Tom Coyne and the WMU Presidents

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WMU Alum and VP Emeritus for Student Services Thomas Coyne

Tuesday September 20th at 2:14 PM

At the Zhang Legacy Collections Center

_Cassie_: Today is Tuesday, September 20th at 2:14 PM. This is Cassie Kotrch interviewing with Tom Coyne today. Can you spell your name?

_Tom_: My name is Thomas E. Coyne. C-O-Y-N-E.

_Cassie_: And what is your connection to WMU?

_Tom_: My connection with WMU is I go back to 1951. I've had the privilege of knowing all of the presidents at Western Michigan University, except for Dwight Waldo. I have the greater privilege of having had, as instructors, at Western Michigan College of Education men who had been hired by Waldo and who had tales about Dwight Waldo.

I'm originally from Chicago, Illinois. I came to Kalamazoo, Michigan totally by accident. I was a runner at my high school, St. Ignatius High School in Chicago and had been turned down for a scholarship at Marquette, but I decided to go to Loyola.

However, the summer of 1951, I won a five mile road race in Chicago and a walker by the name of Bill Mahalo, who was quite well known at the time, asked me where I was going to college and I told him I was gonna go to Loyola.

And he said, “Oh no, you have to go to Western Michigan. I’ll get you a scholarship there and a job paying room, board, books, fees and tuition and $50 a month for your work.” I was obviously delighted. So, and even though I had never heard of Kalamazoo, in fact I thought Kalamazoo was a name of a community crafted by Jack Benny, the comedian. Like Anaheim, Azusa, and Cucamonga, all of which, as it turns out, are real colleges too.

However, and I applied for admission, came to Western. The first person to see me was the then basketball coach who showed me around the campus and I liked it. But when I came to campus, the track coach, Clayton Moss, a fine gentleman in every respect, quickly took care
of my room, board, books, fees and tuition and saying “None of that is possible. Bill Mahalo has no connection with Western, he has no right to offer you anything like that, we don't do it.” But he said, “If you want to stay, all of the students in that time, 1951, were getting state board scholarships.” Which were provided I presume because they thought we were all gonna be teachers ultimately, and they paid half of our tuition.

I had been caddying and making money over my high school years. So, I had the money to pay for my room and board. I’m embarrassed now to tell you what my tuition was because you’re a student now and you’ll probably reach over and hit me once I tell you, so I won't do that. (Cassie laughs)

But I was a very homesick individual since I’d never been away from my home. For the first few days, I was not running well with the practice, I felt it was just gonna be a lost cause. I even wrote that way back to my mom and dad, but I won the first cross country meet I was in and after that life picked up very nicely.

I received, at Western, a wonderful education. I didn't realize how really good it was until I went for my Master’s degree in history at the University of Michigan and I found myself quite able to work in that program based on the excellent teaching I had by people like Dr. James O'Connell’s and Charles Starring and wonderful people, wonderful educators.

Well most importantly though, the best part of going to Western Michigan. In Charles Styron’s American history class my sophomore year, I walked in the side door because it was in what is now Seibert Hall but was then the brand new administration building and the main corridor was classrooms, they were not offices etc.

I walked into the American history class and in the far right hand corner was a beautiful blonde with a white turtleneck sweater. When I heard her French accent, I was even more captivated. For an entire semester, I tried to make an impression on her with limited to no success. I found out her name was Monique, I found out she had immigrated from France with her parents and she was also a sophomore.

She transferred out of the class at the end of the semester, going to Russell Seibert’s American history class. But I did find out that a year later she was working as a librarian in where the library was, which is now the predecessor or former Waldo Library. So I spent a lot of time there studying at night.

But she would not go out with me until my former girlfriend, who was also working there as a student librarian, assured her it was all over between us. So she agreed to go out with me, March 27th 1954, and went well from then on. So we were married upon graduation August 27th 1955.
Western not only gave me the most wonderful woman in the world but a great education, so I have nothing but great memories. I got my masters at U of M in a one year program that they had. Monique was teaching at Holly high school, French and English, not bad for someone not even a citizen yet.

And we then went back to Chicago. I worked two different jobs in Chicago, in the construction industry and in the paper industry. And then I was involved with the Alumni Association for Western. I was on the board of directors of the Alumni Association, and in 1962 the position of Director of Alumni Relations came up.

So I applied for it, interviewed with Dr. Faunce, Student Services Vice President, and was hired. We moved back into 717 Oakland Drive in August of 1962. Well, 717 Oakland Drive by the way, is right directly across the street from the Little Theater. It doesn't exist now, it's a bunch of pine trees.

