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FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



Francis Michael Sharp (1979-2008)
Professor of German

January 24, 2018

By Doris Meyer

Transcription by Mia Watts, University of the Pacific,
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Subjects: Modern Languages Department offerings, faculty, language lab, and study abroad; Development of School of International Studies; The importance of the Humanities; University/Community Outreach programs.

UOP ARCHIVES FACULTY EMERITI INTERVIEWS

Meyer: Good Morning, Mike.

Sharp: Good Morning, Doris.

Meyer: To the readers and listeners, Francis Michael Sharp and I, Doris Meyer, are here in the Alumni House on the University of the Pacific campus and the date is Wednesday January 24th, right Mike?

Sharp: Yes, that's right, and it's 2018, to be precise.

Meyer: 2018, right. Mike and I are looking over the questions now that are suggested to be covered in our interview. It always seems appropriate, that asking a question about how the interviewee arrived on the campus here in Stockton is an appropriate first question. So, Mike, how come you're here?

Sharp: I often think about that, Doris, but I thought that I would go back a little further in my life and tie an earlier period into the chain of events.

Meyer: That's fine. That would be great. That puts it in perspective.

Sharp: Yes, that's exactly what I thought. I went to the university of Missouri as an undergraduate and graduated in 1964 after the fall semester of '63. It was one semester late because I had changed majors. I had begun my undergraduate studies as a chemistry major. When I took organic chemistry and all of the mathematics that went with it, I began to think in my junior year that this kind of study had too much memorization for me and not enough real personal involvement. My studies were at that point too prescriptive and too little "inspiring". I had memorized a lot of things but hadn't involved my inner self with what I was studying. I had also begun German courses from the beginning of my sophomore year since that was **required** of all chemistry majors at that point in history. Unfortunately, that kind of requirement no longer exists at the university level and I always have told students that they should wait to declare a major until they are sure they are pursuing that major which is right for them, both as something that might provide a lifelong career as well as expand their inner selves. Thus I decided that I would become a German major when I was a junior. I knew that I was opting for lifelong personal satisfaction over any promising financial rewards as a medical doctor, for example. I also kept in mind that my 4 years of ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) courses at the University of Missouri would put me in a good position upon graduation to serve my 2 years of active duty military service in Germany. Believe it or not the government did decide to send me to Germany for my service from 1964 to 1966 during the Cold War--so much for those skeptics who always assert that there is no such thing as "military intelligence." For my life's further course, it was obviously the most "intelligent" decision that the Army could have made!

Meyer: [laughs]

Sharp: But anyway, I look back on those 2 years and think of them not only as an opportunity to

serve my country, but more personally important to me then, the opportunity to be immersed in the language and culture that I had grown to love; and especially to provide me the instruction and immersion in the spoken language that I needed to get through graduate school upon my return to the US. I lived with and almost became part of a German family, people I stayed in contact with & visited regularly until their deaths in the 90's. They even made a couple of trips to our home in Stockton--the husband had by some odd coincidence been in a POW camp located in Stockton in the mid-forties which made the trip for him even more special. I still am in contact with their youngest son--via Facebook--after all these years! And even more wonderful, I met my future wife (Nancy) in the German city where I was stationed, a lady I have on occasion called my "Sergeant Major" even though she claims that only after 50 years of marriage (2017) did she take over this post! But really, she was in Germany as a first-grade teacher of the children of all those American soldiers on our base and we met outside the Officers' Club where we often talked, ate, and drank beers in the evenings & on weekends. So anyway, my service for 2 years in Germany was good in at least 2 senses. I had already decided at that time that I was going to come back and go to graduate school in German at the University of California in Berkeley. I had already been accepted there for the year 1966 when my military service was over and things went as planned--I returned in '66, got married in '67, spent a long time in graduate school--7 years!--got my first job in Princeton from 1973 to 1979 and drove west to Stockton in the summer of 1979 to join the faculty at Pacific that fall.

Meyer: Say that again--how long were you in graduate school?

Sharp: 7 years.

Meyer: How come?

Sharp: Because I was a bit behind on coursework that I didn't have at Missouri but that I needed to get a PhD. Nancy and I both enjoyed every minute of it because it was a very exciting place to be at that time. In the middle of the hippie world and lots of fun. Never a dull moment!

Meyer: Were you married at that time?

