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GEORGE AXINN

July 22, 2003

Jeff Charnley,
interviewer

Charnley: Today is Tuesday, July 22, the year 2003. We're on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing. I'm Professor Jeff Charnley, interviewing Dr. George Axinn for the MSU Oral History Project for the sesquicentennial of Michigan State to be commemorated in the year 2005.

As you can see, Dr. Axinn, we have a tape recorder for this session today. Do you give us permission to record this interview?

Axinn: I certainly do.

Charnley: I'd like to start first with a little personal background, and then educational and professional before you came to Michigan State. Where were you born and raised, and where did you go to school prior to college?

Axinn: I was born and raised in the state of New York. My memorable youth was all on this small farm in Ulster County, New York, and I might point out that one day I was driving a tractor on the field, and we had a road that went right through our farm. It was in the hills, a small hill farm, and a car drove by, somebody I didn't know, and my father was there, and he

was talking to him. I was going back and forth in the field with one eye on them, and what the man asked my father, said, "Does your son really want to be a farmer when he grows up?"

And he said, "Yes, he talks like he does."

And he says, "Well, then you ought to send him to Cornell [University], because that way he'll learn how to be a farmer."

And frankly, I hadn't thought much about higher education then at all. But, yes, I went to Cornell University and studied agriculture.

Charnley: Who was the man?

Axinn: I never saw him again. I have no clue what his name was or why he—

Charnley: He was an Extension agent or something?

Axinn: We had a county Extension agent. We were far away from the city of Kingston where 4-H things were, and I did raise chickens to show in the show there. There were no 4-H clubs in our valley. It was a narrow valley, high up in the mountains. I got very much involved with 4-H, and some later things, if you wish to hear about.

Charnley: Sure. Was this western New York?

Axinn: Central New York. The Hudson River runs right on one edge of Ulster County, and then the county goes west from there. It was out of that experience that I went to study agriculture.

Charnley: How would you describe your farm?

Axinn: Two hundred and sixty acres, mostly hills, much of it untillable, which you would keep cattle on. A small mixed farm, and that tractor was the first one we had. For a while we had a homemade tractor, and before that, we had a horse. I had a brother who really had no interest in that. By then, he was a student at the University of Pennsylvania. But together, we talked our father into buying a tractor, and he gave us all the reasons why it was better to have a horse than to have a tractor, and we tried to convince him.

Many years later, here at Michigan State, I was trying to convince the dean of the College of Agriculture that we should have electric typewriters for our courses, and he was absolutely against it. He thought our secretaries could just sit at the keys and whatnot, and I told him this little story, and he was furious. So now I've told it again. I said he was just like my father. He did not want to get rid of the horse.

Charnley: That's interesting. What kind of tractor was that?

Axinn: It was a Ford Ferguson with a hydraulic lift on the back, very nice for me. I used to mow people's orchards in addition to ours, and things of that sort with it.

Charnley: Was your father pleased after he saw what it could do?

Axinn: Yes, I think so, but he was worried that I was going to do some damage with it, you know, cut off my fingers or some other more serious damage. But, you know, it wasn't just agricultural engineering; we milked only a few cows, sometimes down to four, sometimes up to six, and we ran the milk through a cream separator, and my mother made butter, and we sold milk to our neighbors in bottles. It wasn't pasteurized. I picked the flies off the top before I closed the bottles. And later—I don't know whether you want to skip to that, but my wife's family had a much larger farm close to Cornell. There I was milking ninety cows twice a day with their machine, but not like the modern machines you have in a modern dairy with all highly automated machines. It was hand—put the machines on and take them off.

Charnley: A lot of labor.

Axinn: Yes. Well, you know, ninety cows. That means you have to bend down and wash the udder, and then you put the milking machine on, then you get down again and check it, and then you're actually taking four deep-knee bends, plus cow, times ninety cows, times twice a day, times seven days a week.

When we finished, my wife and I—we got married when we were sophomores at Cornell. I'd already joined the United States Navy, and they were about to ship me out. Anyway, after the war, I worked there part-time while I was finishing my degree at Cornell, and her father wanted me to stay, because the poor man had no sons. And after all these deep-knee bends, Cornell University offered me a job at the Geneva Agricultural Experiment Station in a place

called Geneva, New York, north of there, as their assistant editor. I had edited the *Cornell Countrymen*, a student magazine, and switched my major back and forth among many subjects, but agricultural journalism was one of them. So we had a choice of staying on the farm or going up there and writing, and I chose journalism.

Charnley: Interesting. When did you start Cornell?

Axinn: 1943.

Charnley: So you went in the service after the war already started.

Axinn: While I was there, they came through enlisting people for the United States Navy, and I signed up in the United States Navy Air Training Program, but at that time they had too many people. They had groups at every campus like they did at this one, so they sent me back to Cornell for a few more semesters till they were ready, and then I started their training program, and then the war ended. So that ended, too, and I went to Guam. Went to several Pacific islands and then went to Guam, where they were looking for somebody who was untrained, had no rank, no nothing, but knew how to type. So I became a yeoman in the navy and had a very unglorious career.

Then in those days they had a point system that you could get discharged. I mean, the war ended. When I got to Guam, the war was just ending, and our problem was getting rid of all the tremendous equipment and a lot of relieved persons, because we were prepared for the invasion of Japan, which we never had to do. Anyway, I don't know if any of this is relevant.

Charnley: Of course. As I said, many of the people we've interviewed have had World War II experience and that sort of thing. So was that the farthest you'd been from home in terms of the travel that you did associated with that, with your military service to that point?

Axinn: Yes, really. My family had traveled to Florida once for a vacation, but getting to the Pacific islands was a very different world for me, and I really liked it there. I wrote about Guam and the things on the island. The navy had a hometown news service there, so I was writing articles for them that they would send to somebody's hometown newspaper. It's not like the open journalism we've had in more recent combat situations. So what I was doing for them was writing stories about people who were there, for their hometown newspapers to say how great it was to have one of your boys still in the United States Navy.

Charnley: What rank did you finish when you got out?

Axinn: I was a yeoman third class, bottom of the barrel.

Charnley: In reflecting, where were you when you heard the news of the end of the war, at least in the war against Japan? Do you remember when you heard the news?

Axinn: I was in the navy. I was at Floyd Bennett Field in New York, and my wife was there with me. We heard the news and went to Times Square to celebrate with a lot of other people. I had a brother. He was in the army in Europe, and he was in Sicily and then in Italy, and then he

had already been done [unclear], because that war had ended earlier and he had already been back to the States.

Charnley: And then after the war, you went back to Cornell?

Axinn: After the war, we went back to Cornell and finished. I had changed my major a couple of times, but I was working editing the *Cornell Countrymen*, which was the Ag College magazine, and taking classes in journalism, also. My journalism prof got me a job with an ad agency in Ithaca, so I was also working weekends, interviewing farmers and visiting farms and writing stories for their local Farm Bureau. We it called it Farm Bureau then, before it became Extension.

Anyway, my wife graduated a little bit ahead of me, because she hadn't missed the years that I was in the Pacific, and went to work in Extension there in Tompkins County, which is the county that Cornell was in. And my prof in animal husbandry, it was called then, had arranged an assistantship for me out at Iowa, where there was a professor who was really good in my interest, which was animal breeding. But then Cornell offered me this job at the Agricultural Experiment Station, which was mostly horticulture. Never had a course in horticulture, but I learned a lot there. I learned that Michigan State was a great place because our director and many of the others had come from Michigan State.

Anyway, I can go on chronologically, if you wish.

Charnley: The cross-fertilization is interesting, where people from Cornell came here.

Axinn: Cornell and Michigan State have had an exchange of people since before I was born.

Charnley: Liberty Hyde Bailey.

Axinn: Liberty Hyde Bailey was the dean really before I got to Cornell. Although later, at one time, my wife and I sat in at an evening session with him, sat on the floor literally, while he sat in his chair, and a dozen or so of us just hung on every word. Liberty had a ~~[unclear]~~ very- that was really great. Later I visited his home here and other things. Ulysses P. Hedrick, who was head of our hort[iculture] department here, then went to Cornell; spent a long time there as director of that experiment station at Geneva.

But after a couple of years there, the University of Maryland offered me a job there, doing similar work @ the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Extension Service, editing all of their publications. So I went there to do that, and a little radio besides, and I did that for a year or so.

Then the University of Delaware right next door, they had a one-man information kind of bureau, and I was asked to go there and replace him. So then I started writing a daily column for the Sunday paper and the news releases for the weekly papers of the state, a daily radio program when tape recorders were much newer than the beautiful one you've got. I used a wire recorder when I was in the navy. But than we switched from wire to tape, and it was all reel-to-reel tape, but I got a portable one and I used to—since the *Delaware Farm and Home Hour* was on five days a week at 12:30 noon on WDEL, which is the NBC station for there. Although in those days, we had more strict traditions than we have today in terms of avoiding—we were sponsored

by a bank, who put an institutional announcement at the beginning, at the end, and everything else had nothing commercial in it.

But I traveled all over the state of Delaware. The state of Delaware has only three counties; it's not a big thing. So for some years I traveled all over that state every day, made tape recordings interviewing farmers and covering the 4-H events of the state, and county fairs in each county. We would do our program as a remote. In those days, it was very untechnical compared to now, to do remote broadcasting with the cooperation of local telephone companies. But I think with some pressure from my good wife, Nancy Wixton [phonetic] Axinn, who had grown up on a dairy farm and was heavily involved, she'd been an Extension agent in two counties in New York—

Charnley: What was her field of study at Cornell?

Axinn: At Cornell it was home economics, and home management was her main thing. But she said, "If you're going to stay working for universities, you've got to get a ~~[unclear]~~ degree." University of Wisconsin had a master's degree program in agricultural journalism, so at a certain point—and I was taking courses. Even at Maryland, I usually took one course each semester.

Then I went to Wisconsin. We went there for a year, a little less than a year. By that time we had one little daughter, and lived in grad student housing off of the campus and rode through the snow every day. It was a good experience, and a fine department, and I completed this degree, went back to the University of Delaware, changed the unit, its name, to the Department of Rural Communication, the first such department in the world, to say nothing of the U.S.A., which was one of my many creative failures in this. After I left there, they changed

it to something else. In fact, they changed it back to where it was before, and no other university picked up on that great idea. So we had [unclear] College of Communication.

As another year or so went by, I was very busy, because I was in my office writing in the mornings. At noontime, did this broadcast. I would take a sandwich in the car and go someplace in the state, and it was such a small state, I could go to every county in that very day, making tapes and whatnot, writing. It was exciting.

Then our NBC station, WDEL, started television. It was black and white, like stick figures walking around.

Charnley: This was the early fifties?

Axinn: Yes, this was about '49, '50, maybe '51. I could look it up, if you want. I have my CV here.

But I went to see the station manager and said, "You know, you ought to have a farm program on your television station."

He said, "Well, how much would it cost?"

"It wouldn't cost you anything, except [unclear] to get us some time."

So one evening a week—they were only broadcast three evenings then, I think, like from five to nine or something like that, and so we started the *Farm Television* program. I'm the first man in the world to ever milk a cow live on television. We made a table about the size of this one that we're sitting at, about four by eight, with wheels under it and a box on top with glass sides, and made a garden into that, so we could do seasonal gardening things. And we could grow the garden outside. We couldn't go outside the studio.

Anyway, in about late 1952, Michigan State, right here in the EE Building, they were setting up a little studio. They couldn't broadcast; they weren't on the air, but they were making kinescope recordings, and the Colleges of Agriculture and Home Economics said that they needed to get somebody in Extension who would work on television, and get them on the air in television.

So, one thing led to another, and we came out here. Went to the Kellogg Center, was a brand-new hotel. Couldn't believe, my wife and I, that there was a hotel right on the campus with such modern stuff in it. And had some interviews on the campus, and they asked me to come immediately, so we could start.

Well, I was also teaching. I taught two course there in my Department of Rural Communication, and the semesters were a little bit different. The semester didn't end till January then. Christmas vacation was during it, and the first of February was the first of the next semester, so I agreed to come on the first of February. And on the first of February 1953, I came back for my—I'm going to say second visit. I had visited before, because in the intervening years I had visited most of the land-grant colleges that you could go to.

We had an association which lasts, I guess, till now, of agricultural college editors, and they would meet at one campus each summer. And so starting in 1947, I guess I went to all of those kind of things and was active in that. So I'd been to Michigan State a couple of times. I knew Lowell Priestor [phonetic], who was head of the information services department here then, and Earl Richardson, who was the agriculture-in-charge.

Anyway, so I came here and started producing recorded television programs, and we sent them here and there around the state. We started a new series after about six months called *Country Crossroads*, which we did once a week, in addition to producing, writing, and

everything else. We did have a director, and I was the emcee of that thing, and we had people from both colleges, doing demonstrations of one thing or another. I can remember a lot more about that, but I think we'd be wasting your time.

Charnley: No, no, no, not at all, because that's obviously—this was before WKAR, right?

Axinn: Yes, yes, before WKAR went on. We, the university, was working on WKAR. We had WKAR Radio and they were broadcasting from the auditorium in some little studios there. Occasionally they interviewed me there just to find out what television was and what its impact was going to be on agriculture and whatnot. I was very excited about it, too.

Back in Delaware when we started, nobody in the College of Agriculture at the University of Delaware had a television receiver. So my wife and I had to buy a little RCA black-and-white receiver, where all we had was black and white then. And on the Thursdays when our program was on the air, most of the college faculty and wives would come to our little apartment to watch, especially if their husband was on the air that day.

Charnley: On the big screen.

Axinn: Yes. Then when we came here, we still had small screens and we had just black and white. But the director, a guy named Les Fishhof [phonetic], who worked for the TV thing in the EE Building now, it's the Computer Center, he used to come to our house every night because we still had that. We would watch other people on television, you see, and get ideas of what to do and how to make our show creative and such things.

But then in addition to that, in the College of Agriculture, they needed some training for county Extension people, and also the stations. They were just coming new on the air. We had one, and then two in Lansing. They got one in Grand Rapids and they got one in Traverse City, and so as part of our Extension responsibility, I found myself going to those places, helping them see how you set up a studio and how do you do those kinds of things, and working with the county Extension staff, trying to convince them that, you know, it does work. People will watch it when you get going. But then they were writing articles for their newspapers and doing radio broadcasts, a lot of them, so we set up a communication training center in Ag Hall, and that was really a one-man thing at that time that I did.

I went out to Iowa because I was doing things for the College of Home Economics as well as Agriculture, but we decided we need really a home economist. WOI, at Ames, was already on the air. We were still talking about WKAR, and they had a home economics show, and I went out and saw it one time, and Margaret McKeegan [phonetic] was doing it, and Michigan State employed Margaret, so she came, and we then had a two-person team here. Margaret McKeegan later married Ken Whitehair [phonetic], who was a veterinarian, and they stayed in East Lansing for a long, long time.

Anyway, we were producing television and doing the communication training, traveling all over the state in that Extension capacity. And then in the old cafeteria, which was used during World War II, a very large Quonset building with small Quonsets around it, MSU—MSC [Michigan State College], I guess—just we were becoming MSU. That was about 1956, '57. I can't remember exactly.

The studio and everything moved out of the EE Building to that place, not exactly soundproof, because we then went on the air, and our program then was five nights a week, like,

I think it was 6:30 to 7:00. The news was at 6:00 to 6:30; and then we were 6:30 to 7:00. And I think the first night it rained. Well, when the rain hits the roof of the Quonset building, if you're concerned at all about sound and sound quality, that was—and we were learning a lot. You know, we had microphones, not pinned to people then. We had them on booms, trying to get to the right place, keep them out of the picture, but allow them. And I learned a lot about television.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture was also interested, and so they came out and watched our productions, and we made a film for other colleges of agriculture and home economics—now human ecology—on how to do that kind of television. The U.S. Department of Agriculture then distributed it to all the other colleges, but it was produced here.

Charnley: Does the university have that film, a copy of it?