But I worked as Alumni Director from ‘62 to ‘66. Then President James Miller asked me to be his administrative assistant because his former assistant was going on to become president of…Dr. John Proust. I was delighted cause Jim Miller was quite a good character and I worked for him from ’66 to ’70.

In 1970, he appointed me to Vice President for Student Services, and I worked in that position, officially retiring in January of 1992. But I actually walked out the door December of ‘90. I was on a year’s leave of absence. So that’s why I always say I go back to 1951.

I had classes in what is now Heritage Hall. I’ve walked that campus many times. I’ve lived in two different houses, now both gone, on East Campus. And so my memories of Western are not only positive, but they’re a delight to have. Now, I’ll let you ask your questions.

**Cassie:** Yeah, so I’m wondering, you say you go back to 1951, correct? What was your earliest memory of East Campus?

**Tom:** Walking into the basement of what is now Heritage Hall for a history class. A history class taught by Dr. Stanley Idzerda, who was only at Western for one year, was a superb teacher and in my memory, probably one of the very best history teachers I’ve ever had, and I’ve had some good ones.

I argued with Dr. Idzerda every day of that class for two semesters. Never won an argument, but it was wonderful. He taught history and made it alive. He left us to go to Michigan State, stayed with them for about a year, and ultimately was the president of at least two colleges, and then finally, the executive director of the Lafayette Association in Washington DC.

So that’s my first memory, going down into the basement, sitting in a classroom, pipes across the entire length of the floor. Not just the classroom, but the entire length of floor, that every so often would just make noise. And it was a building growing old then, Heritage Hall now, the original East Hall.

And at that time it was not the East Hall, it was the administration building.
Cassie: Right.

Tom: Heritage Hall is magnificent in its architecture and is a living example of what the Friends of East Campus wanted. They wanted a restored building. And they wanted what Heritage Hall is now, but they wanted it for all the buildings on that campus.

When they tore down the library, they destroyed one of the greatest reading rooms, that could also have passed as a ballroom. Because it was long, had this curved roof, had these magnificent, large paintings with great frames from the AM Todd collection. It would have been a perfect ballroom, and it was a perfect reading room.

So I spent a lot of time there, and justifiably. They had the most comfortable chairs you’ve ever met in your life. They had a big table about the size of these two, a series of them, a whole big table, really comfortable wooden chairs, and quiet, studious, and it was a great place to be.

The exterior of the area was not particularly impressive. It was a parking lot, it was a quadrangle parking lot. You had, as you came up to the curved driveway on the left-hand side, the speech and hearing building. Then beyond it was a science building, natural science building. Beyond it, directly on the end facing you was the library, and on the right-hand side, administration building which had on one end, a gymnasium and a running track, a very nice hanging running track. And then on the other end, what they then called the Campus School. Because Western, true to its role as a teacher training school, had classes there for elementary school up through high school and the education students were using those, they were the student teachers. So that was very good.

So exterior wise, there’s more green space now than there was then. There were lots of stories, Walwood Hall and Walwood Union existed. And Walwood Union was, in fact, a really good union. Now when I came back in 1962, Walwood Union was where the alumni office was, on the second floor of Walwood Union looking out over Oakland Drive.

And in a way, I had it perfect. I could walk right to my office. It was a negative at one point, because after dinner at night, I would find myself going back to my office to work more. But it was a hall that was memorable because a lot of Western history was in it.

And consciously or unconsciously, it was there. When you walked into Walwood, then Walwood Union, Walwood Hall was basically off limits cause it was a girl’s hall. Still exists on that left-hand corner, the names of all the young men who died in World War II, and it was a reminder of what had happened.

I came in ’51, the Korean War was wrapping up. But there were stories even then of the World War II days when the V-5 and V-12 guys were on our campus. When they arrived on campus, the brand new Walwood Hall, 1939, all the girls there were booted out to provide housing for the boys, the men that were V-12 and V-5.
And so it was kind of a brief introduction, but then they got the hall back. There was a place, a juncture between Walwood Hall, the residence hall and Walwood Union, called Walwood Commons. And it was used for both meeting rooms and for dining, banquets, etc. The Friends of East Campus, the board of directors met there most of the time in that Walwood Commons area.

It was a contained campus. The East Campus did exist. In fact, in my sophomore year, '52, I had my first classes in what is now Seibert Hall, what was then the administration building, because the administration moved over from the East Campus. At the time in my freshman year, the administration, you could see it in that corner of the main floor.

