all Christians—some were Jewish. But anyway, things like that. I think that’s where the context of the Christian faith comes in and how you live your life and everything. Long answer.

ML: Wonderful answer—thank you. Has Hope become more or less diverse from the time you came here? This is with the student body and with the professors both ethnically and religiously.

AM: Diversity is a difficult, difficult subject. It’s a difficult project or whatever. Talk about racial diversity, talk about African Americans—I would have a difficult time comprehending why an African American would want to come to Hope College. Why there is not a community of African Americans. It’s like the Dutch people who came over, and my parents were amongst them, and what did they do? They moved to Iowa because, I think, my father knew somebody who lived in Iowa and said, ‘why don’t you come over here?’ My father was not a farmer, and so his work on the farm was not where it was, and so he eventually moved to Grand Rapids because he wasn’t making a living. We moved from a couple of towns in Iowa to a town in Minnesota—two towns in Minnesota. We moved to Grand Rapids. And everywhere they moved, it was a Dutch community. And I think there’s something about human psyche that says ‘being on familiar territory’ or ‘people like yourself—shared culture, values and so forth— is very important and keeping a nationalistic identity is important’, at least for Dutch people. And, you know, these neighborhoods in Grand Rapids or Iowa or just like a little transplanted part of the Netherlands. It was important. My mother said in later
years that she was sorry that they’d moved to these Dutch communities because, in some ways, we’d missed part of what America was all about. Maybe we did—maybe we didn’t. But, it’s okay for Dutch people who want to live with Dutch people. But for African Americans who want to live with Dutch people or come to a college which is predominately white, middle-class. And we say, ‘hey we want some diversity- come on in’. Why in the world would a black person want to do that when they really long for a group of people that share their culture. There’s no mass of people like that around here. Or, whether Islam or Asian or whatever. I think it’s difficult. I think the Phelps Scholar Program is a really good step in the right direction to create diversity- create a learning community of diverse backgrounds- racial, ethnic. I don’t know if there’s more diversity now than there was, it sort of came and went. We had a lot of students from Qatar, over in Middle East near Bahrain. We had a bunch of kids from some other Middle Eastern or Asian place. And maybe from Afghanistan, I’m not sure.

ML: Was this just active recruiting in those areas for a time?

AM: I think usually there was somebody- a representative of the Reformed Church or Hope College in one of those areas, and they create some way to get a few of them over, and then for awhile they all come over. One of these kids from the Middle East, I don’t think he’s the oil minister, but he’s the assistant to one of the oil ministers in the whole OPEC thing- he’s at all the conferences, you know, that sort of thing. We had a lot of Middle Easterners at one time. It just seems to me that we always had a pocket of kids and always glad they were here. Then they sort of disappear, and I don’t know why it didn’t have continuity. Some of the
international students tell me that Hope is a good place- they always wish they could find more acceptance amongst the American kids. All their friends were international students- most of them. One international kid told me a couple of years ago that his whole freshman year his roommate never once asked him about where he was from or anything about his past. That’s what it’s all about- it sets kids up to get to know each other. You find, that a lot of kids here aren’t too interested in international kids. When I went to the University of Michigan, I think there were more international students on that campus than any other campus in the country at that time- it was a long time ago. And you go to the University of California in Berkley. And I was on that campus not too long ago, and there are more... the population of Asians is just extremely high. The population of the kids who are of low economic means is extremely high- and minorities. Completely different guidelines for accepting students from Harvard. Harvard and Berkley are pretty prestigious schools and their guidelines are completely different. Berkley favors diversity, in fact the head of the Diversity and Ethnic Studies at Berkley is a Hope grad- Lun Chi Wang- graduated in the late Fifties early Sixties- world renowned guy. He’s done a lot to help out. Diversity’s a tough one. You get a little pocket here in the Middle West where... I think different from East Coast, West Coast. West Coast has a high Hispanic and Asian population everywhere. East Coast- there’s just all kinds of pockets of different nationalities everywhere, including the Hispanic or the Puerto Ricans and the Blacks, but also a lot of Europeans and Middle Eastern people. It’s all over the Eastern Coast. And the Midwest over here, you know, you can live your
life and not really worry about what’s going on. You don’t really worry about somebody who talks funny because you never encounter them. And so, a lot of these kids come to Hope College because the highest population’s from Michigan. They have a great opportunity to broaden a bit, but a lot of them find it very difficult to deal with that- not because they’re bad kids or different, but they just haven’t experienced living in a diverse community. I don’t know if we have any more diversity now than we had earlier.

