AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD COLE

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History Project

Endacott Society

University of Kansas
RICHARD COLE

B.A., Mathematics, University of Texas, 1956

Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Chicago, 1962

Service at the University of Kansas

First came to the University of Kansas, 1965

Associate professor, 1965-1969

Professor, 1969-2001
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Q.: I am speaking with Richard Cole, who retired in 2001 as professor of philosophy at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas, on June 5, 2001. Where were you born and in what year?

A.: I was born in 1929 in Evanston, Illinois, although my family lived in Park Ridge, Illinois, which is adjacent.

Q.: What were your parents’ names?

A.: My father’s name was Harry, no middle name. I don’t have a middle name, nor does my twin brother have a middle name. My mother was Bertha Florence Cole.

Q.: What was their educational background?

A.: My father graduated with an engineering degree from M.I.T., actually interrupted by World War I, when he served as an officer in the Engineers. Then he went back to college after he got back from Europe.

Q.: What was his occupation?

A.: He was an engineer all his life.

Q.: You said you had a twin brother. Any other brothers and sisters?

A.: My twin brother is Arthur, no middle initial. My sister is Muriel Treadwell. She is divorced but that was her married name. And I have an older half brother, whose name is Myron. He presently lives in California. He has been retired for some time.

Q.: Were you identical twins?

A.: No, fraternal twins. We are easily told apart.

Q.: Did you grow up in Park Ridge?
A: For four years. Actually, we moved around a good bit, because when the Depression came, my father lost a good job that he had in Chicago. He went around looking for work and finally accepted a job with the Corps of Engineers as a civilian engineer. The Corps of Engineers does a lot besides military work.

Q.: Such as lakes.

A: In this case he was with the flood control project on the Mississippi River, which built dams, which produced power. But mostly it was flood control. That was part of a New Deal project.

Q.: So you lived in a variety of places along the Mississippi.

A: Yes, until later. We lived in St. Louis and then in Memphis and for a while in New Orleans. My father got a job, again with the Corps of Engineers, in the Isthmus of Panama. So we moved from New Orleans to the Panama Canal Zone in 1940 and lived there until 1943. The project on which he was working, which was to build a set of locks along side the existing two sets of locks it was called the Third Lock Project was discontinued because of the war. It was interesting living there during the early part of the war.

Q.: What was it like? As I understand the Americans had their own community.

A: Yes, the Canal Zone was almost entirely American. It was governed as a possession. Actually, it was rental property, rented from the Republic of Panama after a little fooling around in Central America by Theodore Roosevelt. As you know, the lease expired some years ago and the canal was returned to Panama. But at the time I lived there it was administered by an appointed governor. It was an interesting community because of that. It was kind of a socialist community because almost everything was the federal
government=s, the commissaries, etc.

Q.: Like a military base.
A: Yes, although it was almost entirely civilian. There were also military installations in the Canal Zone.

Q.: So that=s where you were in school then.
A: Yes. When we got there my brother and I were in the sixth grade. We both skipped the sixth grade when we got there and went into the seventh grade at Balboa Junior High School.

Q.: Then this ended with World War II, you said.
A: After the beginning of the war the project continued for a while, but finally Congress discontinued it. Besides that, the nature of the ships that could use it changed; some of the newer ones were too large and they had to go from the Atlantic to the Pacific by going around South America. They are still doing that. So the value of the third locks, which would have expanded the size of the locks in the canal, diminished and they just gave up the project.

Q.: So your family returned to the United States.
A: We went to Texas, where my father got a job with a contractor in Orange, Texas. First we were in Austin visiting relatives. Then he got this job in Orange, Texas, with these people who were building transport ships. So he worked as a nautical engineer for a while, although he was trained as a structural engineer.

Q.: Were there any members of your family in the war?
A: My father was in World War I, as I mentioned, but there were no close family members in World War II. We were not the right ages. Arthur and I were too young. We were 15
when the war was over. My father was too old, and besides that, he had already served.

Q.: Do you remember anything that was happening on the home front during the war?

A: Oh, yes, very much so. The first notice that we had that there was a war happened when Arthur and I delivered newspapers. We were waiting for our newspapers to show up. All of the aircraft at an airfield near where we were living took to the air. Every last aircraft that could fly was flying around.

Q.: This was in Panama.