But there were a lot of stories about the setting, most of which I learned, frankly, after I graduated, when I became alumni director and I had the privilege of working with older graduates, but I did know the one classic story that you may or may not know. You’re a student at Western, right?

Cassie: Mm-hmm.

Tom: Are you a coed? Now there's a reason for asking that. Have you been kissed by your boyfriend under the light by the pillars on East Hall?

Cassie: No.

Tom: Then you’re not a coed. That's the rumor that you didn't become a Western Michigan coed until you were kissed by your boyfriend under the light by those coeds.

Cassie: Well, I guess we’ll have to go over there now before I graduate.

Tom: You definitely have to go there. Tell him he's got to take you.

Cassie: Yeah, the one I hear about the most is don't step on the W in what is now Waldo Library. If you step on the W then you’re cursed, that’s what.

Tom: Okay all right, that’s a newer tradition, that’s a newer tradition. But Waldo Library, as I said, is a true library, was really good. And they had classes in the basement by the way. I also had some business classes down there. I had business classes down there. But classes were all over, for example, the football stadium press box, behind the press box is a parking lot.

But that parking lot, it was not a parking lot, it was a site for free, temporary, what they called temporary buildings that were more than temporary that housed the college of business classes. And not all of them, but some of them. Okay, I’ll let you go again.

Cassie: Sorry, I did have a question that I just thought of because we talked a bit about some of the buildings and such, but you also said that you lived on campus. Where did you live and what did that look like?
**Tom:** Oh, where did I live? I lived on the East Campus and I lived for all four years in Smith Burnham Hall and the reason I stayed there for four years was for three of them, I was a residence hall, an RA, residence hall assistant. The Burnhams, Draper/Siedschlag had been built about the prior to building what is now Sangren Hall.

Kanley Chapel was up and Sangren Hall was being built. They hadn't built Sangren and they hadn't built the Bernhard Center, that was the wooded area down there. None of the valley halls were existent then. So I lived in Smith Burnham, Ernest Burnham, the halls on the East Campus along Oakland Drive, Draper/Siedschlag and Vandercook and Spindler Hall.

Now, Spindler Hall was special because it had male and female students, graduate students and they had their own kitchens, one kitchen that they could cook their meal in. Vandercook Hall was known as hungry hall because it had no kitchen at all. The Burnhams and Draper/Siedschlag had a common cafeteria, basically what you’d have to call it because both of them had their separate eating facilities, and they were strictly single sex.

In fact one of the stories that you always wanna remember from those days, and you should ask people about, the girls had hours, it was a double standard completely. The girls had hours, boys did not have hours. The girls had to be in at 10:30 on weekdays and I think they could stay out till 12 o'clock on weekends.

But if you've ever seen a World War II movie and you remember the scene where a couple is at the train station, he's about to go off to the war and his wife or girlfriend is kissing him goodbye like she's never gonna see him again... All you have to do is visualize that and then you can see exactly what it was like in the front of the women's residence halls at 10:30 at night.

The guys would be saying goodbye to their girlfriends like they were going off to battle in France and then they would rush back to the men’s hall, rush up to the floor; they had one phone per floor to call their girlfriend that they had just been kissing goodnight.

**Cassie:** I have heard that one before, one or two people said that they actually did it too.

**Tom:** I would not doubt it. I dated a town girl. Monique always lived downtown. She and her parents lived in town.

**Cassie:** That’s funny.

**Tom:** But it was college life. Now when you were there during a panty raid, did they talk to you about the panty raids because they did have a few?

**Cassie:** I think somebody mentioned that once.

**Tom:** And the boys all got blamed for, blamed for it, but it was the girls who were inciting them. They are not blameless. Okay, what else can I tell you?

**Cassie:** And you said that you lived at a house, you said it's no longer there?
Tom: When I lived on East Campus?

Cassie: Right, you lived in a house that’s no longer there, right?

Tom: Yes, I lived in two houses. When I was the Alumni Director housing was next to the office, 717 Oakland Drive directly opposite the Little Theatre. They came to me one day and said “We'd like you to move, we'd like you to move back across the parking lot” cause the houses that had been there were gone now and there was a parking lot there and “We'll let you live in 939 Walwood place.”

And that was a place where the girls had been originally assigned to live after they were thrown out of Walwood Hall. Which I could not imagine by the way that they did that because there were, God knows how many girls, 10 to 15 girls at least living in that building, one bathroom.

