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Wolters, Edward J Oral History Interview: Retired Faculty and Administrators of Hope College I and II

Conrad Strauch Jr.

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LIVING HERITAGE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Edward J. Wolters

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Hope College Archives Council
Holland, Michigan
1978

INTRODUCTION

The Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project consists of a series of interviews conducted during the summer of 1977 by Nancy A. Swinyard, and the summer of 1978 by Conrad J. Strauch with persons who, in years past, were members of the faculty and administration of Hope College. Upon the completion of each session, the taped conversation was transcribed and then edited by both the interviewer and the interviewee for clarity. While accuracy is desirable, the viewpoint of the interviewee is maintained. Some alterations were suggested by the interviewer during the interviews and in later correspondences, but the researcher will discover discrepancies between the interviews themselves and with published sources of information. Therefore, the researcher must be aware that these differences exist, and seek to understand the perspective from which all statements were made. Tapes of all interviews are stored in the Hope College Archives.

No claim is made that the information contained within these transcripts is absolutely accurate. No two people share identical viewpoints, and the separation by time from the interviewee's experiences on campus can sometimes intensify this divergence.

Without the support of Dr. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, Dean for the Humanities, and Mr. William K. Anderson, Vice President for Business and Finance, this project would not have become a reality. Dr. Elton J. Bruins, though busy with his own pursuits, willingly lent his guidance and support. The success of this project can be attributed to the efforts of the interviewees, each gracious, receptive and cooperative.

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PREFACE

Interviewee: Mr. Edward J. Wolters

Interview I: July 17, 1978

Mr. Wolters' home in Holland, Michigan

Interview II: July 19, 1978

Mr. Wolters' home in Holland, Michigan

Interviewer: Mr. Conrad Strauch, Jr.

EDWARD J. WOLTERS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Mr. Edward Wolters was born on December 26, 1898 in Holland, Michigan. He attended the Laketown Township Schools and then went on to the Hope College Preparatory. He then continued at Hope College, where he received his AB in 1920. Mr. Wolters is married to Laura J. Lemmen, they have five children; Dale, Ann Elaine, Lloyd Jay, June Marie, and Mary Ruth.

After completing Hope College he took a teaching position at Holland Christian High. He stayed there until he joined the Hope College High staff in 1926, where he taught Latin until he joined the college department in 1930. When he came to the college he taught in the German Department. Then in 1943 he switched to the English Department until 1945. In 1945 he took over the Latin Department, which is where he stayed until his retirement in 1966. During the years 1945-1947 he was also the Director of the Veterans Institute.

While at Hope he found time for other things besides teaching. He continued his graduate work at the University of Michigan and received his AM in 1927. From 1949-1960 he also served on the Committee on Fellowships and Scholarships, he was secretary of that committee. And from 1963 till his retirement he was chairman of the Classics Department. Mr. Wolters was also helpful in getting a Eta Sigma Phi chapter set up at Hope in 1958, he is a member of the National Classical Honorary Fraternity. During his time at Hope he had an article published in the Classical Journal of February 1952, entitled, "Carthage and Its People."

Since his retirement in 1966, he has been keeping busy. He has spent some time reading and writing although he doesn't plan to publish anything.

He has also been keeping up with yard work and chores around the house. And in his spare time he is operating a small nursery, gardening, and flower culture.

Mr. Wolters was very eager to get get his recollections down so that they might be of use to some future scholars. He was very helpful in all the work that is required to get the finished product. Our interviews began by talking about the time when he first came to Hope as a student in the Prep School. Because of his time here then, he was able to give a little bit on Dr. Vennema and Dr. Dimment. We talked about his service under President Dimment and how he viewed that period in the history of the college. We also got to talking about Dr. Wichers and the relationship of Dr. Wichers to his predecessor and Dr. Lubbers. We also covered the way things were on campus during the two World Wars since Mr. Wolters was here for both of them. He tells of his experiences in the Lubbers administration and then compares them to the other administrations he served under. Dr. Vander Werf is also talked about, and very candidly. We are also given a little bit of the development of the departments of German and Latin. Although most of the interview was spent talking about Hope College, Mr. Wolters also gives some recollections of his native Graafschap and the city of Holland.

INTERVIEW I

CONRAD: Why don't we start by talking about your first days on the campus as a student at the Prep School. Could you give a little background as to why you chose to come to the Prep School rather than one of the high schools? Why was that option taken rather than one of the others?

WOLTERS: I graduated from an elementary school where we had eight grades and one teacher. There were three of us that graduated that year. We had to go to Saugatuck to take our examinations, our eighth grade examinations, in those days. Then the records would go to Allegan. From there we got our report as to whether we passed or not.

Then during the summer I received a letter from the president of Hope College, Dr. Vennema at that time, inviting me to come to Hope College if I desired. They urged me to come because they thought my record was good enough. My parents were anxious to have me learn something, as they said, something more than just the eight grades, hoping that I would enter some kind of profession.

I went to school on my bicycle, a country-boy not knowing anything except that I had a close friend, that was John Heneveld, who later became Dr. John Heneveld, a doctor of medicine. He practiced in Muskegon for many years. He kind of guided me those first couple of days. I enrolled in the D class, instead of the freshman class, it was D, C,B, and A; A was the senior class of course.

In those days we started the day with chapel service at 8:00. All the students, there were preparatory students as well as the college students, would come to chapel service. The faculty members would assemble in a room of the administrative offices. The chapel was in Graves Hall, and classrooms were upstairs and the auditorium was downstairs, the library was on the

north side of the first floor and the faculty room and offices were also on the first floor next to the library. Well, the faculty would assemble, and then at promptly 8:00 or a minute before, the president would lead the procession of the faculty members into the auditorium where they had special seats in the front. The students had opera seats up to a place where they could divide the room. They had doors that could be let down, behind them there was some more room for the overflow, if there was more, but it wasn't usually necessary in those days, we could all sit in the regular auditorium.

