

KEITH GROTY

September 11, 2003

Jeff Charnley,  
interviewer

**Charnley:** Today is September 11, 2003. We're in East Lansing, Michigan, on the campus of Michigan State University. I'm Professor Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. Keith Groty for the MSU Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial of Michigan State to be commemorated in the year 2005.

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

**Groty:** Yes, I do.

**Charnley:** I'd like to start first with some educational and professional background and training. Where were you born and raised, and where did you go to school before college?

**Groty:** I was born and raised in Detroit, went to schools in Detroit, graduating from Cooley High School in Detroit, and my family moved out to the Birmingham area right after high school.

**Charnley:** What year did you graduate from high school?

**Groty:** 1957, in January.

**Charnley:** Where did you go to college?

**Groty:** I went first to Highland Park Community College for two years and then to the University of Michigan, where I did my undergraduate, graduating in 1962, and my master's at Michigan in 1964 and my doctorate at Michigan in 1970.

**Charnley:** So you have a U of M background.

**Groty:** Yes.

**Charnley:** What would you say was your major? What was your major field of study?

**Groty:** Well, every degree, it changed. My undergraduate was in biology and chemistry, and I was a secondary school science teacher. That was my training. My master's degree was in guidance and counseling, and I eventually became a school counselor. My doctorate was in educational administration, and I eventually became a K-12 administrator before coming to the university.

**Charnley:** What public schools did you teach in?

**Groty:** I came out of college, again, in January, and taught in the Royal Oaks schools. Then when I finished my master's degree, which was my first time that I graduated in the summertime, or in spring, and I moved to a what was then junior high school counseling position in Royal Oak.

Then I continued right on doing my doctoral work. After two years as a counselor, I was offered an intern program in a kind of innovative administrative development program for the Southfield schools, and I moved over there in 1966. I was there for two years and was contacted by the School Labor Industrial Relations here and offered an interim position to finish out a grant that they had with the State Department of Education, and was here about a month when I was offered a tenure stream position. So I came, and I've been here ever since.

**Charnley:** That was before you had your Ph.D. finished?

**Groty:** Yes, I finished the Ph.D. in '70. At the time—and I'll maybe go back and give you a little more of the detail. While I was a teacher in Royal Oak is the time when the laws passed in Michigan to permit collective bargaining of public employees. I was a teacher, a science teacher, from '62 to '64, and in August of '65 is when the law passed. I had been active as a teacher in what was then called meet-and-confer discussions with the administration in the school district about salaries and so on. When the law passed in August, we immediately shifted gears to become formally recognized unions, although we didn't use the word *union* in those days, necessarily, because the union was considered the American Federation of Teachers and we were the national Michigan Education Association.

But the immediate request of my colleagues was, “Well, you’ve been doing this on a voluntary basis. Would you lead our effort in becoming a recognized union?” With no background or training of any sort, I got engaged in that, and with the help of the Michigan Education Association, that signed an attorney to work with me and so on, and so I led the effort to get the Education Association recognized as a representative of the teachers in Royal Oak.

As soon as that happened and the election was won, they turned to me and said, “Well, now will you head the bargaining team?” Again, with no background or training, I, of course, said yes. I was still in my twenties then; I could do anything. And went to the bargaining table to bargain the first contract.

While I was doing all this, I was at the same time taking classes on weekends in Ann Arbor on my doctoral program and met, in my class, my educational finance class, as a matter of fact, the assistant superintendent from the Southfield schools. On a break in class one day, he said, “Have you thought of going into administration and when?”

I said, “Well, yes, some day, but right now I’ve just only been a counselor about eighteen months,” at the time. He told me about this intern program they had where it was quite innovative. It was a screened type of program. They put you through a one-year program where you kept your affiliation with your major institution, and so it was a developmental kind of program. So I applied for it, and unlike most of the people selected who were assigned out to schools to be trained as principals or assistant principals, I was assigned to the central office to work in the whole area of personnel and labor relations. It was supposed to be a yearlong program, but within six months, I

was offered the director of personnel for the school district, and while I continued in the intern program, I was actually promoted at the same time.

So I had gone there. I had finished the contract in Royal Oak in early summer, I'd been moved over to Southfield, and by that late summer, I was on the opposite side of the bargaining table from where I had been, and I was representing the school district. So about eighteen months later, there was a gathering of middle-city-size schools, that's all the larger school districts except Detroit, up here in Lansing Community College. The whole idea was for us to start helping each other out, working together, to meet this large effort of the Michigan Education Association, in particular, in representing teachers. They had the resources, and the school districts were still trying to get their act together. At that meeting, one of the resource people for the meeting was from the School of Labor and Industrial Relations here.

**Charnley:** Do you remember who that was?

**Groty:** He's no longer here. He was here at the time for a very short period, and I can't even come up with his name right now. He was a doctoral student, but on the faculty, working on his doctorate. He had this grant from the State Department of Education that he was administering to train school teachers and administrators in collective bargaining. At our noon break of that meeting, he asked if he could sit with me at lunch, and we talked and he told me that he really didn't like working in the public sector. He was from the private sector. He was impressed with

the fact that I'd had experience already on both sides of the bargaining table, and would I be interested in coming to Michigan State?

Well, I was a U of M guy, for one thing, and I'd never been on this campus. I thought, well, I might as well keep talking. So that was like on a Thursday or Friday. On Monday, I got a call from him and from his associate director of the school, who was Tom Patton at that time. They asked if they could come and see me in Southfield, and I said sure, and they came down.

I asked the superintendent of schools to sit in, who was kind of my mentor by this time, and they asked if I'd be willing to come for six months to finish out this grant. Well, I'd only been at the school district about eighteen months at this point, but I asked if I could have a leave to come and do this, and so I did.

I came up here, and I was here not very long when they said, "Would you be interested in staying here?"

I said at that time that I had just gotten this promotion and I had this new salary level and I'd have to move, and I was working on my doctorate, and so they matched the salary, told me they'd support me in the finishing of my doctorate. You know, I couldn't very well lose. So having never been in a job more than two years up to that point, I figured I'd be here for two more years and move on to something else. I've been here for thirty-five years.

**Charnley:** It sounds like you were a labor gypsy until that point.

**Groty:** Until that point. So I came here, and that was the emphasis at the time. My job was to train public school people in how to deal with collective bargaining. Most of the effort by this time was shifting to administrators as opposed to teachers, because the Michigan Education Association was hiring their own lawyers and so on to do the training there. So most of the emphasis shifted to public school administrators.

I then expanded the program to include city administrators and county administrators and eventually even administrators in the military dependent schools in the federal government, and even in work with the State of Michigan and the administrators in the State of Michigan.

That's what I was doing here when the director of the school in July of 1971 went on sabbatical, and I was named interim director of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations in July of '71. In the fall of '71, another university called and asked for some help because their faculty was unionizing and their staff had unionized, and they needed some help in organizing their administrative structure to deal with this. I went to help them, and in the process, was offered the position. I said I needed some time to think about this, because things were happening quite rapidly at that point.

I had been working—by this time, I had been elected to academic governance, and I mentioned this to Herman King, who was an assistant provost at the time, just casually, at an academic governance meeting that week. Later that week, I was over in Kellogg [Center] running a program, a seminar program and President [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.] was walking down the hall. He said, "I need to talk to you," and pulled me into a side office in Kellogg and said, "What's this I hear about you having an offer to go somewhere else?"

I told him that was true and told him what the offer was, and told him that I only had two more days to make my decision.

He said, “Well, let me talk to the vice presidents about this and I’ll be back to you.” Let’s see. That was on a Tuesday. I heard nothing on Wednesday, and when I came into the office Thursday morning, there was a phone message from him and from Jack Breslin. I never had met Jack Breslin, but they wanted to see me immediately.