ML: What was Holland like when you moved here?

AM: Well, Holland had a reputation and they end up with that reputation more than by knowing people who lived here. That reputation being pretty conservative, pretty narrow- you couldn’t sit on your front porch and drink a beer. You couldn’t do a lot of stuff on Sundays, and you couldn’t buy gas or ice cream cones or anything like that. Anyway, I moved here in 1979, and I found it just a wonderful place. Our neighbors, they all go to church but they don’t care what I do on Sunday- if I cut my grass or do whatever. There’s nobody that I would count as saying, ‘well those Muidermans, do you know what they do on Sundays?’ No, not that. Maybe there were some blue laws... I think, when some stores started to open on Sundays I think there were a few little skirmishes or votes or who knows what. A few things like that happened. I think the biggest changes have been, oh some years ago there was a study published- someone came to town and did a study and proclaimed that Holland was under-retailed. It could probably use four times the number of retail stores and shops and things listed in Holland. And I thought Eighth Street was kind of nice because all the stores were sort of family owned.
Dumay’s, it was a woman’s store which was my wife’s favorite store, had been there for ninety years and they’re out of business now. It was decided that when they consult some reports that said Holland is under-retailed- all the retailers sort of sensed a big opportunity. Maybe they were right because you had to go to Grand Rapids to shop for the big items and so forth. I thought it was kind of neat. We didn’t have traffic problems- didn’t have a mall, it’s kind of nice not having a mall. The highway was sort of going through the country and fields and so forth. And now US 31 looks like 28th Street in Grand Rapids- just about as bad. Traffic… there’s just been tremendous expansion, and I liked it the other way better. And Holland is still kind of a neat place, and I live right down Twelfth Street here in the historic district- it wasn’t the historic district when I moved there, it was just a house I bought. But the proximity for us is wonderful- close to the college, a block from church, all the college activities, we like to shop downtown and support the local retailers and so on. Plus you count in visitors- Holland has been discovered and everybody’s moving this way- there western from Grand Rapids to Muskegon to Grand Haven to Holland. Filling in, you see all these developments between here and Grand Rapids. Just busy, busy, busy. So it’s changing and I don’t know if the changes are better. I guess the Chamber of Commerce would talk about progress and I guess they’d measure progress different from the way I do. I think its quality of life. I think Holland has a good spirit. I think there is a lot of committed people who value the quality of life in Holland to work enough to champion it. I think the biggest indication of that changing has been last year’s vote on the Area Center where the North Side
Township voted against it. The other two, let’s see… Park Township, Holland Township and the city of Holland, I guess they all had a vote and Holland Township on the north side voted it down. They had enough votes to vote it down and they were sort of redneck about the whole thing. I’m just sensing a different culture around here that I’m not used to. The letters to the editors were pretty snide and not nice and not civil. They sort of missed the issues, even though they voted it down, what they wrote about what they said was said to be… things are changing around Holland. There’s an element that has no appreciation for the tradition and the quality of life and so forth. But Holland’s been a good place. I’ve been glad I’ve lived here and been able to live my own life with no interference.

ML: Do professors, in general, find their friendships within the Holland community or within the Hope community or a combination of both?

AM: I think it’s a combination of both, and in our department- Economics and Business- we all like each other, we don’t associate with each other socially, by and large we don’t. A little bit, but in terms of who do we do a lot of things with, it’s not people in the department- even though I’m good friends with them. I really can’t speak for the other departments. I know there are departments where they do a lot socializing together. They have a lot of departmental gatherings and potlucks and parties and so forth- any occasion that comes up. We have less of that, and we ought to have more. But I do think that people on the faculty are probably pretty active in other areas, whether it’s church or committees or community and other social activities that are outside the college.
ML: How much interrelation is there between the academic departments? How much should there be in a liberal arts setting?

AM: There's something unique about Hope College. That we're very interdisciplinary, and it's very comfortable for a professor to reach across disciplines. I don't know about most of them, I don't know much about other institutions. But I do know that Prince's John Lunn, who came to us as an economist from a State university. He said there were seventy economists in his departments. As I recall, I thought he said seventy. It was at this big, huge school. And he and one or two other people were sort of in this field, and that's who you knew. And, there were economists in his department he never knew- he never related to. And probably never related to the philosophy department or the political science department. And there's connections between philosophy and economics, and political science and economics, and so forth. I think at Hope College, we have professors who are collaborating all across disciplines. And I think they all think it's kind of wonderful that it's not a problem- that it's so easy to do. Nobody is saying, 'hey, you're out of bounds', or, 'I'm not interested in your field'. I think John Lunn, I think he's very much involved in the religion aspects of... the impact of religion on economics always brings up political science stuff, environmental stuff. And he works with all these professors and does papers. That's just an example of a lot of things that happen here. And I think Hope is unusual in that way- you know, some schools say, 'stay in your box'. But here it's pretty interdisciplinary- it's great.

