

SOUTHERN MINNESOTA HISTORICAL CENTER

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

EMMA WIECKING

Interviewed

by

Dennis Lavery

Spring, 1977

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Emma Wiecking was born in Mankato on August 14, 1894, the daughter of Hermann Wiecking (Accession #1246) and Emma Kerndt. She is the third child of five. Anna Wiecking (S116) was her older sister.

Emma attended the State Normal School at Mankato, the University of Minnesota and the Library School of the New York Public Library, receiving her masters degree from Columbia University. She worked in the library of Mankato State Teachers College for 37 years, retiring in 1959.

This is a tape recording made in the Spring of 1977. The narrator is Emma Wiecking. The interviewer is Dennis Lavery of Mankato State University, Development Office.

LAVERY: Okay.

WIECKING: This is warm. Warm in here.

LAVERY: It is warm isn't it. Nice day though. Can't argue about that.

WIECKING: Yes, yes. I noticed when the sun came in on the stairs, it was just as warm to the touch. It felt good.

LAVERY: Alright now, what I'd like to do is just get some basic statistics first. As far as--you were born in Mankato?

WIECKING: Yes.

LAVERY: And what year?

WIECKING: Do you have to know that?

LAVERY: (laughter) No, I don't. No.

WIECKING: Well it's 1894.

LAVERY: 18--1894.

WIECKING: August 14.

LAVERY: Okay, and how many children were in your family?

WIECKING: Five.

LAVERY: Five children. All girls, boys?

WIECKING: No, three girls and two boys.

LAVERY: Three girls and two boys.

WIECKING: And the only one not living is my sister Anna, who was older

than I.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. Where did you fit in at those five?

WIECKING: I'm the third one.

LAVERY: The third one.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And my two brothers are younger.

LAVERY: What did your father do?

WIECKING: My father had a cigar--tobacco business down on Front Street.

And he sold on wholesale and retail. He had men working for him who made the cigars.

LAVERY: What was Mankato like when you were a child?

WIECKING: Well, wooden sidewalks.

LAVERY: Wooden sidewalks.

WIECKING: Oh yes. All around and there were lots of vacant lots, all these over here were vacant. And we played around on those and the slough out here. You probably don't know that.

LAVERY: I know where it is.

WIECKING: Yes. You can almost see it from your house.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: That was not built up.

LAVERY: What kind--do you know what the population was at that time?

WIECKING: Well we always said around ten thousand.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm, do you think it was that big?

WIECKING: Well, in later years. I was thinking of what it was at then, I don't know. And I wouldn't.

LAVERY: What--tell me about some, some of the early days at the University when you were a student there. Relative to oh, the faculty or some kind of characters or--now what did you major in the University?

WIECKING: I majored in--you see, I had two years here at the old Normal School and they gave us credit. So then I took two--I took three years because I was getting ready for Library School.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I majored in Education and English.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. And where did you go from there?

WIECKING: From there I went to the Library School of the New York Public Library. Which was. . .

LAVERY: Was that. . .

WIECKING: Down on Forty Second Street, do you know?

LAVERY: Sure, I know where New York, yes.

WIECKING: And they couldn't grant degrees so later on they moved up to Columbia.

LAVERY: Columbia.

WIECKING: And that's where I got my masters.

LAVERY: How did you feel, a girl from Mankato, going all the way to New York?

WIECKING: Well, I tell you, as a matter of fact--is this being recorded?

LAVERY: Yup.

WIECKING: Oh. As a matter of fact, our whole family went. That is, my mother and Anna and my two brothers and I went and had an apartment.

LAVERY: The whole family lived there?

WIECKING: The whole family. By that time my sister was married, the one I want you to meet later on.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And we each went to a different school. (laughter)

LAVERY: Oh is that right?

WIECKING: I went to the New York Public Library School, and my brothers and Anna went to Columbia.

LAVERY: Now why did your family do that?

WIECKING: Well, we just thought it was a nice vacation. Nice change. And I was going to school and Anna wanted to take more work and my--one of my brothers was just ready for freshman in college, and the other brother had had one year. So it just fitted in. We had a wonderful time.

LAVERY: How long was that?

WIECKING: A whole year.

LAVERY: One whole year.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And we had an apartment across from Grant's tomb. (laughter)

LAVERY: How does your father run his business?

WIECKING: My father was gone by that time.

LAVERY: Oh, your father was gone by that time, I see.

WIECKING: He died in--14. . .

LAVERY: I see, and what year was this?

WIECKING: This was 19--let's see, 1920-21.

