

DR. JOHN URBAN

Personal Reflections

February 29, 1979

SMJ: I have with me Dr. John Urban, former professor of biology and university distinguished service professor. Could you give us some information please concerning your family background? Where were you born, and information about your family?

URBAN: I would be delighted to do that because I feel that my background is different from that of most people. I was born in what is now Ckeckoslovakia in the eastern part of the country that is now known as Slovakia in a small town of about 5,000 people. My background was of the Lutheran-Evangelical church, that is unusual because 90% of Slovaks are Roman Catholic. Both of my parents were from peasant families. There was some complication about education over there, both of them dropped out of school at the sixth grade level, at about age 12 for them. I was born in 1909, my family came to this country in 1912 during the winter. I am sure that my Father was already here and my Mother brought me and my younger sister and three children from another family and we parked at Ellis Island. We were a part of the last mass of immigrants just before WWI. We originally lived in a town in Northwestern Ohio called Gypsum. My Dad worked there in what was known as the

plaster mines. From there we moved to Cleveland around 1917 or 1918. I recall the Wilson election and staying out of was. I went to the Cleveland schools for my education from kindergarten to grade 7. There was a depression on at this time, my father traded the house we lived in, for a farm in Kent, Ohio. That was one of the lucky things that shaped my life. This farm was within 3 miles of Kent State Normal College. As a immigrant son I did what to go to college. If we did not get the farm it would of not turned out that way. I went to rural schools there for grades 8-11. They only had three year high schools there. I went to Roosevelt High school in Kent, Ohio to finish up. In 1929 at the age of 17, I received my diploma. Then I worked for a year at the Mason Tire and Rubber Company as a laborer. My wages started at 42 cents an hour and increased to \$1.00 an hour which was big money at that time! In Aug. of 1927 came another minor depression, many men were laid off from work. Rather than be laid off, I quit the job and went to school. I entered Kent State Normal College, which was a four year institution. By 1930 I had finished my BS in Education, with majors in biology, English and education, minors in chemistry, history and French. I was certified to teach all those subjects in the secondary schools in the State of Ohio. I was the school representative in various oratorical contests!! In my Jr. year I won the contest for the section of the county in which we lived. In my Sr. year I tied for first place with a fellow student. We were the champions of the Tolly League as it was called!! In college I became interested in journalism, becoming the editor of the college weekly "The Kent Stater". I was also president of my

graduating class of 1930, and president of Sigma Tau Gamma, it was the only international fraternity on campus at the time. It was a family tradition that you worked. Everyone worked! As a child in Cleveland, I worked selling the newspaper. I was not a good businessman as I bought the papers at 3 cents each and sold them for 3 cents each!! I always came out even I never made any money!! When I was about 12 years old, I worked picking vegetables on shack row in the suburbs of Cleveland. When we moved to Kent, I had a job working for a Scotsman named Walter Kirkhart. He had a muck farm raising celery and onions. He paid me 10 cents an hour for 10 hours a day. I was fired from that job because I talked too much and did not weed enough. I could not stand the silence of working out on a farm. Another thing we did as kids, was to pick strawberries at three cents a quart. If you picked all day, you could make three dollars. That was considered doing very well! When I went to the Mason Tire and Rubber Company I lied about my age, you had to be 18 to work. While I was sitting in the waiting room to be interviewed for a job, my friend came out of the office telling me he did not get hired because you have to be 18 years old. At that very second I became 18 years old. I did get the job as long as I would take the night shift. I would go to work at 8pm, work until 7am and then walk 4 miles home. We only had one car and my father needed that to get to his job. I was at that job for about 16 months, when I decided to go to school at the college. One time I worked at the Kent Sand and Gravel Company, loading railroad cars with wet sand and then moving them down on the track. Later on I worked as a cosmetic chemist in Newark, New

Jersey at the Col-Mar Laboratories during WWII. My contribution to the war effort was to make cosmetics to keep the girls beautiful so the soldiers would be happy when they came home!! I also worked at a place called the Fandangro Paper Mill, we took scrap paper and converted it into the kind of board that is used for book covers. That was the end of my commercial experience. Would you like to ask any questions at this point??

SMJ: When you finished your degree, was it from Kent?

URBAN: Yes, I finished my Bachelor's at Kent State. From Kent State I went right into teaching. From 1930 - 1935, I taught virtually all of the sciences there are to teach at the rural schools in Randolph, Ohio in Portage county. My first summer studying for my MS, I went to the Marine Biological Laboratories at Woodshole, Mass. and did some work in protozoology. I finished my MS at Teacher's College, Columbia University in 1935.

SMJ: You got your degree in education, did you?

URBAN: In science education. At that time all you needed was a BS to teach. At times they were hiring 2 year diploma graduates from normal school to teach in the elementary schools. In 1935, I attracted the attention of the Dept. of Natural Sciences who offered me a graduate assistantship for the years 1935/36. I was then matriculated and started to work towards my PhD.

SMJ: Had you met the future Mrs. Urban during this time?

URBAN: No, not yet. In 1936 my appointment had expired. I then started a job in New Jersey at Milburne high school teaching biology and general science. It was there in 1937 that I met Helen. She was in therapeutic dietetics at the time. We got

married in 1929. By 1941, there was a war on so you didn't move. I was classified 'B-1' by the local draft board, I was not shipped off to war. the first opportunity we had, when the war was over, we moved. In the summer of 1945 I taught at Montclair State College in NJ. I was suppose to have been called back to teach in 1946. It came to be Feb. '46 and I had not yet heard, so it made me fidgety because I did want to work. In the mean time I heard from Buffalo State. I accepted the invitation to come to Buffalo to teach there in the summer of 1946.

SMJ: How did you get the invitation? Was it through a letter, or what?

URBAN: 1946 was the first summer they ever taught graduate courses at Buff State. They were looking for an expanded curriculum. They wanted someone in science to do something at the graduate level for elementary school teachers. The man in charge of that was Dr. Robert Albright, the director of Graduate Studies. He was the one who was in contact with Columbia College to see if they had any candidates. They recommended me!

SMJ: That was my next question, what brought you to the college?