Axinn: I don't know how good our archiving is, you know. This was 16-mm film, and all of our programs were produced on that. When we recorded it all, we recorded on that with the kinescope recorder. We didn't have tape, which means everything on the air was live, and whatever you did wrong on the air was still on the air live. It was a great experience. Anyway, I was getting into these other things. We then employed one of the assistant deans in the College of Agriculture. Dick Swenson [phonetic] became the on-the-air host, so I was usually producing, arranging different faculty members to do demonstrations of one thing or another, and Dick Swenson was the on-the-air emcee. I was in the control booth then all the time as the producer, with a couple different directors. We had an art person, too, with sets and props and things like that.

Charnley: Were there any particularly memorable ones that just stick out in your mind, that succeeded?

Axinn: Well, you know, success is hard to measure, although we were then doing—I had done my master's thesis on audience research, or audience listenership to radio when I was still in Delaware, and we were kind of keeping some track of whatever success was.

But one show that I particularly remember was what we called the Picnic Show. It was in springtime and we were focusing on outdoor kind of things. The studio was on the third floor, I guess—third or fourth, I'm not sure—of the EE Building, and the Red Cedar River is running right by. So we had one scene in that, in which the ducks went by the river. We had one camera. We had to take the camera on the tripod down the elevator with the cord out the window to reconnect it. These were big clumsy cameras compared to what you have now. We had the former dean of the College of Agriculture read a poem, sitting on the bank, about fishing, "Don't Let the Fishing Spoil a Good Fishing Day." And as he did it, somebody said, "Cue the ducks," which means they threw bread crumbs on the water, so they would run down, and the ducks followed it down, and the ducks went right through our scene. And that was one of the plusses of that, one minus to demonstrate our amateurism.

We had another scene where some people are sitting around a campfire, talking and cooking things and discussing whatever the subject was. I think it was safety in pit making, how to keep from getting burned, how to keep from ruining the food, etc. The fire was artificial. There was a red light under some red paper, and some logs over the top and whatnot. And off to one side we had a tree stump, which was really an old footstool with papier-mâché on it, made to

look like a tree stump, and here our faculty member, who was giving this discussion to some other people who he couldn't see that well, sitting on the tree stump, cooking his thing. But what they had done is made a little fire there, a safe, indoor kind of fire, and it got hot. At one time he took the tree stump and moved it back about a foot, and the director shouted, "There goes our verisimilitude," whatever the word was. Because you can't move the tree stump, that shoots the whole thing.

Anyway, we were amateurs. We were having a lot of fun. We learned a lot, and that was before we went on the air that I remember that one. Those *Country Crossroads* broadcasts we issued each week. We could only afford to make two copies of it, and we would send them by mail to two stations, who then sent them by mail to two other stations, and then sent them by mail to two other stations. Usually, after two or three weeks, we'd get them back, and then we kept them in Ag Hall in the basement, where my office was, copies of all of those. And WKAR, when it went on the air, was keeping copies of those things, too. What they have now in the archive, anywhere, I have no idea.

Charnley: Those first two stations, you remember where they were? Was one in Grand Rapids and one, was it WOD?

Axinn: Yes, WOD was in Grand Rapids. There was one in—K something. KZO, maybe.

Charnley: KZO, Kalamazoo.

Axinn: And then in Traverse City, there was another one.

Charnley: But nothing local?

Axinn: Well, there were stations locally.

Charnley: WJIM.

Axinn: WJIM was on the air before us, and maybe one other. And they used our kinescope recordings also. But then we went on the air, things changed a little bit, because we sort of became competition. We weren't competing for their advertisers, but we were competing for their time, and also, recording was expensive, you know. We didn't have lots of money in making these films, and when we went on the air, in a sense we didn't have to do that. And some of those broadcasts were probably recorded. But by the time we had tape, I was no longer doing that, because I was already training Extension personnel all over the state and doing other things.

Durwood B. Varner, "Woody" Varner, was our director of Extension during those days. He hired an associate director called Paul A. Miller, who came from the sociology department. And then President [John A.] Hannah appointed and the board appointed Woody as the vice president for off-campus affairs, and Paul Miller became the director of Extension, and he wanted an assistant to the director, I guess, and so I joined his office to be the assistant to the director. Later during that period, thanks to the Kellogg Foundation, I went to the University of Wisconsin, finished my Ph.D., and when I came back, they made me associate director.

Charnley: What year did you finish your Ph.D.?

Axinn: I really finished everything in '57, even a book on communication, but the university said, "You haven't been here long enough to give you a degree, so we'll give it to you next year." We finished all the exams and everything, and they said, "Your dissertation has to be dated 1958," and I was disappointed. I came back here and I was talking to a colleague in Ag Hall, complaining, and he said, "George, you're a fool. If you wait ten years from now, and it's dated '58, yours will be a more recent Ph.D. and it will be better. So you're ahead."

I came back and forgot all about that, and worked with Paul Miller for several years as associate director. Then Woody Varner was sent by the university to Oakland to start Oakland University. He was its first—they called him the chancellor or vice chancellor or something like that, and then he went to [University of] Nebraska, I guess, to become the president. And then Paul Miller—we had a vice president for off-campus affairs and a vice president for on-campus affairs. You know, we had Floyd Reeves [phonetic] here, a great gentleman who had been at the University of Chicago for a long time, in education, and he had come here as President Hannah's sort of personal advisor, and he also was in the education college. He taught—

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Charnley: This is side two. We were talking, when the tape ended, about Floyd Reeves. ~~**Error! Bookmark not defined.**~~

Axinn: Yes. Floyd Reeves had been at the University of Chicago for a long time, knew a lot about administration, and had worked very closely with the federal government. When John Hannah worked out the potential of how to do the point system and the discharge of people at the end of World War II, because he was working on personnel with the government part-time then, Floyd Reeves was the one who actually laid out the details of it.

Floyd Reeves, when they decided to have a Tennessee Valley Authority, he was the one who did the administrative design and worked in the top administration of TVA for a long time. He knew a lot about higher education and its administration, and John Hannah brought him here when we got the idea of general education, decided that everybody needed a general education, before this building was built for that purpose some years later. We started the—Was it called the University College?

Charnley: Basic College.

Axinn: Basic College, yes, and it was Floyd Reeves who was the leader of that exercise of forming the Basic College.

John Hannah was a visionary—we can talk more about him, if you want—but he thought ahead. He wanted to have television here when most universities thought, you know, you teach face-to-face, and it'll spoil it if you start doing it on television, and television will compete. If people watch television, they won't be going to school. Their fears were very negative. But he could see the possibility, which was why I got into television, and he could see a lot of other things in the future. He thought very broadly, but he also brought in technical experience, people to help do the various things. He had brought Floyd Reeves for that purpose.

And now I've backed up a little bit. When I first came here in information services, my arrangement was at Extension that if I would be allowed to take some courses toward a Ph.D., I'd come. Otherwise I could stay in Delaware. The big advantage of coming here was not the greatness within Michigan State College, which was still pretty great. But my Delaware friends kidded me. "You'd leave the university to go to a college?" and things like that.

But Michigan State College said, "Yes, we have a rule here, if you're a full-time working faculty member, you can take one course each semester," which is not a lot of courses, if they're averaging three credits each. And I did that all the years that I was talking about doing these other things, and then I would take one in the summer, and sometimes do one ahead, back register and various things. But I took Floyd Reeves's course, which was excellent, and some others.

Then the Kellogg Foundation was really concerned about the Cooperative Extension Service, as it has been for many years, and they said, "You're hiring people to be the directors of your Extension Services who don't know much about administration, and they don't know much about higher education, and a lot of other things like that; and most of them did good work in the county someplace, and got well known, got a little political help, you made them Extension director. We ought to have some kind of program to really prepare people to be directors of Cooperative Extension Services in the various states."

So they set up a program, which was headquartered at the University of Wisconsin, and gave fellowships, and that fell very nicely into my long-range thinking. Paul Miller, maybe with some reluctance, although he's also a great leader—he's down at Columbia, Missouri, at the University of Missouri now, where he's retired—he agreed. "Okay, we can get along without you for a year."

I'd collected a lot of credits, fortunately, in the CIC, or the Big Ten, as it's more generally known. You could change credits back and forth anywhere, so I went to the University of Wisconsin for one more year, and finished that Ph.D. That's why we had the timing thing I mentioned earlier, because they transferred all my Michigan State credits there, and I became a full-time student for the first time in my life, which was a great experience. And when I finished my dissertation, I had it bound in black. I cut out the K from [Kellogg's] Special K, which was a new cereal then, and pasted it on the cover, and gave one to the Kellogg people.

Charnley: Did you know Russ ~~Mobey~~ Mawby [phonetic] then?

Axinn: Yes. Russ was doing some television as the on-the-air person in the kinescope recording days when he was in the ag econ department as a grad student before I came. And then when we started the live television, he did some emceeing for us. Then when I was the associate director of Extension, we decided we were going to have an assistant director for agriculture and one for home economics and one for youth and one for marketing, which was a thing which grew, and one for which is now resource development. Russ was the assistant director for youth and 4-H, which then was called the state 4-H leader. So we were close colleagues for several years.

In those days, Paul Miller was our outside man. He got the money, did the public relations, and George did personnel management and program development, and that lasted for several years, until Paul Miller became the first provost. Different from later provosts. He went to the library and he looked up *provost*. One question—how do you—some people said "provo" and some people said "provo" and some people had other things. And he spent a week there. He

was a scholar type. I remember that week, because that was the week that all the calls that came to Extension, especially since people had heard the director was leaving and they wanted to know what was going on, I had to take them for him because he was in the library.

He went through the stacks—it was the old library, which is now a museum—and as a scholar, he studied the literature of the administration of higher education, much of it from England, some of it from the United States, and found out what should a provost do? As far as I know, he's the only provost who did that. At least the next couple, they thought they were anointed as a provost. When they were chosen, it was like somebody had touched their head with magic wine, and they all knew how to do it. I'm not going to say any more about future provosts after that. But Paul was a very creative, vigorous provost, who really related to the faculty and saw that as his main job.

The main reason for having a provost, I think, was to look at the budget and see that the academic side has a role in it as well as the other parts of the university. Paul Miller used to have meetings in his office with faculty members on some topic, and there usually were so many, we were sitting on the floor on the carpet, discussing the evolution of the child education program, the changes in timing of things, the transition to the—you know, we were in quarters then. Semesters came later, but it was discussed.

One of his big projects was the changing of the name of home economics to human ecology, which was not an easy thing to do. But it wasn't just a name change; they were concerned about ecology and the ecological movement long before some of the present popularity of the ecosystem came into effect. Managing families in an ecosystem was something that home economics was teaching already. Beatrice Palluchi [phonetic] was a great leader in

that field, and she produced a book or two on the ecological approaches to family life and to home management.

Anyway, Paul Miller was the administrator, creative administrator, if you will, who convinced the other deans that it was all right to do that, and there were many other things that I really don't remember well enough to know, and he became a very dynamic and creative leader of that.

In those days we had Continuing Education Service and Cooperative Extension Service, two different, separate administrative units, continuing education headquartered in the Kellogg Center. Woody Varner had started working toward some kind of a collaborative and merger thing. I think it was when he was the vice president. We set up that every college had one person who was sort of an assistant to the assistant to the dean for continuing education, and so there were weekly meetings of people from every college in the Kellogg Center, and I was the representative from the College of Agriculture and Natural Science, which was then was just the College of Agriculture, although under natural resources. We had the resource development-type departments going.

But those were things where John Hannah could see ahead that you had to do more. And Paul Miller then became the one to really implement that, and so we changed responsibilities. We had a person in Grand Rapids who was in charge for that part of Michigan of continuing education and Cooperative Extension, another one for the Upper Peninsula, and I think two others in other parts of the state. But, you know, the Farm Bureau, and ~~[unclear]~~ the Michigan Livestock Exchange, and the other groups, who politically were sort of defending the tradition that they and I grew up in. You know, 4-H was for farmer kids.

We had an office Extension in the city of Detroit for a long time, but having programs for urban people, for urban kids, and then by that time we had one member of our board of trustees who was a labor union representative. Well, I think the thing that was called Extension was changing to a university-wide, off-campus service thing to carry on educational—television in a way fit right into that, because, you know, we didn't have any boundaries in our relationships, and helping the other stations was, from the very beginning, even before we went on the air, part of the MSU responsibility in television.

But when Paul Miller became the provost, I think the political pressure on President Hannah, who was very astute politically as well as creative educationally. I mean, in those days he would go to the nominating conventions of both the Democratic and Republican Party, and make sure that both of them nominated a friend or alum of MSU as their candidate, and one of them always got elected, or two of them got elected. They might be for either party, but they were our friends, and he did a lot of other things of that sort. It became clearer to him that we really have to get a straight-line aggie as our Extension director, so he chose Pat Ralston [phonetic], who was then head of the dairy department, a very fine gentleman. He became the director of it, and we did some shuffling around.

I became the director of a thing called the Institute for Extension Personnel Development. I guess I was associate director of Extension then, and personnel was my main concern as it had been before, but then training new people. In Ag Hall we had a one-person unit, and we gave master's degrees to Extension agents, dozens of them. I'm now recycling the paper, unfortunately, with a few tears, of people who got their master's degrees during those years. There were lots of them. Had Extension agents coming from the county to do a master's degree,

and the goal was to have them really broaden their vision, and see a lot of things that they hadn't thought about.

Charnley: So they did on-campus study?

Axinn: They did on-campus study for one year. They would get their master's degree, and they all had to do a thesis, so it took them a whole year usually, and sometimes a little more. County Extension personnel came from many other states as well, and that was a really exciting adventure for me. I learned a lot. Actually, you know, Michigan State has been teaching me and training me for fifty years, because it was about February 1st of 1953, and I got to be seventy years old before February 1st of 2003, and so about five years before—seven years ago now—I really retired, and I became professor emeritus. If you're trying to do this chronologically, I'm skipping way ahead.

Charnley: That's all right. You said the university has been educating you.

Axinn: Yes. I have been learning from, and I have a great debt to the individuals and to the philosophy of it. And that brings me back to Hannah, you know. The other day someone was asking me in international studies and programs, how did Michigan State get involved? What was the driving force? And I said, "Number one, John A. Hannah; number two, John A. Hannah; number three." And there were some others. Floyd Reeves was one of them, and Paul Miller, when he became provost, was very much interested in international studies and programs.

Charnley: How about Glen Taggert [phonetic]?

Axinn: Well, he was employed then. Glen Taggert was working for the United States Department of Agriculture. They had a thing called OFAR, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations. In World War II, they were very busy working in places like Turrialba in Costa Rica, and some other agricultural research locations in Latin America, because, you know, we had a shortage of sugar, for instance here, during the war. We had to bring food, tropical food mostly, from these neighbors in Latin America, and USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] was doing collaborative research with them in those years, focused mainly on the plantation crops where people like Dole could ship fruit to the mainland, or to the U.S.A.

Glen Taggert had worked with them over the years. He was a graduate of Utah State [University]. He has a Ph.D. at Wisconsin, and he was very much interested in international things. When Ezra Taft Benson became the Secretary of Agriculture, by then Glen had got high enough in their system that he was on the edge between professional appointees and political appointees.

Well, John Hannah had seen him one day and said, "You know, we have this rigorous, dynamic rural sociology program at Michigan State in the sociology department." It was still sociology and anthropology. "And you'd fit in nicely. If you'd ever want to come, let me know." He said, well, he was too busy; he didn't have time.

But when somebody from Benson's office came to see Glen Taggert and told him that, "We've decided to keep you, Glen," he realized he had gotten at that point where further appointments were going to be political. The gentleman left his office and, as he told it to me, as

soon as the door was closed, he picked up the phone and called John Hannah. And he said, "Are you still interested in somebody with my kind of international experience?"

And John said, "Right away."

So he came here, and he really taught and did research in Extension in the sociology department for some time—now my memory's not that good—a year maybe, maybe a little more. When then really the dean of international programs was started, Office of International Programs. Later we got changed to international studies and programs, and I guess it's still ISP. Yes, Glen Taggert had a lot of do with the organizing.

