

BLANCHE MARTIN

March 31, 2000

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is Friday March 31, the year 2000. We're in East Lansing, Michigan. I'm Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. Blanche Martin for the MSU [Michigan State University] Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial of the institution to be commemorated in the year 2005.

As you can see, we're tape recording this interview Dr. Martin. Do you give us permission to tape?

Martin: Yes, I do.

Charnley: I'd like to start with a little bit about your personal background and then we'll get into educational background. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

Martin: I was born in a little town called Millhaven, Georgia, which is not far from Augusta, Georgia. I grew up in River Rouge, Michigan, which is in the suburbs downriver from Detroit. We had a family of five, and was raised by my grandmother and grandfather, although my mother and my stepfather lived in the area. So I grew up in River Rouge.

Charnley: How old were you when you came from Georgia?

Martin: About five.

Charnley: And you graduated from River Rouge High School?

Martin: River Rouge High School, yes.

Charnley: How did you first come to Michigan State as a student?

Martin: I got an interest in Michigan State when I came up here in high school with our basketball team. We were in the state finals in 1951, and I came up on a bus and fell in love with the campus. So then I was recruited for football, basketball, after my senior year, and I was delighted to end up at Michigan State University.

Charnley: So the first impression of the campus was a good one?

Martin: Oh yes. Very good.

Charnley: You were in the state finals?

Martin: Yes, my team was.

Charnley: Was that in Jenison [Fieldhouse]?

Martin: Yes, in Jenison.

Charnley: Did you win?

Martin: No, we lost that year. But in my time in school, my junior year we won Class B State Championship, and then we won again in my senior year, so I played on the first two state championship teams we had.

Charnley: Is that right. Just a side note, I graduated from a little town north of Grand Rapids, and we played River Rouge in 1964, in the finals, and we lost. [Laughter] That was Class B then, they must have dipped down.

So who recruited you specifically to come?

Martin: "Fortie" [Forest V.] Anderson and Duffy Daugherty.

Charnley: Both of them?

Martin: Yes. As a matter of fact, one of my claims to fame, Fortie told me, Wilt Chamberlain graduated the same year I did, so Fortie told me that if he could get me to come here and he had a good chance of getting Wilt, that he would have the nucleus of a good basketball team. That I should be mentioned in the same voice as a seven-foot center.

Charnley: World-class player. Which did you prefer, basketball or football?

Martin: I preferred basketball, but I was too short. I wasn't a very good ball-handler. I was a good jumper, good shooter, but I couldn't bounce the ball more than twice without losing it. But I did make all-state.

Charnley: Any highlights on your basketball career that you want to talk about?

Martin: Except for winning the high school state championships two years in a row in high school, I did play as a freshman at Michigan State. As a matter of fact, I was partially responsible for Johnny Green's success, because he started on me. [Laughter] I was one quarter ahead of Johnny on the freshman team, and when he came, he came up to the gym, this kind of tall, lanky guy. At the time, I was probably the roughest thing on the freshman team, so

when I saw him, I said, "Boy, that guy looks tall. I'll probably end up check-guarding him." But that's okay, I had tall ones before. But Johnny jumped right out of the gym. [Laughter]

Charnley: Were you amazed at his jumping ability?

Martin: Oh, I couldn't believe it. Still don't believe it. He was awesome.

Charnley: Did you continue on with your basketball career?

Martin: No, I didn't. I played as a freshman, and then I concentrated on football.

Charnley: What would you like to talk about your football?

Martin: Football, I had a great time. We had some success. We didn't play as freshman in those days, so my first year was Duffy's second year. I came in '55, and he started coaching in '54. So in '56, we had a very good team. We lost a couple of key players. As a matter of fact, the time we lost a couple of key players, we were number one in the nation when we lost Clarence Peaks, and somebody else, I forget who it was. So we finished about seven and two that year, and the following year, we finished eight and one and we were ranked second in the nation. And then I missed what would have been my junior year with a bum knee, and I stayed around and played in '59. I think we were about six and three, but we came within one game of going to the Rose Bowl that year.

Charnley: You went to the Rose Bowl those years?

Martin: I was a freshman when we went in '56, which was the '55 team. So I didn't go. Exciting game, though.

Charnley: How did you hurt your knee?

Martin: In spring. At that time, we had old-timers spring football games. I was on the varsity at the time. It was late in the game, and I shouldn't have been in there, but I shot back in the game. Somebody ran into the side of it, and I was done for a year. In those days, it was quite a surgery. But nowadays, they probably would have had me back the next week.

Charnley: It is amazing what progress they've made. What was it like to play football for Duffy Daugherty?

Martin: It was really fun. We had a great group of people, great group of coaches. Some of them are still around here. Duffy was a great guy. He and I got to be very good friends over the years. But we just had a good time. Coming to Michigan State from a small downriver area was quite unique. You got to meet a wide variety of people, and make new friends. It was really a ball for me. I had a great time.

Charnley: Balancing academics and athletics seems to be pretty tough. How did you handle that push and pull between the two?

Martin: I did okay, because I was a pretty good student. Matter of fact, I had some scholarship offers, academic scholarship offers. My scholarship I had here was a combined academic-athletic scholarship. I forgot the name of it, but they only gave two of those out a year, and I got one. But I seemed to do a little better during football season, because I was too tired to go out and waste time. [Laughter]

Charnley: So the time you had to study, you were focused?

Martin: Absolutely.

Charnley: Interesting concept. What did you end up majoring in while you were here?

Martin: I was in math and physical science. That's what my degree is in. I was in pre-med for a while. I thought I'd want to be a physician, but at the last hour I decided to go into dentistry, mainly because I didn't want to ever have to tell anybody that they were going to die. [Laughter]

Charnley: Interesting. Any professors that you had as an undergraduate that you want to mention, that were good, bad, or indifferent?