URBAN: I told him that I felt he should pay me \$600. rather than the \$500. he offered. I was offered \$550 to teach during the summer, so I took it. It was a turning point in my life because I looked at the Buffalo area and decided that I liked it and wanted to stay. A thing that was in my favor also, was that I had just finished up an eighth grade textbook in collaboration with Gerald Graig, it was ready for publication. On the last day of summer

school I was interviewed by Dr. Rockwell. He asked me if there was still enough time to put the name of this college on the title page before it was published. When I said yes there is, I think that may have done it for me. I have always been proud of the way I came to this faculty. Ordinarily when you hire a man you do not what you are getting. There was a full professorship open here at the time and I did not know it. The Dean of the College, Ralph Horn, came into one of my classes once, two days later in came Dr. Albright, he spent a few hours in my class. I was worried about what they were doing. A few days later I found out that they were looking me over. They also talked to other members of the staff, Margaret DuPree, and a man by the name of Sirgood Shield. They even spoke with some of my students! I was told to speak with Dr. Rockwell, but I told them I didn't I didn't have time as I had to catch a train back to Cleveland. I went and talked with President Rockwell and he asked if I was interested in college teaching. I had the gall to say "yes" but you don't have anything here that would interest me. The reason I said that was because I did not know there was a professorship and I knew that they might offer me an instructorship. Instructorships in those days began at \$2400. Of course I was doing much better than that in NJ as a high school teacher. He told me that he was talking about the full professorship. My attitude changed immediately!! Subject to checking your credentials, we are offering you the job right here right now! That is how I came here. Here are some of the other reasons: 1. It was a full professorship and one doesn't get the opportunity very often. 2. It meant about a 45% increase in my

salary. 3. As a college teacher, I would have a shorter school year. 4. That would give me time to study and to write and do research. 5. I was intrigued that I would have a higher calibre of colleagues. 6. There was far less routine work, like report cards, monthly reports, and lesson plans. 7. There was more of an intellectual challenge by college students, etc. All of those things together convinced me that I wanted to be a college professor.

SMJ: What did Mrs. Urban think about all this?

URBAN: We had two daughters. At the start of summer semester when I came here to teach, Helen took two kids and went to Nebraska to see her family. We decided to meet in Ohio at the end of the summer session. Actually Helen did not show much elation, she did not seem to be impressed. All she said was that if I wanted the job I should accept it. There was no question about that. It was a good change for her also. She had been cited by the National Council of Christmas and Jews, the Erie County Extension Department, the University Women's Group, etc. Coming into this atmosphere gave her many more opportunities for self development. I came to this college in 1946... this is where we get into what the college was at that time!! It consisted of 5 buildings. What we now call Rockwell Hall was the administrative building, it also contained the President's suite of offices. The offices of the dean's were housed there as were a number of classrooms. The college library was in what is now the Burchfield Center, part of the book collection was up in the tower. The only college dining room was in the basement there, that included the kitchen, student

and faculty dining areas. There was even a small apartment for the head maintenance man on the staff, his name was Harry Curtain. At Ketchum Hall we had Industrial Arts. That included all of home economics, all the sciences, all of the industrial arts: machine shop, auto mechanics, garage, wood shop, etc. What is now Bacon Hall, was originally the Campus School, housing grades k through 6. Chester Pugsley was principal at that time. In addition, there was the old gymnasium which is on the west end of that little quadrant. The president's residence was also there. He did actually live in it!! The faculty had about 100 members at that time, including the Campus School Faculty. It was the largest in history up until that time. There were 13 of us who were new members that year in 1946. Of those 13, 3 were full professorships. The others went to Dr, Morris Fouracre to teach what we called special education. He was the predecessor to Dr. Mann. The third one went to Dr. Arthur Bradford in English. This is an estimate, of course, but as far as I can recall there was about 1200 students enrolled. So far as the curriculum was concerned... we had a division of elementary education which was the biggest enrollment. We had art education of which Dr. Stanley Czurles was already the director. In industrial arts education we had a man by the name of Irving Perkins. Miss Mildred Sipp was in Home Economics. And Dr. H. Emmett Brown was in the sciences. As I mentioned earlier Dr. Morris Fouracre was in special education. The curriculum here was heavy in social studies but pretty skimpy in everything else at the time. We had six faculty members in the sciences. I was told when I came here that I would be teaching biology. One half of my load

turned out to be teaching physics. I was not prepared to teach physics except for one thing. These were bright intelligent girls who did not know a thing about physics, so no matter how simple you made it, it was new to them.

SMJ: It was actually more than what they knew.

URBAN: Right, as an example the first experiment we had to do was to determine the boiling point of water. That seems a ridiculous thing to do, everyone knows that the boiling point of water is 100 degrees C or 212 degrees F. There are many variables depending upon what you are devolving in the water!! This was an exercise in careful observation and critical thinking. We did have a few electives, such as astronomy. I taught that once. I had a lot of satisfaction and pleasure out of teaching physical geology. Dr. Emmett Brown had come up with an idea that I thought was just brilliant at the time. There was a great deal of emphasis on the improvement of science education in elementary schools. We felt everyone should learn science from kindergarten and up. Dr. Brown started a program which consisted of 24 hours of various sciences. That was followed by a course in methods of teaching in elementary school science, the post semester, practice teaching in elementary science. For these people half of the semester had to be in a science situation, we had our own supervision, a woman by the name of Ann Boltz who was originally from Plattsburg. That program was very successful. We had about 150-160 signed up in that program. We kept careful track of them and did the best we could with them. They were good students. There was one fault with the program. When they graduated they did not teach in the elementary school,

the local junior high school snatched them up. Because of the background they had they made outstanding junior high school teachers!! So they never got into elementary school.

SMJ: Well Dr. Urban, what positions did you hold while you were at college?

