April 14, 1989

Dear Dr. Cherkauer:

It was a pleasure to be present at the reception honoring those who had been here on campus over twenty-five years. Luckily for me, I was able to talk with you and learn that you were to retire this year. I am glad you can find time to tape an interview before you leave. Here are some questions which can be used as a guide. Feel free to ignore, change, add to them:

1. Could you give a little information about your family background? Where did you grow up? Go to school, etc.?

2. What influenced you to go into teaching mathematics?

3. Did you have any professional experience before coming to the college? What brought you here?

4. What were your initial impressions of the campus? Students? Faculty? etc....

5. I think you have served under all the presidents. Could you give your impressions of each one? How did each differ in his approach to his position?

6. What positions did you have on campus as a professor?

7. In what particular activities were you most interested?

8. What changes did you observe through the years? Administration/ student body etc.

9. What contribution do you feel you have made while on campus?

10. Do you have any comments to make about the future of the college?

11. Do you have any plans for the future?

Thank you very much.
SMJ: Good afternoon, Mr. Cherkauer, professor of Mathematics, who has been here for quite some time. Today is May 10, 1989 right?

RC: Right.

SMJ: Okay, Dr. Cherkauer.

RC: Please, just call me Jim.

SMJ: Could you give me a little information about your family background; where did you grow up, go to school, etc.

Jim: I was born in Buffalo in 1922. When I was about 3 years old, my family moved to Philadelphia where we lived for only one year. After that, we moved to Staten Island, NY which is where I started school. From there, we moved to Kenmore, NY at about the time the Peace Bridge was being built.

SMJ: So that was about 1926 or 1927?

Jim: Actually, I guess it was completed by that time as we got to Kenmore in 1928. I attended school in Kenmore for three years after which we moved to Tonawanda, NY. I was in Tonawanda until I went into the army, got married and stayed in Tonawanda. I am a local boy basically.

SMJ: Did your dad have the kind of work that made him move around?

Jim: My father worked for the railway post office. First, he worked for the post office, then he was transferred from Buffalo to Philadelphia. Actually, he asked for a transfer to Philadelphia because he wanted to see what Philadelphia was like. It turned out that he did not like Philadelphia and my Mother did not like Philadelphia either. She was never healthy there. We transferred to Staten Island, and she was even less healthy there because it was too damp. Even though Buffalo is damp, Staten Island seemed to be worse. That is why we eventually moved back.

SMJ: Of course Staten Island would be surrounded by water and be damp.

Jim: She had pleurisy the entire time we were there. Actually, Staten Island is really in the river.
SMJ: Yes, Staten Island would be in the river as opposed to the Atlantic, but I imagine it was still very cold and damp.

Jim: It was a very beautiful island, and there were very few people living there.

SMJ: What college did you attend?

Jim: I attended Buffalo State College. It was called Buffalo State Teacher's College at that time.

SMJ: Are you an alumni of this college?

Jim: Yes, I am an alumni of Buffalo State.

SMJ: And the University?

Jim: I did some work at Syracuse University, but I completed my MS and my Ph.D. at UB when it was still a private institution.

SMJ: How many brothers and sisters in your family?

Jim: Living, I have a brother and a sister.

SMJ: Are your parents living?

Jim: No, my parents are both dead. This year, my dad would have been 100 years old, and my mother would have been 102.

SMJ: They are living, just living somewhere else!

Jim: My dad's sister is 96, and she is still alive.

SMJ: Is she living in the vicinity?

Jim: Yes, we have her in the Amherst Nursing Home. We had her other sister there too. She died last year, and was a little over 93.

SMJ: What influenced you to go into teaching mathematics?

Jim: Well, I liked mathematics from the very beginning. When I was in high school, I had one teacher who always encouraged me to do individual type work. I was always going to see her, share things with her. She would always help and make suggestions. The year before that, in school, I had a teacher would put me down, saying this or that could not be done and would never give me an explanation. But the latter was Ms. Bellinger who passed away about two years ago in North Tonawanda.

SMJ: Did Ms. Bellinger keep up with you.
Jim: Yes she did until my mother died.

SMJ: So, she did know what a success you had become through your mathematics?

Jim: I especially started to love mathematics when I had her for a teacher. At that time, I was going to be an engineer; that was my decision. I was going to matriculate at the University of Michigan in 1940. I had won a scholarship from the American Legion to attend there. I had also won an athletic scholarship to attend Michigan. Several months prior to enrollment, I received a letter from the University of Michigan saying that the Big Ten conference had canceled all freshmen scholarships in athletics. At that time my father said, "I simply cannot afford to send you there". I didn't know what I was going to do. Three or four of the fellows I knew who were ahead of me and who were going to Buffalo State stopped in to see me one Saturday. They dragged me out of bed and said, "You are going up to take the exam". (There were entrance exams then.) I didn't know where we were going, and when we got up to Buffalo State I said, "I don't want to be a teacher". I took the exam anyway and was accepted. I did not want to be a teacher. I was here for 2-1/2 years and then went into the Army-Air Force, served three years, came out and had the GI Bill of Rights. I could any where in the country. By then I was married, and I said to my wife, "You know I really do think now that I want to be a teacher because I had enjoyed everything that I had done there". So I came back and finished. Even though I wanted to be a math teacher, all we had was Elementary Ed., Industrial Arts, Home Economics, and the fine arts. Art teachers.

SMJ: Art education?

Jim: Yes, Art education; that is all we had.

SMJ: Dr. Czurles?

Jim: Right. He wasn't in charge of it then. It was Mr. Bradley. I told my wife I was going back to Buffalo State even though I could go on and start in engineering with two or three of the fellows that I knew here from Buffalo State who did do that. I continued my studies and was at UB where I was going to be a high school math teacher. Rueben Ebert, who was chairman of the math department, called me one day and said, "Paul Eberman is leaving in December". In those days the semester finished at the end of January.

SMJ: Now who called you?

Jim: Ruben Ebert.

SMJ: Ebert?
Jim: Right, he was chairman of the math department. It was very small. There were only 2 people and a part-time person from science. Eberman was leaving, and he said could I come over and take over his classes.

SMJ: How did he know you?

Jim: He knew me from here because I had been a very, very good student. I had taken every course they had to offer in mathematics and liked Ebert very much. So I came over here, and we arranged the schedule. The three people involved: Al Penn, Betty Penn's husband; Ruban Ebert and myself. I was still a full time student at UB and their semester went until the end of January, so we had to work on making a schedule. I was driving back and forth from UB to here at Buff State and I finished out the semester the third week in January of 1948. I began on my own, and I just loved it. I just knew that I wanted to be a math teacher.

SMJ: Well the next question was going to be, "Did you have any experience before you came here?" It is superfluous isn't it?

Jim: Yes, I had as many part-time jobs as any college student had. I have been a life guard, worked at the A & P, and what not. I then served three years in the Army-Air Force as a pilot.

SMJ: Do you mean you flew?

Jim: Yes. I almost stayed in the A-AF. If I had had more command of the Spanish language, I would have been a military attache pilot, because that is what the Air Force was looking for at the time pilots to fly around South America. I said that I would be willing to learn it, but the Air Force said they could not wait for that to happen.

SMJ: Did you see any action during World War II?

Jim: Yea, in the Pacific. From New Guinea all the way up to Japan.

SMJ: You were afraid weren't you?

Jim: I don't know if scared of frightened is the right word, but you were always apprehensive every time you took off on a mission.

SMJ: Because you never knew if you would be coming back!

Jim: That is right.

SMJ: But you did it.
Jim: Yes, 43 in a row; almost didn’t make it on one.

SMJ: And you saw the planes go down, didn’t you?

