

Gwen Norrell

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Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is November 22nd. It's the year 2000. We're in East Lansing, Michigan. I am Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. Gwendolyn Norrell for the Michigan State University Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial. The sesquicentennial is coming up in the year 2005.

Dr. Norrell, you can see that we are tape-recording this session today. Do you give us permission to tape?

Norrell: Yes.

Charnley: I'd like to start first with some questions about your personal and educational background. Where were you born and where did you grow up and go to school?

Norrell: I was born in Eudora, Arkansas, in 1919. I graduated from Eudora High School, went to Peabody College, got a B.S. degree from Peabody College, went back to Arkansas and taught two years, got a master's degree at Columbia University, and came to work to Michigan State in 1945.

In 1949, I took a leave and, because of illness in the family, went home to Arkansas. That fall, I entered the University of Colorado and was there a year, came back to Michigan State for a year, and then went back to complete the coursework for an E.D.D. I got an E.D.D. in 1957, is it? I think, something like that.

Charnley: How is it that you went from Peabody to Columbia?

Norrell: Well, I taught school two years, and I was a very liberal person. I ran a course for the black students, black teachers, and I took the high school kids to dances, and I did things that the community did not like. So, probably, if I had not left to get a master's degree, I would have been fired, if you want me to be honest with you.

Then I wanted to go to school, and I just knew about Columbia or read about Columbia University, so I landed there with a master's degree.

Charnley: What was your area of study?

Norrell: Tests and measurements, and in those days it was called vocational guidance.

Charnley: How did you first hear about Michigan State and the job here?

Norrell: I did not want to go to work on the East Coast, because I grew up in the country and I didn't like all the concrete and I didn't like the bigness. I put my name in at Science Research Associates, which at that time was an agency that developed tests. You may remember the old Cooder [phonetic] Interest Tests. That was an old interest test. That company for one year had a placement office. I put my name in there, and Paul Dressel got my name from Science Research Associates, and I came to Michigan State in 1945, sight unseen.

I landed here, didn't know what it was like. I walked in his office, and Dr. Dressel was not a very tall man, and he looked at me and he says, "You are tall, aren't you?" [Laughter] So that's how I got to Michigan State. I was making 900 dollars when I was teaching in Arkansas. When I came up here, they were paying me 1,800 dollars, so I thought I was wealthy.

Charnley: Did you live in East Lansing?

Norrell: I lived in East Lansing, right across from the police station. You remember in those days--well, you don't remember, but in those days, East Lansing did not have a lot of apartments for rent, and there were very few places for people to live. So I lived with Dr. Dressel's secretary, right across from the police department and had an office in the Administration Building, and that's where I got to know Dr. [John A.] Hannah and Ruth Jameyson, whom you interviewed recently, and Marie Mercer [phonetic], who was secretary to the board of trustees, and had an office there until we moved.

How counseling centers in this country got started, after the war, the government gave universities money to test and counsel veterans on career choices. So each university that wanted to could get money to work with veterans. Dr. Hannah was interested in having the veterans come to Michigan State University, and so we got money from the government and we set up a testing office and did the testing and counseling for them.

Moved into Demonstration Hall, and that's where we were. My office was upstairs. That was also the cow barn in those days, where they showed the animals. On good warm days, it smelled rather badly over there. [Laughter] But that's where our office was.

At that time, Dr. Hannah was always interested in general education, and he made a speech in Buffalo, New York, I think it was, right before he became president, in which he reported--I'll always remember this--he said that Michigan State University was more than an ag school, that he believed in general education, and that he was going to set up general education at Michigan State. He set up the Basic College. You know the history of the Basic College.

Charnley: Only a little bit.

Norrell: The Basic College was set up by a man that he hired out of the University of Chicago, and it was patterned after the general ed program at the University of Chicago. In those days, the Counseling Center handled all changes of majors for students, every student who changed their major. That was one of the things about Michigan State was that we used to tell the students, they'd come in, and you decide what you want when you're here. You don't have

to make a decision. You can change your major. So we did that for, I think, about three years. And then it got to point where we couldn't handle it. It got too big, and University College took it over.

But I think University College, during my time and during the growth of this university, is probably one of the most significant things on this campus. It was an absolutely wonderful place for students for two years to get general education. Then it moved from Basic College into University College.

I realize those of us who were part of University College and Basic College, we got upset when a lot of the requirements in the old days were taken away. You know some of that yourself from being at AT&L, because it was a marvelous place. But then the Counseling Center just started growing, and we moved from Dem Hall to where Honors College is. My office, the testing office, was in the basement. Here, again, we come back to odors. That used to be where the pickles were made on the campus, was in the basement of the University College. So, again, on a good damp day, we smelled like it was the pickle factory again. So that was always the front part of it.

Now, at that time, the Michigan State brought in people to set up the guidance and counseling program at the College of Education. [Clifford E.] Erickson. He was brought here to set up. He came in with Dr. Hatch, and they set up the classes to teach graduate students to do counseling. That was the start of the student personnel program in the College of Business. We all knew each other because we were in the same area.

Now, in those days, what we did, there was no, really, orientation program. Faculty and I was part of that. In those days the Counseling Center had faculty status. We would go out to the high schools to recruit. Six or seven, five or six of us would get in the car and go over the state recruiting students for Michigan State as for undergraduate program here.

I'm going to go back a little bit. In the fall of '45, there were 6,000 students here, and that was the big push of the veterans coming on campus. In those days there was a no-smoking policy on that campus. Well, the veterans were not going to put up with that. Dr. Hannah reluctantly gave them permission to smoke on campus. It was not anything that he ever wanted to do.

Also, they brought alcohol with them. That was somewhat of a problem because they were older, more mature, than the others, and it was over in Mason Abbott. That's where they were staying. Sometimes if they got

in trouble, they would call one of us counselors and some nights I'd have to go down and get them out of trouble. That was okay, but that's part of our job was doing it.

So then the university just rapidly grew. When I first came here, Dr. Hannah talked to the new faculty. There weren't very many of us. He always said, and he always said to the students, "If you smile at me, I will smile back." So everybody on this campus was smiling. That was part of what you're supposed to do, smile and say hello. He said that.

The G.I. Bill, as you well know, I don't need to tell you this, was the great leveler of education in this country. That's the start of the education of the masses in this country.

Then there was the housing problem. When I told you a while ago I didn't know where I was going to live, they brought in Quonsets and set up the Quonset huts. Primarily, it was married housing for faculty, because they had to go out and hire faculty and there was no place for them to live. So they set up Quonset Village. So most of my friends in those days--I've been single all my life--were married and they lived in the Quonset Villages. Then they built the apartments later, over on Charlotte Lane. Those were married apartments. Then they started building the housing for students off of Harrison, over there.

We had at Michigan State the largest number of students housed on the campus in the world. We housed more students with that. People came from other universities to look at it. Dr. Hannah was so forward-looking. Good Lord, the Lord was good to us in making him president. They came here looking at University villages so they could see where the students, how we had worked--I say "we" because I feel part of it--how we had built the buildings, even though I wasn't part of that, but how you built the buildings. Even to this day, University Village is still over there. That's where they housed the students.

We never had a great deal of trouble with that, but the Counseling Center would send staff over to work with students in the villages with the wives. If they were having any problems or anything with it, we'd send them there. We'd go over nights and have a room where people could come in and talk about any kind.

Dr. Hannah always believed that students should have lots of support around them. We did not have a med school at that time, and universities that did not have a med school tended to have stronger support services than

those who had a med school where there were psychiatrists running it. For years here, we didn't have a med school; therefore, we did not have psychiatrists. You relied on professional counselors to go and to help students. So we'd go over into the married housing units and work with them at nights and, you know, anything they needed to know.

We started in the fifties, I told you we went out and interviewed students. We started an office on this campus called the Office of High School Cooperation, and that was run by the admissions office. It was set up so the high schools could get information about MSU and we could dispense information about the University. It was run by Dr. [Guy H.] Hill. He's long dead now, but that was his job. So we always cooperated in working with him.