URBAN: As I mentioned, I came in as a full professor of science. Later on as the department specialized, I became professor of biology. Also for one year I was acting chairman of the department. That was in 1950/51, when the previous chairman left for a year's work under one of the federal programs in Burma. Dr. Brown returned, staying at the school for another year before going to Taiwan. I was renamed as acting chairman of the department. He was in Taiwan for some time when he asked for an extension on the leave. Dr. Rice came to me and asked my thoughts on the matter. I said no, we should not extend the leave. This is a full professorship, we need someone with ability to be in position. A man who is in Taiwan can not do us any good. We wrote and told Dr. Brown that if he wanted to stay in Taiwan that was fine, however his association with the university would be terminated. At that time I became full chairman of the department, staying from 1952 until 1964. Along with teaching and chairing the department I became the first president of an organization known as the Branch Association. It was an organization of college faculty. I will go more into detail a little later on. Many years I was elected the first president of the Phi Delta Kappa on this campus. I was chairman of the College Camp Board from 1949 to 1966, I will elaborate later. I was a member of the State University Faculty

Senate for 6 years, 1966 until 1972 and a member of their Executive Committee for two years. Then I was a member of the College Senate from 1972 until 1974. In 1950 I was elected vice president of Faculty Association of NYS Teacher's College Faculties. In 1952 I became the president for two years and then for three more years was a member of the Board of Directors. So I served that organization for a total of 7 years. As a member of the University Senate, I was on the Senate Executive Committee and became one of the founders of what came to be called the Senate Professional Association. It was the precursor of what is now called the UUP. I was on its Board of Directors for 2 years.

In addition to that, I was a member of countless committees of one sort or another. At one time I was vice president of the local chapter of the AAUP. While I was doing those things I became the co-author of six general science secondary schools text books. They were published in Boston by Ginn and Company.

SMJ: Dr. Urban, where did you find time to do all of that work?

URBAN: Well, I don't know!! In addition to all of that I had a family!! I had a wife and three children by that time. Also, there was the house! Two of those books were done with Gerald Graig, two of them with Francis Curtis of the University of Michigan, one with Milton Fellow from the University of Wisconsin and one with Franklin Brimea with the Hayden Planetarium. I was also an education collaborator for Cornet Films of Chicago on 6 biological films. Four of those films were on ecology, long before ecology became so vocal. I was elected a fellow of the American

Association for the Advancement of Science in 1957. In 1960, I was named as one of 13 distinguished alumni at the Semi-Centennial Celebration at Kent University, my alma mater. In 1975, the Distinguished Service Professor of State University of New York was awarded to me. Even I am impressed when I go over all of these awards!!

SMJ: I'll bet, I would be impressed also!! My goodness.

URBAN: I'm happy that you asked me to do this, my family wanted me to do so for quite a time now. Can we go on to the College Camp?

SMJ: What part did you play in the establishment of the College Camp?

URBAN: Sister, that was my baby from the very beginning.

SMJ: Yes, that is what I understand!! Yes, that is why I wanted you to talk about it.

URBAN: I conceived it. I had lived for ten years on a small farm in Ohio. There I learned to plow with horses, plant corn, milk cows and do all sorts of farm work. I roamed in the woodlands, saw many wildflowers, and wild game like minks, muskrats, etc. I did some trapping for a while, there was a time when the money was good. Skunk was my favorite to catch, because they were the easiest and brought good money. The only thing I did not do was to hunt. I was very poor at that so I didn't bother. Being able to do all of the mentioned things is why I became interested in the College Camp. In 1946 when I came to Buff State to teach summer courses, I found out that most of the teachers who were doing field courses were totally uneducated in the field.

That got me to think! We also had the undergraduate biology courses in which we were supposed to do laboratory work. We had no equipment, no supplies, and no money! We looked around for field work. It happened that right outside of what is now Ketchum Hall to the West, there was an apple tree of a good size. I used to take my sophomore class outside and stand under the tree. Then I would ask the class "What sort of a tree is this?" My answer was always given to me in the form of a question: "It is an apple tree, isn't it?" That would bother me. Then in 1949 President Rockwell sent me to a conservation workshop down in the Catskill in Willowy Mt. Brooke, sponsored by the State Education Department. It was at this workshop that I came across two important elements. I learned that the college at Fredonia had a 160 acre camp that was a gift from the alumni to the student body. And I came across Ted Eckert who was working for the State Education Department showing what could be done in conservation aid. He caught my attention. I came back from that workshop and wrote a memo to President Rockwell proposing that we have a college camp. He called me into his office, we discussed the matter and he gave me permission to go ahead with camp. He immediately appointed a committee of which I was the chairman. When Rockwell went out and Rice came in, we had a change and we became the College Camp Commission. We looked at a site near Dunkirk, one down in Cattaraugus County, one near Cadiz which is also near Franklinville. We went from one place to another. When I told the President that we felt we had found the right place to buy, what were we to do about money? He said "blanket tax" on students would be increased to come up with the

money. That was the money that was used to finance all student activities. I told him I felt the students would not go for the idea. He said he wouldn't tell the students... just increase the "blanket tax." Well, that really turned me off. My group just kept stalling until Dr. Rockwell resigned. Rather, he retired. I did not want to throw this at the student body. During this time period the student body was very suspicious of the administration concerning financial matters. When President Rice came into office we discussed some entirely different ideas. The Camp Commission decided to meet with every student organization on campus, and explained to them what we proposed to do. We were asking for their support. We asked President Rice to call a special convocation of the student body. We were astonished to find that 1800 students enrolled, 1400 attended this meeting voluntarily, we were literally amazed. It was a Friday before the Christmas holiday, instead of rushing off home for the holidays, students came to this special meeting. We explained once more to the entire assembled group what the College Camp was all about. We answered questions from the floor. We had prepared a ballot asking for \$5 pledge to be paid by February towards the purchase of a College Camp. When we counted up the ballots, we were amazed that 1200 were "yes" ballots. When February rolled around it turned out that we collected \$9,000. Around that time, a young co-ed came to me and said that her family, the Raub's had property down near Franklinville, she showed me some pictures. When we saw the photographs, we knew that we were interested!! So in 1952 on Lincoln's birthday, we had the day off from classes. We got the Camp Board together and drove

down to Franklinville to see the place. We liked what we saw.

SMJ: Did it have a house or anything on it?

URBAN: Oh yes, it had a huge house, a very large farm house.

SMJ: Was there easy access to the house?

URBAN: Oh yes. This was a house that had to have mail delivery, therefore the road had to be kept open, the mailman has to get through!! The farm had a big dairy barn that held 40 or 50 cows, there was some farm machinery also. There was no central heating in the home. As a matter of fact there was no electricity, no telephone and no running water!

SMJ: Was there indoor plumbing?