Sharp: We didn't get married until '67. So that's why we just celebrated our 50th last year. But anyway, Nancy was working all the time and supporting my studies. But I was also a teaching assistant for most of the time that we were in Berkeley, and taught various language courses. The graduate students did most of that kind of teaching. In Berkeley at the time there were 120 graduate students in German. Can you imagine a German department with 120 people? But anyway, I was very fortunate to get my first job at Princeton University in 1973. We spent a wonderful 6 years there but when it came to tenure time and I had not published my book on my dissertation subject, we couldn't stay any longer. I was working on it but didn't publish it until '81. So we spent 6 years there, 6 wonderful years. It's a beautiful campus and has a wonderful library. A huge library. But there came that time in 1979, when we had to leave because I didn't get tenure.

I had heard about a job at Pacific for a German professor and I applied for it. I was invited out for an interview, must have been early 1979 when that happened. And I came out and it was a wonderful place. I just was heads over heels positive about it. I met a lot of people, the

chairman and his wife, the entire modern language department, etc. I met George Blum as well who during our interview immediately switched into German to get an idea of how my German was since I had been born & lived most of my life in Kansas & Missouri! My years in Germany had paid off!

Meyer: Was George Chairman of the department at that time or were you together in the Modern Language Department together?

Sharp: George began in Raymond in 1962 as a history professor, but was in COP by this time. Bob Kreiter was chair of MLL at the time and was soon succeeded by Janine, his wife.

Meyer: Right.

Sharp: But I met George at the initial job interview and he left a lasting impression on me. I spoke at his memorial service last year & did a lot of thinking then about his influence on me over the years. I consider him to have been a mentor, a person from whom I learned a great deal during my more senior years, someone comparable to my friend Paul Fairbrook.

Meyer: []

Sharp: Both had lasting effects on me!

Meyer: Could I bring up another topic? What was your dissertation about or what was the subject and how was that tied in with a textbook or a book?

Sharp: I had a, what we call in German, a Doktorvater, in Berkeley, a professor who directed my dissertation—a German fellow who was very interested in psychoanalysis, psychiatry, psychology. Of the courses I had taken from him, one seminar dealt with Georg Trakl, an Austrian poet who lived from 1887 to 1914.

Meyer: Say the name again?

Sharp: Georg Trakl. T-R-A-K-L. He was a poet but was also diagnosed at one point with schizophrenia. In my dissertation and my book, I tried to bring these topics together. Thus I did a lot of reading about psychiatry and anti-psychiatry, a fashionable topic at the time. Particularly fascinating for me at the time was a brilliant man named R.D. Laing who at the time wrote about & created the term anti-psychiatry. I attempted to read & interpret Trakl's poetry to show how it was fundamentally supported by his schizophrenia, rather than crippled and consigned to meaninglessness—My book is called *The Poet's Madness*. So after I finished my dissertation on this topic, I was contacted by Cornell University press. They were interested in publishing it. In the next 2 years from 1979 to 1981, I was able to rewrite it for Cornell and the book came out in 1981.

Meyer: Can you repeat the details of the book?

Sharp: *The Poet's Madness: A Reading of Georg Trakl*. Cornell 1981. Anyway, that was a kind of literary interpretation popular at the time, so that's why I think it aroused such critical reverberation.

Meyer: Have you used that material directly or indirectly in your teaching?

Sharp: Yes. I taught courses on German poetry both at Princeton and at UOP. In both courses the students & I spent some time in class discussing, interpreting and often writing about the sometimes tangled but often beautiful meanings of Trakl's work.

Meyer: What were your first couple of classes that you were assigned to? What was your responsibility?

Sharp: Well, I had a colleague in German, Barbara Sayles.

Meyer: Yes I remember.

Sharp: You remember her?

Meyer: Uh-huh.

Sharp: We were responsible for the majors and minors in German. At the lower levels we taught the four basic courses, German 1-4: German 11A, 11B, 23, and 25. We also were obligated to teach as many courses as necessary for the majors & minors, courses that were upper division ones like the course in German poetry.

Meyer: So you mentioned that, when you were a chemistry major, in those days, German was required for a lot of science majors. That's not the case any longer?

Sharp: No—It may be the case in some places particularly interested in supporting a strong palette of humanities courses, but in general that requirement is gone. It was a real boost to the popularity of German as a foreign language.