Martin: The fellow Lawrence Quill, who was head of the chemistry department, was one of my mentors. He thought I was a good student, and he kind of encouraged me to pursue something in postgraduate education.

Charnley: Did you have him early, or was it later as a junior or senior?

Martin: Well, I took a lot of chemistry courses, and he was head of the chemistry department, so I got to know him like that.

Boy, there's probably a number of professors I had, if I could shake my memory.

Charnley: That was just one. I wanted to talk to the people that we've been talking with as students who were here, not just administrators, to talk about some of the faculty, because they're an important part of it.

Martin: Absolutely.

Charnley: Did you live on campus?

Martin: I got married in my freshman year. I lived in a dorm for one year. Then I brought my family up the next year, and we lived in the old Quonset huts, Spartan Village. They were really neat. They had what they called no-bedroom apartments, which just had a big living room, and you had a bed in there. They were twenty-nine dollars a month. I moved up to a one-bedroom apartment, which was thirty-four fifty, and then finally we ended up in a two-bedroom apartment, thirty-nine dollars a month, and no utilities. [Laughter]

Charnley: No utilities. That's pretty good. So you graduated in '59?

Martin: '59. And I stayed around in graduate school for a couple of years. For four years.

Charnley: Here?

Martin: Yes. I was in zoology for two years. Then I switched over to biochemistry. I was thinking about pursuing a Ph.D. I spent two years in graduate school in biochemistry, and then I decided to go to dental school, and I spent four years.

Charnley: So that was what, '63?

Martin: That was '63, from '59 to '63.

Charnley: Where did you end up going to dental school?

Martin: University of Detroit. It's U.D.-Mercer now. They merged with Mercer College.

Charnley: How long did the postgraduate studies take you?

Martin: Four years.

Charnley: So, '67?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: So if you were studying in Detroit, had you maintained any contact with the university?

Martin: Yes. I would come up quite often, mostly for athletic events, football, basketball. But I kept in contact with Duffy.

Charnley: Did he encourage you to come back to the community?

Martin: Yes, he did. Duffy, and Jim Furick [phonetic], who was the team physician at the time. He was a very good friend. B____, when B____ was still alive.

Charnley: He was athletic director when you first came. So you knew him well?

Martin: Yes. Right. He was a great guy.

Charnley: Why did you pick East Lansing to set up your practice?

Martin: I came up here in '55 as a student and I loved it, and I had a great time. Then I stayed around for another four years in school, had a part-time job as a janitor to the state while I was in graduate school, plus I had a graduate assistantship. I just fell in love with the area. Soon as I got out of dental school, right back.

Charnley: Those were interesting times in the 1960s, certainly. You kept up with Spartan football?

Martin: Oh yes.

Charnley: One might say the glory years, or some of the glory years.

Martin: Yes. I was at that famous ten-ten tie with Notre Dame.

Charnley: You were there?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: You probably wished you might have gone right down on the right?

Martin: Legs were pretty good then.

Charnley: How was it that you came to have a position on the board of trustees?

Martin: Well, I started my practice here in '67. About a year later, Don Stevens, who was on the board at the time, came by to ask me if I would be interested in running for the board. So I had heard of the board, but I didn't

know anything at all about it. I said, “Well, Don, you know, I’m just trying to get my practice started. I don’t know whether I’d have time.”

He said, “Well, it doesn’t take much time.” He says, “We only meet once a month.” [Laughter] They were kind of looking for candidates.

So I said, “Well, all right.” I gave it a shot and went down to the convention, and, lo and behold, got nominated. And as you know, if you can get nominated, then whatever the ticket does, that’s what you do. You go up and down with the ticket.

Charnley: So which party was this?

Martin: Democrat.

Charnley: Don Stevens represented that.

Martin: I was on the ticket when, I guess, Hubert Humphrey was running against Richard Nixon. Humphrey lost, but we won in Michigan.

Charnley: So you took office January ‘69?

Martin: January 1969, right.

Charnley: So [John A.] Hannah was still president.

Martin: Hannah was still president, yes, that’s right.

Charnley: Do you remember anything about that first board meeting? I know it's a long time ago, but anything that struck you?

Martin: No, I don't remember much about the first board meeting, but I remember what kind of the climate was at the time on the board. There were five Democrats, three Republicans. I do remember going to my first board meeting before I took office. Usually when you're elected, your term doesn't start until they have you come to a board meeting or two to kind of see what's going on, I guess. At the time, there was kind of, I guess there was a--well, I guess it wasn't a controversy, but C. Allen Harlan [phonetic], Warren [M.] Huff, and Clare White [phonetic], we were three Democrats on the board. They were giving Dr. Hannah some flak about something. I can't remember what it was. But he was not happy about it.

Charnley: So the meeting was tense, for sure?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: Did you wonder what you were getting into at that point?

Martin: Yes. I remember that Dr. Hannah, when he heard that I was running, because I got to know him very well because he used to travel with the team when I was playing football, we used to spend a lot of time talking, he was a very interesting guy, but when he found out I was running for the board, he called me and told me he thought that was great, wished me all the luck in the world. And then when I was elected, he was the first person to call me to congratulate me. Then later on, he had me and my wife over for dinner, gave us a basket of apples. I mean, how can you go against a guy like that? [Laughter] No, he was all right. I really liked Johnny.

Charnley: Some of those early years. Now he retired, of course, or resigned.

Martin: Yes, shortly after I got on the board. He resigned in '69. So I had maybe two or three board meetings with him.

Charnley: At the time that he did.

Martin: Right.

