

**Oral History Interview with Ron Tank**  
**Interviewed by Julia Stringfellow**  
**August 16, 2007**

**[Start: 00:00:00]**

**JS: Today is August 16, 2007. This is the series of oral history interviews being done by emeriti faculty. We are in the University Archives. Could you please state your name?**

RT: My name is Ron Tank.

**JS: What subjects did you teach at Lawrence and Milwaukee-Downer?**

RT: I taught the geology courses. I taught all of the geology courses at Milwaukee-Downer. And then at Lawrence I was the department's "soft-rock" geologist, and in addition to the intro course, which was usually one term of physical geology, followed by one term of historical. In those days students had to take two courses in the same lab science. Today they only have to take one. And then in the upper level courses, I taught Economic Geology of the Non-Metals, I taught Paleontology, Sedimentology, Geology of National Parks...what else did I have here?...Oceanography, and Environmental Geology, Legal Aspects of Geology, and then a variety of seminars and tutorials.

**JS: What years did you teach at Milwaukee-Downer and Lawrence?**

RT: At Milwaukee-Downer, it was '62-'64. And then I came up with the consolidation as they called it in '64 and then retired under an early retirement program at Lawrence in 1991.

**JS: And then there was some introduction that you wanted to share?**

RT: Yeah, okay. So I was born and raised in Milwaukee, went to Rufus King High School, which was the best high school in Milwaukee in those days and still is. When I was a senior, I like all of my seniors had to take an aptitude test and then the results of that aptitude test were discussed at a parent-teacher-student conference. And the goal was to give us some guidance as to what we might do after graduating from high school. And the counselor said that he thought that I would do well in college. For some reason or other which I never understood, he gave as an example of a college, Lawrence College, and then he also thought I would probably enjoy an outdoor profession, and as an example of an outdoor profession, he said forestry. Okay, so this was exciting and was also somewhat disturbing, because no one in my family had gone to college and no one in my neighborhood had gone to college and my father reminded me on the way home there were plenty of good jobs in Milwaukee. Well the next day I went to the library at the high school and I got out the Lawrence catalogue. Well the first thing I noticed was that they did not have a major in forestry and that their tuition rate was more than my father's annual income, so that took care of Lawrence at least for the time being. So then I went to the University of Wisconsin, Madison, I signed up as a forestry major and one of the courses that I had to take for that major was Introductory Geology. So I took that course and I did enjoy it, I did well, I enjoyed the instructor, subject matter, but the thing that probably caught my attention more than anything else was

the geology department bulletin board, because it listed all of the job opportunities that were available to those who were graduating.

**JS: That's a good thing [laughs].**

RT: They were all over the world and mostly in mining and petroleum geology. So before the end of my first semester at Madison, I changed my major to a geology major. And then I did graduate four years later and like ninety-five percent of the male students in the graduating class, I went into the army. We had no choice, there was a draft and so forth. And I spent most of my time in Berlin, Germany which was a really good assignment for me. And then I came back, after two years in the army, got to work on my master's degree at Madison. And I had the GI bill, so my tuition and books were taken care of, and then I got a teaching assistantship in the intro lab and that was a life-changing experience, because it was the first time in my life that I had taught and we had to, you know, the TAs taught by themselves and that was it, and the students were very cooperative, they did very well, and I knew that I wanted to teach. Then when I got my master's, I thought before going on to my PhD, I would try to get some experience in industry, so I got a job with Standard Oil Company in California. I worked for them. The goal was to work for them for two years and then have that experience as background for my PhD and for going on to teach. But then two years became three years, and three years became four years. I started out in California for a year, Bakersfield, California and then three years in Salt Lake City, and pretty soon I had to make up my mind. I just can't just keep going year after year, because you know, then I'll never get back to teaching. And then someone called my attention to a research project that was being offered at the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and this was under a Fulbright Fellowship so I applied for that. I got that and so then as I was finishing up my work there, what I really did there was the research that was necessary for the PhD dissertation. So then I had to look for a school that would accept that research work for the dissertation requirements and also I had to look for a school that would allow me to take the language requirement in Danish, because I had by that time learned enough Danish so that I could pass the PhD language requirement. So yeah, that worked out very well and the only school that would accept me was Indiana University, so I went to Indiana and I was able to finish my PhD in two years. And you know these days it takes forever [laughs]. And as I entered the final year of the PhD program the department chairman got all of us together, PhD candidates, and explained to us that he was sorry to report that there just were not any teaching jobs in Geology.

**[00:06:54]**

**JS: Oh no.**

RT: That by that time of the year, he would have dozens of openings he could suggest to us to pursue and so forth, but he said that he didn't have one. He even got on the phone and tried to find out what was going on, but people weren't hiring. So he said to us, you have got to go out and shake the bushes. Now what did that mean, shake the bushes? So I don't know why, but the first thing that I thought of was up north, Lawrence College [laughs]. There must be bushes up there. So I wrote to the department chairman.