Hardly anyone absented himself. It was understood and accepted that everybody would go to chapel. The ones that did not go would perhaps have an excuse. If they worked in a restaurant or something of that sort, they couldn't always make it by exactly 8:00.

I remember many of those occasions very well, especially because there were sometimes speakers from outside, as we might say. Every now and then the president would bring in a returned missionary or a prominent pastor from the vicinity, or some public figure. We had political leaders that were known nationally that spoke to us. We had prominent missionaries like Samuel Zwemer, who perhaps you have heard of.

CONRAD: Yes, Mrs. Stryker told me about him.

WOLTERS: And Paul Harrison and others too. And also the man who had been president before Dr. Vennema, Dr. Kollen. He was a native of Overisel. By the way the Overisel Reformed Church has contributed very many people that went into Christian service of some kind. Kollen was one of those. He had been president of the college for seven years. When he came back and spoke, as he was going down the aisle, the students would show their approval. They would clap their hands to show that they were glad he was

back. He was humorous, a very good speaker and appreciated because of what he was. He was acquainted in high circles too, he moved freely in Washington shall we say. You've heard of Diekema maybe?

CONRAD: Yes.

WOLTERS: He was a politician who was ambassador to the Netherlands at that time. He would occasionally come too. He was an orator, an excellent speaker.

As to subjects offered, we had courses in English, History, Latin, German, Greek, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Bible, and Gymnasium. I remember a few of the teachers that I had. You may have heard of Dr. Milton Hoffman?

CONRAD: No, I haven't.

WOLTERS: He was a professor of Latin for awhile and he was president of Central College later. Then he also was in New Brunswick Seminary. He became, after retirement, kind of a world traveler, leading tours and so forth. He was also from Overisel originally. He went to Oxford, England.

I remember a Miss. Moore, who was an English instructor in those days.

Dr. John W. Beardslee, Jr. - his father by the same name was at New Brunswick - he wasn't here very many years and he went to New Brunswick. I believe he died very early in life. A very well educated man too.

Dr. Kleinheksel was the professor of mathematics for years. The house right across from Van Raalte Hall was known as the Kleinheksel house, a fine brick house. He also came from Overisel.

A man by the name of Henry Boer was in history in those days. Then later on Dr. Wichers, who later became president. And Dr. Douwe Yntema, a famous family the Yntema family. Did I mention them the other day?

CONRAD: No, but I've read about them.

WOLTERS: Well, their father Douwe was professor of physics and he had a number of boys and one girl. Everyone of the boys became famous in some field or other. Dwight was with the State Department for some years. Then he came to Hope College, the Mathematics and Economics departments. He retired and still living. And his sister Julia was a Latin teacher. She taught in the Prep School for awhile. Then later on she taught in Grand Rapids. She is still living as far as I know.

CONRAD: Yes, they were interviewed last summer.

WOLTERS: Well that's just a few thoughts that come to me now in regard to the Prep School days. As I mentioned the other day I would take my bicycle when there was good weather. After that of course I would take the top buggy, as we called, it because it had a top on for rain and so forth; also it served against the sun sometimes. And I would occasionally have riders, especially two young ladies that lived in Graafschap, in the village. One of them was the daughter of Rev. Van Vesseem, who was a preacher in the Christian Reformed Church, and the other was a daughter of the grocer, and her name was Tien. That name - Tien, was known around Graafschap for years and years. A brother of this lady, the last in the village by the name of Tien, just died this past year. So then we traveled with three in the buggy.

CONRAD: One thing I was wondering about was what was the difference between going to the Prep School or going to one of the high schools in the area. Had it something to do with the course program?

WOLTERS: You see the Preparatory School, earlier known as the Academy, and before that the Pioneer School, existed before there was any public high

school in the area; it was the older institution of the two. Being connected with the Reformed Church and with the college, already in my days, it was known for having an excellent program of education because we had the same teachers that the college students had, there was no distinction. So that was one reason.

We felt it was a somewhat stronger school, especially if you had Christian service in mind. Many of the graduates of the college in those days did go into Christian service. It was often from 10 to 15% for years. We always maintained that record until about the time the veterans came back. I don't know the percentage since then, but it's not as high as that, I'm sure.

CONRAD: Do you remember anything about Dr. Vennema, who was president at the time?

WOLTERS: I do remember that he was president six years after I came. What I do remember about him was that he was a rather stately gentleman. I recall that, if one was late for chapel or was absent for reasons of sickness or something or other - if one had been out especially for a long time - then right after chapel you would go to the faculty room and see Dr. Vennema, and he would write out an excuse for you. That was one of the rituals of the president of the college in those days.

I never had close contacts with him. I don't remember that he ever spoke to us in a class, or otherwise. He was the leader in that he presided at chapel. That's about as much as I remember about him. I never heard him preach a sermon. I don't remember that I ever heard him really deliver an address of some sort, I maybe mistaken there, but I don't recall it.

CONRAD: How about the feeling of the community to the college at that time, I've read that they didn't financially support it very well, that a lot of

money had to come from the East, but how about the community's general feeling?

WOLTERS: I was a very young person, a country boy not knowing very much about city ways, so that I can't really answer that intelligently. I know that the churches had some regard for the school, especially some of the country churches. At that time I belonged to the Reformed Church. Did I tell you about the two churches in Graafschap?

CONRAD: No, but could you expand about that?