Jim: ON the one where I almost didn’t make it I was flying on the wing the lead aircraft, I was on the right wing and the left wing blew up. It was hit by another aircraft, completely disintegrated. Some 300 segments of bomb and fragments went though our aircraft and through the other airplane. They bailed out from the other airplane and were all rescued by submarines as we were over water. Two were not rescued, one of them being a Buffalo State student. Five men on my plane were considering a bail out but some of them were badly injured. I said any of the men on my plane who wanted to bail out over the submarine could. However I wanted to fly the plane back, no matter what.

SMJ: So you did?

Jim: Yes, we chopped out all the turrets, we had only two engines out of four.

SMJ: You must have gotten a medal for that, didn’t you?

Jim: Just an Air Medal.

SMJ: That is great... I hope you still have it.

Jim: I do.

SMJ: Do you have any bad memories as of the Vietnam War? You know about the Vietnam Veterans?

Jim: Not in that sense because I think we felt we had a real good cause. After all the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor and no one had any love for Hitler that I knew of! With Vietnam it was quite different. We went into a war which we all know now that we should not have gone into. No one understood it; we couldn’t tell if we were winning or losing.

SMJ: And everyone knew that there was not a feeling of patriotism behind that war as there was in World War II.

Jim: The public began not to support the veterans at all. It was not that way in WWII.

SMJ: No.

Jim: I came back late enough that we didn’t have any more parades; but when many of them came back, there were parades and they were treated just like heroes.
SMJ: Were you married before you went into the war.

Jim: Yes, I was married before I went over seas. I married while I was still in pilot training, a girl from Buffalo State.

SMJ: Goodness!!! I should have known all of this I guess before I put the question down. Now the fourth question is silly. In retrospect what are your initial impressions of the campus. Of course you can tell me as a student; then of course as a professor coming back. What were your impressions?

Jim: First I saw Buffalo State being built, because my uncle lived across the street from the Normal School which Grover Cleveland High School now. We lived in Tonawanda and we would drive down Elmwood Avenue. The trolley cars ran in front of the college in those times.

SMJ: The trollies?

Jim: Right! We watched the buildings going up.

SMJ: And you had no idea at the time you would be a part...

Jim: I had no idea whatsoever, no. Of course, it was the Spring of 1940 when I took the exam and there were only five buildings on the campus.

SMJ: OK, now may I ask this because I don't think anyone has given me a clear answer: Was there a farm behind these five buildings? I know that the tower was there.

Jim: No, the tower wasn't even there. There had been a farm, but I never saw it.

SMJ: Alright, it was the Psych farm. The psychiatric farm.

Jim: Although they did say that during WWII, when I wasn't here, that it was used as a farm again; but I do not know that for a fact. You could see where there had been a farm. Apparently all this land around here was filled for the Pan American Exposition of 1901.

SMJ: Oh, this was a land fill?

Jim: Yes, this was all swamp land from what every body tells me. I can not verify that.

SMJ: But the material and the dirt and the digging up for the Pan American that was put here?
Jim: That and a lot other was brought in. My understanding is that Elmwood Avenue came over to where the Historical Building is. There is a building near the Historical Building if you look at it, has Elmwood Avenue on it. 1400 Elmwood Avenue I think it says. Someone was telling me about it, (I can't recall who it was) saying that they had done some research on it and Elmwood did come over that way because it was extended for the Exposition.

SMJ: That is right, maybe it was extended to go around the water, or to the entrance if the Exposition.

Jim: Probably the entrance was somewhere on Elmwood. They built Delaware Lake for the Exposition.

SMJ: That is right.

Jim: The only two buildings left from the Exposition of 1901 are the Historical Building and the old part of the Albright Knox.

SMJ: So, you saw it going up from scratch! Weren't you impressed?

Jim: Remember, I was a little kid ridding in the back seat of a car. When we came home most of the time I would be asleep, it didn't mean much to me, until much later when I came here and realized that as a child I did indeed see these buildings going up. My 1st. wife went to the Campus School which was down at the Normal School and then they moved here in 1930. She said they walked from the Normal School each carrying a bundle of books, to Rockwell Hall where they took them up to the third floor where the library was then. Then they went on to Bacon Hall, then the Campus School. Ketchem was the Home Economics, Science and Industrial Arts building. Art Education was basically in the Albright Building which we bought later on, it was a private entity that ran it and taught the classes. The education part of it was taught at Buffalo State in the basement of Rockwell Hall.

SMJ: And most of the other classes, the general classes were held in Rockwell Hall... This side of the administration building.

JIM: Rockwell Hall, two classrooms in the gym and Ketchum Hall, what is now Ketchum. All of the classes were taught there until WWII. During WWII they built four wooded annexes next to what is Ketchum Hall today. Rockwell Road wasn't so wide, and it was over closer to the fence to the institution next door. They had the four buildings in there, then behind those, they built a circular wood dormitory called Pioneer Hall.

SJM: Circular?
Jim: Yes, it was a circle, about where Moot Hall is. It burned down.

SJM: So it did burn down, I had heard that it did.

Jim: The other building stood until they were bulldozed down.

SJM: In Texas we used to call "our additions" the "shacks". We wouldn't call them that up here no matter how good looking they were.

Jim: Up here we call them Annex: Annex 1, Annex 2, etc. They were wood buildings, very hot in the summer and colder than heck in the winter.

SJM: But that was during the war.

Jim: We used them for a long time after the war, at least 15 years I think.

SJM: Is that right?

Jim: Yes, it must have been that long I think before they tore them down.

SJM: Well, they were still usable.

Jim: When I came to school the total enrollment was under 900. Then shortly after WWII the enrollment began to go up and reached 2,000, then up to 2,200, and they just couldn't get any more students in so they had to start building.

SJM: What did you think of the faculty?

Jim: Having been a student here on and off for 5 years I did know most of the faculty. And there had only been a few new faculty. There were not as many doctorates as we have today; but there were some very dedicated teachers. They were extremely dedicated and did fabulous job of teaching. Probably the best teacher I had all the years I had here when I came back was Frasier Drew. I had him for English, and I hated poetry, absolutely hated it. When I finished his class, I received an A double plus, and I loved poetry, and I have read poetry ever since.

SJM: Is that right?

Jim: He is the first teacher who didn't make me stand up in front of the class and explain what poetry meant, and then say "No, that isn't what it meant". He would accept what you thought the poem meant and would encourage you to look for other things.
SJM: Isn’t that wonderful? That is a tremendous compliment to Dr. Drew. Of course he is a distinguished professor.

Jim: I think I had him in 1946.

SJM: He was young man at that time.

Jim: It was only his first or second year at Buffalo State.

SJM: Does any other teacher stand out?

Jim: Oh I remember quite a few of them. Of course I said I liked Ruben Ebert very much. He was a very good teacher.

SJM: That’s Ebert?

Jim: yes, E-b-e-r-t. A little sarcastic, I think I learned some of my sarcasms from him. And there was a Johnson he was an excellent teacher. I had Raymond Fretz who, I thought, was an excellent teacher. Paul Sloan in Education was excellent. And a woman from Geography.

SJM: Kathryne Whittimore?

Jim: No, but I did have Dr. Whittimore, who treated you like you were in elementary school, and I never appreciated that. Melvina Svec.

SJM: Milvina S-v-e-c?

Jim: She went here to Oswego because the would not promote her here, because she did not have a PhD. Oswego said they would give her a full professorship if she came. She was an outstanding teacher. I had Geography of Europe from her.

SJM: They taught Geography in those days.

Jim: Right. She was a nit-picker. If you put a city on the map it had to be pin pointed very very accurately.

SJM: I guess you would have to know a great deal about that city when you put it on the map.