So I called the president’s office and went over. He said that he had talked to the vice presidents and that he wanted to create a similar position here, and he wanted me to go meet with Jack Breslin, with John Cantlon, the provost, and with Roger Wilkinson, the vice president of finance.

So I did. I went, and I couldn’t see Cantlon until after five that day, and I was to give my answer by five that day, but I was able to see Jack and Roger Wilkinson. I was told by Cliff that if I were to take this, I would be working for Jack. So Jack and I hit it off immediately, and we got almost immediately into what would the title be and what the scope of the duties be and so on.

Oh, one little piece of that, in my initial conversation with Cliff, he had said, “I want to do something like this at Michigan State. Would you go back and write up a description of the job,” which I did that Tuesday, and took it over and left it at his office. So by Thursday, they all had this description, and so we got right to what title and so on. That’s when I picked assistant vice president, kind of picked it out of the air, that that would be the title. At that point, we called it personnel and employee relations.

Jack said, “Well, when would you want to start?”



I said, “Well, the director of the school is coming January 1, and I’d like to start January 1, 1972.”

Well, he thought it would wait until the next school year, but he said, “Well, fine, but why don’t you take the first six months and just kind of study it, plan it, lay out what you’re going to do and so on, and then officially take over all the duties by July. You take over some now and take over the rest by July.” Probably that was because there was a director of personnel at that time, Lenny Galander who was in charge of things, and this was going to be a rather—he was going to end up reporting to me instead of to Jack, and this was a transition kind of issue.

And, as they say, the rest is kind of history. But that’s how it all happened. But it happened quite quickly, not like today with searches and committees and the whole business.

**Charnley:** To what degree did that other university shape your description of what your duties would be?

**Groty:** Actually, what ended up here was different than there, because their faculty had already unionized, and this would have been a job handling all personnel, including faculty, all labor relations including faculty, all benefit programs, the whole works. But here the faculty hadn’t unionized yet, and the whole faculty employment part of the function was basically done at the dean’s office level with some recordkeeping centrally, but not a lot of central coordination over it. Cliff’s comment to me was that his thought was that as we went forward, the job would be expanded and built, and particularly if the faculty unionized, it would all be pulled together.

That to this day has never happened, because the faculty didn't unionize and because after a provost change, the new provost then wanted clearly to keep that within the provost's office, and an assistant provost was then named to head up academic human resources, as it's now called, a function that wasn't there before. So that whole thing has evolved over time, and I can expand more on that.

**Charnley:** Was that provost Larry Boger?

**Groty:** No.

**Charnley:** That was earlier.

**Groty:** No, actually, it was Lee Winder was the provost that really solidified that, and Bob Banks has held that position virtually ever since.

But Bob and I both came from the faculty of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations and had known each other and worked together. Frankly, that relationship between the two of us over the years and being able to work together really made it work, because while we were in separate reporting lines, we worked together very closely over the years on many, many things so that there was a coordination between academic personnel policies and the support staff personnel policies, even to the point now where there's organization among the graduate assistants, the bargaining is done out of the staff out of our office or the H.R. office, but in coordination with the

provost's office. So that coordination and the benefit programs have always gone across everybody, so there's been a tremendous amount of coordination. And a lot of that was because of the working relationship Bob and I had.

**Charnley:** You talked a little bit about faculty unionization. When you took over the job or developed the job, what unions were you dealing with all the time?

**Groty:** The history of the unions here at the university is rather interesting. As best I can determine, the first real involvement with the union was with the stagehands union back in the late thirties. At what was called the old auditorium, they had a stage manager who was a university full-time employee, but they didn't have any stagehands. So whenever they brought in shows out of New York, they had to fill what's known as the yellow card.

When a show comes in, what the yellow cards says, they need so many light people, so many electricians, so many flyers or whatever. They had to have an agreement with the hiring hall, that is, the union's hiring hall, to get these people. So the first, in effect, agreement with a union goes back to this hiring hall agreement to fulfill the yellow cards for theatrical productions and so on that were brought into the auditorium.

The other unions really didn't get organized until after August 1965 when the state law passed. At that time, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, or AFSCME, as it's known, moved into organize most all the blue-collar-type work, all your custodians and food service people and your power plant people and your skill trades people. So

the first unions when I arrived, the unions in place, were the Local 1585 out of AFSCME, Local 999 of AFSCME. There was this agreement with the stagehands, and by the time I came on, there was also an agreement with 547 of the operating engineers. Also by that time, the police, Fraternal Order of Police, FOP, had been recognized to represent the police officers.

Prior to my coming onboard, there had been a split. The original union had included the operating engineers within one of the AFSCME groups, and there was a division, and the skilled trades went into one local of AFSCME. The general labor went into another local of AFSCME. The operating engineers split off into—and they handled the power plant and water. But that split had all happened in the late sixties, prior to my coming on the scene. And, again, as I said, the stagehands went way back into the pre-World War II recognition, and the police came onboard in the late sixties.

There was an organization called the Administrative Professional Association, or APA, which represented all of the administrative profession employees, in effect, your white-collar employees. But it wasn't a recognized union at that time. It was an association, and they had not formed a union. There was no union for clerical and technical employees at that time.

Early 1970s, there was an incident on campus where an administrative-type employee, or administrative professional-type employee, got into a problem and felt that they weren't backed by the administration. That caused the seed for the organization of the APs, and, again, that preceded my coming onboard. I was on campus by this time, but I wasn't really aware of all this what was going on, because I was a junior faculty member, and it really wasn't something that I was involved with.

But that led to the APA becoming a much more solidified group and eventually growing into a formal union. That union was recognized after a vote, and later was challenged because in that unit they had both supervisory and non-supervisory employees in the same unit, which under Michigan labor law you can't do. So the Michigan Employment Relations Commission came in and ordered a new vote and split the groups, so that we end up with an AP supervisory unit and a non-supervisory unit.

In the process of doing that, the nurses, who were a part of that union, sought to have their own election, which is possible, again, under Michigan law, that a professional, a recognized professional kind of group, has a right to their own representation. They voted not to have a union, and became nonunionized, and it's the only group that has ever voted, once having been in a union, to go nonunion on campus, was the nurses, and they're still nonunion to this day.

Before all this splitting happened with APAs, the clerical union came along, and it's now called the Clerical Technical Union, but it had a different name at the time it organized. I'm trying to come up with that name at the moment and can't. But that effort started right in the early seventies, culminating with them being recognized about the mid-seventies, and I can't give you an exact date at the moment. But that became the largest of our unions, about 2,300, 2,400 employees in that union.

Also right around that same time was all the effort on the first faculty vote. I can give you more specifics on that.

I came on to the administration in January 1 of '72. By March, I think it was, of '72, there was a petition drive already under way for a faculty union vote. Now, as a faculty member before

coming into administration, I'd been involved in academic governance, and there had already been a discussion at the Academic Council on the pros and cons of whether the faculty should unionize. Charles Killingsworth, who was from the School of Labor Industrial Relations, and I were both members of the Academic Council and were called on the floor of council to give our opinions as to whether or not this would happen or wouldn't happen and so on. I was asked at that time, also, to speak.

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

**Charnley:** This is side two of tape one.

When the tape ended, we were talking about the first unionization and efforts of the faculty.

**Groty:** Right. I was asked to speak at those times, like to the Faculty Men's Club, which eventually became the Faculty Club when they built their building and so on, about whether or not there would be unionization and so on. It was really very hotly debated from faculty who felt that unionization was the way to go and those who thought it was antithetical to a university and was the worst thing that could happen.

As I say, I came on January of '72. By March of '72, the first efforts were starting to show petition for an election, and we had a meeting to set up the first vote. Interestingly enough, the person who showed up from the Michigan Education Association, who was the petitioner, had been the fellow that I had been sitting across the table from in Southfield when I was bargaining down

there. By this time, he had moved to the Lansing area and was now the representative from Michigan Education Association. So the world came back together again.