Both of them had connections with the Ford Foundation, and that's one thing, you know, and that an administrator for a public university has to spend a lot of time, obviously not exactly fundraising with the politicians, but keeping the politicians informed that things are good and they should support the university, but also in the foundation world and at other places where it was legitimate to get financial support. After his long successful career here, people at the Ford Foundation, Kellogg Foundation—Kellogg especially had great relationships with them—Rockefeller Foundation, those three particularly, they all knew John Hannah, and maybe not as much as me, but in general, they worshiped him.

So when he and Glen Taggert came to see them about an international dimension at Michigan State—we'd just become Michigan State University then—they were enthusiastic and they provided funds, which were very significant to this institution from then on.
Now, you know, it was about 1959 when I was walking across the campus with Glen Taggert, who was a colleague in sociology, and I was then working in the Extension with the Extension personnel development, very excited about my students and the other things there. And Glen

said, "President Hannah wants to see you. Do you mind if we take a shortcut and go by the—," what's now the old—

Charnley: Linton Hall?

Axinn: Linton Hall. He had an office up one long flight of stairs with a beautiful view of the circle. And I said, "Well, do we have to make an appointment or something like that?"

And he said, "No, I think he's expecting us."

I said, "What does he want to talk about?"

He said, "Let's wait till we get there."

I knew he'd been working in Nigeria, because at the last Extension conference in which I was involved in planning the program and managing it, he'd just been back from a very exciting visit to Nigeria to a site that he and Nnamdi Azikiwe, who had become the president of Nigeria—formerly, Nnamdi Azikiwe was the governor general of the eastern region, but Azikiwe had found a site as far as north and west as you could get in the eastern region of Nigeria, so as central as you could make it for that. And he wanted to start a university there and he invited President Hannah, and they talked—and this is two of them.

I'm reflecting one characteristic of John Hannah, different from some other academic and administrative leaders, was that he, himself, with his feet on the ground, went there. It's not like they cooked up a project someplace and wanted to send faculty over there to do something, or they cooked up a new department someplace. He listened a lot to the faculty. He knew the faculty very well.

Every year we had a reception on this campus at the Student Union, same building, a little smaller then. He and Mrs. Hannah were the receiving line, and each person, faculty member, and spouse. And from my very first year, when I walked through there, he'd call me by name. He'd say, "George, how are you? How are things going with the television?" in the early years. He knew what I was doing. When I started this Extension Personnel Development Institute that year—and I didn't say anything to him; I didn't know—he said, "How's the training of the Extension agents going? Is the Extension Personnel and Development Institute going to survive?" And everybody else in the line was the same way.

Anyway, so John Hannah was very instrumental in, you know, a lot of things, and he gave a on-hands leadership. But with his foundation connections, he was able to bring the ideas. While he was here, before the war ended, he had a faculty committee discussing international things, because what they were saying—and someplace in the International Center, if they haven't thrown it out, there were records of that committee, because they said, "Look. We have done a charitable thing, you know. We're educating students here at Michigan State College and Michigan Agricultural College and the University of Michigan, for that matter, to be citizens of Michigan, and good citizens. We're trying. But they don't know much about Indiana, or Illinois, even, and the rest of the world is just a blank." There were stories in the newspapers then, "The Americans went to a certain island to land and take the island, but they didn't know there were coral reefs. Their maps didn't show that. They got up on the coral reef, and the Japanese shot them all."

And they were saying in this faculty meeting, "Somehow, after the war, we have to do a better job of preparing our students to live in the world that they're going to have, which is international." They weren't using the word *globalization*, but they said, *international.*

Hannah understood that. He tied it to his Washington work, which was part-time—he was driving back and forth, flying back and forth—with the Defense Department, because then the point system for getting people out of the military and the whole G.I. Bill. I think Floyd Reeves drafted the first draft of the G.I. Bill.

Charnley: Really?

Axinn: Yes. And Hannah was very much involved with those kind of things, and so, you know, it wasn't just an accident that he tried to talk Glen Taggert into coming here. If you set up a new deanship, the first things all the other deans will tell you is, "It's a big mistake. You shouldn't do it. It's competition, you know."

Charnley: Sounds like the tractor and the horse story.

Axinn: Exactly. The other deans were not in favor of having a new dean, and I can say that for every—I wouldn't say that about the communications arts. I was much involved personally in that because of my communication background, and I was very interested, but, you know, everybody else said, "The English department can do that," or, "The American Thought and Language can do that. You don't need a College for Communication Arts."

But back to my story of international things. Because the Ford Foundation had given us money, you see, there was some clout available. So first, President Hannah, and, of course, Paul Miller also was involved—all three of them, really, were very much involved in that. So the

deans of department chairs knew that they had this thing up there, a new dean, a provost, and a president, all who wanted us to become more international.

But they had money, so they could say, "Okay. You've got a professor who's teaching three courses. We'll buy out his time for one-third of that to do international research," or international travel or international something. And they could say to the professor, "You know, if you go to Okinawa," one of our early projects, you know. First of all, we say to the dean, "We'll, of course, absorb his whole salary while he's gone, and that'll save you all of that money, and we will pay him his salary plus an overseas incentive allowance or something like that, plus we'll pay all the costs of his travel back and forth. If he wants to take his family, we'll do that and so on."

They usually had contracts for that, contracts with ICA and MSA before that. ICA later became AID [United States Agency for International Development], our present thing that happened in the John Kennedy years, and AID is still the name, and some contracts like our work in Colombia was funded by Kellogg Foundation, our good friends here. We started doing technical assistance projects here and there, not because the professors and, I think, the administration would rather have them go to do research in their field, wherever it was in that place, but nobody would pay for that.

So we said, "Okay, you can go to country *x*, if you're an etymologist, and help them set up their Department of Etymology. That's what you're going to do there. While you're there, expand your insect collection, because when you come back here, we want you to be able to teach not only about the insects of U.S.A., but maybe the insects of Africa, too, or the insects of South Asia, or wherever you're going."

And the same was true in soils. We have soils department here, people teaching that. "We want you to go to a place where there's volcanic soils, not just to teach what you teach here. You've got to learn about volcanic soils while you're there. Bring some soil samples back," and so on.

Same with the social sciences. "You're going to a Hindu culture. You'd better learn something about Hindu culture while you're there. And if you're going to come back—." And again, John Useem [phonetic] was interested in cross-cultural things before that. He and his wife, Ruth Useem, who's also a scholar, they studied Hindu culture. They learned a lot about it. We did have a project, a medical project, in Madras, and a small engineering project also. But we, the university, were able to facilitate people like John Useem doing his work there. He wrote a book called *Western-Educated Man in India*, which has become a classic in terms of what happens to people when they get a western education, and then go back to their own culture and try to survive.

Some of these names are popping up in my mind. You can see I've got no papers. It's not—I'm leaving out some. I'm just giving you the ones that come to mind.

The deliberate effort of the university was to get as many of our faculty to have an experience abroad in a different kind of place than Michigan, or different than the U.S.A., and learn enough so when they came back and taught, they could build that into their curriculum, their [unclear] material.

Let me see if I can put some year numbers on these. Before 1959, maybe 1958, for the next two decades that was central and a major thing, because it was late in 1959 when I had this meeting I started telling you about before with President Hannah and Glen Taggert in Hannah's office. And he said, "George, how would you like to go to Nigeria?"

And I said, "Why would I go to Nigeria?"

And he said, "Well, we're having some administrative problems there. We've sent out a team of six people. None of them had—." They didn't realize how naive and innocent we were.

You know, President Hannah was very much involved in President Harry [S.] Truman's Point-Four Speech. No reason for you to remember that, but in the second inaugural address, Point Four was foreign aid to implement the Marshall Plan ~~and~~ and to do these other things. The Marshall Plan had been going and a great success in Europe, and Point Four was saying, "Look. We have the technology to produce food. The world has a lot of starving places. We should send our experts, because we can solve the world's hunger problem probably in a decade." The promises sound a lot like our present administration. I mean, they're impossible things. We—I'm including myself—were definitely naive and arrogant.

We thought we knew, and what I learned personally, and others since and in various ways, was that we were both naive and arrogant, because we not only didn't know the answers, we didn't know the questions, and plenty examples of that. I'll give you just one. At a certain point we got started in Pakistan. It was East and West Pakistan then. Ford Foundation was going to pay the bill. They came to MSU to organize it. We already had our Office of International Programs going, and we assembled a small team, which had Harry Vogel [phonetic], who was head of the Department of Agricultural Economics, later became dean of the College of Agriculture, and Floyd Reeves, and one or two others.

They went to both East and West Pakistan and they studied the situation, and we learned an awful lot, because they were an instrumental with Ford and the governments of those two branches of then one Pakistan in the selection of who the leadership would be. And they selected a person for the West at Peshawar, where our joint venture was, the training program for what

would be like for county Extension agents here. Village Aid, it was called, and it was training a village, so it was a Village Aid academy. And Roger Oxcell [phonetic] was a good public servant who followed the rules, and didn't make anybody angry, and the government liked him, and he became the director of it.

Over in the East Pakistan in a place called Kamalia [phonetic] they had another one of these Village Aid schools, and our committee—and heavily influenced by Floyd Reeves, probably, ran against this guy called Dr. Hameed Khan [phonetic], and he'd been in the Indian civil service and he'd resigned because he didn't like it. When I say that, resigning from the Indian civil service in those days was a catastrophe. Your own family would be really annoyed at you, because they paid money to get you an education, you passed a lot of exams, you had become an elite, whatever, and you were giving that up.

But Dr. Hameed had worked as a civil servant in one district in West Bengal, and he didn't think the government was doing the right thing for the people. And he understood village life. He was a student of the Koran as well as his English was better than mine, which is not saying too much. And he thought, "We're not paying enough attention to the really hungry and to the rural people," and so on. And he was one of several candidates to be the director of that East Pakistan Center at Kamalia. The Americans really liked him, and I think the Pakistanis were not too happy, but since our team had gone along with Roger Oxcell in the West, they said, "Okay, we'll go along with Dr. Hameed in the East." And he became the director of that institute, and there's plenty of documented history since then on rural development and international development that came from him.

In the first year, they hired staff, both groups did, that was going to work with them. They sent them both to Michigan State for a year. And since I was directing the Institute for Extension Personnel Development, I was involved in that training program here.

I'll give you one little incident about that. I took a group with Dr. Hameed and others, up to Marquette, because I wanted them to see Michigan along the way. We had a speaker on the bus. We were having lecture and discussion all the way up and all the way back. The [Mackinac] bridge was new then. We got to Marquette, and I was chatting with Dr. Hameed in the lobby of the hotel when the manager came to see me. I saw he was furious. One of our participants was ruining his plumbing. Well, we raced up to his room on the second or third floor. I don't know what it was at—

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Charnley: This is tape two of the George Axinn interview.

When the last tape ended, you were talking about your trip to Marquette with the group from Pakistan.

Axinn: Yes. Well, there was a plumbing problem, and Alger [phonetic] Hameed Khan, who was leader of that group, had gone with me up to the room, and there was a sink torn halfway out of the wall, and a very frustrated Pakistani trainee, you could say, who said, "I knew there was water in there somewhere, but I didn't know how to get it out."

Anyway, later at one point, Glen Taggert was very good because I did go to Nigeria—I should go back to that story and tell you more about it, but I'll interrupt it for a moment. When I

was really working on the Nigeria program mainly, but doing other things for international studies, Glen Taggert wanted me to see other projects. He was that kind of a leader. He thought, "This guy should know more than just what he's doing in Nigeria."

We went to visit several projects, including the one at Kamalia, and there I was following after Hameed, who I'd met earlier, to see some of the work. And my vision now is—we're walking along a bund of a rice paddy. The rice paddy's about two feet deep, full of water and rice plants. The bund is about one foot over that, about a foot or a foot and a half wide, and relatively dry, and you're walking along it in single file, of course, because you'd fall in the water maybe even then. And he's going first, and I'm trying to keep up with him and I can hardly do it, running on this thing, and all the while, he's lecturing.

We went to several meetings of farmers, and he organized some very dramatic, important approaches to involvement of local people in their own—quote—"community development," which people like us had been teaching for years, and he was way ahead of us. I mean, first, you've got to listen to them and learn what their world is like, and then you do other things.

The reason I got into the Pakistan story at all was that the picture that was in the Administration Building, and maybe even in the dean's office now, shows one of these big rice paddies, and a whole single-file line of tractors with drivers in them. Well, you know, the Americans thought tractors was the way to farm. In fact, as a kid, I imagine I thought that, too. And so we did one of the obvious things—we sent tractors to Bangladesh. That was a problem. I don't know how big this room is, but farmers' fields were not much bigger than this. I mean, it was in terms of feet, maybe twenty by twenty, that would be pretty big. Some would be twice that size, but not too many. Well, you can't turn a tractor around on that.

So they had to reorganize the social structure and get people to cooperate and also one family, because of their inheritance, would own several plots like that in different locations, they had to do a lot of social organization to get them to have ten of them in a row that they could argue to get a tractor out to make it go the length and come back. We had to train tractor drivers. We had to train tractor maintenance people. They set up a tractor maintenance shop at Kamalia, all kind of things like that, and I visited there several times over the years. It wasn't too long before they all sat in that beautiful row, rusting, because in Bangladesh, they had a shortage of land and a surplus of people and a shortage of money.

Now, in the United States, when it was growing, we had a surplus of land. All our history, even till about then, we had a surplus of land, a shortage of labor, and plenty of money. It was kind of in Europe – as much as you could (?) [unclear], ~~cheaper to~~ borrow. So it was just the reverse thing. If you have a surplus of land and a shortage of labor, you need agricultural mechanization; and if you have a surplus of labor and a shortage of land, the last thing you want is to mechanize.

The real goal, as I learned later in India at their research station, instead of having a hoe with the blade about ten inches wide or eight inches wide to hoe in the garden, you need a hoe with the blade two inches wide, because that way you can grow another row of the thing next to it, or you could plants seeds in one row, and then wait two weeks and plant in the next row, and wait two weeks and plant in the next row, and by the time the first ones are getting big, the little ones are started, and then you harvest one and do it over again. You want to intensively produce as much food as you can from a small piece of land, and good agricultural engineering research would be making smaller and smaller blades on the hoe, but we had brought tractors.

I just offer you that as an example that we were not even arrogant. Well-meaning, well-educated, college professors went to places all over the world to try to really help them, and

some of them were colossal failures, some of them were tragic failures, and some of them we gradually learned how to do it.

And another thing, I'll give you one more example of that, because I think it characterizes what the well-meaning Americans in Point Four tried to do for the first twenty years or so. We sent a home economist from here, and she went to Okinawa to our project there at the University of the Ryukyus, and she was going to teach women about food and nutrition. So she got the 4-H bulletin, and one of the first ones you start with is how to bake a biscuit. Because twenty years before her time, every farm home had a wood stove, and the oven was always hot, so you had a hot oven. They all had cattle, so milk was easily available, and everybody had wheat, and they had shortening from lard or whatever else. So you had the ingredients already on the farm, and then you would turn on the stove, and you could bake biscuits. So we taught level measurement and things like that to girls in 4-H by making biscuits.

So this well-meaning, honest young woman—not all that young—went to Okinawa, and she organizes groups, and she wants to teach them how to make biscuits. Well, they don't have ovens. Not to worry, we just had a war. We had all these five-gallon gas cans. You could make one on top of the other, use the bottom for the fire and the top for the oven. And, you know, with a little bit of work and some help from others, you could make ovens, and you could get fuel. Wood was scarce, and people cooked on usually three stones in an open fire; that's what they cooked on, and this one was more efficient. And then they didn't have the fat that goes in or the lard, so she was able to get from the U.S. military some of their big cans of Crisco or S(?)Spry?.

We'd take the [unclear] sacks, so you brought your own artificial things, and they had dry milk they could make powder out of. There was a dairy. There were dairy cattle on those islands before, but not lots of them. It was a home dairy at best, if you had one, and goats are

much better than cows, because they don't eat as much and they still produce milk. So she went through a year of work, really, getting all the things together so that she could teach them how to make biscuits. Now, none of them cooked in a stove.

And I'm just saying in reflection, you see—I don't know whether she ever got it or not. Probably not. She'd rest easier in her grave if she doesn't ever think about it, but that was a waste of everybody's time and money. Now, it wasn't that she was trying to do the wrong thing. It's very much like the tractors, you know.