Charnley: Do you remember, did he present that letter at the board itself, or was it a case where he just submitted it in writing? Do you remember that, or any circumstances or issues about it?

Martin: I don't remember.

Charnley: Walter Adams obviously took over. Where you involved in asking him or selecting him?

Martin: Yes. In those days, we could meet in private. I remember the five Democrats. That would have been Don Stevens, Clare White, Warren Huff, and--he passed away not too long ago. I can't remember his name right now.

Charnley: We'll look it up.

Martin: We got together, and we decided that we would ask Dr. Adams if he would serve as interim president while we went through the process of selecting a new president. He had five votes. That's the way it was.

Charnley: Did the Republican members--

Martin: Matter of fact, they were pleased that we were going to select Walter as interim president.

Charnley: So it ultimately came out a bipartisan decision?

Martin: Yes. He was a popular guy.

Charnley: Did you have any other contact with him personally, or just through your board members?

Martin: Just as board members. I got to know Walter very well. He and I got to be good friends after that, but I think that was the first. I had met him before, but not to talk him. After that, we were like old friends.

Charnley: I know in the sciences, you might not have run into him.

Martin: Right.

Charnley: The decision, do you remember the talk at the time when he decided not to continue? Do you remember your reaction or the board's reaction at the time?

Martin: If my memory serves me correctly, we had considered offering Walter the job. He had the votes. I don't know whether we were unanimous in that, but at any rate. Then he was adamant about the fact that he did not want to be considered. So there were lot of folks said, "Well, I bet if he knew he had the votes, he'd consider it." But I don't think so. He said he wasn't interested.

Charnley: Were you the first African-American on the board of trustees here at Michigan State?

Martin: Yes. I wasn't the first one nominated, but I was the first one elected. There was a fellow, Nathan Conyers [phonetic], I think. He was nominated prior, either two or four years before I was nominated, but the Democrats lost that year. But I was the first one elected.

Charnley: So were you involved in, then, the decision for Dr. [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.]?

Martin: Yes. Yes, we were. We had a search committee, and Dr. Wharton and I think either four or five other candidates were presented to us. So we were to choose from one of those four or five. I remember we went to New York to interview Dr. Wharton and another fellow from SUNY. I think Dr. Wharton was with some kind of [unclear]. I don't think he was--

Charnley: Wasn't in academia?

Martin: Wasn't in academia at the time. I think we maybe interviewed three guys there. I forget. One of them was from SUNY, and one was from another New York school. And Dr. Wharton. I think we interviewed maybe one or two others later, but then we decided to offer Dr. Wharton the position, which was a five-three vote.

Charnley: So politics continued in the decision.

Martin: Yes. There were a lot of pressures, I would say, to name, G. Mennen Williams [phonetic]. I don't think he was in the Supreme Court at that time, but he was in government.

Charnley: He was available?

Martin: Yes, he was available. He would have been a good president, I thought. But we had agreed, at least some of us felt that since we had agreed that we wouldn't consider anybody who didn't come through the selection process. But there were some pressures to forget that and name S_____ president.

Charnley: He had a lot of political clout within the Democratic party at that time.

Martin: Don Stevens and I, we stood firm on what we had said. We were the only two Democrats that did.

Charnley: Was he the chair at that time?

Martin: He was chair. I think Don was chair, that's right.

Charnley: So this interview, was that the first time you met Dr. Wharton?

Martin: That was the first time. Right.

Charnley: What do you remember about that first meeting?

Martin: He was an attractive candidate. He was well spoken, well educated. He knew quite a bit about running an academic institution. I think he had some experience somewhere along the line. But he was the most impressive candidate we talked to.

Charnley: You knew the university well from your many years, gave you an advantage even, probably over some of the other board members who might not have even been alums.

Martin: I thought so.

Charnley: Well, I think that's important in terms of understanding a board member's decision, if you come from that background, at least as a student, graduate student, all levels. Did you think that Dr. Wharton would be a good fit for the university at that time?

Martin: Oh yes. He would be an excellent fit. He brought what we were looking for. He had the academics, he had connections. He brought a lot of things to us. He did a lot for us.

Charnley: When he came to campus in the late sixties, early seventies, in your experience, the things that were going on on campus, people have talked about as being tough times. What were some of the incidents that you remember that were difficult to deal with as a board, or the hot issues at that time? Obviously choosing a president was one of them.

Martin: Yes. That's always a biggie for us. It was.

Charnley: A main responsibility?

Martin: Yes. [unclear]. I think the Tent City was kind of a biggie, because I think it went on for a week or so, maybe longer than that. But anyway, there was what to do about that. I guess ultimately we had to move the tents out of there.

Charnley: Was the Tent City related to the [Vietnam] war?

Martin: To the war, yes.

Charnley: To the war protests?

Martin: War protest, yes.

Charnley: Was the board divided on that issue, or were they pretty unified?

Martin: No, we were pretty unified on that. I don't remember any divisive issues we had, other than that. Maybe some I don't want to remember. [Laughter]

Charnley: It's only natural to think about that. In terms of the other social issues that were going on at the time, or the war, student riots--not student riots, or there were?

Martin: Yes. '71 or something we had. I think they brought in the National Guard or something. You know, that was handled fairly well.

Charnley: So Dr. Wharton was able to solve some of those?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: Did you have any personal relationship with Dr. Wharton as a board member, or how would you characterize his leadership style once he got here?

Martin: He was fairly low key, decisive. He didn't back down too often. A lot of folks, because he seemed to be such an easy-going guy, they mistook kindness for weakness, but that was not the case. He was a strong guy. If he believed in something, he'd fight. He was a quiet warrior. [Laughter] Yes, he was.

