

Oakland University Chronicles

Interview with

Herbert Stoutenburg

Transcript of Oral History Interview

Interview date: February 7, 1998

Interviewer: Paul Tomboulian



Supported by

Oakland University Foundation

Office of the President, Oakland University

Department of Chemistry, Oakland University

Published by Oakland University

Rochester, Michigan

Copyright 1999

Oakland University Chronicles

Herbert Stoutenburg

Transcript of Oral History Interview

Interview date: February 7, 1998

Interviewer: Paul Tomboulian

Contents

Preface

About the Oakland University Chronicles

Editing of the Transcripts

Introduction to Interview

Biographical Sketch of Herbert Stoutenburg

Photograph Taken February 7, 1998

Photograph from MSUO Yearbook 1963

Biographical Sketch of Interviewer

Transcript of Oral History Interview

Transcript of the Interview: 23 Pages

Index of Topics in the Transcript

Oakland University Chronicles
HERBERT NATHAN STOUTENBURG

Date of birth: February 10, 1920

EDUCATION

B.A.	Michigan State College	1947
M.A.	Michigan State College	1953
Ed.D.	Michigan State University	1968

PRIOR TO OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

Assistant to the Registrar
Michigan State University

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

1959 Director of Admissions, Registrar

Other positions held:
Assistant to the Chancellor
Dean of Students
Assistant President for Administration

6-30-71 Resigned

SINCE LEAVING OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

President, Alpena Community College
Alpena, Michigan

President, Montcalm Community College
Sidney, Michigan

Interim President at community colleges
in Illinois and in Pennsylvania

CURRENT OCCUPATION

Retired, volunteer

Current as of February 7, 1998



Photograph of Herbert Stoutenburg

February 7, 1998

Photographer: Alice Tomboulian



Herbert N. Stoutenburg, Jr.
*Director of Admissions and
Registrar*

Photograph of Herbert Stoutenburg

MSUO Yearbook 1963

Oakland University Chronicles
Interview with HERBERT STOUTENBURG
February 7, 1998

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: This is one of the interviews in the Oakland University Chronicles Project, supported in this second year by a special university allocation. Today is February 7, 1998 and we are speaking from the studios of WUSF-TV16 in Tampa, Florida on the campus of the University of South Florida. The goal of the project is to collect oral histories dealing with the beginnings of Oakland University. We are going to focus on the first few years, a time prior to the graduation of the first class in 1963. My name is Paul Tomboulian and I have been a professor of chemistry at Oakland University since 1959.

My guest today is Dr. Herbert Stoutenburg, who was one of the very first administrators for MSUO. Herb's position as Director of Admissions and Registrar started on January 1, 1959. Herb left Oakland University in 1971 to pursue a further career as a community college president. [He currently resides in North Carolina, but is spending the winter in the Tampa vicinity.]

Herb, welcome to the OU Chronicles Project.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Thank you.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Herb, tell us how you came to Oakland University.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I had been a person in the admissions office and the registrar's office at Michigan State University, and had the opportunity in 1956-58 to be the executive officer of the Michigan State University Vietnam advisor group in Saigon. While I was out there, I became aware, through communication back to East Lansing, that there was a new institution that was going to be built down in Oakland County. So I let people know that I was interested. One person who was rather important to me at that point was Dr. Glen Taggart, who was dean of the international program, and Glen came out several times to Saigon on tours. In the process I let him know that I was interested and asked him what could he tell me about the development of the new MSUO. So he shared his information with me and I in turn told him I was

interested. Of course the interest was in the field of admissions, records, and registration because that was the background that I had come out of in my prior service at MSU.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So that gets you up to about when?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: That takes me up to August of 1958 when I returned to the MSU campus.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: As assistant to the registrar?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes. When I came back I was made assistant to the registrar for special projects. I remember one day I was busy doing one of my projects, and all of sudden a kind of whirlwind came into the office. A hand flew out in front of me and I looked up, and a person said, "I'm Woody Varner!" This was the first time that I'd ever met Woody and he was aware of my interest in Oakland University. This was probably October of '58, I'd been back a couple of months, and we chatted briefly.

Then he invited my wife, Arlene, and me over to his home one evening for dessert. We sat down and started talking about MSUO and about the kind of program it would be. My background had been at Michigan State and I was pretty much involved with knowing the program of what we called "basic college," or as it later became called, "university college." There were five areas of study starting out with the written-spoken language, natural science, physical science, effective living, and the history of Western civilization.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Is that what people might call today "general education"?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: It's called general education and every student had to take the written-spoken language, one of the two science options, and effective living or history of Western civilization. I thought that this was a good background for liberal arts and everybody ought to have this as a minimum. Woody and I got to talking about what he was thinking in the innovation of programs at MSUO, and I kept coming back to the basic college concept. As the

evening went on, I could see that these two things were melding together very easily and I picked up his enthusiasm for the new thrust.

