Maurice Crane

February 28, 2001

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is Wednesday, February 28th, the year 2001. We are in East Lansing, Michigan. I am Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. Maurice Crane for the MSU Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial of Michigan State to be commemorated in the year 2005. Dr. Crane is Emeritus Director of the G. Robert Vincent Voice Library here at Michigan State.

Professor Crane, as you can see, we've got a tape recorder here today. Do you give us permission to record this interview?

Crane: I do.

Charnley: Let's just start first with some questions about your background and professional education. Where were you born and raised?

Crane: I was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on the 6th of June, 1926.

Charnley: Your parents, what were their names?

Crane: My father was William James Crane. My mother was Luca Davidson Crane.

Charnley: Where did you go to school?

Crane: I went to Atlantic City High School. I went to Princeton University. I went to Villanova University. I went to the University of Chicago. I taught at and got a Ph.D. at the University of Illinois. Later, I took courses at R_____ in Okinawa and at Cambridge University in England.

Charnley: How did World War II affect your life, the timing of it?

Crane: Oh, wow, it was great. I know people aren't supposed to say that. I know we're not supposed to say that, but my eighteenth birthday was on June 6, 1944. I got into the war too late to be in harm's way. I went directly to Princeton University, where I took a pre-med course, completed it in sixteen months, by which time the bombs had flown on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. I went out to sea for a very short time and got more G.I. Bill than anybody knew what to do with. For every month at Princeton, I got a free month at Chicago. You can hardly beat them apples.

Shortly before I ran out of G.I. Bill, I got a teaching assistantship in the English department at Illinois. As I left Chicago with a brand-new master's in '50, I left Villanova with a brand-new Ph.D. in '53, having taught full-time for three years, gone to school, taken my German, my French, my prelims, my orals, written my dissertation. As far as I can tell, I didn't learn anything, but I had a Ph.D., and it was all free, and I was ready to start my education, which I got here at Michigan State.

Charnley: Were you married at that time?

Crane: We got married. I got my master's degree in June of '50. We got married March 26th, 1950. I said to people when I retired last year that we got married fifty years ago and I started college teaching fifty years ago. I looked at both contracts, and only one of them mentioned death. So I said, "It's time to quit." [Laughter]

I quit Michigan State University, not in anger, not in weakness. I thought fifty years was such a round number, I didn't know where'd I'd find--I didn't want to go a hundred. I couldn't go a hundred, and I didn't want to go sixty.

We were married. We had two children at Illinois. We had four children. My wife says we had children by every known means of birth control.

Charnley: What's your wife's name?

Crane: Elaine. She was Elaine Neff. She went to Atlantic City High School also. We met in junior high. She went to the University of Pennsylvania. When I said I was going to graduate school in Chicago, she said she was, too. It was a fake. I don't know anybody except us who went to the University of Chicago to have a good time. That's not what that school stands for. If you want to have a good time, you go to Michigan State.

But we had a good time and we got married and we had kids. Somehow or other, when she was pregnant with our daughter Abigail, who turned fifty last Friday on the 23rd, so we got

pregnant after two months of marriage, I guess she taught high school before we were married. She taught at Unity High of Toledo. Then she taught out in St. Joseph, Illinois.

We saved every penny she earned, and when got to this town, we had money for a down payment on a house. So I was twenty-seven, she was twenty-five, we had two kids, we were buying a house, and I was teaching for Paul Bagwell. I was teaching the freshman comp course here, which was called Communication Skills, because they keep changing the name of the freshman course in the hope that the kids will like it.

That course, Paul Bagwell had advertised fallaciously for people with master's degrees, telling them they would never have to get Ph.D.'s. So people like Ben Strenus [phonetic], Ben Hickock [phonetic], Ken McCory [phonetic], Glen Swarthout [phonetic], Bob Wright, good men, came here, told that they wouldn't have to get Ph.D.s. After they got here, they changed their mind and told them they did. Ken went off to Columbia. Bob Wright went off back to the Korean War and then to Columbia. But Glen and Ben and Ben and lots of others took their Ph.D.s here from the English Department, which had created Communication Skills so they could hire people, telling them they'd never have to teach freshmen. It's amazing. These are all extremely good guys. Paul Bagwell, subsequently ran for governor and lost, a wonderful bit of news for the State of Michigan.

Charnley: That he lost?

Crane: That he lost. He ran against Soapy Williams, and then he ran against John Swinks [phonetic]. I should say this, when I came here, it was called Michigan State College. The

governor's name was Soapy. The football coach's name was Biggie [Clarence Munn]. The president was called, universally, Uncle John.

Charnley: John Hannah.

Crane: We were teaching in Quonset huts on south campus, which they called the Clapboard Jungle. They brought in temporary buildings. We are sitting now on ground where the band shell used to be.

Charnley: In Bessey Hall.

Crane: In Bessey Hall. We're sitting in Bessey Hall where they destroyed the band shell and they destroyed the forestry cabin and they promised--let's see. They destroyed both of them in about '61, I think, and they promised to rebuild both of them. They haven't rebuilt them, but it's not malice, because Michigan State University is not run by malice; it's run by stupidity. And, as they say, you can cure malice, but stupidity is forever. They built this very nice building where I had offices while I taught humanities.

Any rate, go ahead.

Charnley: What did you study at Illinois?

Crane: My Ph.D. is in American literature. I wrote on Nathaniel Hawthorne at Brook Farm and about the Blythedale romance that grew out of that. I never took anything seriously. Until I was a grown man in my thirties, I didn't know the difference between cleverness and intelligence. I think I just got by exclusively on cleverness. I went into my doctorate orals, I was teaching in the department in which I got my degree, and I knew all these guys who went to coffee, which was a nickel in those days. The teaching system paid quite a bit. It paid enough for you to get married and start a family on.

I used to refer to Hawthorne as Nat King Hawthorne. Then I just started calling him King. I went in to my orals, and John Flannigan said, "What did King feel about this and that?" I was about twenty-five when I went in to them. I was just twenty-seven when I came here. I looked fourteen. I didn't take it seriously, yet nobody should be able to get a master's, a Ph.D. in '53 while teaching full time. You can't do it well, but kids are arrogant. I thought I did a wonderful--I thought I was a great teacher. Everybody thinks he's a great teacher. I never met anybody that didn't think he was a great teacher.

I came here thinking I might teach freshman comp all my life, because I liked it. Just a series of crazy things happened to me, and I went from one career to another without ever leaving home.

Charnley: What were your impressions of the campus when you first arrived?

Crane: Oh, I loved it. I used to tell people I wrote the alma mater at the University of Illinois. Not the one that says, "Hail to the arch, hail to the blue," but the one that goes, "I get no kick from champagne." Of course I didn't write that. Cole Porter wrote that.

But Steve Ellison got here, taught with me at Illinois. Steve Ellison is a Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard. He did very well at Chicago. He came here after me. Everybody came after me. I was the youngest man in the department for years. About ten years I was the youngest man in the department, in whatever department I was in. I was writing and publishing and doing all kinds of silly stuff. I guess I never took it seriously.

Any rate, I was in American Lit. When you're in American Lit or anything you have take all that Anglo-Saxon, and I thought that was hilarious. It was a game. As I say, I really didn't know that I wasn't deep. I just thought clever was fine. I thought glib was fine, and it got me through, not only teaching, but show business and other things.

Charnley: When did you change your department here?

Crane: I went into Humanities January 1st, '57. I had been three and a third years teaching. What happened is the dean was Ed Carlin [phonetic]. Ed had just replaced Tom Hamilton. Tom went off to run the State University of New York, the job that Cliff Wharton later got, and Tom went off to run the University of Hawaii.

Tom was a guy very much like me. He wasn't ever very serious about anything. He was a very good basketball player and a quite good jazz drummer. I met him the day I came here to interview for a job. Dean Erickson was taking Paul Bagwell around, and Tom was taking me

around. Bop jokes had just come in, and so we were telling be-bop jokes to one another. The week we arrived on campus, we were over at a party at Tom's house.

At any rate, Tom left to become, not provost, but vice president at Michigan State. Then Carlin took his job. Ed was a friend, too. Ed's first speech was, "We've got to understand each other's departments." University College was broken up into four unequal segments. There's no secret about it, everybody thought Humanities was wonderful. That may be the reason they closed it down, I don't know. Everybody thought Humanities was wonderful and wasn't nuts about Natural Science or Social Science or Communication Skills.

Now, he talked about how we should--you know, so I went in to him and I said, "I'd like very much to teach all of the departments. I'd like to teach social science. It's what I want to teach first."

He was a social scientist. He said, "Oh, no, you've got to having training to teach social science." Easy to teach history, but when you teach history with the facts left out, that takes--I wanted to teach natural science, because I had taken genetics and embryology and comparative anatomy and all that stuff. He said, "You know, you ought to be all right."