ML: How has technology changed the way you teach or the classroom?
AM: This has all happened in the last five years, ten at the most. When I first arrived here. We had a computer, we had punch cards in the department. We didn’t have a computer- there was one in Lubbers Hall but nobody knew how to use it. There was work done, particularly in the science departments and so on. I think in the last ten years, but in the last five particularly, Hope has made such an opportunity- they’re sort of on the leading edge of computer technology. They have made the commitment, maybe long before other schools have, that this is a tool that should be an available ingredient to every class, every discipline if we want to. And I think we soon found out that whether we want to or not, it’s absolutely essential because that’s where the world is- technology is influencing so much. For our students in any area to leave here and not be able to handle the information-technology part of their discipline says they’re gonna be deficient. So it’s a good way of teaching. It’s new kind of skills that people have to get used to- professors as well as students. Students are counting on professors in being able to really deal with information technology. And now they grow up with it- there are students who just blow my mind with what they can do. I can’t do it, I can’t even comprehend it. And, a lot of professors have really worked hard to stay on the forefront so that they can share with other Prof.’s on campus, or certainly build it into their courses or redesign their courses and so on to add information-technology components.

ML: What led to your decision to retire?

AM: I was 73. My wife retired a year ago. She’s ten years younger than I am, and she retired at 62 from the school system- she was a school social worker and also a
personal resource development for special education teachers. And those were
good jobs- she liked it- she did them well, but she wanted to retire. She wasn’t
burned out but she wanted to make a change that was good. In many ways, I
could go on for a long time. Teaching has been a good thing for me. I think that
teaching at Hope College is worthwhile- I don’t know if I would feel that way if I
were at another institution. But Hope has been a great place for me to be. The
culture and the quality of relationships here- the leadership, I could identify with
all we’ve had. Under Van Wylen- I think under Bultman we’ll have strong
leadership. Jacobson was off in a little different direction but a good guy. And
Hope has a very strong constituency. There are people who love Hope and I can
understand why they do. I think there is a good balance here. I think at Hope the
faculty value each other- I think in the whole area of faculty, staff, administration,
so forth. I don’t know if we always agree- we can have differences but we fight
fairly. I think we got away from that a little bit in the last half a dozen years.

ML: Why’s that?

AM: I think the Chaplain issue. Without taking position on the Chapel, I think the
process of disagreement got out of hand and how it was handled. And therefore,
for the first time in my years here I’ve seen polarization. There are some tractable
positions and we weren’t always nice, we weren’t always acting like Christ’s
people. I think it was avoidable, but we went downhill. I think the process of
how you handle differences and dissension, I think that’s maybe a skill. I think
Jim Bultman is turning some things around. I was the chair of the department
when Jim Bultman was made Dean, so I had worked with him a few years- got to
know him pretty well. And it’s always on the table, you know just what he’s thinking and where you stand and what the issues are. He’s a person with some great abilities- open and honest. So I think we’ll get restored to that. I think it’s a leadership thing. This is not to say anything negative about Jacobson or Patterson. I think its process. Van Wylen was a pretty strong-willed guy and maybe, in some ways, he controlled a lot of things. But he had such a wonderful way of dealing with disagreement. The process was always fair- we did not tear each other apart. I’ve been in corporate life where I saw a lot of that. I think, I’ve said this before to people, I had Grand Valley, Calvin and Hope all in one week and I’ve been in a lot of organizations- I’ve visited a lot of companies and talked to a lot of people, corporations and so forth. And you can be in a place for twenty minutes or a half-hour and you can sort of tell how they play the game. There’s things that immediately betray whether things are on a good plane or whether it’s just a rat race, and whether they’re tearing each other apart. And when I came to Hope, I could tell immediately that they valued each other and fought fairly, they were respectful. I think that’s unusual- you see that right away. I think they’ve lost a little bit of that. And it’s partly leadership- Van Wylen always handled it just wonderfully. I think Bultman will- I think Jacobson may not have had some of those skills.

