

INT: This is the tape on July 13th with Bill Dickson, and we're talking about -- what? -- miscellaneous?

WD: Miscellaneous, period.

WD: Well, we're getting near the end of what I have to say in this sequence of stories that we've been telling for the past few weeks -- I guess months now -- and I thought I would give some interesting tidbits today, just for posterity. I'd like to start with the construction process, and I'm not talking about when you sign an architect and engineers. I'm talking about contractors that you hire to build something. And you know, the process is that you -- by one means or another, either lump-sum bidding, or cost plus, or some other way you select a contractor, and obviously, you then sign an appropriate contract with that contractor, and he or she now builds the building, and you get to a point when it's nearly ended where you have it ended well enough so that you can get a certificate of occupancy, which means it's then usable by the owner. You then pick up the loose ends and get a final certificate of occupancy, and basically that should end the process with the contractor. And you release any sums of money that you might still owe them and any retainage that you have, and sign an agreement -- a final payment agreement. It usually goes along reasonably smooth, but I want to tell you about two projects which were constructed when I was a student at MIT, and for which I signed final payment.

INT: Wow, really?

WD: In the mid-'60s, which was at least, I'm sure, ten years after I graduated from MIT, and these two projects were both done by the same contractor, the George A. Fuller Company, and they were the Kresge Auditorium and the Compton Laboratories, for two different reasons. Basically, as you've heard in previous stories, the roof at Kresge Auditorium started failing right away, and I never believed it was the fault of the contractor from what I learned about it because the material was basically selected by the architect, and it was an untried material -- a magic elixir -- but of course it was agreed to by the contractor and the Institute, before it was applied. And that was the world-famous orastone, a white coating that was trowelled on the finished assembly.

Well, that immediately began to crack up, and it wasn't until the Institute decided to put a new roof on it that was actually a lead roof, that was done by the Fuller Company, I'm sure at some cost to them, but also the Institute paid a fair amount. And it was only after that was in place in the mid-'60s or so that they agreed to make final payment to the Fuller Company for that job. I asked Carl Peterson once, who was my boss when I went to work there in 1960, why they hadn't acted more quickly to pay off the Fuller Company, and he said, well, I like Paulson, who was the head of the Fuller Company, and I like to meet with him. And so this gives us a chance to meet at least once a year to talk about when we're going to make final payment.

INT: Oh, my God. [Laughter]

WD: He said, of course, Paulson, you know, is a Norwegian. And I said, well, yes, I didn't know that, but I'm not surprised. And he said, you know what a Norwegian is? He's a Swede with his brains kicked out.

INT: My God, Bill!

WD: So even though he gave that definition, it was in jest, and he and Paulson were very good friends. Actually, the problem with the Compton Building was that it was designed by Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill of New York, not Chicago who we worked with many times while I was there, and Gordon Bunshaft -- quite a renowned architect -- was the architect on the job for Skidmore, and as you can tell by looking at it, Compton is a curtain wall building of aluminum panels and trim, and black panels, also. And it is quite striking, and it was sort of different for the time when it was built. Bunshaft's feeling was that you can never keep a curtain wall building tight from the elements, so you might as well not try, and let the rain to some degree get behind it or go in the cracks of the mullions, and so make sure that the structure under the curtain wall was thoroughly waterproofed and then the water would just enter and run down inside the curtain wall and come out. Now we're not talking huge quantities of water, but we're talking about enough water so that if it entered the building it would present a problem. Now they had this half right. The west side of the building never leaked in its history to my knowledge, and the east side leaked whenever there was a severe storm, and it didn't take a rocket scientist to see why.

The worst storms in New England come from the northeast, and so they would drive

at the east face of the building, whereas a steady rain would --coming straight down -
- would basically not be driven into the building. And there still was a question,
though, of -- I think at one point in time because it leaked so badly that Fuller came
back at its expense and caulked the whole building to try and make it now tight, and it
worked to some degree, but never really worked. And it wasn't until some years -- I
think after they caulked the building, MIT agreed to make final payment, which I
made final payment on Kresge and Compton the same day --

INT: Oh, really?

WD: -- in the mid-'60s.

INT: No kidding?

