

KATHLEEN LARGE

May 8, 2002

Jeff Charnley,
Interviewer

Charnley: Today is Wednesday, May 8th, the year 2002. We are in East Lansing, Michigan. I am Jeff Charnley interviewing Kathleen Large for the MSU Oral History Project for the Sesquicentennial of Michigan State to be commemorated in the year 2005.

As you can see, we have a tape recorder to do this oral history today. Do you give us permission to record the interview?

Large: Yes, I do.

Charnley: I'd like to start with some general questions about your personal background. Where were you born and raised, and where did you go to high school?

Large: I was born in Lansing, Michigan, raised in Gaylord, Michigan, moved back and finished high school at Eastern High School.

Charnley: What year did you graduate?

Large: 1951.

Charnley: What did you do after high school graduation?

Large: Back in those days if you wanted to be a secretary, you didn't go to college; that was recommended by teachers and counselors. So I seeked a job. I had worked at Daniel's Jewelry, downtown Lansing, while I was in high school on a co-op program in the office, so I knew I liked that kind of work. I came to Michigan State and applied for a position, and got two half-time jobs the first summer, and I've been at Michigan State ever since.

Charnley: What was it that was appealing to you about becoming a secretary at the time?

Large: Oh, I think back in the 1940s and '50s it wasn't expected that girls were going to work for a long time, that they were going to get married and raise a family, so the secretarial route was kind of enticing. I like to type and I liked the shorthand part, I liked the business part, so it just was a natural.

Charnley: Did your business courses in high school prepare you with that in terms of shorthand?

Large: Yes, I felt that I was well prepared for that.

Charnley: You mentioned that you got two half-time jobs at Michigan State. Where were those?

Large: Half-time with what was then home economics. I worked with a professor, and I cannot think of her name at this time, who was doing a research project that summer and she needed a

half-time person. We worked on the fourth floor of human ecology with the nice sunlight domes. It was very hot that summer.

The other half-time job was with guidance and counseling, which was in the College of Education, and I worked for a couple of the counselors there, so it made a full-time job for me.

Charnley: What happened in the fall?

Large: In the fall I went with the Placement Bureau. A position opened up and it was one full-time position, and there I worked with the high school administrators coming in to hire teachers. That was rewarding.

Charnley: What did you like about that job?

Large: I liked the contact with the public and the students. I guess from that point on I always have worked with students in some way or other. From there I went to Kellogg Center and I worked in the conference department for a couple years with the staff that set up the arrangements, the logistics and everything, for people to have conferences. I later became the manager of the conference desk. I loved that job because I did work with outside people from all over the world. That was very rewarding. Then I went with Gordon [A.] Sabine.

Charnley: The Kellogg Center is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, isn't it?

Large: They opened in '55, so it'll be fifty.

Charnley: Fifty years coming up in 2005 also.

When you worked with Dr. Sabine, what was involved in your work there?

Large: I was his administrative assistant and he was responsible for the Office of Admissions and Scholarships, as well as the registrar's office, plus any task that Dr. [John A.] Hannah wanted completed. So it was a secretarial role, keeping track of his calendar, talking with students, talking with faculty. There was a lot of communication between the Honors College, the admissions staff, a lot of families and students coming in to try to understand why they were denied admission.

Charnley: So that was the tough part?

Large: That was the tough part, yes. A lot of legislators would get involved at that time.

Charnley: When they were denied admissions?

Large: Right. Not when they were admitted. [laughs] He worked with the total university. We worked with all the deans, all the chairs. It was just a miscellaneous position. I went with him in 1960, so in 1961 is when we started working with the Merit Scholarship program. That all fell under, I guess, my umbrella because we did all the initial contacting of the students and compiled the mailing lists and so forth, which was quite a detailed operation. I don't know if you want to get into that now.

Charnley: Yes, let's talk about that. What was involved?

Large: When we first started that, the only way you could get the students' names was to get this merit semi-finalist annual book that was published by the Merit Corporation in Evanston, Illinois. The book was available to anyone who desired it on a particular day, like Monday, September 19th. I just picked that out of the air, it seemed like it was the third Friday of September. That was available on Friday morning. Someone would make a trip to Evanston, Illinois, by car, pick up that book on Friday morning, get back to the campus, and I would have the admissions clerical staff ready to start the procedure to communicate with these students.

Prior to that, we had several thousands of letters printed. Back in those days it was very important to make the letter look personal, so we had to have several typewriters with the same element because we inserted the salutation. It didn't dare be crooked; it had to line up and it had to look for real. We strived very hard on that and we did a good job. We ahead of time had packets ready, but when we would get that list, I would make a copy of it. It was in order by state, by city, by high school, and then the students within those high schools that were named semi-finalists. We would type envelopes to every student in care of the high school, along with a principal envelope because everything had to go to the school. There was no home address at that point in time. So envelopes were hand-typed for, I believe the number was between fourteen and fifteen thousand, and we would then add the salutation to the letters.