ML: What are the things that you are going to miss the most?

AM: I think the things I’ll miss the most are dealing with students. I always made time for students. If they happened to wander into the office, I gave them my time. I had office hours but that didn’t mean anything.
ML: We were talking about what you'll miss most.

AM: Well, I will miss the students more than anything else. I wasn't real wild about being on committees. I never felt I was a very good committee person and in more recent years I really wasn't on committees- nobody ever asked me anymore, which was okay with me- just fine. But that's not where I function, and probably because the corporate world is different from the academic world and I understood corporate committees and I never quite understood the academic mind. Some of these people grew up in academia and this is their whole life. They're all wonderful people- they think differently, that's all, and they make decisions differently. So, I figure that this has just been very good hands-on experience. I didn't really care for the administration part of being Chair- that was not really where I was. I was more... I could see my time being better spent. And I did think about how you spend your time. But, what I would miss the most would be contact with students. And there again, I think it's a sense of mission or... it's my ministry, I guess. I think it's useful to help students reach their potential. And I think you can do that through classroom- give them assignments and stretch 'em a little bit. But I think the other component of that is through conversation, or through interaction or getting to know them in different ways. I think as a population, most students- the age of college students, coming out of teens and into their college years- self-image is not so good. Most kids think they're ugly and unloved and everything else. That's sort of where the teens are, whether they know it or not- that's sort of what it is. One of the things that I tried
to do was to affirm kids. I would certainly let them know that either they were better than they thought they were- they knew more than they thought they did, that their contributions would be really appreciated by anybody they were working with. Some students have never heard that from anybody their whole life- nobody’s ever affirmed them, parents or teachers. But that’s an easy thing to do. It’s not deceitful- these kids are good. They have to hear that they’re good. I was the liaison for the Philadelphia Program for twenty-two years... twenty years at least. And my job was to interest students to look at internships, whether they went or not. It was my job to tell ‘em what had to know so they could make the best decision for themselves. And Hope College has always had more students going to Philadelphia than any other school. I would spend time and talk to kids about Philadelphia and about what it could do for them. And I would see a lot of kids go there and then say it was the best thing they ever did. I got into this Philadelphia thing, it was kind of interesting. As I said, I did it for more than twenty years. And the last few years, Joe MacDoniels has also been a liaison, he’s helped with that. But I did it by myself for a long time. When I came to Hope College, one of the first people that I got to know was Jim Piers over in sociology. Amongst things, we just happened to chat and got aquatinted. And he said that one of the things he did was he was a liaison for the Philadelphia program. And I didn’t know what that was about so he told me it was internships and things like that and I thought that would be kind of neat. I think in my first or second semester I was at Hope, a student came in my office and sat down- his name was Bob Winter, I still remember. He was in one of my classes, and he
came in my office and sat down and sat there for five minutes and didn’t say a word. Then he left. He was embarrassed and was sort of choking and swallowing and so on. I tried to make conversation- nothing. Next day he came back and he sort of said ‘I’ve got cotton in my mouth right now’, but he said, ‘you know, I want to talk to you. I’ve never spoken to a professor before. It’s very intimidating’. I says, ‘me, intimidating you?’ But anyway, the upshot was that he had no idea what he could do with his life. He was a business major, but says, ‘I don’t know what to do’. So how do you handle that, so I called Jim Piers. I said, ‘Jim, there’s somebody I think oughta talk to you about what Philadelphia can offer’. He said, ‘well I can talk to him now’. So I took Bob Winter over to the basement of Graves where Sociology was then. The upshot was that this kid went to Philadelphia. He came back in the spring and came bouncing in my office and gave me a glad hand and... it was like he was this tiger let out of a cage. He says, ‘this all happened in Philadelphia. I had an internship, and I decided to do something’. I said, ‘wow’. Anyway, Jim decided he couldn’t do that job anymore and I says, ‘yeah, I’d like to do that’. And then I volunteered. Well, you can’t just volunteer for the job, you have to go through a selection process. So they selected somebody else. I said, ‘okay’. I didn’t know any better- I was just new there. And this guy left after a year and went to another university, and so they went through the process again and I don’t know if they had anybody who volunteered except me. But anyway, I got the job. It wasn’t something you get paid for, you just do it. I believe that it was just a very important thing to do. It helped kids reach their potential in one way or another. So, I enjoyed all the
conversations I had with kids about Philadelphia. I could see so many results of
that- just sort of found a vocation or what they wanted to do, or they became
different kinds of social creatures. Another thing that I enjoy doing but haven’t
done it for a number of years- actually, Barry Richardson actually got this
program started. About a year after he started it he turned it over to me- I did this
for a number of years. We raised a little money, and we used the money to send
students overseas. We figured since I’m in the Economics and Business
Department, kids can go out and learn about business and so on and put them in
internships in Philadelphia and they’re working in business. But there’s also a
business component, that all the efforts in this world where people are serving
human need- you know, the medical doctor, the educator someplace in this world,
somebody in agriculture- helping people in developing nations to a better life
through education, medicine, agriculture, who knows what. And every one of
those operations has a business component. I mean, there’s money spent- that
money has to be accounted for. Record keeping, who knows what. And
everybody who’s out there doing stuff- at a seminary or agricultural education-
they don’t know anything about business. They don’t keep any records,
everything’s a mess. The least interesting thing in the world, for them, is to keep
records and be accountable as to how the money is spent. They’re conscious of it,
but they don’t know how to do it. So, we decided that what we ought to do is
create an internship program for students who can use their business abilities in
areas where human need is being served. So we sort of scoured the world to find
places where we could send students. I think we probably sent about thirty
students- one to India and to Afghanistan and Nepal and Bahrain and Liberia. One kid we had down there got caught in a civil war down in... I think it was Liberia. And he was working for the Ministry of Agriculture- I think he was working for the Minister of Agriculture as an intern, and during the coup, things happened fast. They picked up the officials at the Ministry of Agriculture and they shot them. And this kid took off into the bush, and we didn't know where he was for awhile, but things like that happened and were risky. Yeah we had students in a lot of different places and it changed their life. They never saw the world through the same eye again. It wasn't a matter that they would then go back and do that kind of service, but it ought to be nice if they did. But as Layman in their churches or as citizens, they would have sensitivity that they never would have had before- be more informed and so on. For what it's worth, you can just do so much and then the rest has to happen- you can't control the results. We stopped doing that. For one, it was a lot of work. But there was terrorism scares every now and then, particularly in the Middle East. And we could recruit kids and then the parents would say that our kid's not gonna go. And I could understand that. And we had a lot of that for awhile so we just put the program on hold and we just never picked it up again. And I always felt badly about that because we still have some money in the kitty. We would raise money from private individuals. We would pay the kids transportation from home and halfway around the world and back again. Make sure they got home and back- they had a ticket both ways, we paid for that. And they paid tuition to get credit for it and so on. And that was interesting- a few weeks ago I threw away all the
reports when I was cleaning out my office. And I felt kind of badly, and now I think some of that stuff should have gone to the Archives. I didn’t really understand that the Archives were interested in those sort of things, but some of them were worthy of being in the Archives.