WD: However, it still leaked to some degree, and it wasn't until we took a whole elevation
of panels off the building on the east side that we could find out really why it was
leaking. And it was leaking because the concrete frame underneath was indeed
waterproofed, but it had seams in some cases that weren't sealed and so the water
would get inside, roll down not only the curtain wall, but also the waterproofing, and
then enter the building where there was a seam that was open. And naturally in the
elevation where we did the exploratory work, we properly sealed those two bays,
which I believe were the worst leakers in any case, and so for the most part -- not
completely -- but for the most part, stopped the leakage in the building. I suspect
under the proper circumstances it probably still might have a small leak somewhere,
but not enough to bother many people. So that's one interesting tidbit of how the past
met the present.

INT: Yes.

WD: Now I have a couple of other things to talk about that happened before my time, and
they're just, I find, of interest. One is that in 1938, Building 7 was built. Most people
that don't know better probably think of Building 7 -- and look at the Institute as a
whole -- that it was part of the original main group --

INT: Right.

WD: -- because it looks like it was, but it wasn't. Building 5 and Building 7 were built at a
later time. Building 5 quite soon after the main group was finished, but as you know,
it was first occupied in 1916, the main group. But Building 7, which was to house the

Architecture Department, which had remained in Boston when MIT moved to Cambridge, was not built until the late '30s, and the structure was basically in place. The dome was framed in wood and I believe had a plywood covering over it, and they were just getting ready to set the stone when, on September 21st, 1938, the worst hurricane probably ever to hit New England --

INT: Yes.

WD: -- particularly the Boston area -- came, and Carl Peterson was the director of the Plant -- it was called something different -- Buildings and Power in 1938 -- as an interim appointment, and so he was well aware of what happened. He said you could find pieces of the framed dome all over the city of Cambridge by the time the storm was over, but you could find none of the dome framing on site at the Institute.

INT: Oh, jeez.

WD: So they had to reframe it, and start all over again in that process.

INT: I didn't realize that, that that had happened.

WD: So that was -- that's, I think, of interest.

INT: Yes.

WD: The last one is that in one of the hurricanes of 1955 -- I believe we had two. We had Carol in 1954, which was a heavy wind, not too much rain, and then we had Diane and Edna in 1955. And I'm not sure whether it was Diane or Edna, but they both had a lot of rain, and the Charles River then had its old locks, and they couldn't really control the level of the river too well with the old locks. And so the river rose rapidly, picking up, of course, all the water that was coming from its source up in Milford and Medway and Dover and Watertown and Natick and it rose precipitously, and the Institute had a river water line that used to supply water to a boiler plant, but also had canals in Building 2.

INT: Oh, really?

WD: I'm sorry. That's incorrect. Mechanical engineering, Building 3, where the old steam power laboratory used to be. And those canals used to allow water to go out of there and into the Charles River. They were nothing more than open canals with wire mesh open steel grate on the top of them, and of course the river rose above that level.

INT: Wow.

WD: So that it backed up into the entire main group to a depth of, I believe, close to 2 feet. So -- and of course, once it rose there, it rose throughout because it tends to flow, and so Buildings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 -- 8 and 10 -- all had water to a depth of about 2 feet --

INT: Wow.

WD: -- in their basements, and of course, a lot of the space was not storage and stuff, but was usable laboratory space.

INT: Right.

WD: So it was quite a mess, and you couldn't just pump it out because you had nowhere to pump it, and so you had to wait for the river to recede. And I remember stories that Don Whiston had told me.

INT: They didn't cancel class or anything, did they?

WD: It was in the summer.

INT: Oh.

WD: So there were no real -- there wasn't any real classes, and if there were classes, they were -- other than [kids] that used those laboratories, they were probably upstairs, so I think it just caused an expensive mess.

INT: Yes. Wow.

WD: So that's another historic happening. Since that time, those canals have all been closed off, not because of that, but because the steam lab eventually disappeared, and they didn't have the same need, so those have all been filled in and you wouldn't even know they really had ever been there. We still could have trouble at the boiler plant, though, we're not down at as low a grade, but the new locks were installed in the Charles River and new bigger pumps, and we have never had another instance where the water has risen to such a degree, although we have had some heavy rains, but they're able now to manage the level of the river. It sometimes gets a little higher than normal, but never -- I've seen it higher than the dock at the boat house, but --

INT: Really? Boy, that's high.