And I don't know how they did it. They had three floors of that 939 Walwood place, the top floor was an attic, but it had cedar wood ceilings and so it was livable, but it was like, it would be like living in a keep, and one set of stairs going up and down.

I have three sisters, so the idea of one bathroom just to me for a loop. But so we moved across there though, and they tore down 717 Oakland Drive. Then, a faculty member said he wanted… in the science department… said he wanted to do some experimenting and he wanted to use 929 Walwood place.

At that time, I was working for Jim Miller as his assistant and I think President Miller probably was a little bit nervous about the fact that here one of his employees, staff people was living in university housing. So he asked me if I would find my own home.

And so Monique found us a home and that's where we lived for the next 50 years. We moved out. The faculty member never moved in. They tore the house down. Now that may say something about us as tenants, I don't know. Okay, but those are the two places we lived in on campus

Cassie: And you also said earlier that you knew basically every president has had except for Waldo. Can you tell me a little bit about those Presidents?

Tom: Yeah, Paul Sangren was the President when I came as a student in ’51. Now, he, at that time, his Parkinson's was beginning to affect him already. He was a very quiet, dignified man. His wife, Flossie, and there's a… if you may have been in Sangren Hall, there's a cafe that was named for her.

Cassie: Yes, yeah, and they're… both of their ashes are there as well. Their ashes are there and Waldo's are in East Hall.

Tom: Yeah, and… but his ashes were moved at one time.

Cassie: Right, yeah.
**Tom:** So he was a quiet and dignified man, but he didn't...he really wasn't running the place.

Dean Hoekje was running the place with Russell Seibert as the Vice President for Academic Affairs. No, I'm sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself, Russell's still a history prof at that time. And Dr. Russell was head of the history department, the guy who was really running the place was Dean Hoekje.

There was, at one time, a Hoekje Hall on campus, a residence hall. That's gone. But Dean Hoekje was a no nonsense administrator. He had a lot of individual personality perks. For example, he, like most of us older men, was losing his hearing and he had a hearing aid but a hearing aid in those days is different than they are now.

He had a little small battery operated hearing aid. And the story always was when you were talking to him and he didn't wanna hear you, he would just turn it down. And I can believe it because he was a no nonsense guy, as I said. He had, and this is now listed in the archives here somewhere, a rubber stamp tree. Have you ever seen one of those? And he would, when you'd come in to see him and he was gonna make a decision, he would flip that around and he'd reach in unerringly and pick out exactly the stamp he wanted, stamp your paper in front of him and hand it to you.

That was your... sometimes it was a simple letter to somebody “see me” and he sent those things to both faculty and students. But he kept the place clicking. I mean, people, he was not at all unafraid to make a decision, he did it. The next President in the interim, Jerry Osborne was acting President, there had been several acting Presidents as well. Jerry Osborne was one. Then the faculty wanted, and by that time Russell Seibert had become the Academic Affairs Vice President. And the faculty wanted Russell Seibert to be the President. Jim Miller was the guy that the Board of Trustees, and Western was under the State Board of Education at the time; they didn't have their own independent board. They did not get that board until 1963.

But, Jim Miller was the secretary to the Board of Trustees at Michigan State University. Prior to that, he had been Comptroller of the state of Michigan, under Soapy Williams, the Governor. So, the state board wanted Jim Miller. The story I was told by both Miller and Russ Seibert was that Jim Miller called Russ Seibert and said, “I'll take the job if you'll stay on as a Provost.”

It was a marvelous decision, because Jim Miller did what a President should do. He worked with the outside audience, he worked with Lansing, he handled that. Russ Seibert ran the academic side of the university and he was a superb educator, he was a superb leader of men. Miller was classified one time by a faculty member; accurately, as a man of great second opinions.

He would sometimes come to a rapid opinion, but then he would change his mind and come to a very good decision. But I would... I can remember, in the days when I worked in the administration building now, Seibert Hall, seeing Jim Miller and Russ Seibert sitting together just chatting and the two of them meshed perfectly.
They decided what needed to be done and how best to do it. I would see Russ Seibert working at the faculty Senate meeting. And the faculty Senate, before the union, was a much more effective institution than it is now. And Russ would sit there in the back row, people would argue back and forth, argue back and forth, faculty members came up to claim, etc. And then they tried to make a decision. What to recommend? What to recommend? Because faculty governance was huge as it should be at a university. And at the last part of the discussion, Russ Seibert would make a few pointed remarks, point out this data and other things. They’d vote Russ’ away. It was marvelous, he could move an audience, he could move a group.