Charnley: How did he come to a decision? Did he study the problem, or make personal decisions like Hannah might have? Or did he take a different approach?

Martin: I think he took a little different approach than Hannah did. Hannah, I think, in his day, he had boards that were a little different. From what I heard, they weren't quite as political. Board meetings never lasted very long. But the climate kind of changed, and people's politics started to take a bigger role, I think. You not only had to answer to the public, you had to answer to the party, especially if you were interested in running again. [Laughter] I found that out.

Charnley: When were you reelected the first time?

Martin: I was reelected in '76. I guess I was reelected in '75 and I took office again in '76. Something like that. '76 to '84.

Charnley: Did you have to campaign at all?

Martin: Yes, yes.

Charnley: You had to be nominated again.

Martin: Yes, you had to be nominated. But your campaigning was a little different than regular campaigns, because what you do is they send you around different places to push the ticket. But every now and then, you'd have, like Tom S____, I think, had board candidates on his show, one or two other things where the board candidates actually got together and debated, more or less.

Charnley: Or discussed the issues.

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: Did the board change at all in the makeup after that election?

Martin: The board changed back and forth from like five to three, four and four, for a while. Every two years we would get some new people in. Sometimes it would shift a little bit. But I think most of the time we had more Democrats than Republicans during my time. But I think there was a while when it was like four-four.

Charnley: Dr. Wharton had to deal with some of the NTAA investigation. How did you first hear about that, or where you involved as a board member in any of those?

Martin: No. They had a committee, and I was not on that committee. John [B.] Bruff was on the committee, and they would report to us periodically. That was kind of a hot issue there for a while. I remember one Friday or something, we fired Benny Stolz [phonetic] and [unclear] and somebody else, some of the assistant coaches because of some of the things that were going on. I don't know why we fired [unclear], because I don't think he was in on it.

Charnley: So it was almost a clean sweep. Who was the athletic director then?

Martin: Bert Smith, I think. I think we fired Bert, did something to him. Bert was a great guy. I was saddened by what happened to him. I don't know what happened. I knew Bert. He was a great guy. He wouldn't have knowingly let anything go awry.

Charnley: In terms of the teams, when you were on the board, because of your experience as a letter-winner here, did people look to you for a statement or anything like that?

Martin: Yes, they looked to me. Right. I know when we hired Bert, I really pushed hard because I knew he had administrative abilities, and he was a coach, one of my coaches. A lot of the building programs, like the Duffy Daugherty Building, [unclear] Arena, and stuff like they were doing, asked for my opinion because I had been closely associated with athletics. I like to think that I was at least helpful in getting some of those things done, the Breslin [Student Events] Center.

Charnley: What was your opinion on Jenison [Fieldhouse] and the Breslin?

Martin: We were pushing that for quite a while.

Charnley: The board was looking for a replacement?

Martin: Yes. Right. There was a time we had plans for another arena, before we did Breslin. We were close to getting it. It would have been over there where the football practice field is now. The site we had picked was over by that way. Everything was almost all set to go, but then we had a student committee and some students were upset because they thought we should have concentrated our efforts in other areas before we did that. So that kind of fell through, which cost us a bunch of money.

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Charnley: Before the tape stopped, we were talking about the Breslin Center and the formation, and you mentioned how initially the board had thought of a different location for the sports facility. Would you talk a little bit more about the student protest to the idea of it there, or wherever it was located?

Martin: Yes. It was going to be located over where the football practice field is now, right behind where the Duffy Daugherty Building is. I think it would have seated something like 18,000 and had some other things hooked to it. I think the time and the total project would have been like eleven million dollars, but the students on the committee at the time were against it, not because we didn't need it, but they felt that there was a number of other pressing needs that should have been ahead of that. So we put it on hold.

Charnley: So students were involved in that committee and that decision.

Martin: Right. Yes, they were. Most of our projects at the time, we tried to get a campus-wide consensus on things. We didn't want to push anything without support.

Charnley: In the 1970s, under Dr. Wharton, was that a difficult time to get things built? I know, obviously, under President Hannah there had been such a tremendous expansion, I wondered if it was harder to get money for building.

Martin: I don't think it was so much harder, but we had decided, at least the boards that I was on, that we would try to get campus-wide support for projects. As opposed to what I think happened earlier, if we needed it they would just build it. Sometimes, not often, but every now and then you'd run into a situation where the campus, most of the people, students and whatnot, would feel that there was other things that were more pressing.

Charnley: So besides the Breslin Center, or what became the Breslin Center, were there any other major building projects that you were involved in? For example, in the Wharton Center [for Performing Arts], was there a push under President Wharton or even, obviously, not to name it after himself, but--

Martin: Well, President Wharton was one of the prime movers in the idea of building the performing arts center. At the time, he had come up with a proposal that would have required little or no state support, and little or no support from the board. Matter of fact, the original thought was to have it mostly from gifts, big donors and stuff like that. But as it went along and got kind of far along in the process, we became aware that we were going to need some state funds. Some of the board members started to balk, but we were able to pull it off anyway. But the financing turned out to be a little different than what we had originally planned.

Charnley: The endowment of the university was obviously very low at that time.

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: Was there any attempt to change that during your tenure on the board?

Martin: Yes. Matter of fact, I think we created a new position for endowments. I can't remember what the name of it was. We had somebody that was in charge of--

Charnley: Some type of development fund?

Martin: A development fund, right. Then we had a--shoot, was it a development committee or something? Two board members used to serve on it. I served on it for a while. Can't remember the name of it. But our gift-giving and endowments and all those kinds of things took quite a jump, I think, during Dr. Wharton's time.

Charnley: Anything else about Dr. Wharton's tenure as president that you recall as a board member? Were you surprised when you heard he was leaving?