LAVERY: 1920-1921. Okay, lets. . . (Break in tape) Okay, when--did you always want to come back to Mankato and work in the library here?

WIECKING: Well, the opportunity came up.

LAVERY: How did it come up?

WIECKING: Because--between the time when I--I'm going to go back a little bit. After I had my two years here, I taught a year. And then I decided that I really wanted to do something else. And I had a chance to work in the new--in the Public Library with a friend of mine was working down there.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I enjoyed it so much I decided to go into library work.

LAVERY: Oh great.

WIECKING: And I went on in Minnesota to get my degree.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And to get ready for--I had to take entrance exams in those days. And I felt I needed to get up on things so I took three years at the "U" and then I took the examinations for Library School and, in Minneapolis, and I made it.

LAVERY: Great. When you came to Mankato as far--to join the library, do you remember what your salary was?

WIECKING: Not much. Then after New York, I went back a year to be what they called a revisor in the library school. I corrected cards and kind of helped around.

LAVERY: I see.

WIECKING: And then the opportunity came to come here.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: That was the--I had been hired just before the fire and when I heard about the fire, I thought, well there goes my job, but of course, it didn't. And that's when I came. The summer of '22.

LAVERY: Summer of '22.

WIECKING: That's--I mean, I was--that just happened to be open, you see.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: But there was only one librarian, head librarian, and I was the assistant.

LAVERY: What--but you don't remember what they paid you.

WIECKING: I can't remember. And I don't have any record, I don't think.

LAVERY: And you came in 1922.

WIECKING: Yes, in the summer.

LAVERY: And you retired in 1969 was it?

WIECKING: '59.

LAVERY: '59-1959; so you were there. . .

WIECKING: Thirty-seven years.

LAVERY: Thirty-seven years.

WIECKING: And I had one year off to go to get my masters.

LAVERY: In those. . .

WIECKING: And when I first came back, the--after the fire, of course, they were rebuilding. And they had a room in the basement of the Public Library where we were.

LAVERY: I see.

WIECKING: Then we moved up to the old cafeteria, in the main building while they were building.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And they went up to--and I was in there. And I was in the Lincoln Library just one year. Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Then you were in actually in three different libraries? Or two? Three different. The one in the basement, the one in the cafeteria, and the one. . .

WIECKING: And the one on the second floor.

LAVERY: Where the book store is.

WIECKING: Where the book store is.

LAVERY: Right.

WIECKING: And then one year in Lincoln.

LAVERY: In the Lincoln.

WIECKING: Four different locations.

LAVERY: Four different libraries.

WIECKING: Yes. Of course, the one on the hill wasn't built at that time--
I mean. . .

LAVERY: What was--in 1922, it was called the Normal School then?

WIECKING: Yes. Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: What was campus life like in 1922?

WIECKING: Well, there was the--that was after the fire.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And there was the--the new building went up and, of course, the
old training school was there. And there was nothing across the street.
The old high school was over there.

LAVERY: Oh, really?

WIECKING: Where the arts building is.

LAVERY: Right.

WIECKING: And that burned down too.

LAVERY: Did that go with the library? Or with Old Main?

WIECKING: No that. . .

LAVERY: That was separately.

WIECKING: That was Mankato High.

LAVERY: Oh, I see.

WIECKING: Before they had West and East.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. You--what year was that?

WIECKING: '40 I think.

LAVERY: 1940.

WIECKING: I think so. I'm not quite. . . .

LAVERY: How large was the faculty when you started? Do you know?

WIECKING: Well, not very large.

LAVERY: Was there thirty, forty people?

WIECKING: Oh I suppose. Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Do you. . .

WIECKING: I--we knew everybody, you know, and. . .

LAVERY: Were most of the people that were on the faculty people from Mankato?

WIECKING: Well, all around.

LAVERY: All around.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. We had a girl who taught music and lived with us for a while. Came from the state of Maine.

LAVERY: No kidding.

WIECKING: Adelaide Linnell.

LAVERY: Hmmm.

WIECKING: And we had an English teacher from Cape Cod.

LAVERY: Who was the president then?

WIECKING: The first president was Charles H. Cooper.

LAVERY: Charles Cooper.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And he was a. . .

LAVERY: Was he here?

WIECKING: Mighty fine man. Everybody loved him.

LAVERY: Did they?

WIECKING: And he--of course, it was a very different situation from now.

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: I mean. . .

LAVERY: Right.

WIECKING: Naturally. They were very--he was a Dartmouth man I think.