**Charnley:** Who was that?

**Groty:** Jim Sissung was his name.

But this had been anticipated that this could all happen when Cliff created the position, because the petitioning and so on was going on at that time, so this wasn't totally unexpected that there might be this effort. Anyhow, we agreed to set the election for that following October, and so the votes, and I can't give you the exact date, were in October of '72.

There was the normal information sharing as to what it meant, what the terminology meant, would people have to join unions, and so on, and we actually created, administratively, a process of putting out information. The question at the time always was, "How strongly an anti position does the administration take?" And there was the question at the time, the board was predominantly Democratic board members, Democratic elected board members, and so there was always the question of how stridently could the university take an anti-union position. Should they take an anti-union position?

There were clearly some within the administration who were very anti-union, but the position taken then and through the subsequent two elections that came later on was that the administration as a group should take an information position, should make sure that people were well informed, knew what the issues were, knew what the alternatives were, but that if there was

going to be an anti position, that was a kind of freedom-of-speech issue, that an individual administrator wanting to speak out on it was free to do so, but that neither the president nor the administration as a whole would take a specific position.

**Charnley:** What was Don Stevens' role on the board? Because his was, of course, a union background. Did that enter into it at all?

**Groty:** Not really. Don Stevens and Pat [Patricia M.] Carrigan, who are members of the board, were actually—I didn't know them personally. But they ended up being my champions as far as when I was brought to the board for this new position to be created and so on, they spoke on my behalf and so on.

I found out later the reason for that, of course, Don was very supportive of the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, and I was coming from the School of Labor and Industrial Relations. He had checked me out there, and I was fine there. Pat Carrigan's was a little different story. As a faculty member, I had been appointed the fact-finder in the dispute with the Ann Arbor schools and their teachers, and held hearings down there on their dispute over their contract. Pat Carrigan was working for the Ann Arbor schools, and I didn't know her at the time or know anything about her, but found out later that she had been sitting in the front row throughout all these hearings watching me conduct these hearings and so on, and because of that, was impressed and became supportive. To this day, we're friends. But they were the two who, when my name was brought to the board, spoke on my behalf as why this was a good idea and so on.



But when it came later on, and this has been true pretty much throughout all of the labor relations history here, the board has been cautioned to stay out of it. That's been difficult for some board members because of their own personal backgrounds and their own personal political connections and so on, but other board members tended to remind them they're in a management role when they're a board member and that those of us who were hired to do this were professionals at doing it, and why we should be accountable to them and make sure they understand what's going on and so on, that it would be best if they didn't address the press or speak on the issue. That's been pretty much the way it's been for all of these years.

They may, in private briefing sessions, express to us their opinion as to whether they thought we were taking the right tact or not, generally directing the president more than us who were doing the table work. But generally, the board has stayed out of all of these things. Even when we've had strikes and the unions have come to the board, open board meetings, and spoke and we've had pickets at the board meetings and so on, the board members have kept their comments generally in private session.

**Charnley:** In the late sixties, early seventies, what were some of the main issues, labor issues, that you dealt with, beyond just the mere organization and that sort of thing?

**Groty:** There was a huge shift in the administrative style at Michigan State between John [A.] Hannah and then subsequent. I didn't work with John directly. I did work with Jack Breslin who

was a John Hannah protégé. John Hannah was far more a directive, take control, and give orders-type president.

The university was shifting from a college to a university, with a different kind of faculty who expected a different kind of academic governance. Cliff came in and there was a shift, and it continued to shift over the years, to a much more collegial kind of academic governance. There was this pull and tug between whether or not you were going to have this collegial kind of government or you were going to have a collective bargaining kind of government.

One of the classics was at Central Michigan where they voted for unionization, but they wanted to still have academic governance, and so the issue there became which issues could academic governance deal with instead of collective bargaining. That was part of the debate that went on here, would academic governance lose its power to a union if there was unionization?

There was a real clear split, and always has been, between the faculties of the various colleges as to who supported collective bargaining and who didn't. College of Arts and Letters always had more support among its faculty for the collective bargaining than did the sciences, the hard sciences areas. The chemical, biological, physical science areas, engineering, business were not as supportive. Other schools, such as education, tended toward supporting collective bargaining, but, again, there was more split.

You could almost line up the colleges. If you looked at things like salaries, the colleges that had lower salaries by comparison tended to support the collective bargaining. There was also issues of resources like graduate assistantships and all the other resources that go along with supporting

the teaching effort that were issues that kept coming up. But to characterize it kind of crassly, it was more the have and the have-nots kind of split.

The other issue that came in there is that whether or not this was to be an MEA or a teacher education association type of effort or whether it was to be an AAUP type of effort. The first election, it was driven by an MEA-supported group, and it was later, in the other elections, the later elections, that AAUP actually came more forward. AAUP was a part of the first election, but under Michigan labor law, you have to have a petition signed by 30 percent of the bargaining unit that you're seeking in order to get an election. But you can get on the ballot if you have a petition signed by 10 percent. The same person can sign both petitions or cards, if you will. So AAUP got on with a 10 percent showing the first time.

Oakland University, who had been attached to Michigan State not many years prior to this, had gone unionization with AAUP. I think that had some influence. But the people who wanted no union were clearly trying to say that this was a research university in a class with the University of Michigan and other Big Ten research universities, and that research universities were not unionizing, which was basically true. The places where research universities were unionizing were in systems like in Florida, University of Florida and Florida State are in unionization, but all the system is. They're a part of a whole system. The same thing is true in New York where the whole system is unionized, and so Stony Brook and others are part of that whole system.

But many of your standalone research universities were not unionizing, and so Michigan State was trying to go through this transition of becoming recognized as a true research university

and wanting to continue to be a part of that group and not the other group as in the view of those who were speaking against it.

There was a defeat of the union effort in the fall of '72. It has come up twice since, and I can't give you the exact dates. I believe the last one was '83, but I can't remember what the other one, middle one, was. But in each case, the vote against unionization was greater than the time before. So as the years went by, the sentiment of not needing a union went up. I would say, from my observation, so did the strength of academic governance at the same time. I think there's a real correlation between how academic governances functioned and how the administration, and particularly the provost and president, have utilized and worked with academic governance over this same period of time. So I think for many faculty, there wasn't a need for the collective bargaining if you had what they perceived as a governance system that worked.

**Charnley:** Within your school, the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, was there that same split?

**Groty:** No, not really. Most of the people in the School of Labor and Industrial Relations are ones who believe in the value of collective bargaining. I think virtually all of them do. The people who are working directly with management as opposed to the division in the School of Labor and Industrial Relations, there's a division that works with labor and there's a division that works mostly with management, and then there's an academic program that teaches and there's some overlapping.

But the people working with management, you're really talking about two, three people. I mean, you aren't talking about huge numbers of people, and those would be people like myself, who had a union background, who really saw it as a method of making decisions, and that if you didn't have a method that worked for the good of the employee in making decisions in the workplace, then collective bargaining was a good one, okay, but it isn't the only one.

As I teach in my collective bargaining courses today, that management creates unions, unions don't create unions, and that if management works with employees, listens to employees, takes in the concerns and needs of employees, you're probably not going to have a union. But if management runs roughshod over employees and doesn't involve them and keep them connected with the work of the organization, then the employees are probably going to form a union. Now, once formed, they tend to stay. Even though we've had a shrink in unionization, the shrinkage has come not because they voted out unions, it's because those companies have gone away and new companies have come in who haven't unionized.

**Charnley:** In looking back at some of those early years, the attempts at faculty unionization, who were some of the people you faced across the table? Do you remember any of the leaders?