A: Yes, December 7, 1941. Then we heard that there was a war. They pulled the switch on all the electrical power in the Canal Zone. They were very concerned that there would be an attack. So we had our first of many blackouts. After that it was legislated. There were blackouts without the power being cut but with the windows painted dark or shuttered well. All of the cars had black paint over their headlights with one little slit while driving during wartime in the Canal Zone. There were a number of false air raids. They were apparently more nervous than they should have been.

Q.: It was such a long ways from Japan. In those days I would think refueling would be a problem and it would be hard to get that far.

A: Well, they would do it by aircraft carrier, which is the way they attacked Pearl Harbor.

Q.: Then you went to high school in Texas.

A: We started high school in Balboa, Texas, and we finished high school in Houston, Texas. After the war the business of building ships for the Navy wasn’t very good, so my father got a job in Houston. So we moved to Houston and spent our senior year in Houston. I say Awe@ because my brother was the same age.

Q.: Do you remember influential teachers from any of these schools?
A: Well, that's a long time ago. I don't remember any teacher who was particularly
inspiring, except a whole bunch of math teachers. Almost every math teacher I had after
I got interested in mathematics was inspiring and played a considerable role in what my
brother and I, and, as it turned out my mother as well, got involved in. Arthur and I took
up amateur radio as a hobby. But we couldn't actually operate amateur radio because it
was wartime. So instead we started repairing radios after school. That developed into a
kind of a business. My mother became a partner, and we rented a store in the Holland
Hotel in Orange, Texas. So it was called the Holland Radio Shop. We repaired radios
there during the last year and a half we were in Orange.

Q.: How did you learn to repair radios?

A: We just taught ourselves. Electronics was not an unusual hobby in those days. It still
isn't. There are still a lot of electronics people around. In those days it was centrally
focused on the hardware, rather than the use. That was the only thing we could do,
because we couldn't use a transmitter.

Q.: Were you involved in extracurricular activities?

A: Plays and that sort of thing. I was very bad. I remember that in one play I forgot about
one whole page of my lines. But nobody knew. It made as much sense without it. I
wasn't very good, but my brother was. Later he got involved in amateur dramatics after
he was in college. We were also on a winning touch football team in junior high school.
So I lettered in junior high school because of that. It was electronics that interested us. It
was not associated with school. It was always outside of school.

Q.: I usually ask if you had summer jobs but I suppose that was it.

A: Yes, that was the summer job.
Q.: What year did you graduate from high school?
A: 1946, after we moved to Houston. Our senior year was in Houston.

Q.: Did you go directly on to college then?
A: Yes. That very year I went to the University of Houston, which at that time was newly established. I went for a year. After that we sort of split up. Arthur went to Rice, which was in Houston. I went first to Baylor University in Waco, Texas and then later to the University of Chicago for a while.

Q.: I suppose it was always assumed that you would go to college, since your father had gone.
A: Yes, that and the fact that the money we made repairing radios was put into War Bonds, which were designed to help with college. It helped a lot.

Q.: What was your major as an undergraduate?
A: I was originally thinking that I would be an electrical engineer because of the connection with electronics. But then I changed to physics and then I changed to mathematics. My bachelor’s degree is in mathematics.

Q.: Were you in the military service at any time?
A: Yes. My college career was interrupted by being in the Army during the Korean War.

Q.: Did you get drafted?
A: No, I enlisted to avoid getting drafted. I took the bull by the horns, so to speak.

Q.: Did you go overseas?
A: No, unless you count Louisiana.

Q.: Where did you go then?
A: At first we were in San Antonio at Fort Sam Houston. That’s where I did basic training.
Then I got put in the Signal Corps and I was sent to radio repair school at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. At this point Arthur and I were doing different things. Arthur had gotten a job while still an undergraduate at the M.D. Anderson Foundation, which is now part of the University of Texas. It is a cancer research hospital. He worked there until he retired. That=s what he was doing while I was in the Army. My outfit finally ended up in Louisiana, where I moved from the Signal Corps to the Public Information Office. Then I was discharged from what was then Camp Polk and is now Fort Polk.

Q.: Then did you go back to college?

A: I knocked around for a while. I went to Europe. I was a little disappointed in not going overseas, especially to Europe. I was just in Louisiana, although that=s a little bit like France. I had a good friend in the Army who was Cajun. I visited his community once or twice. It was a very interesting community, not like Paris. So I knocked around Europe for a while, mostly in France, England and Germany.