Jim: Well, we all had to make a crow quill pen drawing of Europe. Every time we learned something it had to go on that map. The map was only a little larger then 8 1/2 x 11. That is why we had to use the crow quill pen. It was very, very fine and I still have that map at home. I think it is stuck in the Geography book that we used.
SJM: That seems to be sort of an elementary or high school technique, but it didn’t make you feel that way did it.

Jim: It was a small class and we sat at a table about the size of the one over there with nine of us in the class. It was almost a seminar, really is what it was. She held you to a lot of work. No excuses. You did what she assigned or else you were in trouble.

SJM: Did you have to take a foreign language when here?

Jim: I took no languages at Buffalo State. I took two languages through high school, Latin and French. I don’t know if I could handle either of them today.

SJM: What about your Science here? Did you have any sciences?

Jim: Yes, one year of biology, and a year of physics at Buffalo State.

SJM: Do you recall your teachers?

Jim: Oh yes, the biology was with Raymond Fretz, and the physics was with a fill-in person, Harold Resser. His wife Mildred was in the History Department. I am not exactly sure, but I think he was a chemist. He worked on the Manhattan Project during WWII. He was down here at Lewiston in the munitions dumps where they still have a lot of radio active materials stored. When the war ended they wanted to transfer him somewhere, but his wife was still here so he didn’t quit the job and was looking around. President Rockwell knew he was a very intelligent person and said we need someone to teach Physics. We don’t have anyone on the staff who can teach it, so Harold Resser came and taught Physics. Almost everyone of us taking Physics were taking all of the math courses. In fact, all of us in those courses went on into Mathematics of in Engineering.

SJM: You must have been an extremely good class, and I’m sure that was enjoyable for the professor who taught it.

Jim: Well, I got to know Harold afterwards when I became a Faculty member. He used to say to me "You don’t know how close you had me backed to the wall in that course," not just me as an individual but the entire class. Because he said "you know I was just keeping ahead of you" because, I think chemistry was his field. But he was a darn good teacher, and he never had an education course in his life.
SJM: For goodness sake! He was just a natural. You didn’t know that he was just one day ahead. It sounds like the nuns and some of their teaching too from a long time ago.

Jim: Well I think we are all in that situation at times.

SJM: Yea, I think so. Now you have served under all of the Presidents of this institution. Can you recall all of them and the impressions that each one made on you?

Jim: Oh yes, I think so.

SJM: The older the college becomes, the more the people are interested in the past, naturally. So anything you could say about Dr. Rockwell...

Jim: Harry Rockwell was the first one. Everyone called him Dr. but, he didn’t have a PhD.

SJM: He had an honorary one.

Jim: He had an honorary one. After I got my degree, he was already retired and he wrote me a letter congratulating me, saying how jealous he was because he always wanted to have his own earned PhD but he never did. I don’t think he needed one, because he was a very intelligent man, and up on every thing.

SJM: Wasn’t he a wonderful speaker?

Jim: Oh, just excellent as a speaker. Rockwell auditorium held every one on the campus. We had convocation at 11 am on a Tuesday and 11 am on Friday every week, required attendance.

SJM: Well, did anyone really ever want to be absent? I understand he was so good...

Jim: We had a lot of things. The Philharmonic would come, he would talk once a month; oh what did he call that? "Rockwell Speaks About the World" or something like that title. On current events, no one knew more than he did, he was right up there, and he was a grand speaker. My first real experience with Rockwell was when I was a student. We were having a pep rally in the auditorium. I was on the swimming team and was called up as a freshman to say something. I was very nervous as I had never spoken into a microphone in my life but I said something or other. When I came down the steps Dr. Rockwell said "I will see you in my office as soon as this is over young man." It was known that is Dr. Rockwell ever addressed you as "young man" or "young lady" that meant you were in trouble. He did that to one other fellow who happened to be my junior counselor so I asked Irv "What did we do?" He said "Well we probably made a mistake in grammar." I didn’t
know what it was, so we went to his office. He kept us sitting
there cooling our heels for a long time, then he called me in and
said "I think we should dismiss you from the college". Now that
was quite a shock and I asked why. He said, "Because you know you
made a mistake in grammar". I told him that I had been so nervous
that I didn’t realize what mistake I had made. Dr. Rockwell said
"If you are going to be a teacher than you shouldn’t be so
nervous". "What foreign language do your people speak at home?"
Dr. Rockwell asked. I answered, "They don’t; they speak English".
"English people don’t make mistakes in grammar." Well about two
weeks later we had a speaker from England who spoke on the bombing
of London, and she made a mistake in grammar in every sentence.
Anyway, Dr. Rockwell picked up the phone and called Mina Goossen
who was the head of speech. He had asked if I was taking a speech
class, and I answered yes. When he got Ms. Goossen on the line, he
told her that she should fail me in the speech course. I continued
in the course and did my vest. At the end of the course, Ms.
Goossen called me aside and told me I got an A in it..."but I can’t
give you an A so I will have to give you a C." I did honestly
receive an A in the course but Ms.Goossen showed an C for a final
grade because that is what Dr. Rockwell told her to do! So when he
hired me a few years later, I said "Dr. rockwell, I didn’t think
you would ever hire me because there was a time when you said I
should be kicked out of college. He answered: "We all make
mistakes". Those are my first impressions of Dr. Rockwell. Now
Dr. Rockwell lived in an era in which his idea of a college was
would not jive with anything that we know of today. He was an
autocrat, complete and total. Everything in this college he ran,
every order before it was sent out, everything. If a student was
seen on the grass, he would run out of his office, and tell the
student get off the grass, or I will dismiss you from the college.
And he was serious. He did dismiss some people. When the college
grew to the point where no one man could handle it alone and
authority would have to be delegated, it was time for him to
retire. It was a good thing because I think it would have broken
him.

SJM: That would have broken him?

Jim: In a sense I think he did break just before he left.
The next one to come in was Harvey Rice. I didn’t know if you ever
met Harvey Rice? He is living in Florida today, I believe. He was
the first of our tall presidents. He was about 6ft 3in.

SJM: Oh, was he that tall? I didn’t realize he was so tall.

Jim: He was several inches taller than I am. He was the
farmer type, but had a handsome smile, beautiful blonde hair and
the most buck teeth you had ever seen in your life.

SJM: Oh. really?
Jim: He wasn't here but a one year and had them pulled out and got false teeth. His teeth were so bad they jutted out almost horizontally.

SJM: Really?

Jim: Really, and I think he was very conscious of that. He was the first President that came along that was more interested in his image than he was of the image of the college. Rockwell, no matter what he did, he did it because it was for the good of the college. If what he did made Rockwell look better, OK, if it didn't make Rockwell look better, than OK too; he still did it. You could see that Harvey Rice would weigh what he was doing. He got into an argument with the faculty at a meeting one time. We had faculty meetings in the music room then to Union. We were probably about 350 faculty at that time. A faculty senator was giving a report and Dr. Rice stood up and said "that is not true, that is not true". The senator said, "well I was there, and I didn't see you there, Dr. Rice". "Well, I hear that it wasn't true". Than Dr. Rice turned to the faculty and said "I want a vote of confidence as to who is telling the truth here, me or Carlton." And Dr. Rice was voted down. He only received two votes out of 350. The rest said they believed the senator. At that point he changed. From then on, he listened to the faculty for the first time before he made any rash decisions. He has always made decisions: some good and some bad, but without any consultation. From that point on, he worked with the faculty much more. He was much more democratic from that point on. He wasn't autocratic like Rockwell was. He delegated authority; he saw the President's job as it should be.

SMJ: He was quite different from Rockwell. I suppose the people who had been under Rockwell had been quite stunned by it.

