

**SRU ORAL HISTORY**

**"SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY AND THE CAMPUS MINISTRY"**

**INTERVIEWEE: P. A. HARMON**

**INTERVIEWERS: DR. JOSEPH RIGGS AND LEAH M. BROWN**

**06 AUGUST 1993**

R: This is Joe Riggs and Leah Brown interviewing P. A. Harmon about the Slippery Rock University campus ministry, and about his career as a campus minister on August 6, 1993.

We'd like to start with an early disclosure and that is that P. A. stands for Paul Ambrose for those who don't know.

H: And it's also junior.

R: And it's also junior, and there is a Paul Ambrose the third who is now beginning his ministry.

H: Yes, this is a very exciting time for our family. Last Sunday he was called to be the pastor of a church, a United Church of Christ congregation in Bel Aire, Ohio, which is a suburb across the river from Wheeling. So the first of September he starts his time as pastor there.

R: That's my home country. I lived just below Wheeling. So I know a little about Bel Aire. I have a sister that lived there. The calling is large. A lot of sinners.

H: He just finished seminary in May. So we've had several months of celebrations and anticipations and now another celebration coming up.

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R: Well, I think we kind of like to begin at your beginning here, although you may want to say something about your earlier years in campus ministry. You now have a total of 20 years?

H: Yes. I've been a campus minister for 20 years, and the reason that I came to Slippery Rock in 1980 is because of the kind of ministry that they claimed at that point to be doing and wanting to be doing. I'm a product of the ecumenical movement. I went to seminary in 1965 to 1968. I was in graduate school at Emory University in Atlanta from 1968 to 1973 working in a doctoral program on American church history. So you might say I cut my theological teeth on that exciting time in the sixties, the ecumenical movement, after the Second Vatican Council. All of the official and unofficial dialogues going on among various Christian groupings. Also, involvement in civil rights movement at the time. Feminist theology, a part of my training in seminary which I always will consider a very important part of what makes me what I am at this point. I got involved in various social issues of antiwar movements. All of that sort of thing. I know at this point it's fashionable to say we don't want to label people and we don't like to talk about labels, but I've always been very conscious of the fact, and I've worked very hard at being a liberal. So I come out of a time in my church and

theological training and involvement in social issues of the sixties which are characterized in all kinds of different ways,

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H: but for me it was kind of the birthing of myself as a person and as a minister and as a campus minister. I've always felt a calling to ministry and higher education. Always, of course, from the time I started thinking about becoming a minister. When I went to seminary, my idea was to go to seminary, to get a master's divinity degree, and then go to graduate school to get a Ph.D. so that one day I could teach on a college level. Teach religion or philosophy. I felt a real calling into that. While I was at graduate school at Emory University, I came to the conclusion that I didn't really want to be teaching, but after making an acquaintance with some of the campus ministry people there, I came to realize that the two institutions that I loved the most, the church and the university, they came together at a special way every day in campus ministry. So while I was a graduate student I decided this is really what my calling is to be. So I was one of those people that fairly easily after having a pretty successful graduate career decided before getting the Ph.D. just to drop out. I had no qualms about doing that in the late sixties because a campus ministry position came open in Kentucky. So I went to Morehead State University in

Kentucky. I was there for two years from 1973 to 1975. From 1975 to 1980 I was at Kearney State College in Nebraska. That was my first experience as an ecumenical campus minister there. It was supported by four different Protestant denominations. Then I

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H: started feeling a need to come back east to be closer to family. When I saw the position was open at Slippery Rock, and that my predecessor and the current Catholic campus minister were really serious about doing ministry together and trying to operate as a staff, I applied for this position with that in mind. This is the place I want to be because they're doing the kind of ministry that I want. I'd never been to western Pennsylvania. I had no feeling for the place or I wasn't drawn here by geography or anything else, but I was drawn here because of the unique aspect of the campus ministry as they advertised when they trying to hire a new pastor. So I came here in 1980 with the intention of joining into an ecumenical ministry, and I found that exactly what I was looking for because the Catholic campus minister at the time who was coming in also was new, Father Ted Rutkowski. Ted had a vast ecumenical experience. He had been on the national body called National Institute for Campus Ministries. So he had had a lot of ecumenical experience and we pledged together when we came here we would not only

try to follow the example of our predecessors but to expand it. At the same time, we were joined by a third person, a new person, Sister Rosaire Kopczenski, who was just finishing up a master's program at Fordham in higher education. So the three of us came together within a month's time in August of 1980 from different parts of the country with all of us with the intention of doing

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H: ecumenical campus ministry. Wilma Blake, who is currently the secretary of the Newman Center, also joined us that summer. She was Father Rutkowski's secretary in the diocesan office in Pittsburgh. So all of us came together, all of us new, with the feeling of working together, and it was just a marvelous experience to come here knowing that something I really wanted to do, I was actually going to have a chance to do it. So when I arrived here in 1980, it was kind of the culmination, I think, of all that I had been trained to do in the ecumenical movement. One more word about the ministry here. It began in 1968, and they called the pastor, Neil Severance, who was a Presbyterian clergyperson. He was here until 1979, then took a position as dean of students at Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Then I came the next year. So there have only been two campus ministers in for the Protestant campus ministry since 1968, Neil Severance and myself.

The official title of our organization reflects, I think, the ecumenical movement. Our official title is, and I always have to refer to some memo here, United Christian Council for Campus Ministry at Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania. We've shortened it to United Campus Ministry, but the reason that it's significant is that it reflects one of the high points, I think, of the ecumenical movement because seven denominations decided in 1968 to form the United Ministries in Higher Education in Pennsylvania.