URBAN: No, there was not. There was however, a door off the one side of the kitchen that went to an attached privvie. You did not have to walk out into the snow and cold to use the facility. That fact did not bother me, after living on a farm for ten years myself, it was something that I was accustomed to. We immediately reported to Dr. Rice that we liked what we saw. The next day we had off would be for Washington's birthday. When that day came, all of us, with Dr. Rice, went out to the farm for another look. While we were out there, we spotted a young doe in the field. Everyone was in awe, that clinched it for us!! The price we had to pay for that property was just \$6500. It was 435 acres and included buildings! One of the things I did not mention, was that it had 150 sugar bush trees on it, including all of the syrup making tools that you would need. The way prices have shot up in Cattaraugus county, I estimated the land would be worth about \$150,000. An official survey of the place was made and handled by

an attorney who had attended Buff State College. By June of 1952, we officially owned it!! The legal work was done by Don Voltz. The old house on the land was in bad shape, we knew that we would have to build another lodge on the property. What we built, will accommodate 40 people overnight. It now has a large kitchen, central heat, hot and cold running water and indoor plumbing. The original investment in the improvement of the lodge was \$43,000.

SMJ: Yes, I was wondering where you got the money to make the improvements?

URBAN: The FSA has always been prosperous. Under the guidance of President Rice, the FSA loaned us the money. Outright, they gave us a gift of \$18,000. One of the reasons that they did it was because they were beginning to show a profit and that would have made the Association taxable. We assumed a mortgage of \$25,000. They were suppose to be repaid out of that student camp tax that had been voted on at the rate of \$2,000 yearly.

SMJ: Now, did you have to go to Albany for all of this?

URBAN: Nah, there wasn't a dime of state money involved in it, therefore Albany was not involved at all.

SMJ: Alright, I didn't know whether you had to have permission for all of this to take place.

URBAN: Now, maybe the President and I didn't know about that. So far as I know, Albany was never consulted on any of this. When Dr. Rice left to go to McCallister College, he was persuaded to forgive us for the rest of the mortgage. That original \$43,000 included some small expenditures for the original two college ponds. One was stocked with trout the other with bass, the ponds

are still there! Dr. George Logg^{awg?} was in charge of the land usage.

SMJ: Isn't that now called "Logg^{awg?} Lodge"?

URBAN: Yes, and I was disappointed at the naming of the lodge. Dr. Logg had absolutely nothing to do with the building of the lodge, that came due to the efforts of Dr. Callan. It should have been named after him. Land usage and tree planting was done by Dr. Logg^{awg?}.

SMJ: Well, do you suppose it was named because he was there longer after Lou Callan?

URBAN: It was in 1966 that Callan and I became disgusted with the student personnel of the College Camp Board and we resigned. Another faculty member from Industrial Arts Dept. resigned. Dr. Logg stayed, but they never had five faculty members again. He was a very kindly person, working well with the students so that is why it was named after him. In front of that lodge there is now a stone tower. On top of that tower is an antique railroad bell off of a Chesapeake and Ohio railroad train. That bell was obtained for us through the efforts of Dr. Stanley Czurles. We started to build that camp in the summer of 1953 and the very first student group ever to honor was on Jan. 16, 1954. We played politics with it. We invited the student council down. The student council at that time was very active. They came down as our guests and said this what we have done for the student body. They were very pleased. We were political in other ways too. One thing we did was to say to the officials of Lyndon township (where part of the property is located) and Franklinville township, is that we would continue to pay taxes. That if they were fair in their assessments

of us, because we were using student money, we would continue to pay tax. We did that because we thought that an institution would spend most of its time and effort educating teachers to support education in the town of Franklinville. Also, we wanted that road to be plowed. We had excellent relationships with both of those communities. If the heavy snow came, it would be easy to be buried in there. We were one of the first roads to be plowed! The College Camp Board continued working. For a long time we had meetings once a week, usually on a Monday evening. After we got caught up in work we had to do, our meetings were held every other week. Four times a year we would go down to the camp and clean things up. We made sure that everything was in good working order. We spent a great deal of time drawing up a Camp Board constitution. We also set up the camp rules. These rules were initiated by the students themselves. The students always out voted the faculty: 8 to 5. We agreed that a group going down should have a chaperon. Every group had to sent us a list of those individuals who were going. We also agreed that there would be no consumption of alcoholic beverages while there, no gambling was to be done at the camp. Every group that went down, would have to have a member of a camp board with them. We held a meeting in the Spring to set up a calendar. All of the students organizations were invited to attend this meeting. All requests were submitted at that time. Then, in May everyone knew what the calendar year for the camp would be. One of the things we did that I felt was especially good was to offer the camp to the Orange St. Neighborhood House. Their children used to come down there every summer after school for a

week. Black kids who never got off the pavement came down. We had arrangements with a number of the local elementary schools. Now the elementary schools had to pay something for the use the camp. The Industrial Arts Faculty used to go down there for weekends. On one occasion, we had all of the college presidents down there for a weekend. You have to furnish tour camp!! We had a dormitory on campus called Pioneer Hall. When Pioneer Hall was torn down, we got the bunks to use down at the camp. In addition, the State had a temporary college called Champlain College. When it was closed down, we hauled all of the bunks from Plattsburg to Buffalo to Franklinville and set them up! Other furnishings we bought. Students did the selection of most of the equipment that we had to purchase. A lady by the name of Arlene Adams from the Home Economics Department, worked beautifully with the students, taking care of the things that needed to be done. She saw to it that we had the place well established! It was an excellent learning experience for the student body. If a group wanted to go, they had to do their own planning right down to the menu. A camp board member was there to see that they cleaned up any mess before they left the camp. That is the way this thing was conducted. Those who gave outstanding service to this camp were of course Dr. Callan, Arlene Adams, Cecile Rodney from the Mathematics Dept., Nora Truesdale from Art Education, Ray Bradley from the Campus School, Grace Aspe from the Home Economics Division and George Logg. So, by and large that is the story of the College Camp. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask about the camp?

SMJ: No, very good. I would like to go on to the next

question. What part did you have in the establishment of the Great Lakes Laboratory?