But he was afraid of Harry Kimber [phonetic], who terrified people. He said, "Well, you go talk to Harry Kimber."

I caught Harry Kimber on a very good day. He thought I was the cutest thing since sliced bread. We had a wonderful time together always. I visited him when he was dying over in Bircham [phonetic] Hills. He gave me all kinds of wonderful private stuff. We became very, very good friends.

Anyway, I went into the Humanities Department in the belief that I would then teach natural science and social science. I was teaching both communication skills and the humanities. Kimber called me in and says, "Crane, we can't do this. You can't do this. You've got to choose one department or the other." So I chose humanities. I wanted to do humanities.

A year and a half later, the Honors College started having honors courses, and he decided I would be the honors man. This is in '59, '60, and '61. Those kids, if they were nineteen at the time, are now sixty-one years old. They include people like Ken Beachler. Ken's actually sixty-four, because he'd been in the service. But wonderful, wonderful, wonderful people.

Since there was no rules for Honors College, I said, "Here's what you do. You take the regular course, and every Sunday night we'll come to my house. This is voluntary. I'll get paid for it, you'll get credit for it. We will read those great books that everybody says he's going to read someday and nobody reads, because if we read everything we had to, we wouldn't go to college." That's what smart people do. A whaling vessel was my Harvard College and my Yale.

We read things like *F____ the Ancient City*, and we read *Skepticism in Animal Faith*, and we read *The Legitimate Rise of Capitalism*. And then we read primary materials like C_____ and *Lear* and things that people are going to read and don't. We did that around the clock, because at the end of the first year a group of kids led by McKay Sunwall [phonetic] and Ron English came in to me and said, "Listen, we're going to be here this summer. Can we?"

I said, "Yes, you select the books, but they can't be silly books." Well, there were. *The Causes of World War III* was one of them, but we didn't think it was a silly book at the time. It was the summer of '60, and we thought there would be a World War III.

These kids came over to my house, and my wife baked cookies. We made coffee. We found out that Mac and another guy, Tyson, were both Mormons and couldn't drink coffee. So there I was, running a cafeteria. I was also serving milk. Mac wouldn't take coffee ice cream. But he went and got a Ph.D. He went off from here to Harvard, and he's teaching something. He was a psych major, and he became an English major under my influence, because his father was a Ph.D. in psych. And, I'm sorry, but that's what happened.

I taught this wonderful group of kids, and I still talk to some of them. I talk to Kenny all the time. Barbara Rahl [phonetic] was in for her mother's funeral. I ran into one of them in the Vatican, Mary Russo. I can name the kids in that class, and they were at my house every Sunday evening. That was really the beginning of the healthy Honors College that we have here.

Charnley: Not very bureaucratic at all.

Crane: Oh, no. You know, we had a free university in the sixties, I guess, maybe early seventies here. I just told the kids--this was at Wilson Hall, if they found a serious book to discuss, I would--oh, and in this course I had guests so that I wouldn't screw them up. I had somebody for that book, the best man. I used to use Hal Walsh a lot in philosophy, but Dick Sullivan was one of my guys, and, oh, I don't know, all kinds of wonderful people. Carl Thompson. So we would sit there, and I did this because I felt that if we ran out of things to say, I could have a dialogue. And I was learning all kinds of wonderful stuff. I was learning books I hadn't read. It was good. Those were very, very, very good times.

By this time I had moved to my current house, which is pompous. It was a great, large--it's on three lots in East Lansing. It's a great big--I don't think it's pompous anymore, because everybody's buying pompous houses, but it was strange in those days.

I talk to these people now in their sixties. I think about it, the first eighteen-year-olds I had in 1950 are now sixty-nine. They're sixty-nine years old. These fresh-faced little kids, they're retired and they're eating meals at half-price at 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon.

Charnley: Did you see a difference in the students from when you first got here from those in the sixties? Was there a difference?

Crane: Oh, yes. There's an editorial in today's *State News* about--it's angry because there's a new movie, and in it the Michigan State kids are talking about sex and booze. The guys from the University of Michigan are talking about their coursework. I don't know why these kids are angry, the rest of the newspaper is about sex and booze, you know.

I don't think it's Michigan State. I think kids, in general, have gotten disappointed with authority. I voted for Bill Clinton twice. I like him very much. But we didn't have Presidents of the United States--well, we did have, actually, Presidents of the United States, but they were quiet about it and the press was quiet about it. We didn't know everything about everybody.

The kids have always treated me with respect. I've heard that kids don't treat people with respect. I never had that. Every Friday I go and visit the people who used to work for me in the Voice Library. John is fifty, Rick is forty-five. They call me "Dr. Crane" and "sir," and we spend Christmas and Thanksgiving and Fourth of July together.

Charnley: This is John Shaw?

Crane: This is John Shaw.

Charnley: Who was the other person you mentioned?

Crane: Rick Fifer [phonetic]. He's our engineer.

These are marvelous people, just marvelous. I've had very good luck. I had just great students. The recently retired president of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, Mick Ferrari, Michael J. Ferrari, used to chauffer me around, because I used to give speeches out in the countryside and I hated to drive. He was my driver. He's a guy with three degrees from Michigan State and he's been a college president. He was college president for a while at Bowling Green. He was provost, mainly, and he was interim president. When they didn't make him president, he went off to Drake.

Charnley: What were some of the courses you taught in the humanities, besides the honors course?

Crane: Yes, I taught the three courses, you know, about the ancient world. You know, the Aristotle, Plato, and Bible course, the Middle Ages, the Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare course, and modern, which was Darwin, Marx, Freud course. I taught Japanese, cultural traditions of Japan. I

did that because they were giving a free trip to University of Okinawa. I could take courses and teach one summer. When I took it, I didn't know there were hooks attached, but I taught that. I taught the modern course, whatever that is. It's post-World War II. Popular Culture, I taught in the English Department.

I taught a series of just fun courses in Justin Morrill College. I taught jazz history and history of comedy.

Charnley: But Humanities wasn't part of Justin Morrill?

Crane: No, no, no, no, no. Justin Morrill was run the way James Madison is successfully run and Lyman Briggs is semi-successfully run. They were going to have a residential college, and it got very expensive. They wanted to give kids the Swarthmore, Reed, Carleton experience, while coming to a campus that could bring in the London Philharmonic and the Notre Dame football team. This was the arts college, and it just kept changing its self-definition all the time.

But I had wonderful--I'm in contact with many of those kids today, and they're in their fifties. I taught there in '66 and '67, '68, maybe. Gordon said he would get the finest teachers on campus that could teach it. Well, he got who he could get. It's like Clarence Thomas was the finest name you could find for the Supreme Court if you're limiting yourself to black conservatives, you know.

But there were guys. John F. Keller [phonetic] and Russell Nye were guys that did teach there. They were fun guys, and we all became very close friends with one another.

Charnley: What was it about Professor Nye? Did you work with him directly, or how did you come to know him?

Crane: He's one of the finest people who ever lived, and he was incredibly modest. So that if you were to say to him, "I've got a theory that *Moby Dick* was a flea," he would say, "Jeff, that's wonderful idea." And he'd start feeding you bibliography, from literature and from entomology. I just made that up. But he was so good. He was teaching popular culture courses, and he would have me in as a jazz expert and a comedy expert. Not that he didn't know more than I did, it's that he didn't know that he knew more. Russ and I used to go every summer to Davenport, Iowa, for the big spider b____. We went from the Dixieland Festival. We started when it started, and we ended the year he had his stroke, which was '85.

Charnley: Was he a musician?

Crane: No. His son Pete. He has only one child, who's in his early sixties now. Pete is a jazz trumpet player and a jazz guitarist, but he's a racecar driver. That's what he does. I knew Pete. I played with Pete. I was the faculty advisor to the jazz club because you couldn't have a club without a faculty advisor in those days, and it fell to me to be the faculty advisor of that club most likely to have people smoking marijuana at its meetings. I didn't have tenure at the time, but I got to play a lot with these kids. I hadn't played, and I did play. I've quit jazz about six times in my life, always for the same reason: it wasn't getting to be no fun. It gets to be no fun when you're an

administrator, when you're a bandleader, when you've got to tell people to stop drinking or get on the stand or wear a clean shirt or whatever.

But I knew Pete that way. Pete was also a student of mine. He took the medieval renaissance humanities from me. This was not in the Honors College, but it was a very good class he was in. I do have a memory for classes, and that was a good bunch of kids. These were kids that I hung out with.

I was blessed--or cursed--with looking like a kid for a long time. That's over, and it's been over for a long time. But they let me come around because I blew a horn and I was fun to be with, I guess. I don't know why.

Charnley: What instruments did you play, or do you play?

Crane: I play the clarinet now. I was a hard bop alto man. I played tenor, but I don't own a tenor.