Everything had to be double-checked to make sure we had the right students in the right school, with the right principal, with the right envelopes. We would then stuff the envelopes, and then I arranged with our mail service to work on Sunday as well with us. They would come

in and as we had the mail stuffed and ready, they would pick it up by the trayload, take it, process it, seal it, stamp it, and it was in the main post office at eight o'clock Monday morning.

At the time the book was just being released to the public. We had a cover letter to the principal letting them know what the contents of the envelopes were, along with the information that we were sending. We were initially sending the letter—it was a congratulations letter encouraging them to think about Michigan State as a college to attend. We had a response card in that, and if they responded, they continued to hear from us on a regular basis.

Charnley: Offhand, do you remember what the percentage was of people that responded out of the fourteen or fifteen thousand? I'm sure it changed every year.

Large: Right, but we got a good percent. It was around 10 percent of the overall, which is supposed to be a good percent of return. At that first contact we were relying on the principals or the guidance counselors to be open-minded and to pass this information on. Sometimes they didn't, you know.

From that point, if the students—and they had a coded application, so if they chose to file for admission we knew right then that they were a merit semi-finalist. We started a mailing list and Gordon had newsletters going out monthly to the students, and we covered all areas of admissions, Honors College, financial aid. We promoted the three small colleges because that was very intriguing to that caliber of student. They liked that.

Charnley: Those three were?

Large: Justin Morrill College, which was our first one, then Lyman Briggs and James Madison.

Charnley: Residential colleges.

Large: Yes. We also did a newsletter on the resident halls themselves, but the small colleges was a separate one.

Charnley: Was there discussion about the issues of in-state versus out-of-state at the time? In other words, did you go after the in-state National Merit Scholarships to a higher degree?

Large: No, we treated them all equally. They all got the same treatment.

Charnley: So similar letters?

Large: Yes.

Charnley: What were some of the things that you recall about—obviously that must have been a horrible weekend, the equivalent of April 15th for an accountant or something.

Large: It was because there were twenty or twenty-five staff along with myself, and I was the manager of it, keeping control of it. We probably worked from noon until ten o' clock Saturday, and then we were right back there at seven o' clock Sunday morning until it was done. We worked as a team. We were exhausted but we were proud of what we had accomplished.

Charnley: Did the procedures change over time? Did the book become available or some of that information?

Large: Yes. The procedure started to change when Gordon Sabine left. I couple of trips were made, I recall, right after that, and then we just waited for the book to come in and then went through that same procedure. When Bill Turner came on as Director of Admissions and Scholarships, we started using the ACT/SAT results that come out in the spring. Keep in mind we did this in the fall, and the SAT/ACT scores came out in the spring when the students were completing their junior year. So we started recruiting the same caliber of student by using test scores, knowing what they normally have for the different state cutoffs. Then we started contacting them in the spring.

The letter became generic. We no longer went through that procedure. We also had home addresses, and at that time you could get the addresses off the database, so now we were slapping labels on envelopes instead of hand-typing. It made the task a lot easier. It still took the whole admissions staff to do it, and our goal was to get in the mail before anyone else did. I think we probably succeeded in that 80 percent of the time, but I always felt that it was a little down-key from what we did before.

Charnley: When was this? Dr. Sabine left in 1970?

Large: Dr. Sabine left in 1970. The first year Horace King, who was the registrar at that time, took it on as acting director. Ira Polley came in, but Ira sort of was like a Gordon Sabine. He

was like an assistant to the provost, and he had Charles Seeley, who was one of our admission counselors. I think Turner had fifteen years of service when he retired. He'd been gone a couple of years, and I left in '91, so about '85. So for about five or six years this is how we did it, the latter part.

We also recruited the commended students. I'm sure you realize that there's another cutoff?

Charnley: Tell me about that.

Large: There's a cutoff score that's established by the Merit Corporation to make a student a semi-finalist versus a commended student. A commended student probably is between a 3.0 and a 3.5 as far as GPA is concerned, or it was. Today I don't know, but it was then. Then we recruited them in the same way, but we didn't have financial aid to offer them, like we did with the Merit Scholarships, because they could only go to semi-finalists, and they had to reach finalist status. Then we used similar things. We had newsletters that went to them, as well as the National Achievement semi-finalists, and those are your black American students.

Charnley: Do you remember what the main pitch was, why they should come to Michigan State? Was there any strategy?

Large: Why they should come to Michigan State? Because we have the Honors College to offer you, you can make up your own agenda of what you want, we have all these honors faculty to work with you directly.

Charnley: So the Honors College was targeted?

Large: Yes, they were always very much involved.