And he was a scholar.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And rather than an administrator you know.

LAVERY: Right.

WIECKING: He was very fine.

LAVERY: What was some of the problems in the University at that time? Are there any problems that are similar today that you had back then in 1922? Like such as the faculty wanting things from the students. Let's put it--are students the same now as they were in 1922?

WIECKING: Oh I think. No, I don't think so.

LAVERY: What's different?

WIECKING: I think they were more docile. I think. (laughter) I mean they--we didn't have anything like the uprising we had here.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I think they were--I can't say as of today, but I mean when I was still there. I think they were willing to abide by the teachers, what they wanted and all. Although there was--there were always some who wanted to do different things.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I remember some girls that were campused because they went to a public dance.

LAVERY: (laughter) Things have changed.

WIECKING: Yes.

LAVERY: And were you allowed to smoke on campus?

WIECKING: Well, they didn't smoke.

LAVERY: Oh, they didn't smoke.

WIECKING: The girls didn't think of it.

LAVERY: Oh.

WIECKING: But the boys. . .

LAVERY: Well, in that light, what do you think of the feminine awareness today? The new--the, about women and the women's liberation and things?

WIECKING: I'm not very crazy about it. Maybe I shouldn't be quoted on that. I never felt that I was put upon in any way.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I think--I don't know, I think they are going too far. I'm not saying I'm not for the bill that. . .

LAVERY: Equal rights?

WIECKING: But I had a few misgivings too.

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: Maybe I'm just plain old-fashioned. I probably am.

LAVERY: Are you--do you have contact or are you still friends with some of the people that you worked with through those years?

WIECKING: Oh yes. Do you know John Covert?

LAVERY: No I don't.

WIECKING: Well, he's in education faculty. He was a student and worked with me in the library as a student and he went on to get his doctors degree. And he--the reason I spoke of him was he just called me this morning to see how I was.

LAVERY: Really! Isn't it great.

WIECKING: And he is very, very friendly and we're good friends. And of course, Earl Wigley.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: He was a student at one time too.

LAVERY: Yah. Of yours? Not of yours.

WIECKING: Well, he was--you see--yes he was a student.

LAVERY: Hmmm.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Well--did--you and your sister both were employed here on the faculty.

WIECKING: Yes. And my sister was in education and taught various things, and in the field of education. And then she came here originally, to be into kindergarten. That was her field.

LAVERY: Right. And how many years was she on the faculty?

WIECKING: Oh dear, let's see now.

LAVERY: 1917 she came, was it?

WIECKING: I think so.

LAVERY: Yah. I think I read that in the paper.

WIECKING: Yah, I always have to think about what that was. And she retired before I did. A couple years before I did.

LAVERY: Okay. So that was in '56. So she was here forty years? Thirty-six. . .

WIECKING: I think so.

LAVERY: So between you--you've got over seventy-five years.

WIECKING: Yes, that's right.

LAVERY: Wow!

WIECKING: And what were we talking about just before that. . . ?

LAVERY: But the people you still see that were either students of yours. . .

WIECKING: Oh yes.

LAVERY: Or on the faculty or. . .

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. Let's see. Not too many. Maurice Nelson, of course, is gone.

LAVERY: What do you--as far--let me give you some, just some topics. . .

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Things I'd like to see you talk about. Now we've talked about students and we've talked about--what about politics. Who is--were the faculty and the students involved in politics as much then as they are now?

WIECKING: I don't think so.

LAVERY: No.

WIECKING: I don't remember anything about it to tell the honest truth.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. Who was president in 1922? I don't even remember.

WIECKING: I don't either. I'd have to look it up in the World Almanac.

LAVERY: Is that Woodrow Wilson? What about things like, let's say, the censorship of the book problems and the things. Did you have any books that you wouldn't take in the library during those years? Were there problems with some books like the pornography things we now have?

WIECKING: Well, it wasn't the way it is now. But once in a while I suppose there was something that we questioned.

LAVERY: Do you remember any specific books that were problems?

WIECKING: I don't. But in the library where the book store is, there was a little room off on this side that was a children's room.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I remember that the children from the training school came over and they were allowed to go in the main library and once in a while there'd be a youngster who'd go and get something that wasn't bad, but they weren't ready for, you know.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And we--but that wasn't. . .

LAVERY: What were the fines for over-due books?

WIECKING: Oh, two cents a day, I think.

LAVERY: Two cents a day.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Did you ever have people bring back books anonymously or send them?

WIECKING: Oh yes. We'd find them in various places or a bag of books some-
place and that--I think that thievery, or what ever you want to call it,
was always there.