Martin: No, because I think he had indicated that. If he just stayed around anywhere from six to ten years, that would probably be as long as he wanted to stay. So it was not a big surprise when he decided to leave. I was kind of sad. Matter of fact, I was really surprised that he lasted as long as he did, because someone of his caliber, everybody's taking a look at him.

Charnley: So there were a lot of people that were offering jobs elsewhere.

Martin: Oh yes. He was on a number of different boards when he came here, and he decided to drop all of them except those that he thought would help the university. Thirty-some boards or something like that. He ended up staying on maybe eight or ten or something like that.

Charnley: Dr. [Edgar L.] Harden obviously replaced him as interim.

Martin: Right. Everybody around here knew him and he'd been around for a while. He ran Kellogg Center for a while when I was a student. But he was a popular fellow, and he was a very easy choice for interim, did a very good job during that period. He kind of kept things together. He was an interesting fellow.

Charnley: Were there any issues under his short interim that you remember?

Martin: Not that I can remember. Seemed like that was kind of a quiet period.

Charnley: Then his replacement, of course, was [M.] Cecil Mackey. Was the board involved in his hiring?

Martin: Yes, we were. We had a campus-wide committee again like we did before, something like twenty-one people, something like that, including two trustees that I think served on the committee. Boy, this process took a long time. It took a lot longer than we thought, because it ended up we were like two years into trying to get a president and we were getting nowhere. I think we were back to ground zero at the end of two years.

Cecil Mackey was one of the early people considered by the committee, but he had indicated that he wasn't interested. But Warren Huff knew him from somewhere. Warren Huff was on the board at the time. So we were getting a lot of pressure from somewhere to get this job done. So Warren said, "Well, if you like, maybe I can get Cecil Mackey to reconsider."

So we said, "Well, go for it."

So he did. I guess at the time if I remember right, he was one of four people we had considered maybe a year before we came back to him. So he was well thought of by the committee. So he talked to him, and he reconsidered, and we ended up hiring him.

Charnley: When he first came, obviously Michigan was experiencing a lot of economic problems.

Martin: Yes, it was facing tough issues.

Charnley: How did the board respond? Did you find you were working in cooperation with him, or were you at loggerheads with him?

Martin: We worked in cooperation with him for the most part. We had to cut back some things, and there was a move afoot to cut some programs. I remember the College of Nursing was one of those that was planned to be cut. Man, they had some support like you wouldn't believe. Every program that we thought about cutting had some great support. We ended up, seems like we may have eliminated a few programs, like two or three, but not nearly as bad as it seemed at first. At first, I think the thought was to get rid of three or four schools. Like I remember we had the College of L_____, was it?

Martin: L_____. Okay. University College, there was, too.

Martin: We may have done away with University College.

Charnley: Yes.

Martin: L_____, we changed it from a college to a--matter of fact, at a board meeting, Charlie Scarborough [phonetic], who was head of L_____ at the time, was at the meeting. I had been talking with Charlie and some of the other people about how they felt, and that we should try and save it. So I was doing what I could to try to save it, but it looked like it was going down, so I had to talk to Charlie at the meeting. I said, "What if we tried to save it as a school or something?" He said, "Well, that'll work." And we got the votes for that, so we did keep it. I don't know what it is now. It may still be a school.

Charnley: Had you taken courses in L_____?

Martin: No. It wasn't around when I was in school. Some of those programs like James Madison, L_____, and I think there's one other, they were new programs.

Charnley: So when the discussions of dropping programs like nursing and L_____ and someone else, were you lobbied directly by these constituent groups or by alums?

Martin: Everybody. Bags full of mail. Oh, it was, man, and nursing had quite a lot of folks.

Charnley: Did medical schools or even discussions of a law school come up at that time?

Martin: Yes, even discussion of a dental school. At the time, when a lot of the unions started to have dental coverage for their workers, there was a thought that there wouldn't hardly be enough dentists. So we talked with the people from the dental society about a dental school, but that didn't get very far.

Charnley: Was that a UAW initiative especially?

Martin: I think Dr. Wharton may have been the prime mover of that. I remember that we had a discussion with whoever was the head of Michigan Dental Association--I forgot his name. I can't remember who else. But the law school was discussed. Of course, the medical school, that was one of the things shortly after I got on the board that started to move. When we took on the osteopathic school, that was kind of--I can't remember the time frame of that, but that was a biggie. At one time we were going to build a teaching hospital, but that didn't get very far.

Charnley: In one of our previous interviews, Dr. [John] Cantlon indicated that he was opposed to that idea, the idea of the teaching hospital. He wanted a different model, a different plan.

Did the other people on the board look to you as a medical professional, even though you weren't a medical doctor, you were a dentist? But did they look to you for any special advice on this?

Martin: No. I don't know why. I could have been helpful. [Laughter] No, they didn't.

Charnley: Any other things memorable about Dr. Mackey's and last tenure?

Martin: The thing I remember about Dr. Mackey, he was a great guy. He was a good manager, I think, but for some reason he didn't hit it off with the alumni, and I don't know why. But he had to make some real tough decisions, which doesn't make for popularity. When you talk about cutting these schools and all these things you talk about, stepping on the toes of a lot of important alumni who thought they were important, so he just wasn't very popular. It was kind of unfortunate, because I tell you, he did the job that we asked him to do.

Charnley: So the board recommended some of the cuts, and then he implemented them?

Martin: Yes, or he would suggest to us, this is what he would do to take care of the problem, and we more or less went along with it. But, boy, there was unhappy alumni and friends.

Charnley: That was a time of difficulty in the Alumni Association, the official connection with the university.

Martin: Right.