My children went off to college and took my saxophones with them. I had a hard time figuring out whether they were good or bad, because by the time they went to college everybody was playing rock and roll, and I had difficulty telling a good rock tenor band from a bad one. I don't think there's much difference, but I may be wrong about that.

I heard the other day a definition of perfect pitch. Perfect pitch is when you throw an accordion into a dumpster and it hits a banjo. That is a perfect pitch. But there are up to your ears in jokes like this. The difference between a trampoline and a bagpipe is people take their shoes off when they jump on a trampoline. The difference between a banjo and an onion is nobody cries when he cuts up a banjo.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Crane: --in this Dixieland band. Dixieland is football music. And, you know, we've been blessed. We played from Boston to Honolulu. We opened for Guy Lombardo. We opened for Bob Hope. The thing is, we're not any good, but nobody knows that.

You remember what Samuel Johnson said about a woman preacher is like a dog who walks on two legs. She'll have to do it very well. The fact that she does it at all is quite remarkable. So we've got this Robert Ripley value because when we're on the bandstand, there's not a person on this campus of any age who doesn't know somebody in the band.

Charnley: The "we" is Geriatric Six?

Crane: The Geriatric Six Plus One.

Charnley: How did that first come about, that group?

Crane: I was asked. They were doing a Roaring Twenties party at the Faculty Club, and they asked if I could get a band together. I called H. Owen Reed [phonetic] and Sandy Sandefer [phonetic] , two old men. Owen was born in 1910. He will be ninety-one this June. Sandy was born in February of '05. He would have been ninety-six this past February. But I booked the

presidents of the club, and they couldn't say no. We were terrible. Jeez, we were terrible. I often say, "I hate to talk in superlatives, but we were the worst band I ever heard."

I spoke at Sandy's funeral. I did speak at Sandy's funeral, but ten years later I spoke at his wife's funeral, Louise Sandefer. Sandy had been dean of admissions at Ohio University, was assistant dean of natural science here. I said that "For the last ten years, Sandy has been in heaven, and Owen Reed has been in a very, very, very hot place. He's in Green Valley, Arizona." But, man, did that stop them. Because I don't do anything but comedy, and I happen to do a lot of funerals, including Russ's, for that matter. And I just talk the way I talk. At any rate, this is one of the reasons I'm a bandleader, because I can do fancy patter, you know. I don't know.

What were we talking about?

Charnley: We were talking about how the group got started. What year was it?

Crane: '70. People say, "How long have you been together?" I say, "We've never been together. We've learned to start and stop and corner together now." We played at the thing at the Faculty Club. I brought in Dick Haggerty from Detroit. I couldn't continue to do that. I brought in Marshall McNutt, who's a great musician, just happened to be running the Christian Science students' dorm here while he was getting a Ph.D. But he's the guy whose solo you heard on *Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White*. He's just a terrific trumpet.

I had Owen Brainerd, the late Owen Brainerd, who's an abstract impressionist painter. I don't know who else I had. I think I had anybody on bass. I used Gene Rebeck [phonetic], who

was playing at the dance. But people loved the band, and they said, "When are you coming back?"

I said, "There is no band. There is no band."

They said, "What is your name?" There was a group called the Young Americans, so I figured we'd be the Geriatric Six. But I was forty-three when I founded the Geriatric Six, you know. Don Thornberg [phonetic] was in his thirties. Don's the only guy still in his sixties now. We're in our seventies. We've gotten so we know a couple of things and we play all right. We've put out tapes and records and television shows and CDs. The guys are now convinced that we're good. There is no way of disciplining a band made up of seven retired millionaires. First of all, they're never in the country.

We're playing on the ninth of April, and right now, Milt Powell's walking in Patagonia somewhere. Bill Flutz [phonetic] just got back from Africa. Jim Smith is in Sarasota, Florida. And why not, you know? The retirement system of Michigan State University has been aptly called the Revenge of the Nerds. We're all very, very comfortable.

We're no longer bad, I guess. I guess we could rehearse, but I think guys would start quitting. I just don't know. I don't know. I just call a tune and we play. I'll sometimes be onstage--I was playing a Christmas party three years ago for some senior citizen group out of Waverly, and I said, "This is a tune first sung by Pharaoh's daughter." The guys didn't know what it was. I said, "It's *I Found a New Baby*." But I will do this. I will say, "This is the acid rain song." [singing] "I make a date for golfing, you can bet your ass it rains."

Charnley: What were some of the traditions that the band developed, or at least within the university?

Crane: Yes, we all play the same key. We dress really nattily. It's Bill's idea, and he's a sociologist and he knows that if you dress alike, people will think you know each other. They think you're a real band. We play free at all football games. We play at the footballs. There's a concert. And for all those years we had really bad football teams, people used to come to listen to us play for two hours and then go home.

George Perles loved us. George would do great things. He would take us everywhere. We started playing away at Northwestern because nobody came to the Northwestern game and there was no sense bringing a 300-piece band to that stadium because it would outnumber the audience like three to one. So we went there.

Well, damn, if it doesn't turn out that the highest-paid man on the Northwestern faculty died recently in St. Petersburg, Russia, head of research at the medical school, Norbert Frankel [phonetic]. Norbie and I played together with the Princeton Tigers when we were children. The provost there was a man named Ray Mack, a really good big-band drummer who had worked with Bill. So we would go to Northwestern and then we'd go over to the provost's house, which was a real mansion. Instead of eating off of paper plates, we'd have silver and china and crystal. We would play far into the evening. It was a real Jack Okie [phonetic] scene, you know.

We liked going to Chicago, because the wives would go into town. Sometimes they'd come to the football game. But you walk in and out of the football games. It's like football games at Carlton, where it doesn't cost any money, and you walk in and you walk out.

Anyway, we played, and over the years you get--well, hell, we've been playing together now for thirty-one years. We know exactly--it was originally like four guys singing in the back of a car. You had to keep out of the other guy's way at harmony. But now I know what everybody's going to do, and they know what I'm going to do. I don't think we're going to make jazz history ever, but we're part of MSU history.

Charnley: How did the first recording come about?

Crane: Guys wanted to make a record. It was ego. What I've got there is the president of the North Central States Sociological Association, the dean of veterinary medicine, these are all guys who are ambitious. Everybody but me was ambitious. We've got winners of Guggenheims and Fulbrights and guys all pretty famous in their field. And they decided one day that we played well enough to make a record. So we went over to Bob Baldori's [phonetic] studio.

Charnley: Is that in East Lansing?

Crane: No, it's in Okemos. I don't know if Bob still has his studio. He probably does. I think he made our second album, too.

Then we started recording at Michigan State, up in that comm arts building. It's an ego thing. We send them out at Christmas to our friends, and they tell us it's good, because if they don't, they won't get another one.

Guys who are really modest about what they do well are not modest about what they're doing in competition with seventeen-year-olds. I think we do play jazz better than we played when we were seventeen. I think jazz does some things that basketball doesn't. Basketball, you play worse at seventy, no matter how bad. There are certain things that seventeen-year-olds do than seventy-year-olds. They look better with their clothes off. They just do. They just do. And that's why they do it. That's one of the reasons. But jazz is something that we all play better than we did before. We play together a lot better than we did.

Charnley: What was your maybe biggest gig that you had?

Crane: Our biggest gig was playing at the Hollywood Palladium. We'd gone out for the Rose Bowl, and there was this party. There was a very good band on stage, but we knocked them out, because they had written a jazz version of the MSU fight song they thought was pretty good. But we played a fight song a lot, and that's something we do play pretty well. It is genuine Dixie and it's genuine MSU fight. It took us a couple years to get it right, but I now like that song.

As an English major, I hate to say, "Spartan teams are sure to win, their fighting with a vim, rah, rah, rah," but the Princeton song says, "We will fight with a vim that is dead sure to win for old Nassau." Not only that, both songs start out, "Crash right through that line of blue." One was for Ann Arbor, one was for New Haven. We now say, "Crash right through for MSU," which we couldn't do when we were MSC.

That was our biggest gig, but we played weddings up on Mackinaw Island. We opened up that new golf course up north, whatever that's called. We played for the opening of the Civic

Center downtown, the opening for the Breslin Center. I played, the guys didn't, but I played for the opening of the Civic Building that they just tore down, downtown.

Charnley: The older civic center.

Crane: Yes, the older civic center. That was early January of '56. So, I'm always in on the foundation. And when you play here, everybody knows you. I spoke last Tuesday at the Methodist Church here, and somebody says, "I know you from somewhere. Do you sing in a choir?" "Show me the way to go home," at the football game. They thought I sang in a choir. Well, because I was talking to the church, you know.

Charnley: How did the alumni receive the band?