WOLTERS: Yes, surely. All the Dutch immigrants, when they came here with Van Raalte, joined the Reformed Church in America soon after they came. They were invited to join, they got assistance from the church in the East, and so they joined. Then after about ten years, or maybe not quite that long, there came leaders, that is pastors, from the Netherlands that were of the kind that thought that the Reformed Church was somewhat too, as they used to say in those days, somewhat too modernistic. Also the Reformed Church had lodge members in it, and they were opposed to free masonry. So there was agitation in the community and it led to a split. Sometimes almost whole denominations split away from the Reformed Church in America. Graafschap was one of the leaders in that. It was one of the first churches that did that.

The church that is standing there today is still the same in the main. The auditorium part of that whole building is still the same as it was when it was built in those early days. The majority of the congregation seceded from the Reformed Church in America, but the smaller body did not. The building was taken over by the majority and those who stayed with the Reformed Church in America had to build a new building and a parsonage, but they did that.

My parents were not of the earliest colonists, except possibly my mother. My mother was a daughter of a certain Mr. Stereen Speet, who came in '57. He had wanted to come in '47 with Van Raalte but since he had been in the service in the province of Hanover for four years, when Hanover began a war with Denmark he was called back and had to spend another four years in the service before he could come here. He came with my grandmother in '57 and my mother stemmed from that union, so she was born here. My father was 19 when he came from a part of Europe close to the Netherlands border, but on the German side of the border. My grandfather was also a member of that Reformed Church in Graafschap and was on the consistory for some time. Until I was a sophomore in college I was a member of that Reformed Church.

Then because the majority of the members came from the area to the north of the village, Central Park especially, that whole church building was moved to Central Park, where the Reformed Church now stands. It stood there for years. This present building is not very old, but I can't remember just when the old building was torn down and this one put up. Since we lived south of Graafschap my father and mother said, "Now it really would be foolish for us to go past the church here and to go all the way to Central Park." - which was quite a long drive by horse and buggy in those days. So then they transferred their membership to the Christian Reformed Church; accordingly, since my sophomore year in college I've always been a member of the Christian Reformed Church.

When I came to the college to teach I asked the president, who was then Dr. Dimment, whether he thought it would be wise to change our membership to the Reformed Church. He said, "No, you don't have to do that at all. You just stay there where you are if you like Maple Avenue Church." We still

are members of Maple Avenue Christian Reformed Church. And the president of the Board of Trustees told me the same thing. So my wife and I, and Dr. and Mrs. De Graaf, who came two years after I did to the Prep School, were the first members of the Christian Reformed Church on the Hope faculty. But, we were never discriminated against, we always enjoyed our work there.

CONRAD: So then during the time until you came here there were only Reformed Church people on the staff.

WOLTERS: Yes, almost everyone was a member of the Reformed Church. I do not remember any exception to that at that time. Later on there were other non-Reformed people who came in. But I can't remember who was the first one of some other group, but almost everyone who teaches there, even today, belongs to the Reformed Church.

CONRAD: Do you have anything more to say concerning the original question on the relations between the college and community?

WOLTERS: No, I really can't. I know that some of the country churches were quite loyal. I don't know in terms of money how much was contributed, but they at least had a feeling for the school because that's where many ministers came from, and that's where many of the missionaries came from.

There's always been, especially in the Reformed Church in those days and later too, a strong feeling for foreign missionaries in particular.

I know that churches such as Third Reformed, Fourth Reformed and later Trinity, were loyal to the school. The general feeling of the community was that they were glad the college was here, because it always brought in money from students and so forth. There was never any hard feeling between town and gown, as they say.

CONRAD: You've mentioned a few times the uneasiness you felt being a country

boy and going to the city. What kind of changes were there to make, what was Holland like at the time?

WOLTERS: The town was of course very much smaller, than it is now. Quite homogeneous. There were, as they called them in those days - Americans - in the city that had positions of power. They were in business and were among the leaders of the community. They weren't all of Dutch descent in those days. It was a class that was sort of looked up to because of their position in the community and because they had money; that's always the way. They sort of naturally became the bankers and the businessmen.

When one came from the country; well, among students, for example, we tended, at first at least, to have the feeling that the city boys knew so much more than we did. They had more opportunity too than we did, than I did, for example, and many of us, in the sense that they had more access to books, I didn't have any library at home. We lived on a farm, and by present day standards we would have been called poor people, but we didn't know that. We didn't think we were; we were satisfied, always had enough to eat; we never sufferedⁱⁿ our home. But there was still this feeling of inferiority because the city boys knew things that we didn't, but of course there really wasn't a real barrier.

CONRAD: Do you have anything to say about Dr. Dimment? He became president while you were still in school and he was the one who hired you to teach in the Prep School.

WOLTERS: Yes, I have very pleasant memories of Dr. Dimment and his family. The whole family, he and his sister, Mrs. Dykhuizen, were very common people. Mrs. Dykhuizen was a widow with three children: Adelaide, Geraldine and Harold. Dr. Dimment was well educated; he was professor of Greek before

he became president. Dr. Dimment was adept at everything, you could talk about any subject and he knew a great deal about it. He was a business man too, in the sense that he knew the stock markets, and he knew trends and so forth. Later on, after he left the presidency, he taught in the business department of the college for some time too. But as a man he was very well respected. He was a man who had a facile tongue.

He could express himself extremely well, he was a linguist. If he wanted to, he could express his dislike for something in very biting terms, I don't mean any words that are not acceptable, but very exact, to show how exactly he felt.