Then in 1953, I think it was, it was around that time, let me put it this way, Gordon Sabine had come in. Dr. Sabine, here, was really an innovator. He came in as a dean of the College of Communication Arts and then went up as vice president for special projects. He was a tough taskmaster, but he was really a creator and an innovator.

The Counseling Center, by then, had started an orientation program. That was the summer orientation program. Michigan State was the first university in the country to set up a summer orientation program. Here again, there was a lot of people who came to look to see how we ran that. I did all the testing for the summer program. Our counselors did all the counseling. We brought students in on the campus, just as they do now, housed them here and gave them testing, counseling, started on their courses.

Now, when did Dr. Sabine come in and when he was made vice president for special projects, the university decided that that office should be run under special projects. Dr. Sabine, as you well know, had the admissions office under him. So our Counseling Center worked with the admissions office and with Dr. Sabine in special projects. We always were intricately involved with it. For something like twenty-five years, I made speeches every summer. Every orientation program was canned. I could have put it on a machine and let it run off. And we worked with that. So it just got bigger and bigger with it.

Charnley: You said he came in 1953?

Norrell: No, Sabine was here before that. I don't remember when Sabine came, because I didn't look that up, but that was the first summer orientation program that we run, was 1953. As I said, he came in as dean of the College of Communication Arts. But he really impacted this university.

Dr. Hannah--and Mr. Sabine was part of this--wanted to bring in the bright students. So they asked a committee which Horace King, who used to be registrar, and I can't remember who else, and Dr. [Donald L.] Grummon, who was head of the Counseling Center, Mrs. Rost [phonetic], who was a counselor and kind of specialist in dealing with bright students. They had a committee to look at thirty-one really truly bright students on this campus. So they followed them for a couple of years.

Out of that, they recommended that--there was a committee of sixteen. I don't know. You were talking about the committee of sixteen. There is a report on it, incidentally. Fred Honhart probably has a copy of it. They recommended in there that Honors College be set up and the minority program, which I'll get to in a minute.

So they set up Honors College here. John Wilson was the first director of Honors College. Our Honors College also is another thing that other people have patterned their Honors College after, because we started out in the beginning having the students do research with professors and having faculty being part of it. So we all worked cooperatively.

One thing about the university during the early years when I was there, this was a very flexible university. You could go into units without anybody ever worrying about am I treading on toes at all. It was cooperative. If it's a job to be done, let's do it. You just never felt like there was any "me-ism." At least, I never felt that.

Now, in 1957, the Honors College was established. In 1955, I think it was, Mr. Hannah talked with the alumni board and asked for money to run a program for super-bright students. So that was the beginning of setting up the ADS program here. He came to me.

Charnley: What does ADS stand for?

Norrell: Alumni Distinguished Scholarship examination program. And we still run it every spring here. They bring in students.

Dr. Sabine wanted--it had become a question when the committee was forming. I don't remember all these, but I'll say "we," because there was a committee of us where we'd sit down together. Always a question, how do we select these kids? Who do we know to invite here to the university to come for this program? Because we are going to give them full-ride scholarships, okay. Four years, and that was a lot of money. Well, it still is a lot of money. Full-ride scholarships. So we knew that high school grades was important. We also thought that probably what we should do was to give them a test of some kind. So I tried a lot of kind of tests on a couple years of students, [unclear] analogies and what we called the general culture test, and we didn't have anything that would distinguish the kids.

Dr. Bill [Willard] Warrington was head of Evaluation Services. Let me digress just for a minute. When we talked about Basic College a while ago, they had term-end examinations, common examinations, and we had to set up an Evaluation Center here. The people in the Evaluation Center were test-writers. They were so good that Educational Testing Service tried to hire some of them, because they were superb human beings.

So Dr. Warrington and I and Sabine and Bill Finni [phonetic], who was director of admissions at that time, I remember--there may have been some others I can't remember--got together and decided that what we needed was a test that would test the students, here again, on general education. What did they really know about the areas of humanity, arts and letters, science, math, history, architecture, art?

So Bill Warrington and I decided that what we would do was to take items from the common end examinations that we gave to the university students. We selected the best items, and that was the beginning of the Alumni Distinguished Scholarship examination. The students to this day would say it was one of the hardest tests that they have ever taken. In that process, we have now five forms. When I retired, I revised the fifth form. Now, I always get credit for developing the ADS examination, but Bill Warrington was as much a part of it as I was. But people just seem to connect it to me. That program is still flourishing. At one time, we would bring as many as 2,000 students here in the summer. I think last year, last spring, they may have brought 800. I don't remember.

Now, that has been one of the best recruiting parts of the program, because over 50 percent of the students who come in here come enroll at Michigan State. They give the ten--I don't know how many it is now. We started out with ten full-ride scholarships. Now you get the ten full-ride scholarships, and every other scholarship program that we've got comes under that rubric. They'll look at the students. The scholarships are out of the financial aid office, but comes out of bringing these students here.

It was a great device for bringing the parents in, and the students end up enrolling. Over the years, Michigan State has had more Rhodes scholarships than any other single university in the country, including Harvard. We don't now, but we did have them. Then Marshalls out that, and those are our bright kids.

Now, one thing that we learned a long time ago about bright students, they tend not to be the most creative students in the world. They're more academically oriented. So many of them became teachers. Hunt and his wife are ADS scholars.

Charnley: Both of them?

Norrell: Both of them were. Forsythe, and another guy, I'm escaping his name, in the College of Engineering, are ADS scholars. But they tend to be the professor type. The creative ones were the ones that were right below, that were more daring and more innovative. They were very bright people, but you'd never call them just super, super bright. But those tended to be the most creative kids that would go out and get jobs in business and industry and do a lot of the kinds of things that people read about. See, they don't read much about the ADS scholars, because most of them are teaching and doing a wonderful job. But we did have that second tier of kids there that were Honors College graduates that went out and became presidents of corporations and this kind of thing.

About the test, we used to get all kinds of calls, I did and Dr. Sabine did, saying that people wanted to use our tests. No one has ever seen that test except the students taking it and the people who give it. We wouldn't ever even let admissions office people look at it. It was that secure examination.

Now, there was always some problems whereby if students came from--we had two weekends in a row, and sometimes students would come from School A and then go back to School A, and another student of School A come to the next thing, and people would worry about what would be the carryover. That test was so complex, they can't remember the questions, so we never really worried about that. But that's a secure examination.

Now I suspect, and I don't know what's going to happen to this because I'm not there, and I don't know who we're looking at, probably a committee of some kind should look at whether or not we keep this kind of testing instrument, because there has been such an explosion in knowledge of different kinds. The whole communications system has just exploded, as you know. You're in English and this kind of thing. And whether or not we need to look at that, it's a very expensive proposition to run.

Now, in this whole thing I'm talking about with the Honors and the orientation and the admissions and all this kind of stuff, Dr. Sabine started a program for National Merit Scholarship examination program. We identified the National Merit Scholars. Michigan State was the first university to have such a program, National Merit Scholars.

What he would do is, kids all across the country would take the test. National Merit Corporation was in Chicago. He would go into Chicago, he would get the list of these, and begin to write to students saying, "We want you to come to Michigan." We started a recruiting program like that.

Now let me divert into something on the minority program. Well, I'll say this and I'll come back to this. Oh, I know what I wanted to say before I forget this. I said to you before we started recording that two things that I did that brought publicity to the university, but I'm not sure how much of an impact on it. One of them was, and it was started before me, it was started by a woman named Elizabeth Drews, who brought a student by the name of Michael Grost into the campus at the age of twelve. Elizabeth is now dead, but she was an expert in the bright students. I did all of the assessment on Michael Grost, and this was with the students. So I began to get involved with this. Elizabeth left the university to take another position.

The admissions office got a call from a mother out here. Oh gosh, I forget where she's from now, who had a student and the school felt they couldn't do anything more for him because he was too bright. So Cam Hunter

came into the university, and I think it was 1978. Well, it's around that time, I can't remember. Somewhere into there. Cam Hunter was at the age of twelve. Dr. Sabine and admissions office asked would I take care of him. So I would run these programs. So he came into the university, and this just hit the papers nationally. We got requests to be on "Today Show" and everything else.