Meyer: You were talking about some people who were helpful to you, George Blum and the Kreiters, for example. So in the beginning, was your transition to Pacific fairly easy or was it tough?

Sharp: One thing stands out very early in our experience of this transition: we had sent off the furniture that we had accumulated in Princeton by truck and then drove across the country together. But when we got to Stockton, our furniture had not yet arrived. So I got on the phone and called Bob McMasters.

Meyer: Yes, yes.

Sharp: Very nice, welcoming person and guess whom he contacted to bring us things we needed immediately to begin our lives here?

Meyer: Who?

Sharp: Paul Fairbrook.

Meyer: No kidding.

Sharp: Yes! So as we were sitting in our newly acquired home in North Stockton, all of a sudden the doorbell rang and it was Paul. He not only had brought us some necessities that we needed in the kitchen and in the bedroom but also a hot dinner! And Paul--being interested in German by his biography--and I soon became fast friends and have been so ever since. He's 94 years old

today.

Meyer: Yes. Today?

Sharp: No, I mean, as of this date, right.

Meyer: No wonder you've been such good friends! So you're still on that same street? You're still in the same home?

Sharp: No, we moved in 2000 into a house just steps away from here. It's right over on West Mariposa Ave within easy walking distance and not far from the Fairbrooks!

Meyer: Right. But you and Paul and Nancy and Peig have been good friends for a long time?

Sharp: For a long time and we come together with them and a few other people monthly for dinner. But we have met and become been very good friends with many others as well. I mean, Doris Meyer has become a very good friend later in my career. I admire her administrative and organizational abilities so much. But let's see, who else do I have down? Well, we'll come to those. We'll come to those.

Meyer: So the transition was—when you met your first classes, did you feel pretty comfortable? After all, you'd been teaching in Princeton, right?

Sharp: Yes, I felt very good. And the students in general were very receptive and I've kept all my grade books and I was looking at them the other day and wondering what had happened to many of the good students. One of the problems that started early, is that German wasn't required for many other things. The only other major for which German was required was for many music majors. I got a lot of Conservatory students, especially singers. For them, of course, German might be very important to their careers. They were mostly all very enthusiastic and I tried to always keep it light in the beginning classes because language learning can become lifeless at times without great efforts of the instructor!

Meyer: So, today, what languages are being taught today compared to those that were offered in those days?

Sharp: Well, Japanese was not offered then and it has become a popular language in the modern language department. French is still popular, as is Spanish. When I retired in 2008, I knew that the Provost, Provost Gilbertson, was going to do away with the German major and minor. And I tried to convince him of the value of German--I still have all those emails, those little notes that I wrote to him. I did a little research program on "why German?" and tried my best to connect & convince him but was never was able to reach him. I mean, he responded but always simply said: "no, no sorry."

Meyer: Who was that?

Sharp: Gilbertson.

Meyer: So right now German is not being offered?

Sharp: German is being offered but only the beginning courses. There's one person who teaches all the German courses on a part time basis of course. So anyway, I think that's been my greatest

disappointment; I wasn't able to give my enthusiasm for the language to enough students. My courses had become fairly small. Especially in comparison to the bigger majors. I'd have 6-10 maybe in a higher division course. But you know, I'd still have 20-30 in beginning courses.

Meyer: Oh there's nothing wrong with that! One of the questions related to what we're talking about concerns when you first came or when you were interviewed, was what they were asking you to do, was that actually what you did? Were there some challenges or something along the way that you hadn't anticipated when you first came as compared with what you thought you were going to do? Or was that part okay?

Sharp: No, in that sense, it was fine. There was nothing that made me uncomfortable. I think we were working on a language lab at that point and that was all a lot of fun to do. And to help integrate that into language teaching, this language lab. And it helped me to develop a course called, what was it called? Independent Study. So there were opportunities for students to learn German by seeing me regularly and working in the lab and not having a course that they had to go to regularly and at certain times.

Meyer: Did that work out?

Sharp: For a while.

Meyer: For a while?

Sharp: Yes. But not forever.

Meyer: Was there, or is there—was there, or is there a language lab now?

Sharp: Yes, sure.

Meyer: How does that work?