URBAN: Here again, I would claim credit for the original idea, not for its development. As I said earlier, I received my degree in biology at Kent State in Ohio. I learned that Ohio University had a laboratory in the west end of Lake Erie on a little island that was called Rattlesnake Island. It is out there where Commodore Perry met the enemy in battle. There is a monument out there dedicated to him. I knew that they had Rattlesnake Island as a research station. It was called the Franz Theodore Stone Laboratory. Shortly after moving to Buffalo, I was reading the newspaper and saw a picture that caught my eye. As I read the article, the name Franz Theodore stone Jr. turned up. That rang a bell!! I felt that if his father could start a laboratory in the West end of Lake Erie, maybe Jr. would do one at the East end of Lake Erie!! Then I sat down and wrote a memorandum to President Paul Bulger. Bulger liked the idea very much and went to Albany. It was approved in Albany. The first thing I did was to take Howard Sengbush, a researcher, out to the Ohio State Laboratory. Upon return to school we wrote a second memo to President Bulger informing him what we had learned and accomplished. I made several more trips to Ohio shore line with other concerned people, looking for a harbor large enough to accommodate a ship that we would need to use. As luck would have it, Howard Sengbush was attending a social function, when he ran into a gentleman who held a high position in the Boy Scouts. He explained to Howard that they were giving up their Marine Scouting Program in the Buffalo area. He

knew that they had a base downtown, also that it was not boy scout property down there. That is how the laboratory was started!! The next step was to hire a Director for the Great Lakes Laboratory. That is when Dr. Sweeny entered the picture, he has been with us ever since!

SMJ: Just for the record, It was May 12, 1966 that the Board of Trustees approved this on Oct. 8th, 1966 it was dedicated. I just looked this up last week. This is funny and worth recording, last week when I talked with Dr. Sengbush. He was very excited about it. When I returned to my office there was a note on my desk asking me to call Great Lakes Laboratory, so I did right then. The girl I spoke to with wanted to know the dates of the approval and the dedication of the Great Lakes Lab. She was shocked to think that I could give her an answer to that question right over phone with such speed. We had to laugh!

URBAN: Was it Senator Brydges from Niagara Falls who made the dedicatory remarks??

SMJ: Yes, it was Senator Brydges.

URBAN: I don't recall who the senator from Buffalo area was. I do recall that he was a little miffed that we called the man from the Falls. Bob Sweeny has been very, very nice in giving me recognition for this thing. As a matter of fact, just last summer they invited me down there for a luncheon, President and Mrs. Fretwell were there, Barb Frey, Jim Young and others. They named one of their boats after me!! I was too sick at that time to go for a cruise. This summer I do expect to make some use of it. There were other contributions that I made to the college, one of

which is the planetarium.

SMJ: I was going to ask you about that, because you mentioned earlier something about the planetarium.

URBAN: I was very impressed by Hayden Planetarium at the Museum of Natural History in NYC. I also spent time at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago. But what really got me to thinking about a planetarium at BSC was when Helen and I were out in Lincoln, Nebraska to see her family. I stopped off at the Univ. of Nebraska and found out that they had a planetarium. They had summer programs there that I felt were very, very good. I felt that if Univ. of Nebraska could afford this, well so could BSC. I drafted a letter and a proposal to Pres. Rice. At that time we did not have a science building. A local politician who will remain anonymous for the time being, felt that it was not our function to do anything with service. Dealing with sciences was the function of the private colleges. Pres. Rice said fine, if we can not have a science building, then will have a new Home Economics Building. Then we could take a vocational building and make that into a science building! That building could then have a planetarium built into it. I got in touch with the Spitz people of Baltimore. They came in with very complete plans for a planetarium. Then, the political situation changed, I found out we were going to get a new science building after all.

SMJ: So you were in on the ground floor with the planning of the new science building.

URBAN: Yes, the plan has started about 1961. It was done in two parts, the first in 1961 as I said. Ted Eckhard and I went

over those plans. Through the years Dr. Orgren has done a very good job with it.

SMJ: It was tragic about the fire. You do know that the students have a project of collecting pennies to help in the restoration of the planetarium? They are also holding baked-goods sales, etc.

URBAN: I also did the Science Camp, not to be confused with the College Camp. Dr. Brown came to me soon after I got here, reminding me that I was full professor. He asked what sort of a special contribution could I make to the department? What can you do that is innovative? I came up with the idea that we should be doing more with outdoor education for graduate students than we had been doing previously. So in 1948 I proposed to Dr. Brown that we establish a two-week science workshop for graduate students in the out-of-doors somewhere. The department approved it and we ended up in Allegheny State Park. In the summer of 1949 we held our first science camp, but they were finished for the summer by this time , so we used it. We were to have a field trip every morning and afternoon, time for a swim because there was a pool right there, and then a lecture in the evening. We did not let anyone loaf around!! The first lecture was always on the Administration of a State park by park personnel. We also had game and soil management people in and do presentations .

SMJ: Did that cost the students ant money? Did they have to pay for this?

URBAN: Yes. The rent of the camp was \$75 a week, divide that by 49 students and the cost was minimal. They of course had to pay

for their own food and the cooking staff. There was 2 hrs. of graduate credit, so they also had to pay for tuition. The cabins were very primitive. There was only one well for water. If you wanted to wash in your cabin, you had to take a bucket up the hill where the well was, for water. Usually there were 4 to 6 people per cabin. There was no heat in the cabins. Faculty members and students had three meals a day, they ate together in a common living area. The group was divided into three parts, each faculty member took a part, also the parts were rotated. The camp had beaver, beer, racoon, porcupines, deer mice and all sorts of other things.

SMJ: You really formed a community then!

URBAN: Oh yes! That was back in 1949, I still hear from some of those people who attended.

SMJ: There must have been some real nice friendships that were established there!

URBAN: Let me finish now. I don't want to take up too much time. This was the first time in history of this college, that it was recognized that you could have a residence course off the campus. This was sort of a pre-cursor to Siena. If you could do it at Allegheny State Park, then you could do it in Siena!! Remember, Anna Burrell had the course in India for a couple of years.

SMJ: Now they have it in Costa Rica.

URBAN: I hope you are still seeing her, Anne ^Burrell.

SMJ: I have written to her.

URBAN: Well, that is all I have on that topic, do you have

any questions for me? We repeated this program eleven times, I became tired of it! We also had the College Camp, Dr. Logg and Dr. Eckert do a great deal of work with that.

SMJ: I did have a question, perhaps you have already covered it through. What changes did you see in the Science Department?

URBAN: I was going to touch on that a bit later. What I have next in my notes concern the faculty organizations.

SMJ: Oh alright, OK.