Crane: The alumni loved us. I was the first--it's not longer true that I'm the only--I was the first non-alumnus to be on the board of directors of their alumni association. Of course, I wanted to get work for the Geriatric Six. That really didn't turn out, but I liked these guys.

In '79, I won the Distinguished Faculty Award. I said to my wife, I said, "Sweetheart, nobody in the world deserves this less than me." And I brought I list of absolutely wonderful people who had not won it. Many of them still hadn't won it and won't because they're retired. I said, "This is ridiculous." It only paid a thousand dollars in those days. It pays three thousand now. I said, "I can't take this money."

She says, "They're going to give it to you, what are you going to do?"

So I said, "I'll give it back to the University in various ways." One of the ways is I took a lifetime membership in the alumni association, which was open to non-alumni. This is before this trouble between Cecil Mackey and the alumni association. So they probably threw my money away, anyway.

But then I was on it, I got alumni publications, and they asked for nominations for the board of directors. I nominated myself, saying, "Listen, I've been here forever." I thought I could help my band. I really didn't, but I got to do some wonderful things. I sat on the three-person committee, in fact I chaired the committee, that gives $500 scholarships to ten high school seniors. I sat on the committee that gives the Alumni Award to undergraduate teachers. It's the only award now for undergraduate teaching, because Michigan State has become a place where all professors are independent contractors. They bring in money from outside, and the guys who bring in the most money and the most fame get the awards. I don't think I'd ever got an award except that crazy kind of fame I have as a comic and as a musician.

I just got off the board. This past Christmas was my last meeting. In fact, I didn't go to it, because the meeting was in Owosso and it was snowing. It was just before Christmas, because we spent Christmas in Los Angeles. We left Los Angeles on about the 28th, it was 83 degrees. We got back here, it was 17 below. It was 100 degrees' difference. I started oiling my watch with Tropartic.

Charnley: Let's talk about the Voice Library. How did you become the director of that?

Crane: Like everything else, a crazy series of lucky breaks. I was teaching at Justin Morrill College. I was teaching a course on humor. It strikes me that there's some humor that you have to listen to, you can't read. There's some that you've got to look at, and I did some visual. I wanted to do strictly auditory, because everybody who did comedy on radio had a signature line. "You want to buy a duck," and everybody would laugh. Or "hoo haw," or whatever. "Very interesting."

I went in to see Bob Vincent, who had just come here from California. He was a very old man. In fact, he was older than he said. He was born in '98, and he always claimed to have been born in the year '00 because he wanted to be the youngest person to fight in the war. He was in the British Army in 1914. But I went to see Bob and I said, "I feel that there is some humor that is just signature audio."

"Oh, yes," he said. Bob was kind of a hermit of a guy. He didn't talk to many people. He really didn't. He didn't like anybody. He certainly didn't like librarians. He just thought that they were--of course, he had rubbed elbows with the famous all of his life. He really had. He had done interviews with W.C. Handy [phonetic] and Robert Jackson at the Nuremberg trials. He was, in fact, our soundman at the Nuremberg trials. He speaks German as well as he speaks English. His father was a colleague of Sigmund Freud, a student and then a colleague.

I went to see Bob and they said, as they used to say, "Nobody goes to see Harry Kimber. Nobody goes to see Bob Vincent." I'm too dumb to know this. I just went up and I said, "Would you like to be involved?"

Well, you could put together a thing that started with Weber and Fields, and wound up where if you hear a certain voice saying a certain kind of thing, the disparity, and he had Art Linkletter talking very dirty, and it was great. He's at the Friar's Club luncheon and he said, "I

don't know what I'm doing with you guys." He said, "I was born in wedlock." It is, it's just very funny. He says, "I told my mother-in-law, a sweet, sweet, old lady, that I was going to talk here," and she said, "You dumb son of a bitch." This was just great stuff.

Shortly thereafter, as luck would have it, Mutual Radio asked him to do, or he asked them, but they said the format would be, if he's going to do a half-hour show, radio show, they would like to have him talking to somebody, and they would like it to be a kind of polymath [phonetic], but who knew less than he did.

So I would say, "Well, Mr. Wizard, what are we going to do today?"

He said, "We're going to do baseball," or we're going to do atomic scientists or something.

I said, "Gee whiz, do you have Tr____ Speiker [phonetic]," or Three-finger Mordecai Brown or whatever or Albert Einstein?

He said, "Of course, young fellow."

We did these shows and Bob would have a script and I would just sit and respond. So he would say things like, "I think Fanny Brice was actually better than Barbra Streisand."

I would say, "Barbra Streisand wins by a nose." He'd go right on.

He was talking once about Cock Robin. I don't know how the hell it came up. He was talking about Cock Robin. I said, "That's not his real name." I said, "His name is Penis Rabinowitz." So I was doing this for Bob, and he was cutting it out, because he had something he wanted to do, but he had to have me. We had a great deal of fun. As I say, he's a man who didn't like many people.

Charnley: Did you record any of those shows? Have you got those?

Crane: I've got the outtakes. When I took over his job, he sent me these outtakes.

At any rate, we did that show. Bob was overage when he retired. He had been hired--Dick Chapin had said to him, "Come to [unclear], I'll give you a lifetime job." Bob did not know that at Michigan State, a lifetime ends at seventy. Dick did not know that Bob was immortal. He was actually seventy-six when somebody came up, some man from Texas was getting his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania in Malcolm X. He was writing about Malcolm X. He was a black man. He came to see Vincent. He came to the office and said, "I'd like to speak to Bob Vincent."

Bob said to him, "I'm sorry. Mr. Vincent's in California." Bob's picture had just been in the New York *Times*, and nobody looks like Bob. He's four foot eleven, and cute and all.

He went down to see Henry Kirk and he said, "I just talked to Mr. Vincent."

He said, "What did he say?"

"He said, 'Mr. Vincent's in California.'"

It was exacerbated by the fact that this man was poor, he'd come out this distance, he was black, he complained to the head, and so they told Bob that his age was now a factor. And he retired. Bob was a whiz at what he did. He was very, very, very good. But this is the kind of thing he would do when he didn't want to be bothered.

Dick Chapin asked me if I wanted to run the voice office. I said, "I don't know anything about that. No." I said, "No." I said, "I've got a great job. I teach sophomores who love me. I'm doing the kind of thing I want to do. No."

And he says, "Well, I don't know anybody who's in that collection. We'll shut it down." And then he appealed to my greed, which was crazy. He said, "Well, I'll put you on a twelve-

month contract. I'll give you a lot of money," which he really didn't. It was a lot of money for a librarian. I always made a lot of money for a librarian, but I didn't make a lot of money for a Ph.D. That's when I learned that a Ph.D. in English isn't the worst-paid man on campus.

But I liked the job. About 95 percent of the stuff in that library is stuff that I brought in, mainly from phoning people, from trading. I didn't have a budget. I had no real moral or economic support from the library. I don't know what they expected me to do. But through barter and theft and other things and working very hard at home, at night, on weekends, I got lots and lots and lots of stuff. I wound up doing things I wouldn't have done. I would never be a Book of the Month Club author, if I hadn't been.

Charnley: How did that come abut?

Crane: Got a call from the Book of the Month Club. I said, "I'm sorry, I don't want to join."

They said, "No, no, no, listen, hear me out." They said, "We want to do a thing, a series on Presidents." That's what they had planned.

I said, "Well, I'll put together the voices."

They said, "No. Would you write the book?"

I said, "Sure."

I tried to get Steve Jensen to be the announcer, but Clifton Faddeman [phonetic] read the script and he was chairman of the board. He said, "No, I want to do this. So Clifton Faddeman did it. I got that thing back and I listened. I said, "My God, they've made that so wonderful." I looked at it, and he followed my script precisely. It was just like Richard Burton reading it.

Then I wrote a little booklet for it, but it didn't sell worth a damn. What happened is it was put up for a Grammy for historical recordings. The thing that won that year was George Simon's Smithsonian History of Jazz. All the people who voted were musicians, and that's what I would have voted for. But they thought that what would win was an Elvis Presley retrospective.

I got a call from the Associated Press. I very seldom make the national news. A couple times in a lifetime. This guy calls up and he says, "Do you say any relationship between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Elvis Presley?"

hat you're taught in graduate school is you say yes and then you make up, you stall. So I said, "Of course." I said, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt electrified every guitar in the Tennessee Valley," I said, "rendering talent unnecessary." Well, that went out everywhere.

I sat up and listened to the Grammys, while I didn't expect to win. But being nominated for a Grammy is plenty. Who the hell, who am I? So it's enough. It isn't enough when you're Robert Goulet to say " was nominated for a Grammy," but when you're a little guy teaching at the state agricultural school, that's fine.

Charnley: What were the raw materials that you had to work with?

Crane: I used about sixty or seventy speeches of Roosevelt's out of maybe 110 that we had.