Charnley: How did the board get involved in that? Do you remember at all? Or were they involved?

Martin: I remember when Jack Kenny was head of the Alumni Association.

Oh, another issue, I guess, was the issue of the *State News* which we ended up settling early on. The *State News* wanted to be independent, and there was some people that didn't want them to be independent. We ended up giving them their independence.

It seems like there was something similar to that with the Alumni Association. The Alumni Association was still connected to the university. I think there was a move afoot by Jack Kenny. Jack Kenny was the head of the Alumni Association, to make it an independent organ. It didn't get very far. I think Jack ended up leaving here. I don't know whether it was because of that or whatever it was. I don't remember all that went on, but that was kind of a hot issue at the time. Because there was a lot of support for whatever Jack was proposing, at least from the outside, but I don't think they got very far with the board.

Charnley: On the board itself, were you ever chair?

Martin: Yes, I was chair.

Charnley: What years were those?

Martin: From '74 to '76.

Charnley: So those were towards Dr. Wharton's last years.

Martin: Right. My last two years of my first term.

Charnley: At the time you ended being a trustee, what were those circumstances? You'd served for sixteen years.

Martin: Yes, sixteen years. I had had enough, but a lot of people who supported me and friends and all thought I should give it another whirl. In those days, there were two people that you had to get there support, or you could forget it. That was the governor, who was Jim Blanchard at the time, and a fellow who was head of AFL-CIO, who was Sam Fishman. He passed away a few years later.

So these people said, “Well, why don’t you? We need you.” So I let them talk me into trying again. So the first thing you’ve got to go do is to check with these two people. So I went to see Sam Fishman first, and I said, “Sam, I’m thinking about running again.”

He said, “Oh, that’s nice.”

I said, “Well, can I get your support?”

He said, “Well, I wasn’t too happy about the way you guys--” I think it was the time we were giving Dr. Mackey a lot of flak or something about something. Something was going on. Right then and there, I knew I had no chance. So I said, “Oh, okay, thank you,” and I left.

So I told the people who had pushed me, “Say, hey, I got no chance, man. Sam didn’t go for it.”

“So what about the governor?”

I said, “Well, I know he’s not going to.” [Laughter]

I forgot what he was--oh, I know what it was. It was something to do with something we were doing, and word came down by another fellow board member that the governor said, “If you don’t go for this (and I can’t remember exactly what it was) this would be your last term.”

I said, “Well, just tell the governor that some of us can’t last forever.” [Laughter]

When I ran for the board, I was not a politician. I had never really been in politics. The only reason I ran was because they told me that maybe I could be helpful to the university. My allegiance was with the university. So they threatened me. What the heck are they going to do to me? As long as they don’t stand in front of my door and chase my patients away. [Laughter] But at any rate, I knew that there was no sense in talking to him.

So I told these people. They said, “Well, give it a whirl anyway. Maybe they’ll select you anyhow.”

So I said, “Okay. I guess in deference to them, I’ll go to the convention.”

In the meantime, I was getting some weird phone calls, dinky little board positions, you wouldn’t think. [Laughter] A good friend of mine, who I thought was a good friend, calls me and says--and then they had picked another black candidate to take my place, who was a fraternity brother of mine. We were in school together. But

that really wasn't any connection. So one friend calls me and he said, "Well, you know, Chuck Vincent [phonetic] (he was a physician in Detroit, OB/GYN), he's running."

I said, "Well that's nice."

"We think you ought to drop out."

I said, "Why? Anybody can run. All they can do is get on the ticket."

He said, "Well, they are prepared to say that you were doing something wrong." They were just threatening me with all this.

"Tell them to do whatever they want to do. I'll be there. They ain't got nothing on me." The old political thing, you threw out some stuff, rattle the tree and see if something falls out. [Laughter]

So I went down there, and, strangely enough, this was an interesting convention, because a guy who was on U. of M. board, Jerry Dunn, because Jerry had been a rep and he'd been around for years, but he got into trouble. He worked for the Ann Arbor School District or something, and he ended up having to get into some serious negotiations or something with a union or something, so he got on the wrong side of the unions. So he and I were the stars of the show that year. They were going to get rid of us. Jerry thought he could beat them. He'd been around, he had connections. I remember talking to him, I said, "As you go around talking to people, you can tell. Some of your best friends, 'Get away from me. I don't want to lose my job.'" [Laughter]

Charnley: Not good friends anymore?

Martin: No. So I said, "Jerry, why don't we drop out?"

He said, "You can drop out. I'm not going to drop out. I can beat the suckers."

I said, "You can't beat them, man."

"I can beat them."

So later in the convention, when it was getting close to the vote, I dropped out. I made my little speech. I told my buddy, "Good luck," and he took my place. So Jerry went for the vote. They killed him. [Laughter] Poor guy, he was in tears. I told him, "You can't beat them."

Charnley: You had the better political sense for sure.

Martin: When those two guys spoke, that's the way it was. I did have Coburn Young on my side. Coburn had some power, but not that much. [Laughter] But I'll never forget, that poor guy, they beat him into the ground.

Charnley: And then into that election, was Charlie Vincent elected?

Martin: No, they lost. They got beat anyway. So they did us a favor.

Charnley: Was Charlie Vincent an MSU alum?

Martin: Yes, he was.

Charnley: So at least they had that criteria.

Martin: In those days, they did things like try to balance the ticket, you tried to get so many minorities or women, kind of balance it out. So they thought if they got rid of me, they had to find at least another black candidate to balance the ticket, so they got Charlie.

Charnley: The board shifted then?

Martin: Right. The Republicans, I think they went five-three then?

Charnley: In '86 then?

Martin: This was '84.