I have always been a person who never believed in exploiting anybody. I said to Mr. Sabine, I said, "If I run this program, then I have to have the say what happens to this kid academically." And I told the parents there if I could not map his career, I did not want him here. And the parents said okay.

So we brought Cam in, and he went through adolescence on this campus and had the typical adolescent problems of any twelve- to sixteen-year-old kid. One other thing that brought publicity to him, Cam loved football. Del Rogers [phonetic] was coach at that time. I went over to Del, because I knew him through the Athletic Council--and we'll talk about it in a minute--but I went over to Del and I said, "Del, this kid is a very, very bright kid, and he would like to come over to the football [unclear]." Del said, "Bring him on."

So he was kind of a--I don't know what you call them, water boy, little master. He'd be out there every day on the football field with Del. It was written up all over the place about this kid and the football program. Cam today is an orthopedic surgeon.

I had a woman whose father--I will not mention the name of this one because he was a professor, but he was a very hard taskmaster. She came into the program here at the age of fourteen. She got her Ph.D. from Cornell, and she got it writing about 1797 to 1799 women in Russia, a little bitty two-year program. Very, very bright woman.

We brought another young person in here, and whose mother never believed Michigan State was the right person, and she would not let the kid do anything I wanted him to do academically. I said, "I don't think he needs to be here." So she moved him to Caltech, where he flunked out, came back to Michigan State and got his degree.

Then we brought another kid in here, from close to Webberville, who is now a math professor. So I had four. No, then we brought in a black gal from Benton Harbor. That was my fifth one, and they were all under the age of fifteen that were in here. Four of them got degrees from here. Well, all five of them ended up getting

degrees from here. She is now a lawyer in Benton Harbor. So I ran that program. Now, that was a lot publicity for the campus.

Charnley: What was that program called?

Norrell: Not really called anything. We just brought these kids in.

Charnley: The young scholars program.

Norrell: Well, I don't know. We never called them anything. We had to call it a program. I said "program," but we just brought them in here and did our job and tried to do what we needed to do with them.

Charnley: So you really were assigned almost as a personal mentor.

Norrell: I was, absolutely, absolutely, absolutely. Well, I liked it. I enjoyed every bit of it. If I hadn't, I wouldn't have been doing it. I often laugh. Somebody says, "Do you have children?" I said, "No. I've got 40,000 of them over here." But I said, "I don't want to go through adolescence with any of them." And I certainly understand.

Charnley: You had done that.

Norrell: I've been there, done that.

Charnley: Let me ask some follow-up on that. Have you had contact with them? Have they contacted you?

Norrell: I haven't had recent contact with them. I still get Christmas cards and this kind of thing with it. I haven't seen Cam in maybe three or four years. But I have never been a person, here again, who likes to hang onto them. I really believe they've got to go do their own thing. I get Christmas cards from he and his parents, and that's fine. I don't let that bother me. I get Christmas cards from--

[Begin Tape 1 Side 2]

Norrell: I was very fortunate in going through this university from being hired by Paul Dressel, as I told you. Paul Dressel said to me, when he hired me, "I'll never pay you less than I pay a man if you'll do your job." I only had one boss who finally admitted that one year he did not give me the same raise as he gave the men because they were married. He said that to me, but I never knew it for a long time.

But after that, I have always been so fortunate of having people who were willing to kind of take me under their wings and help me work my way through the university. Sabine was one of them. He demanded of a lot of you, but you also wanted to do your best for him, you know, because he's a very bright man and, as I said, a very creative man.

I was also chairperson of the steering committee at the university. I was the first woman to chair the steering committee of the university, and Dr. [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.] was president at that time. I was also chair of the Academic Senate. But I also know that there were people in the background who were pushing me to be chair, and the man who was most responsible told me, and I won't name names because--he said, "I asked Dr. Wharton would he mind if you were chair, and Dr. Wharton said, 'No, doesn't make any difference to me.'" [Laughter] So I've always been very fortunate of having people who--Dr. Wharton is also the one who pointed me to the Athletic Council, but I'll talk about that in a minute.

Now let me go into the major area that is really all-important. It was in 1963 that a group of principals in Detroit contacted Michigan State University and Gordon Sabine. Bill Finni was director of admissions at that time. He's dead now. Said, "Would you be interested in coming to Detroit?"

Let me back up. Bill Finni, director of admissions, had contacted these eleven principals, and they got to talking about students who should be in the university but didn't quite cut the mustard. Dr. Hannah was on the Civil Rights Commission at that time, as you well know. So Dr. Hannah and Gordon Sabine decided that what Michigan State should do is to set up a program for students who were not readily admissible to university.

So Mr. Finni and Mr. Sabine talked to the principals from the six principals in Detroit, came up with a group of twenty-five men, eleven white and eleven black. Three of them decided they did not want to come. So they brought in twenty-two men, and they called that Project Ethyl. The reason they called it Project Ethyl was because Mr. Sabine thought that the Ethyl Corporation would give us money to run the program. The Ethyl Corporation never gave us a crying dime. [Laughter]

So the admissions office admitted twenty-two men, eleven men, eleven white. We brought them on campus. Now, these students were not the real low-end kids. They were very, very poor students, but had good potential, but they just weren't quite up to the level. We were not out to bring in anybody who did not have a chance of succeeding. That's one of the things about running programs for disadvantaged students that we always try to be very careful of, is to bring in only those that we felt that had a chance for success. We could have gone out and got a lot of kids who would have come in here and bombed out. I just couldn't stand that, because that failure is very difficult to do.

So we brought these eleven kids in here. I was the mentor here again, and whatever, for these eleven kids. Some of them came out of homes, one of them came out of a home where there was dirt floor, and they had never eaten off of a tablecloth, for example. So Sabine, bless his heart, paid for us to have dinner at Kellogg [Center] so we could teach them how to use a fork and have a tablecloth and eat and this kind of thing with it.

I worked with those from 1963. I had ran groups. Nobody knew. Really, they get in classes and they didn't know about. There was some noise about Project Ethyl, but not a whole lot on campus here. It was kind of an internal thing that we knew that we were doing. I had the say-so at that time of if there was a problem, I could go in any dean's office. All I had to do was to call and say, "I've got a problem. Would you help me out with this kid

or somebody else?" I never had a dean on this campus turn me down. Here, again, that was the flexibility and the willingness to cooperate.

I ran groups for them, and I learned a lot about myself in the process and the kids learned a lot about this. Then we began to find out. We've always had black students at Michigan State, always, but not large numbers. So this was the start.

Now, in 1967, I went before the board of trustees, took one student with me, and when we found out that 40 percent of those students would graduate on time, that was when the university decided to go into major recruitment of minority students. That was the beginning of the Detroit Projects. I ran those programs. I was still asked to run them. Now, what we did the first year, we went into Detroit.

Charnley: So you were working on this prior to the riots of '67? Working on it before?

Norrell: Yes, that's right, before. Because we had the graduation ceremony two days before the riots, thank God.

We went in and we were recruiting these kids. We started that in 1967. We started early in 1967, and '66, going in to get these kids. We came up with the first group was sixty-six students.

Now, let me digress for just a moment here. Michigan State was the first institution in the country to make a coordinated effort of recruiting minority students. Wisconsin started a program six weeks after we did, and Mrs. Doyle ran that program. Now, we were in contact with each other because of the Southern Education Review Board, who came up here hearing about these programs. The Southern Education Review Board called Mrs. Doyle and I the grandmothers of the movement.

The major difference between the two programs was that Michigan State decided that what they would do was to recruit in Michigan only. Wisconsin decided that they would recruit nationally.

Now, in setting up this program, what we knew was that we had to have counselors and we had to have--I couldn't do it all myself. We had to have tutors as we began to set up. So we got these sixty-six kids, and as I said

to you, they were only blacks in this group. We decided only blacks out of Detroit. We had a graduation ceremony for these sixty-six kids two days before the riots.