Q.: Did you speak French?

A: No, but I was learning a little of it while I was there. Then I came back and went to the University of Texas, where I got my bachelor=s degree in mathematics. There was a very influential teacher, whose name was R. L. Moore, quite a well-known pure mathematician. He was very influential in moving me into pure mathematics, which is not far from philosophy.

Q.: Really? I guess I don=t know much about mathematics. Does pure mean applied, such as in engineering?

A: No, pure means pursued strictly as an intellectual adventure. It is not applied. Much of it is not even applicable. But it is a fascinating field. So pure mathematicians are in many
ways like philosophers.

Q.: Did you have jobs while you were in college?

A: Yes, I did. The interesting one was the last job I had, working for the mental hospital in Austin as an orderly. I was a night orderly and lost a lot of sleep by being a night orderly and going to school at the same time. It was very hard. But being a night orderly there was not much going on, except occasionally. There was almost nothing going on punctuated by a lot going on. That was an interesting job. That was before the psychoactive drugs that they use now, which pretty much emptied the mental hospitals in the United States. At that time there were a lot of institutionalized patients.

Q.: You mean they were having hallucinations and things that are now more controlled by drugs.

A: There were all kinds. Not all mental patients have hallucinations.

Q.: There is depression, etc.

A: A lot were clinically depressed. And a lot of them were also there because there wasn’t any place else for them to go, a lot of older people.

Q.: You mean with Alzheimer’s?

A: No, many of them couldn’t have supported a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s. They were just warehoused there. There were a lot like that. And there were a lot who had incurable physical diseases. They were mentally okay, but there was no place else to put them. They were quite a few like that. I remember particularly three or four Parkinsonian cases. Advanced Parkinson’s Disease is very debilitating. So they put them there.

Q.: Did you have honors in college?

A: I was on the Dean’s List.
Q.: What did you do after you received your mathematics degree?
A.: After I received my mathematics degree I did a number of things, including later going back for graduate education in math. I only spent a semester doing that because I decided to go into philosophy. Among the things that I did was I got a summer job, as it turned out. I thought it was going to be more than that. It was in St. Paul with a computer company. I also worked in California with Douglas Aircraft Company as a computer programer. But there were a number of things I did in those years before I finally ended up getting married and going to the University of Chicago as a graduate student.

Q.: When did you marry?
A.: I married in 1958, which was the year my wife graduated.

Q.: From an undergraduate degree?
A.: From an undergraduate degree at the University of Texas. Then we went up to the University of Chicago. She took a job and I started graduate education in philosophy.

Q.: What was her field?
A.: She was in a liberal arts program at the University of Texas. She didn’t have a major but she had enough hours to have a major in mathematics. She did an undergraduate thesis on the history of mathematics.

Q.: What is her name?
A.: Marjorie.

Q.: Then you both went to the University of Chicago.
A.: She to work, but she took some courses too. At that time it wasn’t unusual for the wife to see to it that it was possible for her husband to go to school. So that’s what we did. We were there from 1958 until 1961, when I had done everything except the dissertation.
Q.: You changed majors. You were not a math major at the University of Chicago.
A.: I was in the philosophy department.
Q.: How did you happen to choose philosophy?
A.: Well, as I moved from the idea of being an engineer to being a physicist, to being a mathematician to being a pure mathematician, I was moving toward the more and more abstract discipline. The natural termination of that is to be a philosopher.
Q.: Philosophy is an abstract discipline then.
A.: It is both an abstract and a concrete discipline. Certainly it has a deserved reputation of being difficult and abstract.
Q.: Do philosophers mainly become professors of philosophy?
A.: Yes.
Q.: Is that what you intended to do?
A.: I intended to be a philosopher. I didn’t think about, nor was I worried about, jobs. It just naturally happened. It really is true. People at the University of Chicago in the Philosophy Department at the time were dedicated to the subject matter. It wasn’t regarded as something you did for the sake of a job. It was something you did because you wanted to be a philosopher. That was the way people thought at the University of Chicago in those days, and, I think, at other good universities.
Q.: So when you talk about being a philosopher, what does that mean?
A.: That means you do philosophy. You seek the truth.
Q.: Okay.
A.: As far as you can. Actually, philosophy means in Greek the love of wisdom, so it is wisdom that the philosopher seeks.
Q.: Did you teach while you were in graduate school?