LAVERY: Did anybody ever send a book back five years later and said that
I meant to give this back to you, but. . .

WIECKING: Oh yes, we've had that too.

LAVERY: Is that right?

WIECKING: Yes. And the landlady would call up and say, "So and so isn't
here anymore, and there is a whole batch of books for you."

LAVERY: I see.

WIECKING: And we'd see that we got them.

LAVERY: What--of all the years you spent in the library and all the years
you spent in education, what's your favorite book?

WIECKING: Oh dear.

LAVERY: Or author, or what do you like to read about?

WIECKING: I'm very fond of biography.

LAVERY: Biography.

WIECKING: And autobiography.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I'm very fond of a good novel. Fiction.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And historical fiction and. . .

LAVERY: What's the latest book you read?

WIECKING: Well, I was reading Hedrick Smith's Russians, have you seen that?

LIVERY: Yah, yah. Very good.

WIECKING: And I also just read this.

LIVERY: World of Our Fathers.

WIECKING: Yes.

LIVERY: Irving Howe.

WIECKING: I like that too. And oh, I like history too. I mean, I have-- I've been given a subscription to the American Heritage, you know that.

LIVERY: Oh yes.

WIECKING: And I enjoy that very much.

LIVERY: Very good. What do you like to watch on television?

WIECKING: We don't have a television.

LIVERY: You don't have a television.

WIECKING: I think we are the only ones in town.

LIVERY: I don't have one either.

WIECKING: Well good.

LIVERY: Yah, I threw mine out a long time ago.

WIECKING: Well no, we have a radio and we have a stereo and we have good records.

LIVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And. . .

LIVERY: Do you feel that you are missing anything?

WIECKING: Once in a while. There is something--I think well maybe we would have listened--looked.

LIVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: But I don't miss it. I know some people think we are just behind the times.

LIVERY: You certainly have a much freer life than if your not--you know,

you don't have to watch something at seven o'clock.

WIECKING: No, and I find when I talk to some people on the phone, that I'm interfering with their pleasure.

LAVERY: What are some of the things that you do now? What are some of your hobbies and things that you do now to interest yourself?

WIECKING: Well. . .

LAVERY: Besides reading.

WIECKING: Reading is one of my cheap hobbies and I do a lot of letter writing and keep up with my family and friends and I like to cook.

LAVERY: Cook? What's your favorite dish?

WIECKING: (laughter)

LAVERY: Well, what do you like to cook the best?

WIECKING: Well, I like to

LAVERY: Oh.

WIECKING: I bake rye bread now and then and, oh, bars and coffee cake and things like that. And we both--my sister and I, like to eat so that makes a difference.

LAVERY: If somebody was to ask you--let's say you went back to New York for a visit, and someone set you down like this, and asked you about what you had done, and you had said that you had worked at Mankato State University for a lot of years. And they've said that they didn't know anything about Mankato State. How would you describe either your experience there or what the University has, as far as your life is concerned? Now what are some of the things that when you think of Mankato State and your years there, that you would tell that you think depict the personality of the place?

WIECKING: Well, I always thought, especially in the old days, it was a

very friendly place. When the staff was small.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And everyone knew everyone else and we made very good friends. And they had graduates went all over. Had an excellent reputation.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I know when we went to New York, when people said, "Where were you from?" I said, "Mankato State." And they would say, "Now that's where Mr. Trafton was." Do you know about Trafton Hall?

LAVERY: Sure do. Yah.

WIECKING: The bird man, you know. He was one of our--my teachers.

LAVERY: Is that right?

WIECKING: And he had written quite a few books and everybody knew him. I mean in the--that field.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And he was well known. That was one thing I'll always remember.

LAVERY: What about--what kind of satisfactions did you get personally from your professional experience there? You dealt with students and faculty alike. The library itself was kind of the hub of what was going on.

WIECKING: That's what they always said. I always laugh because sometimes when the money was short, you wouldn't know it. (laughter) But yes. . .

LAVERY: They had money problems then too. Huh?

WIECKING: Yes, mm-hmm.

LAVERY: They would cut back on the books or. . . ?

WIECKING: Yes, mm-hmm.

LAVERY: I see.

WIECKING: And let's see, what was the other point I was going to make? I can't remember. I had something there. Maybe I'll think of it later.

What was the other thing you asked just now?

LAVERY: Well, it was about the--well the cutting back on money was the one thing, but the. . .

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: As far as, the people you dealt with, the students and the faculty alike. Did you--let's say, did you ever throw a faculty member out of the library?