Sharp: Well, this was the part I was talking about--integrating it in to a language course. You would have certain recordings--at the time which I guess were tapes. Anyway, the German book you chose for your courses for the first and second semester, for example, would have a regular program and a workbook to go along with the book and students would go to the lab and work on their workbooks with the recordings so they might hear the language itself and little dialogues more often & repeatedly. They would hear dialogues and be invited to take part in a shorter dialogue with the recording. It wasn't overly difficult, but we had to integrate that lab work into our classroom activities.

Meyer: What time did that start then? The lab thing start? When you were here?

Sharp: I think it began in the 80's, I think it began in the 80's, right.

Meyer: And do you think they still have it?

Sharp: Sure--but I'm not certain what emphasis is placed on it anymore or what new technology they may have by now. But language lab was a good initial way to get students listening to the sounds of the language. A better way, which I helped develop in the 80's and in the 90's, was a summer work-abroad program. A teacher from Santa Clara whom I soon came to know quite well ran a summer work-abroad program for all languages. He had developed his contacts in

many, many countries and was able to connect students with jobs and so they might become immersed in the language, to live in the language.

Meyer: Was that a summer program?

Sharp: A summer program. And of course if students elected to go abroad for a full semester, then that was another way of becoming immersed in the language--the best way to learn speaking. The courses they took could then count towards their major and/or minor.

Meyer: How long did that continue do you think? Quite a while?

Sharp: I don't know about the summer work program, but I'm sure that my former colleagues in Spanish and French & the other languages still have some way of getting their students to the country whose language they're learning so that they can become immersed in the spoken language. I'm sure they're still doing that.

Meyer: They're still doing that.

Sharp: Yes, right. And it reminds me a little bit of courses that I heard about in the cluster colleges where Bruce LaBrack would take a bunch of students to a foreign country. This experience probably wasn't so much for the language itself, but more I think for cultural immersion.

Meyer: Yes and he taught a class about this experience before they left and of course when they came back.

Sharp: Right--I wasn't here yet but it sounds like a solid educational experience.

Meyer: Was the COP modern language department totally separate from the international studies program that developed into SIS?

Sharp: No. We certainly had separate teaching agendas, but we in COP always worked together for the benefit of the students with the School of International Studies (SIS) that was established in 1987.

Meyer: Some time around then.

Sharp: I very soon became quite involved and received a split appointment with SIS: 70% COP & 30% SIS. I also chaired the Dean's selection committee early on that was responsible for bringing Martin Needler from the Monterey Institute to Pacific as its first Dean. Martin became a great Dean, one of my favorite administrators at Pacific and a wonderful supporter of travel for academic research, special courses for university professors & academic conferences. Along with the support of 2 of my other favorite administrators, Bob Benedetti and Joe Subbiondo, I was often enroute to a conference or course abroad in the '90s, to Berlin, Vienna, Prague, etc, meetings often focused on a topic like the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, events that 'shook the world' at the time. I would be amiss if I didn't include Roy Whiteker as well on my list of favorite administrators.

With my teaching obligations to SIS, I was also able to develop some of my favorite courses. At the top of this list I have to place the course I called "Literature Across Cultures," a course that I

must have taught half a dozen times in the '90s & in the early years of the 21st century. It was simply extremely exciting and satisfying to examine & compare with students some of the best short stories ever written from around the globe!

Meyer: What way would you say, did these administrators have a positive influence on the development of the International Studies program--or other aspects of the curriculum?

Sharp: They all supported and encouraged the faculty in their passions for their individual academic and teaching endeavors. Working for them--especially Benedetti, Needler & Subbiondo--I felt that my contributions to both the COP and SIS were important ones. We had not yet reached the point in our history as an educational institution that a regent described in the 90's with the following words: "The business of education is business." I always felt that, if asked in neutral surroundings, my favorite administrators could have spoken for hours against this kind of thinking. In any case they had more influence on the general education program. Bob Benedetti was the one who introduced general education topics as the basis of the wonderful program of "mentor seminars".

Meyer: Right.

Sharp: Which I thought was great because one of the trends had been to neglect, I think, the humanities, foreign languages along with things like history, philosophy, the arts & cultures of foreign places during those years. I can certainly understand a parent's viewpoint, however, of wanting their kids to enroll quickly in a major that would bring them into a good-paying job sooner rather than later! For many the humanities were more of an educational decoration. But I always considered them central to my college experience--they were my passion. So I always wanted to see students not hurry into a major track until they were sure it affected their inner lives as well as the outer, job-related aims!