**Grotz:** I know Philip Korth as probably the main leader on the faculty side. Phil believes strongly that this was the way that the faculty should go for representational purposes, that this was a better system than governance. Phil, as I understood it, had a labor history background. I mean, this was his belief. We never really had any major problems in discussion. I mean, it was very collegial

even in setting up elections and so on. It was really a test of philosophies as to whether or not one system of decision-making was better than another system or one system of governance was better than another.

That was, I think, far more the case with the faculty unionizations than it might have been with some of the staff unionizations. It was really a clash of philosophies and where was the power going to come from. I think there was a real strong feeling that there needed to be a better balancing of power in decision-making and distribution of the fruits of labor across the faculty, that the distinctions in salaries were too broad, and that there should be more of an homogenization, if you will, of salary levels and so on across disciplines.

That's probably here today. I don't think that goes away, but it's an issue of whether or not there is the power within the groups—back to the haves and the have-nots—if there's the power there to really exercise the clout to make this happen. One of the things that happens with unionizations, whether it's faculty unionization or any others, is you get a rising of the boats, if you will, so that there is less disparity between the lower paid and the higher paid than you would have if you simply look in the marketplace. At the moment, without a union, then we're marketplace-driven, more on salaries, where with unionization, you're more internally driven as far as your comparison.

**Charnley:** If one of the goals of the faculty union and those that supported it, like Phil Korth, was to increase faculty salaries, was that an outgrowth of the defeat of the unionization? Did salaries rise?

**Grotty:** All the way along for all of the years, we've had to work very carefully to keep the salary increase percentages among the staff and the faculty pretty, pretty close. If one got 3 percent, the other got 3 percent. Now, the different might have been in the distribution methods, one being done on a merit system, the other being done across the board, for instance. But understand that when you're applying percentages against different bases, they generate very different outcomes. So while the faculty might have gotten the same percentage, the average salary of a faculty member was probably twice the average salary of a clerical employee, so the percentage would generate considerably more dollars.

The other thing that happened, more with the faculty than with the unionized employees, is that there were a lot of special adjustments. When I first came on the administration, every special adjustment of every salary of every faculty member or every administrative professional employee had to go to the board. So every month, we had these huge reports. I mean, if you adjusted somebody's salary by twenty-five bucks, it had to go to the board for approval. As a result, it had a real dampening effect on doing those kind of special adjustments.

Over the years, that delegation authority to the administration to manage inside the budget, in other words, the board passed the budget, but the administration could make these kind of adjustments, and they simply became reported to the board as a board report, as opposed to board action, changed. In fact, at one point in the late seventies, we stopped even doing the individual report on administrative professional employees to the board; didn't even report it. As long as we worked within budget of the university, the administrator was free to make adjustments and so on.

As a result, you started to get far more offline adjustments to meet market, to meet competitive offers from other places, and so on. So it became much more difficult to say what was the raise this year. The raise this year was the result of all of this that happened after the end of the year. That made budgeting at the budget office level much more difficult, because they worked from fixed numbers. They worked from 1 July to the next July. If adjustments had been made in the meantime, the unit had to figure out how they were going to move that money around and make those adjustments, but there was much more freedom to make those adjustments.

We used to be very tightly budgeted in an equipment budget, a supplies and services budget, a salary budget, a labor budget, and moneys couldn't cross those lines. Well, the first thing I did is fold the supplies and services and the equipment budget into one budget and so on, and there got to be much more flow, and administrators were allowed to manage their budgets more freely. So you started to get more of the adjustments.

Also, there became a system of recognizing equity adjustments, particularly adjustments to female faculty salaries and so on. So that a lot of the things that had become imbedded that were the points upon which you could make an argument for unionization, start getting taken care of on a case-by-case basis over time, and I think that took a lot of the pressure off. The other thing is that by keeping the faculty and the unions pretty closely together, it was hard for someone to argue that, "See? The unions are doing so much better than we are. We should unionize also," because that wasn't happening. This was particularly true on the benefits side. We kept everybody together on the benefits programs, so that if benefits improved for one, it improved for all.



**Charnley:** Did you have any model that you used for the faculty benefits?

**Groty:** It was all one pool, and even to this day what's done is to work with the Faculty Affairs Committee, who has a subcommittee on benefits. We have now, for the first time in the last couple of years now, there is a difference, slight difference, between the direction of the benefits for faculty and the benefits for the staff unionized employees. But that was done with the recommendation of the Faculty Affairs Committee.

The difference is that the faculty pays a little more for premium on their healthcare, but for that, they got a bigger percentage on their salary increases, where the unions chose to go in a different direction and they wanted no premium pay and they took less on their salary increases. But it was done in conjunction with the representatives, with the Faculty Affairs Committee becoming clearly more and more the clear representational line that the provost worked with.

But the coverages are almost exactly the same. It's only the difference in how they're paid for that has changed. I think for a number of reasons, it will stay together. For one reason, by keeping them all together, you have more leverage in the market and you can insure across a broader group so you can handle the ups and downs of catastrophic things that happen within maybe one group and not in the other group.

But the other thing that happened, in 1973 or '74, we had another big strike. We'd had a strike of the maintenance and skilled trade employees. I think it was '69. I was on the faculty, but I was not in the administration. I was then in the administration in '72, and I think it was '73 that we had another big strike. That strike, I think, went on for ten days.

But some things happened as a part of that strike that I think really made even a greater influence among many faculty to be anti-unionization. One thing that happened is there was sabotage in some of the animal labs. Animals were let out of their cages, and there was whole research projects that were destroyed because of the intermixing of animals that had been in research groups and that kind of stuff. Some of that kind of violence, I think, really solidified those who didn't want to have or be a part of a union situation.

**Charnley:** Especially in the sciences?

**Groty:** Yes, particularly in the sciences.

We still continue to have strikes periodically, but the last major strike was with the clerical employees, and, again, I can't give you the exact date, but it was going to occur at the opening of school. We had developed a strike contingency plan to open school, run without them being able to interfere with the opening of school.

The strike that happened in the late sixties, actually, and I think Walter Adams was president at the time, actually delayed the opening of school by a day or two. So there was this resolve that this wasn't going to happen again. Of course, the clerical union, this was their huge time of clout, because with all the registration process, anyhow, the gear-up was such that we had this wide cross-campus planning group that was to plan the contingencies against this. What happened is the students went through registration, came out the back side, television cameras in

their face, and students saying this is the best registration they'd been through. And two days later, the strike settled and stopped.

We really haven't had a big effort since then. We've had some threats and so on, but the whole idea that going out striking or locking out employees or whatever was going to solve anything, it became clear that it wasn't going to solve anything, that we really needed a new kind of labor relations which was more collaborative. For the last ten, fifteen years, that's really been the model of the labor relations, a much more ongoing day-to-day collaborative meeting on a regular basis dealing with issues as they come up. The same thing's true in the relationship—

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

**Charnley:** This is tape two of the Keith Groty interview.

We were talking about collective bargaining and we're talking about the Clerical Technical Union when the last tape ended. Would you talk a little bit about some of the CT presidents that you dealt with? Were there any longtime ones that were there very long?

**Groty:** Yes. When the Clerical Technical Union was first organized, it was called MSUEA, and I remember earlier I said it was the Michigan State University Employees Association. The organization formed, basically, as a support group for the clerical employees, because they were the biggest number, but the leadership was actually out of the technical employees. That shifted after the first year or two, and there has been a group of leadership, Barbara Reeves probably is the one

who's been around for the most all the whole time up to date in and out of presidencies, but always part of a leadership group.

The biggest issues we've had with that particular union had to do with people they hired from outside to be their professional help. The relationship, actually, with the employees really has never been that bad. That doesn't mean we always agreed, but we've been able to build that relationship over the years with the people onboard. We had a bigger problem with people that they brought in.