These are two examples of what was typical of what the U.S. did in terms of organization, structured governments, and the technology of agriculture, and home science or whatever, and we were very slowly learning. As I said, Michigan State taught me a lot, because if President Hannah said, "What about going to Nigeria?" And I don't think I said, "Why should I go there?" But I said, "Well, let me think about that."

He said, "Oh, go on, you and Nancy—." He even knew our wives' names in those days. He said, "You and Nancy think about it."

And I went home, and to be honest with you, we got out an atlas; we had one. We looked at Africa. Now, where's Nigeria, was our first question, and here I had a Ph.D. by then from an American university. We put our fingers on Ethiopia, and we traced—we couldn't find it—all the way down the east coast. We went around South Africa. We went all the way up the west, and sure enough, there was Nigeria. We found it.

I'm just telling you that and whoever is hearing the tape, that that was our level of college professor's knowledge of the world, and this was late in 1959, and into, I guess, 1960. Because it was in 1960 that the Nigerians became independent of England, and I think on October 1st of 1960 was Independence Day. We already had a small team there, but they had trouble.

Dr. Azikiwe's great idea was to just scrape the land in this valley, which he controlled, and build buildings on it. He'd seen some pictures here and there. He didn't have a campus plan. Although President Hannah was a great campus planner; had lots of campus plans to show him in the expansion of this campus to the south, which he'd been working on for years and years, Azikiwe had a sort of slight idea about that. But he wanted to build buildings, and he knew that he's got to get it built quickly and get it started, otherwise the political pressure there would have struck.(?) ~~[unclear].~~ For one thing, there was already a university college and special relationship with the University of London, which the British had started in many different colonies, and one was at Ibadan in Nigeria.

In fact, one thing that drove him to Michigan State—him, now I'm talking about Azikiwe—was that he went to this college at Ibadan, which had started giving degrees, and he noticed that all of their exams were made in England. Well, the British didn't want their colonials to be second-class people, so they should pass the same exam. Some of our thinking about exams is similar today, here.

Well, he went to the greenhouse because they want to show him they had this beautiful greenhouse, and inside are all the plants of England. You know, they could grow the nice bushes and flowering plants and so forth that we have here, which are growing in England. And he looked out the window, there's a banana tree, there's a coconut tree, and he said, "Do you teach about those two?"

"No, no, because, you see, we've got the Cambridge exam, and it comes with the questions, and we have the lab manual that they work with, and we needed to plant some of them in formaldehyde bottles, so they could learn about those to pass that exam."

And Azikiwe said, "Is that going to help Nigeria move into the twentieth century?" He came here and he talked to people who were not very enthusiastic about that. In fact, he went to Palmolive Pete Building in New York City, which has a big sign on it. They made an export crop, was palm oil. The palm oil was coming here and other places, and they'd make it into soap and products like that and sell it. I don't know how he got the appointment, but he went to see—there's all these things about his party: he's ~~[unclear].~~ He was then governor general of the eastern region of Nigeria.

He went to see the executives of that plant. He said, "We'd like you to give us a big grant to start a university with, because we need one of our own that will teach people how to live in this country and apply science to all the needs of our country, and bring the country into the twentieth century, because we're not now." And they wouldn't listen to him.

So he went back to Nigeria, and since he was governor general there, they passed a law in that region, which was the main palm oil-producing region, and they put a tax on palm oil. So every gallon of palm oil that was shipped out of Port Harcourt or any other port there, a certain amount of money had to go to the government to the fund for the university.

So that when he, Azikiwe, talked to John Hannah and said, "I'd like you to come and see my country and see A(??) University," he already had the money. He had enough to operate, to build the buildings, and start operating the university for the first five years already in the bank.

President Hannah went with him and he looked it over, and he came back here and he started telling all of us about this great opportunity, you know, how he drove on this dirt road all the way from the L^ (Lagos) Airport, and ~~he [unclear]~~ went all the way up to Nsukka, and here was this village which had only mud huts with thatched roofs, but here was this land and a university could be built here. And he was excited about it. I haven't paid much attention to that at all.

Anyway, back to the story. He said, "Take a few days." And my wife and I thought it over. You know, it had implications for both of us in the work we were doing. And all they were asking me is to become the coordinator of it and to spend time here and there, to go back and forth, to straighten it out, to recruit staff for the ~~[unclear]~~ project from our staff, and build it up, because our contract called for an ever-increasing staff to maintain contract relationships with the USAID agency. It had changed its name at that moment, more or less. And to also go there, and recruit Nigerians, turned out to find Nigerians all over the world who had college degrees or who were college students, and convince them to come back there and be teachers.

We had an office in—we, the University of Nigeria—now had a little office in London with one old British colonial officer there, who was supposed to help recruit people who were in England from Nigeria. I remember President Hannah, taking my elbow as we walked down the stairs in this place, saying, "You know, our relationship with the British is not too good in higher education. In Nigeria, they think high-quality higher education is all done in England. Anything coming from the United States is third-rate at best." And he said, "If it comes from a land-grant place, it's probably fourth-rate. Now, your job is to build a good relationship in London with those people, so they will see the need for what Azikiwe is asking."

Azikiwe said, "I want a university who will not be a copy of your land-grant schools, and not be a copy of the British, of course. It will be uniquely Nigerian, to fit the needs and interests of the people of Nigeria, and help them apply knowledge to their problems and solve them," etc.

He gave me this little talk. He said, "Now, it's not going to be easy." I'd never been to London. I'd been to Guam by then and to Honolulu, Palau, and Kwajalein, but not to Europe. But he said, "You know, the key thing you have to do is build a good relationship with them and get them to support you."

I said, "Yes, sir." Actually, I didn't know what I was talking about.

I still had this Institute of Extension Personnel Development. I had students who weren't through yet. But they convinced me that we needed a new person to take over that, and I should fly to London, meet people from the University of London, fly to Lagos, Nigeria, the capital, and meet people there in government and in our USAID agency, and then go to Nsukka and meet that staff and figure out what needs to be done next, and then come back and tell us, and we'll help you.

You know, a very important part of my education. I mean, I was forced to learn about British higher education. I have great respect for it, but to get into it in some depth. They had a committee at the University of London called Colleges Overseas and Special Relation, because they had colleges overseas they had started in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, and several other places besides Nigeria, and one in Ghana, too, I think. They were university professors in their system, trying to really replicate their system in these other places. Anyway, I went there and learned a lot.

I went to Lagos and met those people. Flew in a DC-3. I thought they were great. I used to fly to London and back, to Enugu [phonetic], and then our MSU group had bought a few little Fiat vehicles which were available, and so we drove a little Fiat, bouncing over that road, which was then paved in the middle. They were paved for nine-feet-wide. The rest was—and they were already lorries, motor trucks, running back and forth, and they always stayed right in the middle. So if you're going the other way, you either get off or get hit. And the beautiful signs on them all saying, like, "No condition is permanent." Or one, "God's case, no appeal." So he's coming down the road straight at you, and this sign—you get off the road in a hurry.

Anyway, I drove up to the campus. I met our people, and I learned a lot. And, yes, I could tell you details of the first trip, the second and third—

Charnley: When did you first meet Dr. Azikiwe?

Axinn: It was later than that. By then he'd become president, and he had moved his office to Lagos. He came out for some occasions. He had a little home, sort of his country home that had been his before the university came on the edge of the campus. I met him there. When you say "first," I'm not sure what the first was, because then over the years he was the chancellor of the university, which is sort of a figurehead, and the vice chancellor, I guess at that point was one of our team members, and that wasn't working out very well at all.

We had like six people there, trying to survive, and one of them was the administrative guy. I'm glad they had sense enough to bring in an administrative guy, but, of course, he didn't know how to do administration of that place. So we had like four families, maybe one bachelor and three families and our guy who was supposed to be in charge of it all. They wanted little things like toilet paper. Well, you could buy them, and you knew that's forty miles away, and you had to get some quantity and you had to transport it over there. And, you know, they wanted coffee and creamer and a dozen other things like that, and they really didn't know what they were going to need, but they needed everything. They needed to find servants and hire them. Because you could hire a cook and eat the fine food, and he'd cook it for you and know how to do it, and it would be nice if he also spoke the English language.

So that gentleman had a tough time trying to manage the thing. USAID sent an auditor out at one time, and our friend got so angry at him, he picked up a chair like this [gestures], and

he was about to hit him over the head, but the other guy could run faster than he did, and he chased him across the campus. Things were not going well with him.

We had a thing a called a transit house. That was one house set aside for short-term people to come and go, a very important thing. Not my idea. And when I got to the transit house, there was a British professor who had also been sent down, and he was staying at the transit house. The two of us were taking our meals together. That was a good part of my education, too. And in the middle of one meal, our administrative officer came in. He was just furious. He grabbed a glass of water from the table and threw it on the floor and smashed it, and he said, "I've had it. I'm not going to stay here any longer." He was really at the end of his rope.

And I've talked to some others. Made one trip back to Lagos to see the U.S. government people and the U.S. psychiatrist, because they had one there connected with the embassy. And they had a long talk, the two of them, and while this gentleman—I'm not giving you he his name, because I don't think that's appropriate, and you could find it in the records, anyway. The psychiatrist came out and said, "You know, I can understand all he's saying. The same thing happens to me here. You try to get something done, and nobody will help you, and all the frustrations he's having, I'm having, trying to run my practice. But my suggestion for him is that you get him home as soon as you can." And, of course, he didn't want to go, and that's another story, but we gave him some special vacation leave in Europe, where he also had interests and whatnot, and brought him back to this campus, and he survived.

Then we started a program of recruiting personnel for that university, which after a year or two got to be a residence staff of MSU faculty of about thirty individuals, mostly families.

We were building houses. One of my campus responsibilities was housing assignment, both for the Nigerians and for our people and for anybody else who came, and things of that sort.

I came back here through London to help with them, and my main job was recruiting the rest of the staff. And so, in summary, I was responsible for recruiting about fifteen families each year to go out for a two-year assignment at this place called Nsukka. And then fifteen the next year, and then we had thirty there. And at the end of two years, the first fifteen went back, and we rotated that for seven years.

Charnley: This is from 1960 to 1967.

Axinn: To 1967, yes. There were short-term people, also. Among our deans and things like that, they couldn't think they could spare themselves for that long, but they would go. We did have trouble getting a vice chancellor there. We had to get a Nigerian person to be the top of the administrative officer and run the place, but our recruiting was difficult. And we found somebody, who was E___. He had good experience, he was involved in other things, Ibadan and elsewhere, and he could come, but it was going to be about a year, more or less.

So Nnamdi Azikiwe called on the phone one day, and said he wanted to have Woody Varner to come out be his vice chancellor. Of course, by then Woody had set up the Oakland campus [unclear], and we used to have breakfast meetings. President Hannah was very good on breakfast meetings. They'd have them at seven o'clock in the morning. We had the Kellogg Center then, and we had several over this topic, and at one we arranged it so that we'd have Azikiwe on the line from Lagos, and President Hannah in the room, and Woody Varner and Glen Taggert and myself.

What he wanted Varner to do—you know, it just didn't fit that he could be spared by MSU. He was just getting Oakland started and he was—I don't know what they called him there—maybe a chancellor or something like that, too, and ~~there~~ they were all kind of political things. Before that, it was vice president for off-campus affairs.

Dr. Varner had been our main go-between with legislature, especially in the name change. President Hannah gave the overall leadership and the great ideas, but Woody did the day-to-day political thing to convince the legislature to make that change, because the UM people were not at all in favor of that.

In that telephone discussion, it was agreed that maybe Glen Taggert could go, and Glen was our dean of international studies and programs—he had met several times. This was still a "maybe" thing, but the result was that, yes, Glen took his youngest daughter and his wife, Phyllis, and they went there for a year, more or less, and he was the vice chancellor.

I was back and forth many times in that period. I did that job for seven years, yes, and for the first five, I was going back and forth regularly. My routine, not by planning but just came out, brought six weeks here on the campus, doing recruiting and other such things; one week in London, making peace and negotiating; six weeks in Nigeria, discovering the problems and working out how to handle that; one week in London; six weeks in East Lansing; one week London; six weeks in Nigeria; and I did that for the rest of the five years.

Charnley: At that time your family was here?

Axinn: My family was here. My wife went with me once. In fact, she did her master's thesis there because she was working with ~~the [unclear]~~ family decision-making (?). Polygamous families are different than these

monogamous families. And she went there and studied the polygamous families and did her thesis on that. One summer, my wife wasn't going to put up with having our son, who was maybe twelve or something like that, in the house, because she already had a baby daughter and an older daughter, so he went with me for a while.

That summer, I was the acting vice chancellor, and I'd guess it was before Glen got out there or something. So again, we were there for maybe longer, maybe eight weeks that time, very educational, another contribution to my education, not only in trying to do that job. We had in the project by that time worked out a partnership with NUFIC, the Netherlands University Foundation for International Cooperation, and so we had some Dutch faculty that they recruited, and we helped recruit those, too. And with the thirty—you know, we had them in all different academic fields. There are reports of this for anybody who's interested. Maybe I've said enough about the international program.

Charnley: No, you're the first one I've talked with about the record.

Axinn: For me, personally, it was a great learning experience. And, you know, the kind of stories I was talking to you earlier about people in Okinawa or in Bangladesh, we did some of the same dumb things there.

An excellent agronomist who had worked for Michigan State in two other countries, in Colombia and one other, and had been very successful, went out there in our College of Agriculture, and cleared a place on the hillside and planted corn in rows, like you do here. And the first two or three weeks, they were nice and green, and it was beautiful, and he was very

happy about that. About the third or fourth week, it turned sort of purple, and by the fifth week, you couldn't even find it.

Now, as a rural sociologist, I, from the beginning, had been going out and visiting rural villages there, and my wife did her studies of rural villages. The agriculture of that area is what they call three-level agriculture. You have vegetables and small plants, even corn, growing on the ground; then in the middle you have bananas and oil palm, coconut palm, things like that; and at the higher level, there are big trees with leaves. And you not only have the shade, but it's intensive agriculture. They grew it in intensive farming.

They would grow yams, and also, socially, yams are a man's crop. The man grows the yams, has a yam barn where he puts them in something like a tobacco barn, where the air can go through and preserve them for the rest of the year, and men in the village compete with each other, who can grow the most yams, the biggest yam, and all that kind of stuff.

And then the women are allowed to plant between the yams their spices and vegetables and other kind of things, and there's a family garden, and they might have two or three of those places on the land that they work.

Well, our kind of agriculture didn't fit that at all, you know. We're into rows. In fact, agronomists to this day, in most of the world, they say you should plant in rows. And later on we had the same experience in Nepal. We're working again, starting a College of Agriculture, and all the agronomists want—and the books all say plant in rows. Well, mostly, the planting is done by women throughout South Asia, and they're standing in mud up to their ankles or their knees, depending on how the thing is there, going backwards. They've got a sack on their back with, you know, a handful of rice plants to transplant, and they stick them in one at a time, and

they make a sort of U-shape thing. Because if you start on your left and work to your right, that's what comes out. Then you take a half a step backwards, and you make another one.

So the rice fields, if you look at them, are a bunch of these U-shape little things, and they work, and the people doing the work can do that. But, you know, the typical thing, if you say what works in Michigan should work anywhere, and here, if you plant anything, you plant in rows, because remember we've got a tractor. But before that we had a horse pulling a plough. Well, if you're doing it yourself by hand.

Then we've had agronomists give all kind of reasons why technically they'll grow better in rows, which I think is a lot of ~~baloney.~~ bologna And these are some of my best friends I'm talking about, because we have worked together and struggled through these things. And again, now you've got another example I didn't plan on, the same sort of phenomena. We didn't know the questions, much less the answers.

Now, a lot of things about education were similar, but we had the fundamentals and that I can thank President Hannah again. He kept reminding us, you see, that this school of agriculture started because farmers in the state of Michigan wanted a school that would help them prepare their sons and daughters to work on the farm and in the shops, which you call mechanic arts then, and apply science to that, so they could do it better. And book learning was all right, but we didn't want too much of that.