**JS: And who was that at the time?**

RT: That was Dr. Read. And he must have replied to my letter the day he got it, because he wrote back and he said that he was sorry, but he didn't anticipate any openings in the geology department at Lawrence, but he had heard that Milwaukee-Downer College was bringing back their geology program. So I wrote to Milwaukee-Downer College. I knew something about the college and the campus, because I dated my wife while she was a student at Milwaukee-Downer [laughs]. And I knew they had a geology museum on campus, and so I wrote and I was invited for an interview and I got the job. It was a good job, because it was half-time teaching and half-time curator of the museum.

**JS: Perfect combination [laughs]!**

RT: Yeah, right. So you know, when you start your teaching career, course preparation is overwhelming and here that was only half of what I would normally have to do. And the students were very good students and so forth. It was really great. At the beginning of the second year, the President of Milwaukee-Downer had a special meeting of the faculty and he announced that there was going to be the merger, consolidation with Lawrence, and that all of us who had contracts with Downer, those contracts would be honored by the people at Lawrence. I only had one year left on a three-year contract, but anyway I thought, well, I'll go up and see what's going on there. So I was told that the second person in that department Len Weis was going to be leaving, and so there was a real position for me, and Len went on to the University of Wisconsin extension in Menasha, and so that's how I got started at Lawrence and taught there for 27 years, took the early retirement, and then it was hard for me to make that decision, because the rationale for supporting an early-retirement program was that Lawrence would have been dominated by elderly, white males [laughs] and this was not good. I think they probably had another word for elderly, but at any rate...I remembered back to when I was looking for a job and there weren't any, and that's what the PhD candidates in all of the fields were facing back in 1990 and 1991 or something like that, the tenured faculty just weren't leaving and it was hard to create new positions because of budgets and so forth. So anyway, I thought okay, I'll give someone the opportunity here. And then three months after that, I had accepted a position at the University of Pittsburgh in their Semester at Sea program. Now that's a hundred-day voyage around the world. You're on board a large ship with 650 students. The students come from...they are all juniors and seniors and they come from a broad range of colleges and universities within the United States, not just Pittsburgh students. There are about thirty faculty on board. You visit ten ports of call, spend about four or five days in each port of call. Those days are not vacation days for anybody, because faculty members have to offer field trip experiences for the students.

**[00:11:11]**

**JS: Very exciting. That's so cool!**

RT: Yeah, it was. I could take my students to the Rift Valley of Africa and show them the structure of the Rift Valley right in the field. While we were there on one visit, there was an earthquake, which indicated that the fault blocks were actually moving. We climbed an active volcano in the Philippines, did snorkeling in the Red Sea, and then aside from the strictly geology trips, I could participate in trips to the Taj Mahal, Hiroshima, and so on and so forth. And then we got to meet and hear people like Fidel Castro

in Cuba, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa on the first voyage. I took three of these voyages and she died between the two. And then the relationship with the students was so different compared with what you would experience on the Lawrence campus or any campus, because we were living together all on the same boat. We ate our meals together and so on and so forth. It was the most rewarding part of my whole teaching career. So the moral of the story is that there is life after Lawrence. And I did three of those voyages. And then because of that experience, a head hunter, who was looking for people to lecture on board the luxury cruise lines, contacted me and asked me if I would like to lecture on voyages. So it might be a ten-day voyage and you might give three or four lectures that related to your ports of call. My wife would go with me and we visited, you know, the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Alaska's inside passage, Tahiti, Patagonia, and so forth. So those were all really good experiences. That kind of gives you some background of what I did during the early part of my career and later on after retirement.

**JS: Wonderful. To elaborate on some of those points and trying to do this in a chronological order, we'll see how well I do this. While you were a college student and graduate student, were there any student activities you were a part of, any campus activities, such as athletics? Was there a geology club for the students?**

RT: Yeah, right. Well I was an undergraduate at Madison. I went out for the track team. I made the track team. In those days they had special teams for the freshmen, so freshmen very seldom played on the Varsity. In fact, I don't think they ever did. I think it was against the rules. And then they had Junior Varsity and then they had finally Varsity. And so I was on the freshmen track team for two years and then I was a member of the Geology Club and then we had intramural teams in basketball and things like that. The Geology Club met probably once a month. The big thing was probably the Christmas party and then the spring banquet. Yeah, they had a big geology program at Madison. A lot of majors, very active.