WD: -- not much higher than that. So those are interesting tidbits of the past.

Now, I thought I would talk about what made MIT great. And let me start by saying it is still a great place, but it is a vastly different place than it was in the mid-

'50s, and I suppose if I could find someone 95 years old, they'd say it was a vastly different place when they went to school in the '20s and '30s. It's a much larger place, and it's much more scientific. It was mainly an engineering school at that time. And what made it really always a great place, and today included, but particularly when I first came to work there in 1960, were the people. The people were -- well, I wouldn't say less busy but they knew how to get things done, and there was much less bureaucracy and so if you wanted to do something, you just sort of went out and did it, rather than pass it through several levels of approval, each raising different questions. And so I can only speak about the time that I first went there, and then on, but it was a completely different place. As I said, it was -- when I came, there were 3,000,000 gross square feet. When I left there were 10,000,000.

INT: Wow.

WD: And I'm happy to say that I was a participant in putting in place of most of that additional 7,000,000 square feet. The plant was a lot smaller, I think. It was called Buildings and Grounds, then. And it might have been Buildings and Power, which are all names that it had over time. It had a very small staff. You could name the number of people on the administrative staff at MIT on about two hands.

INT: Wow.

WD: And most of the supervisory personnel were then what they called "exempt staff." Administrative staff were paid monthly; exempt staff were paid every two weeks.

INT: Oh, right.

WD: And then you had hourly employees, weekly, who were paid every week.

INT: Yes.

WD: And during my time, the exempt staff disappeared, and they all were merged into the administrative staff.

INT: Yes. That was even during my time.

WD: I think it probably was, Sue.

INT: Yes. It was.

WD: And of course the administrative staff is much larger than a handful of -- two handfuls of people at the present time.

INT: When you're saying that, do you mean all over the Institute?

WD: All over the Institute.

INT: Not just Facilities? I mean, not just the Plant?

WD: No.

INT: Wow!

WD: Because most of the people you know weren't even there.

INT: Yes.

WD: So you had Ruth Dawson. Ruth Dawson was the first woman, I believe, to become a member of the administrative staff.

INT: Really?

WD: And you probably had whoever was the Controller.

INT: What was Ruth's position?

WD: I'm not sure, but she worked -- probably with the Controller's office. But she had a significant position. But I'm not sure whether there were any more women that were on the exempt staff. I think Winnie McDonough later got to be on the exempt staff, but I don't believe she was at the time. And --

INT: Now, what year is this about, '60?

WD: 1960 I'm talking about. Of course, the Plant itself -- and I'm going to call it the Plant because I'm not sure whether the name had just changed to that, or not. But it was quite smaller in itself, as far as administrative people. Peterson was the director. Gerry Barraford was the Superintendent of Power and Utilities. Miles Cowen was the Superintendent of Building Services. I'm not even sure that he was called that, but -- and Ray Howell was the Building Maintenance Assistant.

INT: Now that's a name I've never even heard of.

WD: Oh, he was an older gentleman at the time, very knowledgeable. And Ed Pieper was Construction Manager. That was about it. Oh, Don Whiston was General Superintendent. Don worked -- went to MIT, worked for McCreery & Theriault, and was the designer of Building 20, which was built by McCreery & Theriault during the war. And then he came back to MIT and left to go with American Cyanamid. Ed Pieper came in to be sort of a general superintendent, and Ed was one of the most knowledgeable individuals I've ever met about construction documents, etc., and the construction process, but he was very deliberate and he just didn't work out in this

general superintendent's role, or whatever it was called then because it took too long for him to make decisions. And so they hired Don Whiston back from American Cyanamid, and he became General Superintendent, and they switched Ed Pieper at the time to be Construction Manager. So when I went there, I was unsure, although my title was Assistant to the Director of Physical Plant for Construction, so I do know that the name had changed by then. But I didn't know whether I worked for Ed, since he was the Construction Manager, or what.

INT: Yes.