It was a battle on that because at MSMAC, when it first started, we had a very academic curriculum, but the rule was every student had to work on the farm, and right out your window is where their farm was, and it was wet land, and they had to work in it, and work in the mud, and it was a good thing for them. In several other countries I have utilized that principle, and usually if

someone is on the college faculty as a teacher in horticulture, for example, he wants to read from a book.

Now I'm going to skip from the Nigeria part of this tale, because if we're going to get anywhere in this—I've worked on a lot of projects. I was there for seven years, learned an awful lot, came back here, and, you know, we had a lot of cleanup to do. The evacuation is another whole series of stories, because when that part of Nigeria seceded and became Biafra, the Nigerians didn't like that. We tried to convince the U.S. government and the British government to support this Biafra. All they wanted—because like in so many other places, you know, the controls in Lagos for Nigeria, and that's where the money was, and they wanted to extract as much as they could from their provinces, like the eastern region, but not build the roads, the schools, and health posts and things like that, and yet they would all be built in their own place. So they decided independence would be a good thing.

Yes, all of us were sort of against it, because, you know, this is going to be a big mess. We tried to convince some other governments to support the Biafran government as it was called, and they refused, so it was the Biafrans alone. They had some connections in Portugal in Lisbon, and some other places, but not any support officially. They declared independence. The U.S. government decided—

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Charnley: We were talking, when the tape ended, about the situation in Biafra and in Nigeria and in the University of Nigeria.

Axinn: Yes. The University of Nigeria was focused on local things from the beginning. When the secession came, they didn't really want it. President Azikiwe was against it, but he was in Lagos at the time. But they had a military coup in which in every district, a military officer was in charge, and one colonel, Ajuku [phonetic], was in charge of the former eastern region, and there was a general who was in charge, General Talum [phonetic], of the whole country, and so we had a military government for a while. And so things were a little bit raunchy, anyway.

They all supported the idea of a University of Nigeria. We had helped get two universities started in the north at Kaduna and at Kano and at E___. So by then, and this, I'm talking of less than seven years, here was the old Ibadan, the classical British model school, and then at Nsukka, the University of Nigeria, which is supposed to be trying to do for that country what they need teaching about their needs and interests, and these others got started, too, and they sort of mixed it up.

When things got tough and the people in national government wanted to control the east and the other places, they started a blockade of the east. Now, the east produces a lot of palm oil and ships it out. They don't have salt. They were bringing that in from outside, and meat usually came down from the north, because up in the north—although on our campus we had cattle and some F___ people from the north, who were running our herds, and a professor from here, who was doing animal husbandry.

The government of Nigeria set up a blockade around that whole enclave that was then the eastern region, and said, "Now, you behave and do things our way, or we're going to starve you to death." And it wasn't going too well. I think of one thing, you can't export your palm oil, so you don't have cash income coming in. You've got lots of palm oil, because the trees produce

palm kernels, and everybody in their house can cook those and stamp them with their feet and make oil out of them.

But you need salt, so salt is being smuggled across the Niger River, and unfortunately, or fortunately, the whole country had just built this beautiful bridge across the Niger River at a place called [unclear] from the east to the midwest, as it was then called, where Benin is, and it was like the building of the Mackinac Bridge. For years we watched it getting built, and finally it got built, and it was going to make everything better on both sides. But it wasn't long after that that this blockade started, and the military took over the bridge and wouldn't let anybody cross and all kind of things like that.

We could still get across. The school in Ibadan, on the east side where there was a boarding school, three countries—the Americas, the British, and the Nigerians, together—I had two kids in that school and some of our other people had some kids there. We could, with our sort of diplomatic immunity—semi-diplomatic, not officially—get back and forth. But increasingly, we were reducing our operations for the whole project, although we had thirty families there, and about five, four maybe, short-term visitors when the fighting started in our area, let's put it that way.

Prior to that, U.S. government had sent a diplomat to my home with a big mailbag. Now, mail could be sent back and forth in a diplomatic pouch, and the Nigerian government never interfered with them. It goes from Washington to Lagos. He came with two of these diplomatic pouches, and I was down in my office on the campus, and I was called to go back to my home, and these guys were sitting in the dining room. I remember two of them. They had come from Washington or somewhere, and they were going to install a two-way radio in my home.

Now, since the government of Nigeria says it shouldn't be done, and the new government in the east and the governor of the eastern region didn't want it done anywhere, this was going to be quiet; let's say clandestine. So I wasn't saying anything about it to anybody, and we looked at all of it all in my room, in our bedroom upstairs. There was one shelf and we built a sort of cabinet out of that, so the radio could stay in there, and I would only open it up to talk on the radio. Also they ran an aerial across from my house to the one that Bob Deans [phonetic]—professor of animal science here, who's now retired. He was living then next door to us, and they run this great big red wire across, with a black wire coming down the middle. Now, anybody who knows about shortwave radio—

Charnley: Could see it.

Axinn: We had a single sideband radio installed in our bedroom, and every day I'm supposed to go there and get online with Lagos and exchange information. But since it wasn't licensed or approved, we did only fifteen minutes, and we kept changing the time, so tomorrow it could be a different time than today. And that was interesting and, I don't know, I think it lasted less than six months. We didn't publicize it when it happened. So I don't know exactly.

I know when it ended, because the evacuation of the—we had sort of evacuation plans which never came to fruition, because on a certain day, maybe in May of 1967, I got word on my radio that all the women and children were to be evacuated. We were to have a motor pool, and we could take the British and the Dutch who were with us, if we wanted, if they were willing to go, and all the Peace Corps volunteers from our area should go with us, and we should all drive

all the way down to Port Harcourt, where there was a big airport, and a plane would come there like in two days. And each one was only to have six pounds of luggage.

I said, "What about the men?"

"No, just the women and children, because we want the men to stay there and pretend that you're doing business as usual, the same old Straw ~~[unclear]~~, and nothing's going wrong." They didn't want them to think the Americans think things are going to get worse. "So you stay there, but take all the women and children." Again, that would take me two hours. But we organized a sort of carpool. All of our team, of course, went. They had no choice. Just the women and the children, and most of them had cars, and they drove in this long line. The Dutch agreed and they came with us, and their cars were also in that line with ours. Most of the British didn't come. They didn't want anything to do with us, and they thought they knew better anyhow. There weren't many; there were some. And the Peace Corps volunteers, they came to my home the day before we were going and they said they didn't want to go.

I said, "We don't want to go, either, but, you know, we have to go. It's not a matter of choice.

And they said, "We volunteered to do this thing. We're going to stay."

We had one Chevrolet carryall that had our baseball equipment. On the campus there, every afternoon, every Sunday afternoon, we had a baseball game. There were cricketers and baseballers playing together. You could see them when they came to bat, because they held the bat differently. That was our big recreation. Now, I've skipped some time, because after the first five years of commuting, my whole family, four little kids, my wife, and I, moved to Nigeria and we lived there for the next two years.

Charnley: So what range were your children, let's say when you got there?

Axinn: The baby was like, oh, maybe thirteen months or something like that. And the next one was like, maybe fourth or fifth grade, and the other two were in high school.

Charnley: Certainly formative years.

Axinn: Those were formative years. My daughter, the oldest, it was her junior year at East Lansing High; she didn't want to go. So we made a deal with her where she could go for the junior year and come back for her senior year, and that's what she did. Our son stayed for the whole two years, got to be a soccer player, later played varsity soccer in a U.S. college. So we had those little kids and we stayed there.

A lot of other things happened in that time, but now I'm going to finish this story of the evacuation. In May at a certain time, they wanted us to do it on Sunday, and the plane was going to come to Port Harcourt on Monday, and they wanted us to be all down in a hotel there by Sunday night. We thought it would be better if we go on Sunday; it won't be as visible to all the students. Well, you can't hide a thing like that, you know.

By then we had a continuing education center there, modeled after the one here. It wasn't called a Kellogg Center, but Gordon Belson [phonetic], the same architect who had designed the Kellogg Center in the beginning, came to Africa and helped us design that program out of local materials as much as possible. We started a continuing education center, a very significant part of our total strategy of relating education to the real world.

But there we were, ready to organize. We met at the continuing education center, in its parking lot. Each family is supposed to be there at a certain time. We had walkie-talkies. So we set it up that the driver of the first car has one, and then every sixth car had one, and I stayed in the last car with one, and we could sort of manage things. We knew what route we were going to take. It was a drive that took maybe six hours, and we all went down to Port Harcourt, stayed in that hotel.

The next morning, the plane came, and our families—and it wasn't a U.S. official plane or anything; it was an oil company plane, because we had oil there then, and one of the oil companies had loaned their plane to the embassy, and they flew the plane out there, and each person got on and had to step on a scale and get weighed.

Our luggage was limited to six pounds, and some of the women didn't want to that in public, so we set it up so that nobody has to watch as you get weighed, but somebody was [unclear], because when the plane was full, they were going to stop it, and the rest would go in another batch. They had other people being evacuated besides the so-called Michigan State group.

Anyway, all of our women and children got on the plane, and the men lined up on the other side of the fence and watched the runway, and I was thinking, "Gee, here I've got—." We didn't have quite thirty people. We had some short-termers still there. We had, you know, one short-term. One of our deans had traveled out with his wife. Well, she had to go on and he stayed, even though they were only there for a few weeks. And I was worried about the morale problem. As the plane lifted off the runway, one gentleman, Bob Crewl [phonetic], who's from horticulture, said, "Now we can play poker every night." [Laughter] We found that he was only allowed to play like twice a week [unclear]. And that broke the ice. Everybody started laughing,

not really celebratory, but we all drove back to—and some had it more difficult than others, adjusting to that.

They landed in Lagos, and somebody walked onto the plan and said, "Is Mrs. Axinn here?" Well, I was the so-called team leader, therefore, and the official people wanted to negotiate who's going to fly out next and where are they going. And so she spent that whole day, realizing that—well, you know, none of us wanted to leave in the first place. So she went to the office of the AID mission director. When I got there some months later, he sat in his office. He looked at his ceiling and he says, "You know, we got it painted over now." But there was a big black hole there, where Nancy went through the roof when she was here, "Telling me all the reasons why we shouldn't be doing this thing." [Laughter]

Charnley: That's interesting.

Axinn: Anyway, they organized the youngest children first. Some people wanted to go to Europe. They had not finished their eighteen months of service, which was a minimum to get tax exemption, so they wanted to stay there and meet their husbands later. Well, all of us thought, you know, this thing is going to blow over in a few weeks. We'd all go back. So it was, you know, if you were going to stay and finish out your tour. Others went back to the United States. A few of them, unfortunately, got routed through Cairo on their way to Europe to come back, because they were filling up all kind of planes, and the [1967] Six-Day War broke out. They got evacuated twice.

Anyway, the women and children came back, and I'll tell you two little stories about that, and then let's get on to the rest of it in this year's glorious international history. On the 3rd of

July of 1967, our team was getting a little bit nervous, and things were more or less okay, but we'd given our final exams for the semester, and the students stayed. It's amazing how well the students had hung in there and stayed and wrote their papers and got graded and so on, and many of the faculty stayed. Those from other parts of Nigeria had gone to the other parts, and others came there. I won't get into all the details of the turbulence in Nigeria, which was then and is now and maybe evermore shall be.

However, back on the campus, there was a military detachment there, and some of us played tennis every afternoon. That was our main recreation, and I invited the colonel who was in charge of that to join us, and he did some of the time, so we got fairly well acquainted. And he was wanting information from me, and I was wanting information from him, and things were getting sort of turbulent, and he knew that.

I went to my radio that day and the rest of the Michigan State group went to the house of Andy Doyle [phonetic], who was sort of the deputy team leader at the time. I got on my radio, and their information says, "The northern army is moving in your direction," and we were like six miles from the northern border, "and we're not sure what they're going to do when they get there, but we just wanted you to be informed, and if we find out more, we'll let you know."

So I said, as usual, "What time are we going to meet on the radio tomorrow?"

He said, "Oh, we can't meet tomorrow because the embassy's closed."

I said, "What? The embassy's closed?"

He said, "Yes, it's the Fourth of July and the ambassador's having his Fourth of July party, but we'll be on on the fifth."

I can't tell you or anybody in public what I said, but I had to walk across the street then and meet the MSU team and explain that. It was not a happy moment.

Anyway, on the seventh of July, the first shells came through the ceiling of the Princess Alexander Auditorium, one of our most [unclear], and the group evacuated to Enuba?, which we'd been planning to long before. They would just go out, and gradually everybody filtered back here.

That was ~~[unclear]~~ clear(?) Michigan State was very good to us. Financially, you know, you've got families coming back. They rented their house, they've got two kids or something like that, they're coming back to East Lansing. What are they going to do? And we designated in our business office a "pots-and-pans allowance," that is what we called it. Now, not much of that is where the auditors can find it. And we set up a pots-and-pans allowance, so, you know, if you get back with a new baby, you had to buy some diapers right away, and you need some pots and pans. You need some if you're staying with a relative or a friend, or your department chair for here has taken you in or whatever. And they made all kinds of different arrangements for the various families, but, yes, MSU set up a pots-and-pans allowance to unofficially cover the unintended and unwanted expenses.

And, yes, and over a period of a few months, we eventually cleaned up every—people were welcomed back into their departments, one way or another, and these were sort of not employees that you hired to do this. These were our own faculty. We did have some people from other universities that we brought, and that was another complication. But basically, it's our own faculty, because the rationale that President Hannah announced from the beginning. We're sending our faculty abroad so they can learn about the rest of the world, as I was saying earlier. So they won't make the mistakes that other generations—we want them to know about that place. Yes, they should teach them and be helpful while they're there, but the main goal is they should be back here, in the classroom, facing U.S. students, sharing their perspective of the

world that they didn't have before. And, you know, in that sense, it had to end sooner or later. I was miserable that it ended when it did, but it did and that was that.

Charnley: Was anyone injured in that evacuation?

Axinn: None of our staff were injured in any way. Psychologically, I think one or two really never got over it, and I think of one in particular, but that may have been, you know, personal, anyway. We had one death, not at the evacuation, but earlier. Someone had taken an overdose of malaria pills inadvertently, and that was a big problem. We had prepared in a way, because in the Veterinary College we had one shelf that I had arranged to have reserved in a cold room, in case we had a body. I didn't announce that to anybody. These are not the things you advertise.

Charnley: No.

Axinn: And on one occasion in the whole seven years, we used that shelf. And it was a bit of a challenge, and the embassy was very good. They sent out two body bags, and then we had to take that—I flew home with body and the spouse of that person, and it was one of many, many memorable occasions.

George Johnson [phonetic] at one point, who had been dean of the law school at Howard University, very active in the civil rights movement, well known to President Hannah in his work on the Civil Rights Commission, and he recruited George Johnson to come and be our vice chancellor. And Glen Taggert went home after his short time, and George stayed for at least two years and he was excellent.

We had some rather turbulent moments, you know, like at one point in this particular story, he was gone. I was acting vice chancellor, and the faculty association, like the union of the clerical and technical and kitchen people on the campus, were annoyed over some incident, and they came marching to the vice chancellor's office where I was sitting, carrying palm leaves and drumming on drums. And one by one my colleagues said they had to go, they couldn't stay. My secretary walked in and he said he was very sorry, but he had to leave. He didn't want to be seen here when they got there. And my driver came by and said, "If you don't mind, sir, I want to move your car to another place, because I don't want it to get damaged. Of course, you stay there."

Fortunately, I had been for a while the registrar and had worked with the personnel and had helped both of those unions get there—we had a catering workers union and a clerical workers union, I guess. I had helped them both draft their articles of whatever, and worked with them over the years. And I'd been there over the seven years, on and off by then, because that was near the end, and maybe it was six years by then. And I remember standing on top of a trashcan, so that their union leader could get on it, because he was smaller than me, and tell them his speech, and then I climbed up on the trashcan, and reminded them of things, and they peacefully marched home. And this was long before the evacuation. But then George Johnson used to say, "Yes, you know, it's over now, and that will be one of those memorable occasions, now. In your life there'll be several memorable occasions, and this is one more," being a positive person.

