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Interview no. 97

Oscar H. McMahan

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Oscar H. McMahan
INTERVIEWER: David Salazar
PROJECT: History of UTEP
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Former professor of Physics at UTEP, member of Building Committee.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

History of the University, especially his work with the Building Committee.

1 hour, 3 3/4 tape speed; 20 pages

Oscar H. McMahan
by David Salazar
June 21, 1973

S: Mr. McMahan, when were you born and where?

M: I was born February 11, 1903 in the Indian Territory of Oklahoma. That was before Oklahoma was a state. [It] became a state in 1907.

S: So your parents were from Oklahoma, then?

M: My father was from Tennessee, my mother was from Arkansas. They met and married in Oklahoma, where I was born.

S: When did you wind up coming to El Paso?

M: I came to El Paso the first time to be associated with the University in 1943. Prior to that time, I completed my high school education in Lamar, Colorado. Then I attended what's now Oklahoma State University at Stillwater and received my B.S. degree. A few years later I received an M.S. degree in Education. (The B.S. degree was in Physics and Math.) And it was in Oklahoma that I started my teaching high school at Sayre, Oklahoma, and later became the high school principal. Following that [I] became superintendent of schools, and I organized a junior college at Sayre, Oklahoma, which I became president of. This was done in 1938 and '39, and it's still in existence. After that, I received my master's degree in Physics from the University of Arizona at Tucson. The actual date of awarding the degree was 1944. I came here in 1943 and spent one year teaching under the ASTP program, Army Specialized Training Program, here on the campus. The Army felt some of their people were capable of and should receive additional education. This was one of the schools that was selected to handle that program. It started August 9 and they closed it down along in March. [That] was the beginning of the conflict in Germany, in which the Army lost a lot of men and they [needed] a lot of replacements. And these fellas served as replacements for the Armed Services in Europe. So

the program died out.

S: You weren't in the Armed Forces. How did you happen to get in this program?

M: Well, the University was contracted to do teaching and work for the government. Dr. Knapp, who was head of the Physics and Math Department at that time, contacted me at the University of Arizona and asked if I'd like to teach under this program, which I did. But after the Army Specialized Teaching Program wound up in March of 1944, there wasn't but about 300 students left on this campus, and there wasn't any need for me because the normal teaching staff-- which was few in number--could handle it. So I became employed by Tennessee Eastman, which is a subsidiary of Eastman Kodak of Rochester. They were one of the contractors at what's now Oak Ridge, Tennessee--the secret project of the United States government known as the Manhattan Project*, part of the Manhattan Project. I went there and worked till August of 1945, after the first bomb was dropped on Japan.

From there I went to North Georgia College, taught in a military school for one year. In the meantime, the returning GIs came back and posed a considerable problem of faculty and buildings on this campus. And Knapp contacted me to see if I'd like to come back. The University of Arizona had contacted me also, and each of them offered me a position in the Physics Department. But the Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy offered me a little bit more money and I had been here for a while, so I returned in September, 1946, and have been here ever since. We had a combined department at that time, and it continued that way till 1965 when Math and Physics separated. I remained with the Physics Department.

S: What were your impressions of the University when you first came here?

M: It was a very favorable impression. In the first place, I liked the surroundings

*First atomic bomb project developed during World War II.

and the smallness of the school, and the small faculty and small student body /in which/ you could contact everybody. The setting amongst the mountains and the architecture appealed to me. The Physics Department wasn't large but it was very capable. Under Dr. Knapp it was a very fine institution. But of course we liked the climate. Georgia was so wet and humid. I was glad to get back to the dry climate. And of course then, as I said, it was the Texas College of Mines and Metallurgy.

S: What about some of your outstanding co-workers?