Of course liberal arts, arts and science have been around in major institutions for a long time. It was a matter of reshuffling this concept of arts and science, literature, music, the sciences such as math, physics, chemistry, etcetera. What we did there at Oakland was to change these things around a little bit, but we ended up with the same kind of curriculum. So in that sense we were innovative in establishing a new program, which a lot of people were taken with and excited about.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So he was sort of testing his ideas out?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, and I think he was trying to find out from me exactly whether I fit that situation, or whether I wouldn't fit it. I think he made up his mind at the end of the evening, or whatever followed. It was shortly afterward, at the Board meeting of MSU in December, that I was appointed to be the Registrar and Director of Admissions at MSUO. I went down to MSUO effective January 1, 1959.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: I think, what that encounter sounds like is Woody's kind of interview: you come in and talk to somebody for a little while and decide "You're my woman," or "You're my man."

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, exactly. He definitely was a people person, and could do a pretty good job of analyzing people.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Quickly.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Quickly, you bet.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So you then came down to the area at Adams, Walton, and Butler. Tell us about that.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Well, that fall, before I came down to MSUO in January, we had been up to visit my brother-in-law in Port Huron, and we came

back to Rochester purposely to see the new campus. I knew the campus location was the corner of Adams and Butler, so we went there and of course we found a farmhouse and chicken coops. I went a little bit one way and then the other way, and it looked like that was basically it, so we gave up and went back to East Lansing. Well, it turned out that on the opposite corner of Walton was where I would have seen at least some holes in the ground, or maybe the beginning of some foundations and maybe even a few walls. When we came down on January 2, I was housed for offices in the old farmhouse, which later was remodeled to become the president's home when we moved on campus, which was probably the end of June, first of July of 1959—when we moved into North Foundation Hall.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So you must have occupied some of the first offices?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, that's right. My office was on the second floor of the farmhouse in what had been a bedroom. George Karas, who was handling the engineering and was the building supervisor for the campus, had an office there. As I recall, Bob Swanson may have had one but I think he came later. Then Roy Alexander, who was the dean of students, had an office there, and then we had an office that was Woody's when he came to campus. He was actually traveling between Rochester and East Lansing, and of course he was also, beginning at this time, looking for people like you, Paul—going out and visiting other campuses throughout the nation, so he was not on campus all the time. But it was often enough that we had his leadership.

From that office we got into the actual admission of students and one part, of course, was going out and recruiting students. There had been made a whole series of poster boards, probably 4 x 3 feet in size, and on them were the map of the campus, the description of what the curriculum was going to be, the demographics of the area, and how the curriculum was going to be developed. As I remember there were probably about 17 or 18 of these boards. At first Roy Alexander and I went out together and we were visiting high schools and talking with students. We talked with service clubs, church groups, PTA groups, and had the opportunity to meet with high school counseling officers when they had their weekly meetings after school. We presented our story using these boards as a background. After three or four times out, Roy went

back and did his “dean of students” kind of preparation while I did the recruiting of the student body.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Roy Alexander was your boss?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: The director of admissions and the registrar reported to Roy Alexander, and this was somewhat similar to the setup at MSU. Probably about the second year, when Roy departed the institution and a new dean of students came in, my responsibilities changed—I now reported to the provost, who was then Don O’Dowd, who later became President. But we recruited 863 or 867 students for that charter class. We admitted something like 630 and of that group we had 570 who actually enrolled as the charter class. That was in September of 1959. From that group we graduated 157 in the spring of ‘63.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: You had mentioned that you didn’t know Roy when he was at MSU, or know [anything] about him.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: No, I didn’t know of Roy. Roy came from the public school system of Waterford, Michigan. Roy had had previous contact with MSU that I was just basically aware of, and didn’t know too much about. Roy was in a similar position in Okinawa in MSU’s international program, the similar position being the executive officer. At that time MSU was one of the leading institutions in the country for international programs and their emphasis was on agriculture. Not that Roy came from an agricultural background, but his administrative qualities were what MSU was looking for in an executive officer. As I remember when he came back he went back into the Waterford school system and from there became the dean of students.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Now, when you went out to talk about the curriculum, you were talking about something which actually hadn’t been put together yet. What were the sources of the curriculum as you recall?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Looking back into the history of it, and the dissertation I wrote regarding the early years of Oakland, President [John]