WD: Now, I associated heavily with Ed, but I soon found out that it wasn't their thought that I really would work for him. And when I promoted myself within the year, Ed then went to work for me. And --

INT: Were a lot of those people MIT graduates?

WD: Ed Pieper was a graduate of Course 17, which was Building Construction, as was Don Whiston.

INT: Oh, really?

WD: Which is -- was Course 17 -- Building Construction, as was myself, Course 17.

INT: And what about Mr. Peterson?

WD: Carl Peterson was a mechanical engineer. He was -- I don't believe he had a doctor's degree, but close to it, I believe. And was an instructor in mechanical engineering, and in the late '30s, the Superintendent of Buildings and Power, I think it was then, or Buildings and Grounds, committed suicide in the MIT drafting room.

INT: Wow!

WD: And they needed someone to fill in for a few weeks or months until they hired a permanent replacement. And so they asked Carl if he would come over as a temporary replacement. And I believe that was before the construction of 7, so it had to have been in 1937 or so, and of course he stayed and retired as Director of Physical Plant in 1971.

INT: My God! That's so long. I didn't know he was there then -- started then.

WD: Right. So I took over as Director of Physical Plant in 1971 after he retired. Another interesting thing about Carl Peterson was that his father was the chief engineer at the power plant, and so Carl was very familiar with the power plant, which used to be a

coal-burning plant then, and did his share of shoveling coal and other things at the plant while he was a student. He went to MIT, as well as doing graduate work at MIT. Gerry Barraford was not an MIT graduate. He went to Clarkson University and was at the Institute for quite a long time, and as well as being Superintendent of Power and Utilities, to show you the size of the Institute -- when he was that, he was also in charge of parking for the Institute.

INT: Really?

WD: Yes. They used to run that out of his office, and he was in charge of the grounds operation.

INT: Gee.

WD: So we had one person that was in charge of electricity, utilities, grounds, and parking permits.

INT: Wow.

WD: Gerry was quite a gentleman, easy to rib because you could never tell whether he understood you were ribbing him or not. [Laughter] And he had a fetish, you might say, that he wanted his secretary to be housed in the same office that he was in because he wanted her to hear everything he had to say --

INT: Wow.

WD: -- so that if anyone called about something, she would know whether it had been talked about.

INT: Gee. That's interesting.

WD: Now, I'm sure if he had a personnel matter, or something, he would ask her to leave for a short time, but --

INT: Gee, that was almost ahead of his time in a way.

WD: But the interesting thing is Gerry happened to have two or three younger women who were his secretaries in my tenure and in fact they were in his office, and each one got pregnant and left, and of course that's what you did in those days when you got pregnant, you didn't put your kid in day care, you stayed home with them. So one of my kidding of Gerry was that -- that I understood why he wanted his secretaries in his office because obviously, since they all got pregnant, there was something else going

on in there that we didn't know about. And he wasn't sure whether that was humorous or not.

INT: [Laughter.] My God. Oh, so they didn't have -- what was the --

WD: Elizabeth Young?

INT: Yes. Miss Young.

WD: Yes. But Gerry had his own secretary.

INT: Oh, so she didn't cover him?

WD: No. So there was a smaller place, and of course the leadership of the Institute was small, but also terrific. There never was a finer leader or person than Jim Killian. Now I think by the time I came there in '60, that Jim had been to Washington with Eisenhower, and he became their first science edu -- whatever you call it -- science --

INT: Advisor?

WD: -- Advisor to the President. And Jay Stratton was President, who was pretty much unseen. Jay didn't meddle with the daily business of the Institute, and he was, again, a fine gentleman, but I actually came to know him better in later years, after he was no longer President, but Jim Killian was just the finest, smoothest person that one could ever be. A terrific fund-raiser.

INT: I've heard that about him.

WD: Originally he was assistant to Karl Compton and that's how he got his start.

INT: Is that right?

WD: And I don't believe he had any other degree than a bachelor's degree from MIT.

INT: Yes? Right. I read that somewhere, too.

WD: But he set the tone, and the three gentlemen that really ran the place were Phil Stoddard, who ran Operations -- again, a finer gentleman one couldn't find; Mal Kispert, who was on the academic side of administration --

INT: What does that mean? What was his job?