M: Well, outstanding co-workers, in those early days there was, of course, Dr. /E. J./ Knapp, who turned out to spend some 34 years as head of the Math and Physics Department. Dr. T. G. Barnes, Professor Robert Shumaker--we all worked together in those early years with those returning GIs. It was very cooperative, we worked hard. We added a few staff members down the line and it wasn't till about 1963, when the graduate program was put in, that we had new men come in, such as Dr. Brient, Dr. Blue, Dr. Bowen, who is head of our department, /and/ Dr. Lawson. /They/ have all made contributions to the department.

S: What about the computer center up here? Who initiated that?

M: That was put up there in about 1965 or '66, up on the third floor of Old Main. When I came here, the Old Main Building housed the Math and Physics Department and also the Geology Department. /It/ also had the school doctor there and the school nurse. In one small room down below was what we might call the Student Union today, which housed the post office. They served a few sandwiches and bottled drinks. And textbooks.

S: Now the Union is the biggest building on campus.

M: Now the Union is the biggest building, and that was a little hole in the wall. The Union Building is the second addition to the /original/ building. It's the biggest building on the campus, until next February, when the Fine Arts

Center will be the biggest building.

S: You've been active on building committees.

M: Yes. In 1959, under Dr. Elkins, a building committee was organized, which I was on. I've been on it ever since. For the last six or seven years I've been chairman of the committee. During that time we have built the Physical Science Building, the Union Building, the Education Building, the second addition to the Library. And we also started the Fine Arts Center, which is going to be the largest building for a while, until the Engineering and Science Complex is finished sometime in 1975, which will be the largest complex. There will be several buildings, the same as the Fine Arts Center is several buildings.

S: Who makes up the building committees?

M: It's a presidential committee, and it's been appointed by the president of the institution. Up to the present time it's been made up of four faculty members--who have been myself, Dr. Meadows in Education, Professor Hassler from Engineering, and Dr. Timmons from History--plus the business manager, the director of the physical plant, plus all the academic deans except the graduate dean; also the dean of students, and the registrar. It's been a big committee. It kind of cuts clear across the whole group. Then we had subcommittees to handle certain things. For instance, we would appoint a subcommittee for the purpose of naming buildings. Then we had another subcommittee on the allocation of space to various departments. Then we had another subcommittee having to do with the study of future space requirements, sort of a projection, a committee that looks into the future and sees our needs. So that all stemmed out of this one big committee.

S: Does it have anything to do with the Library?

M: Oh, yes. That is, the construction of the Library--any construction of new

space. It has very little to do with renovation, but mainly with new space and had something to do with the purchase of lands and all that. Now, our committee has been a recommending committee. It is a committee in which we pass our findings on to the president. We recommend to the president and he takes the ball from there. It's an advisory committee to the president. The chairman is appointed by the president of the University. Dr. Ray appointed me, and Dr. Smiley reappointed me. My term is over when I retire at the end of August. And what Dr. Templeton will do with regard to the committee in the future, I don't know. It's his committee. It's a presidential committee and it's not a faculty committee--that's the point that I'm trying to get at. The faculty has some thirty committees, but this is not a faculty committee.

S: Do you feel that, at the time that you were chairman, that the committee had any power, any real say-so?

M: Oh, yes, we really did. The presidents have all acted on our recommendation. I can't remember where the president of the institution didn't follow our recommendation as to closing of streets, recommended purchase of lands, approval of building design, and the location of buildings. For example, the present Library--lots of people criticize the appearance of the present Library, but our committee approved the architect's plans. We studied it for some time and argued back and forth, pro and con. We approved that and recommended to the president that he accept that plan. And he did. He was for it, too, and I'm personally for it. Some think it doesn't suit our architecture, but Dale Walker wrote a letter to the Queen of Bhutan and sent her a picture of the Library. She said it was a striking building that combined both modern and ancient-type architecture of Bhutan. So, she was pleased. But I like the building because it looks like it comes right up out of the ground instead of being

planted. And it's sort of the hub of the campus, and it's different. Sure it's different--every building is different.

S: One thing about the Library building, I think this is the [second] time they've added to it. It used to be the combined Administration and Library.