Hannah brought together a group of about 50 faculty people at MSU and basically said, "We're going to develop a new university. It's not going to be a branch of MSU, it's going to be a free-standing institution." However, even from the very beginning, the MSU Board of Trustees was the Board of Trustees for MSUO for the first years. Then, as you will remember, Paul, our name was changed from Michigan State University Oakland to Oakland University just prior to the first graduating class. The MSUO to Oakland University name change was done in 1963. We got our own Board of Trustees some time about 1970, rather than early in the career of the university.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: It took an act of the legislature to separate the institutions.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, this is right; it did. But going back, the beginning curriculum was somewhat developed on the MSU campus. This curriculum then was shared with a number of very outstanding people, education leaders throughout the nation, Milton Eisenhower—

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: This was the Meadow Brook Seminars?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: The Meadow Brook Seminars. Commager was there, Dr. Blanding—who was the President of Vassar—was there, and a number of other people. There were MSU people such as Dean Muelder who was the dean of graduate studies and also came out of the political science department at MSU. Then of course Tom Hamilton was basically the leader of this program and the development of the curriculum, and then at a point Woody Varner stepped in to become identified as the Chancellor. Woody was the first vice president appointed at MSU and then subsequently became Chancellor of Oakland University.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: And Tom was—

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: The vice president for academic affairs.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: At MSU.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: His title I think at the beginning was dean of academics.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So Tom initially was perhaps the lead person?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, he was the central focal point for development of the curriculum. Paul Dressle—who was in the college of education—was effective in it; Dr. Russell Nye—who was the head of the English department at MSU—was very much involved, just to name a couple of people that were there.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But Woody was not actually part of that committee?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Not to the best of my knowledge. Woody came into the picture after things were starting to roll. Community development had to take place to bring this idea to the people in Southeastern Michigan, namely Oakland County.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: And you actually attended one or two of these [Meadow Brook] seminars?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, I was invited, as was Bob Swanson, Lowell Eklund—who was the dean of continuing education—and of course Roy Alexander, as basically observers of one of the very last of the seminars.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: That would have been about when?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: This would have been the early part of '59 and I think Woody was kind of using us to say, "Here are some real live administrators and we mean business. These are the people who are going to help carry this out."

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: The four or five of you that already had appointments?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Right.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So he was trying to give some credibility to his side of the operation.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Right.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But you observed the Meadow Brook Seminars. How were they actually related to the curriculum?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I think the best way I can describe it is that things were pretty well set. But these individuals that were brought in to discuss this were putting a stamp of approval on them, and it was kind of a “window dressing” situation to provide publicity for a new institution. As I said earlier, a lot of the things were things that the “name institutions” around the country had already been doing. But we packaged it differently, we had a different thrust. So we were creative in that sense.

I know at one point it was referred to that we intended to be the “little Harvard” of the Midwest. We did not have the student body that we could choose from, such as Harvard’s which has a national and international flavor.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But that term certainly wasn’t invented by the folks at MSU, was it?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Oh, no. I think that was something that developed in the promotional aspect of bringing to the attention of the local people, the nation, and other campuses, that here was an institution that was going to strive for quality education. Maybe not as much teaching by the faculty as helping the students to learn.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So the Meadow Brook Seminars really didn’t develop a curriculum, although the curriculum was often attributed to them. But I sense from what you said, that is not really what happened.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: No, there are two things: one, the basic concept of the curriculum was developed at MSU; but the other part is that when the new faculty came on the scene from about April on, they had the free hand to take these concepts and massage them into courses that fit the philosophy and the focal points of what we were trying to accomplish. So I think the young faculty that was collected really had much to do with what was really in the content of the courses.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Now, your major role was recruiting students in that first year, the second year also, probably?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Tell us about how Woody did or did not involve the staff in doing things. What was his style of administration?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Woody chose his people, and then he allowed these individuals to do what they could do, to reach the point of what we were trying to accomplish. For example, last evening you asked whether I had a quota to achieve for that charter class. The answer is no. Woody said, "We want a charter class and we'd like to have it presentably large," and as I stated a few moments ago we ended up with 570 students registering. But Woody let people do their thing, and he was not an administrator that kept looking over your shoulder. I will say that after the charter class, he did indicate that a 25% increase in enrollment the next year would help with meeting with the legislators to get a larger budget for subsequent years. We did not achieve that, but we probably hit about 18%.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: The larger second year class?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Then, starting in February of '59 you had this road show in which you took out these posters. Did you have a lot of printed brochures at

that time?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Not really. Basically we had one that was used, and it was printed up before I even came there. Then in the second year we had a brochure that was put together by Loren Pope. Here [gesturing] are some real live students on the cover, a few pictures of architects' renderings of new buildings, and of course pictures of students and faculty members doing things. One item I remember was, when everything was just getting started and the charter class was enrolled, Mrs. Wilson had a tea over at Meadow Brook Hall. Of course the dress in that day was suit coats, Sunday best. I'm not sure that if this was starting today, that it would be the same kind of experience.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But that [brochure with the faces of three students on the cover] was really the first piece of literature you ever had?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: We took this out, and we distributed those rather freely.