In the chapel service he was always present. In those days the president would announce the faculty member, who would have charge of the service that morning. Every faculty member, unless there was a special reason why he couldn't do it or didn't want to do it, was expected to take his turn at leading chapel. The president would also, from the chapel platform, make the verbal announcements that were needed for the information of all the students. Sometimes he would deliver a little talk, if something unusual had happened. If he heard of some student pranks or some other happening that might involve the whole student body or community, he would talk about that and give his opinion. He had an excellent sense of humor also. He would make humorous remarks along with cutting remarks, depending on the subject he was talking about.

When I was teaching at the Christian High School I did write a letter applying for a position in the Preparatory School. I've always had a high regard for Hope College, and I felt that I would like to teach there, if there should be an opening. I got a message by Western Union when I was teaching my class in the fall at the beginning of the school year of the high school, telling me to meet Dr. Dimment at a certain time. So I asked

permission to do that and this was granted. He hired me to teach Latin at the Preparatory School. At the University of Michigan I had majored in Latin, and language in general, with a minor in German. So I taught in the Preparatory School from '26 to '30, and then from '30 to '66 in the college department.

CONRAD: Do you have any recollection on Dr. Dimment's hiring practices, like the kind of people he was looking for?

WOLTERS: Instructors you mean?

CONRAD: Yes, instructors.

WOLTERS: First of all, people who were capable in their field. That he felt was very necessary. Then for people who had convictions too, as far as religious matters are concerned.

CONRAD: So did you see him as a president who really strove to maintain the Christian aspect of the college?

WOLTERS: Yes, I think he tried to do that. Both he and Wichers after him too.

CONRAD: Do you think he was rather successful in it?

WOLTERS: Yes. I believe he was. There was a fine spirit of esprit de corps among the faculty. He and his sister did much socially also to promote this. We were guests at their home overlooking Lake Macatawa very frequently. They were such generous and congenial hosts.

CONRAD: I would like to back up a little bit, staying with Dr. Dimment but going back to when WWI broke out. We talked about that a little bit the other day. Could you give a little reflection of what the campus was like when the war broke out and how did the program start that instructed

GIs on campus?

WOLTERS: Yes, when I was beginning my sophomore year, just before I went back to school in the fall of '18, the word went around that a GI camp would be formed on the college campus of students that might become candidates for officer training. Because I was of draft age I decided to join that group instead of waiting for the draft. I volunteered. As I recall it, we had a unit that came pretty close to 100 men. The first officer that was here was a man by the name of Capt. Jacobsen. Then later on another man, Dabney came; he was from the south, he had a southern drawl, and there were those two men. And the third one was one by the name of Lt. Small, he came during the last period. He was not a small man, in fact a man of rather tall stature, but he had the name Lt. Small. The thing I remember about him was that at first he felt very insecure, but it didn't take long and he could bark out orders as well as the other fellows.

We were quartered in Carnegie Gymnasium; that was the barracks. I believe reveille was sounded at 6:00 in the morning. We'd be given just enough time to get dressed and then we'd be taken out on the street for exercises, marching on the double and different maneuvers. The streets were not so busy in those days as now. Then we went back to the barracks and disbanded. Next we went to academics; we were students starting at 8:00 with the chapel service. We were taken care of as a body, we didn't move all over and mingle with other students very much at the time. After Chapel we went to our different classes. Chapel used to last in the neighborhood of twenty minutes; if there was a speaker it might take a little bit longer, but classes would start right after chapel. We only had to travel short distances in those early days, to Van Raalte Hall, that was a classroom building, and the upper story of Graves Hall.

After our forenoon classes, we had mess. Our mess hall was on the top floor of Van Raalte Hall. In the afternoon, maybe beginning around 2:00, we would be in the military again and have drills until suppertime. Then we'd be up in the mess hall once more and after suppertime we had a study period, a required study period. Then at 10:00, taps.

CONRAD: I've heard that there was some friction when this was established. Do you know anything about the relationship between Lt. Jacobsen and Dr. Dimment?

WOLTERS: Between the military and the college?

CONRAD: Yes, between the military and the president.

WOLTERS: No, I really don't. I don't know that there were ever any particular frictions, but there could have been; such things could happen; but I do not know. I don't know if anyone else has some information on that, someone who was on the faculty at the time, but you can't find any of those who were on the faculty at that time around anymore.

CONRAD: I had read that sometimes they had some questions as to who was in authority of the servicemen.

WOLTERS: No, I can't. I'm sorry.

CONRAD: That's ok. What about the students then. I'm sure there were some men who didn't join the program, so how did that go between you and them?

WOLTERS: I'm sure there were not many men who didn't join. There were perhaps a few who for some reason or another; either because of physical difficulties or some other reason didn't join. I don't know of any unpleasant incidences between such a group and those in the military. For the most part I felt

that the relations were good.

CONRAD: My next area of questions concerning Dr. Dimment was his building program, primarily the chapel. You were around at the time that was being built. Do you remember what the campus was going through as it was being built? I know now there is a lot of excitement over the new building and the fund drive. Would you say it also happened when the Chapel was built?

WOLTERS: There was anticipation at what that chapel would be like and what it would mean to the college. Dr. Dimment worked very hard to get funds for it, and he himself contributed a sizable amount; nobody knows how much, but he contributed a great deal, because it was; as they say, one of his dreams to get a good chapel there.

Some mistake was made in the construction of it, I don't know if anybody ever pointed it out to you, but on the east end they had to make some change. I don't know for what reason now, but it wasn't planned originally quite the way it is. I don't know if it was Dr. Dimment's fault or the architect's fault. But much of the construction is the result of Dr. Dimment's opinion on things. The alteration on the stage part had something to do with the acoustics on stage, these are not the best; and that is due to the change that was made there, I've been told. But he succeeded in getting some excellent work done on the window, especially.