M: [Yes.] When I came here, the president's office was there, and the business manager, plus the Library. Then they added an addition to it, and then this is the second addition.

S: I'm sure a common complaint from everyone here on campus is that they don't have enough room. What about the allocation of funds? Let's say the Library; it was allocated, I think, \$1 million dollars and then you had to put in another \$500,000 for the new addition.

M: Yes. We were allocated a million dollars of PUF money. The university system did that for us. Plus the federal government matched a third of [the cost], which brought in another \$500,000. So it's a \$1.5 million dollar building. I really think, looking back on it, if we could have had the money and built a brand new building from scratch, instead of having to remodel... It's pretty hard to get everything in a building that you might want, such as a Library. I personally would have liked to [have] seen a brand new building built at the time, instead of building on to that building.

S: What was holding you back? The funds more than anything else?

M: Yes, that was it.

S: A lot of people, even Dr. Sonnichsen and Baxter Polk, have felt that the Regents in Austin think of UTEP as being way out in the boondocks, and so we just get the scraps.

M: Well, I know some people feel that way, I don't quite feel that way about it. It seems that way sometimes, that we're kind of getting the short end of the

thing. But a few years ago I remember sitting over there with the president and some other members of the committee in which Vice-Chancellor Walker said, "I'm for the growth of this campus, but we can't give you anything unless you ask for it. You've got to ask." Now this was before the construction of the Library. He came along since then, and so we've done pretty good since then. The Engineering and Science Complex is going to cost over \$10 million dollars, and the Fine Arts Center is going to amount to more than \$7 million. If you get to comparing with what's going on at the campus in Austin, you might have justification, don't you see. It's pretty hard to compare. But I don't believe they treat us as a stepchild because many of the Regents and also the planning group in Austin are very fond of this campus--like to come out here and they're anxious to see it progress. I've never felt that we were a stepchild, so to speak.

- S: Did you receive any large complaints? I'm referring to Dr. Sonnichsen's commencement address. He wrote about the Education Building and how he was unhappy with it.
- M: Yes, I read that. He had a little complaint about the elevator, and it's just a complaint. I didn't like it either. All during the planning of that, they assured me that those two elevators...one would be a keyed elevator and it would be fast to handle all that tower. But right in the middle of the construction, the architectural firm from Houston changed architects. So the new man didn't know about a lot of things. But one thing that we got slipped up on was that elevator, and I'm very disappointed. Otherwise, I think it's a very fine building. That elevator is a disgusting thing--as slow as it is, and it's not keyed on those top floors.
- S: Were you particularly happy with the outcome of the Physical Science Building?

M: Very much so, for the money we had. We had just \$2 million dollars. And there were a lot of things that we had to leave out, there wasn't quite enough money. Again we had a matching fund deal on this. The University furnished \$1.3 million and the government about \$670,000. I was looking at this building the other day. The appearance of it and the quality of it is quite good. We didn't have enough money to furnish it. That's been our trouble. They have an equipment account to buy desks and chairs and filing cabinets. But they don't have money to equip it with, say, TV, ice machines, refrigerators, and whatever departments need. They don't have that kind of money in there. You have to get that out of the maintenance and operation account that comes out of legislative appropriation. And that's been our trouble in the Physical Science Building, and it's been the trouble in the Education Building. And it could be a problem in the Fine Arts Center. But I understand that Dr. Templeton has maybe taken care of that.

But there's another thing. When you speak of a building, it has to do with just the furnishings, not with the services that you're going to perform in there. In the Education Building, they had rooms that were equipped (the conduit end) for TV and for public address, but no public address units per se, no cables pulled through for TV--just the conduit. And they had no screens for projection. The department had to buy those. But they did furnish the offices and classrooms with desks and chairs and all that, ash urns, carpet where carpet needed to be. But that's been our problem here on this campus--not having a turnkey job where the department can move in and do everything that they want to do in the time that the building is being built and constructed. If you need a certain piece of equipment to operate in this particular room, it doesn't come out of the building fund, you've

got to rustle that money somewhere else. Say, an electron microscope. One music recital hall /in/ the Fine Arts Center /has/ a place for a beautiful organ, but there is nothing in the building contract for an organ. That's a classic example. That organ, whatever it costs (\$40,000 to \$100,000) /has/ got to come out of some other pocket. It's not in the building money or in the furnishings money. That's been the shortcoming.