Meyer: Back up again a little bit...

Sharp: Okay.

Meyer: ...and the connection between modern language department and the college of the Pacific, the international studies program, how they jived together. Then a little bit later we'll talk a little bit more about the humanities issues because that's a passion of yours and that's really important. But back up a minute again.

Sharp: Well, I didn't hear a lot about it before SIS opened its doors. I entered a little bit late into that birthing process but I soon became aware of its importance at Pacific that didn't--& still doesn't have--a comparative literature department. My course Literature Across Cultures was a small attempt to bridge the coverage gap between the English department and the modern languages department. But anyway, I was included in the SIS original faculty and got to chair the committee to hire the new dean. I was intent upon getting somebody from outside the university who had great experience in languages and related things. We found a man, Martin Needler, from the Monterey Institute.

Meyer: What was the name?

Sharp: Martin Needler. He became our dean and I especially was grateful to him as well as to

Bob Benedetti for all the support I was given for travel during those years. I know it's expensive for COP to, you know, pay the costs for conferences in Vienna and in Washington DC and many places in between! I traveled quite a bit and was able to give papers and meet with people that I knew in the profession. So both Bob and Martin were instrumental in getting me to these places. During all this time when COP and SIS were working together, from my point of view, I was listening to George Blum who told me about other seminars abroad that I could take part in. He used to go to a few of these and they're called the Bradley Seminars. Especially during the period of 1989-through the 90's in Germany--the wall went down in '89 and Germany became a single country again the following year. So anyway, those were the beginning of the times during which it was so much fun to look at the differences between the literature and the culture in the east and the literature and culture in the west.

Meyer: Is that right?

Sharp: Yes. To talk about the effect that re-unification had on culture & society, to do research on that kind of thing. I gave 2 or 3 talks at UOP for, you know, for students and their parents who had come before the semester started.

Meyer: Yeah that's funny that you're... I don't think I ever knew that you were so involved in the literature aspect but when you say that was a dissertation topic and then poetry and when you look back now, would you think that your relationship to the international programs was one of the highlights of your time here?

Sharp: For sure!

Meyer: Why?

Sharp: Well, I just enjoyed—well one of the things when I came here, I immediately, not immediately but within a few months, had made contacts with people at Davis, UC Davis. But more important was the contact I made with a professor at UC Riverside who really was the main man in Austrian literature in the U.S. Austrian literature is part of German literature here in the United States. He used to have conferences every year where I would give a paper and, you know, listen to echoes of what I was interested in from the other participants. Later I served on the Board of Directors for the Association that he founded. At some point he married a Viennese lady, moved to Vienna and organized many conferences there that I attended.

Meyer: Oh that's great.

Sharp: I think so too.

Meyer: How long were you involved in this part of your career that we're talking about? Was that all the way until you retired or did it cut off? Wasn't there something about SIS closed up shop for a while and then was re-assimilated? What was that all about?

Sharp: Well it, I think the 90's were pretty good years for SIS--but then something happened around the turn of the century. It may be a decrease in interest and efficacy, I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

Meyer: Right, right.

Sharp: But, now that I think about it, I think Martin Needler **had** gone away as dean by the end of the nineties. We had another dean after him. Margie Ensign, but I wasn't as close to her as I was to Martin. She soon left as well and things started to go down a bit after that. That was the general course of things as I remember them today.

Meyer: Was it?

Sharp: Yeah. Go ahead, sorry.

Meyer: No, I was gonna say you were thinking that you didn't have anything to offer to the oral history project, but this particular topic that we're talking about right now certainly is.

Sharp: Good! I'm glad to hear that.

Meyer: Yes, that's good. So did you teach any classes in the mentor program?

Sharp: Yes, yes I did. I still consider Bob Benedetti to be a good friend. Anyway I sometimes feel I didn't do enough in mentor but I taught for several years. Every year I'd have a mentor class.

Meyer: What level?

Sharp: Well it was just that one semester of...

Meyer: Mentor 1 or whatever they called it?

Sharp: That's right. It was usually Mentor 1 and that was in the Fall semester. That was probably due to my schedule of courses that I taught Mentor 1. But it was an excellent effort at beginning to integrate the general education and humanities more fully into the whole University of the Pacific's education.

Meyer: Do you think about the years since--what year did you retire?