As recruiting in that summer, what we did was to go down and meet with parents. We'd have the parents come into the schools, and we'd talk with the parents, whatever parents we could find, to have some support. So that was the start of the recruitment program on campus. It was called the Detroit Project because it was out of Detroit.

Now, also, in 1970, we had the Lansing Project, which was set up by money from Henman [phonetic] Foundation. To this day, I don't know what Henman Foundation was or is or anything, except they gave some money. Now, we also got some monies for the other Detroit Projects from Rockefeller Foundation and university budget. We required the kids to put in some hours a week. The first year of the program cost us 400,000 dollars to run it. So it was not an inexpensive program.

There, also, during that time, the Lansing Project, what I decided I wanted to do was to recruit the older student. So we had mothers in there with children, and we had some older black men. I only had thirteen of those.

Then we also started the Flint Project, because we went into Flint. So each city had a name of their program.

Then every year we'd get more students. We had sixty-six the first year. Let's see, how many did we have the second year? I've got to find it someplace. I think what we did was something like maybe we brought in sixty more, then we went into the major kind of recruitment of them.

Charnley: Dr. Wharton was here then.

Norrell: Oh, yes. Dr. Wharton was here then, and it was major.

It had become a question of how do you recruit in Detroit, because when we asked for students of this same ilk, and by that I mean who had potential, but didn't cut the mustard, we were often told that "You've got everybody that we know of." Well, we knew that was not true.

So what we did was to send out the first Detroit Project students and the second Detroit Project students in to the playgrounds and recruit off of the playgrounds. Then we got involved with the black churches, and the black churches helped us recruit.

Then we had a piece of great luck by coming into contact with an outfit called the Volunteer Placement Corps. The Volunteer Placement Corps--and Sabine can tell you more about this than I can and you can ask him about, that would be one thing you want to ask him about--they were law students who were the good-hearted kind of affirmative-action people who wanted to go in. So they helped us to find students and to recruit students. So we recruited off the streets, we recruited out of the churches, we recruited off the playgrounds, and we took students from there.

It ended up, I think the third project was maybe 220 students. Now, in the midst of all of this, I said that we have to have women. See, before the first projects were minority men. Then they started recruiting women. These kids lived over in Fee Hall, and they called it "the Fee Circus."

Charnley: They were segregated?

Norrell: No, they were in with everybody else. No, they were just put in a residence hall. But blacks tended to hang together now like they did then, and they called it "the Fee Circus." There were white students there.

There was a lot of racism on this campus. Kids would come to me and say, "Well, I'm the only black in the class, and they always know my name." If the kid said that in any way they were discriminated against, I was always a very forward person. I'd go to the professor and I'd say, "Look, this kid feels like that there is some discrimination here. What are we going to do about it?" And I could do that, as I said, in those days. I was permitted and allowed to do it.

I was also allowed, again, to say how long they would stay here. If I felt like they couldn't make it, then my job, part of my job, would be to try to find some other place for them, some other school that could take them where it wasn't as difficult. I also had some help. Mine gave me help. I had some counselors helping me to work

with these students, because our emphasis was on the counseling program and the tutoring and this kind of thing was where it was with that.

Then we had a program called MEMO, More Education, More Opportunity. Ask Sabine about that, because I can't remember a lot about MEMO, but he would know a lot. He went down to Mississippi. Or did he send somebody to Mississippi? Well, I don't remember it, but somebody went to Mississippi to see if we couldn't recruit students.

Now, during this time, what we did was to try to get other universities in this state to recruit more black students. We would have meetings with the University of Michigan, Central Michigan, Western Michigan, all of them, and bring them in here and say, "Look, this is what we're doing. You need to get more active with this kind of stuff." We tried to promote this with Dr. Hannah and Dr. Wharton and Dr. Sabine to get more students to being recruited.

Now this really impacted this campus. It truly did. I think it brought to fore about the fact that there was a lot of racism here. We had to do something about it. People became very conscious. We talked about these programs. Faculty would hear about them. They'd ask. Faculty would call and ask me could they help. A lot of University College people would come and helped me a lot in those days of working with individual students in their classes where they were there.

Then the students got very active. The Black Student Alliance was here. It was in the sixties that they began to demand that we recruit four or five thousand students, which we couldn't do, but that was one of their things. But they got very political, and I always felt that that was probably a good active force for them getting involved with the university and with the system, was to be active. It never bothered me.

They would have meetings over in the Union. One night I said I was going over, and somebody said, "You don't want to go over there, because it's all blacks." I said, "They're not going to do anything to me." I walked into the room, and somebody said, "Hello, Doc." They called me "Doc." They never called me Dr. Norrell or anything. They called me "Doc." "Hello, Doc." Went right on ranting and raving about how terrible the university was. But it never bothered me, and I would go over at nights to Fee Hall and work with the kids if they

had any problems at all. One night we had a gal pull a knife, and I went right over there. When she saw me, she handed me the knife.

I asked Mr. Sabine one time why did he pick me to do this. He said, "Well, you're Southern, and I think you understand something about the blacks." I hope I did, because my mother always taught me that you treat people with respect, even though they're black. Now, she's very paternalistic, but I always had to treat them with respect. And I always believed that that's what kids want, some respect. You like them and I like them, if you respect them, they're going to treat you decently.

So that was the beginning of the recruitment for minorities. Now, in 1968 or '69, I can't remember, I knew that a white woman could not run the program anymore. Not that they didn't like me, and that wasn't the issue. I think they liked and I think they respected me, but I know they needed a black. So we brought in a guy by the name of Tom [Thomas] Gunnings to take over the program, and I left. I left deliberately, because I knew if I stayed here, that people would come to me, and I did not want to interfere with his running the program. So I took a sabbatical to Boston University and went there with it.

But I think that that probably is the most interesting thing that I did in all of my career, and probably one of the things that I'm very proud of the fact that was I part of it for this university. We could not do now what we did in some of those days because they would call it affirmative action.

In fact, in those days, before we had the application, one of the old applications to Michigan State had on there, "Are you black?" You can't do that now. Look at what's happened to the University of Michigan with this kind of thing right now with the affirmative-action kinds of thing. There's still racism on campus, but it's much more undercover. In fact, sometimes, right before I retired, I used to think it was worse than it was in the days when I did the heavy recruitment, because what people didn't understand on campus is that there were so many of our white kids who had never been around a black.

I would go into the residence halls, here again, most of the time at night after the kids got through with studying, and tell them about the blacks. I let the blacks educate me about their lives and what it meant and this

kind of stuff and what they came from, and they have a whole language of their own. If they would lapse into something like this, I'd say, "I don't understand you," and then they'd explain it to me. So they brought me in.

I would go in, and I went all over the country making speeches about this to people who wanted to know about our programs, about the life and the kind of things that black students expected of them. Nowadays it's so covert, you know. It's there, but nobody talks about it. Those days, we talked about it.

In the first Project Ethyl, I had the black and white students in a group together. They'd yell and cuss each other out and do this kind of thing and then walk out and feel good, you see. But I always believed that that's the way you begin to communicate, is by having everybody get together and talk about, you know, whatever it is that they wanted to know. So it's a tremendous impact, and it was a very, very--and I probably forgot half the things that I did. I don't know. But that's kind of the gist of the recruitment of minorities.

Charnley: You mentioned your mother as having an important influence on you. Did your training or your education prepare you for what you encountered in these projects? Was there anything that you had experienced that made you succeed when others might not have?

Norrell: No. Growing up into the South and learning. No, I can't say that it did. I got my doctorate was in counseling psych, and I'm a therapist. I did therapy for years. But therapy never worked with blacks. I only had one successful case of a black woman in therapy, and I don't know. When you counsel them, it was just almost like--I was trained Freudian, but you couldn't use any of that with today's issues or what's going on in your own life and this kind of behavior modification kinds of things. That was a mode of counseling at one time with this.

My mother was a doctor, lawyer, merchant, and chief a lot in the black community in the South. I was really kind of raised by a black woman, because my mother was poor, my father went off and left us when I was six years old, and she had to work. So I don't know what it was about it. I was just me; that's all. I'm not a very good self-analyzer.