Charnley: If you think about your workload, you talked about that, and then what was involved in your work after you got this mass of letters out and that sort of thing, the correspondence came in?

Large: Dealing with it, selecting the students for their scholarships. There was a break at one time when scholarships went with financial aide, and that was also after Gordon—probably a couple years, might have been '72, '73. The scholarship program was turned over to financial aid, but we kept all freshman scholarships for our staff to determine who the students were going to be. The financial need criteria and everything was always the same.

Charnley: To what degree at that time was the federal government involved? Did the university have more independence then than now?

Large: I don't think so, because as far as need was concerned, it was determined by federal regulations. We still had to follow that.

Charnley: So during that time, that would be the federal loan programs or grants?

Large: The admissions office only dealt with scholarships some of them were no need, but they were really the merit ones; the Merit and the ADS students and your National Achievement.

Charnley: Which was the Alumni Distinguished Scholarship Program, commonly referred to it as ADS.

Large: We call it A-D-S. Some people call it Ads. [laughs]

Charnley: They just celebrated their first reunion on campus.

Large: Yes, that was fun. Seeing people that you remember but can't put their name with them right away, and embarrassed that you can't.

Charnley: Did the students remember you?

Large: Yes, several of them were hoping that Gordon Sabine and I would be there, because they went back a long ways. In fact, John Forsythe was one of the very first ones that I met and we've been friends ever since, and that would have been when I started with Gordon. John was working as a student in our office, doing extra work.

Charnley: He attended that day?

Large: Yes, John was there. Jim Anderson. Eric Goldman. I know them.

Charnley: Some stayed on as professors here.

Large: Yes, in fact, there's five or six that have continued to stay here. Paul Hunt and Kathy Hunt, and John and Eric, and there was another one that I didn't realize—his name escapes me right at the moment. I knew that day, but I don't today.

Charnley: What was your relationship with any of the presidents or provosts at that time? Did you have contact with them?

Large: Oh, yes.

Charnley: Talk a little bit about Dr. [John A.] Hannah.

Large: Well, Dr. Hannah. Of course, we were right around the corner from each other, so there was a lot of contact because of the special projects that he would ask Gordon to do. Not too much with Dr. [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.], and I don't know why, other than when Dr. Sabine left, then there was no vice president for special projects. So our line of communication was through, like, Ira Polley, who was assistant to the provost, and then Barb Steidle came on as assistant to the provost, so our communication to the provost or president would have been through them more directly than what it was when Gordon was here.

Charnley: So the university administrative structure changed with transition from Hannah to Wharton.

Large: Yes.

Charnley: How did some of those changes affect what you did?

Large: I don't recall, but it really didn't affect how we operated.

Charnley: Going back to Dr. Hannah, what were some of the personal contacts you had with him, or how would you describe him in everyday work?

Large: Just every day, you know, "Good morning." You knew his family because they had to walk past you. [laughs] We were in and out of each other's offices on a daily basis. All of his administrators were right there—Jim Dennison, who was his right-hand press man, Jack Breslin, Phil May, the Provost. We were all in the same building.

Charnley: What building was that?

Large: Actually, that was what is now Linton Hall, on the top floor. We got our daily exercise by going up the back flight of steps because there was no elevator. I don't know if there is today or not.

Charnley: There is today. The dean of the College of Arts and Letters is there now. The board room is restored. Very nice now. I think John Eady did that when he was dean.

Large: They probably were forced to put one in. Back then, of course we knew all the board of trustees because they also were involved with denial admissions, but they also would come into the office. Their board meetings were right there, so it was a very close relationship back in those days. They could call you by your first name and you'd know who they were.

Charnley: Interesting. How would you describe the relationship between Dr. Sabine and President Hannah?

Large: Very good, very good. I never knew a soul that had problems with Dr. Hannah. I don't know if it was just being cooperative on both ends or—everyone respected the man, and if he had an idea, you would see that it was fulfilled.

Charnley: Obviously you were here during the time of great expansion in terms of numbers and the physical expansion of that. How did that affect your job?

Large: I continued to do the same things, but it increased staff.

Charnley: So you changed the size of your staff too?

Large: Changed the size of staff, yes. Until they made us cut budgets, and then, of course, everybody takes on more, or it takes longer.

Charnley: When did the budget cutting start?

Large: I remember it more during the Turner years.

Charnley: Under President Wharton?

Large: That would have been under Wharton, DiBiaggio, Mackey, and here we're doing it again.

Charnley: The campus activism of the 1960s, how did that affect your work? What did you see about how all the students reacted?

Large: What I remember about that is that we were locked into the Administration Building one time. Other than that, they didn't affect the admissions office. I think the residence halls got hit more with that, and demonstrating. I went through a union strike where we had to cross the lines because we were administration. That didn't bother me. [laughs]

Charnley: What were the key issues on the labor issues there, do you remember?

