

**INTERVIEW WITH JOHN JAMRICH  
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN  
AUGUST 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2011**

**Russ Magnaghi (RM):** Interview with John Jamrich. Marquette, Michigan. August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This is a continuation on the series of interviews that took place over a dozen years ago on campus. Dr. Jamrich, could you tell us a little about—you've given us a great deal of information over the years and then your giving us this written narrative and whatnot. There are a few questions that I'd like to get on tape, one is the origins of your middle name, as I mentioned early before the tape went on, it's more associated with Catholics and not Lutherans and certainly not Slovaks. Could you tell us a little about the origin of that?

**John Jamrich (JJ):** Well, as I reflected a moment ago, during my Air Force service in Alaska, I came down with measles. I was in the hospital recuperating and it was interesting, the Catholic priest came by everyday, twice a day and we played gin rummy. About the time I was ready to go home I said to the priest, "Well, I certainly appreciate your thoughtfulness but I want to remind you that I'm Lutheran and I really appreciate your taking the time." He said, "Well, that's interesting. How did you ever get the name Xavier, being a Lutheran?" So, the story is really kind of, I would say, a goofy set of circumstances. A classmate of mine from high school and I were good at mathematics and we did math and got along real well. When it came time for graduation, he went to Ripon College and I was valedictorian so the state of Wisconsin had a full tuition scholarship for all the valedictorians. So, I thought that I received this \$37.50 full tuition for a semester at Milwaukee State Teachers College. In the meantime, this friend of mine was at Ripon and I was at Milwaukee, he talked me into transferring out to Ripon, just before the war began and when the war began Ripon College had ROTC, and it was an exodus of fellows by the dozens. And here we sat, we were still sophomores, in sophomore ROTC. But we decided that we were going to apply for something in the Air Force, rather than be drafted. So, fortunately we ran across a U.S Air Force announcement, they were initiating some meteorology classes at about 4 or 5 universities, Chicago, NYU, Columbia, Cal-Tech and one other. So, we made our application and the follow up on the application was more detailed and it required a middle name and my friend had no middle name. His name was Donald Bearer and mine was John Jamrich. It said middle name and of course, then it said if you don't have a middle name just put "N.M.I." in there. That was the "no middle initial", gizmo is used in the armed forces for people who didn't have a middle initial but we were going to be forced to right N.M.I for the rest of our service. So, the two of us decided that's not what we want. Let's give ourselves a middle initial and we were mathematicians, how about "X" and "Y"? So, I said, "Well, I'll take the X and you take the Y." He took the Y and his middle name is Yocul. "Y" doesn't have many choices. Xavier? Well, what are my other choices? Xylophone? Xerxes? Xavier Cugat, okay, I'll take Xavier. From that point on, my name was John Xavier Jamrich on the document. Now, that sounds silly but that's the way it happened.

RM: That answers my question. I often wondered about that, you know? What was that connection? Okay, that's interesting. Could you comment on you know, you've left us some documents here, and I would like you to comment so that it's—I mean a person could read this document in college but sometimes it's a lot easier to get a synopsis. Could you tell us just briefly, you mentioned this earlier

when we were talking, but just what sort of caused this to happen? How did you get involved with this project and what was the result?