Well, I would say that evacuation was one more, and there are some others, relating to the things, but Michigan State was very flexible and very helpful. And international studies and

programs, where I was by then also assistant dean of international studies and programs, but my main job was coordinating—

Charnley: Were you working with Glen Taggert then?

Axinn: No, Glen Taggert was still the dean. So quite a ways later. Ralph [unclear] was there. Ralph was the associate dean, and Glen was the dean, and I was an assistant dean. At that point, they changed my title to assistant dean for overseas operations, and so for the next year or so, my task was travel and visit all the other projects like the one in Nigeria. We had many others, none as big as that, but many others scattered over the world, and help build morale, recruit staff, and build relationships with the local people and things of that sort.

Charnley: Now, one of the things that came up when I was talking with other people about the Vietnam Project, and, of course, is a *Ramparts* article. Was there any fallout? You were in Nigeria at the time. Was there any fallout from that, or let's say, a negative reaction to MSU people worldwide?

Axinn: Later. Not while we were there. Not till 1960. There was some, I would say globally, but, you know, personally I didn't even know about the Vietnam Project. We were so deeply immersed in the going back and forth period, and then the two years that my family and I had stayed there in Nigeria. That was my whole world.

I knew we were doing other things, because I was also keeping in touch with Glen Taggert and Ralph S____. Homer H____ was working with international students then, and they were all very helpful with the Nigeria program, which was my focus, and also, we started the African Studies Center, the Asian Studies Center, Latin-American Studies Center at [unclear], an Institute for International Communication in the Communication College. We had an institute in the Engineering College, which I don't think is there anymore, and the medical school was just getting started. Some of the medical school starting people came out and visited us there, and we had institute started then and there. So I was much more involved in these things, but George was Nigeria. It wasn't a matter of—till after the evacuation, and then when they gave me the new title of assistant dean for overseas operations, then I started visiting all of these projects.

But at that time, Michigan State, Indiana University, University of Wisconsin, University of Illinois were all having similar problem with their overseas technical assistance projects. They were all funded in order to do something technical to make things better in that country, whether it was in education or engineering or in health or in agriculture, whatever.

But recruiting staff—now, President Hannah was really committed to the idea that basically we were trying to educate our staff, help them be better prepared to work with our students, and student exchanges were part of it. Even in the Nigeria program we had a group of students going back and forth, several years. Some of the others didn't think that way about it, but they all knew it was hard to staff. You know, having thirty full-time faculty members there was larger probably than any of the projects of the others, and larger than any of our current ones by the time we got back.

I think it was an example of the arrogance and the naiveté, because we had people who we thought—we could send people to do it. We didn't know what the "it" was, and you see, so

it took me seven years to figure that out, and the others maybe more or less, too. So there were smaller projects, trying to interact with the local people and figure out what needed to be done, and then facilitate the doing of it, a very different strategy. I mean, if you admit in the beginning that you're naive and arrogant, which nobody would have admitted, at least you're not knowledgeable. Like, politely, we say, "We're not knowledgeable what that world is like, what the technical aspects of it are, what the social-cultural aspects of what the political aspects of it are."

We took a smaller approach. But even for the smaller approach, like if you're just going to send five people to Country X, you've got to recruit them, and within any one campus, it was hard to find five people who would go. Now, President Hannah was a great help in the Nigerian program days, because he would help me put pressure on deans and department chairs to let a person go, and would make sure that whoever went, when it came to salary-administration time, their service abroad was recognized. I mean, the salary adjustments would go, as they probably do now, from a department to a dean to maybe a provost, and the president. And he looked at every one every year, and if they had been in Nigeria or S(?), he himself came several times; he and Sarah Hannah came together.

Once, I had the joy of escorting them around. She became very ill with what we call T(?) there. That was, in retrospect, a marvelous thing. We were staying in the same building. He was downstairs with her, and I was upstairs in my room, and there was no water. The water went off. Well, if you've got somebody vomiting all the time, and there's no water, you've got a big problem. So I'd arranged with somebody else, who's carrying water and I'm bringing hot buckets to the door, and President Hannah's carrying them in to help keep Sarah cleaned up and the room cleaned up and everything. Well, ever since then, you know, we could ask for anything

for Nigeria, and Sarah Hannah was our ~~[unclear]~~. She would do it, ~~[unclear]~~, "Those families are living there for two years?"

[Tape recorder turned off.]

Axinn: They had visits like that, and, you know, then my task, being responsible for overseas operations, was to go from campus to campus around the world where we had projects, some in education ministries, and do similar things.

But this consortium came along. Nobody had enough staff to do it, so people from these four universities met here in our library building, and our member was Glen Taggert, but he didn't have a typewriter. I had a typewriter in my office, so I wheeled in my typewriter when he and Roy Dangerfield [phonetic] from Illinois sat down, and we all worked out the charter really, for this consortium, Midwestern Universities Consortium for International Activities, Incorporated, MUCIA. And then they took it Ford Foundation, who was still our friends, and Ford supported it, and that foundation got started, and I was still running around, doing other things.

About the end of the first year, or toward the end of the first year of MUCIA, Roy Dangerfield died—no, he became ill—because then they needed to hire a replacement. By then, John Hannah was our director of the USAID agency in Washington. He had left here. Cliff [Clifton R.] Wharton [Jr.] had come here, so he was no longer president here. But I visited with him one day in Washington, and he didn't say so, but I think he called the board of directors of the thing, and said, "Hey, why don't you guys get George to be the next president and executive director of MUCIA?" So they did, and for the next seven years—and the headquarters was the

University of Illinois—I agreed to go to Illinois for one year, and then see, because they didn't want to move. They had cars, they had the bank account there, the financial officer and so forth.

Toward the end of the first year, I said, "I'm going back to Michigan State next year. For one thing, my wife is teaching part-time there, and she can't do that down here. I like to teach and I could teach up here." I had a friend in one of the departments down there, and he would let me teach a little bit down there, but, you know, I was really not part of that campus. So I told them, "I'm going back next year, and I'll stay in this job if you move the headquarters there, otherwise." So they moved the headquarters here. And in my second year, the headquarters moved into our international center here in Room 201, and that became the MUCIA headquarters for the next six years.

Charnley: So this would be, what, '69 to '75?

Axinn: It must have been—well, I did it for seven years. Because in the sixth year, at the end of the sixth year, my administrative officer, whose name was Bud Doan [phonetic], he had served as administrative officer in the international program [unclear]—is that it? I think maybe he worked in Vietnam with Ralph and Glen Taggert, and he worked in Nigeria for us for two years. He became the administrative officer of the MUCIA consortium. I was the director. I left the other administrative people down there, and the two of us managed the MUCIA consortium for six more years here.

But the end of—that would be my sixth year of it, one year down there and five years here—Bud Doan came to me and said, "You know, I've done the arithmetic. You were in the air more days than you were on the ground last year. And you were only home here in East

Lansing, something like one quarter of the time." And I figured that out, and my wife agreed—that's enough. The board used to meet once a month. It had members, two from each university. By then it had grown. One of my tasks was to expand it, so Purdue [University] had joined, and the University of Minnesota had joined, and one more—I can't remember which one. Anyway, and later Penn State joined. I told the board of directors, "Look, I'm going at the end of this year. That will be my seventh year with you, and you better recruit somebody to take my place, and you have to do that. I can't recruit him for you."

In the meantime, I was working, among other projects, was one in Nepal. I did visit projects all over, and I was very much interested in institution building as a phenomena, and there were some scholars around the United States, studying that. You know, the Nigeria project was a case of institution building for them, and I got involved with that, and we had a little, small consortium that Ralph S[Mucker?]___ helped start of two people from each of four universities, really organizing studies of institution building.

When I was in the MUCIA post, then with Essex—I think they had six or seven universities—we decided to go to AID Washington, and try to get a contract for them for an expanded program in research about institution building. I'm not telling you about my gross failures; I'm only telling you about some of my successes. After a lot of work at the several campuses and in AID Washington, they gave us a grant of a million dollars to start that center. Well, a million dollars was more in the 1970s—the 1960s that was, late sixties—and we set up a thing, which ended up at Indiana University, representing all the consortium universities, doing research on institute—I [remember ~~[unclear]~~ what we were doing technical assistance, but it was the institution-building part that they focused on. And I found myself giving speeches here and there.

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

Charnley: This is tape three of the George Axinn interview.

When the last tape ended, you were talking about Nepal and the conference.

Axinn: I'd mentioned earlier I had this project in Pakistan, and when I was visiting projects, since we had one in East Pakistan and one in West Pakistan—West Pakistan is the state of Pakistan, East Pakistan became Bangladesh—but I was always traveling from one to the other, maybe once or twice a year, always sitting on the north side of the plane so I could look at the beautiful snowcapped Himalayas out that window. And it ran through my mind that, gee, it'd be nice to go there someday.

Well, then, for one reason or another, an institution in Nepal decided to sponsor a Conference on Institution-Building, and the people in our institution-building thing were participating in it, making the program and everything. I went there to give a talk about institution building, and that was my introduction to Nepal.

It was a beautiful place. The first night that we were there, I think the whole outside team got violently ill, because you'd think people would get used to water and things like that. Well, we had eaten something in the reception they had for it, and the carpet was very rough because all of us had spent most of the night crawling from the bed to the bathroom and back on that carpet. We met very late for breakfast and discussed the fact that, yes, we'd all had the same experience. And that sort of endears you to a place.

I began to know a little bit about the Hindu culture. I'd been in and out of India, I'd had students from India and worked with them, but Nepal was different. Some of the things that were said at that conference made them give a little thought to the institutions that they had and didn't have, and they were toying with the idea they should start a School of Agriculture which would be relevant to Nepal, not teaching from old textbooks from the U.S.A. or from England, and professionalize their own agricultural research and Extension people in the kingdom of Nepal.

So they got in touch with me, really, as MUCIA and asked me to come out and discuss that with them, and I did. They wanted a team, so we assembled a team. I think there were seven people from the MUCIA consortium from different universities and seven from Nepal, and we worked together for a couple of months there—this was maybe several months after that conference, maybe a year later—and designed a new project. It was to build the so-called Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science. *Agriculture* really means the plant sciences in the British version of the Indian version of what Nepalis were using for English language. Anyway, we drafted a proposal to have this thing.

One thing you do is not start to send your young people to India, to their schools there. But that's different. And there's so many things that are unique about this mountain kingdom that we came up with a recommendation. The part of it that I was personally involved with was that it shouldn't be in Katmandu, where all of the rich people live, where there's running water, where it's not really clean, but it's relatively safe, and nobody knows much about farming.

Now, they had a little School of Agriculture, which was the name that later stayed with this institute, to train officers for their Ministry of Agriculture, and in it, it had courses. I walked there with the dean one day, and it was a class in horticulture. What they were doing is writing

on a truck—they had a Burpee's seed catalogue, and they were writing on the truck the names of varieties of tomato. First was whether you put an *e* on the end of it or just ended it with an *o*. But they were writing these varieties because the exam was to name twenty varieties of tomato. If you could name in the English language twenty varieties of tomato, you passed that test.

Well, you know, you've got to reflect back on the original rationale of President Hannah and others of why we were in this game, so I asked them, "If you were planting tomatoes here in Katmandu,"—this was in an old palace in Katmandu where, in former years, there had been a very wealthy Rana [phonetic] family living there, so there were weeds, big weeds, and a great big garden that had nothing but weeds in it and no landscaping at all except very much overgrown, and this was about on the second floor, and we could look out the window and see that.

I said, "If you were planting tomatoes here in Katmandu, what time of the year would you plant them?" Well, none of the students knew. The professor didn't know. The dean of their school didn't know. Nobody knew. I said, "Well, maybe that's too high-tech a question. In a flowerpot, like this one that you've got here, if you were going to plant the seed, how far down would you push it?" Nobody had any idea. In fact, that was all kind of irrelevant.

You see, what I discovered, and I had some training in other places with this, people with degrees in agriculture didn't get them to go in a garden in their bare feet or even with shoes on and get them dirty; they did them to get a degree.

I'd already been through an experience in Thailand on veterinary medicine, where they found that they had no veterinarians to practice. It was hard, they had unemployment, because they had a vet school, but they couldn't fill the jobs in government. Well, that's because a lot of the students were women, which they wouldn't admit to you. I went and looked in the

classroom. About half the class was women. They wanted their daughter to be a doctor, rich families, and they couldn't get into medical school, so they sent them to vet school. Now they could be a doctor. But to think that they would touch a sick animal, you know, that just wasn't in the cards. Well, that same phenomenon was there in Nepal among the professional agriculturists.

I was thinking, if you went north on the road to China, which was nearer to the Chinese government, but I thought, just one valley out of Katmandu to the next one, there was a beautiful valley where there were several rivers crossing and you could have fertile land, and on the paved road, you could get there in an hour. And the other way, there was this Palon [phonetic] Valley, a beautiful other valley with rice and other kinds of crops. It was maybe two hours' drive to the south on the road the Indians had built. It goes back to India.

I went around with the dean who was there. In fact, we even got a helicopter and visited some of these places and other campuses, because there was one other way down in the flatland of the Churai [phonetic], where it's very fertile and a good production place and much more hot and sticky, and humid than up in Katmandu, a place like that. We recommended it should not be in Katmandu, it should be in a place like that.

They started the school, and they contracted with MUCIA to come and provide technical assistance. In my role, I recruited a team leader and three other team members. The team leader was an agronomist from the University of Illinois, and about two months before he was supposed to go, the American Agronomy Society elected him as president. He phoned me and said he can't go, he could go maybe two years later, because he's been in that society all his life, and that's his professional thing, and he's not going to go. So we had a little problem.

Then the rector of the university, whose name was Mohanon Sangju—rector is like a provost here. The vice chancellor is like a president. The rector came to Michigan for some kind of meeting. It was a holiday, like the Fourth of July or something like that, and, in those days, the Kellogg Center, where he was staying, didn't serve meals on a holiday, so we had him out to our house. At that time, we were living in DeWitt. He came out to our house, and my wife was very careful and fixed him a vegetarian kind of meal, because he's a proper Hindu gentleman and everything, so the cooking was a little more of a challenge to her.

At the end of the meal, he said, "You know, George, you recommended what we should do with the school."

I said, "I didn't know there was a team." There were seven Nepalese and seven ~~[unclear].~~

He said, "Yeah, I know all that. But," he said, "you guys recommended that we shouldn't put it in Katmandu, we should put it in relatively remote, rural place, because farmers know how to farm." He said he can accept all that rationale, but he can't get anybody to go there. This was a Nepalese faculty. "If you believe what you said, put your body where your mouth is and go." But they suggested to the AID agency, "Why don't you bring George out, because we have a little problem. We recruited this guy, got him all approved and everything."

I was in Washington for some meeting, and the head of the U.S. AID mission in Nepal was there. We had lunch together, and he said, "You know, you should really go. We want you to come, and we'll support you," and all this stuff, because we had a contract between MUCIA and AID, and Michigan State was to be the lead organization, so they had quite a few people here.

I said, "You know, Nancy's teaching now in human ecology there, and she doesn't want to give up that, and I'm not going to go off for two years, at least, and leave the family here."

He said, "No, we need her on our staff," because she had done some other things that were very relevant to them. And he said, "You can both be on the team."

I said, "Well, I'm not sure that'll wash every place."

He said, "That'll be one of our conditions, but we really want you to come."

So then they wrote to MSU, and I guess it was Ralph who got the letter. He had no enthusiasm for that, and neither did the dean of Human Ecology, because Nancy then was teaching these 300 student undergraduate courses that were required, and nobody wanted to take it, and nobody else wanted to teach it, so she was teaching those. Both of our deans said, "No, you really shouldn't go." So, you know, you can't just go. We're not independent individuals.

Some time went by, and Cliff Wharton was our new president then, and he gets a message from the U.S. ambassador in Katmandu saying, "Wharton, what kind of a university are you running, where you have faculty who are willing to come to a place like this, where they're desperately needed, and you won't even let them come?"

He said, "I didn't know I didn't let them come. Let me look into it."

So he called the two deans into his office, and they each explained, and from their perspective, they were saying the right thing. And one likes to think he's valuable in that other post. But Wharton said, "Look, you must give them a choice." He said, "If they really want to go, you shouldn't hold them back for administrative reasons."