Then of course later in the summer [of 1959] we did have a catalog so that the students knew what was expected of them, as far as taking [the required] courses each quarter, because we started out as a quarter system. Then at the end of the first year, you will remember we went to what was referred to as a trimester system, and everything that had been on a quarter system had to be converted over to a semester system. In the registrar role that was just a little bit of a task to take care of and make these conversions, but we did it because our whole thrust was "we're going to make this place a success."

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Who else was out recruiting? You had the major responsibility?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, I had the major responsibility. In the second year we brought on a fellow by the name of Victor Lindquist who had been a high school counselor in the Pontiac system. The reason for that was that he had his own background and network of people he could work with, and he could see it from a high school counselor's point of view as well as from our point of view—so he was very valuable. I think we brought him on as director of scholarships, of which we had a few at the outset.

Then as time went on we would take these real live students from that charter class out to college nights, or after school, or during school sessions where we could meet with classes of seniors and maybe juniors, but mainly seniors. I remember Margaret Swoboda, Jim Morrison, Beverly Donato and they would go out, I would introduce them, and then they would talk about MSUO. In the process and afterwards, the kids didn't want to come and talk to me, they wanted to talk to them. This was a very positive recruiting device we had. We also had a time when we took faculty members to the high school counselors' after-school meetings so that the counselors could talk with a faculty member and get the feeling of what this person's dedication was to MSUO. There were times when high school counselors were brought on campus, again to meet with faculty.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: There was also some out-of-town recruiting by Loren Pope. Tell us about that.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Loren had been the education editor of the *New York Times*, and he had a lot of contact in the Washington and New York City area. You're familiar with the *Lovejoy's Guide to Colleges and Universities*, and for example, they had a division that was taking very high IQ. students to counsel them and place them in colleges and universities around the country. Oftentimes these high IQ students had a little bit of a social problem, also they maybe didn't come up to using the abilities that they had or their potential. Fortunately Loren had contacts with these people and we brought in a few of these very bright kids. We didn't have all that much success with them either, because their years and background had been such that they didn't change a whole lot. But they did bring an interesting aspect to the institution.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: They brought some life and they were quite different than the folks that you mainly found. Tell us the local schools that most students came from.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Pontiac Central and Northern [high schools] provided a large number of students, as did Rochester. Then districts like Centerline, Royal Oak, Roseville, Clawson, and over into Macomb County. Out

of that first group of students, the largest group came from Oakland County and the other group came from Macomb County. For the main part these students were first-generation college students. Although there are pockets in both of the counties with wealth and economic well-being in the family, most of the students were children of blue-collar and working people, so it was a new experience. But most of them came from those two counties.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Then you heard that Woody was interested in foreign students.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes. At one of our administrative group meetings, Woody had said that we also ought to have a foreign student or two around. It turned out that I had a young Vietnamese man who was my executive secretary and interpreter when I was in Saigon for those two years. [Dang Xich] Lan was about 29 or 30 years old and I thought he was very bright. He caught on quickly, he spoke several languages, so I suggested that maybe he would be a student. We contacted Dean Ralph Smuckler out at Saigon, who was then directing the program, and he was able to make arrangements with the Asia Foundation to provide Lan with transportation from Saigon to Rochester, Michigan.

We agreed on campus that Lan would have free tuition and fees. A couple of local churches, University Presbyterian and the Methodist Church, provided Lan with a monthly stipend for living purposes. Then there was a young couple who were in the University Presbyterian Church, who lived over in Bellarmine subdivision. They had what I'd call a "mother-in-law apartment" that they gave to Lan as his home for four years, and he was part of that family in that sense. Then because of our close friendship and ties with Lan from our previous experience in Vietnam, he was over to our place many times and our kids just loved the guy. Then Bob Swanson, who was also out in Vietnam, knew Lan, and he and Elaine would have him over there for a meal or two, or something of the sort.