I don't remember any untoward incidents, any labor troubles or anything of that sort in those days. It is a building that is well built and it shows. It became the center of religious activities especially; that's what Dr. Dimment wanted it to be, he did not approve of having the kind of programs that are held there nowadays. He wanted it to be a religious center, and there was to be no program there that required a paid admission.

One example of its usefulness in bringing the religious community

together is the programs that they had at Eastertime. For three hours on Good Friday they would have a continuous service, people could come and go and various ministers would be asked to take part; maybe you've heard something about it?

CONRAD: Yes, I have heard of it.

WOLTERS: That was started when the chapel was built. The chapel was large enough to accommodate many people in those days and so that was always used. These services lasted until a few years ago. They still have a skeleton of it I believe, but I don't know if it even was in the chapel these last couple of years. Gradually things of that sort have their moments; they have their day and cease to be!

CONRAD: Do you remember any fund drives that were carried out during this period?

WOLTERS: Yes. And the faculty members did quite well in contributing to something like the chapel.

CONRAD: Were there any organized fund drives as they have now, such as "Looking Ahead with Hope?"

WOLTERS: Well there were some like that although as a rule the directing of the whole enterprise would be in the hands of some church leaders, not of professionals as we frequently do now.

CONRAD: That's all I have on Dr. Dimment. So why don't we move to Dr. Wichers who followed Dr. Dimment. Do you have any general comparisons between the two men?

WOLTERS: I'm not sure that you should include this in the written part, but

the two didn't get along very well. Wichers was a teacher under Dimnent and they didn't see eye to eye on certain things. I think many of them were rather trite, but their personalities didn't agree. Nevertheless Dimnent, shall we say, served under Wichers as president. He didn't cause any special difficulty to Wichers while Wichers was president.

Dr. Wichers was not, and I don't know either if you should include this, but Dr. Wichers in my opinion was not so much concerned about the faculty as Dr. Dimnent was. Now there is a reason for that too. He was president of the college during some very difficult days, the depression days.

He had been on the campus before, and then he went to the bank; he was at First State Bank for years. After that he came back as the president of the college. I believe it was just a matter of months after he had become president that he was hospitalized because of a stomach ulcer; the work was a little too hard for him.

But he did, I think, probably what he could. Since he was a banker we felt a little more his attitude of a banker, that money counts, and that you have to be very careful in handling it. In other words, he didn't work to get the salaries of the faculty up as fast as pay went up to the manual laboring man. By the end of his period we were not being paid comparable to skilled laborers.

But otherwise he had a good reputation in the community, and I think he had a good deal of ability as an administrator too. I don't want to give you the impression that he was not fair or anything of that sort. After he resigned from the presidency he would come back and mingle with the faculty frequently. My wife and I and Dr. and Mrs. Wichers met often on such occasions. We had many things in common too; Mrs. Wichers was a person of since, Christian character.

CONRAD: That was the period of the depression and I've read that the school was having problems, and that they worried that the school might not open up sometimes because of the decrease and loss of funds. How did you find that whole period?

WOLTERS: We were more fortunate than many other teachers were. Many other people were either not working or on WPA. We were on half salary for some time, but even then we never lacked food and shelter in our home, and others didn't either. We got enough so that we could live.

And as things were looking up a little bit there was a time when the heating system had to be overhauled. By that time our salaries had come up a little and were somewhat normal, but a certain percentage was deducted from our salaries to pay for the heating system. That was not very pleasant then, but it was necessary in order to make things go. So it was a struggle, but we came through.

After Dr. Lubbers came times had changed and he worked hard not only to get buildings and so forth, but also to get funding for salaries, and get them so that they would compare more favorably with those at other colleges.

CONRAD: I have heard President Wichers referred to as a man who kept the college just going between Dr. Dimment and Dr. Lubbers, and that his administration was just like a way-station between the two men. I was wondering if you viewed his administration in these terms.

WOLTERS: Under Wichers the science building was built. Dr. Lubbers was more venturesome - I'll say that Lubbers had visions of things that could be done and he was quite successful in getting them done. He was a speaker, Dr. Wichers was not a very convincing speaker, he didn't have the talent, but Lubbers did, and that's a great asset, knowing how to talk. Dr. Lubbers not

only had visions of what Hope College could be, but he was able to influence people to see them, to stand by him, and support him, and to get things done. That was a difference between the two men.

CONRAD: Well I think this would be a good place to end today. We'll pick up with Dr. Lubbers next time.

INTERVIEW II

CONRAD: Why don't we talk about the difference between the time when the GIs were here at the Second World War and the First World War. I know you did some teaching in the second one and you were a student in the first, how did you view the difference?

WOLTERS: During the First World War I was a student as you say, and then the emphasis was on how it affected me, and in the Second World War I was on the faculty, and so I saw it somewhat from the other side.

In the First World War there was not so much disruption, shall we say, of the program as there was during the Second, because there were not so many men gone. They didn't involve the ordinary student quite so much. A number of those who did come back after the war ended were men that were quite mature. That's true of the Second World War too, and they just fell in with the classes. For example, in my graduating class of 1920, there were a number of men who had spent some three years in the service. Because Dr. Lubbers was one of these, he graduated later than he would otherwise have done. He was also in India as a teacher for a short period. They still have that possibility, don't they, in the Reformed Church, that you can go for a short period?

CONRAD: I believe they still do, but I'm not sure about the India program.