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H: They are the American Baptist Church, the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, Church of the Brethren, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., the United Church of Christ, and the the United Methodist Church. Pennsylvania is the very last state that still has one of these ecumenical organizations with a full-time director. Many other states had similar organizations with various configurations of mostly main-line Protestant churches that went together. Pennsylvania has always led the way in ecumenical campus ministry. So the ministry that I became a part of was not only ecumenical on the Protestant level, but then when I came here and joined in with the Roman Catholic staff and moved into the Newman Center, although I've never been officially a part of the Newman Center, I moved in and have an office there

and we try to do all of our programming together. We intentionally work as a staff which makes it very interesting when you're not a staff and you try to work like one. It's both positive and negative. In some ways the negative is that you don't have the kind of support structure that a staff has, but on the positive side, if you decide to do it and work at it then it becomes even stronger in many ways because you're doing it because you want to. So that you might say the ecumenical movement and my calling into ministry in higher education is what brought me to Slippery Rock. I've just completed my thirteenth year.

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R: Has the "L" word caused you many problems over those years? So many people just don't call themselves liberals very much because they have a kind of clientele or a group to serve that doesn't like the word.

H: No, it hasn't given me any trouble I don't think because we need some folks around who call themselves certain things, and I'm at times like a lightning rod. I think sometimes you're a lightning rod and sometimes you're a seismograph, but what I mean by calling myself a liberal is that I come out of a tradition that has called me to be open not only to persons, but persons of

all faith traditions, persons of ethnic, racial traditions,  
persons who don't think like I do. I was trained to see that as  
a  
positive rather than a negative, and that is part of what I  
consider as being a liberal and openness rather than a sectarian  
person, a closed person, an open person. The other part, I think,  
of being a, quote, liberal is to see where, from a person  
of a faith tradition, where does my faith tradition impact what  
I really do and where I live and the social conditions around me.  
I think that seeing persons in situations, seeing that it's the  
situation that makes the difference not some guidelines or stan-  
dards from which I can never deviate or whatever. A person of  
faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition seems to me, is a person  
who sees God at work in the world, and my place is to join in  
where God is at work.

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H: I'll tell you two brief illustrations. Not long after I came here  
two students came to see me who had watched me from sort of afar  
or a bit. They came to see me and they were very concerned that  
that they didn't think that I was being what they considered a  
good Christian campus minister. What one of the people said to me  
was, we don't believe that you are taking God to this campus the  
way you ought to be doing. I said, that is not my job to take

God to this campus. My job is to find out where God is at work on this campus and in the community and join in. And very often I'm surprised and even shocked at where I find God at work. It might not be with folks that I ordinarily associate with or in situations that I'm comfortable with, but that is what I think it means to be sensitive to and open to where God is at work. Now I think if you approach ministry like that you are less likely to come off as someone who arrives on the scene with all of the answers, and you're probably less likely to beat someone over the head with your own tradition rather than helping persons through your tradition. The other situation was the very first year that I was in campus ministry in Kentucky, and that goes back to my calling myself a liberal. A chemistry professor there asked me to come by to see him one day not long after I'd been there. So we were chatting. He was telling me about his philosophy of life and his politics, and it became very clear after a while that he was also telling me what he expected as a Methodist, and I

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H: was called there as a Methodist campus minister, what he was expecting of me there. He ended our conversation by saying, I'm a conservative. I work hard every day at being a conservative because I know there are liberals and radicals out there trying to change my way of life. They're attacking everything about what

I know it means to be an American, a Christian, and a southerner, and he went on and on and on. As I left his office and going down the steps I remember saying to myself, I am a liberal and I'm going to work hard every day at being a liberal because I know that there are conservatives out there like the gentleman I just spoke to who are so afraid of losing their status in life that it gets in the way, it really does get in the way, of serving others. It gets in the way of being open to God's leading and God's spirit. I know that in my liberality that I can become just as closed. I can become just as dogmatic about that as anyone else, so I'm not criticizing folks who call themselves conservative because in many ways I think I'm a conservative in some ways too, like in worship. You're not going to find anybody more wanting to conserve the tradition than I do of wanting to conserve whatever. So although those terms do get mixed up and we do have to be careful about what we call each other, but I try not to call anybody else anything, but I am very conscious that what I want to be and what I want to do as a minister falls into what I would define as a liberal position.

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R: And when you can talk about it that way it reduces polarity enormously when you can describe and define what it is your liberalism is all about, because many of the conservatives will

kind of come full circle and say, gee, that's where I am as well.

H: One of the things that I think that we found that it is important in a dialogic kind of way to be able to talk about how are we different, and how that can be seen not as something as a negative but as something positive. Isn't it wonderful that we are different. That's why when we start to talk about racial issues and the last several years my ministry has been very much defined by involvement with minority students. And I'll talk about it at great length if you want me to sometime the group that was originated here after a cross burning incident in 1990 called START, Students Together Alleviating Racial Tensions, but I have always felt that when we start using color-blind statements or we start using descriptive statements of each other that it doesn't take into account who we really are. For instance, when I look at a person of color, it's a very important part of who they are. I don't think it's a good idea to start using color-blind language. When I'm relating to another person their ethnic, cultural, religious, racial make-up or background to me is an extremely important part of who they are, and it should be celebrated and acknowledged. And when I, especially a person