**JS: Great! Now how do you feel that your college experience was similar or different from student's experiences today, like students at Lawrence?**

RT: Well, the biggest difference is that when I was at Madison the enrollment there was about twelve or thirteen thousand, so it was a huge campus then and still is compared to Lawrence. And so that is a big difference. I never really felt that I was part of the University, although you know, I went to every single basketball game, every football game, in those days they had boxing, Wisconsin was great, so I was a fan more so than I think any students are today. You very seldom see many Lawrence students at any of the athletic events. They had a big winning streak going to basketball and then they had a pretty good turnout. But so that's the biggest difference. And then the class sizes usually like in geology at Madison, the enrollment would be about 150 or 200 or so. Here it's closer to 50.

**[00:15:44]**

**JS: Well, were there any professors while you were an undergrad and while you were in graduate school that really made an impact on your life that you stayed in contact with after you graduated?**

RT: Yeah, there was a professor at Madison, Professor Laudon, who was kind of a legend on campus and he was my Intro Geo teacher and he really went out of his way to offer field trips for the students, both during the school year, spring break, during the summer. They were always exciting trips and so forth. So you could see someone who was really going out of his way and giving up a lot of what would normally be free time to give the students some field experience. And then there were a couple of other teachers. Bailey, Sturges Bailey, who probably was the best teacher. He was very low-keyed and he was organized and he could really explain stuff. And then sort of at the opposite extreme was Wild Bill Kiekhofer. He was a professor in economics and that was one of the sort of required distribution type courses and he insisted on giving his classes in the theater on the campus, because he got up on the stage and he put on a show [laughs]. So there's no way I could emulate him, but his courses were always sold out, he wrote the textbook that we used and he didn't really have much more to offer in his lectures than you could get out of the textbook, except the show that he put on. And I don't think anybody ever missed a class. Yeah, he was really exciting. So those are the three really that stand out.

**JS: Well while you were pursuing your PhD and you went on these different research trips, while you were doing that, were there any particular trips that were your favorite that really stand out in your memory or...?**

RT: The trips that I took as a student?

**JS: Yes.**

RT: Now I'm not sure that there's one that would stand out. Professor Laudon always gave his spring trips and he was basically a paleontologist and so he would always talk about visiting what he called bushel basket localities where you could fill up a bushel basket with fossils that had weathered out and it was true. You would go there and there were fossils all over the place. So yeah, those were my favorite and then he offered the summer-field course in the Bridger Mountains in Montana where we camped out the whole eight weeks and we did our own cooking and so on and so forth, and there was a lot of hiking and we were doing basic geologic mapping so that was good trip.

**JS: Well I was wondering what the title of your dissertation was. What the main area of its focus was?**

RT: The PhD dissertation?

**JS: Yes.**

RT: Um, I'm not sure of the title. It's probably...it had to do with the clay mineralogy of the clay sediments of Denmark and so they had some excellent thick clay formations with a lot of variations in terms of colors and so forth. My goal was to kind of document the changes in clay-mineral composition and see if they correlated with any of the other more obvious features. It was at a time when clay mineralogy was a relatively new part of geology and you had to have sophisticated equipment, x-ray diffractors and so forth, do to that. For some reason or another the Danish mineralogists were not really too interested in that, so they were happy that I showed an interest and somebody else could document

that. And then from that I did clay mineral studies of other geological formations, this is post-PhD, in the United States.

**[00:20:01]**

**JS: Well, when you began at Milwaukee-Downer, obviously since you had grown up in Milwaukee, you were already familiar with the campus and with the college. What were your first impressions now that you were a professor/curator there?**

RT: Well, first of all, the thing that I really did appreciate was the independence. I was the only person in the geology department and, although I am sure they must have had a kind of a head of the science departments, but they must have had a chairman of biology, chairman of chemistry, I don't even remember, but it was the freedom to do what I wanted, the creativity that was part of it. And to get me started on the curator work, the people at the public museum heard that I was coming, the Milwaukee Public Museum. And they were just moving from the old building to the new building. And the two curators there were probably in their sixties. And they just didn't...I don't know if they had the energy or what to design the new exhibits, so they asked me to do that.

**JS: Oh fun! [laughs]**

RT: Yeah, I couldn't believe it, that I would be the person who laid out the whole exhibit for the geology stuff in the new museum. And I had a chance to visit a few other museums in Chicago and so forth to see what the big museums were doing and then put together the plan. I was surprised that they followed it. I thought maybe they were just allowing me to do what I wanted to do and then they would go ahead and do it the right way, but...And then that stayed there as the geology exhibit for quite a few years until they got enough money to capitalize on the huge interest in dinosaurs and then they went off in that direction.

**JS: Wonderful. Great! Now the science courses at Milwaukee-Downer were held in Sabin Hall?**

RT: Well, they were, but my courses were all held in the Greene Museum. So the Greene Museum had a ground level floor which had a pretty good sized classroom and then my office. And then on the second floor, which turned out to be almost the first floor if you came in from Downer Avenue, that's where the museum was. And that's where I did all of my teaching, but the other science people were in Sabin Hall, yeah.