WD: He was called -- when I first went there, he was Administrative Vice Chancellor, and --

INT: Did they have a Provost?

WD: Well, I'm not sure. If they didn't, they had one soon after because it was [Charlie Townes.

INT: So they had an administrative person in what's now an academic --

WD: Yes.

INT: That's interesting.

WD: And of course, the Chief Financial Officer was [Paul Cusick], who was I think then Controller, probably. So when I came in '60, Stoddard was Administrative Vice Treasurer, Kispert was Administrative Vice Chancellor, and Cusick, I believe, was Controller. And of course, the Treasurer -- again, a fine gentleman, but I didn't have a hell of a lot to do with him, except the Building Committee meetings -- was Joe Snyder. So the three people that made the Institute tick were Cusick, Kispert, and Stoddard, administratively. Obviously, the faculty were, and I never want to forget the faculty are really what makes MIT, but to make it tick -- to make everything easy, it was those three gentlemen, and what was so good about them is they really liked each other and they had no territorial jealousy whatsoever.

INT: Yes. Now that I think is the amazing part.

WD: Which is a big, big change in today's world.

INT: Absolutely right.

WD: For instance, one year Mal Kispert was in charge of Personnel. He did it for a couple of years and then they swapped and Stoddard became in charge of Personnel, and the three of them would often meet together. If we had a decision to make on a fairly hefty item, I might be called over to a meeting with one and find the other two there. And so it was just a glorious way and something that some day I hope could be reproduced.

INT: Yes.

WD: In my time, I got along fine with most everybody. And I got along well with Jim Culliton and Constantine Simonides, but we were never -- there was always some territorial issues -- I would like to think more on their parts than mine, but I know I probably had some too, and so we never developed the same close relationship that those three guys had.

INT: Did they go to school together? I mean, were they similar in age? Or --

WD: Kispert and Stoddard were both at the Institute and probably graduated a year apart. I'm not sure they would have ever known each other.

INT: Oh, okay. So it wasn't like they were close friends, classmates?

WD: And Ed Cusick was not a graduate of MIT.

INT: Is that right?

WD: Well, he came to MIT during the -- and worked for the Radiation Lab during the War. And then stayed on after that was dissolved and went into the financial area. They all were different -- different people, but they got along terrific, and they were -- as far as business was concerned, they were very, very -- a great bunch. I never saw another bunch of people that worked together as well, and seeing my age, I never will. But I sure hope that some day that can happen.

INT: Yes. Hopefully, things work full circle.

WD: Now, the Space Committee at the time consisted of Mal Kispert, [Joe MacKinnon], who was formerly the Registrar, and was between 65 and 70 and working, supposedly, half-time, and Peterson. And I'll never forget the day -- they used to hold their meetings down in the Plant, and MacKinnon had an office that later on became mine, and I had a desk in a very large open space where we used to deal with construction drawings and stuff. And -- but the desk was right against the wall of MacKinnon's office, and they used to meet there. They'd leave the door open, and to give you an idea of how things were accomplished then, the Space Committee met one day -- it always started with a story. Kispert was the greatest joke teller of all time. I'm not sure I will repeat any of them here -- [laughter] -- but he had a barrel of them. And after they had the story, they got down to business, and one of them said - - and I don't remember which of the three -- we have a letter here from Professor so-and-so, and there was a letter, they read it. One of them read it to the other two, and it says, it seems that Professor so-and-so really has a need for some more space because he's doing this and that. So after the letter was read, they had a discussion about what was available, what could be made available, and whether they ought to try and do it. And finally -- I think I know who, but I won't say so -- said, I vote no, and besides, I never did like the son of a bitch. [Laughter] And the other two said, I think we vote no, also.

INT: [Laughter.] God.

WD: So they decided they would write him a letter and tell him they weren't able to do anything for him. But the funniest thing came next. The next letter was from Jim Holt, who was another one of these professors retired between 65 and 70. They used to let you work half-time between 65 and 70 on the faculty, if you wanted to, between 65 and 70. And he'd been there all his life, I think. And so that letter, or that session started with -- this is the same day, the following thing -- we have a letter from poor old Jim Holt. [Laughter] Well, poor old Jim Holt in Mechanical Engineering at that particular time owned about two-thirds of the Institute. [Laughter] And today we would say they could well solve their own problem, but in any case, they read the letter from poor old Jim Holt, and went on to have a discussion about how they could solve the problem, and --

INT: Poor old Jim Holt?