So we each had a meeting separately with our deans. Mine was not enthusiastic at all. He said, "You know, you can go if you want to. Now, I need you here, and there's going to be a price that you're going to have to pay if you go," in a sense, in my words, "I'm going to punish

you if you ever live through this thing and come back." So they gave us the weekend to think about it, and we both agreed we should go.

I had been there. I guess Nancy had been there, too. She came while we were doing this study and participated in that a little bit, privately, I mean. We paid for ourselves, for her travel out, because she wanted to see the place.

We agreed to go on a two-year assignment, and I would be the team leader of the MUCIA group and work as partner with the dean who had been my partner in doing the study. And we did. We took our son with us. He would have been in seventh and eighth grade here.

Both families thought that was terrible. "You can't take your son out of school." Our colleagues on the campus here said, "Don't you believe in education? How could you take your son out of school?" There was no school in the English language down where we were going, because they picked a remote rural valley, further than I had in mind. And I'm going like this. It's downhill, at that time a twelve-hour drive if there's no rain. If there's rain, there were two rivers you couldn't go through, so you just had to wait till the river stops. Very fertile, flat land, and they had their own reasons, in this place called Lampur in the Shiffoan (?) [phonetic] district of Nepal. Anyway, we went there for another two years of education at, you know [unclear]. I learned more in those two years.

I had told the people in MUCIA, "I'm going again for seven years. I'm not sure where I'm going, but I'm going somewhere." There was a project in Indonesia that was also a MUCIA project, and I thought I was going there, but, again, the schooling would have been very difficult, and we'd have had to send our, at that time, son and maybe younger daughter, too, to another place, like to Singapore, to school. And we didn't go there, but we decided to go to Nepal and

take this son with us. By then, our youngest daughter was finished high school, and our little boy, Billy, went with us, and we stayed there for two years in this remote rural village.

I said, "You know, I can't live in such a place without the Nepali language," because that's all the people speak there. My strategy was, the teachers have to interact with the farmers, and the farmers will teach them about farming, which they can, in turn, teach the students. Well, the farmers would actually have to come to class or, as happened, you take the class out and sit under a tree with the farmer and learn, and there was a place where there was a lot of agriculture going on.

Now, I'm talking like 1975, late '75, '76, '77. We went to Nepal for those two full years, and it was a great learning experience. My wife and I did village studies there. We had agreed in our original plan that you shouldn't have a campus in only one place because the agriculture is so different in the middle hills and up in the high mountains. So we had that one campus on the lower flatland, and we had two others—actually three in the beginning. There were two others in another place, one of them way up high in a place called Lungjung [phonetic].

To get to Lungjung, you could drive or take a bus to a certain place and walk from there two days, or you could fly to a little airstrip called Guaca [phonetic]. This was one of these in a narrow valley that's a U-shaped thing. You could only fly in and fly back the same way. The mountains there, you know, are like over 20,000 feet high, all of them. And they've got little two-engine planes, [unclear] planes, so they can make a short takeoff and landing.

Anyway, that campus was such that we could fly to Guaca, and then it was only one day's walk to get to that campus carrying your pack. But it was much more typical of what a lot of the farming places in Nepal are like than our campus down in the flatland. Anyway, we had

two very exciting years, learned a lot, published some material, got that place more—we met in the institution-building seminar, so they wanted us to build an institution that would last—

[Telephone rings. Tape recorder turned off.]

Charnley: When we ended the tape, you were talking about some of the language training, your son, and what you needed in Nepal.

Axinn: Yes.

Charnley: How did you learn the language?

Axinn: Well, this part we did only verbally. Although we learned the alphabet, you know, it's Devnagari [phonetic] script. I'm not sure whether you're familiar with that.

Charnley: No.

Axinn: *Dev* is the gods, and *nagari* is the house, so it came from the gods' home, this script. It's used in a lot of India. Hindi, Bengami, several of the other North Indian languages, and Nepali are all written with that script. And these guys drilled us, you know, with words. The first day, we learned simple things. [Demonstrates]. Well, you could answer that question. And we started with little things like that, and we worked on and on, and I got so I could make a speech in Nepali to a group of some kind, but not really very good. And we later brought one

Nepali language teacher down to Rampur with us, and he stayed a month or two and helped us polish up our Nepali.

Now, little Billy—after the first week, they gave us a little exam, like on Saturday. He took one look at the exam paper, and he said, "I didn't come all the way out here to go to school." He went down on the streets, and so, for the next three weeks, while we had our lessons, he stayed on the street in this village. His Nepali is so much better than ours. Then we got to this village, Rampur, and his Nepali gets better and better, because he's out. If he wants to talk to another kid, he's got to speak in Nepali.

When we lived at this campus in Rampur, if any visitors came from the outside world, they stayed in our compound and ate at our table, because there was no other food that they could handle. And one time, one of the visitors came there, and our son was talking to the cook or someone in Nepali, and he said to me, "Gee, your son has very good Nepali. How did he get that?"

I said, "Well, look, if you had nobody to talk to except your parents unless you talked Nepali, you'd learn Nepali, too."

Also, it was amazing from a language-learning perspective. He read like most American kids. When he had to, he read, and no more than he had to. But we had no television. The only radio you could get, mostly, was in the morning. Sometimes, early in the morning, you could get BBC in English, and that was it for entertainment. He had a little room about as big as this one in a separate unit, and ours was a little path away from that, and we had two rooms, I mean, one bedroom and one little kind of office, a desk, and things like that. We had offices there, too. But he went home to his room at night, and he could read.

We made our own electricity. We had a generator. We were also the only ones who had a refrigerator. We kept like vaccines for the whole valley, because rabies came and they needed vaccine and all kinds of stuff like that. But anyway, he learned the language very well. Then he came back here—that would have been seventh and eighth grades—he was ready for high school.

Anyway, one other reading story. People would send us books. You know, *Time* magazine would come like three or four weeks late, but that didn't make any difference. And someone sent us *Roots*, which, as you know, is a big, thick book. Nancy and I were both busy, so we gave Billy that, and he was finding something to read. He read it in about two days or three. He really got into it, and he read it. Well, here's this eighth grader, he would read whatever he could get his hands on. He learned a lot of other stuff, too, but in terms of language learning, his Nepali was better than ours, much better than ours was, because he spoke it every day. It was that or nothing. And our Nepali language improved, but I can mix two stories in one in terms of language learning.

We came back here to Michigan State, and I did a variety of things, and then the Food and Agricultural Organization, the United Nations, was looking for a new country head for FAO in Nepal, and they had a Washington office. I knew the guy who was in their Washington office, and I was in Washington then. I was getting money from AID and other places for various projects here at MSU, and I stopped at his office just to chat one morning. He said, "Hey, George, how would you like to go back to Nepal?"

I said, "If you have a job as sweeper back in Katmandu, I'd be glad to take it." Those were tough financial times here, anyway, and other things. So one thing led to another, and I went to Nepal.

Michigan State would only give you a two-year leave of absence. By that time, my home base was the College of Agriculture, which it had been academically all along, although I was working for International Studies and Programs, and they gave me leave for two years to go there. FAO asked me to stay a third year, and I wrote and asked if they would give me an Extension for the third year. I never got an answer, and the third year was starting. And I came back and talked to our dean, Anderson then, in Agriculture, and I said, "Well, why didn't you ever answer my letter?"

He said, "You know I can't answer your letter, because we're only allowed to give two years leave of absence. But if you'll promise to come back at the end of the third, we'll save your professorship." And it was in that period that I moved my professorship from Ag Econ, where it had been for a while—I was not really part of that department, but I had studied a lot of economics—and shifted it to Resource Development, who was doing more of the kind of things that I was interested in. Anyway, so when we came back from the three years, then, in Nepal with FAO—I've skipped ahead to that—then I came back to the Resource Development Department here.

Charnley: Did you return to teaching?

Axinn: Yes. Well, I was teaching them all along. That's one reason I wanted to stay here. I was teaching, in a sense, too, to Extension, personnel development. And I had split it, because we had so many foreign students then that I was teaching really one International, how agricultural—we call it Cooperative Extension here. Then they called it Agricultural Extension—how Agricultural Extension is done globally. So I had a separate section for that.

So then when I came back here—I mean, when I came back from the Nigeria experience—I made a deal with the College of Education, because they had adult continuing education as a unit then, and I was allowed to teach my international Extension course in that college, which I did for some time. Then Ag Economics wanted a course in administration, and I had developed a course in administration, so I offered that course through Agriculture. It was Administration of International Activities or something like that, it was called. It was international administration, same principles as you used anywhere. So I taught that in Ag Econ and the other one in Education, and, of course, I left them both when I went to Nepal. That was going to be three years, and that would stop that. So I worked on Nepali language and other things, and learned a lot about the United Nations.

And in remuneration, I did village studies. That was part of our arrangement there, that we wanted everybody to get out in the village and learn from the farmers, so I had to demonstrate that by organizing groups of students who would go and interview farmers. I had to teach them how to do that. And faculty would have their students go out in the village and sit in a circle of farmers and try to give them the information they were getting in their classroom on the campus. The same with the teachers. We'd try to involve them as much as possible.

Well, we came back with a mountain of data about farms and how farming systems of different sizes really work, and I got very much involved in that. Two years before that, I had been working with that and, you know, actual studies and programs with getting funds for various things, and we'd gotten some funds for research about farms as systems, but anyway, on return, I wrote more stuff on that. There was a National Association of Farming Systems Research and Extension. I became active in it. We had a journal called the *Journal of Farming Systems Research/Extension*, and the editor of the journal, who was down in Tucson, left, and

they had no editor, so I got recruited as editor. So for several years, I was the editor of that journal.

Charnley: But you did the editing up here?

Axinn: I did the editing up here, and then I did the editing from Tucson a little, so maybe I have the timing a little bit off. Yes, I did the editing. I did it all personally, yes. Up here, my department's tech people had helped me format the thing, because we had zero staff. It was printed in the Philippines at Los Baños. He helped me get it on my computer, the pages just right, so I could take the manuscript that came in, reformat it—it was a two-column format anyway—on a six-by-nine publication. And I edited that journal from here and did all the correspondence relating thereto, and then mailed—it was sent by DHL, which covers Manila as well as Lansing—the photo-ready copy to Manila, where it was printed and distributed globally.

But then, after—I can't remember now exactly—maybe two or three years back here, teaching now in the Resource Development Department and editing that journal and doing other things, I pulled my two courses back from these other two departments and put RD numbers on them and got them approved by six curriculum committees and started teaching them there. Then I got a phone call one day from the Indian consulate in New Delhi.

Well, let me interrupt my own story and tell you something else. In my times at MSU, I did a lot of international sort of consulting here and there on different topics, institution-building for a while and other things. And after my three years with FAO in Nepal, the government of India was having a big fight with the World Bank over their agricultural Extension system, because the World Bank was giving a lot of money for a program I didn't like and had published

an article about it that the World Bank didn't like, here. But the government of India came and told me they have to do this study and they would like me to come out and do it, and again, Michigan State was very good in my department. Well, I asked them, "Is the World Bank paying for this?"

They said, "No, the World Bank isn't paying for this. We'll pay for it, but, you know, we really don't have money to give you any kind of an honorarium that they do."

I said, "If you'll cover all my travel expenses on India Airlines," which I don't really recommend, or Air India ~~[unclear],~~ "they will do that," my living and travel expenses. And my department said, "Here. Okay. You can go." It was going to be like three months. "You can go. We'll keep you on salary and be ~~[unclear]."~~ And that's what I did. I did the study for them, which made them happy, made the World Bank even more angry, which I didn't mind at all, and I returned here and taught.

But then I got a phone call one day from the government of India. No, it was really from FAO Headquarters in Rome. The government of India had asked them, because they were replacing their FAO representative, and they would like FAO to send me. And I said, "I'm sorry. I'm over your retirement age there." I was sixty-plus then. "And I can't go, and anyway, you need a younger man," blah, blah, blah.

They said, "They've talked this over with the director general. This is the first time the government of India has ever asked for an American to be their head of mission in an United Nations mission. We think you ought to go."

So this time I said okay, and here, my department, this time it wasn't going to cost them anything. I was going to go for two years, and they'll save salary money for two years. It didn't bother them at all. I got another guy on campus to teach one of my courses, and he left his

department and is now part of our department. So for two years, then, I worked—not much Hindi but a little Hindi.

At one point, I started telling you that, when I was in my FAO job, I went for three years to the state capital in Katmandu. I got a new language teacher, and he talked with me the first morning. You know, the office opened like at nine, so I met him every morning at eight in my office. And he said, "You know, you're talking bush Nepali. That won't work here. Here you need M(?)_____ Nepali. This is for the ministries of government, a more Sanskritized version."

I said, "Do I have to, because that's the conversation—?"

"No, no, no. We want you to do it."

So, anyway, I learned Nepali, the bush Nepali and then the better Nepalian. And the one thing that he made me do—because you asked about language—he helped me learn to read, and I wanted to read, but the newspapers, they were too Sanskritized, you know. They didn't have a fresh? [unclear] formula or anything like short sentences and small words. The journalist would make it as elegant as he could. But he was clever, now. He got me children's books, first-year children's readers, some of the fairy tales very similar to ours, and I worked on those maybe for a year, and it helped a lot.

Do you have any other question about anything in this?

Charnley: Well, yes. Did you have any contacts with Sylvan Wentworth [phonetic] at all? Whitworth?

Axinn: Yes. Well, I knew him when he was here in Agriculture. Is this machine on or not?

Charnley: It is.

Axinn: I see. When I was with the consortium, in the MUCIA days—I guess before I had been to Nepal, so I was still working full time for the consortium. In Bangladesh, they had a school at a place called Mymensingh, and they wanted an agricultural college ~~[unclear]~~. They wanted to have it improved, and they wanted me to come out with a team of two agriculturalists and advise them on how to do that, and MUCIA would see whether we could finance a project there.

I asked Michigan State for someone on the agricultural research side, and I really wanted Sylvan Wentworth. Well, they had another gentleman who worked on animal science, mostly, who was like the associate director, and he wanted to go. And I think ~~Wentworth~~ was busy with another thing, and they suggested to send him. And I said no—I lost some friends there—that it was really Wentworth we needed because this is a crop area, it's mostly rice growing that we're doing, and we don't have, really, too many people who know much about rice growing, but Sylvan had seen it and knew about it, and he was an agronomist type.

Then the third person didn't materialize. So Sylvan Wentworth and I flew to Dhaka in Bangladesh, and then we went up to Mymensingh, this remote rural place, and we stayed there a few weeks and carried out that study and got better acquainted personally.

Charnley: How about [M.] Peter McPherson, when he was the AID director? Did you have any contact at all?

Axinn: No, not at all, so I can't speak with any authority on that. By that time, I was out of the AID business. I was not working on projects for AID, I was working for the United Nations and FAO, and I learned an awful lot. First of all, I was reluctant, you know. Here I work with the

sort of security blanket of MSU, to say nothing of the U.S. government, for little things like health insurance and travel costs and per diem, or whatever you're going to call it, and all those things, to say nothing of a salary, and I was a little bit squeamish.

When I first went to FAO headquarters in Rome—this was for the first assignment in Nepal—I was here—

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

Charnley: You were talking about U.N. and FAO.

Axinn: Yes, FAO, or United Nations. It's all part of the same family.

Are we resuming?

Charnley: Yes.

Axinn: The FAO director general, if I'm going to go as his representative—it turns out the FAO representative in a country is like the ambassador for FAO, like the ambassadors that we send. The president picks him, he comes as the personal representative of the president, and he serves at the discretion of the president. In other words, I would be going to FAO to serve at the discretion of the director general. At any given day, he could say, "Axinn, go home," and I would quickly pack and go. That's the rule for all ambassadors officially, and that's what this job was.

They said, "When can you go?" and, "They want you to come as soon as possible." I flew from here to Rome, got in at night, stayed in a *pension* not too far from FAO, which is near the Coliseum, right in the downtown part of Rome. I saw some other people in the morning, then they took me to meet the director general. I had a nice chat with him.