Large: Higher wages. That's one I think that was always out there, foremost. But not better working conditions. They couldn't ask for better working conditions at the university.

Charnley: The Honors College and the Alumni Distinguished Scholarship Program, did that change over the course of time, or were there some constants?

Large: A couple things changed. Of course, the students were invited in January for the competition in February. In 1961 until '70 or '71, all the invitations, everything associated with it was handled by the admissions office, so that my only involvement was after they had taken the test, and Gordon wanted data accumulated and so forth. When he left, I was asked to take on the merit program and the ADS program, which I did.

One of the biggest changes we went through with the ADS program was that students used to be housed in the residence halls, and for the first couple of years that I was working with it, MSU students had to commit themselves so that we knew where we were going to house students. It got to the point that maybe two days before students were coming on campus, our university students might decide to change their mind, they might decide to go home, or didn't want anyone in their room while they were gone for the weekend, sickness. The last time there was a big chicken pox outbreak. I thought, "I'm not going through this another year," because it was just too difficult at a late time to find enough space. We did, but it was kind of overwhelming. So that was probably one of the biggest changes, is that we took the students out of the residence halls unless they had personal friends or friends off campus that they could stay with. We started housing them in Kellogg Center, Butterfield, and I had also used the Holiday

Inn over by Frandor, I had used Harley and University Inn to house the students. Today I understand the students are responsible for their own housing.

Charnley: Were you ever involved in any of the interviews where they went out, went to the high schools?

Large: Yes, I had quite a trip. [laughs] I just went out one year because we were short-staffed. I had a couple of interviews, and—

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Charnley: When the tape ended, you were talking about the ADS scholarships interviews. Tell a little more about that.

Large: I myself went on interviews just one year, and a schedule was put together for me, which I wish today I would have done myself because it was a hectic schedule. I had two interviews in Illinois, one in Wisconsin, one in Minnesota, and one in Colorado, and they were bunched together. I did the two in Illinois in one day and the Wisconsin one day, Minnesota one day, and then Colorado another day. I had to fly in between and have rental cars, etc.

I interviewed the students at their schools. We always arranged to have a conference room of some sort where we could do the interviewing. We had set questions so that we all were interviewing in the same way and could compare responses. I can't even remember today what the questions were.

Charnley: Did you write responses or you basically just filled in a form? You didn't record them?

Large: We did not record them. We took our own personal notes. Back then you didn't record, where today it's a lot easier. I don't know if you want to get into how we got to that point of interviewing students.

Charnley: Sure.

Large: We would get our test results after the second weekend of ADS. We had a cutoff. I can't remember what that cutoff score was, but it was pretty high on the ladder. We would start pulling the applications and the data together, of the students, because we didn't just look at the ADS score. The ADS score pulled out the top hundred students, let's say, then their class rank, grade point, curriculum, and their recommendations all were part of the formula that got us to what we considered to be the most well-rounded, balanced scholars.

The next step was we brought that list down to thirty, thirty-five people, and those would be ones that we would interview. There was a team of the director of admissions, five what I call senior admission counselors—they'd been with the office for some time and they worked with the students quite extensively—and myself were part of the whole committee that did the selection. Then when we came back with the interviews, that was another component added in to, "Okay, now who do we offer these to?" They all had to be ranked in order so that we had alternates, because we didn't always get our scholarships accepted. Many students wanted to

take the test just to see how well they could do. However, we never shared test results with them, but they just wanted to see how well they could do, and Harvard [University] might have been their first choice or some other school.

Charnley: How many were given out each year?

Large: Ten. In later years we added what we call the Distinguished Freshman Scholarship, and we were able to offer five of those, the difference being the Alumni Distinguished Scholarship was a full ride for four years, and the Distinguished Freshman was tuition only, which included the out-of-state tuition as well.

Charnley: So that must have been attractive to out-of-state students.

Large: That was attractive, because the out-of-state was more or less waived.

Charnley: Were some students surprised when they actually got the interview.

Large: The interview, and they were very nervous. I can remember the ones that I interviewed. We had the practice that besides the letter of offer, we always wanted to call and let them know that they were being named an ADS scholar. Just jumping for joy, or a real loud, “Oh, Mom and Dad! I won!” Lots of excitement. I can’t remember anyone just being, “Oh, okay.”

Charnley: You mentioned some of your immediate supervisors and you talked a little bit about some of the other presidents that you worked with. Some of those others that I haven't really interviewed yet that you did mention; Horace King and Ira Polley.

Large: Ira Polley, he was brought to the campus to do an admissions—I can't think of the word I want. Look into it.

Charnley: Survey?

Large: Survey.

Charnley: A report?