So we ended up getting a young man who started in the charter class at the beginning of the second quarter in January of 1960, made up the one quarter that we had already had, and ended up graduating with the charter class.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: In April of 1963.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes. Lan has another interesting story here. When he graduated he was on a visa, and I think he got an H classification. He went out to the Presidio in San Francisco, and ended up teaching Vietnamese to U.S. army officers who were going out to Vietnam. He was there for a couple of years. But while he was at Oakland, his major was business administration and economics, and he ended up working in the international division of the Mellon Bank in New York City. I mentioned that he spoke several languages, and of course we had that language requirement right from the very beginning. Lan took Russian, and as I recall he got an A every quarter or every semester or trimester that he took it. I was curious: “How could you pick up this language?” He said, “You know, there really isn’t too much difference between the structure of the Vietnamese language and the Russian language.” Now, whether that’s true or not I don’t know, but that’s the way he saw it and Russian was easy for him to handle.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But not all the students were successful—there were some hard times that came to the student body. We were not getting [our] message sold very well to the high schools. What is your perception of what was going on there?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I think that if I were an admissions officer today, I would tell you the same [situation] today that I’ll tell you about then. The high school counselors knew the University of Michigan, Michigan State, Central Michigan, etcetera, and they knew from experience which students could succeed at these institutions. Oakland University was something brand new. They had nothing to measure it by. They had to trust that what we were telling them was going to happen, and they took this seriously. But they were not totally convinced that this was all going to happen, and they were not totally cooperative in the sense of sending scads and scads of students to us. But obviously we convinced a few—getting 863 applications.

Again, Oakland was new and it didn’t have much in the way of housing; the students were commuter students. When we brought them in, they were there during the day. When they went home, they went home to the same

community that they were in when they were students in high school. There was no upper class—there was nobody for them to tie to. We had activities on campus but they were limited and weren't too well attended. But on Friday nights these same students would go back to the high school football games or the high school dance, and it took some time to break that habit. I think by the end of the first year we were starting to make progress in that direction.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: You recruited in the first three, four, five or six years about 700 or 800 students. Is that the size of the student body you were recruiting?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I would say that we did, yes. I would say that by the time we were in our third or fourth year we were up around 800 to 900 students as compared to the original 570. But it was a selling job.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: You did most of it, but you had a little help, didn't you?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, as we went along. As I mentioned earlier, we added Vic Lindquist who was helpful. We later added a fellow by the name of Fred Shadrick who was a dynamic, bouncy sort of person who could sell anybody just about anything. Later we were fortunate to get the director of admissions from Kalamazoo College who was a very effective admissions officer, but those were in the later years. When we started getting a little bit more staff, then the enrollment started [increasing]. Of course by then we had a finished product, and that meant something to the high schools.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: There was a first registration, let's go back to that—September of 1959—when nothing had ever been done [here] before.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: At first the registration process was somewhat fashioned after MSU, because that had been the experience that I had previously. We had the registration process: we of course had to have everybody talking to a faculty member as a counselor to set up their program. I made one major "boo-boo" right off the bat. Instead of taking the students and scattering them alphabetically to each faculty member, I took the students whose name began

with A and gave them to you for example, the B students went to Richard Burke, and so forth, and then we set up a time schedule. It turned out that all the A's showed up in your office on time, and you had twenty students standing outside there waiting to see you, and the other faculty members had nobody until the next 15 or 20 minute period. So we got over that and we went through the registration process. Of course we were using IBM punch cards and at the end of registration, we had [to provide] the class lists the next morning.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: How did that happen?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I picked up all the cards, brought them together, put them in trays, and drove to East Lansing, to the data processing center in the basement of Linton Hall.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: How long would that have taken?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I left at 5:00 in the afternoon and I got up there in an hour and a half or so, did all the punching out and ran the class lists. Sometime between 12:00 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. the whole process was done. I jumped in the car, came back to Rochester, had a couple hours of sleep, got up at 5:00 a.m. in order to separate the class lists, so when you came in at 8:00 a.m. for those classes that you had, the class lists were on your desk. At every registration we did the same thing. When grades came due at the end of each quarter, and then registration was starting, that became a little hectic. I burned a few miles up between East Lansing and MSUO getting the job done.

But the point, Paul, is that we wanted it to happen, we wanted it to be successful—so we did it and it wasn't any big deal. It was just "that's what we wanted to happen," and the faculty had the same kind of feeling.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: I sensed that. When we changed away from quarters to what people call trimesters or semesters, it didn't seem to bother the students, but as you've indicated it required some changes in [your operations].

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: It was an administrative thing. Of course you have to look at the other side, and that the faculty had to take quarter courses

and convert them into semester courses. That was a challenge and used up most of that summer when the decision was made to make these switches.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Herb, maybe you could describe the relationships among the various folks at the university—the faculty, the administration and the students. They were sort of different then [from what they are now.]