JJ: In 1957, I was Dean of the Faculty at Doane College and I received a telephone call from a gentleman named John Dale Russell, whom I had never met. He was the Executive Director of Higher Education in New Mexico, for the whole system. Michigan had engaged him on a two day, for a month consultation to deal with the future of higher education in Michigan. The Legislature had him employed as a consultant. His telephone call was out of the blue, "Dr. Jamrich," he said, "This is what I'm planning to do in Michigan. We're going to do a survey of all the state colleges, community colleges, and private institutions for the Legislature. I need someone to be full-time managing the activity, involved in preparation of data gathering, data analysis and so on. I have two days a month that I would come in and work with you." He said, "I make this call on the basis of my assistant here, met you at the University of Michigan at a workshop on higher education and the two of you developed some sort of a numerical measures of teaching load and facility utilization." Out of the blue he called me and out of the blue, I said, "Yes, I'll be there." So, the college granted me a leave of absence. I came to Michigan; there was a legislative committee that had oversight over this whole survey, the finances and so on. The Representative Charles Boyer was the chairman of the committee. We took off on this analysis, published the results in fourteen volumes for the legislature and it included many recommendations. One of them for example was at that time, a Constitutional Convention was being explored as a possibility and we recommended that if a Constitutional Convention were to be undertaken that the universities of Michigan, the state institutions, should be embedded in the Constitution, individually, the way that the University of Michigan, MSU, and Wayne State had been. That recommendation was adopted by the Legislature, by the way, but that's how Northern Michigan became Northern Michigan University from its prior name as Northern Michigan College. In that survey, we also identified a number of other later issues. One of them was, is there a possible need for additional higher educational institutions throughout the state? Number one, we had a document on community colleges in which we recommended that the state authorization was established between 20 and 25 new community colleges in Michigan to better serve the student who would prefer Associate Degree programs or beginning regular Baccalaureate programs and then transfer to the senior institutions. We also identified or raised the question, based on our demographic analyses; it appears that there is a need for an additional institutional higher education degree granted in Grand Rapids and also Saginaw Valley. The result of that recommendation was the formation of another committee in each of those two areas. Mr. William Seidman, a prominent citizen of Grand Rapids, he was a Certified Public Accounting for so long. He was the chairman of the Citizen's committee and the Legislative committee and undertook the study of the need of a new college, an additional institution, four year in Grand Rapids. This document called "A New College" is the result of my work as the director, I was at that time, I was the director for the Center for the Study of Higher Education at Michigan State University. In that capacity, I conducted a survey of Grand Rapids, diagnosing demographics, school enrollments, questioning the parents and students of their expectations of going to college and if they want additional education beyond high school, what sort of programs, careers, did they have in mind? All of this put together into this document and the result was the Legislature looked at this and on the basis of it, authorized the establishment of Grand Valley State College, which is now Grand Valley State University and one of the things in here was the

recommendations for the site and when I analyzed it, I put it halfway between Grand Rapids and Allendale. Many of the local citizens raised eyebrows about the decisions because at that time it was a cornfield. In fact, when we went to the dedication of the first building, it was held in the cornfield but since then of course the cornfields are long gone and Grand Valley State College is an institution for some 20,000 students. The same thing occurred in the Saginaw Valley area, similar study was authorized by the Legislature and the Legislature authorized the establishment of Saginaw Valley State College, now a state university. You had some questions that you asked, oh, significant development. Well, as I scratch down some notes here, given the 15 year length of tenure, diversity of the Universities structure and operations, this might be a rather difficult question with just one answer. However, given the rather unique setting of Northern at this particular moment, that is one development that emerged as the most significant as I look back over those 15 years. The decades have effected educational performance as a teacher's colleges and designated as a college and planned it constitutionally as a university. There was a wide horizon of opportunity but the identification of the most significant development is not what I would call a solo performance. Such a significant achievement relies, first of all, on the presidents who preceded me and what they were able to do and establish. Secondly, it depends on the existence which holds true for a very solid academic foundation and the quality of the faculty and staff at that time. So, it was very definitely recognizable. Then finally, on a personal note, a supportive element that I characterize as a valuable craftsmanship that my wife and myself and this presidential role. Mrs. Jamrich's contribution's as a mother of three daughter's, the particular challenge during the protest years, as a presidential spouse and as one who related most helpfully with many, many women students on a personal basis right at the President's home and numerous visits by women students to come in and her community outreach. Interesting, by the way, when Mrs. Jamrich took over teaching ice skating, I mentioned this to you before. There were some faculty who took issue with the wife of the President being employed by the University. In the decades that followed, there has been a dramatic change in that concept in spouses and husbands, wives, working together on the University is not a rare occasion. Another important contribution, by the way, regarding my wife Mrs. Jamrich was her role in the design of the new Kaye House. Actually, the exterior of the resident's, the configuration of the rooms, the interior room configuration and decor, those were all her work with the people who had the expertise in those areas. She utilized quite a number of our own objects, including those from Nigeria, South Africa, Northern faculty paintings and sculpture, as well as American Indian items presented to us by the students and the participants in the North American Indian Women funds. Further, in the higher education learning, the year of my presidential appointment was clearly in the beginning stages of major expansion and development. Generally, a major societal taking place, meteoric surge in enrollments first of all. The college group responded with expansion to accommodate enrollments and respond to the need for additional degree programs. This was the beginning through the nation of something that was taking place nationwide, including Michigan. In Michigan, our enrollments at that time were 134,000. By 1956, they had gone to 164,000 for the whole state. In 1970, they had risen to 289,000 in the state and the projection we made was 340,000 by 1975. I should point out, by the way, that President Harden and I had a long time relationship because we came from the same culture of Michigan State University under President John Hannah. It brought pretty much his right to try, the concept of it carried. I continued to embrace during my tenure. After the point of significant development, on numerous occasions I verbalized the concept, mainly to continue the development of Northern Michigan University