**JS: What was the museum's collection generally comprised of?**

RT: Well it was donated to the college by Mr. Greene, an independently wealthy person who had some health problems, and the cure-all for health problems in his days was fresh air and exercise. So he went out and collected fossils from the quarries in Milwaukee. And you know, he got to know the quarry operators and he told them, "If you ever run into any rocks, I have a lot of fossils, set them aside for me." And so they did. So he would just go there and pick up all of these fossils and he would bring them home, and he had a lot of cabinets and so forth that he put them in. And then he got interested in donating all of that to Downer College. So the central point of their collection was the fossils of the

Milwaukee area and you know, those quarries have now since been filled in and so forth and are no longer accessible, and it was more of a research collection. The fossils were not always weathered out and so forth. The collection did attract people from all over the place. But then in addition to that, there were some other people who gave like minerals and rocks and so with all of that together there was a lot to work with.

**JS: Now what happened to that collection when Milwaukee-Downer merged with Lawrence?**

RT: Well, there were two things that were involved here. One was the possibility that we could bring that collection to Lawrence. But it would have involved packing all that material and then it's quite likely that it would have never been unpacked, because you had to have space, and there was no space on the Lawrence campus. So when I had some discussions with the people at Lawrence and the people at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the geologists at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee did not want it to leave, and they were going to sue me if I took it up and all that kind of stuff. But we never got to that. We said, "fine, you can have it." Well, that collection was then moved to another building, and I had never gone down to look at it, it was packed up for a while, not accessible. And finally it was made accessible, at least part of it, in another building, and people are using it.

[00:25:09]

**JS: Great. Well, what was the relationship like between the students and the faculty at Milwaukee-Downer? From everything that I've heard it was this very strong bond between the two communities there.**

RT: Oh yeah, it was. You know, most of the – I'm quite sure of this – most of the professors at Downer were women, so there was that sort of bond, you know, between the professional successful women and then the students, but the students were also impressed with the male part of the faculty [laughs]. And because it was a small campus, small courses, we got to know each other real well. One of the things that was really a lot of fun was crew. The shells and so forth came up here. Well, when I was there, they had a competition where the senior class would row against the freshmen, and the winner of that would row against the winner of the sophomore and junior competition. This is the same day. And then the winner of that would row against the faculty. So the faculty would just hope that these winners would be tired by the time we took them on [laughs]. So that was a part of it and I think the faculty did not participate in Hat Hunt, but they did watch it and so forth.

**JS: Now did you participate, was it the Faculty Follies that they did at Milwaukee-Downer?**

RT: Yeah, they did have that, but I don't remember participating in that [laughs]. I think I would remember! Yeah, I do remember the Faculty Follies, but I wasn't a part of that.

**JS: Well were there any other campus activities that you were involved in, any other traditions, such as, there were many activities held during the holiday season with Lantern Night and the annual Christmas play and..?**

RT: Yeah, I do vaguely remember that. But you know, I was only there for two years.

**JS: Well, when the announcement was made that Milwaukee-Downer was going to merge with Lawrence, was it a big surprise?**

RT: Well, it was for me. In fact, that summer my wife and I were looking for a home near the Downer campus [laughs]. Luckily we didn't find one. It's a very upscale neighborhood for the most part, which meant we couldn't afford the homes. So it was a total surprise, that's for sure. But it wasn't that disappointing to me, because there was no possibility of a geology major at Downer, I could see that. Although a friend of mine from graduate school days was a chairman of the geology department at UW-M and he told me that after I got settled and so forth that he would be working me into their teaching group, so I looked forward to that. But that wasn't a guarantee thing. But the prospect of joining a department where they offered a major program was very attractive.

**JS: Well, upon coming to the Lawrence community from Milwaukee-Downer, what were your first impressions of the campus and the surrounding community of Appleton?**