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: A little bit earlier, Paul, I was talking about the activities on campus and the fact that the students went back to their high schools. One of the ties that a student did have to the campus was the tie that they had with a faculty member. This was their point of contact and because all of the faculty had this feeling of wanting to do a great job, we had students who [responded]. Let's take Bill Kluback for example. Bill, I think, was in philosophy and he had such rapport with the students that he—well, the statement that "someone sits at another person's feet," Bill was that kind of an instructor. He had students that just adored him, and who also were willing to spend time with him just to chat with him. Helen Kovach was another person. In her Russian class, she'd have kids over to her house and have little parties over there. This relationship existed with many faculty members and students.

Of course, because we were all new to each other and in a new situation we bonded kind of like a family. There was a lot of communication between the members on the staff. Just as an example, at Christmas time Hollie Lepley—who was handling the athletic/physical activities, intramural sports, or whatever—he arranged to have a piñata for the little kids. They blindfolded them, gave them a stick, and they'd pound away at these piñatas, and finally the candy would spill out and the kids would be running all over. We would follow that by going over to the student center where there was a Christmas tree, and every one of the small children there received a small Christmas gift. Well, this was a family thing — faculty, administrators, custodial staff, secretarial staff, everybody that had small children attended this. Of course Woody and Paula [Varner] were right there as members of that group.

Then we had bridge parties in various homes. I remember going to the Hetenyis', Obears', O'Dowds' [homes], and we had it at our house. We also had picnics each Labor Day because we had a fairly large flat lawn. Everybody came up with their grills and their folding chairs, and everybody brought a dish, along

with whatever meat they wanted to cook. The whole front yard was smoking with charcoal, and the kids were running around. The new faculty members that were coming on that particular fall, they were invited to come along too. I think it was one of the things that made people welcome at Oakland and it was a fun time for all. Another thing that we had for about four years was a square dance group. We'd all meet over on the campus in the student center area and square dance. Again it was a mixture of people. It was a good kind of fun time.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Who was behind all of this?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Probably Woody. Probably Woody when you get right down to it. Lepley kind of handled it, but the binding was Woody, because Woody was a people person, that's all.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: So he was building, not just people relationships, but the whole community working together. But he didn't just focus on that single purpose—he also helped people like yourself achieve other personal goals. I think you told me that he was instrumental in convincing you or suggesting to you that you could take an opportunity in Nigeria.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, the international program at East Lansing called and asked me if I would go out to the University of Nigeria, which was in its second year, to set up their admissions, registration records, and scholarship program. I went out in 1962—June, July, August—a couple of months, to assist them and help get things set up out there. One of the things I did was building back records that had happened in the first year—that didn't exist. It was difficult, but we set it up for them. At that time of the year for the director of admissions and registrar to be away from the campus was pretty difficult because we were heading into our own registration. But Woody was that kind of a person, that if an individual had an opportunity, he encouraged you to take it. Again, it was another one of those highlights in my life that allowed me to do something different.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: You characterized Woody in a way that someone else has done, in terms of being an optimist.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, Woody was certainly an optimist. He was a builder of a program, and he was a builder of people. A number of us had opportunities to do things subsequently, that if we hadn't had the encouragement from Woody, we might not have taken them.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But there was an enthusiasm also, right?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Oh, absolutely. You know, anything that was surrounding Woody was kind of infectious, and his enthusiasm spilled over to all of us, and we wanted to do it. He just gathered people around, and everybody just put their shoulders to the wheel, so to speak, and took off.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: You've had a lot of careers since then, but let's go back to your first pursuing a program at East Lansing—a doctoral program?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Well, I had a bachelor's degree from MSU as an accounting major and I worked in accounting with Ernst and Ernst in Detroit for a while.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: You did? I didn't know that—in accounting?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: In accounting, yes, my background was in accounting. I didn't like the non-people-contact that accounting was involved in, so I went back to MSU and went into a masters program that led into general administration. I finished that in '53, but of course during that period of time I was also working as an employee of the registrar's office. Then along came the Vietnam experience.

After I got down to Oakland, I'd been taking a few more graduate courses beyond the masters, and the department of education wanted to know whether I was going to be a serious candidate for a doctorate or not. There was a little bit of a challenge thrown out, so I said that I was going to get it. So in '63 I started making the sincere effort of finishing off the doctorate, and of course this meant working full-time at Oakland and doing the kinds of things that we did. Then a couple nights a week or on Saturday morning, I'd jump in the car, drive up to

East Lansing, take a three credit course three hours at a crack, and then get back to my private life.