Jim: Just before Rockwell left, about in his last two years things had gotten so bad that Harold Peterson, one or two others and me had organized what we called the Branch Association. We would tell Dr. Rockwell that some things he wasn't going to run without consultation of the faculty which he didn't particularly like. The faculty stuck together very, very much. They stuck together also under Harvey Rice, all the way through. We formally became the Faculty Council. We had a Faculty Council and Administrative Council and a third one which I can't remember.

SMJ: It wouldn't be the Faculty-Student Council would it?

Jim: No, students didn't come into anything until about 1969, I guess. The first time faculty really recognized the students is when the student riots began in 1969 or 1970.
SMJ: Now, as you are were saying, it was the late 60's before the students were being recognized as a part of the institution.

Jim: Of course, by then, Fretwell was President.

SMJ: Did you know that Dr. Fretwell was the first president to be criticized in the RECORD? I indexed the RECORD beginning with the year 1950. Administration and faculty were not criticized just out of respect prior to that. When Fretwell was here there was a cartoonist who made fun of Fretwell through his cartoons. There was a great deal of criticism going on in the 60s and 70s and Fretwell got the information taken from the RECORD.

Jim: I didn't realize that because I thought all of the Presidents had been criticized at some time or another.

SMJ: Well they may have been criticized, but it was not printed.

Jim: Well I am sure they would not have printed anything to criticize Dr. Rockwell. I'm just sure of it.

SMJ: If you didn't get criticized then there must have been something wrong with you.

Jim: Under Harvey Rice, we established the first general education courses on the campus. That was something he forced on the faculty. There was a very strong reluctance from the faculty. There was a very strong reluctance from the faculty on that.

SMJ: It didn't really work did it?

Jim: It did and it didn't. To get it, he closed the college for three days and we had a three day conference in which we wrote the entire program. Thirty-two hours, it was supposed to be required of every student. The very next day, they made exceptions that Industrial Arts doesn't have to take this or that, and some others didn't have to take this or that. Most courses were two hour courses, so there were a lot of course involved. He wouldn't change that until he left. Now Harvey Rice left in somewhat of a snip, because they were looking for a new Chancellor. Actually they called it President of the University then, not Chancellor. He applied and was turned down, so he left. He made it clear that if they didn't want him as Chancellor he didn't want to stay at the University as President. He went up to McCallister in Minnesota and became President there. He retired from there, I believe. He stayed on a long time though.

SMJ: Yes. It was a very small institution.
Jim: Harvey came here from Oswego where he had been President.

SMJ: Oh, had he been President of Oswego?

Jim: I believe he was President for about two years, then he came here. Paul Bulger became the next President. That was another man who was about six foot-two or three, somewhere in there. Quite a different person than Harvey Rice. Bulger was more of a down to earth individual... like your Father - Reminded me of a farmer in a way. He worked very, very, close here with the faculty. I can remember sitting in his office when the Branch Association was still going strong and President jointed it. Richard Brown was the President of the Association, and I was the Treasurer. We were discussing something and Paul Bulger said "I don't want that". Brown looked at me because he didn't know quite what to do, then I looked at Bulger and said "You are in the Branch Association executive meeting right now. You have one vote, I have one vote, he has one vote, each person sitting here has one vote." He kids me to this day about that incident when he sees me. He turned a little red and said I was right on that and he didn't get what he wanted. I don't recall what it was specifically. He was the sort of person you could say that to. He took it well. In no way did he try to get back at you for anything like that. I don't think we realized what a democratic person Paul Bulger was. Because he was that way the Branch association began to fall apart. You see the Branch was the strongest when you had a President who always resisted you and would do things that the faculty thought it didn't want then it would stick together. Slowly it fell apart, Paul Bulger at a meeting said "I think we should eliminate certain things from our by-laws". Harold Peterson whom was more instrumental in doing the by-laws than anyone else on the campus stood up and argued against what Paul was suggesting but the faculty voted for Paul. From that point on the faculty got weaker and weaker. It was because they trusted Paul Bulger so much that they didn't worry about having a strong faculty. Paul stayed just so many years and then he went to Albany. First he went to the state education department, then he went on to Albany University Center as a faculty member, a professor but I have forgotten in what area, politics or something, political science. Our next president was E.K. Fretwell. He was the tallest of our presidents at 6 ft 5 inches.

SJM: Was he taller than Johnstone?

Jim: Yes, I think he was a little taller the Johnstone. I couldn't swear to it but I think he was.

SJM: He was thinner.
Jim: He was thinner, so he may have looked taller. Now Paul Bulger wasn't stout. Paul Bulger had been a basketball player and he had a good build, so you probably didn't notice his height as much. Fretwell was very, very slim, so you noticed how thin he was.

SJM: He always looked so young!

Jim: Yes.

SJM: He has such a youthful appearance and he still does.

Jim: Fretwell was... well, I would have to rate him below all of the other Presidents.

SJM: You were very young when you had Rockwell as a student and as a teacher, then you were maturing as the presidents came. You were really in your mature years when Fretwell came along. You were able to give a real good balanced view. So you would evaluate him as the least...

Jim: It is hard to put Rockwell in the same category as he, because he was a different kind of person. It was a different kind of college.

SJM: Yes, and it was a different era.

Jim: So, you have to take Rockwell out of it. He was a total autocrat, and today that would be rated very low. Harvey Rice and Paul Bulger I would rank higher. I would rank Harvey Rice as the highest, as the presidents that we had and Paul Bulger very close and Fretwell somewhat behind. There was a significant difference and you could see it. Fretwell was a much harder person to work with; he was more difficult to convince that he was wrong on something or taking a bad stance on something. You could not always rely on him to do what he said he was going to do. He would say something, and what grew out of it was not what he said, either because he lost track or just said it for the sake of saying it. He was here during the riots.

SJM: I was going to say that we were harsh on him. He was here at the worst time that anyone could have.

Jim: But he was more interested in his image than anything else there was. When the riots went on he closed the college. He went on channel 2, 4 and 7 closing the college they video taped him, and we saw it on the 6 PM news. After that we couldn't find him for days. He hid. When the University on Albany said colleges could not close we all received memos (I still have mine in a folder somewhere) from him in which said he never closed the college. It happened just before exam time, and he canceled all
of the exams. On official records he denied all of that, which was very disturbing. Why didn’t he just say that he made a mistake? "I closed the college because I thought I had the authority to do so." He closed it, we know that!

SJM: I was here then, and I recall that it was closed at that time.

Jim: Then you know that he denied all of this. There have been a number of things done on this campus that have been officially denied that really bother me. It all started around that time. His hiding from the students at that time was his downfall I believe. The students had no trust for him after that.

SJM: This is my impression of the college I came in 1969, but I got the impression from about 1965 to 1966 a group of bureaucracy set in because the deanships were established and that is where your organizational charts...puff!

Jim: You are absolutely right. At that time I was the university senator from Buffalo State I was so for six years. I did a little research on the number of administrators to faculty in every unit of SUNY and we were almost double the next highest unit, in administrators to faculty. Because of all of these organizations that we have gone through and all of these administrative positions that we have made and all of these layers it was at this time that the whole business came into being that I used to take my grades to the Registrar. Now I must take my grades to the Chairman who must sort them, and takes them to the Dean who sorts them and then they used to go to the Vice President (he was asked out of that). Then they go to the Registrar and this sort of thing. Then I got into hot water one time because on December 26 the last day to turn in grades, I had had all my exams on the 23rd so I came down here at 9 in the morning and everything was closed tighter then a drum. My office was closed; the department office was closed; the dean’s office was closed. So I turned my grades into the Registrar’s office as there was a girl working in there. She said she was not supposed to take these but needed them, so she took them. Two weeks later, I got a letter from E. K. Fretwell telling me that I had violated college policy, that I should be reprimanded; that and the other thing. No rhyme or reason - didn’t call me or ask me anything. That was the sort of thing he did. One time, when I got a students’s name on the roster that never appeared before, I called the registrar. They said, "you have to give him a grade." I called E. K. and I said if you are will send me a roster of every student on this campus not in my classes I will give them all the same grade. But I am not going to give one student a grade, and I didn’t. Do you know they fixed that? They just refused to give all of my students their grades until I gave that student a grade.
SMJ: And did you know this one student?