S: According to some of the interviews that I've done, the Administration seems to be sort of anti-fine arts. What can you tell me about that?

M: I don't know whether they're anti-fine arts or not. There were people on the campus that felt that fine arts wasn't deserving of a building like this, that there were some other disciplines that should have it before. But those of us on the committee, and I personally, had seen Music pushed all around on this campus from one place to another. I've been through the basement floors of Magoffin where they /have/ their practice rooms--students sitting on the floor, waiting for classes to change. And /when/ you walk down through there, you have to step over them, 'cause there wasn't anyplace else. Music has asked for more space here and more space there, and each time they'd be shunted off. The committee and myself, as chairman, felt that Fine Arts needed this building, and the committee (contrary to what they may say, I have the minutes here) voted unanimously for this Fine Arts Center. Later when they got the preliminary drawings and it was a little bigger than they thought, two or three members thought the size should be reduced. But the majority of the committee said no. So we have this rather large building being completed at the time when we have had a reduction in student enrollment, which is unfortunate.

From the time you start talking about a building until you /are/ ready to /move into/ the building, it takes four years--a long time. When we built

the dormitories we were turning away 500 student per year--no place on the campus for students /to live/. We started talking about new dorms. And by the time we got the dorms built, the students' mode of living, their new type of thinking regarding housing and so forth, the new morality if you so please, was upon us. Therefore, we couldn't fill them. Up to that time, we started talking about these new dorms, we had about 5000 students and 500 in the dorms. By the time the dorms were finished, we could house 1100. We had a student population of about 11,000. But, we couldn't fill them. Can't fill them yet, even after taking the other dorms out of the dorm system, because of the pattern of living. And it not only happened here, but it's happening all over the United States.

S: Do you think that the trend will go back to living in the dorms?

M: I was reading a magazine this morning. They've asked student /in/ some schools what they wanted most, and they wanted quiet and solitude. They'd stay in the dorms if they could have quiet so they could study in solitude, not all the hubbub. And they asked students, "If you can have that, will you move into the dorm?" "Yes, /we'd/ move in right tomorrow."

S: Can you tell me a little bit about the Engineering complex that you're about to build?

M: Yes. /It'll be the/ Engineering and Science Complex, and it will house Biology /as well as Engineering/.

PAUSE

M: The engineering part of the complex will house the schools of Engineering: electrical, civil, mechanical, and metallurgical. In addition to those two

(they're four story buildings on the average) there is a third building in the complex which is a five-story classroom tower. The top floor of it is the library for that complex, and the other four are classrooms and seminar rooms. There are going to be five elevators in the whole complex. I'm sure they'll move faster than they do in the Education Building. The plans are 95 per cent finished. We expect to get a contract about the first of October to start construction of that building. The cost is in excess of \$10 million.

S: Are they going to get any matching funds?

M: No. Matching funds are a thing of the past. We got some for the Fine Arts Center. We stood in number one and number three priority in the whole state of Texas for matching funds. But there wasn't enough federal funds, so it diminished quite a bit. But I don't think there will be any matching funds for the Engineering and Science Complex. Things might change, you know.

S: What is the cost going to be for the Fine Arts Center?

M: In excess of \$7 million dollars. About \$7 million, maybe more, counting furnishings and so forth. This new Engineering and Science complex will put all the College of Science together, with the exception of Geology, in the same part of the campus.

S: What do they plan to do with the Biology Building?