Charnley: Were you on the board when Mackey resigned?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: So you were still on the board then.

Martin: Right.

Charnley: Had John DiBiaggio come by the time you were there, or they hadn't hired him?

Martin: Yes, we hired him. I was in on that.

Charnley: You were still on that, on the hiring?

Martin: Right. I was a prime mover for John, because he was a teacher of mine when I was in dental school.

Matter of fact, John was one of the reasons, he helped me when I came back. In my last year of school, he and I were talking, we were good friends, and he asked me where I was planning to practice. I said I was going back to East Lansing. He said, "Well, have you been up to look around for any place?"

I said, "No."

He said, "What are you doing Friday?"

I said, "Nothing." We got in his car, we drove up here, and looked all around. We found the spot where I am right now.

Charnley: Is that right?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: Where is that?

Martin: In East Lansing. Right across the street from the union, upstairs. Used to be Redwood and Ross below me, they moved out of there. But I'm right upstairs.

Charnley: So you're right on Grand River?

Martin: Yes. Thirty-three years, right in the same spot. But we came up here, we looked around, and we found that spot, looked at it. I introduced him to Biggy and Duffy, we had a great time. So when John left dental school and he started getting into education, I think he went down to Kentucky and someplace else and someplace else, and we were talking about candidates and I mentioned his name and got him nominated. I went to--where was it, out in Connecticut somewhere, went out there to talk to him to convince him to take the job. Because he really had a cushy deal there. He only reported to the governor when he was in Connecticut. He told me, "Well, why would I want to go there [unclear]? All I've got to do is call the governor once a month and tell him how I'm doing."
[Laughter]

Charnley: So his Connecticut job was a governor appointee?

Martin: Yes, an appointee. We really needed help at the time.

Charnley: So you'd had a long-time relationship with him?

Martin: Yes. As a matter of fact, I didn't want the other board members to know, because at the time there were at least two or three of my fellow Democrats who were not happy with me about something. I knew if they knew I was--they didn't care who it was, he was done. [Laughter]

Charnley: This was your candidate.

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: That's interesting. Right toward the end of your tenure, that you engineered that.

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: I don't know if that info came out much.

Martin: I hope not.

Charnley: Revealed now. Have you had contact with him?

Martin: I haven't talked with him since he left. John was in my wedding. I got married again for the third time in '86, and I had John and John's brother was my best man. Walter Adams was in my wedding party. Lee Carr. We had a great time.

Charnley: During your career at MSU or since you came back to East Lansing, what local activities were you involved in, besides obviously your professional dentist work?

Martin: Local dental societies and stuff like that. I was in the Kiwanis for a little while, but I've always had so many kids that I didn't have time to do that. Right now, I've got five kids under thirteen.

Charnley: Funny how much of a drain they take on your time.

Martin: They play travel-hockey, travel-soccer.

Charnley: Keep you young, though.

Martin: Oh, wow. We put about 70,000 miles in a year on two vehicles. I'm in a couple of fraternities, and I usually get with them. Church. Nothing to speak of. I dropped out of Kiwanis years ago. They require you to show up every Monday. I could make it sometimes, but not often.

Charnley: Since you left the board, have you had any continuing university contact or been involved in any special programs, either athletics or academics? Has the university called on you to do anything?

Martin: Every now and then, somebody would call on me to speak to their class, regarding some health issues, dental issues, or something like that.

Charnley: In the medical school?

Martin: Medical school sometimes, or even, it seems I went over to L_____ for something once. Couple of other things that I can't remember. Lately, maybe I've gotten so old, they've kind of forgotten about me.

[Laughter] Nothing special. We used to get an invite. Who did that? What's his name, when he was interim president.

Charnley: Gordon Guyer?

Martin: Gordon Guyer. Well, before Gordon, too. They used to bring us old guys back once a year for a dinner.

Charnley: Former trustees?

Martin: Yes. I think John DiBiaggio did that. It must have died after John left. At one time, the president used to invite the former trustees back for a ball game.

Charnley: They don't do that anymore. Tickets are too hard to come by. Are you a season ticket-holder now?

Martin: Yes. They give us season tickets to basketball, football, and hockey. I go to some of them, but my sons usually go. I've got two sons who are thirty-one, and they love to go.

Charnley: So you kept up with athletics. This weekend obviously with the Final Four coming up.

Martin: Yes. Wish I could go down to the that. But I can't make it. I did go Thursday night, when they played Syracuse.

Charnley: In Auburn?

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: The spirit was there, for sure. An interesting perspective from your experience as an athlete, as a professional man, also some great success in academics. What do you see today? Is there a balance that student athletes have to make, or what are some of the special problems that you see?

Martin: Well, the student athlete, in my day, especially those that played on teams, intercollegiate teams, they would encourage them to take lighter loads during the season so they could keep up. But it requires a little extra effort to try to balance those two, because the athletics takes up a ton of team. You know, those coaches think you have nothing to do but play ball. Matter of fact, the coaches were very instrumental in, at least my education, they would always encourage us to do, because you have to, keep up a certain level. But it's not easy, but it's been done.

Charnley: I had Tekoe Duckett [phonetic] as a student. He was an excellent student. The only thing is he missed a few classes because of press conferences. [Laughter]

Martin: [unclear]. He's a great guy.

[Begin Tape 2, Side 1]

Charnley: This is tape two. We were talking about intercollegiate athletics and the balance that student athletes have to make between their academics and their sports. Do you have any words, in looking back on your career here at Michigan State, would you encourage people to come here? What's your view about this institution?

Martin: Well, I figure it's the greatest institution in the world. We have a wonderful facility. We offer a lot. You've got it all right here. I've had the opportunity to meet some wonderful people. We've been fortunate to have some good administrators. I think it's the greatest.