His opinions and his suggestions were always spot on and he just was a superb leader. I never saw two men work… well, I did, I shouldn’t say that there were three men. The third man in the group was Arthur O’Connor. You ever heard that name? Arthur O’Connor

**Cassie:** I know it, but…

**Tom:** He was the director of, what was then called Director of Public Information. Now, it would be the Director of University Information. Now it would be Paula Davis, or Paula actually, now it would be Paula Davis’ boss, but in those days it was just at that level. That’s one of the things about Western, I will tell you before we’re done. When Jim Miller came to the university, the band by the name of…, I’m drawing a mental blank on his last name, but I’ll get it for you, who was a… had been the director or the publisher of the university magazine, the W magazine. And Russ was also serving as the Director of Public Information. And then he was focusing, he was gonna go to Michigan State to work at Michigan State and left us, so Jim Miller brought in Arthur O’Connor.

Arthur O’Connor had been a reporter in the Muskegon Chronicle, and then, he was, after that, the press secretary for Soapy Williams, the Governor of the state. In that capacity, he and Jim Miller worked together. So he was going to retire, when Soapy left the office, he was going to retire. Miller became president at Western and he hired Art O’Connor. Those two guys… Art O’Connor had a tiny office, half the size of this room we’re in right now.

**Cassie:** Wow.

**Tom:** Right next to a door which led to Jim Miller's office.

**Cassie:** Mm-hm.

**Tom:** But Miller would come in out of his office, sit in this chair across from Art O’Connor. Both of them would pull out their pipes, tamp their pipes and start smoking their pipes and they would talk about what needed to get done. Sometimes, Russ Seibert would sit in there and join them because Russ had an office down the corridor on the, what is now his building.

But the two of them mostly talked about what had to get done in Lansing. They knew more about what was going on in Lansing sitting in that little room than people who traveled back
and forth to Lansing. They knew the politicians, they knew how they operated, and they knew what buttons to push and pull. So, Art was a very good person. At the time… Oh, I’m getting ahead of myself now, I’m getting back to when I was working at Western.

**Cassie:** That’s alright.

**Tom:** Let’s go back to where we were.

**Cassie:** Okay.

**Tom:** Now I’ve just told you I lived in Smith Burnham Hall

**Cassie:** Right.

**Tom:** What else do you wanna know after that?

**Cassie:** Yes, so, let’s see, who was the president after Miller, again?

**Tom:** Miller, who came in after Miller?

**Cassie:** Yeah.

**Tom:** John Bernhard.

**Cassie:** Bernhard, right, and you knew him as well?

**Tom:** Yeah, I knew John. I worked with John, I worked with Diether Haenicke. Diether was the last president I directly worked for.

**Cassie:** Mm-hm.

**Tom:** But ever since then, the other presidents, we’ve had John Dunne, Judy Bailey…

**Cassie:** Mm-hm.

**Tom:** Elson Floyd… I knew them, I got to meet them and got to know them. I didn’t know them as well as I knew the other men.

**Cassie:** Right.

**Tom:** But I did get to know… I got to know Elson a little bit tangentially, and he was a wonderful president. He really was a loss to us when he left. He died much too young. Well, he didn’t die, he left us for Missouri, to run a state system in Missouri and then he left to run Western Washington in Bellingham, Washington.

**Cassie:** Hmm!

**Tom:** Now, I’ll give you a little bit of trivia.

**Cassie:** Okay.
**Tom:** When Western Washington was first established, they needed an experienced president to help them get started. They asked Dwight Waldo to come to Western Washington to be that. So he left for a year, on a year’s leave, and he helped Western Washington get established. Western Washington was Elson Floyd’s alma mater. And when he left Missouri, he went to Western Washington to become the president of Western Washington university.

**Cassie:** Wow.

**Tom:** Yeah, it was an interesting connection.

**Cassie:** Well that is cool, so two WMU presidents...

**Tom:** Yeah.

**Cassie:** Okay, and we do have just about 10 minutes left.

**Tom:** Okay.

**Cassie:** Just a warning to you. So, I wanted to ask, what events or people or things impacted you the most during your time at WMU?

**Tom:** What, give me that again? Slowly.

**Cassie:** Yeah, what do you think impacted you the most during your time at WMU?

**Tom:** I’d have to say, well, let's just go beyond my marriage.

**Cassie:** Mm-hm.

**Tom:** The faculty student contact.

**Cassie:** Hmm!

**Tom:** We had an advantage that you students do not have right now. It was a small school, relatively speaking. When I came in ’51, there were 3750 students. You had the same prof for several different courses. He got to know you, you got to know him or she got to know you and you got to know her. As a result, we had an opportunity for exposure and a relationship, faculty-student, that I don't think the present students get to share as much.