URBAN: When I came here in 1946 the faculty was small, only about 100 of us, Already, there was an undercurrent of dissatisfaction. (The evidence for this I thought was that we had an AAUP chapter on campus.) At that time, those chapters were not common on teacher's colleges. Now this chapter had to meet off campus because the President said he would have nothing to do with this organization. It was not an official organization of the college. We had some of our meetings at the Kenmore YMCA which is right around the corner from here. That group was already organized, H. Emmett Brown who I have mentioned previously, was the President. Of course I joined immediately! That was some organization!

SMJ: What was it's purpose though?

URBAN: The purpose was to promote the general welfare, both academic and personal of the faculty. The goals were actually common with the National Chapter of the AAUP. There was another State organization of which I have mentioned briefly, this is the Association of New York State Teacher's College Faculties, started by Herman Copper and other state authorities.

SMJ: Now, is that still in existence?

URBAN: No, it is not. This association included 11 teacher's colleges, it lasted into the earlier years of the State University. The name was changed to Faculty Association State University of New York. It was sort of a ____?____ organization, but they did have a bi-annual conference. The first conference was held in 1946 here in Buffalo, NY. About 1947 the local faculty, displaying increased restlessness, and not being organized as a group by the administration began , more or less, having secret meetings. The critical meeting came one Sunday afternoon at the apartment on Elmwood Avenue of a Dr. Ruth Huston. She was the chairman of the physical education department. Present at that meeting were people like Harold Peterson, Kathlyn Whittemore, John Urban, Kenneth Weinbrenner and a number of others. We wanted to do something and did not know quite what to do!! It was Ms. Whittemore who came up with quite a brilliant idea: we are all members of a State organization, let's organize a local chapter of the state organization. We drew up a proposal and sent it to the president. He could not object to our forming a chapter of an organization that was already accepted by the state. For lack of a better name, we called it the Branch Association. It was Feb. 2, 1948 that the President called a faculty member for considering the organization. We really moved in on this, we had a proposed constitution of this by Feb. 6th. On Feb. 11th we had a general faculty meeting to discuss the proposed constitution. This meeting was under the temporary chairmanship of Harold Peterson. We went over the constitution section by section, it was not finished until sometime

in March. It was a very democratic concept, everyone was eligible for membership, including all of the secretarial, maintenance, and library staff. We felt everyone should be in on this. We had no recognition from the state officers. In September of 1948 the officers of the Branch Association proposed an amendment to the state constitution to allow branches, so that we could have local input from the faculty into these branches. The branch associations dealt with local problems of a special nature and of general welfare. I was the first chairman of the association. No one else wanted it, because they were afraid of it!! Ruth Buddenhagen was treasurer, Ruth Sugarman was secretary. Of the approximately 100 faculty members, about 40-45 were involved in some sort of committee within the branch association. One of the things we did that fall was to get our committees to set up a variety of resolutions calling for actions by the state authority on various subjects. That fall the Bi-annual meeting was at Lake Placid Club, we closed up the college and nearly everyone went. To show you the difference in professional attitudes, we used to go to the meetings paying our own way for travel expenses, paid for our rooms which were not cheap, we never expected the state to repay us for this. The state did give us the day off and we went. We presented 18 resolutions to the general meeting at Lake Placid in October. The resolutions were on salary, sick leave, sabbatical leave, faculty load, summer school appointments, legal liability of faculty members and one resolution requesting that we be given leadership by our administrations. This is a quotation from it "it should be obtrusive leadership." We passed a unit resolution on

inter unit cooperation. We were 11 colleges all doing the same thing we should get together and exchange ideas!

SMJ: Now was Dr. Rockwell still president then?

URBAN: Ha was still president in 1948. Rockwell shagrined at the way we behaved at that meeting. Everyone from Buffalo was there, we dominated the meeting as we had the largest representation. When the chairman of the meeting asked for a voice vote, Buffalo just roared. This state faculty association was sort of a weak one. It started out as sort of an administrative organization. The faculty gradually moved in on it. Through the years we moved away from the company union idea to more or less independent organization. Having very little money we found to be a weakness. All of the money we did have we would spend on the convention. We liked to have good speakers at our conventions and that cost money. We extended an invitation to Eleanor Roosevelt, she did not come of course. We could not run our organization with the dues that we collected from our members. We had three organizations representing the faculty. I was vice-president of the State Organization 1950 through 1952. The bi-annual program was always the responsibility of the vice-president. That meant the 1952 program was mine. It was a difficult thing to do, because that summer I had been invited out to San Jose State College in California to teach. I could not turn down an opportunity like that! So I did most of the planning from California. But we did get it done.

SMJ: Did you find that the results were worth all of the work that was put into it?

URBAN: Judging by the attendance in the early years... yes, we felt it was worth it. Because in the early years we would close up the college and we would have 150 go to Lake Placid. In the later years, complications arose and with the coming of the State University Senate our organization declined in prestige and enrollment dropped off. Eventually, we decided to fold up. Because people would say, why should we have this organization when we have effective representation to the senate who have direct lines to the chancellor's awards.

SMJ: You were a predecessor to that and played an important role.

URBAN: From 1923 to about 1960 this was the only state faculty organization we had. Now as far as the further development is concerned, the story of the union... back in 1947 there was a long teacher's strike in Buffalo. As a result of that strike Gov. Dewey became angry and he persuaded the legislature to pass what became known Condon-Wadlin Act. That was very, very severe and there were no strikes for a very long time. Later Gov. Rockefeller came in and felt that the Condon-Wadlin Act was too severe. So he said let us have a new law. He invited a man named Taylor from Penn State University, to write the Taylor Law. Well it was written and accepted by the legislature. I objected to it on the grounds that it deprived faculty any of the rights which everyone else had. I do not believe in the right to strike, but if you are going to force people to negotiate, you have no way of giving them any leverage on this to have the right to strike. I even wrote a letter to the Buffalo Evening News that they printed. The Taylor