WD: That's the way the Space Committees were run. So it was an interesting time.

INT: When do you think it switched and sort of the faculty started to get much more power because now, the faculty, I think, really does drive the Institute. But it sounds like then it was completely run and driven by the administration?

WD: Well, administratively, but not -- it was just a much smaller place. And when did it switch?

INT: Yes.

WD: Well, the Provost eventually became much more -- much stronger people. You see, in MacKinnon's era, when he was the Registrar, MacKinnon was an old duck. MacKinnon used to teach math in Boston before they moved.

INT: Oh, my God.

WD: So he'd been around.

INT: Yes.

WD: And he'd been Registrar almost all the damn time he was at MIT in Cambridge. I remember signing the cards for going to school there that MacKinnon was the Registrar. But for all the time when he was the Registrar, he was in charge of space.

INT: Wow.

WD: Not the Provost.

INT: Yes.

WD: The Registrar.

INT: Well, I suppose with all the classrooms and stuff.

WD: Well, that was the main reason.

INT: Right.

WD: Because there were so many classrooms. I think it started changing --

INT: Was it student unrest that kind of -- or?

WD: Well, that had a lot to do with several things, but I think it started to really change when people changed. I mean, when Kispert died at his swimming pool at a fairly young age -- 74. I'm sorry, in 1974. And Cusick and Stoddard, both left in '71. Cusick might have left even earlier. And I think the break-up of that group started really when Jerry Wiesner became President because Cusick had no love at all for Jerry Wiesner. I'm not sure whether this should be written in this book or not, but if somebody thinks not, they can take it out. And Cusick used to frequent the Faculty Club quite often. [Laughter.] And was known to say to many people down there that the Corporation wasn't crazy enough to make Jerry Wiesner President, and that got back to Jerry Wiesner, and he did become President.

INT: Oops!

WD: And one of his first things to do was to try and fire Paul Cusick.

INT: Oh, is that right?

WD: And someone intervened, but at that time, they did demote Cusick to some Vice President of Business Relations, or something, to take advantage of his contacts in Washington, of whom he had many, and they made Stu Cowen --

INT: Oh, yes.

WD: -- the Vice President of Finance. Now, Stu was another fine guy that could have --

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO TAPE ONE

WD: All right. What was I saying?

INT: Well, I had asked the question about when kind of academic took more of a -- became more of a driving force in the Institute than the administrative side?

WD: Yes. I think the break-up of that great triumvirate, and fading out of day-to-day contact with Jim Killian, and although he stayed Chairman for a while, really made quite a difference, and the Institute's rapid growth.

INT: Was Dr. Killian the Chairman when Dr. Wiesner was President?

WD: I think --

INT: Or was it Howard Johnson?

WD: It might have been Howard Johnson.

INT: Uh huh.

WD: Wiesner succeeded Johnson as President.

INT: Oh.

WD: And I'm not sure that Johnson wasn't made Chairman. Of course, Joe Snyder left eventually.

INT: Right.

WD: And Charlie Townes came to be Provost. Charlie was well-known for his work, and was the father of the laser, but I think when somebody became President -- maybe Johnson -- Townes, who I think expected to be named President, picked up and left.

INT: Hmm.

WD: And so there was a whole different group of people -- Wiesner, Rosenblith, and all great people, but different in their -- the way they handled people and things. And I guess you could say the -- with this Provost taking over the head of formal Space Committee, etc., it became a much more academic-oriented administration. Of course, the -- like the rest of the world, the ethnicity of the Institute changed dramatically, as did the number of women. When I went there -- well, let me say that it was mostly a Protestant place, and one of the things you did was join the Maclauran Lodge of the Masons.

INT: Is that right?