You get, maybe, if you're lucky in a discipline, the same prof a couple of times. And that’s really desirable because they get to sense what your interests are and they encourage that.

**Cassie:** Right.

**Tom:** I called upon Dr. Knauss for references and he was generous to give them. He was a classic. I wrote an article one time, which I maybe should send you for a background about the history department at Western and describing them.
Cassie: Yeah.

Tom: And I will send that to you.

Cassie: Yeah, that would be great, yeah.

Tom: Because they were all distinctive men.

Cassie: Mm-hm.

Tom: And women, I should say. And, believe me, the women who were teaching then, the faculty, women who are teaching then, were able to candle themselves. They were not shrinking violets, they had to be strong and sturdy and they knew what they did.

Cassie: Right.

Tom: By comparison though, I’ll go back a minute.

Cassie: Mm-hm.

Tom: When Clayton Moss as a track coach, reviewed my schedule to see which classes I was taking, he noticed, he said, “Oh, you’ve got Dr. Macmillan”, who’s the daughter of one of the Burnham’s, I think and “she’s pretty tough. Maybe you should take this new guy coming in, Idzerda, for American history.” I should have argued with him because I came from a fairly good school, St. Ignacious, but I was a freshman and he’s a coach. So, as it turned out, it was the best thing that ever happened as far as history profs go because Idzerda was so great. But McMillan was good too. Those women, and in the science area as well, etc. they were very good teachers. So, clearly, the best thing that happened, I was exposed to good teachers. They may not have been the greatest researchers or the greatest writers in the world…

The best writer I ever saw was Willis Dunbar. I remember walking up to Willis Dunbar’s office one time when I was taking a class from him to drop something off and he was tapping away like that. He was writing one of his books! I mean this is no slow thumping, he was just ripping through. And he was a really good historian.

Cassie: Wow.

Tom: Really good historian.

Cassie: Yeah.

Tom: So, to answer your question as simply as I can, that’s it.

Cassie: Yeah, so, as we’re closing out our time here, I was wondering if there were any other memories you’d like to share or topics we didn’t touch on that you wanna touch on right now?

Tom: Well, Western has had a wonderful group of leaders. There's only one that I'm really negative about but the other men, all were devoted. They were clearly different in style and
I'm gonna send you something that will hopefully explain that. But, they were… the best thing, in retrospect, was the first of them Waldo 37 years.

Cassie: Mm-hm.

Tom: Sangren, 37 years.

Cassie: Yeah.

Tom: Jim Miller; 14 years I believe it was, Bernhard, 13/14 years. That stability lent a great deal. The faculty and the relationship between faculty, and even though administrators have a tendency to administer, with Russ in particular, the Academic Affairs Vice President (we didn't use the term provost for quite a while) were really good.

When I got to work for them and with them, close to them, as Vice President of Student Services, we were all in Seibert Hall, what is now Seibert Hall. And later on when Dr. Haenicke came, he moved me down to the Faunce building. But I saw those men close up. Jim Miller had a breakfast group that met every Monday morning. The president, the vice presidents, Arthur O'Connor and me, first of all, as the administrative assistant to Jim Miller and then later on as a vice president.

They would cast out what needed to get done for the week. Arthur, I'll give you an example, and I know we're almost done timewise, Arthur O'Connor would suggest stuff that would be really, in retrospect, marvelous. You may or may not have heard of Apollo 13 and what happened.

Cassie: Yes.

Tom: Okay, Art sat in that meeting right after those guys had been rescued and said, “We need to offer them an honorary degree. Everyone else wants to honor the astronauts”, there were three of them. “These men went through a great deal, we need to offer them an honorary degree.”

So we had all three of the astronauts come and receive an honorary degree. There were several other people, not to mention David Wayne, a very, very well known movie actor and stage actor, Margaret Feather, who was a pearl of a woman who worked as a financial aid officer for the university. Wonderful people. But, we were all in the president’s dining room in the Bernhard Center, the astronauts were seated there, everybody wanted to be there.
Everybody wanted to be around the astronauts. One of them commented, “We had more room in the capsule than we have here.” And he broke the room up. (both laugh)

And now I’m done talking.

Cassie: That’s all right. All right, so I’ll stop this real quick.