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H: who's of the majority, when I start using color-blind language,

all that really says is that I want you to be like me. And being a white male heterosexual, blue-eyed, blond-haired, southern, clergy, I have never been discriminated against. There is never a time when I can't walk into any room, and I don't have to worry are the people here going to notice. I have two small glitches in my life. One, I'm a southerner. One, I'm a minister. And I am very much aware over the years of being stereotyped in those ways but that's okay. It's very minor, and it's no big deal. But what I have found in trying to relate to international students, minority persons, persons from all religious traditions, is that we really do need to celebrate and acknowledge each others' differences. And I think that has been a defining part of what it has meant to me to be a minister in the world of higher education because there's very few places left anymore like the academic world where we have the opportunity to celebrate diversity, but also to celebrate our unity. Where we are alike and where we are different. Also, the university is one of the last places where at least we say should be a marketplace of ideas. All of those kinds of terms, free flowing intellectual conversation. Now we all know that there are all kinds of limits on that with political and other things. But at least here we say out loud that this is what we ought to be doing. That's why I think that ministry in higher education

H: for me has been so exciting and fulfilling. I can't imagine ever doing anything else. All of the students now who twenty years ago when I was their campus minister now are calling me on the phone and talking to me about their children who are getting ready to go to college, and about some of the moments that we had together that I don't even remember anymore. Conversations that we had that they say were turning points in their life because I listened to them and joined in their questioning rather than piling answers on top of them. That just tells me over and over again it is in the world of higher education where as a minister I have a great opportunity not only to grow spiritually myself, but to help other people grow. It's wonderful to talk to former students, and I'm sure that you share that with me. To talk with former students who have had a significantly positive experience that you were somehow part of, or maybe you weren't a part of it but you saw them come to a place like Slippery Rock where I have seen students come in under the University

Enrichment

Program. They probably wouldn't have had a chance anywhere else, and I'm right now thinking of several examples. They just blossomed. They became what we all would just hope that education can help people do. So a place like Slippery Rock that gives people a chance or any place in higher education that gives people a chance to grow and flourish. If that's been part of

what is meant to be, need to be, in ministry in higher education.

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H: I have a tee shirt that says, John Wesley was a campus minister. John Wesley, of course, was one of the founders of the Methodist church of which I am a part. The Methodist church really started on Oxford University's campus with John Wesley, an Anglican priest, and his brother and others who felt a need for a spiritual renewal and that sort of thing. So I'm always harkening back to the fact that the church has not only always been a very important part of higher education, but the reason that they have sent me here is not to convert folks on this campus to Christianity or not to make little Methodists out of little something elses, but to celebrate the world of higher education, saying we believe that higher education is an important gift of God and we want to celebrate it with you.

I've always seen campus ministry as having two facets. One is the personal facet which you relate to individuals. You relate to persons either in times of celebration or in crisis, in times of inquiry. The other facet and perhaps even, perhaps the most important facet to me, is the systemic part of what I do. By that I mean I consciously, self-consciously, relate to

Slippery Rock University as an institution, as a system, made up of faculty, administrators, and students who are together in a time of inquiry. So we've always used in Slippery Rock, the Protestant campus ministry folks, have always used words like ministry of presence and involvement, and we use the word that

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H: came out of the 1960's also for campus ministry called prophetic inquiry. Being involved in, actively involved in, the academic world with whatever is happening within the inquiring into the learning process, and being ready to make our contribution from our tradition, but more importantly to join in that process of inquiry. And campus ministry has allowed me to do that.

R: Is there a difference between being a member of the campus ministry and being a classroom teacher in terms of how open you can be about what you believe, think and feel? Are there more strings on ordinary faculty than there are of someone in the campus ministry?

H: Well, one of the things I've always very much appreciated about being a campus minister at a state-related or state-owned institution is that I'm not officially connected to the University, and although I am officially still connected to my church, I am sort of in-between. I fall somewhere on the periphery or the edge of both of those institutions, and therefore, I obviously

have felt a great amount of freedom to take part in the academic life. To be critical if I needed to be, to ask questions that I thought needed to be asked, and to be told by my church also that this is what we expect. We expect you to be a minister there.

Every campus is different, and every place you have to respond differently. So I am sure, I've never been a faculty member, but I am sure that there is a difference. I speak in classes often

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H: enough, and I know that I've been asked by several faculty members to talk to classes about diversity, for instance, or whatever, and indicating to me that maybe I could say some things that they really could say, they wouldn't have any problems saying them, but later on they would have to deal with ramifications and all that. So I think that is the case. There certainly has been a feeling that I have been asked to contribute and have been accepted. You see I think there is great responsibility with that though, because there are no official kinds of restraints and there are no sanctions that this University could put against me or whatever. So I take that very seriously that if I get involved and if I say what I believe or if I make some kind of a position statement or a prophetic statement to the University that it is done in a very careful

and loving way. My style has always been not to be so

confrontational, but to go to persons and talk. I've had a very close relationship with our current president, Bob Aebersold. I've considered him both a friend and colleague, but we both know that whenever we really want to say to each other what we need to say for the good of the institution, we can do that and we do. It's done in private. I have felt a real sense not only of trust but also working as a colleague with Bob and nearly everybody else at Slippery Rock. One of the things that we're finding in the church these days is that the University is still one of those

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H: places that welcome us. I don't have to jump over hurdles, fight battles, or whatever around here to be involved on this campus. Now some of that has to do with my predecessor, Neil Severance, establishing for the first twelve years of this ministry a trust relationship. I followed him, people here expecting me to be like him in many ways, and after a few years proving that I could be trusted. So there's never been a feeling on my part of having to break down walls of resistance. I've always been involved since the very first day. As a matter of fact, not long ago, I was going through some files from 1980, and I was part of what they called in 1980 the fall welcome days for students. I hadn't been here but a month, but in September

I was leading small groups at the request of the administration with students coming in. I think what that told me right away was that we want you here, and we appreciate you being here. I've tried to work around here as if people might think that I was part of the staff. That's part of what I mean by the systemic part of the ministry. For instance, I have been a part of the employee wellness committee since its beginnings, and I have been a part of the gerontology committee for

probably ten years, and various other groups I have been a part of, but those are faculty administrative level committees that I have taken full part in. I didn't need to be part of any of those. Nobody asked me to or expected me to, but as part of