M: I don't know. That will be up to the president and to his advisers, as to who can best use that building, because it was remodeled for Biology, it had a lab situation. When Music moves out of Old Main, the same question will be asked. There's some good classroom space there. And what's going to happen to Cotton Memorial? That will probably be given to the Library.

S: Yes, I understand they will try and house the archives in there.

M: That's right.

- S: With the present trend of funding, what about the rise of the building use fee?
- M: Well, I guess it was a necessary thing. It makes it better on the part-time student but rougher on the full-time student. It was a pretty good raise considering what it had been. It is to pay off the bonded indebtedness. That's about as much as I think I can say about it, except that it seems like it's the only way you can build these buildings. The University has some permanent fund money but they are using the interest accrual on the investments to help out on these buildings and also furnishings and so forth. Of course, the dormitory is a little different type of funding. The student building use fee doesn't go into help defray the cost of these dorms. They're on a different basis, they get it out of their rentals of the dormitories. But these other new buildings come out of the student use fee. I think if you add the building use fee, the tuition fee, and also the student services fee all together, I still think that you're going to find that that's still less than other state institutions. One time I listened to a report about four or five years ago concerning New York in which theirs was about \$800 dollars a semester--tuition, building, and all that stuff. But when a person doesn't have the money, it's still pretty high; if you haven't been used to it.
- S: Do you think that there will be a further drop in enrollment?
- M: I wonder, I wonder.
- S: Will that pose a problem? Because I understand that the University gets money according to the number of students it has.
- M: That's right. They get money according to the students they have and the credit hours earned. And while you help the one person taking one course-- it'll help them--but yet it's going to take five of those people to make up for one full-time student. If you lose one full-time student you got to gain

five part-time students. Full-time students can't go anywhere in the state of Texas and do much better. The \$50 tuition is the same in all state schools, and there is a building use fee in most of the university system. Arlington has maybe a dollar less than we do, and I don't know about the University at Austin. North Texas State University--I don't know if they have any or not. Some of them get their monies out of the ad valorem tax. So we could stand to lose, I guess.

S: Could you enlighten me on the funding arrangements for the buildings and how the building use fee is going to help?

M: Well, the University sells bonds to investors, banks in New York City and so forth, for which they charge an interest rate. And there has to be some assurance that this interest will be paid. So with this student use fee money paid each semester, they have some assurance that the University can meet its obligations. There's a certain limit to which they can bond, don't you see. It depends upon their resources. And we've about reached the end of our bonding power to build new structures unless we raise the fee. In other words it'll stop right there unless you raise the fee.

Now in dormitories, they usually require about 90 per cent occupancy in order to get them bonded, and all last year we didn't have it. (This has nothing to do with student use fee, I'm just using that as an illustration.) They had to dig into some other resources to pull that up and pay the bill. Yes, sir, you've obligated yourself. That's the reason you can't say, "Well, we've got the space over there, empty rooms, we'll just put classes in there." You can't. You've got to use them for their intent. They get all the accrual from the rent from that up to a certain figure. And that 90 per cent is very important. If you can't make it, you got to dig

down in some pocket and pay it up.

S: That's why they passed that ruling about students who aren't living with their parents.

M: They tried to force the parietal rule, which is on the books yet--still is, but it's /an/ unpleasant thing. And that's /why/ the Board of Regents very wisely paid off the indebtedness on these old dorms and bought them outright, and made them no longer a part of the dormitory system. /They/ just left the two towers over there, plus Burges Hall, which is the athletic dormitory. So those three are under the dormitory /system/. But Hudspeth, Bell, Worrell, and Benedict /have/ been taken out. They've been taken out so they can be used for anything--classrooms, gymnasiums, swimming pools, or whatever you want.

S: Maybe I can get some comments from you about Physics. I have a friend who graduated with a degree in Physics and he's had trouble finding a job. What is the trend now in Physics? Will it be better?