RT: Well, the summer before we moved up here, I got a grant to participate in, I think it was a two-month geology trip through Italy. It was sponsored by the National Science Foundation. So my wife's job was to find us a place to live, and she did find a place it was on Oak Street right by the Y. And so that was right, a short block to the campus. I felt I had a nice office arrangement on campus and when I started teaching Len Weis, Bill Read, and I were there together, and the program had been established. We had pretty good group of geology majors so that worked out real well. But in general, the Downer faculty was not welcomed [laughs] by the Lawrence faculty. And part of the problem was that the Downer faculty had tenure and Lawrence did not. Tenure was not part of the Lawrence situation. So you get a department like let's say English or history from Downer, about the same size as English and history at Lawrence. Well, then the question is, are they going to support a department that's now twice the size as it was? They are going to have to keep those Lawrence [Downer] people on, they are tenured [laughs]. So there was that insecurity on the part of the Lawrence faculty. There was also I think the Lawrence faculty felt they were being forced to accept colleagues, they had no choice. They didn't interview these people and decide. So that was awkward at first and I never was bothered by that in the geology department. There were social functions that we would hear of and the Downer people weren't invited to those, and things like that. But the person who really turned things around was President Warch. There was a big dispute over the Occupational Therapy program, which at Downer had been one of the best programs in the country, and the Lawrence faculty did not want to have anything to do with that. It was too professional oriented and at Downer you could get a B.S. degree. So the head of that program, the Occupational Therapy program had to satisfy not only the Lawrence faculty, but they had to satisfy the national accrediting group and they demanded certain things. And that was an overload on science. So that it turned out that anybody who came to Lawrence with the idea of majoring in Occupational Therapy would have room for probably two electives [laughs]. That's it!

**[00:31:46]**

**JS: Very demanding major.**



RT: Yeah, so that program was dropped. That was a sore spot for the Downer faculty. They were so proud of that program. But Rik Warch really turned things around, and I give him credit for that.

**JS: What were some activities that you were involved in with the students, like taking them on field trips or trips related to work in the classroom?**

RT: Well, with all of the geology courses, you try to do field trips. With winter term, we usually don't do that. It's not that the weather is too cold, but that the rocks are covered with snow [laughs]. So they don't plan on going out for that. So we always introduced, or I did, I guess, a spring trip which was taken between the winter term and the spring term. We got together with Knox and Monmouth. Three departments were small, so we would meet either at Knox or Monmouth and go out West and do that. But then early in my career, I don't remember the exact years, the University decided we should have an emphasis on interdisciplinary programs. Now that was not easy to do, because a hard-core conservative liberal arts people did not think that was the direction to go. So okay, how are we going to do interdisciplinary? So I decided to offer a seminar on the Colorado Plateau. This would be open to geology people, to botanists, to zoologists, anthropologists, history, and so forth, and the capstone of the seminar was going to be a flow trip down the Colorado River. So okay, we offered that and 45 people signed up for it. This is a seminar [laughs]. And you would have been lucky, maybe our other seminars get about three, four, five people. So what are we going to do with a group this large? Well, it turned out to be pretty good, because we could charter a bus, the bus that would seat about 40-45 people. And the bus would drive us out there to Lee's Ferry. We would get on the raft and go on down, would take us back, it would work all out. So that was the most successful field trip. We did that for three years, three consecutive years. And I guess the faculty got tired of hiking the Grand Canyon or whatever, I don't know. But then another group on campus took that over for just a fun thing to do. So that was probably the best field trip we offered.

**JS: Wonderful, great! Well, in the time that you've been at Lawrence, how did some of the national events affect life on campus, such as being at Lawrence during the 1960s, and there were many protests that went on during the in the late '60s, early 1970s regarding the Vietnam War. How did that affect campus life?**

RT: Well, you know, it did have some impact on campus life, although I thought that in Appleton it was pretty low-keyed. There was a march down College Avenue and there were a lot of Lawrence faculty and students that participated in that. And then the students had some maybe spontaneous demonstrations on the weekend. I forgot what the reason for that was, but one time they took over the administration building. Yeah, I think that the administration building at that time was part of the old library building, and anyway, they just took it over. And the president played it pretty cool. He said they were not demonstrating against the University, they were demonstrating for the University. And he let them do their thing for a couple of days and that was it. But I would go down to Madison for the demonstrations. It was kind of a dual thing. I would go down on Friday to do some clay-mineral work in their lab and then stay over and participate in something on Saturday and so forth. The students were a bit ahead of the faculty on that. The faculty was pretty conservative. The students were more activist-type than the faculty. Although, what was this one, there was this group, Students for Democratic Action, SDA or

something like that, where Professor Boardman stuck his neck out and became the faculty advisor for that. Yeah, should we do this or should we sponsor this? He says he'll do it. So that was in the background. Of course your students were concerned about being drafted and having to go to Vietnam or something. In a few cases, very few when I was advising people, I would notice they weren't satisfying their distribution requirements, they were seniors. Well, they weren't going to graduate. They didn't want to graduate [laughs]! So they could stay on for a little bit longer.