Jim: Never saw the student; never heard of the student!

SMJ: Where did he come from?

Jim: I can't answer that. What goes on in the Registrars office...! Since we have the new Registrar, Bausili, I haven't seen any of this going on. I did have a male student change his last name, and he didn't tell me. This new name appeared on the roster, and one name disappeared...So I thought we are back to the old things that used to happen. We get this final roster which did not jive with the previous roster. But since Bausili has been registrar I have never had any problems.

SMJ: What do you do, give them a C or give them an A or what?

Jim: I gave him an E.

SMJ: You gave him an A.

Jim: No an E. I thought I would hear quicker from the student by giving him an E, but I never heard from the student, never heard! To this day, I do not understand what happened. They try to give you all kinds of explanations. They said that I must have signed a slip that gave the student permission to register late. I said I never signed such a slip. Well, maybe your chairman did it. my chairman does not have the authority to put someone in my class. This is a little off track, but this is just administrative layering of Red Tape, begun at that time.

SMJ: Then Dr. Johnstone just continued it.

Jim: He continued it and he enjoyed it. I think that if he could have put more layers of red tape in there, he would have. I found him the hardest of all the Presidents to ah... Now I don't know how to word it. You could talk to him anytime, you could write him a memo and he always send a "thank you" for it. I don't know of he read it. Most of the time I don't think he ever did anything. Fretwell never even responded, but if you made suggestions for changes that were needed you could see them coming about. Under Johnstone, this was a dead end. Last night at the retirement party, I was being teased about the fact that Cherknauer was no longer a trouble maker. That he and I must have mellowed. Then I replied that I hadn't mellowed, I just realized it was a waste of time to send anything to Johnstone to warn him of a situation that may be coming up. Johnstone didn't care if the faculty discussed anything, I couldn't get him to publish anything in the Staff Bulletin concerning all of the actions that he took. According to our by-laws they are supposed to be in there, with an
eight or ten day period to which the faculty can respond, before
the action becomes a policy. Johnstone said he will make it policy
anyway so why bother to print it? When he first came here he took
me out to dinner one night and we were three hours discussing
things at length. We went out a second time to discuss things
again because he was brand new and wanted to hear what was going
on. People on campus had told him that Cherkauer kept track of
what went on here at the college. I would say to him "The day will
come in the senate when you are not going to win your point of
view". He answered: "That day will never come because before we
vote everyone will agree with me." And basically that is what
really happened. He would not let a vote come up until he did have
everyone agreeing with him, I don’t know how he got everyone to
agree, but many strange things happened.

SMJ: But he got censored.

Jim: Several times, yes several times. Actually Fretwell
was censored and Bulger got censored once if I recall right.
Harvey Rice got the vote of no confidence which he asked for, and
everyone was wondering if he would resign at that time, but he
didn’t. He changed his technique then.

SMJ: Well I think they all have to have their bad days,
because that is part of the game.

Jim: But it seems to me right now with Dick Wiesen being
acting President that they are all being image makers. They are
most interested in their image then they are in Buffalo State
College. They don’t care much about who the students are, or what
the students are doing.

SMJ: Do you think they will have confidence in this new
president coming in?

Jim: Dick Wiesen said I should have confidence; however, I
haven’t met him. He will be here on Friday.

SMJ: I know it. Dr. Newman said he is... But you can’t
tell. How can you tell?

Jim: I have been misled. I have hired people when I was
chairman what I had one impression of. But after they hired I
then had and entirely different impression of them.

SMJ: Absolutely!! It is hard to determine by a first
impression.

Jim: But apparently his track record is one of being a human
being. And that is important.
SMJ: We get the impression that he would be the sort of guy who would like to come in and sit right down and have a cup of coffee with you.

Jim: Well Paul Bulger would have done something like that.

SMJ: Paul Bulger was the kind of man who would come in and say "How is your Mother?"

Jim: Yes, he would remember if your Mother had been sick and acknowledge it.

SMJ: He was a very compassionate man.

Jim: He still is, I don't know if you know Sister that he is partially blind. I saw him this summer. It was very distressing to see that he was nearly blind. I have a neighbor who had the same condition, can barely see anything right in front of him, only some vision on the side.

SMJ: His mind is still very, very sharp. He was a good administrator and a very loving person. Well, served in a lot of positions here on campus haven't you? You were in the Branch you say? You were interested in Faculty Activities.

Jim: Yes, I was involved in six or seven together. I served in teaching Math and spent three or four years as professor for individual studies. That grew out of the fact that we were trying to go to Liberal Arts. We had a committee trying to generate a Liberal Arts program with majors in the academic areas for two years. It got nowhere, absolutely nowhere. The vice president of Academic Affair was Bob McVittie who went on to become president of Geneseo. Bob called me into his office one night and said that he would like me to take over the Chairmanship of that committee. I said "Well not unless you dismiss it. It would have to be an all new committee". He did that and in less than two years we banged out a Liberal Arts program. Two members walked out of our committee because it got hot and heavy, and they couldn't take the criticism. We had to get the job done; two years had been wasted. Nothing they had accomplished for two years could be utilized by us. So we started from scratch, and worked hard on that while we taught full loads. We were here late many evenings, but we got the program in we got it to Albany where it was approved. As a reward, Houston Robinson became acting President. He gave each of us a summer position in which we had a seminar by ourselves. We also had a lump of money to bring in guest speakers to work with us on liberal arts. At the time the entire concept of individualizing study was coming into the University, so a group of us thought to invite some of those people in. We had people from Worcester College, Michigan State, Honors College and places like that with our money. We sat down with them for the entire summer. We got a
little more than what you would get paid for teaching a course. When that was all over, Houston called me into his office and said that Walter Greenwood, who is now the acting director of the Arts and Sciences as we call it, had suggested to me that you be given the job of drawing up the individualized studies. The first year the State University paid my salary, the college didn't have to do so. They paid it in thirteen units. We formed a group and met several times. We even had an Honors Convocation in Syracuse that I chaired. We brought guest speakers in from all over, to learn about this. So in that four years with the help of a committee, I developed the Challenge of Courses, Individual Study, Contract and Project. We got them all defined carefully through the Faculty Senate. I'm not sure if we had a Faculty Senate yet or not.

SMJ: Wouldn't that have been about 1970?

Jim: I don't think that the Faculty Senate came in until 1972. I think it went through the Faculty Council. We went ahead because everything was approved. We got it going, and I administered it. I don't like administrative work.

SMJ: You don't?

Jim: No, and I went to Houston and said "The job no longer needs a faculty member to run it. A good secretary could run it now, and I would like to go back to teaching." So, I went back to teaching, and they appointed someone else in my place. Then the University put the pressure on to close it and they stopped it. It has been run out of the Academic Office now.

SMJ: But you still have Individual....

Jim: We still have most of those things around. They have changed; they have been modified; but, yes, we do still have them around.

SMJ: No you recommend from classes individual guidance on subjects?