A: Yes. In fact, I taught both philosophy and mathematics. One of the ways I helped with our mutual plan was to go to work. First I had a computer job at the University of Chicago at the business school. They have some interesting mathematics in business. Then I taught mathematics at the Illinois Institute of Technology in the evenings on a part-time basis while I was in graduate school. I taught a philosophy course at the downtown center of the University of Chicago for a while.

Q.: Did you have children?

A: In fact, we had our first child, Mark, while we were in Chicago. He was born at Billings Hospital at the University of Chicago, where my wife was working, very convenient. So we had him with us my last year in Chicago. Then we left Chicago when I took my first job and also wrote my dissertation, which was at Colorado College.

Q.: Did you get a masters or was this one of those programs where you go straight through?

A: I went straight through.

Q.: What was your dissertation about?

A: Modal logic. It was titled Possibilities. Modal logic is the branch of logic which deals with concepts which are called modal concepts, such as necessity, contingency, possibility. So I thought I would just name it Possibilities. The first couple of papers which I published were taken directly from the dissertation. As a matter of fact, I published them before the dissertation was accepted. That is, I had them accepted for publication before the dissertation was accepted.

Q.: So you went to work before you finished your dissertation.

A: Yes. In those days it was not at all unusual to do your dissertation out of residence,
especially if you were married and had a kid.

Q.: Where did you go?

A: Colorado College in Colorado Springs. I was there for a year filling in for someone who was on leave. After that year I had to find a permanent job. I finished the dissertation in a year because I thought I had to. A lot of people don’t. They go many years without finishing. But I finished and got a job at Grinnell, a college in Iowa.

Q.: What year did you receive your Ph.D.?

A: I finished it in the spring, but I got the degree in December of 1962.

Q.: You were at Grinnell, Iowa.

A: I was there three years.

Q.: And you taught philosophy.

A: I was in the department of Philosophy and Religion, because they had a combined department. It wasn’t unusual in liberal arts colleges.

Q.: This was a small school, I suppose.

A: Yes, it was very selective small liberal arts college. It was in Iowa where it gets cold in the wintertime.

Q.: I’m from Iowa.

A: Actually, in those days it would begin to snow about Thanksgiving and there would be snow on the ground well into April.

Q.: Yes. It does seem like there used to be more snow than there is now. I can remember a lot of snow.

A: In those days you would have snow on top of snow on top of snow. From the ploughing of the snow soon you’d have something 15 feet high on the side of the highway.
Q.: So you were three years at Grinnell, and then where did you go?
A.: Then I came here, because I had a friend, Don Emmons, who I met in Chicago who was on the faculty here. He invited me down one time when I was at a meeting in Kansas City. So I came over here and talked to the people in the department. I wasn't looking for a job, but I got an offer. It was attractive because they had recently established a Ph.D. program here in Philosophy. It was established in 1964 and I came here in 1965. There are obviously no Ph.D. programs in liberal arts colleges. That's not quite true. There are some like Swarthmore, which has a Ph.D. program. But typically you don't have any graduate students in a liberal arts college.

Q.: Who was the chairman of the department when you came here?
A.: Edward Robinson. Then Richard DeGeorge, who is still in the department, became chair. After my first year Edward Robinson was killed in an automobile accident.

Q.: What building was philosophy in then?
A.: It was in Strong Hall, on the first floor in the west wing. I don't know what is there now. I haven't been back for a while.

Q.: What do you remember about Lawrence at that time?
A.: In many ways it was not much different than it is now. Of course what they did downtown, putting in all those trees, is different. I understand there were trees in the old days which were cut down because the business people didn't want them.