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H: what I felt and my local board felt was part of campus ministry was to be involved there in being helpful. We recently had an on site evaluation. A team of people came to evaluate the ministry. And the last conversation they had was with the President, and he said some very kind things, but the most important thing, I think, that he said was that it would cost the University something to hire somebody to do what I do and it's free. That's exactly what I would hope that he would feel because that is what without any expectations, without wanting anything from the University except acceptance, and that's all that I've received

here, and it's been very positive. I feel that I'm very much a part of a team of people on this campus who really care about the community, the students and faculty and administrators, people in health services. I see that there are all kinds of opportunities for me to get involved. I have never thought about campus ministry as, quote, student work. Obviously, with 7,000 plus students around here that's the main component of what this University is, but I've always seen campus ministry as ministry in higher education, and I've seen my involvement with faculty and administrators and other support staff just as important as working with students. There have been occasions when people who pay for this out there in the churches have a question about that, because usually when somebody asks me how things are going they want to know how many kids do you have in your

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H: group. Well, it gives me an opportunity to do a bit of my own sort of education. First of all, I don't call university students kids. I mean I do slip up occasionally, but I feel if you want somebody to act like an adult you start treating them like an adult and your language is the first part of that. Secondly, I don't have a group. I have intentionally not formed a group of people who would say we are P. A. Harmon's group or the campus ministries group. I relate to a lot of

groups and I relate to students on all kinds of levels. When they want to talk about how I relate to students, many people have an idea that a campus minister is someone who comes to campus to sort of take care of the students that they send, and sort of keep them on the straight and narrow, or keep them involved in the church, and make sure that they come through this place unscathed and funneled back out to the churches, not having been influenced by the evil world out there. Well, I don't see that in any way as part of my calling except obviously in situations when somebody needs that they certainly have that, but I try to relate. I've often told people, I'm

your campus minister whether you like it or not. I believe, I feel that I in many ways am the pastor for everyone here. I don't mean that in any kind of an arrogant way, but I mean it in a way that no one who lives, works, or plays at this institution is someone that I would not want to be involved with in any way

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H: if I can be helpful or to help celebrate their life with them. And my local board has always been very supportive of that, has never asked me questions like what are the numbers for these kinds of things, but are you involved in the ministry of presence on this campus, and are you relating to the University and responding where you think your response needs to be?

B: Is that a kind of outline of guidelines from your board? You have made your presence very felt and very important, and so you have a lot of freedom or you've assumed a lot of freedom on this campus, and is that what your board wants of you? What other guidelines have they put down for you?

H: Yes, we have always assumed, and when I say we, my local board, perhaps I need to talk about the local board in a minute since I've referred to them several times, and that's a term I've introduced to you. But we have felt all along since I've been here that we need to provide as the campus ministry on this campus almost everything that a local parish would provide in a local congregation, knowing that this is not a local congregation, knowing that it's different. But for instance, when I make annual reports I make them under the following headings, generally speaking it changes a bit each year, but I've always tried to provide worship experiences for students. That means on the one hand every Thursday night I celebrate holy communion in the chapel at the Newman Center for anybody that wants to come.

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H: I also try to make it possible for students from every religious tradition to relate to their worshipping community. Every summer when we get the religious affiliation cards we go through those and disseminate that information to all the Christian, and

Jewish, other organizations in the community. So they can contact their students and let them know about worship experiences. So I take it very seriously that one of the things that I need to be doing here is to provide for, in the broadest sense, worship opportunities for students and faculty and others. Secondly, try to provide for education. By that I mean in the broadest sense of the word historical and religious educational opportunities. The example of that, and I think it's a very positive example, is the lecture series at the Newman Center. Father Rutkowski and I started that in the fall of 1980, and every semester since then, that must be 26 semesters or so, we have had a lecture series that's been open to the community, not only to faculty and students, but everybody in the community. And we have tried to cover the widest variety of topics all the way

from church history to world religions to social issues. So we intentionally do a lecture series and we don't try to be cute by that and calling it serendipity or come on by and share your stuff with us. We call it a lecture series because we lecture. That's one of the things folks are accustomed to doing on campus, and I think sometimes people who are in campus ministry think

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H: they need to be cute or innovative or whatever to draw people in. Well, we decided that what we need to be is intellectually

rigorous and honest and work hard at what we do. So when you come to one of our lecture series I hope that you come with the expectation that I will have done my homework and that this is approaching at least a college level lecture. So we do those kinds of things. So worship, education, then fellowship. I'm very conscious of providing for fellowship, for instance, either at the Newman Center through parties and dances and different kinds of fellowship and social activities, or through local congregations to make sure that students who want to be involved with fellowship things related to their own religious tradition can do that. Also, service. We try to provide through our senior citizens assistance program that we also started in 1980 to provide opportunities for

students and others to relate to the community through helping senior citizens with all kinds of tasks and chores around their home, to visiting nursing homes, to being involved. We have come to the point over the last several years of providing a way for people in social work classes to send their students to us in campus ministry to participate in our programs in the two nursing homes in the community, the high rise for the elderly here in town, and other kinds of opportunities. So worship, education, fellowship and service are kind of the four things that if you ask any parish, Christian, or any other tradition

