

Lee; My name is Michelle Lee, and I'm conducting an interview today with Professor Arnold Aho, in Marquette, Mi. He is a Professor of Economics at NMU. The date is November 22, 1994. Professor Aho can you tell us where you were born and what year?

AA: Well, I was born in Gran Marais, Mi. one of the small number of people I suppose still around, born in Gran Marais back way back in the middle of the Depression in 1933. Grand Marais was originally a small logging town lumber town. My grandfather had arrived there to work on the boats in lumbermills. I was born there way back in the Depression. It was common for people from Grand Marais. We starved out fairly early. In 1940, we moved to Trenary so I grew up on a farm near Trenary, and spent most of my childhood there. I moved about the second grade.

Lee: And your grandfather was from.....?

AA: All my grandparents came from Finland.

Lee: Was that true of most of the people in Trenary?

AA: Well, in both Gran Marais and Trenary there was significant Finnish population. Probably actually Trenary had a larger Finnish population, but there were enclaves of Finns in both areas.

Lee: What kind of school system did you grow up in?

AA: Well, I started in Gran Marais and in fact I was part of the class of "51" graduated in 51. I started with that class and a cousin graduated with that class. Her father, my uncle, moved back to Grand Marais as a member of the coast guard. And she ended up graduating with the same class I had started with. So it's kind of a coincidence that we weren't there for the middle. But, one of us for each end of it. But, I moved to Trenary in 1951, and finished up at Trenary High School which presently doesn't exist. It was combined with Eden, Rock River Township to form Superior Central. So now I guess my old school would be at Superior Central. But, the building I attended is still standing in Trenary.

Lee: Was there anything that you wanted to add about your Finnish heritage?

AA: Well, I grew up initially in the depression. My parents lived with my grandparents on a farm. They were farming together and I learned to speak Finnish before I learned to speak English, and in fact I spoke primarily Finnish until we moved to town in Grand Marais. And then of course playing with the other children in the area I quickly became English. But my parents actually always spoke English at home. It was my grandparents. When my grandparents were on the scene we spoke Finnish. I spoke Finnish quite well until we moved away from my grandparents. We were in

Grand Marais we moved to Trenary about 1940.

Lee: So you were pretty much bilingual.

AA: Yeah, I was really bilingual then. And I still understand Finnish fairly well, and speak it a little. But i'm not very confident anymore.

Lee: after you graduated high school where did you go from there?

AA: Well, I went down to Milwaukee somewhat after graduation and worked for Allis-Chambers, learned to operate a turn lathe. Then I started getting letters from the local draft board inquiring about my condition and whatever. Finally it appeared I was going to be drafted. So I went home and spent the summer on the farm helping make hay and playing baseball and similar things. By fall I hadn't been drafted so I ended up taking a job in a saw mill. With one of the fellows on the ball team. Our pitcher owned a saw mill and another ball player and I went to work for him and about half way through the winter I received a letter from the president of the United States, stating that my friends and neighbors had selected me to join the US Army.

Lee: The Army?

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Lee: How long did you spend with the Army?

AA: I was actually only in 21 months. I got an early out. I was drafted during the Korean War. And as I completed basic training the Korean War ended and there was a very large group of very pleased people in our basic training unit. Very happy about that. As a result the military began to cut back, I spent 21 months in the service and that was a good career. I got to see a good part of the country and they treated me pretty well. I fact I left as a Sergeant so in terms of progress and so on it was quite good. Having the GI Bill I felt it was best to get out of the military and go to school. So that's what I did. That's why I arrived at Northern. Got out of the Army during the winter of 1955. I was in the army from March of '53 to January of '55. So in the fall of '55 I started school at Northern, with my GI Bill.

Lee: What were the school conditions like when you were here?

AA: At Northern? Well, when I started it was a pretty small institution. I think we had 500 and some students. Dr. Tape was the president, and the football lost every game. It was not a great year for the football team. But then things began to change. Veterans began to come in and the student population increased fairly rapidly. President tape retired and President Harden came in and he brought in a right-to-try policy, a growth policy. It was a time when schools around the country were

growing anyway. So we began to grow. I think the next year the football team didn't lose a game. I think they might have had one tie. So it was quite a turn around all the way around. Then after President Harden arrived-- it might have been a little later when he arrived-- the institution began to grow.