Charnley: So Gordon Sabine knew he had the right person.

Norrell: Well, I hope he had the right person. He'd probably tell you he had the right person, whether he did or not anyway. But he can certainly fill in a lot of kinds of things with that, because he was really the dynamo in this.

Charnley: But you're absolutely right in terms of seeing things the way they are today. Lots of times students and even administrators don't know how we got there, or they talk about what went on in the sixties, but they don't realize that there were important--

Norrell: When Duffy Doherty came here as a football coach, and "Biggie" [Clarence L.] Munn came as a football coach, Mr. Hannah said that, "You recruit blacks. You go South and recruit blacks," and that's what made us have such tremendous football teams in those years, because the Southerners weren't recruiting, you see. You could not go on the campus.

I told you when I was teaching, I taught classes with black teachers, and my community didn't like that. I graduated in '38. In '43, I applied for the job as county superintendent of education because it paid me more money in Arkansas. The man said, "We're not going to hire you, because if we do, you would integrate us." So I don't know where I got all of it. It was just the right thing to do, you know, was to work with these kids. I loved them to death and I liked them, and I had a great time doing it. It was never a chore to me. I had an absolutely wonderful career with this kind of thing.

One other thing that we had here on campus, back to University College, we had a Learning Resource Center that I used a lot with the kids, because Miss Cherney was so marvelous with these kids. I don't know if you knew Elaine Cherney.

Charnley: Yes.

Norrell: She was just absolutely great. So if they had problems in reading or anything like that, the Learning Resources Center was always there to do it. Did you ever know Nell Awl [phonetic] when she was in science?

Charnley: No.

Norrell: She was another University College teacher in the natural science. You kind of have people pegged who would talk about and help in their own areas with this kind of thing. I can't think of anything else about that.

Now during the sixties, also, we had student riots. I told you about the blacks and the Black Student Alliance. We also had during those days the first black student who was head of ASMSU. It wasn't called that in those days. It was the student government. As we start thinking about this, I first started working with black students before I got into the recruitment and working with them on the programs. There used to be a tree over in Student Services Building where we'd hang out. We'd sit on the rim, and we'd talk with this young man. So, you work with one, and the first thing you know, they refer another and then they refer another, and I became known as a good person to go see if they had problems. So that's how I got known.

That's also how I got known with working with gays and lesbians on this campus, because, of course, as you well know, they were not recognized. But I would work if somebody came, you know, and I worked with one, worked with another. And the first thing you know, I had several of them coming for certain kinds of help.

Charnley: For counseling?

Norrell: For counseling, yes. See, I ran the testing program, but I also did counseling with that.

Also during this time, Mr. Hannah always used to say that the sun never sets on dry concrete. You're always pouring concrete on this campus. He built the living learning units, and they were really a very unique kind of thing in those early days, because what he did--and I say he and his group--was saying, in essence, we're going to

have a miniature university in Wilson Hall, you know. Everything you need's right here. The counseling, the academic advising, everything else is right there. That's the living learning units were.

In those days, he put signs up on the front of the residence halls, "Not paid for by public funds," because he borrowed money to build those big buildings that we now have on here and, you know, still got. It was that kind of thing.

Now, go back to the other thing that I said that brought publicity to the campus. Here again, I was not the first woman member of the Athletic Council, but people think I was. Ann Harrison was the first woman on the Athletic Council, and she preceded me by six months. I've always made it known, but everybody will say, "No, Gwen Norrell was the first person," but I wasn't.

I can't remember who it was now, somebody resigned to do something. I don't know. Dr. Wharton named me to the Athletic Council because he said I knew how to work with minority students. So, yes, I went on the Athletic Council. It wasn't the minority students I was worried about; it was the way they were treating women. Oh, my goodness gracious. Well, you know, I was mouthy, and I just didn't put up with all of this and, you know, with it.

For example, you know, ticket prices. If you were a single woman, you didn't get any advantage, but if you were a married man, you got some advantage with ticket prices. So it was things like that that you had to get in gear and do right by.

So I also pushed to have a woman named--well, she wasn't named. She wasn't called director, but she kind of took charge of the women's sports. That was Nell Jackson. She's dead now, too. She was a black woman who kind of took over to work with the--I was on the committee that hired her. I've been on so many committees on the university. I've served, as I said, on the steering committee, and committees to select [M. Cecil] Mackey, and you know first one thing and then the other. But we got her in here. Now, she belonged to AIAW, okay, and that was the Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for Women. NCAA was the national organization for men. Okay? Dr. Wharton would send me to meetings. It was AIAW.

You know, in so many ways in athletics, men in the early days treated me better than the women treated me. The women in AIAW were very suspicious of me because I really believed in integration, whether it was black and white, but also integration of women and men in programs. I would go to meetings with AIAW, and I wouldn't have many people talk to me, and these were all women at that. Well, here again, you can't let those kind of things bother you. You have to move on through. But Wharton was very good about sending me. I never had any trouble with Wharton.

Dr. Cofer [phonetic] was Wharton's assistant. Dr. Cofer came in and was the big honcho. Dr. Cofer--he's dead now--came in to talk about Tom Gunnings running the Detroit Project. But Dr. Cofer came into the admissions office to be in charge of all kinds of minority recruiting. He worked closely with a friend of mine and he worked closely with Dr. Wharton, and so we always had entree to Wharton. He was very good about sending me places.

Okay. All right. So I was on the Athletic Council. I chaired the Athletic Council. I was on the Athletic Council, two committees, to hire two different athletic directors and a football coach. I was on the committee that hired [George M.] Heathcote. The story about Heathcote is the fact that he wrote the book and he says in there--and I did. I called up Heathcote--

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Norrell: ...that this woman called him about coming to be interviewed, and he thought I was the secretary.

[Laughter] But that was Heathcote. He had a wonderful sense of humor. I think, deep down in Judd's heart, he would have preferred to work with men, but he would never know that. He was always gracious to you. And also so was Joe Kerney [phonetic]. Joe Kerney was athletic director.

Jack [John A.] Fuzak was faculty athletic representative here for something like twenty-five years, I think, or twenty-three years. It was a good long time, anyway. Jack Fuzak was vice president of student affairs and was

my boss, the big boss, because I worked in the Counseling Center and that was under Division of Student Affairs. So I knew Jack Fuzak very, very well, and Jack wanted to retire.

Dr. [Edgar L.] Harden was president at that time. Dr. Harden called me one day, and I knew Ed Harden because I mentioned he was also part that came in here with Erickson to set up the student personnel program. So I knew Harden from way, way back, and he knew I was on the Athletic Council. He called me one day and said he wanted to see me and would I come over. I went over. I've been in Ed's office lots of times, talked about lots of thing, nothing very serious, but we had a lot of fun together. And he said to me would I be interested in becoming the faculty athletic representative.

Charnley: To the NCAA or to the Big Ten?

Norrell: To the Big Ten. I started laughing and I said, "Whom have you talked with about this?"

He said, "How did you know I talked to anyone?"

And I said, "Well, knowing you, you would have, because somebody has to ease the way." These were my words, "If you just dump me in there on these men, they're going to have a heart attack."

He started laughing, and he said yes, he'd called Wayne Duke, who was commissioner of the Big Ten at that time, and talked about it with Wayne Duke. Wayne Duke said it was no problem with him if I came in there as faculty athletic representative. So Harden named me faculty athletic representative.

Now, that brought a lot of publicity to this university all over the place. I was written up in papers and papers all over. I was the first woman from a Division I institution to be faculty athletic representative. Wayne State had a faculty athletic representative, but that was a Division II school. And in a Division III school, there were a lot of women athletic directors that were in NCAA, but I was the only woman in NCAA in those days.