H: what are the kinds of things you do here. Those are the things that you would say, so I have always taken that as the least I want to help people get involved with those kinds of activities. What I do then as a pastor opens up all of those areas of presence, involvement on campus, abd relating to faculty members. I do something, somebody started using the term, I think it was in health services after my third year here, I walked into the office there in Claire Schmeiler's office and somebody said, hey, what are you doing? And she said, he's making rounds. Which is a medical kind of term, but it struck me as that's exactly what I was doing. I intentionally make rounds. I am in every academic building on this campus every week. There are places that I intentionally make sure that I visit all the time for no other reason, just to say hello, but that inevitably has opened up opportunities for involvement in various kinds of ways. On the one hand we have some fairly self-conscious guidelines for campus ministry, but then on the other hand it's sort of like whatever the person who's here does. It's interesting

that over the last couple of years we've had some serious financial problems, and so if you look at my budget I spend about \$200 a year on programs. Mostly I do that because I don't have more money, but I don't know if I had much more if I would spend much more, because in a way my personality and

my approach has come to the point where I am pretty much the

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H: program. I can use other people's money. I can use other people's facilities. I can join in with other groups doing things, but primarily the ministry here is seen very much as centered in the campus minister and what he or she would get involved with. We are related to United Ministries in Higher Education in Pennsylvania which supports us through block grants. All of those seven denominations I mentioned earlier give money to United Ministries in Higher Education in Pennsylvania. We have at the moment, counting full-time and part-time ministries, about 20 or 22 ministries in Pennsylvania mostly related to the SSHE campuses. So we are related to them in a way of accountability, reporting and that sort of thing. But at each local level a local board oversees the work of the campus ministry. The local board here is made up of pastors from the churches, the congregations who are part of United Ministries in Higher Education. A couple of lay persons from their congregation, and then a category that I love, the at-large category which means whomever we want to get to be related to our board. Some of the early people on our board are some retired persons. Some of them are still around. Carl Laughner, a former faculty member at Slippery Rock, was an early member of the board. Pastor John Peterson of

the Center Presbyterian Church is probably the earliest member, a person who was interested in getting this ministry started. So he's been a member of the board for however many, 25 or 26

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H: years however long we've been in existence. Carl Dresden who is still a faculty member here, he was early involved. Jan Hudak who retired a couple of years was a member. Some of the current members, Tom Gaither, Joe Lisciandro, Anne Dayton, Claire Schmieler. To stop there for a moment, Claire is a Roman Catholic but is a member of the Protestant campus ministry board simply because she was seen as an important part of this community to make contributions to our board. It is nice that she is a Roman Catholic which adds a bit of diversity to our board. Our board is very diverse anyway in their own thinking, in their own theology, their own approach to the ministry. But these are the persons who oversee my ministry, so as you can clearly see a lot of them I see every day anyway so we work very closely together. They're my pastors. They're my support system. They're my friends. Because this could become a rather lonely kind of position because the next colleague, the next Protestant campus minister that I would relate to would be in Pittsburgh or in Clarion or wherever. So I really appreciate the friendship and support that I've gotten from the members of the board. So the

board has been fairly constant over the years. When it needs to be involved actively, it is. When I leave one day, they'll become very active because they will have to hire somebody. They'll go through the process of doing a nationwide search, like every other board or department has to go through. But they

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H: are involved. Right now they're pretty much involved because we are having financial problems. It's interesting that the history of campus ministry has really followed the history of the ecumenical movement. When the ecumenical movement was in its height in the late sixties and everybody was excited about Christian unity and we're talking to everybody even non-

Christians, and we were doing all this sort of thing, money was flowing into all of these kinds of things. Now what I do is very low on the priority list of all the denominations that support me. Not because they don't think it's important on the one hand, but everybody is having financial problems. So my title, what I do, is so ecumenical that it's easy for them to cut their contributions to us. So now that the ecumenical movement has sort of fallen on hard times, so have ecumenical campus ministers. To me on the one hand it is disappointing and upsetting that in my fifty-third year I need to be worried about whether I'm going to be paid next week, but on the other hand

it also provides for some exciting new ways of rethinking and some innovations because we've always been innovative in campus ministry. We've always been encouraged to be different, to do things differently, to see things, and to try things in new ways. and maybe this at this point because we are running out of money we're going to be forced again to say, what is it going to look like? It just can't go on the way it was, and the liberal

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- H: in me will get to say all right. Let's be open to, let's experiment with, and try some things even though structures or traditions say that's not the way perhaps that it is done. But my thirteen years at Slippery Rock have shown me that although things seemingly haven't changed very much, that under the surface there have been kind of major changes that cause us to have to look at everything that we do in new and different ways. And right now the financial situation is causing us to look at different configurations. So it could be next year or ten years from now there won't be a full-time person in my position. There might be a part-time person related to one of the local congregations or any kind of different configuration.
- R: How does the fund raising work? Each of these supporting units commits through their annual budget?

H: Yes.

R: And is the local board involved in fund raising also?

H: When I came here ninety-nine percent of our budget came from the block grant from United Ministries in Higher Education. At the moment, we are involved in a full-blown fund raising effort of the local board. When I came here it was never the case that we ask the local congregation for contributions or an individual. But now that is very much a part of what we do, because we're having to ask now congregations in generally the Slippery Rock area where we would draw students from, to consider putting

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H: us in their budget, the local congregations and individuals. We've asked individuals. Now I'm not very good at this, and I don't feel very comfortable about it, and I don't want to do it, and so I'm doing it. They're sort of dragging me in kicking and screaming, but I'm doing it. Obviously, I need to do it. So my local board now has been preoccupied with this, but it has become sort of the major item of our meetings. When we get together they say, how are things going? We chat about that for a while, but then we say, now how are we going to keep this going? So it's wide open now as to fund raising. Foundations very often have money, but they have money to support programs,

and right now what we need is money to pay my salary and my pension plan and all of those goodies. Foundations are not an obvious way to raise money right now. So I think what it means for the future is that it's going to be different, and things are going to have to change because I don't see any way possible for a return to those good old days of the high point of the ecumenical movement when all of these folks are contributing money for this kind of thing.