Lee: What was the name of the institution?

AA: It was Northern Michigan College when I first arrived. Northern College when I first arrived. Northern Michigan College of Education. I received a bachelor degree with a major in sociology and minors in history and economics. I graduated under two curriculums. The social work curriculum and the education curriculum. So with that background, I had options as to going into teaching or social work. I took a number of social work interviews, tests, and had some offers of jobs, but then I was offered a job as a teacher in Escanaba. And I grew up in Trenary. Escanaba was down the line, and it was a town I was very familiar with and it seemed like a nice place to live. So I took the Escanaba job, in the Upper Peninsula where I wanted to stay.

Lee: What was the student life like while you were here?

AA: Well, I was a veteran so I was really older than the average student. I did actually end up joining a fraternity, but it was primarily several of us older fellows. We found a very convenient place to live. We got our room and evening meals and breakfast there as a part of the deal. So it was good living and a convenient situation. So really wasn't a typical fraternity type. I ended up having to join if I was going to keep living there. We lived there a year or two before we joined. They said you'll either have to join or leave so we ended up joining the fraternity which is fine.

Lee: Was there a name to that fraternity?

AA: Zeta Alma Con Roe I think it's a Delta Sigs but as I've said I was an older student, not part of that culture.

Lee: So you did take the job in Escanaba.

AA: Yes, I taught in Escanaba five years, teaching social studies, sociology, American history, and finally I got an economics course put into the curriculum. While I was in Escanaba, I picked up a masters degree in teaching from Northern. Summers, evenings and whatever.

Lee: What kinds of things do you like to do? Hobbies?

AA: I grew up on a farm so things out doors. We hunted and we still hunt at the farm. We were down there Sunday making a drive when, in fact, we got a buck. I never got it but we got a buck on the drive. So I always hunted and fished. Through most of my

youth to a pretty old age, I played baseball, hardball and later on fast pitch softball. I coached little leaguer Babe Ruth American Legion.

Lee: Did you play football while you were here?

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Lee: Do you notice any changes in courses from when you were in school to how they are now? As far as set up or student teacher relationships?

AA: The rapid growth was really under the Harden years. Educational institutions all over were growing and when the baby boom population began to move to college age, we had tremendous pressure on institutions so we had terrific growth. But then the baby boomers passed the college age period, institutions were shrinking. I think that Dr. Jamrich presided over this period of change quite well. I think that he protected the institution, its programs, and so on. And most of us feel that he got us through in very good shape. I've been a member of the negotiating committee for the union. I was on the first negotiating committee when the union was established here. I suppose that we could touch on that. The McCellan affair was part of the background for the faculty starting a union. That certainly was not a major issue that helped to divide the population a bit, I think. The institution was changing. We were just a different institution. By the time we got to the middle of Jamrich's tenure, we were greatly changed from when I came here as a student. When I started here in 1955 as a student, it was Northern Michigan College of Education. Then somewhere along the way we dropped "of education." So it was Northern Michigan College, and eventually we became a university. Very dramatic changes, in terms of size and structure of the institution. During the Jamrich years we had some ups and downs, but as I said, most of us felt animosity toward any of the leaders that we've had. The presidents, I think, they did

different things, accomplished different things. I think that in the long haul, things worked out quite well.

Lee: Was there anything else you wanted to add?