Large? It was a report. Commission on Admissions, seems like what it was. I'm trying to remember what president was here then. I think Ira was superintendent of schools prior to coming to MSU and doing the report when Gordon Sabine left, it was a natural, I guess, to put Ira in as an assistant to the provost.

Charnley: He had been the superintendent of Michigan public schools.

Large: Yes.

Charnley: Your job with admission, later on did you assume more responsibilities?

Large: I managed the whole office. We had a clerical staff of fifty-some. When you added the professional staff to it, we probably were about sixty-five. In a management view, you see that the work is done. We had office supervisors. The office was divided in sections. Some people worked strictly with freshman admissions, some worked with transfer, graduate, and just processing the applications initially. Each one of those areas had to have an office supervisor because I couldn't be everywhere at the same time. I managed the budget for the total office.

Any special recruitment that we did—like we had what we called Green Carpet Days. Green Carpet Days were in the spring of the year, or summer, and we would invite students to come visit the campus, learn about admissions and financial aid, I would always arrange those. We would have five of those during the summer.

Through the course of the year we started having football outings in the fall. We would invite students to come to the campus for a football game and listen to an admissions recruitment presentation. I did those. I did all logistics that had anything to do with bringing students to the campus, any large groups, and the budget, and that filled my time very well, more than 60 percent.

Charnley: When did you move to a newer building?

Large: We moved to the new Ad Building in 1969, December.

Charnley: President Hannah would have been gone by then?

Large: No, President Hannah was still here. President Hannah got to be in the new building before he retired. The admissions and scholarship office, prior to that, was housed in student services, and then the registrar's office was in the old Ad Building, which is now Lenton Hall, and so was Gordon and I. When we got the new Ad Building we all were under one roof. Logistically it was much easier.

Charnley: What were your impressions of that building when you first moved in?

Large: It was nice and new and it was air-conditioned. It was nice to be all under one roof because it was easier to get materials. We always had to have runners back and forth. It was easier for both Gordon and myself to have to do things with the registrar's office or the admissions office. It didn't seem to take any less time away from the job, but it was more convenient. I think it gave not necessarily us, but it gave the staff—like they knew us better instead of just being the bosses. It was more of a family.

Charnley: So the physical location was critical.

Large: Yes, definitely.

Charnley: What technological changes did you see in the course of your work, initially as a secretary and ultimately as a supervisor, affecting your field? What were some of those technological things that you experienced?

Large: I went through less secretarial clerical-type work to more management tasks, as talking with staff, hiring staff, firing staff, evaluating staff, working with figures every day. Then computers came in, not more than two years before I retired, so I didn't see a lot of technical changes as such, not like what's happened in the last ten years. Definitely they've gone through a lot of major changes in the last ten years.

We had support from the beginning from what was then called data processing. They would key-punch and generate all of our address labels to send to students, or high schools, or whatever.

Charnley: They were behind the scenes rather than you doing it.

Large: They were behind the scenes, right.

Charnley: Did you have accounting training or did just on-the-job bookkeeping?

Large: No, I did not. I just had general bookkeeping. I think I was very fortunate in that I was able to go from high school, without any advanced training, and go from non-secretarial tasks to secretarial tasks, to management, and then on up into administration. I was, I think, because I'm a good worker, I don't like to waste time, and I worked for good people, and I apparently had some skills I wasn't aware of. [laughs]

Charnley: How was it that you came to work at the MSU Museum?

Large: I had retired.

Charnley: What year was that?

Large: I had retired in August of '91, and in the summer of '92 my daughter was working with Terry Schafer, who was in the agricultural heritage division of the museum, and they were working with what they called Country Life Historic Park at the Michigan State Fair. I had no idea what it was about, but my daughter was responsible for children's activities, whatever that was supposed to mean. She needed help, so she asked me to help her out, so that's how I got acquainted with the museum. I guess they liked me.

The winter of '93 I was getting bored with home activities—that is, cleaning house, everything else had gotten done from retirement—and Julie Avery had called me at the time I was thinking about looking for something. I had no idea what that was going to be. Maybe it was just going to be a sale clerk somewhere, I didn't know. Anyway, Julie called me and they needed someone with MSU background, administrative, and wondered if I might be interested, and they wanted somebody on a part-time basis. I can remember saying to her, "Well, I would like to, but I don't like computers," because I had no experience with computers other than in admissions when I left we were just getting them, and we could look up what they said online to see that we had an application from somebody, and know where they were from. That was as far as it had gone. Julie says, "That's no problem. I'll teach you."

So I took a job that was nineteen hours a week that has grown to thirty hours a week. Now I'm back as an administrative professional classification, and I have learned how to do research, how to put an exhibit together. We had a very successful Fair Time exhibit that we had

at the museum in 2000 and 2001. I worked with grants. I never knew I'd write a grant. I now write grants, I do budgets, I seek money from sponsors, because the museum is not 100 percent general funded.