In the last ten years or more, that relationship has worked quite well. The attorney that represents them, while clearly fighting for their interests, and makes no bones about it, I mean, but you know where he stands. There's a trust that you can build there. You may disagree, but you don't have to be disagreeable, kind of relationship. That's been true across most all of our unions.

It's been a relationship that's matured quite well, and probably the biggest sign of its maturity happened within the last five or six years when we simply made an agreement that healthcare was such an important part of the relationship and the cost, that we were going to handle the healthcare with all the unions together at the same time in coalition. Instead of dealing with them one union at a time each, and the model has been—we had eight unions at the time—we'd do four one year, four the next year, have a year off, and so we'd do three-year contracts, and then we'd start with the four again.

Instead of doing healthcare this way when you're trying to keep it in one group, we simply made an agreement with the unions to carve out healthcare from all the contracts and deal with it with representatives of all the unions sitting with us together, and then when we came to an

agreement, put that agreement back into each of the contracts. That is a very unique model that is not—you won't find other places, and it has worked very well for us.

After having done that for a couple of rounds of bargaining, we then went to, in the last round of bargaining, where we not only carved out the healthcare, but we carved out the wage increases as well. So the healthcare and wage increases are dealt with as a package, and then after the agreement, are put back into their own contracts. By "put back in," I mean each union has to ratify that agreement independently even though it was done across as a group. When they ratify it, then it's, in effect, amended into their contract.

What that means is that this present round of bargaining that they've been going through, hardly anybody knows is going on because wages and benefits are already settled. So the things that they're talking about are working condition kinds of things, seniority issues, promotional issues, that kind of stuff. Bargaining, instead of taking months and hours and hours, is taking sometimes days and just a few weeks, and they've got a contract settled. So it's gone from a long, protracted, month after month, hours and hours and hours of tablework, one union at a time, to a much more collegial kind of problem-solving approach where they identify the issues, they sit down and they array alternatives, and work at solving these, as opposed to hardnosed banging across the table on issues.

So in the years between the late sixties, middle to late seventies, where things were very confrontational and unions were just forming and getting going, into the eighties where we still had a lot of confrontation, into the nineties, and now turn of the century, it's really a very different kind

of labor relations than we had before, and some of that simply come with the leadership maturity on both sides. We have the long-term relationships.

There's been a change now. I've stepped out of my position a year ago last January, so thirty years to the day that I took on the position. Then July 1st of this year, Sam Baker, who's been the negotiator working at the table for the last twenty-four years, has retired. So all of a sudden, there's a change. There are people still from the human resources and so on that are still there, that have been around, but the leadership change has taken place. So that will happen, too, and has happened, with some of the union leadership. These people have come up to retirement age or whatever.

So there's been some turnover there, but there will need to be a readjustment to new faces, but I think the groundwork has been laid for a much more constructive—most people read about unions and read about strikes and read about confrontation, but the reality is most union-management relations are not like that. The reality is most union-management relationships reach contracts without strikes, work on problems, have a day-to-day relationship. That doesn't mean they always agree on things, but they get things settled, they get problems solved, and that's where we are. But it didn't come easily, and it didn't come right away. It took years to build that.

**Charnley:** Has your replacement been permanently named?

**Groty:** Yes. There was an interim, Denise Anderton who had started with me as a student employee, as an undergraduate student employee, worked in benefits, worked through a number of

offices, went away, came back, then worked for me for years and then retired. Then she was brought back on an interim basis.

Then she has been replaced by a permanent replacement in Pam Beamer who also had started with me as my administrative assistant, who then went away and was at Oakland University and Strok Brewery Companies, Sparrow Hospital, and then I brought her back a few years ago from Sparrow. She headed the benefits unit, and she's now been named my permanent replacement as of, well, I guess it will happen in June of '03.

**Charnley:** And Sam Baker's replacement, is that an interim now?

**Groty:** There's an interim, Jim Nash, who has worked as his assistant for years, is handling it in the interim, but there's a nationwide search going on right now for his replacement.

**Charnley:** You mentioned women's salaries, and there were some inequities initially. Was there any proponents who brought this to the attention of the administration?

**Groty:** Well, one of the major issues with the clerical bargaining was the women's equity, salary equity issue. When I first came on the faculty and in administration, there used to be talk about the student wives. Student wives were the clerical employees. And I had to keep pointing out to them that that may have been the case post-World War II or post-Vietnam War, but it certainly wasn't the case in the seventies. But seniority of a clerical employee would probably be on the average in the

three- to four year range, where the seniority of an administrative professional might be in the eleven- to twelve year range on the average.

Over the years of the seventies, eighties, into the nineties, that seniority piece became almost exactly the same across all the unions. Now, some of your smaller unions, like power plants, at one point had seventeen, eighteen years' average seniority, but as there's been turnover with retirements, that's going to come down some. But we went from a situation where it wasn't a student wife working while the husband went to school. We were clearly working into a professional workforce, and that change came on fairly subtly, but it was clear that this meant a whole different kind of wage structure for clerical employees.

And so one of the big issues early on with clerical employees was to get them market equity, and then the question became, well, who is our market? And who do we compare with? And, of course, the easy one for people to say, well, we'll compare to state employees. And right away we had to say, no, we aren't going to compare with state employees, because state employees are paid across the state based on the highest common denominator, which is Detroit. Okay? There's a ruling that you can't have a differential based on where the person is within the state. So they had to go for the highest market, which was Detroit. Well, that was higher than we were. That wasn't Lansing. So we didn't have to go with state employee.

Nor didn't we have to go with General Motors necessarily either. So we really had to decide just who were we going to be. Just what was going to be our market? And we just, over the years, had worked to try and stay kind of in between the state employee market and the private



sector local small business market, which is where we've been and tried to stay all along and have been pretty successful.

But that did mean we needed to do something special for clerical employees who were predominantly women. And over the first few contracts, that was done. There was extra money poured in, not unlike they'd done for women faculty salaries in order to correct those. But that issue, I think, I mean, it can always be raised again, but I think the issue basically was taken care of within the first few rounds of collective bargaining contracts.

The other issue that was a huge issue among all of the employee groups was job security. The way the system had been set up is that seniority didn't really mean much and that unit administrators across campus really had the power of the prince in their fiefdom type of situation and could pretty well run their budgets, hire who they wanted to, get rid of who they wanted to, promote who they wanted to, and that it was not unusual for someone to be told, "Well, you've been here a long time. Your salary's too high. If you want this position, you'll have to take a salary decrease," or something of that order.

That became a huge issue at the bargaining table, and it resulted early on in a whole system where people had the right to be interviewed, even limits on who could be interviewed, based on seniority and qualifications for jobs, to get around that problem of people being, in effect, loyal to the organization, staying here, earning more salary, but then having it work against them when it came time to get promotions.

So that was a huge major issue that was a part of early contracts, particularly with the clerical employees, but it was also an issue with the administrative and professional employees, and

their contracts clearly addressed those issues even to this day. When you're talking about promotion and seniority for promotions and so on, there's also the correlation of having seniority for layoffs and so on. But we've had so little in the way of layoffs, that we haven't had to test that much.

There have been layoffs. There always are layoffs when grants run out and so on. But the system gives preference to those people in getting back into the system and other vacancies as long as they have qualifications and so on. And in some cases, there have been severance payments where people have very unique skills and they can't back in. There have been ways to cushion that exit, but again, that was a huge issue, which over time the parties worked out ways to deal with this. And as long as we don't have massive layoffs, we won't have a problem. If we ever have massive layoffs, the systems of bumping and so on is, frankly, so complicated that it will, I'm afraid, tie things up in knots. But it's not likely that we'll have that. We have enough turnover because of soft money that generally cushions this. Turnover has decreased significantly. Early years, clerical turnover was 25 percent or more a year.