WIECKING: Did I ever throw one out?

LAVERY: For making noise or did you ever throw anybody out of the library?

WIECKING: Oh yes.

LAVERY: You did?

WIECKING: Well, we tried to keep it quiet. And that was always a bone of contention. And the students--just the way--I suppose these days they can talk all they want to. in the library, I don't know, but we tried--we thought it was a place to study.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And that's one of the things we've always had--see some of the former students we had fun about, you know, and. . .

LAVERY: What kind--did you ever go around shushing people? Was that what they. . . ?

WIECKING: Well, we took that on ourselves, the librarians do go around to the tables and invite them to be quiet.

LAVERY: I like that, invite them to be quiet.

WIECKING: Yes, it didn't always work and we had to ask people to go. It was very unpleasant, but as I said, we thought it was our duty to keep the place so people could study.

LAVERY: Right. How many different presidents did the University have while

you were there?

WIECKING: Well, President Cooper, and by the way, he has two daughters still living out in Charlotte, North Carolina. One of them is way over ninety, Helen. And she had taught French in college. And Margaret had taught in the primary department she had left--her other patients--she wasn't here always.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And, but I still correspond with Margaret.

LAVERY: Oh really?

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Beautiful.

WIECKING: But Helen is now--they both in a home. And Helen is not able to communicate. She is failing. Well, President Cooper and President McElroy and President Crawford.

LAVERY: Crawford.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Which--were they all academicians? Were they all academic people with high degrees? As. . .

WIECKING: Oh, Major Cooper didn't have a doctors.

LAVERY: I see.

WIECKING: He had a masters I think, but he was a scholar. Very interested in the library. Very fine man to work for.

LAVERY: Good. Tell me about some of the--when I read the article you and your sister wrote about some of the things like, oh, the type of dress that you had to maintain, like the middy blouses.

WIECKING: Well, up in the. . .

LAVERY: People don't dress like they do today I take it.

WIECKING: No. One of the teachers in the junior high department wouldn't let a student teacher come in if she had a middy blouse on. They thought it was indecent.

LAVERY: Wow!

WIECKING: And of course, the--everyone wore skirts.

LAVERY: Right.

WIECKING: And. . .

LAVERY: As opposed to today, nobody wears a skirt.

WIECKING: No. And the shorts first came out, we tried, the Dean of Women was Miss Bruce, who's--and we tried to keep shorts out of the. . .

LAVERY: Did it work?

WIECKING: No. Of course, we weren't successful.

LAVERY: Right. What kind of--you were telling about before when the University was small and everybody knew everybody else. Was it sort of like a family atmosphere then?

WIECKING: Yes. And one of the nicest things they did was to have a big--they call it the George Washington Party--where everybody dressed in colonial costumes. Students and staff and they always had it in the library. We moved all the tables and chairs out against the wall.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And they could dance there and put on a little play or what ever they wanted. And I can still see President Cooper and his wife as George and Martha, walking down. It was really awfully nice. And when it got to be some what larger, they had it down in the armory, way down.

LAVERY: And every year they would do that?

WIECKING: Yes, they did that.

LAVERY: And that was faculty and the staff and the students.

WIECKING: Yes, and it was traditional. I mean, and they. . .

LAVERY: What are some of the other traditions that you can remember?

WIECKING: I was going to say about that, they taught them to dance the minuet.

LAVERY: Is that right?

WIECKING: In the gym classes.

LAVERY: Oh.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And it was nice.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. What are some other things that they would do?

WIECKING: Well, that was. . .

LAVERY: Did they have homecoming in those years?

WIECKING: Oh yes.

LAVERY: Did they?

WIECKING: Yup. I forgotten what year that started, but Jane Ann Roberts who was on the physical ed staff, was the first homecoming queen, I think.

LAVERY: No kidding. Oh boy.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And they had college picnics. They'd go out to Sibley Park or where ever they wanted to go and have it catered, and. . .

LAVERY: Wow!

WIECKING: And. . .

LAVERY: That's beautiful.

WIECKING: And then the staff used to have wonderful parties. Just the staff by themselves. Big dinners at Daniel Buck Hall, which is, you know, where Cooper Hall is.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: Yah. Well, it's now called Cooper, but the larger building that you see first from Searing.

LAVERY: Right.