WD: I went to a couple of those meetings with one of my co-workers, and I had already been a Mason in Framingham. I was made one on my twenty-first birthday, which is the youngest you can be a third-degree Mason. So I've been one for 50 years next year, but I was surprised how many people from the Institute -- faculty and a few staff -- that there were who belonged to the Maclauran Lodge. I mean, more likely than

not, one of them was the master of the lodge every year. So that soon changed, and the Institute became heavily Jewish. I'm talking throughout. I'm talking students, employees, administration, and of course many more women. As I said before, Ruth Dawson was the only woman on the administrative staff. And I take some pleasure in having promoted three women to Director's jobs while I was there -- Vicky Sirianni, Director of the Plant, Diane Shea, Director of Purchasing, and Anne Glavin, Chief of Police. I think Diane Shea is probably the only one of them still there, but --

INT: Yes.

WD: -- Diane was quite a bit younger than the others. So all of those things put together make MIT a much more diverse and fast-paced institution with all of the construction, the new laboratories. They form a different laboratory every few months. And so it is a very different place, and I think a place where you'll not find people that go to work there out of high school and retire from there.

INT: Hmm.

WD: I don't believe there will be too many more 50-year employees. We had three or four to my knowledge in the Plant.

INT: Really?

WD: One was -- it got to be 55 years, I think.

INT: Wow.

WD: But he used to be in the electric shop, and the Institute had a series of coordinated clocks and some that weren't. And every year at the time change, he used to go around at night and he'd change all the clocks in the Institute. They weren't personal clocks on somebody's desk. And the way he did it was he used to go around and roller-skate.

INT: Oh, God!

WD: Up and down the corridors of the main group.

INT: Wow.

WD: The other thing you've got to remember is that when I went there in 1960, the main group which we're going to describe as all the buildings between Memorial Drive, Mass. Ave., the railroad, and Ames Street -- Main Street -- there was only one air conditioning system in the whole place, a little piece of the library, where they kept

some of the older materials, and Kresge was air conditioned, but of course that's not in that complex, and the Sloan building was air conditioned from its inception because that was built by Lever Brothers in the '30s, and they air conditioned it at the time.

INT: Huh.

WD: So that the Sloan building was always air conditioned. But again, not on the MIT campus.

INT: Hmm. Gee, that's not that long ago, really.

WD: Oh, I can remember working some very hot weather in Building 24 basement for the three years that I was there. We then moved to the Ford building, which was then air conditioned. My biggest problem when we moved to the Ford building was to convince Gerry Barraford that we were not giving him an office large enough to house his secretary within. And we fought and fought and fought. I finally won that fight, as I knew I would, but -- because by that time, I -- somehow, after I'd been there a couple of years, everybody got to assume that when Carl Peterson left I would become the Director of Physical Plant -- the people I worked with, the people I worked for -- I mean, it just -- there wasn't any doubt. And I never took it to be a known fact because funny things happen. But I was treated that way. Suddenly, all these superintendents, who had a lot more time and knowledge than I did at the Institute, would seek my advice, and so forth. So I convinced Gerry, but he made us promise to put the secretary right outside the door. And we did do that. She was -- she couldn't have been closer to the door.

INT: [Laughter] God!

WD: And he always -- again, left his door open so she could see who and what they were talking about. And I had to admit, finally, that I was wrong, as she got pregnant. I told Gerry I apologize for all of the incriminations that I'd said about him, as she was not in his office. [Laughter]

INT: Yes, obviously it was a different time.

WD: So it was quite different, and the other thing is, of course, we had loads and loads of fun.

INT: Yes. I agree.

WD: While people worked hard, they seemed to save time.

INT: Uh huh. The one thing I'd say to people is it was a lot of fun.

WD: The people I worked with -- Peterson and [Palmer] they were great hunters and fishermen. They would drop anything if they had a guy in the business -- [Blewin], a sheet metal guy who owned a big boat up in Gloucester, and he'd call around 11:00 o'clock and say, you want to go out tuna fishing or blue fishing this afternoon? Well, it didn't make any difference what was going on, they'd drop everything and off they'd go at noontime to Gloucester. They also used to have outings. The last one -- they used to have them at Round Hill, a property we owned in South Dartmouth, and they used to take a bus because by the time they came home, none of them could have driven. And they used to play softball and other stuff, but I think they did their share of drinking. And one famous story is they stopped on the way home one night -- it might have been their last bus trip -- at Red Coach Grill in Middleborough, right off the highway for dinner. They all go into the inn and Peterson and someone else were at a table with [Wally Hockinson], who was the Bursar, and as I said, they'd probably done their share of drinking during the day. But Wally had a manhattan, and Carl said they were sitting there talking, and Hockinson started to gradually slide down in his chair, and he eventually slid under the table. [Laughter] And he said -- they said to hell with him. And in a few minutes he started to come up, and they said he came up and he finally got himself back at the chair, and he hadn't spilled a drop of the manhattan that he had when he went down.