Charnley: Did any of your children go here?

Martin: Yes, they did. One of my sons graduated undergrad here, and then he went to Syracuse law school. He did very well. But the little guys, I don't know where they're going. I think he graduated in political science or something.

Charnley: In looking back at your whole career here at Michigan State on the board and as an athlete and as a student, what do you think was most important to you personally?

Martin: The most important thing to me was getting a good education. I had heard that a lot as a youngster. I didn't really realize how important that was until after I was gone. But when I was in graduate school and in dental school, I didn't have many problems at all because of my background here, and some of the people I was associated with that taught me how to study, taught me how to think. But later on in life, when you look back on it, you say, "Man, those people really did me a favor. They really did." It was a great background I got here. Some of the people, I wish I could remember the names of some of the professors. They were very instrumental in whatever success I've had.

Charnley: You took it to heart.

Martin: Yes.

Charnley: I'd like to suggest that to students. They don't take it to heart.

Martin: But you know, one of the things I learned in football and academics is that there's no substitute for hard work. There's just no such thing as a free lunch. You've got to do it.

Charnley: Few shortcuts to a good education.

Martin: But believe me, it pays off. It really does.

Charnley: One of the things that we've asked many of the interviewees in the project is if you had suggestions of people that you think--obviously we're trying to interview the presidents and the board members and that sort of thing, but is there somebody that you know of that's still living that really would be a good interview, one of those that we'd really be remiss in not trying to get? Anyone that comes to mind? It was, in fact, Walter Adams' death that got us started again saying, "We waited too long. We should have done this earlier." So does anyone come to mind that you've worked closely with?

Martin: Well, you know, one of the things I didn't mention that I was instrumental in trying to accomplish was things to do with minority affairs. Minority enrollment, minority hiring, and all that. I was really involved in those kinds of things. When I think about some of the people that I worked with and who were instrumental in giving me information, and trying to do what we could to try to get minorities involved at all levels at the university, Dr. Robert Green comes to mind. Dr. Joseph MacMillan [phonetic], I think he may be retired now, but he was down at the

University of Louisville for many years after he left here. Dr. Thomas Gunnings. They got involved in some things early on that kind of gave an impetus to some things.

We started the College of Urban Development, which I guess is a school now. But I remember Warren Huff was in my house, and maybe a couple other trustees, and we decided to allocate some money to start it. There was like a million and a half dollars, I think. We arrived at that decision in my basement. We didn't have enough votes yet. [Laughter]

Charnley: Started the process.

Martin: Right. Then we ended up hiring Ralph Bonner as human relations director. Dr. Donald Coleman was involved in a lot of the impetus that we had in this area.

Charnley: When you first came, there weren't many African-Americans on campus.

Martin: No. In fact, we all used to get together Friday afternoons at the Union, play cards. Most of the African-Americans were football players. I don't think that's quite true, but there wasn't very many.

Charnley: So you saw the change in your tenure as a board member.

Martin: Yes we did. When I see folks like Bobby Williams as the coach, I think of all the years we tried to get a black coach. We ended up getting Jim Bibbs. I think he was our first black coach. Matter of fact, he may have been the first black head coach in the Big Ten.

Charnley: Sherm Louis wasn't here as a coach; he was here as a player.

Martin: He was here as a player. I don't know whether I was still on the board when he was coaching. He may have been coaching, because he came back as a coach.

Charnley: Assistant?

Martin: Assistant. Right.

Charnley: What do you think about the football prospects for this year coming up?

Martin: They've done very well. I'm excited.

Charnley: Newspaper accounts, the players seem to respond to Williams' style.

Martin: Yes. He'll do all right.

Charnley: I want to thank you very much for your time and your contributions.

Martin: I wish I could have remembered more.

Charnley: You remembered a lot. On behalf of the program, I'd like to thank you very much.

Martin: You're quite welcome.

[End of interview]

Index

Adams, Walter 12-14, 35, 40
 Anderson, Forest V. 3

 Bibbs, Jim 41
 Blanchard, Jim 29
 Bonner, Ralph 41
 Breslin Student Events Center 20, 22
 Bruff, John B. 19

 Cantlon, John 27
 Carr, Lee 35
 Coleman, Donald 41
 College of Nursing 25
 College of Urban Development 41
 Conyers, Nathan 14

 Daugherty, Duffy 3, 5, 20, 21
 DiBiaggio, John A. 33, 37
 Dunn, Jerry 31

 Fishman, Sam 29
 Furick, Jim 8

 Green, John 3
 Green, Robert 40
 Gunnings, Thomas 40
 Guyer, Gordon 37

 Hannah, John A. 10, 11, 18, 22
 Harden, Edgar L. 24
 Harlan, C. Allen 11
 Huff, Warren M. 11, 12, 24, 41

 Jenison Fieldhouse 2, 20

 Kellogg Center 24
 Kenny, Jack 28

 Louis, Sherm 41

 Mackey, M. Cecil 24, 27, 29, 33
 MacMillan, Joseph 40
 Michigan Dental Association 27
 Michigan State University
 African-Americans on campus 41
 Minority affairs 40
 Student unrest 17

Peaks, Clarence 4

Quill, Lawrence 6

Scarborough, Charlie 26

Smith, Bert 20

Spartan Village 7

State News 28

Stevens, Don 10, 12, 15

Stolz, Benny 19

Tent City 17

University College 25

University of Detroit 8

Vincent, Charlie 32

Wharton Center for Performing Arts 22

Wharton, Clifton R., Jr. 14-17, 19, 22, 23, 27, 29

White, Clare 11, 12

Williams, Bobby 41

Williams, G. Mennen 15

Young, Coburn 32