M: Well, it's still like all disciplines, a little bit--it's difficult to find a job. That is, Ph.D.s in Physics are having a difficult time finding jobs, the same way as Ph.D.s in some other disciplines. Now, there are certain areas /where there/ is not much trouble. Some of our undergraduates, bachelor's and master's degrees, if they're in the field of geophysics, due to this energy crisis, they easily find jobs. That's in prospecting and going out in search of natural resources--fossil fuels, what I'm talking about, mainly gas and oil. We have a geophysics department here, and some of those fellows have gotten jobs and have no particular trouble. But it's kind of tight.

S: What is your opinion on this energy crisis?

M: I think it's been over-emphasized, to some extent, but it's very real. We're running short of fossil fuels--oil and gas. Our population growth accounts for the fact that we're using more. In the United States, we have six per cent of the world's population but we use 35 per cent of the world's energy. Electricity here and electricity there. And our fossil fuels within the continental U.S. have been depleted. Our gas wells are running wide open. They are looking for gas at 20,000 feet depth in Western Oklahoma, because they can't find it at shallower depths.

Then, on the other hand, we can bring it in from some places. Alaska has plenty. But on the one side are the environmentalists who think it'll disturb the environment, which it might, I don't know. But in other words, the decision has to be made whether we want to change our standard of living or if we can do it without disturbing the environment. We're going to have to go outside and get some of our fossil fuels. El Paso Natural Gas is going to buy from Russia. They plan to freeze the gas and ship it over, reconvert it and put it in the lines. But with the increase of population and our standard of living, we've run short. Our fossil fuels are not replaceable. We may have to go to geothermal energy, or take a lot of rather cheap coal and change it into natural gas.

S: What about solar energy? Would that be the next trend?

M: Yeah, that could be.

S: The problem when we run out of fossil fuels would be the conversion to some other fuel. Wouldn't that be hard?

M: Yes, there's some of that. For instance, coal--you'd have to convert it, don't you see. Then there's quite a bit of contamination with that. Nuclear energy, I don't know. There's lot of contamination involved with nuclear

energy, more than people realize. I just have my doubts about that.

But this energy crisis is a very real thing. Everybody is getting in on the act and talking about it. But I think it's being over-exaggerated, to some extent, but not too much.

S: What about pollution?

M: Yeah, there's pollution on one end. Like on an automobile, they want you to put pollution devices on your automobile but that also cuts down on your gasoline mileage. Should you buy more gas to have less pollution? The price of gas may go up. We may have to go into mass transportation.

S: One complaint about pollution, especially here in El Paso, is that they require all those pollution control systems on your automobile, and yet you have Juárez right across the border. They have no type of control. So to what avail are all our laws here?

M: Our location is unique, in some respects, compared to some inland cities. We have a big city across the river from us that we have no control over. I think we're going to have to buckle our belts, maybe change our standard of living a bit, drive fewer cars. Engineers made a study a few years ago here on this campus that showed that each car coming on this campus carried 1.1 students. If you could get them to carry four or five students, you could cut down on the cars, we wouldn't have a parking problem, as some claim. (Which I don't think we have here on campus. You don't walk very far here to get to class.) Well, we've got mass transportation. But a student living in Northeast El Paso tells me that it takes about three hours to get to this campus by bus, and they have to change buses several times and wait for the buses. If they've got an 8:00 class, they're going to have to leave shortly after 5:00 in the morning, and it's pretty dark and cold. (Laughter) In cities

such as Chicago and New York they have mass transportation that has helped solve some of the problems.

S: What about some comments on the future of this University? Would you say that it's on its way up or at a standstill?

M: It's sort of at a standstill now, number-wise. And since it's number-wise, it also affects our money. That's working a hardship on the administration presently--money, to pay faculty, and not equipment or power and light--unless you go to extremely large classes, and I doubt the effectiveness of tremendously large classes compared to smaller classes.

So the future is a very good future. El Paso is growing. We have our backs to the wall, in one sense of the word. We're against Mexico on one side and New Mexico right up the other side. We raised our out-of-state tuition and that cuts down on out-of-staters. But we have a unique position here in our relationship to Central and South America. I think with the mixing of two cultures we have a potential here for working with and studying the two cultures. I think we ought to pursue that more. So it is unique in that.