So, now, you know, you have to learn--I told you I was always supported. Men were always supportive of me throughout this university and always were good to me and helpful to me. I was taught, early days, that you have to be political on campus. People don't think a campus is political. My god, it's the most political place that I

know anything about. I learned how, when I was on the steering committee of the university, and working with people, to be able to maneuver my way into and out of situations. Now, I don't know, I guess I learned it; I don't think it can be taught. Women, for the most part in those days, were not very political. And you've got to learn to play the games. I still feel that you have to learn to play the games, because I think there's a lot of game-playing over there. I think you've got to know where some of bodies are buried, and I think you've got to know where some of the stuff is going around. Here, again, there were always people there to help me.

Well, going into the Big Ten, there were the men there. The faculty athletic representatives' men were very supportive of me. I really didn't have any trouble with those guys. They took me right on just like I was an old buddy of theirs. But the male A.D.s, that was an iffy kind of thing.

One of the guys, Don Cannum [phonetic]--let me talk about Don Cannum for a minute. Don Cannum wondered what in the hell Michigan State University was doing naming a woman--Don will tell you this--to that position. And he was not very cordial to me in the beginning. Don Cannum turned out to be one of the biggest supporters I ever had. He'll tell you that to this day, too.

We got along fine. But there again, I had to learn that you don't threaten them, okay. You just don't threaten people. You don't get very far by threatening people, I don't think. And that was their turf.

Now let me come back. I told you a while ago about AIAW. Okay. I was on the Big Ten faculty rep for two years and then got named to NCAA representative in the Big Ten and was the first woman vice president of NCAA. During that time, there was a move afoot in NCAA to integrate women, and I was part of that, because I believed that NCAA, that women would get more advantages and more opportunities. Now, AIAW, this organization for women, were violently opposed to that. Really, some of them were just violently--but what some of those women who were so strong in this did, they threatened the A.D.s on their turf. It's like, "I'm going to take over your job." That was the feeling the A.D.s got, and the A.D.s just coalesced against them. It was really a battle, and sometimes it just got downright dirty, really, with some of this. It was subtle.

It's still there in football to this day. Football coaches simply don't want women around with any kind of power at all. And I had some power. Let's face it. I had more perceived power than I had power, but if it's perceived as power, it is, you know, that kind of thing.

So we started working toward integrating women in athletics. I was cursed out in restrooms by women. I was called a bitch. I was told I didn't know what in the world I was doing, etc., etc. Well, I understood where they were from. They felt threatened, too, and I understand that because the men were not very willing to give up a lot of their turf, you see, and they wanted some of their turf.

Well, we got it passed, and women were integrated into NCAA. To this day, like Donna Lopeanno [phonetic], who works with the national program for women, to this day, you know, she's still bitter about that.

Now, what has happened since then, is Title IX came into effect, as you know. Title IX, in essence, had a tremendous impact on women and women's athletics and this kind of thing.

Charnley: And the funding involved.

Norrell: And the funding and that kind of thing. As faculty athletic representative, I came back and chaired the Athletic Council during my tenure there with it. The old story goes there is that Roger Wilkinson was in charge of athletics at that time, and he used to say, well, the only reason he liked to come to meetings that I called at 6:30 in the morning was because of the pecan rolls. I liked to cook, and so I would make pecan rolls on the weekends and have meetings on Monday. But, anyway, that was part of it. You know, you do things like that, really. But that was the most significant thing that I did in NCAA. I was very receptive.

Walter Byers [phonetic] was director of NCAA at that time, the big honcho. He's not there anymore. They were not including me. John Toner [phonetic], who was athletic director under John [A.] DiBiaggio when he was at Connecticut, was my great friend, and John Toner was president of NCAA at that time, and they didn't include me. I just said, "I'm going to be included." Of course, they started inviting me to lunch, and we were doing this kind of thing. But there were some people that were not too happy. The men were not too happy with

that. The women who were most supportive of me were Division III women, and some of my best friends to this day were athletic directors of small universities. I like women and enjoy women. I like men, too. But we got to know those very well.

Now, the other thing that I did in NCAA which is important, is I just persisted in pushing NCAA to set up a research unit. So that was the beginning of that, came from me pushing. I chaired the first committee for NCAA on research, because that was also part of my background in testing and this kind of thing in the university. I always would try to say in organizations, "What could I do to contribute?" So those were the two main things that I did in NCAA.

It was a great experience, because I never met any nicer people in my life than people in athletics. Even though there were men who didn't want me there, they never pushed me off. They just went off and left me alone. They didn't tell the dirty sexist jokes when I was there, because I didn't like that.

On campus, what I tried to do was keep us clean in terms of not getting into any trouble academically. Fortunately, when I was there, we didn't get into any trouble, because I just couldn't stand the fact that if something happened under my watch, particularly with academics. Then when I left--not because I left, don't misunderstand me--we got into all this shit with--oh, excuse me. All this stuff on probation again, you know, with it. But that was the story on athletics, and I really, you know, enjoyed that.

Charnley: Would you talk a little bit about the research unit. What were the main questions that you were interested in?

Norrell: They had a research unit in NCAA then, and what they did at that research unit was to--and I guess I wasn't first in setting that up. I was first in setting the academic portion of it up. That's it. What they did was injuries and all the kinds of things, the physical kinds of things, they had that before. When I came, I insisted that they have a unit for the academics, and that's the one I started. That's studying graduation rates. So whenever you see anything in the paper that talks about graduation rates and stuff, that was what I did. Also, they gave money for

funding for academic research, and I helped decide who gets that and this kind of thing. So that's basically what I did. I'm glad you asked me to correct that.

Charnley: Do you remember some of the results of that? What were the graduation rates? Was there anything surprising about those early--

Norrell: No, because it wasn't to me because I done the graduation rates of the Big Ten. See, I started that at the Big Ten. I was the first. I did all the graduation rate studies. Every university in the country gave me the graduation rate study with that kind of thing. I did that. So I came in there with a background of knowing that. They always shared all of that stuff with me.

The graduation rate, I don't know what it is now. In those days, for football was about 41, 42 percent. Basketball was lower than football, because they don't stay as long, you see. It's a smaller number, and those kids transfer out. That's public knowledge. You can always get that, what the graduation rate was. I don't remember. I studied the graduation rates of all the sports, not just football and basketball; women's sports and men's sports, and that kind of thing. The women always did better.

Talking about what I did academically, the thing that means the most to me personally was, in 1973, I received the Alumni Distinguished Faculty Award. I was the only person from Division of Student Affairs that had ever received one, and there's been no one since. Most of that's academics. Personally, that thing has meant a great deal to me. That was in '73. In '78, I was named Honorary Alumnus. Then in '78, something like that, I got an award from the Faculty Women Association. Then in 2000, I was named to the MSU Athletic Hall of Fame.

Charnley: Just recently.

Norrell: Just recently.

Charnley: How did you feel when heard word about that?

Norrell: Well, you know, I said to somebody, I said, “At my age, I’m--in football and sports lingo--I’m in overtime.” And I said, “To be in overtime and get a touchdown is really glorious.” [Laughter] I really appreciate it, and I’ll tell you why. When that was set up at the university, I said to one of the committee members who was a lady, I said, “For god’s sakes, make sure you get women in there.” And she said, “Gwen, I’ll try.”

She came up to me a couple years, three years later, and she says, “You don’t know how hard it is to get a woman in there.”

I said, “Yes, I do know how hard it is to get a woman in there.”

Charnley: You would know.

Norrell: So when I got that, I thought of her and how hard it is to get a woman in there. Somebody was pushing me. I don’t know who it was, obviously. I was deeply honored and very humble at receiving the award, because I never expected anything like that at all. What I did, you know, I always tried to do for the university. I never was out for a lot of glory for myself. I’ve been in the limelight a lot, but I’m still not uncomfortable in it. I’d rather be in the background.

Now, one thing we didn’t talk about was the Faculty Women’s Association. Let me talk just a little bit. When I came to campus, I came here at the age of, what? Twenty-five, I think. I probably was the youngest woman faculty on the campus, and most of my friends, women like Ruth Jameyson, were ten to fifteen years older than I, but those women just took me right under their wing, you know, and made me feel great.