from a University on legislative paper to a University in fact. In the three or four years following the legislative designation of Northern as a University, President Harden had taken a number of initial steps in that direction. My specific goal was to accelerate that evolution to a University. In fact, by expanding the several programs we had initiated and to identify additional degree programs including new undergraduate majors and adding the Master's Degree program in several areas. Just to list a few, these are just casual listing of things that came to mind: handicap access. This was a major issue at the time, I forgot her name, a young lady in a wheelchair had brought the issue up and resulted in proper action by the university. Accreditation...

RM: Now this was before it became federal policy?

JJ: Yes, this was before the executive order from President Johnson. The development fund had been started; it's one of those things that it started. We just expanded and formed a development board, Sam Cohodas and Albert Mattson provided great leadership in that respect. Our first effort, I think we had the idea if we got a nominal number of people pledging five thousand dollars for five years. We'd be happy well it turned out, I believe, you'll have to look this up. I believe that first batch there were fifty people who pledged that, for a very good beginning for the development fund. We engaged Johnson and Johnson and Roy for the campus plan back then, they did it again here a couple of years ago. Technical training and the construction of the Jacobetti Center, this was a very, I think, very important step because Marquette voters really turned down the idea of a Community College, pointing their finger in the direction saying, "There's Northern, why don't they do it?" in quotation marks. We had, at that time, a number of projects funded by federal funds that were precisely what we had in mind. My trouble was, those funds were annual grants from the Feds and sometimes we'd get it, sometimes we get less, sometimes more and some conversation was brought up about the Jacobetti. The idea came to us that what we really ought to have is a continuing program containing, embracing various whether it was plumbing or air conditioning or electronics or airplane repair or so on. And all of that grew the idea of the Jacobetti Center, social work, computer science, art and music. My wife and I of course, \_\_\_\_\_ very much in mind, both of us were interested in promoting that. The music department expanded fully accredited by the Music Association nationally in a few years. Anthropology, the pre-med program, I'm trying to think of the physics professor way back...

RM: Wagner?

JJ: Wagner, yes. Wagner. It was kind of interesting that a physic professor would come up with the concept of a pre-med program but that's what happened and then we had a local doctor, Dr. Roy and Dr. Mazzuchi and others who embraced this, enthusiastically volunteered to take the students on rounds and make it a program but now over the years, it really provides an edge advantage for students. President Wong was telling me the other day that a student in the pre-med program today, scored perfect scores on ACT and the other one, and he had choices to go to Yale and somewhere else and he chose Northern because one of the things that happens is Northern's placement of its pre-med students, percentage wise, had been substantial. Whereas in larger pre-med programs at other institutions, your dealing with 100 competitors for for a couple of appointments, but that's been a valuable addition. The enhancements of the public radio and public TV from a paid-play (?) entity to a