B: Can you tell us about one or several campus crises that you were involved in and helped to find perhaps solutions for. Something we ought to remember.

H: To me, at this point, the most obvious point is the beginning of group called START, Students Together Alleviating Racial Ten-

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H: sions. In February of 1990 we had a cross burning incident at the Kiester Apartments. Within 24 hours the two students who were involved with burning the cross were gone, removed from the community, but obviously this brought home to people in a way that hardly anything else can, that there's a major racial crisis in our midst and what do we do. I've been a member of the

President's

Commission on Race Relations ever since he started that several years ago. The next day we met in kind of emergency session

bringing all kinds of people together saying, how do we address this situation, not only the present situation about the cross burning, how do we deal with the hurt that that caused, but how do we go on from there and do some other things. We came up with all kinds of different programs and plans. I mentioned in the meeting that I thought there was one thing missing that we hadn't dealt with yet, and that was to form a student organization

that would get together for the sole purpose of talking to each other about racism, and if it broadened out from there, okay, but we need to get a group of students together. Because, as I

mentioned earlier, a significant part of my education occurred during the 1960's, and I was really a part of movements where we knew that if students got involved we were empowered and we had power to bring changes in the community. We could actually change things, the way people do things. So I asked that a student group be formed, and that I be allowed to meet with them for a while to

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H: get them going, but that no faculty or administrators be a part of it, and that it not be a formal structure, that it be a gathering of students to talk about racism. Well, they said, of course do that. So we decided we would call a meeting for that very week, and we decided, are there students that we know

who would be good to start this group rather than just saying volunteers. So we came up with 16 names and the President had a breakfast for us within the week after this cross burning incident and we met. We decided that we would meet in Boozel Dining Hall in their private dining room on a weekly basis for dinner. And we started meeting that week, the next week at four o'clock on Monday at Boozel. That group met without missing a meeting for two solid years, except we missed a couple of meetings during the summer. But within a couple of weeks they decided to take the name START, and that we would talk about anything under the sun, but centering it on racism, and that we would do some programming and so forth. It's been the single most exciting group that I've ever been a part of. There isn't any question about it. We ended up with a wonderful mix of African Americans, white, Hispanic, Asian, a real cross section of religious traditions and one of the most important programs that we came up with the first year came out of a Jewish student making a comment to an African American student. We go to the point where we were being very honest with each other, and we

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H: said that we could say anything we want to in this room, and treat it gently and with love. He said to the Black student, whenever I see you I think Christianity. All of your great leaders in the

twentieth century have been Christian and he said, I have been here for four years now and I've never been able to spend Passover with my family. And he said, I want you to know that that bothers me that I have always had to live my life under the Christian calendar and at times I feel that that oppresses me. This is not a conversation they would have had having coffee somewhere, but in this setting where he brought that up he said, you know this might not be something you think about very often, and the Black student said he was just astounded. He said, I have never thought about that, and what can we do? Is there anything that we can do to

help. And the student said, if you weren't able to spend Easter with your family next year, would there be protests to the President? And yes and this sort of thing. So he said, why don't we put together a calendar and publish it in the Rocket, and list every religious holiday that we can get our hands on every month. All the national holidays around the world. And I said, I've got a calendar at home that list women's birthdays of every day of the year. So the more we thought about this, the more excited we got, and we started publishing the START calendar that comes out in the Rocket. It's called START October with

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H: whatever, and we had such a wonderful response from that

calendar from people all over campus who would come up to us and say, I have learned so much from just looking at this calendar, or somebody would call up and say, you spelled Czechoslovakia wrong, or they would say, I'm Hindu and that's not what this holy day is really all about. Of course, Christians and Jews or anybody can argue about exactly what this holy day is about, but it was so educational. Even when we made a mistake in the calendar, they would obviously know we didn't mean it, and it was such an educational thing. So that group became a self-sustaining kind of thing. The students got so excited about what they could do, the kind of changes they could make in their own life with their own ability to confront racism or sexism in settings where there were any kind of bigotry in various settings. We asked Dr. Foust if he would let us have an orientation session with new faculty for the next year, tenure track faculty that were coming in, and he said, sure. The students put together a presentation that was titled, this is what it's like to be a minority person or a woman in your class, and they did a little skit. Then we ate together with these people and they talked about this. The students did it all themselves and I just sat there and marveled at how they were able to relate to the faculty, and the faculty opened up to them about this is what we feel like when you assume the majority

H: cultural position on all that sort of thing. Now we were also invited to go into residence halls and other kinds of things, but through that situation, through that group, resulting from a crisis, we were able to I think touch quite a few people. We also made a national newsletter of a group, Accuracy in Academia. Accuracy in Academia is a group that was put together about five years ago to watch in the world of academics for any liberal or radical notions. We published some things that got into the hands of Accuracy in Academia in Erie, and we made their newsletter. It said the START group of Slippery Rock University, their

literature, is causing racial tensions rather than easing them. So that was almost as good as being on Richard Nixon's enemy list. We knew that we had arrived. The word got around through various of

our networks that higher education has, and we were able to help people on different campuses around the country get their own groups going. I had calls from people from UCLA, Fairmont State and North Dakota State, a student at the University of Maine Presque Isle campus, at least a half a dozen others, I can't remember exactly now, who we encouraged to start to their own group. As a matter of fact, the young man who confronted the African American student about the calendar, he went off to work at Western Illinois University from here in student affairs and he came back the next year and we had lunch together and he