Q.: I didn't know that.
A.: Oh, that was in Grinnell. They had trees downtown, which apparently the business people didn't like because you couldn't see the stores, that is until the wintertime. In Lawrence many of the downtown buildings are still the same.
Q.: The population has about doubled.
A: Yes. Hallmark was here in those days, but there was not much other industry outside of the university. There was this film company. Do you remember that?
Q.: Centron.
A: And the organ company, Reuters. But the university was pretty much the center of my life and the center of the city. We bought a house immediately when we came, and it is the house we are living in now. It has been 36 years.
Q.: What do you remember about the late 60s?
A: Quite a bit.
Q.: How did that affect your department?
A: It had a considerable affect on the department. A lot of the people were young.
Q.: Do you mean the faculty?
A: Yes. There were a number of new hires because the department was growing very rapidly. So we hired a lot of young people. Many didn’t have their degrees when they came here. Of course they were subject to the draft, so antiwar sentiment was very high among these people. One can understand that. So the department was pretty much involved. There were some fairly militant antiwar people. And there were some who were more center of the road, like me, in the department on that issue.
Q.: And the students. I remember they dressed differently. I suppose philosophy students would have been very interested in these issues.
A: Yes, they were. So the antiwar movement on campus had a lot of philosophers in it, students as well as professors. There were several who were in the ROTC demonstration. Do you remember that?
Q: I think that was the year before we came.

Q: There was a ROTC review ceremony in the stadium. So there was this group led by a faculty member in another department that went out onto the field first and pretty much disrupted the proceedings. It was a matter of either arresting them or calling it off, and they decided to call it off. So it was a disruption. All of these people were later called to account, including the faculty member, who was reprimanded. Many students were kicked out of the university and subsequently drafted, possibly. So it was from the student perspective a very serious matter. And from the university perspective it was obviously a serious matter, because it was a university function. I remember sitting on the hill watching it.

Q: What classes have you taught through the years?

A: Almost everything involved in the department.

Q: From beginning through graduate courses?

A: Oh, yes. I spent a lot of time in the graduate program. But naturally enough we also had to teach undergraduates. So I also spent a lot of time teaching undergraduates. And also in different fields, in logic, in ethics. My specialty at the time was the philosophy of science and the history of philosophy. I am an unusual philosopher of science because I had a very strong history of philosophy education in Chicago. This because by far the most important person in the department, both as teacher and as philosopher, was Richard McKeon, who taught courses in the history of philosophy. He certainly influenced me and also my colleagues who came here from Chicago. Tony Genova, the present and eternal chair of the department, came from Chicago and Warner Morse, who died ten years ago, was also with me as a graduate student in Chicago.
Q.: Have you had administrative responsibilities?
A: Yes, quite a few of them. In the department I was acting chair for a year and I was director of graduate studies for a number of years, and of course lots of other stuff in the department. In the College I was on college committees. I was also chair of a College committee on the history of the philosophy of science for several years. That was in the sixties.

Q.: Did that have something to do with the courses that were taught in that area?
A: Yes, we had a program staffed by people in the sciences, in philosophy, and in the history of science. It still exists as a committee. I think the program was discontinued because it never got very many students. It was a very specialized area, the history of the philosophy of science. It was an interdisciplinary program. I was involved with that for a long time.

Q.: I guess I forgot when we were talking about classes to ask if you had originated any classes?
A: Yes, quite a few actually, or helped to originate with others. But that’s not anything special. What I did do was originate a specialty, a Ph.D. program in the Philosophy of Science in the Philosophy Department. In History they also had a history of science option for the Ph.D. So given those two options, we were competitive with the history and philosophy of science. So I sent through a proposal for a specialization in philosophy and the history of science program. And it was established and is still on the books, although they haven’t had a student in it for some time. A couple of people got degrees in that specialty.

Q.: And this specialty studied the history of science?
A: The specialty was designed to accommodate graduate level work in a science or in the history of science. So some got into the program, one, for example, sought a master=s in physics and at the same time was doing the program. That was part of the requirements for the program, that you do master=s level work in either science or the history of science. That was on top of all the philosophy requirements. So it was a longer program than the standard philosophy program. The idea was that you had to be both a philosopher and have some advanced work in a science.

Some of the interesting things I did in administrative work=B I did a lot of it in the College and University. I was chair of a committee that was called a Blue Ribbon Committee on Academic Freedom. There were some complaints about freedom of expression on campus in those days. So the Faculty Senate appointed this committee to look into it. It was an interesting committee.

Q.: So what did you find?
A: There were some problems. The problems were of an interesting nature, though. Archie Dyches was chancellor at the time. He participated and cooperated with the committee. A couple of the administrators, including Deanell Tacha, were members of the committee. At that time she was associate dean of the Law School. We had a couple of administrators, we had journalists and Paretsky, a microbiologist, was on that committee. A lot of the problems arose because of the issue of freedom of expression having to do with protest. So this fellow with his group went to a commencement exercise and had a banner referring to South Africa. Maybe you remember that.