real thing. At that time, a representative of Congress helped with funding for the tower, for the broadcast which was very important at the time. Our efforts with the American Indian programs, *Nishnabe News* and various other programs, we started a program in the Indian reservation in the Copper Country. Instructors went up there teaching receptionists and types of things for American Indian's would be interested in and the Women's Center, we started in 1972 then we acquire a President's Eagle. That was a successful effort. ROTC was a bit of a confrontation because when we were notified that our request for ROTC was granted, we were in the midst of Vietnam confrontation. Interesting thing, Jack Rumholtz and I, we had our offices at the University Center at the time and every so often, there would be a protest line of students sitting one side of the hallway and a pro-ROTC line sitting on the other. Jack and I would carry on the discussion until the program was launched and its existence has been quite successfully. Cooperation with community colleges was a very important thing. And cooperation with elementary and secondary schools, that extension outreach was very important. It did our staff a great service in the public school systems during those years. Athletics, I'll let the record speak for itself how things have changed. I have to tell you, during one period a group of us, a group of Presidents got together and we decided that it would be desirable to form an Athletic conference of Northern Michigan University, Akron, Western Illinois, Western Michigan, Central, Eastern, and a couple of others and it was an agreement to do this and we submitted this proposition to the NCAA. Unfortunately, we called our association "Michigan Conference..." anyway, it came up MCAA. The NCAA said, "You can't do that. That would be confusing. You guys are the MCAA and we're the NCAA." So, that was a battle. We even had the leases already printed with the logo "MCAA", it never came to be. It was an interesting thing. In 1975, we were able to actually convince the Legislature to provide a line-item for Northern if they do the research but that I think made some sense. The lakefront purchase land was an interesting story. I was on a trip down to Lansing by plane and stopped in Green Bay and usually there was time for dinner. Well, I went into the restaurant, had dinner and two gentlemen were sitting near by who happened to be officials of the briquette company that took Dow Chemical over in South Carolina some place. I think that's where they were from. I think it was South Carolina. Anyway, they had the briquettes and they were talking about operations and so on and at one point one of them said, "Our real problem is cash flow. We need cash flow." I took that home with me and decided, "Well, if they need cash flow, maybe they could sell some of that Dow Chemical land that's over there at the lakeshore." I made a call and I was not obviously saying that I heard this and so on, I simply told them who I was and I said, "If you come to a point where you want to sell some of that lake frontage, Northern would appreciate being considered to make an offer." Two weeks later he called and he asked me, "Well, how much land would you want?" Well I said, "About a hundred acres is what we're looking at." And he said, "Well, that's possible. Why don't you buy more? We could sell you more." Well, by that time we had wised up to what the problem was with more because the "more" was in the creosote area, that would need a whole lot of cleaning and whatever, just the way the tar situation is discovered now. So, we settled on about a hundred acres and he wanted \$125,000, I believe it was. You could check the spending but there was no money in our budget to buy land or anything other than operations. So I contact the \_\_\_\_\_ and I chatted with him about this piece of property. He knew what it was, it was a thousand some feet of lakeshore and one of the projected plans was that they planned to build a college of Business right there on the lakeshore. Well, Jacobetti said, "Oh, that's a great buy. You should do it." I said, "Jake, we don't have any money for that kind of purchase." "Well, let me talk to

Senator \_\_\_\_\_. These were, in those days, politics were a little \_\_\_\_\_. Senator Wayne's answer was, "Oh sure, Jake, buy the property." So, we bought the land. The office of general accounting, that's not the name but from the Governor's office did an audit every year and the audit that year, the first item was: you made incorrect use of non-\_\_\_\_\_ funds to buy some land, citation. Well, we had a stamp and they gave us a chance to review this and I said, "Well, I think the first thing that you should do with that citation is talk to Senator Wayne and \_\_\_\_\_, see what they say." Well, when they talked to them they erased the citation. We've had the land, and I think it's been \_\_\_\_\_ with beautiful \_\_\_\_\_ by the University.

RM: I think I can just make a note that if I'm not wrong, we're the only state university with land on one of the Great Lakes or its main campus has land on one of the Great Lakes. We're the only state university with only land on one of the Great Lakes.