AA: I suppose I could say something about the union. In fact, I mentioned Dr. McCellan, he was certainly a factor in the formation of a union. The McCellan incident was background to that but the economy was changing. Educational salaries over the years had lagged behind salaries in some other sectors of the economy. Faculty members and all kinds of institutions were asking "What can we do to get our fair slice of the pie? A bigger slice of the pie?" The public schools in Michigan had been organized and so its kind of natural that the faculty at Northern would think of forming a union as a way of trying to ensure that faculty received their fair share. The formation of the union, Dr. McCellan, and Dr. Jim Greene of the philosophy department were major pioneers. Dr. Saari in the history department was one of the early negotiators. McCellan was the chief negotiator in our first contract, and I was one of the members of the team. For some reason he was gone. So Dr. Saari served and finished up the term as chief negotiator. That first contract was certainly crucial in establishing the parameters under which we've operated ever since. We've negotiated I don't know how many contracts since. We've had a number of negotiating teams with Jim Greene and Neil Carlson and others as chief negotiator. Throughout the years the process has become moderated of institutionalized. People understand their roles. I think from the faculty stand point collective bargaining has been very successful. I'm not sure how it changed the institution because as we went to a university we had a faculty senate. Probably the union has ensured certain kinds or rights that might not have been so secure had we not had the union. And certainly in terms of compensation I think it's been a factor. Seeing the level of compensation in faculty in growing and incomes were growing. Some of that would have occurred anyway, alternatives being fully considered. So he was meeting with some of the neighbors of the community and the administration felt that he was being loyal to the administration. I'm not sure how it exactly started, but in effect he was terminated. But terminating a faculty member in a university is typically a fairly long drawn out process. The process was started, president Harden left, president Johnson came in as an interim president and was stuck with the issue. Suddenly he's brought into it, he's not really part of it but has to deal with it. It became a major event. The argument from one side was that McClellan was being deprived his civil rights and freedom of speech to meet with people, talk and so on. This is a basic American right as well as a right that university people would identify with. The freedom of speech and thought and so on, what else is a university but an institution that lives on that activity and is devoted to that kind of activity? So this tremendous conflict developed segments of the university faculty and the administration there were faculty members on both sides

Retype

Grand Morray should be Grand Marais.

Lee: My name is Michelle Lee, and I'm conducting an interview today with Prof. Arnold Aho, in Marquette, MI. He is a Prof. of economics at nm. The date is November 22, 1994.

Prof. Aho can you tell us where you were born and what year?

Aho: Well, I was born in Grand ^{Marais} Morray, MI one of the small number of people I suppose still around, born in grand morray back way back in the middle of the Depression in 1933. Grand Morray was originally a small logging town lumber town. My grandfather had arrived there to work on the boats in lumbermills. I was born there way back in the depression. It was common for people from Grand Morray. We starved out fairly early. In 1940, we moved to Trenary so I grew up on a farm near Trenary, and spent most of my childhood there. I moved about the second grade.

Lee: And your grandfather was from ...?

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Lee: Was that true of most of the people in Trenary?

Aho: Well, in both Grand Morray and Trenary there was significant Finnish population. Probably actually Trenary had a larger Finnish population, but there were enclaves of Finns in both areas.

Lee: What kind of school system did you grow up in?

Aho: Well, I started in Grand Morray and in fact I was part of the class of "51" graduated in 51. I started with that class and a cousin graduated with that class. Her father, my uncle, moved back to Grand Morray as a member of the coast guard. And she ended up graduating with the same class I had started with. So it's kind of a coincidence that we weren't there for the middle. But, one of us for each end of it. But, I moved to Trenary in 1951, and finished up at Trenary high school which presently doesn't exist. It was combined with Ebon^{ed} Rock River Township to form Superior Central. So now I guess my old school would be at Superior Central. But, the building I attended is still standing in Trenary.

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Lee: How long did you spend with the Army?

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Lee: So there was a lot of controversy between faculty and the administration?

Aho: Oh, yes. Some of the faculty marched. One of the old stories is that a fellow from the speech department was leading a march down around where the University Center is located. The president's house was located across from the University Center where the hospital parking lot is now located. If I understand it right our friend from the speech department fired a rock through the president's front window. That's one of the stories, whether that actually happened, that was certainly one of the stories we had here. There were marches and signs and it was certainly a significant event in the history of the institution.

Lee: Did the feelings change after president Harden left?