Jim: For example, if you come into this college, and you are told you must take course X, you look at course X and say I think I know that. If it is a required course you simply go and say that you are going to challenge it. We debated if there should be a fee or not. Some of the colleges have a fee, but we didn't put a fee on it. The student takes an exam in this area (course X), and the faculty member grades it. If the faculty member grades it above a certain point it is very much like your advanced placement and the student is given credit for the course. Now if it is not a required course, they can not challenge it. My answer to that has always been: "Hey, you don't have to take that course so take a different on if you want it challenged". But is they are making
you take a course that you don’t think you need, or you think you can prepare on your own, then get ready for it and take the exam. I don’t think you can prepare on your own, then get ready for it and take the exam. I don’t know how successful it is now, but when I was running it and got it set up, I was probably running through my office 180 a semester, of students that were challenging courses. And most of them were succeeding.

SMJ: Do you recall if there was a predominance of men or women, or was it equal?

JIM: Probably more women, but I think the predominance was EOP. EOP was just getting off the ground through SEEK, and they were trying to make all of their students take all of the Mickey Mouse courses. Many of the students were rebelling. They would say "I am above that standard". So that is why I don’t think it is a popular today because that is no longer true.

SMJ: But then if you want to take a course on your own though (independent study) then you can get credit for that?

JIM: Yes, it can be done.

SMJ: Do you have to write your own or do you need to work with a professor?

JIM: You have to work with a professor, you have to propose your own course. It could not duplicate an existing course. A project could supplement an existing course. An independent study had to be something that was beyond what was taught. For example, a student who had taken all of the biologies, and wanted to do something in genetics beyond what was being offered here, could go to a genetics professor and propose something. He would come into my office then, and I would review it, go over and talk to the faculty member and the student and you would say "go ahead". Then we would argue over how many credit hours it should be!! It could be any where from one to four. Yes, most of them were three credit hours, that’s what students wanted to fir into the program. That seemed to be very successful.

SMJ: Do they still do it?

JIM: I don’t think they do as much as they used to. But you see there is no one encouraging them. I used to write an article in the RECORD nearly every week on Independent Study and what was happening and the things that were available. As long as they could give me space in the RECORD I would write an article. Writing the articulus would get students in. No one is doing that now.

SMJ: What about the Projects?
JIM: Industrial Arts made the greatest use of that. Also Art Education and the Fine Arts did quite a bit of that also. The student would be doing something in class, finish the class and still have a lot more that could be done with that and he would continue on with it as a "project" and go into the next semester working on it. Projects and Independent studies don't have to fit the framework of the semester. They can run over into other semesters.

SMJ: The "Projects" and the "Independent Studies" are equal, aren't they?

JIM: When you say equal...

SMJ: As far as credits are concerned?

JIM: Credit again is proposed; in most cases, it is three hours. I went down to Fredonia to help them set up a similar type program and gave them a lot of ideas, along with copies of everything that we did. No I have been very, very active up until recent years in the politics of the college. I have been on the Faculty Council, Administrative Council as a faculty representative twice, and the Student Council. I was appointed once as a non-elected member, I was both Vice President and President of the UUP, and of the AAUP when we had that. At one time we had the biggest chapter in the United States!! That was when Katherine was here. I was the first chairman of our state-wide committees, serving on a group where we would go to various community colleges and evaluate them. I did that sort of thing. I kept very active all of the time in the politics of the college, and I chaired the Curriculum Committee of the College Senate on two occasions. I chaired the committee for two years that literally got the Liberal Arts program going. So I did stay very active. I did not do research. I was one of those people who just loved to teach, I dedicated myself to teaching and to the other things in the college. This was acceptable in those days. I'm not sure it would be acceptable today.

SMJ: No, but it is a shame though because we need good teachers as well as good writers who could research.

JIM: I never really liked research, that was part of it.

SMJ: I suppose that was one of the reasons at first that you felt that you didn't want to go into teaching. Of course you didn't know then.

JIM: Of course my experience in writing has not been favorable. I have written many articles; none of them have been accepted, always been rejected. After they are rejected once or twice, I stopped. I wrote a book with Cice Rodney. I knew when we
were writing it, that it wasn’t going to be accepted because mathematics changes too rapidly and it would be out-of-date by the time it was finished. It was a nice book, but it was out-of-date. We should have come out with it four or five years earlier, and we would have sold a lot of copies. It covered beautifully the sort of things that freshmen needed.

SMJ: Well that is all right. You didn’t do too badly.

JIM: Nothing ever got published. The only things I have had published are articles in computer science which is now my field. Just four minor articles.

SMJ: Well of course I always think of math as being different from History or English or Political Science because there are so many other things to write about in those other fields.

JIM: Mathematics is very difficult to do research on. The average professor in the United States has only one to one-and-half articles published in a lifetime. Even Physics or Chemistry or Biology you can published articles all of the time. But in Mathematics you must prove something.

SMJ: Absolutely, yes.

JIM: It is interesting until it is proved. Where in Physics like these men out in Utah say they think they have fusion. You get a lot of publicity and everyone is following up to see if they can get this fusion. It is an inductive science. In math you either prove it or you don’t! We have a professor who spent a long time trying to prove a theorem and she finally got it proved, and no sooner did she get it proved and published so she did get credit for it, someone else published proof of the same theorem about one-quarter as long. That person gets no recognition, because she beat him. That person found a shorter way of doing it. Once you publish in math, people will look and see how you can change it to make it more "elegant".

SMJ: Through the years have you seen a change in the student attitude toward math?

JIM: Yes.

SMJ: For better or for worse?

JIM: I think we are at the lowest point we have ever been right now and it still seems to be going down. We have been talking in the department, and we feel it is still going down. The quality of students in mathematics is devastatingly bad. They can’t add; they can’t multiply; they can’t divide, and they can’t
even subtract. What are you going to do with them?

SMJ: They are not getting a good foundation to begin with are they?

JIM: Well this is the irony. I always ask my students what they have had as high school math. I have been doing that all through the years, and I keep a record of it. Our students on paper have the highest qualifications of mathematics from high school of any group of students that I have ever taught. They are averaging about three and one-half years per student of high school mathematics. Then when you work with them you would swear that they haven't taken freshmen algebra. I just don't know what the problem is. When we were averaging two years or just under two years of mathematics I got much better quality out of the students. When I talked to the high school teachers they would tell me that the quality of the education in New York State in mathematics has gone down, down, down. The Board of Regents just keeps watering it down. Factoring is no longer a topic in Algebra, and I don't know how you do algebra without factoring.

SMJ: I was to a meeting the other day and talked to a woman who is married to a mathematician and he was saying that there are very few scientists and mathematicians graduating and the majority of those are foreign students.

JIM: Oh, I saw a figure the other day that said approximately 70% of the people getting Ph.D.'s in mathematics today are non-American. Meaning that they were not born here. Now many of them stay here though. This is the history of our country.

SMJ: There are many Chinese and Japanese.

JIM: Yes, many Asians.

SMJ: Medical sciences too, a lot of doctors, scientists.

JIM: Well, in the field that my middle son is in (who is graduating from the university this May) is in computer science. In going on for his graduate work he is finding that the competition is very fierce. Nearly all of the competition is foreign born. And they dedicate themselves to this. They make sure that they get what they want.

SMJ: They have lost of motivation.

JIM: But we are fortunate because most of them stay here because what are they going to do with the information from the advanced studies coming from some of the places that they do? The unfortunate thing is that they go on to teach at our Universities and they really haven't mastered English yet. And our students
have a hell of a time trying to figure out what is going on.

SMJ: Some of the students have a hard enough time trying to understand the course, and having a foreign professor who doesn’t speak English well makes it even worse.

JIM: Most of them are very, very bright people. So we still have a brain drain going by other countries to this country.