Charnley: These were ones that Bob Vincent had collected, or had he taken them himself or gotten them?

Crane: The wonderful thing about Presidents of the United States is that as President of the United States speaking ex cathedra is copyright free. There are lots of albums of Roosevelt that you can take it from, but you don't have to pay the album either, because they got it from somewhere.

Roosevelt said so many things, you know, "Rendezvous with destiny," and "Nothing to fear but fear itself." It's like Ralph Waldo Emerson, you know, every fifth line is a quotable one. I did them in chronological order. I did the Depression, the Dust Bowl, the War, and it was a three-volume thing. Clifton Faddeman was wonderful. I had the chance to write. I wouldn't have done that. Lord knows what I'd have done if I hadn't gone into the voice center, because I had nervous energy. Although, I've got to tell you, I'm retired. I'm not doing anything now. I'm just screwing around.

Charnley: We'll change the tape.

Crane: Okay.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Charnley: This is the second tape of the interview with Dr. Maury Crane.

When the last tape ended, we were talking about the Vincent Voice Library and your production on FDR that you did. How would you describe the collections at the time when you took over?

Crane: Well, any library collection, special library collection, is a reflection of the collector. Mine was very simple. I took in things that I could get free. Bob wanted to make it seem more impressive than it was, and so he never sourced things. He would never say, "This comes off a Columbia record." He would never say, "This comes off Edward R. Murrow." He would take these separately. He wanted, as all collectors do, to make those look like a unique and marvelous collection. It was very good, and the fact that it was catalogued was fine. What I did is I found people who wanted to give away their collections.

Charnley: Who were some of these people?

Crane: Lansing Community College went to a different format. I got their entire audio-visual library.

The Wingspread Foundation, this is in Racine, Wisconsin, and they have one or two meetings, scholarly meetings a year. If Johnson's Wax sold nothing but Raid, it would be one of the richest private corporations. It's owned by the family. The president of the Wingspread Foundation later became Bill Boyd. Bill Boyd, Ph.D. in history from the University of Pennsylvania, was my next-door neighbor in the flattops, in the temporary veterans housing here at Michigan State, and we were very good friends. He went off to be the dean at Alma [College] and ran the Honors College at Ohio State, became the president of Central Michigan University, at which time I would come up and give addresses kind of frequently. Then he became the president of the University of Oregon. He went to the Johnson's Wax Foundation, and he married Karen

Johnson. So there he is, married into the family that owns one of the richest businesses in the world, and they've got this Wingspread Foundation.

I came up and did a couple of things, shows like I used to do with J.P. McCarthy. He gave me the entire canon. This so excited the Stanley Tool people, who run the Stanley Foundation in Muscatine, Iowa, that they said, "Can we give you our entire collection?" And then other people gave us their collections.

There was a man named Tony Janek [phonetic]. Tony Janek was the chief recording engineer for Columbia Records, but he had a business on the side, in which he did a clipping service for famous people, not of newspapers, but things that were on radio and televisions. He had six television stations in the New York area, WABC, WNBC, WCBS, Metromedia, WNYC, and W-something else, maybe a PBS station. And he had six radio stations. He had these things running all day, and he would come home at night, and mainly his wife--they would send off to people like Golda Meir and O.J. Simpson and Henry Kissinger, subscribers. And they could get subscribers. They would send people things. Nixon became a subscriber. To see what people were saying.

Tony wanted to retire. He wanted to sell his collection for a couple million dollars. He called me up, and I said, "We don't have that kind of money, but I'll give you the addresses of the other people who do this." They all didn't have that kind of money, too. So we talked.

Tony had been a corporal working for Bob Vincent in his recording studio during the war, the V-disc studio. We danced around each other until we both felt at ease talking about Bob's eccentricities, and then we just became very, very good friends. Finally he says, "If you'll send a truck down here, you can have it." They evaluated it at a half-million dollars, and if you go into the

Kellogg Center where they've got that plaque on the wall of the major donors of the university, Tony is one of them. He sent me so many things that if that stuff had gone to Bailey's [phonetic] school, they'd have had the biggest voice library in world. It more than doubled our collection.

Charnley: What year did that happen?

Crane: This is in '81.

Mike Wharf [phonetic] gave us all of his originals. He got tax credit for it, though. So he's a donor to the university. He called me up, we were going to the Rose Bowl, he says, "I'm getting four tickets to the Rose Bowl. What do you think?" I said, "Fine, I'll see you when we get there."

Charnley: He was at WJR?

Crane: He was at WJR. Bob Reynolds was at JR. JP and something W. Smith was there. I got to go there with different people at different times. Bob Reynolds would always interview me at the Michigan-Michigan State football game when he was here. But that was a good source to have.

We have people in Germany and England who want our stuff. Most of my German stuff, Bob had a budget to buy, and I really didn't. He bought from Pelletier [phonetic]. I have two trading friends, one in Berlin and one in Frankfurt. I'm not sure that's true. I'm not sure it's Frankfurt now. But whatever it is, they want Buffalo Bill and I want Herman Gehrig. This is a good thing to have. The same thing's true with my guys in London, my friends in Paris. The guys

in France are very good. I used to deal with the Phototeque Nationale, a lady named Francine Bluk [phonetic].

But I've got two guys who came to visit, and they visited this country. I may have told you this. They visited New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and East Lansing, and Washington, D.C. They sent me--I had the complete Lenin, except for the one that Stalin ordered destroyed, that couldn't get out of Russia. That was when Lenin condemned anti-Semitism and Stalin really didn't feel like condemning anti-Semitism. This was the impossible Lenin. They had just picked it up in Bucharest. They had just picked it up, and I said I needed that. Well, they needed Gene Autry or some damned thing, and so this is what happened.

This is a great thing. I don't know how legal any of this is. We are trading baseball cards. We are trading bubble gum cards. Only, as you know, we're trading Xeroxes of bubble gum cards, except that a Xerox of a bubble gum card or a Xerox of the Magna Carta or a Xerox of the Declaration of Independence is not the same thing. But a tape of a tape is a tape. I got a lot, a lot, a lot of stuff from a lot of different people. This was my skill. I was making bricks without straw.

The Library, shortly after I got there, evidently wasn't interesting at all. My good friend Randy Scott spends more in three months on comic books than I spent in twenty-six years on voices, and he does it every three months. That's because nobody gives you comic books free. It's not because I'm virtuous and he's avaricious. You've got to buy comic books. You get comic books free, but you mainly buy them.

Charnley: He's the librarian in the special collections?

Crane: He's the comic book man. And, you know, Michigan State is that kind of a library, which has the best library of comic books, voices, and turfgrass. That's what we've got. I don't think we're going to beat Ann Arbor in anything else, but we can beat them in things that they don't want. That's what we can beat them in.

Charnley: You mentioned some of the tapes that you had, or the recordings, were tapes of tapes of tapes. Would you talk a little bit about some of the technology, how that changed, and maybe how it influenced. You were dealing mostly in cassette tapes or reel-to-reel tapes?

Crane: I was dealing with open reel. I saved everything in open reel. The predictions of when open reel would fall apart keep changing.

Charnley: They're increasing.

Crane: Yes, their time increases. Well, now they're digitizing everything. They've got money to digitize the collection. They got a grant, and they may get the grant repeated--well, now, I can't say that, I just don't know--to put the collection online.

What they have to worry about putting the collection online is copyright. What you try to do is wait until somebody else gets sued and there's a precedent. What they do is they're very constipated about this. They want to be exceptionally safe, and so they are operating very, very slowly. The Voice Library was, under me, free, fast, and friendly. Somebody calls and wants Katherine Hepburn, and I've got six Katherine Hepburns. I said, "I'll get them out to you this

afternoon." There's now a copyright officer, and he checks on these things. If we have six, there's no chance a person could get more than one or two.

It used to be free. I sent them out free. They now charge $20 a voice. Not a tape, but a voice. So if she wants six, it's 120 bucks. It used to be free and she got it by return mail. We are not friendly, because the Library is now run by guys who went to library school, where they have a three-semester course in how to say no to legitimate requests. This is what they do. They are anal retentives.

It's a different world. I didn't mean for everything to change when I left, but everything changed when I left. I got a call yesterday from a lady at the University of Virginia. They're doing a show on integrating the schools in Virginia, the public schools. She says, "I can't find anything."

I said, "Here's what you do. Wilbur Brookover [phonetic] had a project integrating schools in Prince Edward County. It was Bob Green's dissertation. You punch up the Voice Library and then you punch up Brookover or punch up Green or punch up Virginia integration, and you get it." Then I said, "I don't work there anymore, so you're going to have to go through a copyright person." But this isn't so bad because I think Bob is currently visiting campus and Wilbur lives in town and once or twice a year he goes down to Virginia to check on how things are going.