WOLTERS: So we had a number of these returned veterans in our class. But in the Second World War the enrollments at the college, it seems to me, went down to somewhere around 300 or 350. For two years there, from 43-45 I was helping in the English Department because the German Department didn't have enough for two of us; there were just two of us in the department.

Then after Dr. Lubbers came in '45, we had a large influx of veterans;

the enrollment went up. That involved quite a few problems at the college, because these veterans were not discharged in the summer so they could start the normal fall program. Many of them came during November. I was asked to take the Latin Department because Albert Timmer, who had been in the Latin Department, had gone into admissions and so Dr. Lubbers offered me the Latin Department. It was very small, it always did remain fairly small. I also became director of the Veteran's Institute, as it was called.

CONRAD: What was that?

WOLTERS: That was for veterans who had not yet completed their high school. They were given an opportunity to finish their high school work by examination or by some, let's call it in modern terminology, remedial work. It involved some tutoring and at the same time a combination of class work. I would have them in a certain class; at one time the first year there were some thirty or thirty one in a class in English, and some would at the same time take the regular course; the course numbered 101, which was freshman English in those days - the numbers of course vary with the times. When they took mine and the other one too, we tried not to duplicate each other. And if they passed that course with a satisfactory grade, they automatically got their English credit for high school; and the same thing was true of a few other courses. As I said, some of it was tutorial work. That program cleared up in a couple of years, two years, I think.

CONRAD: So this program was designed by the college for students who hadn't graduated from high school.

WOLTERS: Yes, the ones who had not yet completed their high school work.

CONRAD: So they were finishing high school and going to college at the same time.

WOLTERS: That's right. And most of them did well. They were students that knew what they were there for. That was noticeable too; they had a good influence on the whole student body because of their maturity and their desire to learn; that's what they were there for, they said. So we didn't have much trouble with students that just shirked their work. Have you met Ponstein? He was one of those. And Hillegonds was too.

CONRAD: That's two people I interviewed this summer. We talked a lot about what went on on campus after the war from a student's perspective, which is always a little different from the faculty's.

WOLTERS: Yes, indeed. They had experience, experiences of life, so they sometimes no doubt, felt they weren't in every respect treated as students who were just about as mature as the faculty members that were trying to teach them something, or rather to guide them in their studies, I'd rather use that word.

CONRAD: How about the building that was going on in Lubbers' period, I know there were really a lot of overcrowded classrooms and a lack of offices and all those physical plant type problems. How did you view that situation at the time?

WOLTERS: You heard about the barracks that we had on the campus, having been put up temporarily?

CONRAD: Yes.

WOLTERS: All in all we made do, as the expression is. Both sides, if I may speak of sides, both students and faculty members were willing to cooperate in those matters so you could get things done. I think the college was not severely damaged. Let me put it differently, I don't think the education

was damaged a great deal by those matters. Of course later on we got better quarters, but many of those particular students that were there at that time did not stay long enough to take advantage of the newer buildings. That's always for another generation, frequently at least. You may get a little touch of the latest building on the campus.

CONRAD: Well, I'll get one year's use out of it.

WOLTERS: By the way, the retired faculty members are to have a tour of the building August ninth, a preview.

CONRAD: It's a beautiful building.

WOLTERS: Is it? I haven't been in it yet.

CONRAD: Getting back to Dr. Lubbers' era. When he came he did a lot of restructuring of the administration, putting in new positions and such to make the college run more efficiently. You had been there when the school lacked all of that administrative set up, so how did you view the change that he was bringing in?

WOLTERS: I think generally for the good. He was an excellent administrator. He was well liked by the faculty, and I think by the student body too.

CONRAD: I've heard that at that time he was having a little trouble with the Reformed Church, so one or two years after he was here a petition went around to the faculty to show their support for what he was doing. Do you remember the situation?

WOLTERS: I don't. I'm sure it wasn't serious. I feel sure it wasn't serious. He didn't perhaps express himself always in a way that many ordinary folk could understand well, and he didn't probably emphasize, let me just use the

term, the orthodox position, everytime he spoke somewhere. But I think it must be said, when he did go out to speak to the people directly, if there was any such feeling, shall we say in a synod or some community, I believe that he could always get them to see his viewpoint and to begin to support his aims. He knew how to handle things. He had been a debater.

CONRAD: It pays off to take speech in college!

WOLTERS: Yes. During his student years he was in debating and public speaking, I don't know if that's been talked about much in connection with your research, but public speaking played a very important part in the years when I was a student still, and also in the earlier years of my experience on the faculty. That generated as much interest, on the part of the students too, as athletics does nowadays. Hope frequently won the oratorical contest in Michigan among the, oh I suppose there were probably about ten colleges at that time that competed, somewhere in that neighborhood. Hope got first very frequently, and second sometimes. A number of our people competed in the national contest and won.

CONRAD: When did you see a move away from the enthusiasm for that?

WOLTERS: As the enrollment in the college increased and especially after the time of the Second World War. The emphasis shifted more away from that to, may I say what they like to call, a more practical part of education, athletics, science, business and so forth.

CONRAD: Would you say that during Lubbers' administration you saw that shift towards a more practical education?

WOLTERS: Well, I don't like to use that term because the emphasis was - on the part of Lubbers and the faculty too, still on the humanities. But the

viewpoint of the students as far as public speaking is concerned and debating- that interest was not as keen any longer. It's hard to say just what caused it, but that was the trend nevertheless; coming I think as a result of the whole war experience.

CONRAD: I've read a lot of how Lubbers handled student problems that arose during his administration. I was wondering if you could compare how he handled problems to the way Dr. Dimment handled the problems that you mentioned earlier?