SMJ: I think you may already have answered number eight. What changes have you observed with students, student body, and administration. However, I will say this: "Do you feel that students are taking a more active part, or is it just too many students, or too big a place to say that there is active student participation together with the faculty.

JIM: Well, let me see. When I was a student here there was about 900 of us, and we were very, very active. There were no dorms so no one lived on campus. So it was a 1,005 commuting college. There were many nights when I was here until 10:00 p.m. for activities that were going on. I felt that we were extremely active. There wasn’t the politics that the students have today. When I was in my freshman year, we organized what we called the Student Council brought over from high school. Dr. Rockwell did not like it, and he eventually put it out of existence. We were very organized that way. Students seemed to be very, very involved with themselves and would study when WWII ended. Some of our very best students were the GI’s that came back. They really weren’t any brighter, but now they weigh what they really wanted to do and aimed for it.

SMJ: That’s motivation!

JIM: Motivation. Then we went through a period where it seemed to lag a little bit. In the late 60s and the 70s when you had student agitation taking place all over the United States, including Buffalo State College, there was a lot of student activity in everything. It was then when we voted to have students in the Senate. The Math Department revised all of its committees to include students. We haven’t had a student on a committee in ten or twelve years. It still says in the by-laws that they should be on it. They will not accept this position. We cannot get anyone.

SMJ: Why won’t they accept?

JIM: Because they don’t want to be active.

SMJ: Okay. So you have seen it go from active to no activity!
JIM: Well our curriculum committee is made up of three faculty elected by the faculty, three appointed by the chair, and we had three students, elected. And for those years those students were elected and they participated. As I said, we haven't had a student on the committee in at least twelve years. Perhaps even longer than that. Again, we went through sort of a doldrums, and I think our students have been pushed around by the administration and the faculty. Now the students are showing some signs and some rumblings if they don't like this or they don't like that. As I said, to a student today who was complaining that she got a parking ticket, she paid the fine; they lost the record so she couldn't register for the next semester. She went and paid the fine a second time, but this time it was double. She had the receipt at home, so she still could not register for the next semester. Do you know that if this had happened to you in 1969 or 1970 you would have been in court so fast it wouldn't be funny. Do you want to know what happened? The courts would rule as they did then, that this is not related to registration. There should be a penalty, but it should not be that you can't register, or that you can't graduate. We tried to hold diplomas also, all colleges were doing it, and the students took it to court. If something is in violation of the college policy, you should set up a system of punishment. But to say a student cannot register or cannot graduate is wrong because the student is going to lose, even if the student is right.

SMJ: What is that student going to do?

JIM: I don't know what she is going to do. But she said they absolutely refused to let her register because she has this parking violation on her record.

SMJ: Her entire future to be resolved around a parking violation?

JIM: Yes, that is not fair and it is not right.

SMJ: That is just mind-boggling!

JIM: I could see it would be fair to say we could hold up your grades and won't give them to you officially until you meet your debt. But to say that you cannot register. Do you know the penalty of that? By the time she can register she can't get any decent courses that she needs. Is parking that bad a violation? And furthermore, she says she does have the receipt, which she showed. However, the computer did not show that the fine had been paid (twice). Until the computer reflects that the fine has been paid you can't register. We used to do this with the library fines at one time. Students could not register. Again, when those riots and that came along the students asked the president of the college why they couldn't register if they had a library fine. I can see
you holding up my grades and mailing them to me at a later date. If I remember the court cases correctly, you cannot hold up a degree on those grounds. Our constitution says the punishment must fit the crime. And that is quite unusual.

SMJ: But do you know, I cannot help but think when looking back at the sociological implications of it all. The student body in the 50s and 60s was quite different than it is today. There weren't so many married couples. Now there are more, and many of them cannot take part in school activities because of their outside work.

JIM: The average age has gone up considerably. This woman whom I have been talking about, I would say she is in her late 30s. She is working, her husband is working, they are raising a family, so yes, she cannot be here all of the time.

SMJ: So that is the reason why I think only a small percentage of the students can take part in the activities of the campus because they have other commitments, and other priorities don't they?

JIM: You asked the question about size and I feel size has a lot to do with what goes on at the college. I can't help but feel that at a small college you would have a different feeling than you would for a larger one. You are so lost at a large college. By the time I was a sophomore here, I think I knew about 80% of all the students at the college. No student could know that today. Even the President of the Student Congress would know that. And the fact that you are at an urban college where people come and go all the time because they may have a class at 8 a.m. and have to be to work at 10 a.m. and that might be it. You just can't have the same involvement, same spirit that you had years ago. Once upon a time you knew the basketball games were jammed, they are not any more. Students would be there to cheer the basketball team on. Now if the games draw three or four hundred, that is considered a crowd.

SMJ: What contribution do you feel you have made to this institution?

JIM: I don't know if I have made any. I have tried to do a good job at teaching and tried to keep the administration honest. That has been the one thing that I have always tried to do.

SMJ: Well that is excellent.

JIM: I tried to work for curricular changes that I thought would make for a better college. I think that Buffalo State still has a long way to go up and it can go up. We have an awfully good faculty.
SMJ: Do you feel that? We do have a good faculty?

JIM: There are exceptions, of course, but overall we do have an excellent faculty. Most of the faculty members are dedicated to their teaching and their students. Among some of the younger faculty I think the exceptions are greater, because they didn’t grow up seeing this. If the faculty could move forward they were always being probed. I think we could move forward and I think the student body would drag on. If you set low standards, then the students will not aspire to anything higher. If you set high standards, then they will try to meet them, and you do get a little more out of them. I do become discouraged at times though.

SMJ: See you are leaving, retiring and I think when we leave; and I will be soon myself, we like to look back and say, "Well, what do I leave?" How long were you here Jim?

JIM: 41 and a fraction years!

SMJ: Alright, what do I leave? I just don’t want to be there and leave not having left something of myself. And I think you have. Now within the next 15 or 20 years no one will remember either one of us. But the Archives will show your name and the curriculum because I have that. All of these names I have: Rockwell, etc. The college is the result of all of those people from the past, and as you said, it goes on into the future.

JIM: I think of some people who gave great contributions to this college. Harold Peterson, Fraser Drew, etc. Harold Peterson has been dead for three or four years, but he was gone from the campus about 15 years prior to that. What he has done virtually no one knows, it is there. The government of this faculty basically started with Harold Peterson. I don’t know whether I should be saying this, but the Union started in my dining room.

SMJ: It did?

JIM: Yes, five of us reached a point when the Taylor Law was passed, and they would no longer give us any raises but said that we would have to negotiate. Up until that time everything had been done automatically for us. So we wrote a charter for the Union and we applied to join the AFT. We did all of that in my dining room over a period of five evenings. Ben Steinzer, who has since retired, Irv Folidare who died, and a fellow who went back to Kentucky, however I cannot recall his name.

SMJ: It wasn’t Bill Tallmadge was it?

JIM: No, it wasn’t Bill. But yes, bill did return to Kentucky. Bill had been here a long, long time. This person was only here under 5 years and was in Education. Now, who was the
fifth? I don't recall, but there were five of us. The Union
started from there. I am not proud that faculties have to have
unions but that is the way we have to live in New York State. When
I was visiting my oldest son who is a professor at the University
of Wisconsin at Milwaukee ...

SMJ: In Math?

JIM: No, he is in geo-hydrology. He must be in his
sixteenth year.

SMJ: Oh my goodness.