WIECKING: It was called Daniel Buck.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And they had a very lovely dining room and--we had a wonderful staff dinners put on by the manager of the dorms. I don't mean that the--she was the--yes, she was, too, the manager of the dorm. And let's see, picnics and staff parties, and there was a lot of walking done. And I remember one time we had a picnic up at Highland Park, which is up on the hill.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And there were very few people who had cars. So they can't afford--had a party for the people who had cars or the fords. And they hired horses and some kind of a--we called them buggies, but I don't know what the real name for them is. Carriages. And invited them to ride up the hill and up to the picnic.

LAVERY: Oh.

WIECKING: That was fun. I mean, things like that that were much simpler than people do now.

LAVERY: What--now, you've been retired from there--from the job since 1959.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Can you--either, since then or while you were there, can you think of things that you feel were unique about Mankato? Or were things that make it a great place to be? Every University thinks it's special in some way.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: In your experience, what are the things that were special about Mankato--that make it--that distinguish it from other University or some

other school?

WIECKING: Well, I always thought it had a very friendly atmosphere. That the staff was a good staff. I'm thinking of the early days now.

LAVERY: Yes.

WIECKING: And I think it's continued to be, although now it's so large I wouldn't know. And I don't believe now that people know each other in other departments as well as we--we knew everybody you know.

LAVERY: That's true. Do you hear from many of your past students? Do you keep in contact?

WIECKING: Some. Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Of those people, and you mentioned a couple already, how many are still at the University? Do you remember some of the other people that are at the University that were students?

WIECKING: Well, Jane Ann Roberts was. And John Covert and I think there are some more.

LAVERY: That's--what was it like the last day you were there? Talk to me about your last day at the University.

WIECKING: Oh, well, getting ready to move out. Packing up and of course, they had a retirement dinner and--for those who were going. And my--the last day I was over in the Lincoln and packing up and getting my things out.

LAVERY: How did you feel?

WIECKING: Well, I--I was--I don't know how to express it exactly. Things were getting a little complicated. I mean, they--things were bigger, but not necessarily better.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I felt it was time that I was ready to go.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. Was that--how soon after that was the new one built?

The new library?

WIECKING: How soon?

LAVERY: Yah, when was the new library built?

WIECKING: Well, I can't tell you the exact year.

LAVERY: In '59 were you still on the Dewey Decimal System?

WIECKING: Oh yes.

LAVERY: When did they go to--the Library of Congress was later than that, I guess.

WIECKING: Yes, they've gone into that I think.

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: Haven't they?

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: Yes. I never approved of that.

LAVERY: Why?

WIECKING: Well, I thought it was more difficult. Now, maybe I just didn't know enough about it, but. . .

LAVERY: I agree with you. I'd much prefer the Dewey Decimal System.

WIECKING: And you know, the most of the students who came were brought up on the Dewey Decimal. So it wasn't a transition for them.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And I don't know it is now.

LAVERY: In your years here, can you remember any luminaries or dignitaries that came on campus that you saw?

WIECKING: Let's see, President Taft came to town.

LAVERY: President Taft did?

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And I couldn't tell you what year that was either.

LAVERY: That's all right, we can figure that one out.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm. And let's see. Who did we have? Oh, we did have--I believe they had Roland Hayes sing.

LIVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: They had a nice concert chorus. And I'm quite sure he was there. And I can't seem to think who they were. We had a nice department of-- drama department too, that put on nice plays.

LIVERY: Mm-hmm. What were some of the--yes, that's a good point. What were some of the social or extra curricular activities? You had drama. You said you played girls basketball.

WIECKING: Well, that's when I was a student.

LIVERY: Right.

WIECKING: They always had some girls basketball I think. And ah. . .

LIVERY: Did they have a football team then?

WIECKING: I've forgotten when they started, but they had a football team and basketball. And I used to always go to the basketball games that were in the old gym of the old training school building, you know which one that is.

LIVERY: Who was the big rival then? What team was your big rival at that time? Do you remember?

WIECKING: Mm-mmm.

LIVERY: Well, they would get excited with, like Augustana or. . .

WIECKING: No, I couldn't tell you that. Now if you interview Wig, he could tell you that.

LIVERY: Wig could tell me that.

WIECKING: Yes. That was his field. But we enjoyed--the going to games and the--and football, I never did much viewing of football.

LIVERY: I'm going to stop here for a second.

WIECKING: We had always had nice concerts too. I can't remember what

they were but. . .

LAVERY: Was John Philips Sousa ever in town?

WIECKING: I don't know. Not at the college I don't think.

LAVERY: No, you don't think so. Let me see.

WIECKING: You know in the old days when I was a student, we had a chapel. We had a lovely chapel that burned down in a fire, and we had to go to chapel. It was compulsory. And. . .