WOLTERS: I think we might say that Lubbers was very suave, he knew psychology; and I think that Dimment was not nearly as adept at turning, shall we say, turning the student around in his view of the matter as Lubbers was. He had a couple of more or less confrontations, as we speak of them nowadays, Dimment did. If Lubbers had any such problem he was able to settle them, it seems, in a way so that the student or the students were usually quite satisfied with the outcome. He was willing to hear them out for one thing, and that helps. Now I don't know because I was never present when Dimment tried to resolve those things with the students, so I can't really judge him in that way. But just from what I've observed I would say that that was a difference. Lubbers knew how to tackle a problem and gradually to get the other person to see things from his side, or from the side of the general public. After hearing first and then talking, things were usually settled amicably.

CONRAD: How about in his dealing with faculty problems?

WOLTERS: Yes. I must say that among our faculty in those days there were no factions, never in my whole career were there strong factions on campus among faculty members. That began during my last years, a few of my last

years, on the part of some who were brought in, especially a few of the younger members of the faculty, people who had come from other places where there was an organization of professors, which you might just as well call a union, because that's what it is. They wanted to sometimes have a little more influence and make themselves and their influence felt. They thought the faculty should be more vocal in administrative circles. But, as I say, and I emphasize that, there was a unity of purpose among the faculty during almost all of my career there.

CONRAD: So then when did you see the change, was it during Dr. VanderWerf's administration?

WOLTERS: Especially then. I believe there were a few on the faculty during the later part of the administration of Dr. Lubbers who formed the nucleus of that Association of University Professors, I believe that was the term they used either official or unofficial. But they were not very vocal in those days. They didn't have much influence on the faculty either. That increased under Dr. Vander Werf's administration.

CONRAD: I have one other general area under Dr. Lubbes and that's funding, which was one of his big things. I was wondering if you were involved in any of the campaigns that he set up?

WOLTERS: Yes, in fact I was too under Wichers. There was a year, I don't remember the year it was, but it was sometime in the late '30s, when a number of us faculty members were sent to Iowa to raise money for the Science Building. We got a great deal of our support from Iowa, and many students came from there. I don't remember how many weeks we were there, three or four, I believe. Then we called on individuals, we had a schedule made out for us. We went to may homes, a large number of these on farms, and we tried

to advertise Hope College, in order to increase the rapport between the college and the people, also to obtain money and/or pledges of support. I was engaged in that along with Kleis, Hinkamp, Welmers, and others. We went in cars; Welmers, Kleis and I went in one car, and I believe Hinkamp was in our car too. There were a couple of cars of people; around eight or ten people went.

During Dr. I Lubbers' tenure I was a worker in the "Century of Service Campaign." This was conducted among residents of the Holland area. I found some of our daily reports, when looking in one of my old filing cabinets this week. If my records are complete, it seems that our team (John Nyboer and I) collected in cash and pledges about 390.00 dollars.

CONRAD: That's all I have for Lubbers. You were also here for a little bit under Dr. Vander Werf's administration. How did you make that shift from Dr. Lubbers to Dr. Vander^{Werf}, I've heard they were very different people?

WOLTERS: Yes.

CONRAD: How did you adjust to the change?

WOLTERS: In my own case it didn't affect me at all, I had very good relations with Dr VanderWerf. Even at the time of my retirement, I retired at 67, he said, "If you want to stay on till 70, fine, in fact I'd like to have you." But I felt at 67, since Mrs. Wolters was rather weak, and my hearing was a little affected already; so that I would usually try to be somewhere in the room where I could be close enough to the students to hear the question and still occasionally I would have to ask to have a question repeated, and I felt that wasn't fair to a student; so I took advantage of the retiring age and retired at 67.

Now to come back to the other. I think that Dr. Vander Werf was not psychologically equipped to handle what he tried to do at Hope College, that,

as I look back on his administration, would be the way that I would characterize it. He tried so hard, when he came especially, to get the students to feel that he was one of them. He even wore the green pot, he said, "I'll be in chapel just the way you are," chapel attendance was still expected in those days - required chapel is what some people liked to call it. He said, "I'm one of you." But under the pressure of work, he wasn't true to his word. There were many times when he was not in chapel but working in his office; and he started in his office a long time before 8:00. He was a hard worker. So after he had been in the position for a while, he too, just as Wichers before him, had a physical problem. He recovered from that.

CONRAD: How did you view his push for academic excellence?

WOLTERS: It became a little bit trite, I believe. He used that expression so often, but he tried to live up to it. He himself was an excellent student, he has a very good mind. It's too bad that he didn't develop this, whatever is needed for an administrator, in addition to his native intelligence, I'm a little sorry about that. He strove to get academic excellence, I wish he had also applied that more to spiritual excellence. I'm sure he himself had serious convictions on that matter, I don't doubt that but he didn't speak about it much, he didn't always set an example, shall we say. Perhaps you know in general what I'm saying. He would absent himself from chapel. I don't know about his church attendance, I won't judge that because I was not a member of his local church. You could find that out, if you wished maybe, from someone from Hope Church.

CONRAD: Did you feel any push to the sciences in his administration?

WOLTERS: Yes, even when I was a student there, Hope College students in the science department had good entrance into the University of Michigan and Rush

Medical, those two in particular that I know about. That remained strong too under Van Zyl and it got impetus under Vander Werf. Yes, because he was in the sciences himself.

CONRAD: How did you feel his relation to the faculty was?

WOLTERS: Excellent at first, he had the total support. But gradually people began to be more critical of the things that he did. Certainly there was not that support that former presidents had from the total faculty at the time that he left.

CONRAD: Did you see him as having problems with the Reformed Church?