said that was probably one of the most important groups in his

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H: whole life. And the next thing on his agenda out there after he got his job settled was to get a group going like that because what he was able to learn from being open and honest with other people and having that forum. It was just immeasurable. And over the two years probably no more than 60 or 70 students actually took part in the START meetings. They were able, I think, to impact people in all kinds of areas of your life. I know a student right now who has been student teaching this past year, but will be a teacher this year. He said that because he was part of that group, he now is more able to relate to fifth graders and to help them deal with racial issues and sexism. What it really means to be a majority person as he is. So I could probably spend

the rest of our time talking about START. Clearly, that has been a very important group for me. What I'm really interested to see is how the group will be formed again this coming year because almost everybody who was in the original group is gone now. We are still going to be meeting in the cultural center every other Tuesday night, and as far as I'm concerned it's a brand new group. Whatever the group wants to do, we will do. We have resisted all this time organizing. They're still not an organized

group of the student government. They haven't asked for funding. We resist all of those things that organizations get into so we're still sort of this freewheeling group and they haven't kicked me out yet, so I'm going to keep on meeting with them,

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H: but we'll see what that's going to be doing. Since I've been here we've had a murder-suicide. We've had suicides. We've had all kinds of tragic deaths and automobile accidents and sudden illnesses and deaths. I'm very much interested in being involved in the appropriate way when something or some tragedy or whatever took place, that we wouldn't automatically assume that we would do a memorial service or that we would be the ones to step in. We're not the chaplains of the University, but we wanted them to know

that we are here however they saw us taking part. So we came up with a set of guidelines that when there is a death on campus or a tragedy of some kind immediately certain people get notified and

they are put in touch with us, and we can help or do memorial services or other things. Over the years, I think, being involved

being involved with memorial services and grief counseling has been a very positive thing for us, a way that we can be helpful

to the campus. If this was a private university there would be a chaplain whose duty it would be to do all of these things, but I think over the years we have been able to operate as chaplains in that setting. Those are the things that really come to mind that I think that we've been able to get involved with and make some significant changes, differences.

R: When students have had academic problems and have run into some

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R: intransigence from an office or faculty members and you feel sure that there's been an injustice involved there, do you intercede from time to time in those kinds of matters?

H: Yes. There are all kinds of ways to do that. One is to help that student figure how he or she can take the next step on their own or relating them to some other persons, and in the end if they need just another presence with them or they need me to talk to the person, I will do that. I think on the one hand I'm very conscious of trying to preserve that student's independence and their own integrity, helping them feel they can solve the problem themselves, but it's obvious to those of us who have been around longer, it's obvious when you know somebody that you can have their ear, it does help. To me that is a very important

thing that we've done over the years.

R: And you feel good about being able to do that without creating a problem?

H: Yes, I feel good about it even when it has created a problem, or even when I was told to forget it.

R: Even when you lose it.

H: Yes. One of the things that I have become accustomed to, and I hardly ever think about it any more in campus ministry, is almost like a major league batting average. I expect to fail seventy percent of the time and I'm going to have a good day. By that I mean things or ideas that I have, programs that I think are great, and everybody else \_\_\_\_\_ to them, or changes that I see

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H: ought to be made or whatever. I don't see those things that don't work. To me that's just part of what it means to do what I do. I'm not an extrovert. I have to work very hard at those extrovert things. I'd rather be by myself sitting in the stacks, thinking and talking to one other person all the time. So I had to work really hard. I've chosen a profession in which extroversion is rewarded, and introversion is seen as you're either aloof or shy or whatever. I've had to work really hard at those things. I think maybe that's made me a little better at that because I have learned how, I think, not to come on in a confrontational way,

but an honest way of saying that this is something that needs to be addressed. The things that I've had to work the hardest at over my life are the things that I think that I'm most rewarded in. For instance, at this very moment I'm working at one of my most difficult things is that I've always had a stuttering problem from the time I can remember. When I was a teenager I could hardly put a sentence together. I would never talk on the telephone. Recently

I went back to my home congregation to celebrate its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary and I was its guest preacher of course. Well, an elderly man came up to me with tears streaming down his face, and saying, I can't believe what I've just heard. I haven't seen you in all of these years. I tell you that story because it's very much a part of what it means to be who I am and what I do, is that I have to work very hard all the time at not stuttering. And

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H: so a handicapping kind of condition which is just a mild one compared to what a lot of people have to go through, but I think that having to deal with something like that heightens your awareness and sensitivity to others and to know that you can really take charge of things. You can do some things. I don't very often share that with people, but it seemed kind of appropriate here.

R: It's like the kind of every little town in America where I grew up had a stutterer or two or three or more, and they were always treated as very, very different and mentally deficient and all kinds of bad things happened to stutterers. The other part of that is that if you have a handicap and you have to come through that situation, somehow you come out on the other end a little stronger.

H: You always are aware of it, but like I say it's turned out to be positive part of my life.

B: You talked about the difficulty with that terrible incident of the cross burning and the very positive way that the campus and you handled that, and you got something good going. Were there other instances where groups of students sought you out to help resolve problems. Are there things like that you can share with us? Major issues?