Before I left, my wife made me buy a new suit at Jacobson's ~~[phonetic]~~, you know? I'm for casual clothes, and I wear nothing but jeans now in my incarnation, but she took me over there and bought me a suit, and I was wearing that suit. I stood at the director general's desk—he was seated before he even asked me to sit down—and I was saying, you know, "I've come at your request. I'm not sure that I'm the right person."

He said, "One look at you, and I can see you're the right person. Sit down." I had produced at least one book that I thought was relevant, and that was lying on his desk already and some other things, but we had a nice discussion.

It took me some weeks here, but I went to Nepal with my second assignment there for three years—again, this was for two years, but I stayed into a third—as the FAO representative. I learned a lot about the United Nations system and a lot more about Nepal.

Now I've traveled all over that kingdom and worked with all the ministers of government. We had a minister of supply, concerned with food supply and other supply things, and I learned a lot about food security. I worked with the Ministry of Health and with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture, again, a great learning experience.

At the end of those three years, I came back in Resource Development and was teaching there. It was after that that I went for two more years to India, again as their FAO representative. I'd been to India doing studies for them for that government. Then I went as the FAO representative for two years, and by that time, I really was over their age, because when I came

back, I was maybe sixty-five or something. In fact, I must have been sixty-five, because at age sixty-four, I was playing tennis, among other things in India, at the Delhi Gymkhana Club, a beautiful place with grass courts, nicer than they have in London at Wimbleton, because labor is cheaper, and my partner said, one of my tennis-playing partners, says, "Look, we can enter the tournament in the sixty-five-and-older category."

I said, "But I'm not sixty-five."

He said, "We don't count age that way here," which I really knew. You're two years old at your first birthday, and when you're born, you're one year old. After a year, you're two years old. "So by our system, you are now sixty-five, and we can play in the sixty-five and overs," and we did.

Anyway, those were two great years but tough, in that my wife and I were both getting older, there are all kind of intestinal diseases that one gets, we've had them all. We had them all in Nepal, where there were ways of treating them. We had some of them in Nigeria before that, and we had more malaria in Nigeria, some malaria where we lived in Nepal. But hookworms and roundworms, flatworms, and pinworms are there.

We came back here, to MSU, on many occasions from these various places, and the MSU medical people were very good to me right from the beginning. I mean, the first trip to Nigeria, and now we're going back to 1960, Dr. Feurig [phonetic] was our team physician and head of our clinical whatever, and he did all of the examination himself and made sure, and once a year, MSU gave me a full physical just to keep me alive, and FAO did the same thing.

Charnley: That's a part of international study we don't think about, are the impact on faculty and students, that reality.

Axinn: Yes. There's an awful lot of that, the illness, you know, people dying. I told you about one case with malaria. Things happen, people do get sick, and you've got to keep well. When I was bringing short-termers in my MSU jobs and in my FAO jobs, you know, to come for a week or two weeks and do some technical thing, I spent a lot of time with them on the first day, you know? And if anybody gives you water, if it doesn't come out of a sealed bottle, don't drink it. It's better not to drink it anyway. If anybody gives you tea, make sure it's hot when you get it, and you can't lift it in the middle of the glass, you have to lift the top of the glass, because if it's not that hot, don't drink it.

If they offer you coffee, tell them to forget it, because they just made it recently, and the amoebae and the giardiae that are in there—but as the years went by, we got better drugs, not so much the U.S.A. but in India now there are much better drugs for those kind of intestinal disorders. In Nigeria, I hardly remember any sick days. In Nepal, I had more sick days when I couldn't work, one really bad episode for a week or more. In India, yes, I would get sick some days and couldn't work, not too often. At the end of the two years there, of course, FAO said, "We want you to stay one more year," and I said no.

When I went back to Lomond, to their physical, with their annual physical, this time their own medical office sent a thing to—I'm whispering when I say this—to our administrative office there, to the director general, saying that, "He's not fit for further service in India." And I fooled them, because I'm still alive. But yes, the health thing. And also, this Department of Resource Development was growing, evolving, and we had started two international courses there within it, and I had grad students. In my India assignment, some of my grad students from here went to India and did their thesis or dissertation research there.

Anyway, I came back here and started teaching. My wife and I produced a book on international development called *Collaboration in International Rural Development*, because what we'd really come to is the key essence of collaboration. That is, if people come from a place that is—quote—"advanced technically" or other ways want to interact with people who are not and figure out ways to make life better in that other place, if they collaborate as full partners, each one at the table because they know the other has something to offer and each one willing to give the other something, in genuine collaboration, the thing can work. If you know the answers before you go there, don't go. Anyway, we produced this book, and I had just started using it as a textbook, maybe the first semester, and someone knocked on my door and said, "Would you be interested in teaching on the virtual university?"

I said, "What's the virtual university?" Well, I wasn't afraid of new things. I came here doing television. They explained the virtual university, and really, it wasn't because of anything about George or his topic ~~[unclear]~~ or anything. They wanted people to use the textbook that they had written and therefore had the copywrite rules, because when they're going to put it on the Internet, they want to be protected.

"Okay," I said. "Well, how do you do it?"

They were very good in the VU and the producer worked with me, and this is the fifth year, I guess. So that must have been five years ago. I may be wrong by half a year. I worked with a producer, and I really took that same course and modified it and made it into an Internet course. We simulated a conversation roundtable like this one, in which max of a dozen students, ideally maybe seven or eight students, and a professor sit around once a week and discuss the assigned readings, and the lectures really are converted to lessons on the Internet that week, and there are questions there, and they all respond. Each student does a term paper, and each student

does a book review of a current book and all that. So it's a very interactive exercise, both for the students and for me, even more than in some of those classes where you meet once a week for a three-hour seminar.

Anyway, in the first semester that the course was on-line, I did a separate section in a classroom here and the other one on-line. Then I went down to Arizona and did one just completely on line and never have been in a classroom again, to teach again.

Charnley: Yes. It's interesting, how the media has changed, and yet, some of the same things that brought you here to this university, and you're still on the cutting edge.

Axinn: Yes, exactly. Well, you know, for an older professor, there's a lot of advantage to teaching on the Internet. You don't have to get up as early or travel to the place. You don't have to go through snow ever and things like that. It's in your own study that you do your class. But other things. I found, in the seminar rooms, in the latter years, I would want to be saying something simple like, you know, "Grand Rapids is west of here, as you all know," but I would say "east" instead of "west." Then I would get a grad assistant to sit on the opposite side and give me a little signal when I've said something backwards. I could pay them, but they wouldn't do it. So then my wife used to sometimes come to the class. She would not only interrupt me, but she would explain to them what I was trying to explain to them, not so well.

But on the Internet, we're having a weekly conversation—I try to react every day. I'm on-line every day—and when a student puts something on, I will give them some feedback, positive reinforcement for them and something for the other students, and I would try to ask them some questions or say, "What do other students think about this?" or, "Has anybody had a different

view?" Very interactive. Then we have the e-mail, so that if a student—like I got one while I was here. She's having some family problems. She's going to have to take a deferred grade this semester.

Well, they don't have to put that in the conversation, they put that on an e-mail to me. Or if a student puts something in the conversation that had really missed the point completely, then I'll send them an e-mail and say, "Why don't you check page 134 in the text, and, related to your question, maybe you could modify your response a little bit." I'd send that just personally. Sometimes, the students send me little thank-you letters saying, "Good."

Charnley: Then they can edit.

Axinn: Then they put the correct thing on the page where everybody can see it.

Charnley: They can edit.

Axinn: And whenever I post anything, I type it into a little box—you're probably familiar with those—and then I proofread it. Then I click, and it'll give me a preview of what it's going to look like on the page. I proofread it again, and then only do I post that item. You know, you can't do that in a give-and-take across the room.

Charnley: No. No. And normally, the e-mail is stream of consciousness and not much care to editing.

Axinn: The flip side, it's very good for students, particularly students for whom English is not their first language. In a seminar room, they might make notes, some even take a tape recorder, but they usually don't say anything, and they don't ask questions. On the Internet, where they have plenty of time to do whatever they do, they will ask questions. I've had Thai women—women are usually very polite, and Thai women especially, they'll sit there quietly and say nothing except solid econ. But in the classroom on the Internet, they will say, "Both of you have said something in this last lesson that I don't think would work in Thailand at all, and here's the reason why," and she'll say it. I find that every semester that I'm teaching it, to the thirteenth semester right now.

We're in our eleventh week, and next semester will be my fourteenth. Some day, I'm going to stop. I'm not sure. It's getting closer.

But it's got many advantages, and, gee, you don't have to have bricks, you don't need a classroom, you don't have dormitories, you don't have food service, none of those things are involved. A student has to do the work, and they have to demonstrate it. They each write a term paper.

Now, we have special ways of dealing with exams at the Virtual University to take care of it. Everything is public, just like a seminar room. Everybody sees everybody else's stuff. That keeps them all in it. If you don't say anything for a day or two, the other students know you didn't say anything for a day or two. They post the term paper in two pieces, the description and then the analysis. Everybody can read everybody else's description. They can say, "Well, you didn't say anything about What's-his-name in yours." They talk back and forth, and I can read it all, I can get into it.

At the end, they post their final paper, and they get a grade. And not so much, maybe, with graduate students, but for somebody with undergraduates, nobody's parent's going to come and sue the university, because I can show, for every lesson, what their kid did and what everybody else did.

Charnley: You've got it. Forward it by e-mail. I'm interested. Was there anytime when you actually had a retirement from Michigan State?

Axinn: Yes. I wasn't here, I was in Arizona. We came back from India in 1991. It was the end of our quarter system. We ended up one more year of the quarter system. And I was then teaching here, from the very first semester in the fall and in the spring but not the winter. So our son Paul, who lives in Tucson, invited us to come down for a couple of weeks. You know, we've got snow. We've lived in the tropics so much, we weren't as used to snow as we used to be, and even in our house in East Lansing, where there was a mailbox right across the street, walking out and sliding and falling in the snow was just not for us, either my wife or I.

Anyway, we spent two weeks there that year, and the next year, we went for about four weeks, and the third year, we went for two months. We rented a little house. The fourth year, we bought a house down there. Then, for a couple of years, we kept two houses, one here and one there. Then we sold our East Lansing house about a year ago, and the last two years, we were full-time residents in Tucson and have been coming back once a year for a couple weeks to touch base with the department and the VU.

The year that I formally retired, to answer your question—now we're going back about seven years ago—every year, they have a luncheon for retirees, and my department had wanted

me to come, but I wasn't about to fly all the way up for that. So she made a little speech or something, or made a scribble, as she's supposed to, and this year, last week, my department had a little social thing because they knew I had completed fifty years at Michigan State. So they made a little plaque for the fifty years of academic something-or-other at Michigan State University, and they gave me that. So now I'm in my fifty-first year.

Charnley: Amazing.

Axinn: Also, my wife and I did make a little grant to the department for a grad student. It's a fellowship thing that we've established. So we gave some money to the university for that, and we got another little plaque this time with no speeches saying that we're members of the John Hanna Society for something. I think it's for money giving, but they don't say it.

Anyway, that answers your question.

Charnley: In looking at your career, after you first came to Michigan State, did you anticipate that you would be here fifty years?

Axinn: No. As a matter of fact, I've mentioned we'd been several places before that, and when we got to our little house on Division Street, my wife still had the curtains from our last house in Delaware, but she did not adjust them for the windows because she thought if she makes them higher, every year we go to a different place, or every two years, she's not going to waste her time and energy adjusting the curtains. She left them that way. That was fifty-one years ago.

Charnley: And you had that house—

Axinn: Well, we had that house for six or seven years. We moved into another house and then a third house. Going overseas and keeping a house here is a little bit of a problem. We did that once or twice, and then we got out of that business. But the truth is, to answer your question, no. We had no idea we'd still be here that long.

And I didn't expect—I thought, naively, that I got my education and my training by being a degree student at various levels in various places, not that I would learn much more doing the job that I've had. So, as I say, Michigan State provided me this tremendous education over the years, and I didn't pay tuition. And look, they're allowing me to teach on the Virtual University on the Internet. I've learned an awful lot about that. I didn't have to pay tuition for any of that, but I'm grateful.

Charnley: That's interesting. Is there anything that you can—well, you, maybe, alluded a little bit to it, but in looking back at your experience here, that stands out maybe more than anything?

Axinn: Well, certainly the Nigeria experience was a major change in our whole life, for myself and my wife and our kids, for that matter. Our whole lives were changed in direction and in depth and in perception of the world around us. When I came back from that seven years, I was more than seven years older, and I'd learned an awful lot, and it had definitely changed my life.

For one thing, you know, when I walked across this campus to meet President Anna and he told me about Nigeria, my focus was on Extension in Michigan. I got to every county at least once every year, I knew most of the Extension agents, not only by first name but I knew their

wives and families because I was having lunch with them or something like that, and I was really trying to save the world through agricultural Extension.

I was beginning to learn that we had what I called then a well-carpeted rut, that the world was changing faster than we were, and we were staying in our rut, and that every year in Michigan since I first came, there were less people farming. More farms had gone out of business. And the commitment to large-scale, one-crop-at-a-time, commercial agriculture was destroying rural life in America.

Now, I couldn't say that in my college then. My colleagues would have killed me. But then I got exposed overseas to what rural life in America had been 100-and-some years before that and what it still was in places like Nigeria and Nepal, and I realized, in my India experience, trying to cope with food security for—they had a billion people when I was there, although they didn't claim that much because China politically had a billion, and they didn't want to be in another fuss with China that they didn't need—but working on national food security and things like that, I became increasingly convinced you don't solve the food problem by producing more. I know you mentioned Sylvan Wentworth, a great scholar, and I traveled with him. He, like me earlier, we really believed that you could solve the world's problem by getting rid of poverty and making life better by producing more food, and I learned painfully that, you know, that's one part. And I had courses in marketing here, but I never really paid that much attention. You've got to somehow put it in a form and in a place at a time when people can get it.

But then this entitlement, and we didn't talk about entitlement. Who's entitled to eat? I think still we don't talk about that much. I would argue with our present government and both parties, "You ought to spend more time on entitlement than on these other things."

McDonald's can have a sign that they sold a billion hamburgers. Today, if you don't have ninety-nine cents, you don't get one. It doesn't make any difference about all this other stuff. You're not entitled to one.

You know, I work in Tucson now, and I spend two days a week with homeless people on the south side of Tucson who are hungry, and it's a different approach to food security than I used to take. And that number is increasing. I've been working about four years with them on it, and the numbers are greater every year. And that's not different from the daily ~~[unclear]~~ newspa. If you look at the *New York Times* and you look at the op ed page, they're laying this out pretty clearly these days. The few are getting richer and richer and richer. The bulk are getting relatively poorer and more hungry and larger in numbers.

Well, that's the thing we dealt with in Nigeria and tried to solve and in Nepal and in India, and to come back to America and to see that kind of thing—at any rate, I would say the watershed was Nigeria. Before that, we were believers in capitalism and if it's profitable, if the bottom line shows a profit, it's good. We learned it's good for some but not for all. Now, you know, other people have learned that staying in this country, but we grew up in farming families, where if you ~~produced~~ could more, that was your contribution to the human condition. Now we're faced with things like thousands of Mexican farmers going out of business producing rice because they can't compete with the cheap ~~with the cheap~~, mass-produced U.S. rice, which is subsidized by my tax money so that it's cheaper than what they can produce.

Now, Henry David Thoreau, one time, wouldn't pay his taxes because he didn't like what the U.S. government was doing, and he went to Walden Pond. In fact, he went to jail, and one of his friends bailed him out, and he was angry at that friend for bailing him out. I had read and used Thoreau in classes over the years, but I never faced the reality of what Thoreau was

concerned about and what drove him to Walden Pond until the Nigeria experience, which was then reinforced by the other ones overseas.

Now, I'm giving you one thing to change it. Probably the day that John Hanna said, "We need you in Nigeria," and, you know, in my mind, "Where's Nigeria?" that's probably the biggest watershed.

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

Axinn: Well, I thank you for giving me the opportunity, and I feel a little badly that I've wasted too much of your time with my words.

Charnley: Not at all. Thank you again.

[End of interview]

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