Sharp: 2008. My last semester was Fall of 2007. Right.

Meyer: Looking back in hindsight, how do you feel about the way the humanities have been handled since then? Do you think they've gotten the short end of the stick or?

Sharp: I can give you a very specific connection. I had a--and I forget the exact time--maybe in the early days of the 21st century--a very good student from Modesto and Nancy and I used to visit her and her parents after she graduated. They would invite us down there, so we had a very close relationship. But when she came to Pacific, she had heard from her parents that she probably should do something more concrete that would result in a job. So she thought, "well you know what", and she told me this, "I think I'm gonna try to double major in German and Business." Well she ran that idea by the dean of the business school at the time and he thought about it for a minute and he said "well, y'know, my opinion is that you either need to major in business **or** German." So there was not, there was no option there to major in both. So that was the kind of thing that characterized my perception of the atmosphere.

Meyer: So, do you think the present administration, just whatever you know from the outside, how do you feel that they're handling that right now?

Sharp: Well I think for quite a while now, and I realize that private universities need a lot of money, and that has to be, but I think it goes over the top when--I'm going back to the 90's again--when I read in a regents' publication, one of the regents--and I honestly don't remember which one--say the words "the Business of Education is Business" and I think that's wrong. I think the business of education is education. Students have to be enthused, have to be inspired, have to be excited about what they're doing. So anyway, that kind of characterizes my idea of the way things have gone at Pacific, is that more of a... I don't know.

Meyer: And you're very good about recognizing that dilemma.

Sharp: It's what I believe anyway.

Meyer: It is. Backing up again to the comment that they business person made to the girl.

Sharp: Okay.

Meyer: Wouldn't you think, or wouldn't we all think to have a bilingual ability in any language coupled with business would multiply her major value of business?

Sharp: Absolutely, Doris. That's precisely what I thought, y'know. Once that happened I thought: people in business often have the job of 'selling' something or other. If they can do that in the language of the customer, it is so much more effective.

Meyer: That may not be a pitch for humanities but it's a pitch for business.

Sharp: Maybe.

Meyer: A criteria, really, for at that one time in lots of places already perhaps. I bet they are demanding a language ability.

Sharp: I'm sure that's the case there, Doris.

Meyer: Yeah. So there's a question here about how you have gotten along, as it were, or how you perceive your relationship with the various publics that we associate with: our students, our staff relationships, or y'know any relationship you've had with administrators. You talked a little bit about the three administrators that you really rather appreciated. So what's your relationship, how do you feel about your relationship with these various groups?

Sharp: Well I think I've already said a little bit about the students. I kept in contact for many years with some of them and I found them, very good, very receptive, very enthusiastic. And one of the things that really struck me was when another faculty member or an older person would come into my class and would want to sit in on the German class. That had an effect not only on me, but also on the students. It made them more open. This is something real, this is something important, learning a language. So yeah, Dave Fletcher was in my class, as well as Bill Dehning and several others.

Meyer: No kidding! I didn't know that!

Sharp: Sometimes just for a semester, but others were there for more than a year.

Meyer: Sure.

Sharp: But anyway, the students were wonderful and the conservatory students I soon learned to appreciate. Nancy and I used to go to many of their recitals, loved that. The faculty, a wide variety of faculty, really became good friends with lots of them. One of the things that I could never understand fully was why faculty members—some faculty members anyway—could give up major interest in order to become an administrator. Because once that happened, it seemed like they had cut off the life line to what had most enthused them to that point. How, for example, how an English professor could give up teaching English for administrative duties! So that was the kind of faculty I just could never understand.

Meyer: Yeah I never thought of that. I never thought of that. What about, did you ever have much to do with the Academic council?

Sharp: I was on the academic council for periods--I can't remember for how long, a year or maybe year and a half. I was on COP council for probably that same amount of time. And of course I was the major and minor advisor for our students. And then I did some work "Beyond the Gates": I was president of the northern branch of the Association of, what's it called, sorry, I'm blanking.

Meyer: Is that a language group?

Sharp: Yes, the Northern California Chapter of the American Association of Teachers of German.

Meyer: No wonder you couldn't remember! No wonder you couldn't remember that!

Sharp: That is a long one!

Meyer: What about those committees? Did you know, now and actually, when you had to leave Princeton because you didn't get going on something there, what do you think about the service issue versus the publishing of research issue and all of that?