Aho: Well that made it certainly easier for compromises and for tempers to cool. Obviously he was identified very strongly on one side of it, and when he retired president Johnson came in. Jamrich was the next president I think. Part of Jamrich's coming in was that he was putting this thing to rest. He didn't want to come into a community with this hostile environment and this significant issue hanging out front. The thing was put to rest. I think that most of the faculty and students today don't even know of the McCullen affair. But to those of us who have been here a lot of years it was certainly a significant event. It was a very significant event in the history of the institution.

Lee: What were the faculties feelings toward Jamrich?

Aho: Towards McCullen even. We always have divisions in an institution of this type and different subcommunities and points of view. I think that an awful lot of the community was pleased that Jamrich had come in and the McCullen affair was put to rest. HE presided over a period of considerable stability in the community.

Olson Library. I had a number of classes in Olson 1 . Enrollment was determined by the number of seats.

Lee: You were teaching Economics then?

Aho: That was Economics then in those courses. I did teach sociology 101 and rural sociology for several years after I came here. When the department split I was in both departments for one year. In an institution like this you can't effectively be in two departments you don't have any status in either one as a result. I decided to stay in economics, and that's when I decided to go back to school to get another degree in economics.

Lee: Any particular feelings when they did tear down Longyear or any of the other buildings?

Aho: You always have some nostalgia. I felt kind of bad when Olson was torn down because that was one of the newest buildings we had. It was the Olson Library and there was audio visual facilities and a 200 seat auditorium type facility. Apparently the building had been built on unstable ground. I think the foundations proved to be inadequate and the building was structurally unsound. I think that was a factor and of course the chance of building a new building in the area. Peter White was the building it was attached to and then there was Kaye Hall and then Longyear. Around the corner Pierce . Pierce and Longyear were saved for a good number of years. We tore down Kaye Hall. That was if you think of the buildings the hardest one to lose, Kaye Hall, which was the original building. Like you say how bad did I feel? Well, ambivalent because the building was really obsolete and the cost of rehabilitating it so it would have been usable really effective building would have been awesome. The only benefit would have been maintaining the front for nostalgia purposes. But in terms of a facility it would have either been awesomely expensive to make it an effective building or otherwise it would have been inadequate. So I had to agree that it made sense to tear the buildings down. And of course now we have the Cohodas building which serves a number of functions. It's quite an effective building. It's a good use of that space. It was sad to see it go, but time goes on. I had offices and taught quite a few classes at Longyear. In some ways it was sad to see it go, but again it was really old and difficult to restore. The idea of saving some stone and rebuilding is nice and I hope we can do something with that but that was probably from the economic stand point the best thing to do. There were a few people willing to put up some money but I don't think that the tax payers of the state of MI were very eager to put up the money. It probably wouldn't have been a very good use of our money. What is the price of nostalgia? You miss it but once it's gone it's gone. But still putting the money into a new building probably makes sense. In the case up here that really was an obsolete building and there was nothing really favoring its preservation. A parking lot is a better use of that building.

Lee: Do You recall any changes that occurred in the 1960's?

Aho: Well, we did have some serious events here once the most famous event from the standpoint of history. What is often referred to as the McClullen affair. Professor McClullen was a member of the history department and a community activist. And a very socially concienious person. He was concerned that Northern was expanding rapidly over the surrounding community and that people were maybe being squeezed out of there homes too rapidly without adequate compensation and without

Lee: Even with career placement.

Aho: He followed up on where the jobs were and wrote letters for you and so on. I'm pleased to have been a student of Dr. Peirman's. The other people who had him used to growl about him sometimes. He was kind of fierce sometimes but, we learned a lot.

Lee: When you were in Escanaba did you commute back and forth?

Aho: No I lived in Escanaba I taught there for 5 yrs. at the high school.

Lee: But you got your masters while teaching.

Aho: I spent summers at Northern and I commuted from there. One summer we lived in Trenary in a cabin. It was convenient I was playing ball there and coming to school during the week. I was helping to coach some little league in the evenings. It was convenient in terms of getting back to Northern for classes during the day in summer. So I went three or four summers and took extension courses during the years offered in Escanaba. In fact I commuted back to Escanaba for a Saturday course or two as well. So it was time of driving but the upper peninsula is a nice place to drive.