Charnley: So grants are a major portion of the budget.

Large: Grants are a major portion of the budget, right.

Charnley: How would you describe the County Life Historic Park, just for the record?

Large: How would I describe it? Probably the first experience that most urban people in that area, in Detroit, would have had with how things used to be, like eighty or one hundred years ago. Churning butter, most of them wouldn't even know what that was. What else do we have? Old-time children activities.

Charnley: You said your daughter was involved in that?

Large: Not this portion. The first year that we went down there, we did activities with children like painting or cutting out animal designs and having them glue seeds on them to decorate them, or circle medallions. They felt that there needed to be a place for children to go, to do something different than walk around the fairgrounds and be on the rides and so forth. That was just part of that. We had them coloring with vegetables, and coloring books and things like that. They really needed it staffed and we had a huge tent, and we had children in there all day long. We

had enough tables maybe for twenty children at one time, and they were filled all the time.

Parents would interact as well. Parents would help the children with it.

That particular activity grew into an activity done by what we call the Farm Lady. She's a lady out of Novi, she's a very dear friend now, and she works with children and brings in animals, animals that they might not have ever seen, pygmy goats, chickens that you don't see today. She does old activities, playing marbles the way they used to play them, walking on sticks. That's all that comes to my mind right at the moment. The area was large enough that we brought oxen in from Tillers International in Kalamazoo, who today work with countries that don't have access to the mechanical machinery that there is, and they have to use the old-fashioned ways. They demonstrated how oxen behave and how they work. We showed them how you make oxen yokes by hand, and they're made out of wood, blacksmithing.

Charnley: Do people dress in period costume?

Large: Only Tillers and Charleton Park were the only two that did that. We wanted to at times. I guess Greenfield Village employees also did, because they would make soup on old cast-iron kettles over a fire. I think it was a good experience.

Charnley: One year I know they had a shingle mill.

Large: Yes, we built a barn, put it up by hand.

Charnley: Erected a barn?

Large: Erected a barn from scratch, I guess you would say. All the fittings were done with old-time instruments and placed together and put up by hand.

Charnley: Did they take the barn down?

Large: Yes, they took the barn down and it belongs to Tillers now. No, I beg your pardon. That barn went to Margaret Schmidt, our Farm Lady. Eventually it went there. They would take it down and then put it up at different places.

Charnley: How did the public receive the—

Large: In our surveys that we did, it appeared that they did very well. The older generation really enjoyed it because it made them recall their own memories of how things used to be.

Charnley: Some of the other work that you've done, you mentioned the country fair exhibit that you worked on, that was Julie's research. What did you learn from putting that museum together?

Large: The Country Life Historic Park?

Charnley: No, not that. What did you learn from assisting with the exhibit when you worked with Julie?

Large: Well, it was a whole new area for me. I guess I enjoy yesteryear myself, so I enjoyed all the exhibits that were brought together there within one large park. I enjoyed meeting the people that we collaborated with. I guess that's all I can say on that one.

Charnley: You didn't come from a farm background, did you?

Large: Yes/no. When I lived in Gaylord, one of my aunts and uncles had a large dairy farm, and my uncle was responsible for the Sebago potato. Back in those years, kids, in the fall, were let out of school to go pick potatoes, and I can remember that because I did it. So from that standpoint, I wasn't raised on a farm but I've always been around cattle, through having relatives.

Charnley: How about your work with Julie on the exhibit?

Large: On the Country Life one or the Fair Time one?

Charnley: No, the Fair Time.

Large: That was fun, and that was a long, drawn-out experience. I think we started in '95 or '96. The Fair Time project was several activities, first being we put together traveling exhibits for fairs or anyone else interested, and they were made up from old Fair Time posters that were done

back in the 1880s to 1920s. The collection itself has 246 pieces, and there were three of them that we wanted to do. We wanted to do what we called American fairs educating America, livestock heritage, and horse racing as entertainment. We selected the pieces of artwork that would be in these exhibits so that each exhibit has anywhere from twenty-two to thirty pieces in it. That really sounds simple, but it took a lot to get that done. This is all original artwork and we had to have them reproduced as closely as possible to the original in color and content and so forth, because many of our vendors didn't have the facilities that would guarantee the protection of the originals, so we had them duplicated and framed, and carrying cases made, and so forth. That was the first phase.

The second phase was to work with Equity Studios out of Sturgis, Michigan, who produces videos of different things. They've done Michigan bridges, Michigan highways. Those two come to mind right at the moment, but it all has to do with Michigan history. They did one on Michigan fairs, so we collaborated with each other on that.

A third component was a book we put together that includes a lot of essays. Julie has a couple of articles, and again we have the artwork in there. Then creating the exhibit at the museum itself. We worked with a committee of twelve people that represented fairs—fair managers—Julie and myself, Michigan Department of Agriculture, and the Michigan Fairs Association, because we collaborated. It was a three-way collaboration to put this whole project on.