**Charnley:** Per year?

**Groty:** Per year. And now turnover is probably down in the 7, 8 percent category, counting retirements. If we take out the retirements, it's probably half of that, so that we've really professionalized the workforce. Unlike all the stuff you hear about the private sector with high turnover and people don't stay for a long time, people do stay for a long time here. And as a result,

from a human resource, we've had to think more about how do we continually train and upgrade the skills of people. We can't just hope that people are going to turn over and leave and you'll bring in someone with skills. People don't turn over and leave, so you have to have programs to improve people's skills, bring them along.

This was a huge issue as we went through the technology, bringing in computers instead of typewriters, and so on. That was a major shift, that whole technology shift, because that changed the way, significantly, work was done by the clerical employee. And it also increased the number of technical employees that we had.

But through that, you can see a demographic shift. Clerical employees today are under 2,000. They were over 2,400 at one time. AP employees were at one point about 900, 600 to 900, now they're 1,300, 1,400. So that the shift has been to a much more professional workforce, to a workforce that, I think, is better aligned with faculty.

Faculty, of course, have had to take up the computer, do a lot more of their own manuscript drafting and so on, which used to be turned over to clerical employees. They don't have that clerical support, so they're doing more of that themselves. And many of them would prefer to do it themselves, now that they have those kind of skills. So you've seen a real demographic shift in the kind of workforce we have.

One of the issues that's come up over and over, over the years, is always the issue of outsourcing, whether or not we should as a workforce reduce our workforce in certain areas and shift the work out. Probably one of the easier areas to explain is the whole food service area. There

are all kinds of organizations and lots of other universities who have outsourced their whole food service operation.

**Charnley:** To include the dormitories?

**Groty:** Yes. We hadn't. Okay? And largely, one, because of volume, we're big enough that we had the volume that other places don't have. And, two, it's been our human resource policies, how, in fact, we have utilized that workforce and kept it economically viable, that we don't need to outsource now.

The issue of outsourcing continually comes up. It's continually reviewed across a whole array of jobs. But by watching how we do things, how we pay, how we manage our workforce, in many places we haven't found the economic advantage to do that. And the economic advantage has to be significant, because to bargain that out of contract, even though we've protected the right of subcontracting in our contract, we have the right to do that, the displacement of all of those employees would be a major, major labor relations issue. So even when we do do some of this, we do it transitionally over time, move people to other assignments, retrain them to do other stuff or whatever, so that there's a tremendous job security, which in part can explain why we have good labor relations.

**Charnley:** For the CT's, how did the job classification system develop?

**Groty:** Well, there was always—quote—“a system.” Okay? When I first came onboard, the system was really kind of the director of personnel deciding out of his hip pocket, “This is a Clerical I or II and this is a Clerical III.” I mean, it was done by people who did it every day, but it was done without a lot of documentation, without a real systematized way of doing it.

One of the early things that I was faced with was having a classification study, and classification studies are not fun. They are very difficult. They’re highly emotionally charged, because you’re now talking about people’s salaries. You’re talking about their promotional future. You’re talking about their perceived value, not only within the organization, but one person to another. They’re tough. But we had to do them.

We had to create a system, because a classification system is what determines pay. I mean, the reason for a classification system, basically, is to determine pay. Now, the other reason for a classification system is to let people know what’s expected of them, what are the job duties, what training and development do they need to do those job duties and so on. But the basic function is to set up a system that differentiates pay across different skills and so on. And to take very different kinds of jobs and put them in some kind of equated way for pay purposes, so you’ve got jobs that don’t look alike, you have to give them some value in order for pay.

We’ve done this. Again, we had to do it in a union environment, which means bringing the unions into it up to their ears, even to the level of sitting on appeals panels and everything else. But once we got it in place, then I created behind that a professional staff who were charged to keep it up to date and to modify it and fix it as you go, rather than letting it get out of whack and then having to start from scratch, throw out the whole thing, and start all over again. In fact, to the point

where probably ten to fifteen years, halfway through my time, I said to my staff, “We will never do this again. You will keep it up to date. You will fix it as we go. We are not going to go through this again,” because it is very expensive. You have to bring in outside consultants and so on, but it’s also very expensive in lost time, because you’ve got all the employees filling out forms about what they do and how they do it and how much time they spend and so on. And then you’ve got all these committees reviewing all of this and ranking it. And you’ve got appeals procedures and time it takes for that and lost productivity that goes along with that. It has to be done, I guess, every once in a while, but kind of a measure of how well your system is working is how often you don’t have to do it.

But by giving the unions the right to raise issue at any time along the way, any day, they can raise an issue on a job and have it looked at, you don’t have that buildup of people saying, “I’m not being treated fairly.” They have a way of bringing that forward and having it dealt with on an ongoing basis, and that takes a lot of the pressure off the system. And also not having to take all of this to the trustees every time an adjustment was made, made it much easier for an adjustment to just be made and taken care of.

Now, within the bureaucracy, it does cause stresses because you get new fields. For instance, the whole computer field came on, and you had a growth very fast with the number of people with the skills limited, and so their market demand position was greater than their position would be in a normal classification system. They could demand a market position or salaries higher than we would say they’d be paid. Then you have to set up secondary systems to say, “Okay, we’ll do this on an exception basis, but we’re not going to change the system. We’ll take care of these

exceptions, but as the skill pool catches up, as the availability of talent catches up, it will all fall back.” And if you do that, you don’t have to keep redoing the system all the time. Some systems didn’t do that. They set up whole elaborate systems only to have to change the whole thing again years later when everybody started having new skills and there was an abundance of people with these skills.

But if you have a classification that people think is fair, that is open and reviewable, and that is the basis then from which you make your salary increases, one of the early issues, it was a huge issue, was the issue of promotional ladders. Okay? People wanted to know, “If I start here, how do I get to this level up here? What do I have to do? How many years do I have to be in this job?” and so on.

And again, I took the position that a promotional ladder is what you look at after you’ve had your career and you look backwards and say, “Oh, here’s how I got here.” Okay? There’s no one way for everybody to get to their position. I mean, we anecdotally talk to people, “How did you get to where you are?” And then you shake your head and say, “My gosh, how’d that ever happen?” But people needed to know that they could, in fact, advance, and they needed to know that in gathering more skills and experience, that that had value, and that we would, in fact, help them do that. And so we’ve over the years created systems that will support people as they go back to school, paying for tuition and so on, and that’s true with most of our bargaining units, where they can take classes and have the tuition reimbursed and so on and that once they get these things, they make themselves then eligible for opportunity.

That took a lot of the heat off the system where people felt that they were in these lower-level jobs and there was no way to get out. But by creating a system and supporting that, that was an issue that tended to—I mean, it may still be there for an individual or two, but on a systemic basis, it's not there.

**Charnley:** And the most recent group on campus to unionize, of course, was the graduate teaching assistants. To what degree were you involved in that?

**Groty:** Only a little bit, because Sam Baker, from my office, worked with Bob Banks. I was involved early on when we were on the early discussions about the election and the definition of the bargaining unit and that type of stuff. And in fact, when they did the vote, I was there representing the university in the vote count and so on.

But at the bargaining table, this was done with the dean of the graduate school, the provost, and our office serving as the technical staff to help them do this. They actually sat at the table. It was also being done just as I was leaving my position, and because the staff reported to me, I knew what was going on, I knew what the issues were, and I knew what the progress was, but I was not as involved in it. Over the years with the other units, actually, I would work with the administration to get the parameters of what we could do and so on, and I would give the direction to whoever was doing the bargaining at the table as to here's what authority. They would check with me as to could they put more money on the table or that kind of stuff. That wasn't the case with the grad students, but that had been the case for many years with all the other bargaining.