John Shell [phonetic] is one of the great guys in this world, but he doesn't know this. You don't know it unless you know it.

Charnley: And you knew the collection.

Crane: And I knew the collection.

Peter Berg is in charge of the collection, but he's in charge of seventeen other things, including this Great Lakes thing that Wendy Wilkins in involved in. Is there such a thing as a Great Lakes culture? All you've got to do is have a course in it. Yes. As we say in the jazz world, as soon as you teach a course in something, it's dead. It means you assume it's over.

You cannot write a doctorate dissertation at Cambridge University, Oxford, or the Sorbonne, either, but Cambridge is the one I know, on a living author. So that when E.M. Foster dies, or Ernest Hemmingway dies, there's this flood of dissertations coming in that have been written. But the assumption is that with his dying breath a guy can say, "I want you to know that I copied all of this from George Elliott."

But we teach courses in living, we do. Michigan State teaches courses in anything. There was a man named Tom Hamilton here, my dear friend Tom Hamilton. Somebody in a faculty meeting back when they could get the entire faculty into the music auditorium, said, "How would you differentiate Michigan State from a school like, say, Harvard?" Did I tell you this story?

Charnley: No.

Crane: Tom, who was the ultimate politician, he was brilliant and he was crooked, Tom said, "I find Michigan State University and Harvard University to be on opposite poles of an optimism-pessimism continuum regarding the number and variety of courses that can be taught successfully at the university level." We were sitting in that meeting and said, "Son of a gun, we just beat Harvard." Because optimism is always good word. It's morning in America. An optimism about

what you can teach for college credit, and that's true. Whorehouse management, whatever we teach.

I don't know how I got to that, but we teach things that aren't over yet. And probably a good thing. Probably a good thing.

Charnley: That Popular Culture, obviously Russ Nye was very influential in starting. How else were you involved in that besides your teaching?

Crane: Russ started both American Studies and Popular Culture. I tried to get the English Department to teach a course called American Literature in Translation, because American literature is all in English, whereas, American literature should be a geographical thing, and it should be Spanish and Polish and Yiddish and Italian, you know, and it would be a great course, a course called American Literature in Translation. I didn't have time. By the time I got in the English department, I was running the Voice Library. I just didn't have time. They would have given me a year off, but the library wouldn't give me a year off to work up such a course.

Russ was just full of ideas. When he came here, American literature, not ATL, American literature, was low-class stuff. The more British it sounded, Henry James, the more you taught it. The less British it sounded, Fennimore Cooper, although he sounded like Sir Walter Scott in some ways, the less, you know. But he persevered, and in order to make it valuable, he really had to teach sociology and literature. You really have to do that. It's important.

We said, when I taught the ancient world, that you study Greek politics in order to understand their literature, you study Roman literature in order to understand their politics. You

study the thing that helps you. We study the life of Shakespeare in the hope that it will throw some light on these--damn little, it sheds damned little light, because we don't know much about Shakespeare. We know a lot about the plays.

But Russ was an amazing man. He knew how good he was, he just didn't want to talk about it. I spoke at his funeral, which was very small, it was by invitation, because Russ had been sick for nine years and Kay decided to have nobody come to that funeral who hadn't visited him in that time, and not all of them. I said Russ was a great man and a good man, but his goodness was in the center of the stage, in front, and his greatness was way back in the back. He used his greatness in service of his goodness. When you couldn't get jobs for Ph.D.s in English from Princeton, he was getting Michigan State Ph.D.s jobs at great universities. Not all of them, but some. He used his name to get his people published.

I went to MLA conventions with Russ. We frequently roomed together. At a couple of these things, he says, "I'll see you later." He was taking all the MSU graduate students out to a meal at a great restaurant. Once in Milwaukee, once in Chicago. He knew what his reputation was, but he didn't make much fuss about it. He used it, and he used it to build up the English Department, which is now not a very great department. It is not a very great department, but old men die and they're replaced by young men, and they may be great some day, but they haven't done it yet. They haven't done it yet.

Russ made everybody around him smart. He did this with his students. In the last nine years of his life, I used to take him for a ride every Sunday in the automobile. Marshall McLeun [phonetic] tells you this. Russ couldn't walk, he was incontinent, he couldn't read, he couldn't write, but while I was driving the car, I couldn't walk and I couldn't read and I couldn't write, and I

always had to go to the bathroom. I would say, "Who was the shortstop for the St. Louis Browns in 1936?" That was good for two hours. Or, "What were the true influences on Charles Brockton Brown?" I'm not smart, but I'm glib and I could think of these things.

He was a most remarkable man. I made a vow never to turn a profit on Russ Nye, never to get anything from him. He was the world's greatest giver. When we used to go out to Iowa, he was the fastest gun in the West picking up a check. I decided when I was seeing him when he was ill, and people didn't visit him because he was such an ugly sight.

Charnley: Had memories of how he was.

Crane: Yes. Someone would say, "Are you Russell Nye?" He said, "I used to be." But he was going to give me his jazz record collection, and it's a great collection. Kay called me up and said, "When are you going to come over and pick up the collection?"

I said, "Kay, if you give that to Bowling Green University, they will give you credit for a dollar a record. That's a couple of hundred bucks. I'm not allowed to give you credit at all. I'm not allowed. I like that collection, and I want that collection, but Bill Shirk [phonetic] will send a truck up tomorrow if you call him." And he did. Bill Shirk not only has funding behind him, and of course it didn't cost him anything in funding, he just gave them credit. But Bill Shirk is the most educated garbage man in the world. You've been down to that library. He's got this collection of hubcaps. It's the biggest hubcap library in America.

But I had this personal thing with Russ. I didn't want him ever to get me a job. I didn't want him ever to do anything, because I had this kind of pure love for him. Peter knows about it

and Kay knows about it and that's enough. Vic Howard thought I should continue to visit because Kay liked to see me. But the truth of the matter is, I went there as kind of a parish call, as kind of faith-based therapy.

Charnley: Did you collect any of his materials at the Voice Library?

Crane: I've got him speaking. I've got him speaking. When I taught oral history, when I taught Popular Culture, I always played Russ as the founder. I wanted to use *The Unembarrassed Muse* in my course, but it's out of print. But Kay took me down in the basement and gave me every copy she had, so I've got about twenty-eight copies of *The Unembarrassed Muse*, and it's outdated. The thing about popular culture is it just, you know, there's no hip-hop in there now. Popular culture doesn't have to be good. It doesn't say good culture, it says popular culture. And it does tell us who we are.

If I were teaching Popular Culture this year, I would teach the XFL, which is a combination of the NFL, the World Wrestling Foundation, and the Jerry Springer Show. This is what it is. It's gratuitous ugliness, which is where we're going.

Charnley: The Voice Library and students, how did students fit into the mission at all?

Crane: Theoretically, the university is here to serve the students. You get freshmen, and these kids have been going to grade school and junior high and high school all their lives, and their concept of what a university is, is a place where people are paid to teach them. And the better they

teach them, the more famous they are as professors. They soon discover if the guy's a really famous professor, he's in Vienna. If he's moderately famous, he's in Washington. If he's kind of famous, he's in the stacks. What they discovered is this university isn't set up to teach them.

I was reading a book the other day about flax. We studied in junior high and high school that the main product, we always listed flax. Belgium has flax. France has flax. Iowa has flax. Nobody's ever seen flax. Flax is this little flake you make linen out of. But a kid wants to get an A on a geography paper, all through school you've got to mention flax. This is flax. You leave out flax and the professor gives you an A-minus. "Where's the flax?" says the teacher.

Kids have a funny idea what teaching is about. They think, "Maury's a great teacher. Why didn't he ever win the teacher award?" Because he doesn't bring in money, that's why. Kids are theoretically the reason for the Voice Library, but we get our fame among librarians because Bryant Gumbel talks about us and Garrison Keillor talks about us, and we're on trailers for movies. The more famous people who use you, the more they like you. In the library, the poor librarians feel that they're really professors and that you're famous out of town. People know all about you in Iowa City and Tuscaloosa. Nobody knows who you are in these things.

Charnley: How did Garrison Keillor use the collection?

Crane: Oh, they changed the name of the theater in St. Paul to the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater. This was about six years ago.

Charnley: From The World, was it?

Crane: Whatever the theater was called, it became the F. Scott Fitzgerald Theater. Only one person had the voice of F. Scott Fitzgerald; that was us.

A friend of mine dug it up, a friend of mine in San Diego. He had gone into one of these booths, twenty-five-cent "record your voice" booths, and made it for Sheila Graham. He was reciting some romantic poet. I think it's Byron. Then he screws up, and he says, "Oh, shit." He made this and he gave it to her, and it was in her estate. This friend of mine who's a psychiatrist got it at a hockshop and sent it to me. It's the voice of Scott Fitzgerald. It's a great voice. He's reciting poetry that he memorized at Princeton or in prep school in Minnesota. I sent it off to Garrison Keillor, and he said, "We want to thank those wonderful people at the University of Michigan." When anything good comes out of this state, they assume it's from Ann Arbor. Why the hell. With those cowboys. Why would Michigan State, why would they have that?