Law was both good and bad. It deprived us of the fight to strike... at the same time it gave us the right to organize as faculties and negotiate as a faculty. No one knew who was going to do the negotiating for the faculty. FASUNY could not do it because it was more or less dead and did not have the money with which to do anything. Those things do cost money. The faculty senate could not do it because in reality it was an arm of the State University Administration. In the early years of the Senate, the Chancellor was also the President of the Faculty Senate. The Taylor Law forced us to organize, the Senate became the natural organization instrument at that time (about 1970). I was a member of the Executive Committee of the Senate. We took the job of forming and organization that would be acceptable to the faculty under terms of the Taylor Law. Then it would not have the stigma of being an administrative faculty. Our first thought is that it would be only proper to go to the civil service organization. We were State workers and they were State workers, they have a lot of clout, let's get together with them. We had meetings with Ted Benzel who was President of the CSEA at the time. We made the proposition. they said they would take it to their Board of Directors, they did, and their Board of Directors turned it down cold. They wanted no part of us. One of the reasons was that we sort of wanted to be considered an independent, autonomous unit. I feel it was on that basis that CSEA turned us down. Then there was only one thing to do if we could not join them. It was at that time that we came up with the idea of what later became the Senate Professional Association. We have set up SPA, we were rather timid because of

our dues were too small. We were never going to have enough money to run an effective organization. Furthermore the general idea of union was reprehensive to most college faculty. They just could not see the point of jointing a union. The union stepped right in and competed with us, we beat them the first time. So we set up the Senate Professional Association. I was elected to the Board of Directors of that association. Other than dues, we had other weaknesses. To try to convince the faculty that dues were inadequate, I got statements of dues from carpenters union, plumbers, brick-layers, electricians, etc. Their dues were fantastic in comparison to those that we were going to propose. It is not unusual for a plumber to pay \$500 a year for union dues. The people included in SPA were to varied. There were the 4 university centers, they thought that they belonged on the top of Mt. Olympus!! Then there was the 11 teachers colleges, and then we had the two year colleges, Alfred, canton and Farmingdale. In addition we had the contract colleges, like the Agriculture College at Cornell, School of Forestry at Syracuse, etc. All of these were lumped together in one organization. Then we also had problems with library staff. There was a big problem with non-teaching staff as their interests were very different from ours. Binghamton chose Bob Hart to head up a committee to draw up a salary schedule. A man by the last name of Carlip, also from Binghamton was on the committee. They came in with a recommendation that we adopt a 3-11 salary schedule. The highest and best salaries would go to the State University Centers, which of course would include Binghamton themselves!! The next highest could go to teacher's colleges and

at the lowest level would be the two year colleges. I for one, objected to it. We ought to pay a man, not according to which college he teaches in, rather what his qualifications are and what his contributions would be. That proposal was overwhelmingly voted down. As a result of that vote, Bob Hart resigned the Chairmanship of the committee right then and there. Carlip also resigned and they both walked out on us. The SPA did remain weak, it was too professional in its approach, inexperienced and under financed. Not much of a battle was put up in the next election. We almost had to forfeit to the UUP.

SMJ: Now you realize that in the last year they voted to find out if we wanted to in the NEA.

URBAN: Yes, well there again the typical faculty member in the university would not want anything to do with the NEA. He does not consider himself to be similar to a public school teacher.

SMJ: Do you want to go on to the next question? What changes have you seen in the Science Department over the years?

URBAN: That will be obvious as I go over some of these items. When I came to this campus there were six of us comprising the entire science department. They stuck pretty much to their specialties. We had four rooms in Ketchum Hall at that time. The first addition to this was a temporary building built on the south side of Ketchum Hall, in which we put a physics lab and a classroom lab. That was built because of the campus population explosion after the war.

SMJ: Is that where the parking lot is now?

URBAN: Yes. The next building to go up was just in back of

that which was a dormitory called Pioneer Hall. It had four rooms in it, with 8 girls to a room. That was in about 1948. It was on the sight where Moot Hall is now. We had very, very little equipment, I was shocked at how little we had. I came from a high school that was better equipped than the college was. For example, we had a class of 45 students in the biology department. The only equipment we had was the use of 8 microscopes. Of those only 5 were in working order because they were antiques. We had a few dissecting pans with paraffin bottoms, that is all there was!! This was a very skimpy curriculum. Something that the Russians did, sending up the first Sputnik, made Americans voice the opinion that we needed to improve education in the fields of science and math. As a result, SUNY became very science conscious and we were told to go right ahead and start planning for a new certificate program in science. Dean Herman Cooper said that we should be doing something about science, but you must limit yourself to a junior high school science. You will also limit yourself to a curriculum which will be an extension of the elementary school certificate to include junior high school science. So everyone else who finished that program was certified to teach both elementary and junior high school. It was about in 1962 before we developed majors in biology, chemistry, physics and geosciences, by that time we moved into the secondary school education certification. The science did grow. With the growth of the secondary school programs in the liberal arts/science programs the elementary programs disappeared. No one wanted that any more. The first of the new buildings was opened in June of 1964. I stayed on

in the dept. at the time because I wanted to be first in that office!! The second part of the science building was not opened until the fall of 1968. the size and the cost of the building was laid down in Albany. However, the space planning was done with a great deal of input from the faculty.

SMJ: That was the same thing as Upton Hall, wasn't it?

URBAN: Right, right!! When it came for furniture, equipment and things of that nature our faculty was very much involved.

SMJ: Did they honor the suggestions of the faculty?

URBAN: Yes, they did. Ted Eckhard and I looked at the first stack of plans that the State came up with on Tuesday. The State wanted our answer about plans on a Friday. Of course we did not agree to the plans. We felt there were many things wrong with them.

SMJ: Well, that was good then wasn't it?

URBAN: Oh yes, as a matter of fact.... the faculty asked for a lot, it was almost over equipped, maybe I shouldn't talk about it. Anyhow, it was 1966 that we broke into separate departments. We did find some junior high school general science teachers whom we brought in. One of them was Herny Collins who is still with us. He has a masters from Harvard and had experience in Massachusetts somewhere, so we brought him in.

SMJ: In looking back then, you really started out very small institution and became very sophisticated along the way.

URBAN: Right. We had problems... for example: Too many of us had PhD's in Science Education. As those Phd's left, we replaced them with new faculty having less training. At one time I also

taught Botany, geology, astronomy, field study courses, school science teaching course, science camp, conservation workshops, etc! I taught out in California in the summers of 1952 and 53.

SMJ: Did the family go with you?

URBAN: Oh yes. Well the first year, yes. We drove out taking 10 days to get there. On our way put there we did visit the Painted Desert, Grand Canyon and Sequoia National Park. The second year I went alone. Helen's mother became very ill, she stayed with her. I don't know that there is much more I need to mention.