The model that I created and followed all those years was that there are two bodies you negotiate with: the body you represent and the body across the table from you. And so I set it up so that I negotiated with the body that we represented. In other words, I worked with central administration and the trustees, and the person who worked for me then worked across the table. Now, that got a little fuzzy over the years, because when we went to coalition bargaining on healthcare, I then actually went and sat at the table for that. And I did, early in my years, actually did some of the bargaining at the table. I put the clerical contract, the early clerical contracts.

What happened also later on is that the meeting with the board, we used to meet with the board and brief the board on what was coming. And then as we did bargaining, we'd go back and brief them and so on. We had less contact with the board later on, just briefing the president and the vice president and the provost. And they did most of the board work, and that change came more with Peter McPherson as president than prior to that. Prior to that—

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

**Charnley:** This is side two of tape two.

You were talking about President McPherson and, looking back, some of the other administrators.

**Groty:** In the fourteen years that I worked for Jack Breslin, the relationship with Jack was basically, “You go take care of it, and call me if you need help.” I mean, I can remember, it rings in

my ears to this day, one of the earliest, if not the earliest direction I had from Jack when I started to work for him was, “These are our people. Take care of them.” I remember that. It was clearly a more paternalistic kind of system, but if you knew Jack Breslin, it was clearly Jack Breslin, too. I mean, Jack Breslin was revered by the common employee of this campus. I mean, he could walk across campus and converse with a gardener or with a custodian or with a faculty member. I mean, that’s the kind of person he was, and he really meant that.

But his position with me was that, “This is your area. This is your professional area.” He was busy with the lobbying down at the legislature and so on. I can remember, I think I had one staff meeting with Jack Breslin where he called his whole staff together in all the years I worked for him. Basically, it was a one-on-one kind of thing where you called him if you needed help, and generally it was you calling him. You basically ran your area.

When I switched then to report to Roger Wilkinson for, I think thirteen years for Roger, that was a different model. And in that case, Roger had four assistant vice presidents, and we met every other week for almost the whole morning, and it became much more of a team kind of thing. We had housing and food, physical plant, the finance area, and the human resource areas, were the four assistants, so there was much more planning and collaboration across the whole operational side of the university.

Also during those years, that had been around for years as the Operations Committee really became much more formalized and more active, and to this day has grown more, has more people on it, is a broader group. You have the dean’s group that meets with the provost and the president. Well, this would be the people on the operational side equal to, in effect, in many ways to the

dean's group, and they get together monthly and meet and coordinate across the operational side of the university. That evolved into a more important organization over the years.

With the change in presidents, and every president has a different style, every president has, as every person does, their strengths and their weaknesses, and you learn to adapt to the presidents. I mean, they don't adapt to you. And you're used in different ways. Some presidents simply say, "You're the expert in this area. Take care of it. Keep me informed," and it's a very collegial kind of relationship, and rank doesn't necessarily mean a lot as far as your title and so on.

Other presidents, it's a much more micromanaged top-down kind of setting, and you don't have the same kind of feeling as being dealt with as a professional as much as you do as a technician. But that's the way things are, and people change, and even presidents change. They start one way, and then as the years go by, they change to become a different way based on the reality of the situation.

**Charnley:** Are there any of the presidents that you've worked with that you've found that it's been most easy to work with or that you enjoyed the most?

**Groty:** Well, for different reasons. I mean, some of them were very short-term, like Ed [Edgar L.] Harden and Gordon Guyer, but Gordon and I had been friends for years and years as faculty members because we have a lot of conservation and outdoor interests and so on. So when he was president, he was still Gordon, and to this day, we're still friends.

Cliff Wharton was easy to work with, but there weren't a lot of years, but he was easy to work with. But I worked a lot with Jack Breslin at that time. When [M.] Cecil [Mackey] came onboard, I worked more directly with him. Cecil Mackey, from an administrative point of view, I would say is an administrator's administrator. He respected your area of expertise. If there was a problem or an issue that needed—you came in, you were expected to be able to array what the alternatives are, explain which alternative you were recommending, and why. It was like taking your final exam type of thing. But once a decision was made, you didn't have to look over your shoulder as to whether he was going to change his mind or whatever; you knew you had backing. You could just take and run and go with it. And in that regard, I still have a very good relationship with Cecil and Claire [Mackey], and I have a lot of respect for him and the way he ran and worked with his administrators.

John [A.] DiBiaggio is a good friend, but totally different. John, again, respected your expertise and the way you ran, but you seldom had any interaction with him. He was external more, raising funds and so on, and so you dealt more with the provost, in that case David Scott, and so it was a whole different kind of administrative structure.

By that time, I was also working more with Roger Wilkinson and worked through Roger more than directly with the president. I had a social relationship with John, too, so that I always had to make sure to keep and respect the line of authority. Even though I had a social relationship and I could have worked more directly with him, I had to respect the fact that I was working through Roger Wilkinson and the provost. So you have those kind of issues.

[M.] Peter's [McPherson] a whole different kind of president from any of the others that I've ever worked with. Peter is much more involved in everything. He wants very much more to be involved in the decision-making. He personally gets involved with the union leadership, and is a very different model to work for.

**Charnley:** Do you see any holdover from his experience in the White House in personnel when he was with Dick [Richard] Cheney? Is there a continuation there?

**Groty:** No, I don't think so. I wouldn't have seen it. The one issue that Peter's experience in the federal government, when he first came in, led him to believe that he would find the same kind of public employee here that he found in the federal government, and he was not very supportive of that. Early on, I had to say to him, "No, you've got to reserve your judgment. This is different. Our unions are different than federal unions. Our employees are different than federal employees. It's a different kind of environment. This is a university environment." And he did. I mean, he withheld judgment, he learned for himself, and he became, I think, a great supporter of the staff employee when he really found out what they were doing and how they were doing it and how we were staffed.

His perception early on was that we were probably overstaffed and we had a lot of people who weren't doing their jobs and so on. And he found out that that really wasn't the case and that we did have a high level of productivity among the staff employees and so on. He became very supportive.

Peter is very focused on finance and on money, and so most everything at one point or another comes down and equates to cost and to money, which is very different than, I'll take DiBiaggio, for instance, who was very focused on people and relationships and building relationships with people. And so they're just extremely different personalities.

**Charnley:** Did you have any contact with President Hannah in his retirement years?

**Groty:** Only passing. Not much. In fact, I probably heard more about Dr. Hannah from Jack Breslin than I did anybody else. We were housed for a long time over in the same building, over in the Nisbet Building. He had an office there, but I really didn't get to know him much at all.

**Charnley:** Certainly the history of this university was shaped, obviously, significantly by President Hannah, and especially by the generation of faculty and students following World War II. You were in your job when many of those people retired. Could you talk a little bit about that? Collectively, as a cohort, is there anything you can say about how they faced retirement?

**Groty:** My relationship today, I still have part of my appointment is with the administration to be the liaison between administration and retirees. So I still have contact with the retirees, and I meet with the Retirees Association. I go to their gatherings in Florida every year and talk to them, and I have a lot of connection with the retirees. And because we pay their benefits, health benefits, ours was the main office of contact for retirees, and still is.

Years ago, they came to me and wanted some improvement in their benefit package or whatever, and I said, “You know, it’s real hard to sell that we should be giving more when you’re already gone.” And I said, “If there was some way that you could provide service back to the university on an ongoing basis that was visible to show that you still were adding value,” and that was when they formed the Retirees Service Corps, which still exists today, where you can call and get retirees to come help with your event or whatever.

Then they said to me, “Well, you know, we had this organization,” and they’d had a retirees’ organization. It was a retirees men’s club, actually, at one time.

And I said, “You know, you’re going to need to be open to staff employees and to women,” so they changed it to Retirees Association. And then I provided them an office over in my operation, and they still have an office there to this day. And so that solidified that contact between the retirees and HR.