Sharp: Well, just personally I would be on the side of finding research activity to be more fulfilling, but I obviously realized that there has to be a certain amount of service for tenure and a promotion. And I always tried to do some of both. But more on the side that gave me more fulfillment. One of my sins was that I never was willing to take over the chairmanship of the department. There were times when I probably should have, but especially when we were without a chair after the Kreiters left. Barbara Sayles and I were the two members of the German section at the time. It just seemed logical to me that Barbara, who was not involved with research--she was a lovely lady and I adored her--but she was not involved with that and I thought she would make the better chair--it turned out she didn't make such a good chair in all respects but was adequate. But I thought at the time that her being chair represented a fair division of labor.

Meyer: Right-- your comments about both, I mean, are important.

Sharp: Sure, sure.

Meyer: We think about non-tenured faculty these days and one of the things that I always think about, is that they probably will not do their part in the committee aspect of things.

Sharp: I'm sure that's true.

Meyer: So I realize how and why it's gonna go that way. But it's kinda disappointing I think.

Sharp: I agree.

Meyer: Their contributions to research in their discipline will be maybe less too because that's not often their main interest.

Sharp: Right.

Meyer: Wow. Well I respect your ideas on all of these things. One question here is, you're not one to be involved in controversial issues, that's just not you. But were there any or have there been any uncomfortable kinds of settings in your time here?

Sharp: Well, it always seemed extremely logical to me that the football program was probably too much of a burden for Pacific to carry. I don't know if you're aware of it but George Blum was very much an opponent of football--I'm sure you were always aware of it.

Meyer: Every time we saw each other, he would, y'know, he would imply that I had everything to do with it. So that was hard huh? That was hard.

Sharp: That was hard. But, well anyway, we won't go on with that. One of the things that you were asking about were the groups, my reaction to certain groups.

Meyer: Oh yes, back to that.

Sharp: Yeah, just one more comment. I had never met a Regent until last year. The lady that Judy brought to our luncheon.

Meyer: Diane Philibosian.

Sharp: Right. Seemed like a lovely lady, but it's just incredible, and then I go back to that quote that I found in that regents' booklet. I wonder why we don't have more people from other sectors of life among the regents. I think that in other schools where they have a similar regent-like construction that they do have people from, y'know like retired people, from all forms of existence. Like academia and I always thought a nice addition to the regents would have been Gary Putnam who is a brilliant guy.

Meyer: Who?

Sharp: Gary Putnam. He was chaplain at the university for a few years and then he moved across to the Methodist Church on Pacific. He's a brilliant guy who could have looked at the university's problems from other angles; ie, from other angles than the monetary ones. So anyway. . . .

Meyer: I think that's a very interesting comment. It would be interesting for us to see what the mission of the regents is. I mean if it is all dollars and cents then that's . . . That's very...

Sharp: You know, I've thought that as well and hopefully there's more than just dollars and cents to the way they conduct university business.

Meyer: I'm glad you brought that up. That's an interesting comment. Gee, when you look back

over your career at the university, what are--again, just sort of enumerate some of the things that you are happy to have contributed?

Sharp: Well, I never thought I would be happy to contribute to the Emeriti society, but it's turned out otherwise. I enjoy working with people and doing the chores that I'm asked to do with such good help from other people. What was, let's see, I think I've lost track of the question.

Meyer: I was asking if there was anything--I'm glad you brought up about the Emeriti society because I think our relationship in that group is just really outstanding and great fun--because, well I'm the interviewer. But just to get acquainted with those people we had no contact with in our everyday work is just really outstanding.

Sharp: I certainly agree with that!.

Meyer: I know that you've been involved with the OLLI program as well here at Pacific. Why don't you speak a little bit about that group?

Sharp: Okay. Well I became involved with OLLI just when it had changed directors and now we've lost the director who had come that year. [DeLyn Ravinius] And I can't remember...

Meyer: And she has left that program?

Sharp: Yes--she just left it at the end of December. And we have a new director this year. When I served on the OLLI Board under DeLynn, one of my favorite tasks was suggesting possible speakers for the lecture series. Courtney Lehmann (English department) was my first recommendation. She gave an exciting talk as did her colleague in the English department--whose name escapes me at the moment. Then also upon my recommendation, Courtney's husband in Physics, Jim Hetrick gave a fascinating lecture on the stars--there were several others I also suggested for the spotlight.