Furthermore, getting back to the Fine Arts Center again, I feel that El Paso is sort of a fine arts city when you get down to looking at it. They like music, good music of all kinds. There are artists. And when we get the Fine Arts Center, we're going to see a big growth in those departments. Because up till now, the parents have been sending their youngsters, say, in Music, to North Texas. I think they're going to stay here when they see this nice facility. Art, the same way. I think that there'll be some art patrons here in town that will really assist this University when they see a facility like we've got up here. Together with our Civic Center, I can't

help but see quite a growth on this campus in fine arts, although I'm not a fine arts person as such.

S: So you would say the trend here in El Paso is to go toward fine arts. Would you say that that's the way it is in the nation, more or less, or are they still sticking to the technical things?

M: Well, I don't know. I think there's been a little coming up of fine arts in the nation. Our scientific endeavor has turned pretty much to technology--gadgets and things that can be put to practical use. In pure science, I think things have sort of leveled off. However, the biological sciences are changing. I have seen quite a growth in health and medicine and biology. After World War I, chemistry took a great big boom. After World War II, physics took a tremendous boom. We had in our Physics Department, as small as it is, forty B.S. degree graduates in one year, seven or eight years ago. But now it's biology that's coming up and you see it here in the enrollment. With health, medicine, ecology, and all that sort of thing, that part is going to boom all over the nation. It's already started here. And this university, fortunately, is doing something about it, as far as biology is concerned.

Back to fine arts, it's doing something about the fine arts. Some think it won't pay off, but you asked me what I thought. (Chuckles) I'll be disappointed if fine arts doesn't show a nice growth up here and attract some new students. And I think this energy shortage is going to help us, because in some of the seaboard states, the Northeast, retired people, they don't like the idea of getting hot in the summer and cold in the winter. With the energy shortage, they're going to seek more sunny climates such as ours. They're going to retire out here and take in some of those things.

S: You'll be leaving us soon.

M: Yes, the end of August. When I first came there were just a very few buildings on the campus. Where the present Biology Building is [there were] tennis courts, and Magoffin Auditorium wasn't here. The Administration, Union, and L.A. [buildings weren't] here. I've seen this all grow and I've seen students come and go. The critics used to make snide remarks [about] TWC [being] a teeny weeny college. But the school has turned out a lot of very fine people and I get letters from them. One of the rewards that I have had--and every teacher has that-- is the letters and visits they get from their ex-students, and [seeing them] in their jobs. I got a letter last week from one of our physics students who has a Ph.D. now. In fact, this department produced at least 15 students who had gone on and [gotten] their Ph.D.s. [This letter] was from one of those students, [expressing] his appreciation to the University and the department. I guess [it was] one of the finest letters I ever received. And all of those were gratifying things. And it's been a pleasant time for me. This University has been good to me. I came here as an assistant professor, rose to full professor without benefit of a Ph.D. I was old enough and [had] reached a place after World War II where [I] couldn't take time to go for a Ph.D. I've had raises. I've never asked for a single promotion or a single raise, and I've gotten them without twisting anybody's arm.

I like the student body and I look for great things. I think it's bound to increase in numbers. I don't think that we should try for it to be a tremendously large school, but I think it should serve the needs of the community and people who want to go to school here, and become good in what they're doing. I doubt whether it should ever be a Ph.D.-granting institution, but I think it should be one of the strongest liberal arts, fine arts, and engineering [schools] in the nation, on a B.S. and M.S. level. [It] should not try to become strictly

a Ph.D. institution, because in most Ph.D. institutions the lower division courses have suffered. I think that six schools in the nation now are turning out enough Physics Ph.D.s for the needs of the nation. So I think [that UTEP] should become even better in what [it's] doing.

S: Well, thank you very much, Mr. McMahan.