There was a picture of me on the Bryant Gumbel show when he was on NBC, and they said, "Ann Arbor." This is what they do because this isn't a serious place. This is a serious place where guys like you and me teach, you know, a place for guys who are chasing comets through C___.

They did a NOVA show. We had the only voice of Sigmund Freud in English that they could get. A lot of Freud in German. A lot of Einstein in German. But we wind up, I wound up—

[Begin Tape 2, Side 2]

Crane: What national recognition I have, like *People* magazine and *Christian Science Monitor* is because of the Voice Library. I don't know if they think of it as cute. It's a valuable thing. I think

it is a valuable thing. If they go online, then anybody who wants a classroom teaching on Martin Luther King [Jr.], they can pick up "I have a dream." But anybody can pick it up at his home. You can do that right now. You can pick up "Nothing to fear but fear itself."

Charnley: Did you see an increase in requests after the collections went online in terms of catalog or no?

Crane: There's an increase, and they've hired a very expensive man with a Ph.D. from Chicago to say no. They've hired a copyright officer, and he's got a huge staff. Hell, they spend more on saying no in a year than I probably said yes in ten years. It became something of value, and we found out it was something of value when other parts of the university decided to appropriate it.

When Mike Cornblue [phonetic] in History said, "Wow, I found the farce." Well, it wasn't quite a farce, it was a farm. Somebody'd been plowing it all these years. This stuff doesn't grow wild, you know, you've got to bring it in and plant it. But I could tell that we were getting famous when various people wanted to steal us. I think that's fine. I believe the world's goods belong to the world's people.

Dick Chapin always told me I'd wind up in Sing-Sing for giving away valuable stuff. I said, "It didn't cost me anything." He said, "It's already passed through you." He said, "I'm not even going to visit you when you go to jail." I said, "Fine." That's the kind of encouragement I got in the library.

It was a fun thing. I go to the library every Friday, because Randy Scott and Don DePorter [phonetic] and I have fake books down there, and we are playing every popular tune we can on the

accordion, guitar, and clarinet. We're just going through every--because it amuses us. We go down in the back of the Rare Book Room where nobody could hear us, and it amuses me to play as loud as I can in a library. Then I take John and Rick to coffee, and we talk about a world that has passed into legend for them, that there once was a thing called Camelot, you know. We did have a good time. Nobody in the library knew what we were doing, and now nobody knows what we've done. But there's grant money to be had, and they will use this either wisely or unwisely, I don't know. But I didn't worry about copyright, because I don't worry about things. I figured that anybody who sued me would get experience, wouldn't get any money.

Charnley: How about your appearances on the J.P. McCarthy Show? Do you remember the first time? How did you end up on his--was it on *Focus*?

Crane: It was on the *Focus* show. Ed Zebruski [phonetic] was always bringing him interesting people from Michigan State. J.P. is a wonderful interviewer, just perfect. He asks a question and he falls back, and what he would do is we would record it about a couple hours before it went on the air so that if it was no good, he'd just pull out a golden oldie. That's why I'm always on. Every time somebody really screws up, they've got a list of about fifteen guys that they just play.

But he has two people, and the one he thinks is going to be better, he has first. That's a half-hour show, and I did twenty-five minutes. Then some poor guy who's trying to collect money for the Armenians got up there and talked fast.

J.P. and I both come from New Jersey. I loved his show, and he thought I was cute. They'd try to get me as often as they could. I told Ed Zebruski, "I don't drive in Detroit." But Ed likes to

drive anyway, so we would drive in. Then we'd stop at a nice place and get something to eat, and we'd listen to the radio show.

You introduced me once, just after J.P. had died. I hadn't thought, if I were to give that speech now, I would have said, "J.P. McCarthy left no written record. If there weren't a Voice Library, people would be unable to say, 'Oh, is that guy good? You want to prove it, go to Michigan State and listen.'" I've got him doing Joe Waldmeyer [phonetic] on Hemingway. I think it's a phoner, and I think Joe is in Spain at the time. And these are two great talkers, you know.

But Joe McCarthy did what Russ and I did: he made you feel smart. He listened to everything you said. It was not J.P. With Dick Cavett, it's the *Dick Cavett Show*. He tells Lew Alcindor how to play baseball--basketball. He tells Gloria Swanson how to be an actress. What he's doing is he's saying, "I went to Yale. Am I smart or what? Let me tell you about you." There are lots of guys who do that.

I did a talk show myself. It's hard not to show off. But what you really do is you do what J.P. did. You ask a question and you jump out of the way. We're unlikely to see the likes of him again.

Charnley: How did you get him interested in oral history?

Crane: Oh, I was stuck. We had this Voice Library, and for a shy guy, I'm something of a wheeler-dealer. I brought the national convention here. I was in the Voice Library four years when we brought--and national convention is usually in Savannah or Poughkeepsie or New Orleans. East Lansing, it was a dry town when they came here. You couldn't drink in the Kellogg Center.

We brought them here, and there was not a state organization. I had taken a course because college professors feel that that's the way you learn things. I took a course in oral history from the lady's husband who is an anthropologist at Wayne, Pat Pilling [phonetic]. Pat Pilling drove in from Detroit to give a course at LCC. Geneva Wiskeman [phonetic] was in the class. The local oral historians were in the class I took, Pat Pilling's course. We became close to Pat and to the guy she eventually married. We got together and decided that they hadn't been in the Middle West for a while, and we invited them to the Kellogg Center. Mark Van Wermer [phonetic], who's a friend of mine, was running conferences there. We ran just a hell of a conference. I mean Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., was one of the speakers. He was the main speaker, as a matter of fact. He traced oral history back through Eucides. There's a great speech in it, very little to do with oral history.

But we had people from around the world come to this, and I decided to have a voice library there. I told people in our invitations to send tapes if they were on a project, send dubs of tapes, and we had so many that the room that I had wasn't big enough. I had to put up a sign and it said, "Other voices, other rooms." I don't know how many people got it, but we had other voices, other rooms. We had all kinds of stuff here.

Geneva said, after the meeting, "Let's sit around together." Justin Kestinbaum [phonetic] was one of the guys. "Let's form a Michigan Oral History Council." And that's when it started. I thought to myself, "You know, I could get into oral history, but damn it, I'm a voice librarian, and there's only really one of them in the country." And I spent all day and all night doing this. I actually started ignoring my teaching. I didn't ignore it, because I was good and I was glib and I got by and nobody ever found out, nobody ever caught on.

But we formed that association. It was in ’79, I think. So I was here five years. I came in January 1st of ’74, and this was in the fall of ’79. It was a little more than five years. We were in the Kellogg Center, and it was a very successful convention, and it made money. It made money because I got people to donate things, including my band. We had a dance with the Geriatric Six playing at it. It was a very successful convention, and that was the beginning of it.

Pat was a ball of fire, and so was Geneva. It got going, and it’s going today. We took over doing the quarterly, John Shaw and I, from this fellow that was teaching high school near Detroit.

Charnley: Glen Ruggles?

Crane: Yes, that’s right, Glen Ruggles. Because Justin said, “This damn paper looks like a ransom note.” The kids were putting it together. It just looks like a ransom note. So I took over. John Shaw is the finest assistant a man could ever have. He graduated with high honors in journalism. He was the number-one man in his class, actually, and he’s a journalist.

I’ve got to call myself a journalist, because I’m quick and dirty. I write very fast, and I seldom rewrite. I was a journalist at one time. I did sports for the *Atlantic City Press* [unclear] high school sports, and we turned out what was a very, very good journal. We just couldn’t keep it up.

What happened is Hiram Davis came in as the head of the library, and he wanted a library journal. So John took that over. But John never called himself the editor. He always called me the editor, because that’s the kind of guy he is.

Charnley: Who else besides John worked? Is he still at the Voice Library?

Crane: Yes, he's at the Voice Library, but I think he'll be there. He thinks of it as a job now. That's a much easier job, because we get requests and we turn them over to the copyright officer, and he says no. So it's John's job, and John's got lots of other things to do. He runs the whatever it's called, you check out stuff and you put it in computers, that lab. He's never going to be completely appreciated, because librarians feel that if you didn't go to library school, you're not a real person. If you didn't take those three courses in how to say no, you know.

Charnley: Who else?