As it turned out, in the five year period of '63 to '68, I finished the doctor of education with emphasis on higher education administration and a sub-interest in community colleges, which has always been an interest of mine. When I finished that off, Woody knew that I had other aspirations than being a director of admissions/registrar. He and I talked about it and I told him, "Woody, I'd like to someday be a president of an institution, a college." He went down to Olivet as a commencement speaker, and while he was there, and with the proper people around him—they were starting to look for a new president—and he said, "You know, I think I've got a candidate for you." So Woody again unselfishly gave me the chance to be promoted, to be considered as a candidate. Well, it turned out I was a bridesmaid."

Then later on June 30, 1971, I left Oakland after 12 1/2 years and went up to Alpena Community College in Alpena, Michigan, where I served as President there for five years. Then I went back to Lansing as assistant secretary of the Michigan Community College Association. There I had a couple of roles: one was doing lobbying work for the community colleges; the other was to visit community colleges to see what we could do for them. That lasted two years. Within six months of entering that job, I knew that it wasn't something that I really was going to enjoy, working across the street with the Senate and House members, where I couldn't get a definite answer anytime. So about a year and a half into that job, the President of Montcalm Community College was retiring, and so I applied for that job, became President, spent six years there as President, and retired.

There is an Association of Community College Trustees [ACCT] and it has its headquarters in Washington. They had a program that if a community college was losing their president for whatever reason, they had a way of selecting retirees who were willing to become interim presidents. So about a year and a half after I retired, I ended up becoming the Interim President for a full academic year at Prairie State College in Chicago Heights, Illinois. This was a larger community college than I'd had before, it was up around 6000 or 7000 students; previously my management was in the area of about 2000 students.

I came home and within a few months, I got another call—from Montgomery Community College out in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, which is just

about 30 miles outside of Philadelphia. They were releasing their president. I went out, the Board said yes, they'd like to have me come in, so I went and I served for about seven months until they got a new president. [In both cases] under the plan of the ACCT group, I could not become a candidate for the presidency. I didn't want to, although both the institutions wanted me to stay. But as somebody said, "Herb, that was an ideal situation because you could see the light at the end of the tunnel, and anything you did was great." As I said, "Probably I got out before they got to know me."

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Well, I don't know about that. So you actually had a career as four presidents?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, and it was great. It was just a great experience.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: And Woody really encouraged you.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Absolutely. Yes, he was certainly instrumental in helping me feel that I could break from one career and continue it in a different direction.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: But you were there at Oakland in 1969 and '70, that period when all of a sudden Woody, very unexpectedly—at least from our view—changed careers. Tell us about that. You were very close to Woody.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Yes, I feel that I was one of Woody's confidantes. I certainly wasn't the only one but I felt that I was very close to Woody.

One particular Friday we went up to the legislature to talk with the people there. When we were done, Woody said, "I'd like to go out and visit with Mr. [John] Hannah, do you mind?" and I said, "No." So I rode out to the campus with him, he went and visited with Mr. Hannah, and I made a couple of contacts within the same building. We met and he said, "Do you mind a little bit longer, I'd like to talk to Lee Carr?"—Lee Carr was the university attorney. So we went back downtown to the Olds Tower and I sat in the waiting area while Woody talked with Lee. Of course I didn't know what was going on at this particular point. We got in the car and headed back for Rochester, and

Woody said, "What would you think about the fact that I might become Chancellor of the University of Nebraska system?"

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: When would that have been—November or December, late in 1969?

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: Certainly right around there. Late in '69, yes.

I said, "You know, Woody, I'm not surprised at all." He said, "Why?" and he wondered where I got any [news] leak. I said, "Well, you know a couple weeks ago there was an article in *Time* magazine that Cliff Hardin, who was the former Chancellor at Nebraska, had retired or resigned." Then I said, "You know, Cliff came from MSU also." I thought, if Woody wanted that job he could have it. I told Woody this little story, and he said that he had been out and had been interviewed and they were looking at him strongly.

Well, it was more than strongly—they had already made their decision. I presume Woody talked to several other staff people on Saturday. I don't know if that's exactly true, but Sunday morning about 10:00 Woody called and said, "Herb, I'm going to have to make my announcement because they are going to release the information out at Lincoln, Nebraska on Monday afternoon. Could you call the faculty and ask them to meet in the Student Center area around 2:00?" I said, "Sure." So I called a number of faculty members, and I remember Dick Burke saying, "Herb, what's up? Why is he calling this meeting?" I said, "Dick, I don't know."

I had asked Woody if I could tape his resignation speech—I guess that would be what you'd call it—and he said, "Yes." So I taped that, and got a reasonable tape out of it, and as I mentioned to you last night, that tape is somewhere on file in the library. I made a copy for Woody and I kept a copy, although I'm not sure where my copy is any longer.