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: Of course, they did away with that after a while.

LAVERY: Yah. How often did you have to go?

WIECKING: Every day.

LAVERY: Every day?

WIECKING: I think I'm right about that.

LAVERY: Was it in the morning or in the afternoon or. . . ?

WIECKING: In the morning. And it was very nice. I think it was every day.

LAVERY: Well, we're a long way from that now aren't we?

WIECKING: Yes, aren't we. I should say. Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: I didn't realize that. How--back at that time, what did the presidents do back in 1930? Were they very close to the students at all? Or were they kind of removed from the students and just dealt with the faculty?

WIECKING: I suppose they were kind of removed.

(break in tape)

WIECKING: Cooper was a very, really a very fine man and I think the students saw him a little aloof.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: But I think they do most all presidents.

LAVERY: Yes they do.

WIECKING: Don't you--I mean. . . ?

LAVERY: Yes. Is it just because it's the title and the position rather than the person?

WIECKING: I think so.

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: I think there's something in that. Naturally you feel that you-- kind of in awe.

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: And I think it's nice, too.

LAVERY: Yah. Do you know Dr. Moore at all?

WIECKING: Yes, mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Fine man.

WIECKING: Yah.

LAVERY: If you had to do it all over again, would you do it the same way?

WIECKING: Going into the same kind work and all? I think so. Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Good. Now you're obviously satisfied with yourself.

WIECKING: Yes. I'm just--I always have been glad I went into library work. You see, I had some teaching along with it.

LAVERY: What did you teach?

WIECKING: Well, I taught what we call library instruction. The--all the new students were suppose to learn how to use the card catalog and how to use reference books and all that kind of thing. I don't think that was really popular with the students. There was no credit, but you had to do it. Then I also taught the library science courses when we first started them. Now of course, they have a lot of people teaching that. And in the summer, we gave a nine credit course and the students could go out and take care of small libraries.

LAVERY: Mm-mmm.

WIECKING: But that was--I enjoyed that very much.

LAVERY: What--and maybe we're coming back to something we've already talked about. But if we could have taken the best things from your years at Mankato, as far as feelings from the institution, and again, maybe what the institution was or hopefully still is, how would we define Mankato State University? Is it--or else let's even put it this way. How about the people? People like you and the people like Wig and the other people that you talked about that were there when you were there. I guess every institution, regardless of whether it's General Motors or Mankato State, is really made up of some great people.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: And what was it about those people? What--about you and people like you that spent their whole life there. Dedicated themselves to the job. Is there something different about those people than we have today where people bounce around from job to job and life styles change? What is it about--I guess you--that was much more solid and dependable than the things we see today. Was it your upbringing? Was it your family life? Was it your religious background or what was it?

WIECKING: Well. . .

LAVERY: Did you ever think about leaving Mankato?

WIECKING: No. But I did go off to study and to school.

LAVERY: But once you came back. . . ?

WIECKING: No, I was satisfied and happy and there was sometimes that I was a little discouraged, but generally speaking it went along all right.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm, but. . .

WIECKING: And I don't know, well, of course, we were brought up to--we

always did our work and we were encouraged to be good students. And my mother and father worked with us and we had a very fine home life and we were interested in what we did. And being--and we had to have our manners you know. I don't know just how to describe that.

LAVERY: That's something that's sorely missing today, is manners.

WIECKING: Yes, and of course, my mother was a homemaker, but later on after my father died, she did lots of volunteer work in town.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And after. . .

LAVERY: In what area?

WIECKING: Well, she was in--she helped with the welfare work and she-- for the county. And also a health board.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And she did all kinds of things like that. Joined a study club and, but we were always told if--we had to be good you know.

LAVERY: And what happened as a child. What happened if you weren't good?

WIECKING: Well, if we should get a licking in school, we'd get one at home. So we never--we were careful. But. . .

LAVERY: Do you think that's what today's youth would have needed more of is a good licking?

WIECKING: I don't know, but I think they need more help.

LAVERY: More help.

WIECKING: From the--of some kind.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm. That's a good point. Very interesting.

WIECKING: I mean, they need more--I think it's too bad that--well it can't be helped I suppose, with so many mothers working. As I see some of the neighborhood children too. They don't have anything to come home to.

You know.

LAVERY: Ah-huh. How long have you lived in this home?

WIECKING: How long? I've always lived here.

LAVERY: Always lived there.

WIECKING: Yah. It's been added on to and changed a lot.

LAVERY: And you told me it was built in 1880.