Q.: I don=t remember that. I know they sometimes put weird things on their hats.
A: But this was up in the stands. The campus police took exception to it. So these people
complained. One of the things the committee was charged with was looking into that. There was another thing having to do with faculty and a state senator at the time. The history department had set up an exhibit in the research library of paraphernalia from the Nazi period, particularly paraphernalia that Hitler had something to do with. It came from a collection that somebody in Kansas City had that he had loaned to the history department because someone was teaching a course on the period. A fellow in history was doing it. I think he was also an administrator in history. There was a call from Topeka complaining about it. Then a decision was made at the chancellor’s office level to effectively discontinue it. At the time it was mostly Del Shankel and the people he consulted who made the decision, because Archie Dyches was off somewhere. Del is a real nice fellow. He was acting chancellor at the time. So they postponed it. There was an outcry about academic freedom coming from all over campus. So this was another thing we were asked to look into. So we looked into these various problems which had arisen, mostly having to do with university policy in connection with freedom of expression, where the freedom of expression involved protests, or in this case academic freedom. We did a report on that.

Q.: So your committee would make recommendations. But then it would be up to the administrators whether anything was done about it.

A: That’s right. There weren’t any subsequent problems of that nature after that. But it may have been because a lot of the fervor had gone out of the protest movement. But it rankled for a bit among historians because they didn’t see anything wrong with this. Nor was there any intention of supporting Nazism. It was just an exhibit that historians would be interested in looking at. But there was politics involved, you see. There was pressure
from Topeka on an issue of academic freedom. So it was one of those things that became an issue. The Faculty Senate met. It was another case of rising in indignation. There were a lot of cases like that in those days. This was at the tail end of the period, actually.

Q.: The period of the sixties and early seventies.
A.: This was in the seventies. When we discharged the committee I gave everybody a blue ribbon.

Q.: What were your research interests?
A.: Originally the philosophy of science, from the point of view of the history of physics, mostly, and of astronomy. Then I spread out into what might be called the metaphysical foundations of natural science and also of the social sciences. My life’s history has been becoming more and more comprehensive.

Q.: Did you ever take a sabbatical?
A.: Yes, we went to Edinburgh.

Q.: Were you studying at the university there?
A.: Well, I was writing. I did a lot of writing that led to a lot of the articles I published. But I was in contact with the University of Edinburgh. I attended a faculty colloquium that they gave. So it was a very profitable relationship. Our department had a number of relationships with the University of Edinburgh and with Scotland too. Two people had been at the University of Edinburgh. Jack Bricke got his degree from the University of Edinburgh. Jim Woefel got his degree from St. Andrews, which is in the highlands. So we had a lot of connection with Scotland. That’s why I went. I didn’t have any connection until then.

Q.: So you lived in Scotland for a year.
A: It was a semester. Some of the time we spent traveling.

Q.: You talked about some of your articles. Have you ever written a book?

A: No, I’m doing that now.

Q.: What are you writing about?

A: Well, it’s going to be called *The Philosophy of Nature*. Natural science was originally called the philosophy of nature. Natural science developed out of a specialization within philosophy. Then when it got old enough to leave, it left Philosophy and became independent. That is characteristic of the relationship between philosophy and the sciences. So it was called philosophy of nature when it was philosophy. That’s why we give degrees in philosophy to scientists. So that’s what I’m working on now.

Q.: Do you belong to professional organizations?

A: On yes, a whole collection of those on and off. Many different ones, and also the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which is a scientific organization.

Q.: Have you held offices?

A: Yes. I was chair of two regional societies, the Mountain Plains Society and the Southwestern Philosophical Society. I am going to be giving papers to both of those in my retirement.

Q.: Have you had honors at KU?

A: I got a fellowship which gave me a semester off to study in another department of the university. It was called Intra University Fellowship. I was Exxon Intra University Professor of the History of Science in the History Department.

Q.: So you studied in the history department.
A: The history of science. I had a number of friends in the history of science. One of them was Professor Jerry Stannard, who died about five years ago, I think. He and I team taught a course in the history and philosophy of science for years. So we were doing that and I thought, Why not take advantage of this opportunity to spend some time studying the history of science while at the same time being paid. We also team taught that course during the year, 1980-81.