You know, here's a guy that was the focal point of the curriculum, the community, the faculty, and the students loved him. He was just an outstanding person, and we all wanted to do the job because Woody had made us a part of his team.

It gets to this point, as I look back on that Oakland University-MSUO experience: there were so many magic moments that happened for me and my family, and for all of us as different individuals. You know: starting something

new, being creative, being let alone to do your job, being involved with Meadow Brook and Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, meeting the power structure people of Oakland, Macomb, and Detroit in the social kinds of ways.

Then everything that I did at Oakland, I tried to emulate in my subsequent jobs. The later community colleges, those that started about 1963, had a thrust in technology with just some liberal arts. Because of my Oakland experience, one of the things that I tried, certainly in the first two jobs, was to create a liberal arts aspect to the community colleges, so that every student had their life broadened, rather than narrowed by the technology sort of approach. I think that comes from what we talked about earlier: the basic college and general education back at MSU, and then the MSUO-Oakland University experience—how important it was to the students to have this opportunity to expand their lives and set themselves up for pretty neat careers later on.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Do you think that Woody left because maybe he was following this pattern of “Well, I’ve done what I can do here,” and was he going to take on another challenge? How would you characterize that? He’s always been a little bit reticent about explaining why he really left.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: You know, it’s supposition on my part. I look at Woody, he was 55 years old or thereabouts in 1970 when he left. I wonder if what he was thinking was, “I need one more great challenge between now and when I’m going to retire.” Becoming the Chancellor of the University of Nebraska system, which included all of the universities—the four-year colleges and the community colleges there—gave him that opportunity, and as we both know, he went out and was as successful out there as he was in Michigan. He’s just a number one person.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: Herb, it’s been great talking to you. I wonder if you have any final reflections looking back at your life at Oakland, and the things you’ve done.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I guess I’m happy with my life. There are so many people that have reached the age of retirement, and they can’t wait to get out of their jobs and retire. I think I’m honest that there wasn’t a day that I didn’t want

to go to work, and it was hard to call it quits. Fortunately, these two interim presidencies that I had helped ease that process out. So Oakland University was a major player in my life.

PAUL TOMBOULIAN: In mine too. Thank you Herb, it's been good talking to you.

HERBERT STOUTENBURG: I appreciate the opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

Oakland University Chronicles
HERBERT STOUTENBURG
Index: Transcript of Interview

Administration:	
Commitment to success	10, 15
Alexander, Roy	4, 5
Atmosphere on campus:	
Family-style Christmas parties.....	16
Bridge parties, picnics, square dances	16-17
Change to semester system	10, 15-16
Completing doctorate in education	18-19
Course design:	
Done by new faculty	9
Curriculum:	
Compared to MSU general education	2-3
MSU committee as source	8, 9
Dang Xich Lan	12-13
Early development of MSUO:	
First offices in farmhouse	4
First registration process	14-15
Data processing done at MSU.....	15
Faculty:	
Close ties with students	16
First contact with MSUO:	
Information while in Vietnam	1-2
Visit in fall of 1958	3-4
Image of MSUO.....	8
Kluback, William	16
Kovach, Helen	16
Lepley, Hollie	16
Lindquist, Victor	10

Meadow Brook Seminars:	
Participants.....	6
Administrators as observers	7
Relationship to curriculum	8
MSU committee:	
Establishment and members	5-6, 7
Thomas Hamilton as leader.....	6-7
Developed basic curriculum	8, 9
Name change	6
Opportunities encouraged by Varner:	
University of Nigeria	17
College presidencies	19-20
Philosophy of education	2-3, 22
Phrases:	
“A kind of whirlwind came into the office”	2
“Window dressing” (Meadow Brook Seminars)	8
“We bonded like a family”	16
Pope, Loren.....	11
Promoting MSUO	8
Recruiting of students:	
Other recruiters.....	4, 10, 14
Poster board presentations	4
Charter class enrollment.....	5
Size of classes recruited.....	9, 14
Brochures distributed.....	10
Students and faculty at presentations	11
Eastern students recruited by Loren Pope	11
Main sources of early students.....	11-12
Vietnamese student in charter class.....	12-13
Hard to recruit for new university	13
Reflections on career at MSUO/Oakland	21-22, 22-23

Shadrick, Frederick.....	14
Students:	
Main sources of early students.....	11-12
Limited on-campus activities	14
Varner, Durward B. (Woody):	
First contact.....	2
Interview and appointment	3
Gave independence to staff	9
Building campus community.....	17
Encouraged staff to develop.....	17
Infectious enthusiasm.....	18
Departure from Oakland.....	20-21
Possible reason for leaving	22
Wilson, Matilda Dodge:	
Tea for Charter Class	10