WIECKING: Well, 18--I think it was about 1888 when we moved in.

LAVERY: Wow! That's--1888, that's ninety years.

WIECKING: It isn't quite.

LAVERY: Eighty-nine years.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LAVERY: Was it a dirt road or a . . .

WIECKING: Oh yes, dirt road and wooden sidewalks and we had a big lattice-work fence.

LAVERY: Oh really?

WIECKING: To keep the children in. And, ah. . .

LAVERY: Do you remember when the school was built?

WIECKING: Oh yes. That was built the year we were in New York. 1920--21. But there was the old Pleasant Grove School. Which faced Pleasant Street, an old type schoolhouse.

LAVERY: Oh, I see.

WIECKING: Where we went to grade school. And then the high school was up where the arts building is.

LAVERY: Mm-mmm.

WIECKING: And we walked.

LAVERY: Is that right?

WIECKING: Yes, we had streetcars, but we. . .

LAVERY: They had streetcars in Mankato?

WIECKING: Oh yes. Horse cars first, and then streetcars.

LAVERY: When you graduated from high school, when students graduated from high school in Mankato, what were the options available to them? What-- where did they usually go?

WIECKING: Well, many went to Normal.

LAVERY: Went to Normal.

WIECKING: As it is now, many a person wouldn't go--didn't go any place else. Couldn't go any place else, but went here.

LAVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And then. . .

LAVERY: What if they didn't go to school? What did they do?

WIECKING: Well, they took jobs. There was the Commercial College. And many people did that. Went to Commercial College. And. . .

LAVERY: Was farming, did a lot of them go into farming?

WIECKING: Oh yes. Yes. We had many students come in from the surrounding area.

LAVERY: How did they get in those days?

WIECKING: Oh, we had trains.

LAVERY: Trains?

WIECKING: Oh. . .

LAVERY: To bring kids in from school? Now what about coming to school daily?

WIECKING: Oh daily. Oh. . .

LAVERY: How do they come in?

WIECKING: Well, they walked. There were no cars.

LAVERY: How far would that be?

WIECKING: Well, quite a few--people lived on the West side.

LIVERY: Mm-hmm.

WIECKING: And that was all pasture and cement works and I don't know what.

LIVERY: Wow! I'm trying to get more impressions from you about the people. Now most of the time while you were at Mankato, most of the people that were attending the University were in teacher education I presume. Is that correct?

WIECKING: Yes. That's right.

LIVERY: About teaching and about education, what are some of the definite, how can I say this? I guess to you, what is a good teacher? Or what does it mean to be a good educator as far as dealing with, not only your students, but yourself and with the subject matter? Mankato has turned out more teachers than anything else.

WIECKING: Mm-hmm.

LIVERY: If you had to describe for someone, I guess you do it here, what is a good teacher? What kind of attributes do they have?

WIECKING: Well, I think in the first place, one has to be interested in the student. We may--be interested in people, I suppose would be better to say.

LIVERY: Good.

WIECKING: And I think one has to show that one is interested.

LIVERY: How does one do that? How do you show that you are interested in the student?

WIECKING: Mm-mmm.

LIVERY: How did you do it as a teacher?

WIECKING: Well, I just--trying to think. (laughter) I think it--to--you talk to one of them, be interested in the family, and why they're there.

And what they want to get out of college or Normal, law school or what ever it is. And be pleasant and not ride them too hard and still have discipline. And. . .

LAVERY: Did you ever flunk anybody?

WIECKING: Well, in my work I didn't because they were always--some of them got "D's", but they--see that was kind of specialized in a way, the people who came in. . .

LAVERY: That's true. Tell me about. . .

WIECKING: Wanted it.

LAVERY: What about some of the characters? The kind of off--beat people, whether faculty or students or administrators, that you remember from your time at the University. Were there any kind of crazy goings on or people that did strange things or just real characters that. . . ?

WIECKING: Let's see, I'm trying to think.

LAVERY: Besides Wig, that is. Did you have any student pranks and like would they pull things on April Fools Day?

WIECKING: Oh yes. Oh, I'll tell you one thing that--I don't know where the statue of Lincoln is now.

LAVERY: It's in Old Main.

WIECKING: Is it?

LAVERY: Yah.

WIECKING: In the book store part?

LAVERY: No, it's on the main entrance.

WIECKING: Oh, you know they were always taking Lincoln's head off. After that. . .

LAVERY: (laughter) Honest to gosh?

WIECKING: Yes. After they got that statue--that was one of their favorite