Meyer: Maybe we should spell what [OLLI] stands for. The acronym. What can you tell us?

Sharp: Sure. OLLI stands for: **OSHER LIFE-LONG LEARNING INSTITUTE** It provides 2 semesters worth of fascinating courses, lectures, trips, computer instruction, etc, etc every year for adult learners--50 or older--as well as a summer program. My wife and I have not missed one semester of Qi Quong, a Chinese exercise and meditation class related to Tai Chi over the past 5 years!

Meyer: I noticed that there is a similar group at Delta College.

Sharp: But with a different name and different resources. The "Osher" in Pacific's program title is a wealthy man who provides support for such "Institutes" across the country at many colleges & universities.

Meyer: I see. Are we competing with them for our constituents or are there enough interested people to go around?

Sharp: My impression is that they are entirely separate. We have, where we live, we have right across the street a man who teaches at Delta. And he introduced us to their wonderful summer

program one summer a few years ago. Their classes seem to be very full. Many of the OLLI classes as well. But, I think they're quite independent of one another.

Meyer: Well, getting close to the end here. Can you think of anything that you really wanted to hit upon that we haven't mentioned?

Sharp: Oh, maybe one of the things that I wanted to talk about a little bit, can't talk about it much, but there's a question about contributions that Pacific has made to local communities.

Meyer: Oh yes, yes.

Sharp: One of the things, I looked in my notes and found an article that appeared in the Stockton Record about Pacific's contribution to local kids whom, the Conservatory and the Stockton Symphony work together with. It is a smaller copy of the El Sistema program that started in Venez...

Meyer: Nicaragua or something?

Sharp: Venezuela.

Meyer: Venezuela, yes.

Sharp: That was one thing that really caught my eye. In Venezuela, the state has supported music education for their poor and outcast people for years. One of their most prominent "graduates" now serves as director of the LA Symphony!

Meyer: Which one?

Sharp: Unfortunately, his name escapes me at the moment.

Meyer: Too bad!

Sharp: Right. I don't think he was among the poorer students in Venezuela but it gives all students who may not have a very positive outlook on life, gives them something to look forward to, and brings some flash of light into their poverty-stricken lives--I thought that was an outstanding program for Pacific to bring to our local community.

Meyer: There are lots of things that we do that the community doesn't recognize. I mean we're helping in this way, and this way, and that way, but lots of people still think of us as ivory tower and it's a shame.

Sharp: Yes. Michael Fitzgerald wrote an entire article about the El Sistema program for the Stockton Record a few years ago, calling it "Venezuela's remarkable music program for poor." Julio Angarro, former Dean of Pacific's Conservatory, had been to Venezuela, seen it in action, and provided the motivation for bringing it to Stockton. But anyway, I thought that was a wonderful outreach beyond the gates.

Meyer: I really think that we hit quite a few of the topics which we set out to cover! I feel like I shortchanged you in providing you the opportunity to really pitch the humanities issue. Is there anything further that you can think of that you'd really love to say? About that whole thing?

Sharp: Well maybe I can go back the very beginnings when I changed from chemistry to German because that showed me the difference between kinds of learning. It's not the same with every person, but I obviously needed something in the humanities like a language and its culture and literature. I needed something like that to sort of set me afire--something to turn me on. It is this sort of subject matter and it's often in the general education program, often in the humanities that a person will respond very personally that helps internal education, helps turn them into a person, into a different person. Rather than "oh I can get a job doing this." Of course, that's important. Go for your passion, I guess, you often hear that. So that's what I would like to emphasize now that our time has ended

Meyer: I feel that the present administration has really tried to give it a shake, I believe they are really trying to. And yet they are bound by the money, I mean the concerns of parents for training for a job. But I hope that the university will continue its interest in that.

Sharp: Yeah I hope so too, Doris, I hope so too.

Meyer: Well I've really enjoyed our chat & I think we've done a good job.

Sharp: Well I hope so. I wanna thank you for bringing these things out.

Meyer: Thank you Mike and I think that in the future, when you look back on this interview, you'll be pleased that your contribution has added something to the whole collection. Thank you, Mike.

Sharp: Yes, I hope so. Thank you, Doris.

END OF INTERVIEW