**[00:37:06]**

**JS: Well there had been many student traditions at Lawrence throughout the years, such as The Rock, the big rock, and the Celebrate Festival. Were there any traditions that you helped with or I'm not sure if the Rock was a big issue since...**

RT: Well, it was for awhile, but all of a sudden it seemed to disappear forever. But that was always done by students independent of the geology department. We of course knew of it. We were asked to identify the Rock as to the specific type. There was so much paint on it, so you couldn't do that. And then all of a sudden it would be gone and this and that, but let's see. Well, there was broomball on the campus. I think global warming has taken care of that. There's not that much ice out there anymore. But the thing that I really do miss and that I appreciated were the pep rallies for Homecoming. The Chapel would be packed, standing room only the night before the Homecoming game. Football team would be up on the stage. The coach would make a few comments. The student were yelling and screaming this and that. It was really great. And then the attendance at the football games, some of the games, every seat of the Banta Bowl was taken. Now when I first came here, it was right before the Banta Bowl was built, but then there was more I would say school spirit, more support for athletic event stuff than there is today.

Well, and then the other thing that was so different then was the single-sex dormitories and this debate about that. One of the interesting debates we had in a faculty meeting was: should we give the students the opportunity to visit each other in their rooms? Their bedrooms. Now remember these were bedrooms. Okay, we'll do that provided the door is open. And the argument was, how open does the door have to be to qualify for being open? Well, it should be the width of a textbook [laughs]. That's how that one was solved. There was curfew. I remember getting back from a field trip late, because there was a threat of a tornado and this and that and we took shelter for a couple of hours and it affected the coeds, I guess. They got back after curfew so there was a big to do about that. And then for at least part of the time the drinking age in the state of Wisconsin was 18, so most of the students qualified for drinking in the Viking Room.

**[00:39:44]**

**JS: Okay, and I had heard that they offered beer in Downer Commons as well?**

RT: That could be, I don't remember that. I remember once...for awhile we had class on the Friday after Thanksgiving. So that was a problem, and then when we did away with that there was some effort to accommodate the students who could not really go home because of the short weekend and they did

serve wine at the Thanksgiving dinner. It was an elaborate big dinner and I remember them serving wine. So yeah those were a couple of things.

**JS: Now for Homecoming, the different fraternity houses would decorate their homes and there would be a Homecoming parade, I think?**

RT: Yep, a parade, and I think there was also some sort of contest for the best decoration or something like that.

**JS: Well, have there been colleagues that you worked with that really played a very positive role in your life and your career and that you've maintained a relationship with throughout the years?**

RT: Well, it turned out that I was department chairman when John Palmquist and Ted Ross were hired. Now Ted Ross and I went back to my days in Indiana. We were both students there at the same time. I was working on my PhD, he was working on his master's. So when there was an opening I invited him to apply. There were some others. And then John Palmquist I met on these joint field trips, because he was at Monmouth at that time. And then he said that he would like to come to Lawrence. He had a family vacation home at Marquette, Michigan and wanted to get closer to that. And the three of us were together for almost all of my teaching career at Lawrence. So that would be about 25 years we were together. And I was able to maintain an office on campus since 1991. I still have one. And Ted and John retired quite a few years later and the three of us got along very well. We never had any arguments. Yeah, usually there's some friction within a department. Even a small department, which direction we would go, or how we would do this or that and people get mad at each other. We never had any problems like that so that's kind of been a long term relationship.

**JS: Well, how has Lawrence changed and how has it stayed the same since the first years that you were here as a professor and then now that you're back here as a professor teaching again?**

RT: Well, you know the big changes were the social changes with the coed dorms and things like that. Oh, and the other change I've noticed recently is greater diversity among the student population. That has been really tremendous. When I taught the last time here, I really appreciated that. I was in a class, it was so exciting to see these people from all different countries and so forth. That has been, I think, a very positive change at least from my point of view. It's embarrassing when you can't pronounce their names [laughs], but now even among the white population the first names are so different. Where are they getting these names from, you know? And hyphenated names and all stuff like that, but I think the greater diversity and also on the part of the faculty. We got away from the white elderly male population [laughs]. So that I think has been really great. And then of course the other big thing would be the computers, the impact of computers. When I left in '91 they were just beginning to make computers available to the faculty. Before that you had to buy one. So if you're a faculty member, and you know, they were four thousand dollars or something like that, you had to decide, do I buy a computer for my office at Lawrence or for at home? And as I said, as I got close to retirement they were beginning to make them available to the faculty and of course now you look in an office and all you see is people staring at their screen. And with this e-mail, it's so impersonal. You don't call anybody on the phone and talk to them anymore. Even with the students, you know. I got evaluated on the basis on my

helpfulness with the students. I didn't think I would get a good evaluation, because they hardly ever came to my office. But then I remembered there were so many e-mails that I answered and I always got a big plus, because I instantly responded to their e-mails [laughs]. It was hard for me to do because I was there typing with one finger, looking for the letters. And then there's more sophisticated science equipment and then a big emphasis on interdisciplinary. And then a big emphasis on foreign campus things.