Lee: After you left Escanaba ...

Jean Peirman.

Aho: The reason I left Escanaba was Dr. Peirman contacted me once about a job possibility at Northern and then Peirman took a job at Florida State University. ^{c. 1964} I never heard anymore of it. I was contacted by the new department head about a position and then I left Escanaba and joined the department here. At that time the department was economics and sociology it was a combined department. Because of my background I was really contacted to teach sociology. But it was the department of Economics and Sociology and I got into teaching some of the Economic courses. As a result I said that I'd just as soon do some of that too. Then the department split as the institution was growing so it became a separate economics department and sociology department. I had to make a decision as to which way to go and I decided to go with the Economics people. As a result of that I went back to graduates school and picked up another masters degree in economics, straight economics at Lehigh University in Bethlehem Penn. I took a leave of absence to complete that.

Lee: When you had come to Northern to teach who was the president at that time?

Aho: I think that Dr. Harden was already the president. I'm kind of confused as to what year Dr. Tape retired and Dr. Harden took over. This was a period of rapid growth. That's why I happened to be hired at that time. They were suddenly having a rapidly expanding population. Northern continued to grow for a good many years after I came here.

Lee: So you were here for all of the expansion of the buildings?

Aho: Right. Most of the buildings we have here were built during the years that I've been here. One of the early ones was the Hedgecock Field House. When I came here I was teaching in Pierce which is gone, Longyear which is gone and the basement of Olson Library which is gone. We used to have 200 students in a class in the basement of

Aho: Classes were a little smaller in that era though they fluctuated and probably not as much change as you might expect. I think that probably the level of teaching is better today than it was then. The faculty was spread pretty thin and often had to do a lot of preparations. So I think that the level of instruction has improved over the years and its primarily because the people that we had were dedicated people and some of them were great lecturers or great teachers. They were pretty strapped in terms of time. They had a lot of preparations and were spread pretty thin. You can't do quite the same job you can if you have enough time to devote to it. You're spread too thin. Too many preparations. It's more difficult.

Lee: What was the building structure like of campus while you were a student?

Aho: We only had a couple of buildings. We had a cafeteria on the other side. I actually lived in Vet Ville for a couple of years as a student. Until VetVille was hauled away. VetVille was a set Quanta huts. That were located where the university center is now located. I had a middle apartment. Which is really about a room and a half.

Lee: Can you describe what they were like?

Aho: Yeah, there was a main room that you went into which had to serve as a living room and a bedroom. So you had a hide-a-bed or a couch that broke into a bed. There was a little kitchen on one side of it and a little bathroom closet area on the other side of it. It was really a one room apartment with a kitchenette. Which was convenient a very neat little kitchen area and a bathroom closet area. We had an oil heater. We had a middle apartment so we had two warm walls. So we didn't take much heat. I think my rent was \$18 a month. It was some of the best living I ever had. I had the GI bill and a little venison. The neighbors were poor as well. Everybody wasn't motivated equally some people. Some spent more time working and trying to make money, but I was fairly serious as a student. I never missed classes and did all my papers I kept at it.

Lee: Were there a lot more papers to write because of the heavy course loads?

Aho: There might have been. Probably a little bit more than the average student would write today. But again it depends on the curriculum and the particular group of instructors you have. Doctor Peirman was my advisor and I had a lot of courses from Dr. Peirman. He was pretty ferocious if that's the word. In the first course you outline the text book. You started outlining chapter one and turned it in on regular basis. after your first courses there was a term paper attached to every course. From then on I was writing a term paper for every course. So in terms of writing, and in the program I was in, there was a lot of writing. particularly because of Dr. Peirman who taught a lot of courses and directed the program. He was a very influential person on a lot of us. He had a great impact on an awful lot of us. He was a really concerned faculty member, who made sure we were ready to take the exams like social work. I took the exam and did very well on the social work exam because of the courses Dr. Peirman taught. He made sure that we were well prepared and followed us. He kept tract of job opportunities and so on. He was really a very positive influence in terms of my education.