WOLTERS: Yes, not being a member of the Reformed Church I can't speak to it as well as someone else could, but there were sections in the church that didn't feel comfortable about his spiritual emphasis, if I may use that term again, about his lack of spiritual influence. They began to wonder whether his outlook on life and the work that he was doing at the college was quite what they would like to have the college do. For one reason, he brought in a number of people that had no religious convictions whatever, even one that professed to be an atheist, I'm not sure if I may use that term. At least for all intents and purposes as far as life was concerned, there were a number of people with no sympathy for spiritual matters; and certainly no sympathy for the college traditions, in fact opposed to the tradition of the college. That was damaging not only to the community and to the church people, but damaging to the student body, I would say. Because a teacher cannot hide his convictions, he does have influence for good or bad on his students.

CONRAD: A lot of them try but it still comes through.

WOLTERS: Yes, and one of the tragic ways in which it comes through is, I think, when the instructor is not positive in what he has to say about something; when he tries to leave the student guessing as to what he does think about God, or where we came from, or why we're here and where we're going. I think a student has a right to know what a person thinks and feels and believes.

CONRAD: Just one more general area that I would like to talk to you about and that is about the Latin Department and back a little further to the German Department. Let's start with the German Department. How did you see that develop during your years at Hope College?

WOLTERS: When I was asked to come into the German Department in 1930, we had just two people, Miss Boyd was chairman of the department. We both had full classes. I had four classes in beginning German, and they were all close to thirty in number, as I remember. She had the upper classes and I think her classes were sizable too. One special reason for that was that the science people all took German. They felt that the Germans had done so much work in science that a student could profit by going out and reading the original works in German rather than some of the other languages. That kept on until the war, during the Second World War our student body was decimated so much that there were not many students in any of the classes.

Then after the war I don't know what the German percentage was so far as students is concerned, but I know they began to employ more people when the veterans came back, but that was true in every department. That's about all I can say about that.

Then after the war, under Dr. Lubbers, I became the Latin instructor, I had the title Chairman of the Department of Classics afterwards; what that meant was that the Greek man and I were technically termed the Department of Classics. The Latin Department was never large, but it hadn't been extremely

large earlier either. There were two people when I began in the Prep. School. Professor Greer and there was also J.W. Beardslee. After the Second World War, when I had charge, it was never very large.

I taught all the courses. The student could get a Latin major and a number of them did. The department gradually got a little smaller. During the last years that I was teaching I taught a couple of courses in English.

They usually asked me to teach the Roman History course, Dr. Fried did this, because of my Latin background. I had large classes in Roman History. I sometimes had, I don't think I ever had a class in Latin that I taught in English; e.g., a Latin author. They are doing this now, I understand. I always had the Latin language as the basis of the course. Then my attempt always was to get the student to obtain the 'feel' of the culture and the historical background of things as well; to apply it as much as possible to their own use.

Retention of vocabulary, I can't see how anybody can teach Latin without that, but then also when one begins to read the Latin authors, there's so much possibility of bringing in the background under which the early Christian Church began. I always tried to emphasize that there was some possibility of linking the two; I tried not to overlook it. It gave the student some background, and I think that's important in interpreting the New Testament too, to know the culture.

CONRAD: How were the relations between your department and say Dr. Lubbers and Dr. Vander Werf?

WOLTERS: Always cordial. Always sympathetic to the department, to the work I mean; so far as I could tell.

CONRAD: How did you feel with the push to the sciences? Did you feel neglected

or left behind?

WOLTERS: Well, you can't help ^{but} feel a little bit that way, but I didn't blame the administrators for it.

CONRAD: You mentioned the students earlier, how the students started to push to a practical education rather than Dr. Lubbers or the administration. Could you talk about that? Do you think a lot of the courses that were added along those lines were because of students pushing in that area?

WOLTERS: I think probably even more it was because of the faculty members that came in. They had been taught in schools where a certain philosophy of education was; perhaps they usually reflected that. So I think it was more on the part of some faculty members rather than on the part of administrators or students.

CONRAD How was their view of education different?

WOLTERS: Man centered rather than God centered; let's put it that way in bold terms. And making a living rather than, to use that trite expression, making a life.

CONRAD: Did you see through the years Hope having trouble hanging on to that philosophy?

WOLTERS: Only as individuals were willing to do that. The big majority of the faculty members still had religious convictions, deep seated. So I feel that the tradition always has been kept alive, although there, ^{and} are, non-conformists, who try to influence the student body and as such rebel against that kind of emphasis. Those are the ones that usually got the publicity, those that were against it.

CONRAD: My final question is a very general one. Could you reflect on how you have seen Hope change? From your student days in 1912 to the present?

WOLTERS: Size first of all. with size you lose something. The individual contact between teacher and student, I'm quite sure, is not as close as it was in years gone by. When we were a college of five or six hundred there was a spirit of unity, both among the faculty and among the students, and there was working together. If you didn't know the person in a personal way you at least usually knew the name of the student. I'm sure that the students knew all the faculty, by name at least, for one reason, everyone took part in leading the chapel service; so you got to know something about all the faculty members. Now I'm sure there are many faculty members whom you do not know if you meet them on the street.

CONRAD: That's very true.

WOLTERS: And of course with students it must be the same way. So you lose something when you get bigger.

I feel that Dr. Van Wylene is trying hard to still keep the traditional emphasis in spite of the bigness. It's a tremendous task, but I have faith in him; and I think that's true of not only a large percentage of the faculty members, but of people in general.

CONRAD: Which is what the college needs right now.

WOLTERS: Yes.

CONRAD: Do you have anything to add that I might have overlooked?

WOLTERS: No, I can't say that I have, Mr. Strauch.

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