JIM: I was visiting him in March when my next son was going
up to the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He was thinking of
going there for graduate school, and he wanted to up and see it.
So I stayed with my son in Milwaukee. We went to the faculty club
and had dinner. His wife was there and on the way out I said:
"You know I am having a hard time convincing my wife that when I
retire that my take home pay may be just about equal to my take
home pay now." He asked how did I figure it? Well, I do not pay
any New York State taxes on my retirement only on what I earn other
than that. I won't be paying $4,000 plus for social security which
I now pay, and I won't be paying $700 in Union fees. Oh, he said,
that is something we don't have. I sure am glad I don't have to
take the $700 out from my pay. They don't have a Union and yet
they are as well of as we are.

SMJ: Are they?

JIM: Summer session salaries are one-ninth, every class is
one-ninth of your salary.

SMJ: But you would not have been able to do this if it were
not for the Union, would you?

JIM: Do what?

SMJ: Take all of this home, possibly (meaning the money).

JIM: Oh, I don't know, I think before we had a Union the
raises we used to get were every bit as good as we have gotten
under the Union, if not better.

SMJ: Well, then what has the Union done for us?

JIM: The Union has negotiated raises. But you see what
happened when the Taylor Law came. Before the Taylor Law what was
happening was that the legislature every year passed a budget for
the University. It included any raises for faculty. We also had
a salary schedule, and you moved up the ladder. When you reached
the top you got a promotion. At one time we had fourteen different ranks of professors.

SMJ: You don’t have that ranking any more?

JIM: They eliminated all of that.

SMJ: Oh they did?

JIM: When the Unions came in all of that stuff was wiped out. I had reached up to professor level 8 when all were wiped out. We were getting raises, increments, cost of living increments regularly and we were moving along. Sometimes we even went ahead of it. The legislature took the position with the Taylor Law. They couldn’t do this anymore. It all had to be negotiated. Unfortunately, when we tried to form the union we were challenged. And it was more that three years in the courts. So for over three years there was no negotiation for the faculty or the librarians or anyone. Nothing happened in those three years. Of course when you get a Union negotiating they are not going to give you anything and you are going to have to fight. Then everything ends up being a compromise. I’m not so sure, but I think my son’s salary has kept the pace or better. His salary is not yet up to mine, because he hasn’t been in as long. But I mean in a comparative sense he has done as well as I have. He teaches every summer at least one class and he get the one-ninth of his salary. In the last summer session contract they mailed to me was just slightly over 2% of my salary. I mailed it back saying that I cannot work for that kind of money. I once used to get eight and one-third of my salary, even fifteen years ago was more than 2% of my salary now. It doesn’t make sense.

SMJ: Do you have any comments about the future of this place? I think you have mentioned some.

JIM: Buffalo State does have a future. It will always have the problem of what position does it play with SUNY across town. Ever since UB was made SUNY it has been a problem. But I do think there is a niche for Buffalo State, and I don’t feel it should all be Applied Sciences. Some of us refer to this as the Acropolis on the Scajaquada. And then we referred to it as Erie Community on the Scajaquada. Because we thought of ourselves as an extension of Erie Community College. We were going to all of the technologies and everything like that. They are not going to die out, but their hey-day has passed. The glamour of that is gone, and we will be seeing more of the liberal arts, which we need. There is no reason why we cannot educate our students in liberal arts as well as UB can. We can do as well, challenging our students and have good students. Yes we will have technologies and other areas that UB will never touch, and that is our place.
SMJ: That is our place. They are a university, we are a college.

JIM: See, I don't know if you are aware of it, it was the very first university president called Chancellor Urich. Urich was his name. He came to Buffalo State to Rockwell auditorium and gave a speech which made the TIME magazine that week. His speech was that he envisioned tearing down that wrought iron fence, moving the psychiatric center out into the country and we would take those buildings over and become a big center. Well at that time the University was brand new. Those people who were on the board of Trustees said there would never be a strong University. They didn't believe in it. Once that information made TIME magazine, he was gone within a matter of months. Dr. Hamilton was the next one. I talked with Hamilton a number of times. He knew that we should have Senators; that we should have strength. Seeing what happened to Urich though, he never said that out right. Rockefeller became Governor, and things began to change. Of all people, you never would have dreamed that Rockefeller would want a strong State University. The man had been in private education his entire life, and he turned out to be the strongest supporter of the SUNY system. We wouldn't have SUNY today if it were not for him. It would still be thirteen teachers colleges floundering around, with no organization.

SMJ: It is rather incredible.

JIM: It is.

SMJ: As the university system it is the largest university system in the world isn't it?

JIM: Yes, as a university system it is. Because the California university system is split into two.

SMJ: Their university system did start before our did though, didn't it?

JIM: Yes, both of them did start before us. They have a much longer history. They have some nice things out there.

SMJ: I understand that other states are following suit, following the example of New York State.

JIM: Really? The other one that I know of that came close was New Jersey.

SMJ: Let me put it this way. In Texas you have the University of Texas at Dallas, University of Texas at different places.
JIM: Right, but they had that for many years. But do they have a central body?
SMJ: I think it is Austin, isn't it?
JIM: Well I don't know.
SMJ: What about Ohio, aren't they?
JIM: No, they are not. My oldest son Douglas is in University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, and they have about twelve or thirteen others. I ask him all of the time, "How are you organized together?" His answer, "In no way are we organized, no way." When the legislature meets to furnish the budget, it goes to Madison first, then Milwaukee, and then down the pecking order. There is no Chancellor, no central administration of any sort.
SMJ: Alright, now you have given me a challenge. When I go back to Texas I will find out what the story is there. I just assumed that it was a central thing. You are right to challenge me on it.
JIM: Oh, well I don't know about Texas. The only one that I heard of that did it was California and they have two and New Jersey.
SMJ: Well, I think it is an excellent idea.
JIM: It also has its drawbacks, but it has its advantages. I really think there should be some sort of central organization to govern so that we are not all going off into left field. See, I sat down with both Fretwell and Johnstone and we discussed that enrollment and especially in secondary education was going down. Why don't you get together with the Presidents of the other schools in WNY (even the private colleges) and share. Why doesn't one take math, two take English, and split it up. He said no way would anyone do that. Now that would be more efficient, save the taxpayers a lot of money, and it really would be better for the students. Instead we all have a math program, and ours is starting to build up now. I was particularly talking about the graduate program. We have five or six students in it.
SMJ: But we have the best education area don't we.
JIM: I guess. Our Exceptional Ed. is also good, but then so is Geneseo's.
SMJ: A lot of people are coming here from New York, especially Long Island, because this is the only college that gives a degree in JBS.
JIM: Oh, I didn’t realize that.

SMJ: This fellow I talked to said that is why he was here, for the JBS degree. He also said he thought Buffalo was somewhere near Chicago. He and I laughed about it. So, what are your plans for the future?

JIM: Well right now I am doing a lot of work around the house. I will be doing that until next summer. Then, Anita and I and Douglas and his wife will tour through Europe. We particularly want to see England, Germany, Austria and since my wife is 100% Spanish, we want to get to Spain. Doug has done a lot of research on Italy, he and his wife want to go there.

SMJ: Have you been to Europe before?

JIM: Never been there in my life.

SMJ: Oh, wonderful.

JIM: I have been to many places in the Orient, but nowhere in Europe. I have also been to a few places in South America, and Latin America.

SMJ: You will love it, especially Germany and Austria. I have been there and I am going to go back.

JIM: I don’t speak a word of German though.

SMJ: No, you won’t have to.

JIM: Both my son and his wife Kathy speak German.

SMJ: Well, they are educated people and most of the Germans do speak English. It is just a beautiful country. Well, this has been a pleasure.

JIM: Well, I enjoyed it. Thank you very much for inviting me.

SMJ: I also want to thank you very, very much. I hope that you will enjoy your future. Take care and may God bless you dear.

JIM: I never look back, I always try to look ahead.