We had to write grants for funding, we had to seek sponsorship from other people like W.K. Kellogg Foundation for money. A couple of the amusement people out there. The most fun part of that was just being part of putting an exhibit together, working on it for three years, doing research, going out of state to different museums, different libraries, trying to find photos

of old time fairs and et cetera, and then bringing it all together and putting a story with it. Julie is good at putting the story with it. But just to see it all work out and have different people's ideas.

The exhibit, there were three parts to it. We had three rooms—we had what we call today's fairs, that represented what fairs are like today. We had another section that was all this artwork that told a complete story, and then Floral Hall, which had over two hundred items in it that you would have seen at a fair one hundred years ago.

We also had what we called an aggie research room that was put together for children's activities like quizzes and so forth, to quiz them on grains, and horse breeds, and what a farm is like. Did you see it, by any chance?

Charnley: I saw portions of it, yes.

Large: Did you see the whole thing?

Charnley: Yes.

Large: What did you think about it?

Charnley: I thought it was great, a lot of work.

Large: We did too.

Charnley: Especially something original too, to pull it together.

Large: Yes, and another fun part was we scheduled several events with that exhibit. We brought in what we called historic home day arts and we had people demonstrating rug-weaving, making lace, making wreaths out of hair. We had a lady that collects millinery items, and that was just fun, the great big bloomy hats and so forth that you see the ladies wear at the Kentucky Derby or something like that. Then we brought a seventy-foot brand-new Ferris wheel. I'm sure you saw that? Did you see that?

Charnley: Yes.

Large: People were able to take rides. We had clowns. We tried to make a Fair Time atmosphere without it being at a regular fair. We brought in clowns, we brought in our own MSU draft horses and had wagon rides around the circle—

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Charnley: This is tape two of the Kathleen Large interview.

We were talking about the exhibit at the museum dealing with country fairs and you were mentioning the day when the draft horses—

Large: The draft horses took people around the circle, wagon rides all day long. Then in May we brought the horses back to be on display but we also had several tractors—we called it tractors in the circle—and brought several tractors in from the late 1880s right up to MSU's most

current John Deere, being on display for people to see. These are a lot of things that don't normally happen with the exhibits that are at the museum.

Charnley: Did you have any way to judge how the public reacted to the exhibits?

Large: We didn't do actual surveys, but just by the way they appeared to be enjoying themselves every day, and the people that would go through the museum were either—if it was in the day's exhibit we had a lot of children's actual work done within the last couple of years on display. They'd go, "Oh, wow." A girl made a horse saddle out of leather. It was just great. You couldn't believe that a young person could do that.

We had a peacock that a couple of sisters had raised, and he came by bad luck and they chose to learn how to do taxidermy. Things like that, that surprised people, and then the art work—there again, the older generation really enjoyed the old artwork because it brought back a lot of old time memories to them. We increased our attendance, the overall museum attendance, by more than thirty-five hundred people for the year. We felt good about that, and we know that we brought new audiences into the university that had never bothered to come to campus. We were looking at the fair industry, we were bringing those people in, and people that had exhibits there that would have not normally been there. We think that was very positive.

Charnley: In looking at some of your colleagues, are there some you'd like to mention that you maybe haven't mentioned yet, that were very helpful to you over time? You mentioned some, Julie and some of the others?

Large: I can't think of anyone right now.

Charnley: Is there anything else that you had prepared or that you were interested in talking about that I hadn't really asked yet?

Large: Let me see. When we were talking about the Alumni Distinguished Scholarship, the competition itself while it's here, and I made notation of we went to housing the students in the residence halls to Kellogg Center and the other facilities. One of the other things we did with that I had chaperones with the students at all times, so that I had it covered in case of emergency, in case of sickness, or the students just needed something. I felt that was very important, and today they don't do that, as well as I also said that I learned that they no longer house them other than Kellogg Center. I know that they have to go elsewhere because Kellogg Center cannot hold all those students. I think that was something we were obligated to do.

The other thing we did, students coming in on public transportation, we provided the transportation from that location to the campus and back. We always felt that it was our responsibility, and today they get there however they can. That disturbs me in some ways because I, as a parent, do not believe I would send my child to a campus knowing that they were going to be responsible for getting wherever they had to be. Some of these students are only sixteen years old and come from country families, and they have not had the experience to deal with what they might encounter. So we babysat them, and I think that was a good thing. Those are a couple of things I know that have been changed. There's no need to go into their whole itinerary.