Q: How has the philosophy department changed while you have been here? Has it gotten larger? You said it did add a graduate aspect of it.

A: It had a master’s program when I came. But I think there were only four or five people in the department at that time. It grew enormously in the sixties and through 1971-72, because the population of the university was growing and because of the graduate program. Many people came from outside the state to study in the program. We had a very good start. Our first Ph.D. was in 1967. The program started in 1964. So this developing program, which also enlarged through those years, kind of stabilized after a while. The department grew so that there are now lots of graduate teaching assistants teaching freshmen and sophomore courses and there are 13 or 14 regular faculty now. That is not large. It is still a small department. Yes, the department has changed enormously in those years because of the graduate program.

Q: Do you have people who just get an undergraduate degree in philosophy or do people tend to go on?

A: The people who get undergraduate degrees with us tend to go on. Only a few stay for graduate work. Usually people with an undergraduate degree from here are advised to seek out another university for graduate work to avoid something called incest. Not truly
incest of course.

Q.: I have heard of that in some other departments too.

A.: A lot of people go off to get graduate degrees and do well. Our graduate program also produced lots of people who got degrees and got good jobs and are teaching philosophy.

Q.: I wanted to ask you about former students who have done well.

A.: First of all there was a student of mine at Grinnell who became my colleague here, Mike Young. We were colleagues for many years. He was my student for three years at Grinnell. So I think that is kind of memorable. He was a very good philosopher and a very good student. Another student of mine, both as an undergraduate and a graduate, Joe Van Zant, who was an administrator on campus and also a teacher in the department, was memorable. Then there was an undergraduate, Mike O=Rourke, who was a university scholar, and I was his mentor for a couple of years. He went off to California and got a Ph.D. He taught for a while at Kansas State. There was a student, Jim Swindler, with whom I remain in contact who is now teaching at the University of Illinois. A number of students who I had as dissertation students are memorable. Another dissertation student I had very early, Merril Proudfoot, went to one of the small colleges in the Kansas City area and became chair of the department there. He just recently retired. He=s about the same age or a little older than I am.

Q.: Have you been involved in community activities in Lawrence?

A.: Sort of, not a whole lot. The cooperative nursery school, which at the time was across the street from the first Merc. Do you remember the first Merc grocery store?

Q.: Yes, I think the nursery school is still there across the street.

A.: At that time you were expected to work if your child attended. So we did that for a
while.

Q.: How many children do you have?
A.: We have three children. Wendy was born when we were in Grinnell. She is presently married to a professor at Iowa State University in Ames, whom she met here. Aletha was born here. She just recently had her 30th birthday. She is working in the Boston area. She lives in Medford, which is a town north of Boston. Mark lives near Philadelphia and works as a computer programmer.

Q.: Do you have continuing involvement with KU since your retirement?
A.: I just retired. I'm sure I will be active with KU.

Q.: What are some things you plan to do in retirement, other than write the book?
A.: Travel some. We are going to do that yet this summer. We've been to Colorado lots of times. Then later we are going to visit people in the Northeast, including our daughter Aletha and our son Mark. We are meeting in New Jersey at a place on the ocean called Cape May. Then we are going to drive to visit my sister-in-law in Toronto and then drive back along the top of the Great Lakes in Canada.

Q.: That will be a nice trip.
A.: That will take a while.

Q.: What is your assessment of the Philosophy Department or KU, past, present, hopes for the future, that kind of thing?
A.: The Philosophy Department is currently having a problem that is worrisome. The number of people who apply for graduate admission has dropped enormously.

Q.: Why do you think that is?
A.: I think it may be because the department has become too specialized. Consequently, it
appeals to a smaller group of graduating students. I think that is the problem. I don’t know if they will be able to fix it or not. I hope so. Otherwise, the undergraduate program is going great guns. The graduate program is also a good program, actually. Probably the reputation of being specialized is exaggerated. Nevertheless, I think we have that reputation.

Q.: So it is mostly specialized in things like the history of science?
A.: No, it is mostly specialized in analytic philosophy, which is a way of doing philosophy. There is a collection of people who share the same methods and language, etc.

Q.: Anything else you’d like to add?
A.: No, I don’t think so.

Q.: Thank you very much.
A.: Thank you.