INT: I remember hearing that.

WD: And when he came back up -- [laughter] --

INT: Did Miles Cowen used to go on those?

WD: No, no, no. Miles --

INT: Because he was a pretty straight arrow.

WD: Yes. Miles was a -- not a party man.

INT: Right.

WD: And there was a lot of humor. There's a couple of more things that came to mind the other day, but I can't recall right now. That's -- when you get to be 70, that's part of the -- I think of aging gracefully. You can't remember everything.

INT: Hmm. I think, too, they promoted a lot of people from within. I mean, almost exclusively back then, wasn't it?

WD: Yes. A lot of --

INT: If you were on your way up, they --

WD: Yes.

INT: -- and now I think they rarely promote from within.

WD: Well, as the Institute grew, they had people that had showed what they could do, and -- some of the best people -- I don't want to sound parochial, but some of the better people we hired in my tenure, two of them were Dick McKay and Tom Shepherd. Both of those were Institute graduates, and I always thought, really, what these other guys get great educations at other places, have worked at some good places. What makes the difference between being good and very good or excellent? And it came to me at one time it was the way the Institute made you learn by the fire hose method with exams every Friday and stuff that -- and the exams -- you always would have to come to a solution, you know? It wasn't like writing an English paper or something, so if it was a calculus exam, you had to get the right answer, or it was wrong.

INT: Right.

WD: Or physics or chemistry. And I think that's what makes the difference because over time, I found that although other people might be as smart as they were, they were always able to make decisions easier, or more readily than anyone else. And I think it's true. I think I certainly learned that. And I think that separates good operating people and engineers from planners because planners never think they've got the right solution. So rather than hang it up and say that's what it's going to be, they want to go on and on and on. And they need somebody on the outside to say that's it. That's far enough; that's what we're going to do.

INT: Yes.

WD: And I never met a person in my life more intelligent than Bob Simha. But Bob's problem in my book was that he always could do better, and that he never wanted to finish anything. And so you had to force him to finish it, and I've said before, and I'll say again, on those times when he and I disagreed, or he and others disagreed, when you looked back, more often than not, he was right, and you probably should have

done what he had been advocating, but you do have to make decisions in life, be they right or wrong, and move on and be willing to admit it if you make a wrong one.

INT: I think, too, is it seemed like people then -- seemed to -- I guess they don't now, but there just was a great love of the Institute, and a lot of history that went with these people. I mean, you know, even --

WD: Well, that's what happens when you have so many people that went here.

WD: Sure. You need a good mix.

INT: Exactly, but I just -- when you're naming all these people, there was just this theme of -- you know, knowledge of history, and also great love of the Institute, and maybe that's -- a lot of people did put their own ambitions aside a little bit.

WD: A little bit.

INT: And almost put the Institute's needs first, and that's why I do think --

WD: Where did Joe Snyder go to school?

INT: I thought he -- did he go to Harvard?

WD: I don't know. He might have.

INT: I think he might have gone to Harvard. Was he definitely not MIT?

WD: I don't know that. I never --

INT: I don't either.

WD: I don't think he was.

INT: Yes. For some reason, I think he was Harvard. But then, I guess, Glenn Strehle.

WD: Well, Strehle was an MIT person.

INT: Right. So maybe --

WD: And very good.

INT: Yes.

WD: I must say Glenn was one of the more cooperative people, when -- he was not a yes man, but when he agreed to do something, he did it without any -- as if it was his own idea.

INT: Right.

WD: Which I appreciated that willingness to do that.

INT: Yes.

WD: So I think that will end today, and --

INT: Okay.

WD: -- I'm not sure whether we'll have another one or not. I'll have to think about it.

INT: Okay.

[End of interview]