[00:45:08]

**JS: Where were some places you would travel to while you were on sabbaticals or during the summer, were there places you would travel for research?**

RT: Well, during my early years here, I was doing the clay mineral studies on a formation out west. So that's where I would go for the summers. And it was almost all self-financed. There was just not the money available. So that would be the family vacation. We would go out there and camp out in Wyoming or something like that while Dad went around collecting rocks and stuff like that. Then on one sabbatical, well it was really three sabbaticals taking one term each year, I went to Madison to get a master's degree in Water Resources Management. There were a number of sub-disciplines in geology that sort of evolved after I got my PhD and I went back to take those courses and they qualified for a master's in Water Resource Management. And then I took advantage of the Oak Ridge lab opportunities. I taught there and then I also did a research sabbatical. The other big travel opportunity was with the German campus, I taught at the German campus in Eningen, Germany about 18 kilometers south of Stuttgart. So I was there for two and a half years. They had a hard time recruiting faculty for that campus, particularly faculty with families, but my daughters went to the German school. They were probably about eight years old, nine years old, or something like that. Two days after we arrived they were in class learning German, and my wife had had two years of German in college so she felt comfortable. And so we were there for one year and then were replaced and when they tried to recruit for another year, they couldn't find anybody so we went again. And that was structured...that campus calendar was structured so we had a three-day weekend every weekend and they had a five-day break in the middle of the term. And then a ten-day break between terms, so we traveled all over Europe as a part of that.

**JS: After your retirement in 1991 I was wondering if you could tell more about this wonderful trip that you took around the world and being able to hear Castro and Mother Theresa and going to all of these amazing places. Was there one or two that really stick out in your memory or that you really, you know, that's the first thing that you think of when you think of this trip that you took?**

RT: Well, when I came back the first time Lawrence had gotten a hold of a Post-Crescent reporter or something like that. So there was an article in the Post-Crescent. And then the Rotary Club and so forth would ask me to come in and give a talk, so I put on a little slideshow and I always knew the question would come up, which of the countries did you find most rewarding or enjoyable or whatever? And so you know, I would think about that and we would think about that during the voyage, too. And whenever you would talk to students or other faculty members about well, what has been the most

enjoyable port so far, it was always the last one you were in, because it seemed to get better and better and better every time you went. So if it was just at the ports of call, it would be South Vietnam the so-called "favorite," partly because I was wondering how we would be accepted as Americans and things like that. They had either forgotten or forgiven or whatever. They were very hospitable and so forth and the geology was interesting. But the overall evaluation would be that it was the relationship with the students. Getting to know the students in a totally different setting. Like you might have a review session pool-side where everyone was sitting around in their swimming suits. They don't do that at Lawrence [laughs]. Or they had a happy hours on board the ship. You might be going to happy hour and talking about something from the class or the last port of call or something like that. When you went to eat, most of the tables would seat eight. So my wife and I could never be by ourselves, and you would pretty soon be with some students. A lot of times it was students from your class, other times it wasn't. And then you would see these students perform after every port of call, they would have an open mike session. And the students would get up there and talk about their experience. Sometimes they would read a poem that they had composed. Sometimes they would read a page or two from their journal. It was, you know, we did this or we did that, and the presentations were so mature. They got so much more out of that than I was getting out of it. You know, they would talk about experiences they had meeting people and so forth. I would say to my wife, "how come we're not meeting people like that?" So I think that was the thing, you would see students in a whole different capacity. If you would ask me, "well would you and your wife and your two daughters considered moving into Ormsby for the year?" [laughs] and with the understanding that you would stay together for the weekends, you know, you won't find too many people finding that attractive. You probably wouldn't volunteer to do that. Now here you had no choice. That was part of it. And I'm glad it was. The faculty cabins on ship were more or less close together. And there was a faculty lounge. But the student lounge was open to everybody.

**[00:51:36]**

**JS: Well, since retirement in '91, what have been some other interests you have pursued?**

RT: One thing that I did was work for FEMA, Federal Emergency Management Agency, as a trainer, so I was teaching again. But when there was a disaster, and it looked like it was going to be a long term recovery where FEMA would be present in that area for more than a couple of weeks, they would send the trainers out to train people to help with the disasters. So that was always interesting and rewarding. Then there had been a voluntary assignment with the Reading for Success Program that the Appleton School District had where students who were in first grade are sometimes indentified having reading problems, so they would get special tutoring from volunteers, so that's been fun. Habitat for Humanity, Housing Partnership of the Fox Valley. Oh, another one that was really exciting was a program sponsored by Outagamie County. It's called Conflict Resolution. And it was a substitute for the small claims court. And it was sponsored by the Outagamie County legal group, they wanted this because there was such a backlog for the small claims court, that they had to have some other way to resolve these disputes. So they hired this person that was a specialist of conflict resolution, and then she trained us volunteers. And then when there was conflict between, let's say a tenant and a landlord. Okay, it's in small claims court, but then you would give them this little flyer saying here's another option. So then

they would come to us and these people who were enemies would sit down with us. There were usually two trainers, two people working for the group. And we would discuss it. "Have you thought of this? Have you thought of that?" And do so forth. And ninety-eight percent of the time they agreed to a solution. The other time they would say "nope, nope, we're going to court!" So that was learning a new skill. But there again the county's investment in that was minimal. They paid the salary of one professional, they did pay a salary of a secretary, and they had one office and they felt it was too much of a burden and they canceled it. Yeah, so now all of that goes back to small claims court.