JJ: I've always dreamed of having some of that money that U of M received for research on the Great Lakes deposited at Northern for the very reason you're indicating. What could be more obvious than research at Northern into factors relating to the Great Lakes? At that time, there was a great deal of concern about lead in fish and I applied with one of the two of the folks in biology. I said, "This is a natural, we could become a regional testing service for this kind of thing." Well, they shrugged it off for some reason or other but that is true. We are the only ones with a frontage on a Great Lake. Well anyway, that's pretty much it. Then your other question, the most unfulfilled... Actually, this is an extension of the original notion of the University, in fact. In a setting of national and other Michigan institutional changes, my specific objective was to have Northern become a full fledged university with an appropriate array of Master's degree programs building on the EDS which we have put in place and leading to a doctoral level program in those selected areas. I felt then, that we had the faculty strength to go into it at that level. Convinced I was that NMU was in an ideal location to convert \_\_\_\_\_ program institution. A natural resource facility would be long before it's time, in terms about the concern of the environment. Indigenous research, utilizing Lake Superior, the mining industry, \_\_\_\_\_ fish research, geology, history of the Upper Peninsula. As I say on the finalization of that for the Upper Peninsula, I look back and I guess I don't know whether staying around would have brought that about now. What I'm saying is, I didn't quite reach the objective I had set in mind with the University with the baccalaureate program. \_\_\_\_\_ Baccalaureate, Master's and some PhD's, Michigan Tech does it as well. Especially in the mining and engineering area, I was kind of hoping that we could carve out something similar.

RM: See because at about that same time I think Michigan Tech developed its—anyways, they have a Master's Degree in Industrial Archaeology which is a \_\_\_\_\_ concept that involved history and can involve a whole variety of things, whatever you sort of want to do with it. They have subsequently developed a PhD in that and they're the only school, some tell me in the world, that offers that major. So, they've had a number of students from Italy and when you ask them, "How did you get into this program at Michigan Tech?" You know? They say, "Well, I went online and it's the only one available." So, it kind of goes back to what you were talking about and having these very special programs that are going to attract students.

JJ: As you know from your many years here, I just was always convinced that we had the faculty quality, the fieldwork for advanced programs and I can't put my finger on it really why it is that my goal wasn't fulfilled. I mean, of course there was that one ending period where State budgets were being cut so new program initiatives were by default, discouraged. That constitutes my answer to general questions.

RM: Well, I think one of the things that comes up at this point and asking the question is kind of unfair because I think you came here at time when the University was emerging to something different than what it had been. It was expanding. So, when you came, you were really—and I think also because of the connections you had with the legislators and so on with the work you had done, you had possibly—you had set yourself up as a leader who could then take charge of the emergence of this new institution as you pointed out. If you summed up, you know, all the things you should talk about, I would have to come to this conclusion that you were sort of the right person of the right place at the right time.

JJ: There's one little footnote, it was the right time but it was also the time that was the beginning of a transition in what I would refer to as "management of colleges and universities." If you think about it, you take the \_\_\_\_\_ for 33 years. You take \_\_\_\_\_ at U of M, charismatic, leaders. They'd sit at the legislative hearings, command attention. They would go back to the campus and when President \_\_\_\_\_ wanted the medical school and it was being backed off with opposition from the other two big institutions. He established a Bio-Science institute. This was essentially the seedbed of a medical school. What I'm getting at is this that was still management by the president, pretty much \_\_\_\_\_ or a singular presidential decision. Well, he had staff but since the year after I came, yes if you go back you will find those task forces that address really the beginning of a different management style of the University. Nationally, that was the beginning to push aside the monolithic presidential role. I remember for example, being invited to Southern Illinois University by President Dwight Morris (?). "Dr. Jamrich," he said, "Let's go take a ride and I'll show you the position that I want to offer to you." We rode out to an open field and he said, "This is where we're going to build Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and you would be reporting to me but you would be fully in charge of that development." You see, those were the end pieces of the \_\_\_\_\_, Hatcher and the I could identify a whole lot of other presidents in that same kind of commanding role but over the 15 years here, we went from that, we had votes for union turned down twice and so then it succeeded. The unionization came in, the administrative decision making spread more widely among, I think, as it should because the same situation had developed in the medical matter and these in hospitals really used to be sort of under direction of the hospital CEO and nowadays the medical staff really is involved very, very intimately with major policy decisions. That makes sense, they're the experts in the field. Faculty members are experts, they're experts in the industry. You're an expert in math, computer science, archaeology, you name it, biology and so on. That expertise has finally emerged, it has to be taken into account in the management of the administration of an institution. So, that 15 year period...

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END OF INTERVIEW