Over the years, as they would stop by the Benefits Office to change beneficiaries or do something, they’d stop in, and they’d come in and sit down on the couch and tell me their war stories, in many cases told me about what they did during the Second War and how this translated back to Michigan State. I mean, some fascinating stories of people who were faculty here who had been responsible for getting food to the troops, for instance, and so on, and other kinds of relationships.

Many of them would tell me the stories of how they came here after the war and how, in fact, in many cases, John Hannah personally recruited them and so on. He was very involved with bringing faculty here, and, I guess, even just prior to my time, he met every new faculty as they

came every fall and got to know them. He'd see them later and ask them how their son was or their whatever. And they would tell these stories. I wish I'd had the tape recorder going then, too, because, I mean, they were fascinating stories.

But some of them are still around, and I still hear some of those stories. I mean, H. Owen Reed is still a good friend, and he's out in Green Valley, Arizona, part of the music faculty here, a world-class composer. But he tells me that when he came on the faculty here, he came out of the background of the Ozarks and then down into Louisiana and so on, and how he played jazz. That was partly how he, I guess, helped himself through school and so on. But when he came on the music faculty here, it was made real clear to him that "real musicians" didn't play jazz and he wasn't to be involved with that and so on. And he tells this story. Now we have a whole jazz program in our music school, you know.

But those kinds of stories of how things changed and what happened. Of course, I have a joint appointment in the College of Education, and over the years, working with many of those faculty and how at one time Michigan State turned out more teachers by number than any other school in the country, and that was the focus then of our College of Education. So, fieldwork was a big issue, going out and doing weekend workshops with administrators and counselors and so on, and watching that whole change to a much more research-focused college and so on, watching those kinds of changes take place over time.

The whole development of the medical schools here, that was all happening as I came onboard, and how the medical schools were developing. That was a major shift in this university,



bringing on the professional schools and eventually law school and so on from what it had been before.

But sitting and listening to the retirees tell these stories, and now when I came into my position in '72, we had, I think it was, between 600 and 700 retirees. We now have over 3,600 retirees, living retirees. That's a huge shift. First of all, they're living longer, for one thing, but that is your Second World War group, the people who came here after the Second World War, Korean War, and now Vietnam War people who are retired. And there's a huge reservoir.

In fact, one thing I did five years ago maybe, six years ago, is when this project was getting started for the history, one of the people from Terry Denbow's office came down to the retiree gathering in Florida and talked about this, and invited all the people who were there to share their stories and so on. But a lot of those people are still around and still telling their story.

**Charnley:** When you mentioned your job history before you came to Michigan State, and it seems like from the people that I've talked with, that's a very common pattern. People come here. Did you anticipate when you came in '72 that this would be the place you wanted to retire from?

**Groty:** No, no, no. My whole model was, at that point I'd stayed, I think, two and half years, and my thought was I'd be here for a while. And even after I was here for a while, I was a candidate on presidencies and vice presidencies at other places and so on. I was very picky about geography, where I would go, and so I limited my opportunities in that regard. And it wasn't a matter so much

that I was unhappy here, it was just one more mountain I hadn't climbed yet, and when the phone rings and the headhunter calls you, "Sure, why not," type of thing.

But it became a good place for me professionally. Throughout all the years that I was in my administrative position, I continued my professional work as a labor arbitrator and have stayed active, actually, in the field. As I tell people, I was one of the few administrators who practiced in my academic field. Most administrators have to give up their academic field when they become an administrator, and have great difficulty going back to it, if at all. When I decided to come back to the faculty to teach, I was going back to teach the same thing I'd been doing, and one of the worries I have to do is to keep control of the war stories. I can't tell too many of those in class.

But I've been a labor arbitrator, and still am, throughout this whole time. There was always this question about, if not spoken, out there, about, "Well, don't you have a full-time job?" And the issue at that point was, "Yes, but I have a faculty job, too, and as faculty, I have a right for a day a week," kind of thing. Eventually, that policy even got passed for executives to have a day a week.

But as I pointed out to anybody, that a day a week didn't mean you didn't do the work; it just meant you did the work on Saturday or at night. I mean, the work didn't go away; it was still there. But because of those contacts over the years, what I was able to do often was reach right out and grab hold of a person in the field that I'd been working with. I mean, Sam Baker became known to me because he was the director of personnel in Pontiac, and I was arbitrating in Pontiac, was impressed by the way he handled things. And so when I had an opening here, I picked up the phone and called him and said, "Ever thought of leaving Pontiac?" That's how he got here. And there have been other, many other, incidences of the same kind of thing.

The other thing that was most valuable was that I could go out and deal in somebody else's problem and come back to my own staff and say, "What are we doing about this? Let's fix this before we have a problem in this." And it kept me involved in the real world that I wouldn't have had a chance. But where else could you have done that? I couldn't have done that if I'd left the university. I mean, you couldn't do that in business.

The opportunity that really intrigued me, I've been on seventy-eight doctoral committees. I've had the arbitration work that I've done. I've been able to do teaching. I've been able to do workshops and speeches. The variety that you get of opportunities working in a university you simply don't get in other places, and that kind of becomes addictive after a time.

**Charnley:** What are you teaching now?

**Groty:** Collective bargaining.

**Charnley:** The graduate-level course?

**Groty:** Graduate level, yes. This afternoon, three to six.

But I'm doing workshops. In fact, we have a workshop coming up here in October on healthcare issues. I'm putting together a national conference for next spring on the future of employment-based healthcare. So I'm taking the stuff that I've worked on that's still current hot stuff, and taking my contacts and my background that I've built up over the years, and now using it

in more of an academic setting, and I still have contact. I was over in HR yesterday. I mean, I'm still there if they want to talk to me or bounce something off me or whatever. I just don't have to do it every day. That's not my responsibility anymore.

**Charnley:** In looking back at your thirty years here at Michigan State, thirty-plus, is there anything that just stands out in your mind about the university or about the history of it the last few years?

**Groty:** Well, one of the things that happened years ago, I had a colleague at the University of Illinois, who was my counterpart at the University of Illinois. He eventually went on to be my counterpart at Duke [University]. But when he was at Illinois, he was working on his doctorate. And it was in the early eighties when we were having all the budget cuts across all the schools, not unlike today.

His research project was to go to every Big Ten school and interview a cross-section of faculty, administrators, students, and support staff about how the cuts were handled and the whole process worked. After he did this, he called me and he said, "Keith, I just need to tell you, Michigan State is a unique place. It's different than any other Big Ten school. I went to them all, and no place were the faculty and the students and the staff as concerned about the outcome of their institution as a whole or more involved and concerned about their institution, nor were they as open to speak about and talk about their institution as Michigan State. It was so different than the other schools. You just need to know about it. I don't know what you've done, but the people there are

so dedicated to that institution and they're so open and concerned about beyond their own discipline for the school."

That, I guess, is the thing that stands out in my mind, goes back to Breslin's, "These are our people." These are our people, but these people care deeply about this institution, and that's true, I think, whether it's faculty or whether it's staff. There's a tremendous dedication to this place. It's like they've earned a piece of it over their years, and I think, in part, it's reciprocated in the sense that I think the institution's taking care of them, has looked after them. And if anything stands out, I think it's that.

We talk about this being the people's university and out of the land-grant tradition and so on, and I really do believe that's true. I worry sometimes that in an effort to become more the research model university, we might lose that, we might forget our roots, but as long as people keep remembering the roots and that what the land grant school is all about, I think it will be okay. As long as we remember that people aren't interchangeable, dispensable parts, that each one of them has unique value that they've brought here, and that when someone leaves or retires or whatever, you can't replace them. You can put someone in that and give them those jobs, but those people have developed a uniqueness here, and I think this school has done a great job at that over the years in recognizing that. And I would hope that that continues.

**Charnley:** I thank you on behalf of the project. I appreciate your time and especially your insights.

**Groty:** Thank you.

**Charnley:** Thank you.

[End of interview]

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