ML: Was there a name for that program?

AM: We called it the Social Responsibility Internship Program. There’s still a little money in the kitty. It really ought to start up again. We had one student who went to Bahrain and worked with the medical people over there, and they had no records or anything. They did have a staff there- they had a cashier because there was money that came in, money that went out, and so forth. This kid was a little bit of an accountant and discovered that the man who was the cashier was embezzling a lot of money. We had another program, let’s see... I think for past sixteen or seventeen years I took students to London in May for a London May Term. And first I did it with Barry Richardson, who started the program. And when he left in ’83, he turned it over to Jim Heisler ‘cause Jim had done it with him one time before, I guess. Because I went to Japan in ’84 with the students, and then Jim Heisler and I did it together since that time.

ML: What is the focus of that May Term?

AM: Well it’s called ‘Management and the British Economy’. And what we attempt to do is give students some experiences, not only in business, through a lot of seminars and fieldtrips and visits. Folks would be around international banking where London is the center for international banking, really. And import-export, some manufacturing, retailing, and emphasis on government- a big emphasis on
the education process, trade unionism. We also require that since they’re in London which is... London and New York, you know, are the best in the world in terms of arts and culture. And we do a few concerts; ballet, opera, lots of museums on their own time. They just do it, whether they’re kicking and screaming, they just do it. And usually, they feel pretty good about it. So it’s cultural requirements and some other exercises into the realm of London so they don’t stay in the same streets all the time- move around. And that was always a really fine experience. I was involved in a group called the Baker’s Scholars. I was the faculty advisor for that group for twenty-two years. Barry Richardson was leading it the year I got here and then Barry said, ‘why don’t you do this’. I just did it, and I didn’t know what it was all about. Again, we just carved out our own way of doing it. That’s a program that... students can apply. They have to have a three-point average, and they have to have the intention of being a business major and maybe going to a business grad school or an econ grad school or something like that- and basically, have a life in business. The Baker Program was envisioned by a man named George F. Baker, who’s affliance from New York- turn of the century kind of guy, and very wealthy guy. He built the buildings for the Harvard School of Business. The George F. Baker Library at Harvard, the business library, is named after him. There’s a George F. Baker Library at Dartmouth- the guy had money. And the top ten percent of the Harvard graduating class are dubbed Baker Scholars. But somewhere along the way, in the late Thirties, they envisioned a program for undergraduate schools with the idea that the values that made America great, are really best preserved and
articulated in small liberal arts colleges. That was their vision, and by that time there was a Baker Trust that handled all this stuff. What they did, is they created a Baker Scholar Program for undergraduate schools, and they probably had a dozen of them- mostly out East, Ivy League schools- prestigious ones. And somewhere along the way, around 1970, we got a Baker Program. And through some of our influential alumni and financial circles, we were able to be considered. About 1978, the Baker Trust withdrew their funding. They would fund the program, and usually they’d fund it for fifteen to twenty years, and then stop the funding with the idea that the students who had been Baker Scholars were now in the working world and probably doing pretty well, and they ought to give back and continue the funding. Which has worked pretty well with other schools. Well, we only had it for about eight years and didn’t have any alumni, Baker Alumni, that were wealthy enough at that point to fund it. So we just continued to do it on our own. So I’ve done that for twenty-two years. Students apply, they’re selected by an outside group of people. Nobody at the college has a voice in the selection process. They have lengthy applications- a day of interviews with selectors- about half a dozen selectors interview them. And they vote and they choose about five every semester or so. There’s five juniors- five seniors for a total of ten. Basically, we try to create an environment where they can have experiences and grow in ways that are not part of the normal curriculum- so trips and speakers and distinguished people. We often have dinners at my house on Sundays where they could invite an executive and spouse to sit around the dinner table and have Sunday dinner. That worked well and I’ll miss that. I’ve seen
these Baker Scholars- you know, many of them have said the program has made a real difference in their lives. So many have done significant things already in their lives. That’s pretty good. They’ve asked me, the selectors and the college, has asked me to hang on with that program for a couple years while it’s in transition until they find someone else to do it. And I’m very happy to do that- I think it’s a neat program.

ML: What are you planning on doing now that you’re retired?

AM: It’s a good question. No great plans, you know, I don’t have any real hobbies. I would wish that I could get enough time to do some serious reading. But it’s hard to find time to do that. People say, ‘well, are you gonna start traveling?’, and I’ve done a lot of traveling and so, you know, I’m not gonna rush around. I think, yeah, we’ll stay in Holland- relationships, church, that’s what life is all about. That’s where our friend’s are- people we know, and I don’t intend to just move someplace and to start that all over. We have four children- three are on the West Coast, and we’ll probably be visiting out that way now and then. The other is in Michigan. We’ll probably have to downscale. We live in a big house that’s not only full of our stuff, but it’s full of… our four kids have a lot of possessions there- the attic, the basement. I have a sister in Freedom Village who moved from a house to Freedom Village and she’s somewhat incapacitated- has a walker and so on, can’t move a lot. But she also could never part with anything. Moving out of her house… I finally said, ‘let’s just take it all- put it in my house, we’ll sort it later’. It’s still there. Twenty some years ago my brother died and my parents died, and they both had households and there wasn’t time for me to sort things
out. All I could do was just grab it all, and take it all over, and put it in storage when we moved here, and it's all in the attic and basement. A lot of it doesn't have any meaning- it was just stuff that was around, but we had absolutely no time. I was commuting, I was back and forth and was busy. And then to have to handle a household full of stuff, because some of it had to be looked at, but there was no time so we just took it all and said we'd look at it later. It's still there. So we've got a big job there- it will take a few years. And then, we would probably want to move to something smaller. We like the big house, but it's a big house. I like living in a big house, but it's a big, big house. Now we need something a little smaller. I don't know, I don't have any real specific things- I just sort of let things develop. That's sort of what life has been for me- I don't back into everything. I did not live life intentionally in many respects, but it's been okay. Sometimes I respect people who are very intentional about everything they do, but I'm not that way. We'll be busy- my wife is very busy in retirement and that'll continue.