SMJ: I did want you to comment if you could, your reflections on various administrations/administrators.

URBAN: Alright. My first president, was Dr Rockwell. He was a short, rather stout man, a real gentleman, cultured, well-mannered... however, he was the boss. He listened to the faculty members and then made up his mind and then issued orders. As I recall Dr. Rockwell was there for 32 years. He did not have a Doctorate, it was an honorary title. Of course you have probably heard all of these things.

SMJ: Yes, I did hear that.

URBAN: One of the things I wish he had not done was to be talking with other people and the same way he talked to me. He confessed to me and others that he did not have an "earned" Doctorate. I always had the impression that he felt just a little bit insecure about that.

SMJ: Well, that was a humble part act on his part, don't you think?

URBAN: Yes, it was. He lived right there in the residence on

campus. There were other signs of insecurity in Dr. Rockwell. When we organized the branch association the 11 College Presidents were going to have a meeting here in Buffalo. President Rockwell thought it would be very nice if the faculty had a dinner. I called a meeting of the Branch Association and I put the proposition to them. They could tell by the way I was handling it, that it was kind of a critical thing, very, very delicate and the approved of having a faculty dinner. I went from the meeting to the President's office to tell him that the dinner would be held on such and such a date, at such and such a time. He had already heard of the action. He preceded to ball me out. We had sold this on the idea that this was an Association Dinner. He told me since it was a branch association dinner, that I would be master of ceremonies. Then he went on to say, that people would wonder who was the president of the school, Rockwell or Urban? this incident took place after the man had already been here 30 years. Another bit of insight, as the leader of the Branch Association, I was not allowed to call myself the President of the Association. I had to be referred to as Chairman of the Association. The memorandum came down that there would be only one PRESIDENT in the campus and his name is Harry Rockwell. Well, later on we got over that. He did run a good school, there was no question about that. He had a good faculty, a loyal one. By the time I came here, the faculty on campus had pretty much out grown Harry Rockwell.

SMJ: How about Dr. Rice?

URBAN: He was a different type of individual. He was tall, handsome, good sense of humor, excellent public speaker, he could

wrap the student body around his little finger with the stories he told. He was an excellent administrator. He did give considerable attention to what his faculty was thinking. He did permit us to operate openly. However....

SMJ: It has been said that he governed with an iron hand!

URBAN: His statement was that he was the one who was responsible to Albany for the school. Therefore, he would make decisions and then take responsibility. One year we planned to go fishing. (The Mrs. and I) Arthur Bradford had reservations on an ocean liner for a trip to England, Harold Petersen had an assignment with the US Army in Washington, DC. Suddenly we are called to a meeting and told that Dean Cooper is holding a workshop at Plattsburg, and all department chairmen were going to that workshop. Harvey Rice, right then and there let us know, in no uncertain terms, that we would be going to Plattsburg. I excused Harold Petersen because he could not very well contradict the United States Army. He excused Bradford because of the money involved with the reservation. But... John Urban did go to Plattsburg. He was an ambitious man and wanted to be Chancellor of the State University. It was about that time that he decided to leave Buffalo and went to McCallister. You heard that story didn't you?

SMJ: No, I don't think so.

URBAN: He made a speech somewhere. Rice was a Presbyterian, he made the address at a Presbyterian laymen's meeting. He very much impressed a man by the name of Wallace. Wallace happened to be the owner/publisher of Reader's Digest. Wallace just so

happened to be a member of the Board of Trustees of McCallister College up in Minnesota. They were looking for a President at the time, so that is how Rice went to McCallister. Harvey felt rather alone in this position.

SMJ: What about Dr. Bulger?

URBAN: Dr. Bulger, well I never got along with him. I am very hesitant in talking about it. To give you one example: He called a meeting of administrators and other people which we held in Bacon Hall auditorium. The question was what should the future name of this college be? President Bulger said we should call it Buffalo State University College. I became upset over that and disagreed. We are already having mail complications between the two. We can simplify the matter by just being called Buffalo State College. That riled President Bulger. He felt that we could become the research center that UB was. Many of us were aware that there was no way we were prepared to be a university center. We did not have a research faculty, we did not have library facilities, etc. That is just one instance in difference of opinion that we had.

SMJ: Now, what about Dr. Fretwell?

URBAN: As a "man" I liked him the best of the four. He was a very likable individual. He was a smooth operator, in that he could get things accomplished without antagonizing people. He lived through some of the most difficult times of the college, like during the time of the 1960's. I came to admire him greatly, we became good friends. As a matter of fact, some ten years ago I had a sabbatical leave. My wife and I wanted to go to Europe for a

semester, to Checkoslovakia. When Fretwell heard this he told me that he knew a person in Pilsen that we might look up. He wrote a letter of introduction to a madam Rumlova in Pilsen. When we got there we did look her up, we have been corresponding with her ever since! That is the sort of thing that the Fretwell's would do.

SMJ: I think we will have time for your last question!! Could you comment on how you see the college today?

URBAN: Well, no one could possibly have foreseen the college in 1946 as it turned out today. the college today is in much better position to serve a variety of interest of the State of New York. We are able to make contributions in areas that we simply could not have done previously that is because we were so restrictive as a Teacher's College. I was one of those who talked early on the possibility in journalism. Now we have a major in communications, I had nothing to do with its foundation, all I did was talk about it, being in favor of the program of course! With the formation of the Industrial Arts and Technology Department, means that the college is now in a much better position to serve the entire state of New York than it could before. We are always going to be in an awkward position because we are at the back door of the University.

SMJ: I understand from other professors also, we are second now because the media seems to emphasize the University.

URBAN: Well, there is a long, long history on that. Part of that history is the fact that the University for a long time was favored by the Buffalo Evening News. The Butler family was much more involved with... despite the fact that they were on our

College Council for generations, they were more intimately involved with the University than they were with the College. It has was the BEN that pushed for State to take over UB. But, I think it would be a mistake to consolidate the two. There comes a time when a unit becomes too big for a good administration. We have enough problems on our own, without taking on the problems of another. I am firmly convinced that the two should stay separate.

SMJ: Very good. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on? Anything in your notes there that we have over looked?

URBAN: I have pretty much covered my notes. I think we can stop and call it a day for now.

SMJ: So we will, and thank you Dr. Urban.