**JS: Oh, it seems like it was such a successful program.**

RT: Yeah, it was, it was. And I don't know why they, they just didn't want to support it anymore. So those were some of the things. And then these lecturing on board the luxury cruise liners. But you know, there were a lot of different options there to begin with. There was a placement agency. In the beginning the cruise line would pay the placement agency and then my wife and I would get to go. We would usually have to pay our airfare to and from the port. But they would take care of the tipping and then sometimes we were asked to join the shore excursions as observers to make sure the vendors in the ports were doing their job. So it was really nice. But then that went into the outsourcing direction. So now the placement agency would charge me for seventy-five dollars a day, which is a pretty good deal if you never have been there before. But if you have been there, done that, and so forth, then it turns out to be several thousand dollars, so we kind of lost interest. And then with the problems at the airports and not being guaranteed that you would meet the ship on time, so I kind of lost that.

[00:55:52]

**JS: In looking back over your time at Lawrence, are there any particularly funny stories that you remember or anything like that?**

RT: Ah, let's see.

**JS: [laughs] It's kind of a vague question.**

RT: Well, there is a funny story, but I don't think I will tell it [laughs]. My wife said, "Whatever you do, don't tell that one!" Anyway it was really a lot of fun associated with that, but since other people might be listening to the tape, better not do that one [laughs]. I would always have fun on April 1<sup>st</sup>. You know, leave a little message for somebody that Mr. Fox called. And then the phone number would be the Milwaukee Zoo or something like that. They don't do that anymore [laughs].

**JS: Is there anything else you would like to add or talk about?**

RT: I think that we really did cover things that I thought we might be talking about. I did...I think one thing that was probably most rewarding in my whole career was that I did get in on the ground floor of the introduction of a new sub-discipline in geology called Environmental Geology. I went to a professional meeting, which was not that easy to do while I was here. The school never had enough money to pay for your fees and so forth, but there was one in Milwaukee so that was an easy one to go to. And they were introducing this new sub-discipline of Environmental Geology. And I thought, boy that

sounds exciting. It's a different way to teach the intro course. And you see there was a time at Lawrence when all distribution requirements were waived. You didn't have to take a lab science or a foreign language or this or that. So those of us in geology were wondering, is anybody going to take our courses? Because you know, the Intro Geo course was a course that many people used to satisfy their science requirement, and they would have to take two terms of that. That was the requirement. Now they didn't have to take any. At the same time, however, there was this new sub-discipline Environmental Geology and so I said to my colleagues, "hey, I'm going to put together a course called Environmental Geology" and people were becoming interested in Environmental Geology. So that was offered as an option to students. About eighty students signed up for the course. It got to the point where we had like a hundred students in that course. We filled every seat in the auditorium in Youngchild. So that was exciting that all of these students who didn't have to take that course found it very interesting. Unfortunately at the time, there wasn't a textbook because it was a new sub-discipline. So okay, now I wanted to be an author. So I wanted to put together a textbook. I worked hard to put together a textbook. Then I sent it out to the different publishers and so forth. In those days, you had a table of contents, a brief introduction, and a sample chapter or two. And then you would wait for a reply. They would send it out to other people. Well, all of the replies were coming back negative. And the reason was, "We don't offer that course. We would never use it, we wouldn't use the book." And so what are we going to do about this? Well, there was one, Oxford University Press took a chance and so they published my textbook and it was a huge success. Now all of a sudden everybody wants to teach the course, because now they have a textbook. So I did three, it wasn't really three editions, there were three different versions of that textbook, and so that I think was probably my greatest contribution to the profession. It's hard to make a contribution. There are so many people out there doing so much research, particularly in the oil industry and so forth. You can't compete with them, really. So that worked out very well and then because of the success of that, I put together another book on legal aspects of geology which was a takeoff from a course I took at Madison during a sabbatical. The course I took was Water Rights Law. So that was one aspect, and then I went to the University of Reno for a workshop on mining law and then I developed some other things, so those were things that I was probably more proud of than anything else.

**JS: Great. Wonderful. Well is there anything else you can think of?**

RT: No, I've gone over time here, haven't I?

**JS: No, that's fine! I'm going to go ahead and turn off the recorder then.**

**[End: 01:01:15]**