We had a kind of a women’s group where we’d have lunch at the Union. I wasn’t in charge. I was president at one time of it, but it kind of grew into the Faculty Women’s Association that met in the Union. Now, the men had a group, a faculty group, and they met also at the Union, down the hall. They didn’t want anything to do with us. Here again, they didn’t want anything to do with us. So, we, for several years there, kind of went on.

The men met and the women met, and then the men said, "All right, we've got to do something together," so they set up the Faculty Association here and everybody could join.

We all donated money to the University Club, because even in those days we hoped there would be a University Club for faculty. We were charter members, because they called and said, "Do you want your money back?" We just said, some of us did, "We just gave you the money for the start of the University Club." So we were charter members. But that's how that got started.

Then what we did there was to try to integrate younger women and grad students. We brought in grad students to be part of the Faculty Women's Association so the grad students could feel some kind of identity. We ran noon groups in Student Services Building for a period of time in the seventies for women to come to talk about their concerns and this kind of stuff with it.

I was always part of it, but I was never as actively involved in setting this up as some other women were on the campus with it, but that's what we did with this kind of thing. But I was always interested in women and would go in, here again at nights. It was a staff person here. His wife is still here, so I'd better not mention his name. They're divorced now. He called me one day, he said, "You know, Gwen, men don't understand women very well." A young man. He said, "Let's you and I team up, and let's go in the residence hall at night and talk about sex."

And I laughed and I laughed. I says, "You know, here I'm a single woman."

"Yeah, that's all right."

But what we'd do, we'd go in and try to work with the young men about how you treat women and how deal with them sexually and what. And also on the converse side, with the women kinds of thing. That's when I went in. I don't know when I slept. Eleven o'clock at night, you know. They'd come down into the lounges with their popcorn and pajamas, and we would sit there and talk about all this kind of things. So I've always been supportive of women on the campus and very active with them, but not really in charge of some of the stuff.

As I got older and got into the place for retirement, I've always said, "You know when it's time to retire." The university was beginning to be a lot of concern, I felt, about "me-ism." "It's mine. Don't tread on my turf."

Charnley: The turf battles.

Norrell: Just have turf battles. And I really, as I told you earlier in this discussion, I never ran into that. I could not do today on this campus what I did in the sixties and seventies. You just couldn't do it, because people are so concerned about their turf. If I'd been concerned about turf when the blacks were here, we'd never have gotten them. We would never have gotten the support. So that began to bother me.

Now, the other thing that bothered me, we had, I think, for years the best undergraduate education in the country here. Now, we still have a good undergraduate education, but it's about as good as Michigan. I think we're on the same par. We've got concern. Now, this is me, now, just talking. We've got concern with graduate students. Here all my life I've worked with undergrad, and I taught for the College of Education, so I worked with grad students, too. But some of those things, times do change. I know I used to work with people on change, and change is difficult for institutions. Institutional change is terrible to do. But I knew that it was time to change, and I also knew it was time for me to get out of there.

So I left the university in '88, and it was time to go. As I told you earlier, I revised--three years it took me, and Lou Anna [K.] Simon gave me money to do a fifth ADS examination. After that, I went to work for state police interviewing recruits, and then got cancer, and enjoy myself now.

Charnley: Could I ask you a little bit about some of the administrators that you worked with and also some of the faculty members? In the 1970s in some of the Athletic Council, when you heard first about some of either the rumors as they developed and then the investigation, how were you and the Athletic Council involved in that and the athletic problems under Dr. Wharton?

Norrell: Well, Dr. Wharton decided. Yes, we were involved with that, but Jack Fuzak was faculty athletic representative at that time, and we were kept informed of the progress. Bert Smith was director of athletics. Bert Smith--I'm trying to be--he probably made some decisions that were not the best decisions in the world. You know

we all do make certain kinds of things like that. He had a group part of it that was his son-in-law, you know, was part of some of the things that were going on with the university at that time. Now, I knew a lot more about what was going on than the Athletic Council did because some of that was not public and some of it has never been made public. I will not divulge some of the stuff. But Jack Fuzak always trusted me, as did Wharton, so I knew a lot of what went on and some of those kinds of things with it.

Faculty--Lord have mercy. This faculty in those days, I can't remember all the good people there were who helped. Jim [James T.] Bonnen, an economist, was speechwriter for Wharton, absolutely totally supportive of me. That man was so good and so bright, I could ask him anything in the world. He was a tremendous mentor.

Paul Dressel was a great mentor that I worked with in those days. Jack Breslin and I had our problems, because athletics supported Jack during this whole time with that. Jack, you know, here again, he probably did the best he could. He was really Hannah's guy in athletics.

After all this thing was over, then I helped Jack downtown with the black legislators. They wanted something. For example, the black legislators used to want all of our grades of our athletes. Jack called me one day and asked me would I go down and talk to them with him. I went into his office. He's dead now. He said, "Oh, Dr. Norrell, what are you doing here?" I told him what the problems were. He said, "Don't worry. I won't ask for them again." He had helped me.

Young, who was mayor of Detroit, was very helpful to me when I was running the Detroit Projects. One of my students was a student who didn't have any family. Young kind of took this kid under his wing. This kid was a malingerer. One night I got a call from the hospital, saying--Stan is his name. I'll call him Stan. "Stan is in the hospital. Could you come help him, get him out?" I went down to the hospital and Stan says, "Call Young."

So I call Senator Young. Senator Young said, "Tell that mm-mm-mm to get up and get out." But Young was really supportive of me, and, oh, I can't think of his name, he's an old black legislator from Detroit. Those guys were so good. They'd come out and talk to me.

Some of the football players, you know, Bubba Smith would come and talk to my kids, you know. So they were just absolutely super. The University College people, Lord have mercy, I could never get all those. I'd have to get my book out.

Deans up at the College of Education were very helpful. Erickson, you know, when he was over there. I can't remember all their names, but they're just great help, wonderful people.

Charnley: What was your position on Proposition 48 at the time when it first came out? Do you remember what your reaction was to that?

Norrell: I was part of Prop 48.

Charnley: Could you talk a little bit about that? You were the faculty rep at NCAA.

Norrell: At NCAA at that time. We had to do it. I had a problem with the testing portion of Prop 48, and I still have a problem with it, because I know about tests and minorities. But we had to do something to see if we couldn't up the graduation rates of it. So I was supportive of it, helped to set it up and design some of the stuff that went into Prop 48 with it, and got maligned for it.

When DiBiaggio was president, the revision of Prop 48 came up on that, and on the floor of the Athletic Council--you see I'm diverting now--I got up and talked supportive of it. I was for it. Everybody on that floor knew where I came from. When DiBiaggio was president, it was come to be a revision, I changed my mind and didn't want them to use testing. DiBiaggio asked me not to say anything, so I didn't. I did what he wanted me to do. So I didn't say anything with that kind of thing. But I think it was probably a move we had to make. Whether it was, in retrospect, the best move or not, I'm not sure, but I think it did focus on some of the problems.

Athletics is a very seductive kind of business. I don't think that there are a lot of coaches in this country who really believe in the academics. You've got such a win philosophy anymore, and that's terrible to say. I'm

talking about football coaches now. I'm not talking about the coach of wrestling or the coach of gymnastics. But somehow they just feel like that that's all they ought to do, and I've had them tell me that. When I was faculty athletic representative, I couldn't stand that. Rogers would stick his foot up on the desk and say, "You can't tell me to run my program."

Charnley: That's Del Rodgers.

Norrell: I said, "Yes, I can tell you how to run your program, because if you don't do it, I'll go to the president." [unclear] and I also had some concern about that, too. But it takes up too much--you know, I've changed my mind about something. When Mackey was president, and I liked Cecil Mackey, he's got a great sense of humor, and Cecil Mackey used to always say to me, "Well, we've got to pay these athletes." We'd argue. Oh, he and I would argue like mad. "You've got to pay these athletes." "No, no, no, no, no." I'm coming to the point where I think we're going to have to do something in terms of giving them more money. It's simply become a business, much more of a business than when I first got involved in athletics years ago.