Crane: Rick is there. Rick's an engineer, and he's very good. He's in charge of digitizing all this stuff, but it's all being held up by copyright. And maybe it should be. I think maybe it was a good time for me to leave, because I was a swashbuckler. I really was a loose cannon. I just went around. Like I called Bill Shirk a garbage collector, that's what I was. I took anything anybody would give me, because I didn't have any money to buy stuff with.

Charnley: More of a preservationist, with the idea that if you didn't take it, it would be gone?

Crane: Yes. What I did is I catalogued. Historians always say, "The job of the historian is to find the diamonds in the dung heap." I say, "And the job of the librarian is to catalog dung." In fact, I think I said that on that PBS show, that for every historian who's finding good stuff in the bad stuff, that's because the good stuff and the bad stuff are all catalogued."

Charnley: When did you retire?

Crane: I retired July 1st, 2000. I started teaching September 1st, 1950. I had made up all kinds of plans for what to do with retirement, and you find out who you are in retirement. I find out that I like to shave. You don't have to shave every day. You don't have to shave at all. I shave. I found out that I like to wear ties. Anytime I can wear a tie. I go to funerals now so I can wear neckties. When you get to be seventy-five years old, you've got 217 ties, of which you wear six, and you want to wear them. Along comes Regis Philbin, and instead of your tie matching your suit, it's got to match your shirt. That's a good thing, because you've got fourteen suits and 300 shirts. So Regis Philbin, the new style is to wear a tie such that people have to look to see if you're wearing it.

Charnley: No contrast.

Crane: No contrast. But I think that's okay.

I was going to take piano lessons. I thought at one time I'd go to law school. My wife said, "You want to be a lawyer?" I said, "No, I want something to do."

But, jeez, doing nothing is great, because what I'm doing is what I was doing over and above running the Voice Library, except that the President [George W. Bush] spoke last night and I wasn't taking notes. I wasn't taping it. Pretty good speech, it was a pretty good speech. The first five things he proposed were things that Al Gore would have proposed. I thought having the mayor

of Philadelphia was great. These are the things I was taking notes in my head. But poor John, he had to take the notes. He had to take the notes.

Charnley: When you came to Michigan State, did you anticipate that you'd be here your whole career?

Crane: Nobody does. Nobody does. What happened to me, and it's in that article, is I moved next door to a magnificent man. I got a job playing jazz although I didn't own a horn. I wasn't a very good musician, I'm not a good musician today, but I worked with good musicians. If you want to learn to play tennis, you always play with people who are better than you are. Well, when I started playing, that was everybody.

Charnley: Who was your neighbor that you mentioned?

Crane: Bill McCann [phonetic]. That's where I met Russ. Bill McCann had been captain of the baseball team here, and he was a reviewer for the *Progressive* up in Madison, Wisconsin. He was head of the actuarial department of the state insurance, and he was smarter than hell. I met all kinds of wonderful people at his house.

Then I got on the Howard Finch Show, and I made so much money. I came here at 4,500 a year, highest paying job of anybody in my Ph.D. class, 4,500 a year in 1953. 1955, '54, I went up to 4,700. '55 I went up to 4,900, but in '55 I got on the Howard Finch Show, and I was making an extra sixty bucks a week. I was earning less than a hundred a week. I was making sixty bucks

extra, that's a 60 percent raise, for playing jazz. We sunk it all into the house, and we paid the house off. And I learned to play jazz.

Howard Finch had me doing comedy, because I always said funny things. One of the things I did is I would diagram sentences. I would do popular songs, and I would say, [singing] "'Just Molly and me,' which is a noun clause modifying. We are happy. 'And baby makes three,' which is a parallel, not a clause. We're happy." I said, "What did I tell you?"

I said, [singing] "'When whippoorwills call, and evening is nigh,'" I said, "Well, that's interesting because it mentions the head of the English Department." It was just so easy to do. [singing] "Every time it rains, it rains pennies from heaven." I said, "That's just a Michigan National Cloud Bank."

We had a singer on the show named Jerri Ray [phonetic]. Jerri could never remember my name. It was Howard Finch who called me Maury. That's how I got the name Maury. I was Maury on television, and there's only one television station in town. It was Channel 6, WJIN. She couldn't remember my name, so she called me Handsome. "Hey, there, Handsome." I would walk into supermarkets and housewives--it was a housewife's show. It was 2:00 in the afternoon. "Hey, Handsome." That's just terrible, terrible, terrible. But I did this for a little better than a year. I paid off my house.

Then they had me talking to the incoming freshmen. I remember when this building was going up, I was talking to Keva [phonetic], and I would watch this building going up. It was just bull I talked for a half hour, just about whatever amused me. So I got to talking and giving speeches around the state. Then I just couldn't leave, you know. I couldn't take a serious job. Was I going to go somewhere and write about Hawthorne, Melville, and James, or was I just going to be

glib bull-shitter, living kind of by my wits here, doing childish things? Playing jazz clarinet is a childish thing. That's what infants do.

Charnley: In the library.

Crane: In the library. And I'm doing it at seventy-five. I had a good time. I met everybody. I knew everybody. Every college president we've had from Hannah to [M. Peter] McPherson has been a friend. Some of them, very, very good friends. Gordon Guyer is a very good friend. John [A.] DiBiaggio is a very good friend. John DiBiaggio was a friend who used to tell me what a terrible guy George Perles was. George Perles was a friend who told me what a terrible guy John DiBiaggio was.

But since I was always a friend on a comedy level, I once was giving a talk to incoming National Merit Scholar people at Gwen whatever her name was, wrote the test that they took. Gwen Norrell [phonetic] wrote the test that they took. She sat on one side of me, and Cliff Wharton sat on the other side of me. I got up to speak. These kids are going to take a test, and they don't want to hear me speak. Everybody's talked too long, but I'm always the last speaker. I'm always the last speaker. I do this once a year at the Tower Guard. Everybody's been standing in the cold and they want to pee and I'm the last speaker.

I got up and I said, "President Wharton, would you stand up? Miss Norrell, would you stand up?" The three of us are standing. Six hundred kids in there. I said, "Now, a lot of you people are wondering what those three kids in the Mod Squad were going to look like when they grew old." Cliff knocked over his glass of water, hit a kid on the head. Years later he said to

somebody, "Tell them the story." I don't know what the hell the story is. I forgot. That's how I remember it.

Then I went on to say, the kids are saying, a black guy, a white guy, and a girl, and they say, "Well, they finally got a job working for *Ironside*." *Ironside* had just gone off the air, and they knew what *Ironside* was. I said, "CBS isn't going to have Raymond Burr to push around anymore."

Frequently I would say, "There are a hundred million people your age in this world who did not eat this well tonight." And the kids would say, "Ooooh." I would say, "And 40,000 of them are on this campus." I said, "We're trying to make you like us. You're not going to eat like this when you get here." I said, "Ten of you are going to get full scholarships. You're going to go to Michigan State. Why not? We're bribing you." I said, "We want the rest of you to come, and that's what I'm here to talk about."

This is hard to do, because these are kids who could get into Yale. I finally stopped doing it, because I thought it was not a nice thing to do. A kid who should go to Yale should go to Yale, you know, but it took me a long time to figure that out.

But I got by on comedy and I would speak. Hell, I just spoke this summer to a convention on folding and flexible proteins. It was biophysicists. They were talking about genome research, and it was up in Traverse City. They put us up at the Park Place Hotel. I talked at the Top of the Park. They knew I wasn't going to talk seriously. They knew. But I'll take that kind of thing. I talk to all kinds of conventions of scientists, because they want somebody who looks like a professor to get up and talk about serious things in a kind of comical way, which is what I did.

This has been my niche at Michigan State, and it's over. This is a great place to retire from. You get your medical, dental benefits. You get your parking pass free. You go to the ball games. I go to the ball games free anyway. You go to the electric concert series, and you don't go to committee meetings. Well, I practiced for retirement for about ten years. I didn't go to staff meetings. I never went to an English department meeting. I didn't go to library meetings because I didn't know what the hell they were talking about, and I didn't care.

It was just some kind of crazy luck, and I've been in on it all. I've been in on, what, this university was founded in 1855. First set of students didn't come for a couple of years. First graduating class wasn't present at graduation, they were all off fighting in the war. But 1855 till now is 145 years, and I've been here a third of that time. A third of that time. I'm one of the few guys that came to teach at Michigan State College who's still alive.

Charnley: Great institutional memory.

Crane: Yes. Well, you go in to teach whatever you're teaching. I go in to teach Shakespeare, and there's a little bit of Shakespeare and a lot of Crane. This is what we all do.

A kid smart enough to put himself through college, a kid smart enough to read all the books himself will read all the books himself. They don't have to get drunk once a week and go to basketball games once a week. They really don't.

Charnley: I want to thank you on behalf of the project.

Crane: Yes, my pleasure.

Charnley: I appreciate your insight. Thank you.

Crane: I appreciate your buying my record.

[End of interview]

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