I also, in later years, on Friday night—the competition is a two-day thing, Friday and Saturday—we always had the banquet on Friday night at Kellogg Center and an opportunity for them to listen to lectures or recruitment speeches for the Honors College and the three small residential colleges. In later years we added a social event after that where they could all get together, there was music, they could dance. That seemed to be a real positive thing, and the students finally relaxed for the first time in the day, they were able to get acquainted with other students other than who they might have traveled with.

That's another change that I know. We invited the students geographically, because there would be about two thousand students that you would invite to get an acceptance rate of one thousand to twelve hundred. Of course they had to come on two different weekends, and it was our policy that students from the same school could not participate on two different weekends. That was basically for the protection of the test because we used the same test for the same weekends, and we had to protect that. Although we would initially invite them to a particular weekend, if they had a conflict we would change them to another weekend providing they were the only one, or all students who were going to attend would change. Today they do not have that option. If they are invited to a weekend and they can't attend, they can't change it. I think that's not good for the program.

I think that's it, Jeff.

Charnley: In looking back at your career both before retirement and your post-retirement job, which you're working here, you say, thirty hours, in looking back at that, when you came in 1951, did you expect that you would be here fifty years later?

Large: No, and it was 1951. No, I thought I was going to be the typical person that would get married and quit work and have a couple children. I didn't have any future goals at that time. Girls didn't look into the future that they would be working at that time more than a couple or three years. But I've always worked because I've wanted to.

Charnley: You did raise a family?

Large: I did raise a family. I have two children. One's thirty-eight and one's thirty-two. I wasn't going to come back to work after we had our second one, but for six weeks off the job, both my husband and I knew I needed to be back working because I like to work.

Charnley: You mentioned one daughter went here. Did your other?

Large: My daughter went here, she got a bachelor's degree and graduate degree in higher administration. Her undergraduate degree was animal science. She's now a 4-H youth agent for MSU in Berrien County. My son went to Lansing Community College for a short time. He's an artist, he works with glass, sculptures glass, sandblasts designs of all sorts, and he's in Texas.

Charnley: Interesting.

Is there anything that you've looked back and seen in your work experience here at Michigan State as most important?

Large: The time I spent with Gordon Sabine was my growing part. I was seeking a job, but wasn't seeking a job. When I was manager for Kellogg Center's conference desk, I had gone to Hawaii for a nice vacation, and when I came back I had fallen in love with Hawaii and that's where I was going to return and live the rest of my life. I had given up my job, I had my house up for sale, and all of a sudden one day I thought, "Oh dear, am I making the right decision?" I am an only child, so my parents kind of influenced me that it was too far away. They won't admit that they influenced me, but they did.

So I was out of a job because we had already promoted one of my staff people into my position. I went to Jerry O'Connor, a very close friend in the personnel office at that time, and said, "What do I do? Here I am, I need a job. I'm not going to Hawaii." Jerry said that Gordon Sabine needed a secretary, and he was a very difficult person to work for. I said, "Oh, really?" That was my challenge, and we worked very well together. I learned a lot from that man. I learned that I could do a good job and that I could move higher up. I fell into things because of the performance that I had done under him.

Charnley: Interesting that you were going to leave the university, and then you end up at your most significant job.

Large: Yes.

Charnley: I want to thank you on behalf of the project, and I appreciate the time and also your insights.

Large: Thank you, Jeff.

[End of interview]

Index

Alumni Distinguished Scholarship Program, 16, 17, 18, 19
Anderson, Jim, 12
Avery, Julie, 24

Country Life Historic Park, 25, 26, 27

Dennison, Jim, 13
DiBiaggio, John A., 15

Eady, John, 15

Forsythe, John, 11

Goldman, Eric, 12

Hannah, John A., 4, 12, 13, 14, 22
Honors College, 4, 6, 10, 16, 34
Hunt, Kathy, 12
Hunt, Paul, 12

James Madison College, 7
Justin Morrill College, 7

King, Horace, 9, 20

Large, Kathleen
 Alumni Distinguished Scholarship Program, 16, 17, 18, 19
 Budget decrease, 15
 Children of, 35
 Educational background, 1
 Employment at Michigan State University, 2, 3, 4, 10, 21, 24
 Employment with Michigan State University, 5, 23
 Michigan State University Museum, 24
 National Merit Scholarship Program, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10
 Relationship with Gordon A. Sabine, 36
Lyman Briggs College, 7

Mackey, M. Cecil, 15
Merit Corporation, 5, 9
Michigan State University
 Activism in the 1960s, 15

Administration Building, 22

Changes in technology, 23

Growth of, 15

Labor issues, 16

Transportation, 33

National Merit Scholarship Program, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10

Polley, Ira, 9, 13, 20

Sabine, Gordon A., 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 22, 36

Schafer, Terry, 24

Schmidt, Margaret, 27

Seeley, Charles, 9

Steidle, Barbara, 13

Turner, Bill, 8, 9, 15

Wharton, Clifton R. Jr., 12, 13, 15