Charnley: Yes. Television dollars.

Norrell: Television dollars are astronomical with what they do. Prop 48, coming in there, we were trying to say you've got to educate these kids. Now, I can match students to this university, and I always could in terms of getting a degree, because I knew who taught what courses, I knew what they tried to do, I knew they wouldn't put up with any stuff, but I knew that they would help the kids.

So some of the kids in football, yes, I helped map them through and get them degrees out of here. But so many times the kids aren't that bright. We have a better support system now than we had when I was there. It's much, much better because of some of the stuff the university's put over there.

Charnley: The Clara Bell Smith Center [phonetic]?

Norrell: Yes. They've hired different people, and they've gotten in there with it. But it's just too much time spent. You know, another thing, sitting here thinking about stuff I hadn't thought about for years, I fought bringing the presidents in as control of NCAA, and I would fight against that today. There were some of us who absolutely believed that if you bring the president in, it's not going to get any better because they don't have the time to spend on it. But, of course, we lost that battle, and NCAA took over. See, at one time, when I went in there, the decisions were made in the Big Ten and in NCAA by the faculty representatives in conjunction with the athletic directors. Okay?

Nowadays, the decisions are made by the presidents. Faculty athletic representatives and A.D.s, for the most part, don't have much say in the major decision-making. They can make the everyday decisions, you know, as you move through, and who does this and who goes where on what bus and that kind of thing. The major decisions are made by the president. In fact, I don't think it's any better under the president than it was when it was [unclear]. In fact, in some ways I think it's worse. And I don't think--

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

Norrell: ...do something about getting rid of all these contracts. See, I fought, or tried to fight, the coaches getting shoe contracts. Why should coaches get shoe contracts and the kids don't get anything? They get all this money. Money is just ruining it in some ways. But the presidents are letting it happen. Universities don't have the money, I understand that. But then, if they don't have the money, let's come back and just make it a game and not make it a show like it is now. I don't think the public would put up with it, but that's how I feel.

Charnley: Were you a fan?

Norrell: Always a fan.

Charnley: What got you interested in athletics?

Norrell: When I graduated from college, I couldn't find a job.

Charnley: That was during the Depression?

Norrell: 1942.

Charnley: During the war.

Norrell: Yes, during the war. I sent out 150 letters of applications to schools. My hometown high school, from which I graduated, the principal hired me, so I was against that right away, you know. I shouldn't have done that. But, anyway, he told me that he'd hire me if I would coach basketball. I said, "I am a klutz. I can't even shoot a basket myself." But I really needed a job so badly, and I could live at home with my mother. I made 90 dollars a month.

So I got me a book from some company that made equipment, and I learned to coach basketball out of a book. It was those days that the court was divided in three units or segments, like Iowa had, because the women couldn't run. The first year, we didn't do so well. But the second year, we won the district. Then I coached softball. I was always interested in men's athletics. Yes, I love athletics. I'm a competitive person, and I like the competition. I would have loved to have been an athlete, but as I said, I couldn't do it. Like I can't dance either. But I have always been a spectator, and Ruth Jameyson, that you interviewed, was the first one that took me to a football game. I saw my first snow at a football game.

Charnley: Oh, really.

Norrell: Yes, first snow at a football game there. So, yes, we have been sports fans for year, hockey, basketball, and football, and then the other sports. Gymnastics I like, and wrestling, and some of those, yes.

Charnley: So when you became Big Ten rep, that was obviously the year we won basketball, was it?

Norrell: That was the year we won basketball.

Charnley: Were those easy meetings after?

Norrell: Well, my first NCAA basketball tournament was out in Utah, and I got lost. Here again, being new, I got set over in the Podunk section over there, not with the others. I come out of there and I didn't know where I was. I ended up on Indiana State's team. A guy who got his degree here was vice president of student affairs, I walked on the bus, and he said, "Gwen, what are you doing here?" I said, "I need a ride." And everybody started to laughing, "Put her off the bus," you know. But they brought me back to the hotel and stuff like that, yes. That was the first year we won the championship.

When the black kids walked off the team here, I was here in those days and saw all of the Magic Johnson eras. President Wharton called me about Magic Johnson, asked me would I talk to Mr. Johnson, and I said yes. In his office I talked to him. We tried to do an education kind of thing for him. I saw him play ball. I did some contract work for the government on testing when they were trying to--here, again, having to do with minorities--upgrade minority education. I saw him play when he was in the eighth grade. The teacher told me to come down. One of the teachers on the program that I was on said, "Come with me and we'll watch him play." So I knew who he was before he ever came out here.

Basketball, I love basketball. It's almost like ballet if it's good basketball. I don't like a lot of this physical stuff.

Charnley: Did you watch the games last year?

Norrell: Yes, I watched the games. We went for years, had tickets. But I don't walk so well and Miss Jameyson doesn't either, so we felt it was better and nice just to stay home where it's warm and nice and watch it on television. So, yes, I've been around sports all my life, I loved it.

"Biggie" Munn. I never took anything from the university. By that I mean as faculty athletic representative, I could have gotten tickets. But I always believed that you pay for your own, that way you're more honest, nobody can accuse of me anything. The only thing I've taken over the years was a football pass that "Biggie" Munn gave the Counseling Center because we were helping the kids in those days on the tutoring, set up tutoring for them years ago. So I had retained that, but I don't have it anymore. But that was my only thing with it. But we just decided that it's better not to.

Hockey. Ron Mason, you know, in athletics, that's one of the finest men that I know in athletics. I've run across a lot of fine men, but Ron has never deviated in any way from his belief system about what sports is all about. Some of the others, you know, I like them, they're great people and all of that, but, you know, I've seen them change their minds and do things.

Charnley: He's been strong on the academic side.

Norrell: Strong on academics. He's strong on what happens to these kids. I just got him on the Hockey Committee when I was in NCAA, and he was just really a great person. Joe Carney was awfully good to me as athletic director. Joe Carney was A.D. here and very supportive my first year. If he hadn't been, it would have

been a rough year for me, but he was just terribly supportive. Then I was on the committee that hired Doug Weaver for athletic director beyond that. So I've been part of the power structure in athletics for a period of time.

Charnley: Since your retirement, have you been involved in any activities associated with the university since your retirement?

Norrell: Only revising that fifth test. When I leave something, I believe in leaving it. I go back over and see my friends, have lunch with my friends. I can walk in. I knew Lou Anna's first day on this campus when she first arrived here, so I kept in touch with her. I go back to the office, but, no, I don't do any volunteer work. It's over.

Charnley: When you came to Michigan State in 1945, did you anticipate that you'd basically spend your whole career here?

Norrell: No, I was always afraid, the first four or five years, that I'd get fired. In the first four or five years, you're always kind of insecure, I think. And Dr. Dressel helped me get secure. I don't know. No, I never expected to stay this long. I was offered two other jobs, one with Proctor & Gamble, of all places, to do testing. I was interviewed for a job at Wayne State and could have had the job, but I didn't want to hit that old [unclear].

Charnley: The concrete tube.

Norrell: That's right. And so I said, "I don't want to be considered anymore."

No, I found a home. That's the way I look at it. I liked my job, I love this place. It's my life. My work, my friends, my social activities. I go to Wharton [Center for Performing Arts], you know. We still go to Wharton and stuff like that. No, I never expected it. But had I left like people do now, they'd have thought I was nuts.

Now you're expected to change jobs five or six times. My career, you didn't change jobs that much. No, never expected to.

Charnley: Seems to be an interesting thing about the people that came here, especially that World War II generation. Many came with the attitude of staying a couple years and then ended up thirty-five or forty years later still here.

Norrell: Well, the place just started growing.

Charnley: And you're part of that.

Norrell: You're part of the growth. You could see it and you felt part of it. Nowadays, I don't know what people feel. I don't know any young staff over there. You probably know more about some of that than I do. But this is part of what you're all about, and we just stayed around here. Yes. Very loyal group.

Charnley: I want to thank you on behalf of the project for the time that we've spent and your insights. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Norrell: You're very welcome.

[End of interview]

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