H: Well, in 1968 when I went to Emory University and saw myself as really involved in civil rights movements and all that sort of thing, I realized that I had never been involved with the gay

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H: community in kind of way except the curious kind of way. So I started attending a gay support group there. From that point on I have felt a closeness to the gay community wherever I have gone. Early on while I was here, a faculty member and a couple

of students and I were talking about the situation here with gay and lesbian persons. So we formed an organization that met in my office for a few years and then moved out of there onto campus and now through a couple of name changes has become an official part of the University under the auspices of the Office of Minority Affairs, Dwight Greer's office. I think they've even changed the office of Minority Affairs to Cultural Diversity. The group right now is called ALU, Alternative Lifestyles Union. I don't approve of their name, but I very much approve of their group. As I said earlier, probably in 1981 or 1982 I became actively involved in helping gay and lesbian students on the campus to do whatever they needed for support. Just to get together and talk. That is primarily what we did over the years. To talk about their own situation. To say what do we need to do with education? How do we live in this kind of a setting in this society? So that's one group that in a way sought me out, but I was looking at the same time to be related to that group. There also have been groups of students who have turned out to be ongoing after a while. Once I spoke in Allan Larsen's

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H: class on world religions; he asked me to do a history of Christianity one night. So I did it in one evening of course.

Out of that several students came by and said that they'd like to continue the conversation. I remember that as being a memorable six or eight week conversation with them. Several other times after having either related to students in various groups or settings or classrooms, other groups have gotten together with me over a kind of medium period of time, six to eight weeks or a whole semester sometimes, to pursue conversations. I know one group got together to really talk about what does it mean to be a part of the peace movement in the 1980's. Now in the 1980's, peace movements, they weren't cropping up on every corner, but there were always students around saying, you know we don't like the belligerent attitude of our country or other countries. What do we do about this? So along with Ted Kneupper, we formed a group called Citizens for World Peace. We didn't have a problem with ego there, Citizens for World Peace. So for three or four years that group really I think did some significant things too, involving students in conversation. There have been different times when mostly small groups of students have come to me to talk about different areas, but those are the ones that stand out. I have always been very close to in feelings with international students. For the last several years Jim Merhaut, who is the lay Catholic campus minister at the

H: Newman Center, and I have been the advisors to the Internations Club. We do all kinds of things with them. I've always felt a closeness to minority students and international students and really drawn to people who are on the fringes of things. Once in a while we will talk with the students from Africa about some issues. The Newman Center in 1982 and 1983, I believe it was, put out a newspaper, an occasional paper, called Voices of the Third World. It only lasted about six editions because after a while people had written all that they were going to write and they got tired of it, and as you know on campuses things are really cyclic. Every other semester is a new world for some people, but Voices of the Third World came to be a group of people, mostly from Africa, but from other third world countries. They wrote articles about their country, about the issues that they saw that ought to be dealt with here while they're here, and that was a really important group so that the groupings that have come out of those kinds of settings have been really important. That's really all that comes to my mind at the moment.

R: When students have been accused, and there are probationary hearings, or civil kinds of hearings that the University is involved in, are you sometimes called on as a kind of a private counsel for those students in those kinds of hearings?

H: I've never been involved formally in any hearing on campus, but

I've been involved in quite a few situations where either faculty

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H: or administrators have talked to me about a situation, or students have talked to me in preparation to being involved or after the fact. Very much of that I've been in a private counseling kind of setting, but I can't remember of any instance where I was seen as any kind of official advocacy role.

R: And the law enforcement agencies, do you sometimes do things?

H: Yes. There are quite a few instances where the local police department has talked to me about people that they knew that I was involved with, and I told them what I was able to. The other thing is I know whenever there is a racial or ethnic slur anywhere the local police will talk to me about that, because they know of my involvement with all of that. There have been quite a few conversations about things about how I can be helpful.

R: What about the evolution of guidelines about sexual harassment? Were you a part of all that?

H: Not in official way, but I remember reading over the early drafts of some of the things that were done here especially with the sexual harassment thing. I have provided over the years information from my own church and other traditions that have given information, for instance, to Judith Lampkins' office about

things that could be incorporated in statements. The churches over the years have come up with some pretty strict rules. We have a position on everything. I mean you name it, somewhere it's

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H: written down we have a position on it, gun control, abortion, through whatever. And so very often the statements themselves are just there, but the work that went into producing those statements produced some pretty good stuff. So whenever I find something where a committee has worked really hard on a certain issue, I try to pass that on. I've been really supportive over the years to the Women's Center. I'm so happy that the Women's Center finally is established and has a place. I've been advocating that for a long time that we need to take some obvious steps. There are times when you need some obvious symbols and you need a place and you need to say it loud and clear. There are also have been faculty members.

There's one faculty member that I'm thinking about at the moment. Whenever I go to talk with him we always assure that we close the door because there's a lot of yelling that goes on, and he is very sure that my involvement with women's groups and gay groups and Black students and anybody else you can think of is obviously not only that I shouldn't be doing it, nobody should be doing

that. So there is a lot of resistance around for change or openness and diversity. There's some people, I think the word diversity just scares some people so bad, and the whole thing that we've been going through about political correctness and all that sort of thing, I think that this all wonderful. We just need to have lots of conversations. We need to have lots of confrontations in a way that are helpful because there are so

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H: many things we need to talk about, and a university campus is a wonderful place to talk about this. I work with two institutions that are sexist and racist, but who say we don't want to be. Work very hard in some ways not to be. Have very good folks trying not to be, but we still end up as institutions oppressing people simply because things get institutionalized. Now we have to address those issues, not just to be doing it, not just to fund for this 1960's ecumaniac to be doing this, but we have to address those issues. Institutionalized sexism and racism is something that this institution has got to be constantly dealing with, and I think we have a long way to go, but I'm really pleased with some obvious things that have happened here over the last few years. First of all, we can't put everything on our president to do or not to do, but it is extremely important for the person in charge to say out loud, this is not tolerated here, this is

the way we do things. The last couple of years at orientation sessions it has been really clear to people who come to those, both orientation sessions and the students who come to that inquiry kind of thing during the year. It is very clear to them that we're saying out loud here that we have certain policies and guidelines, and we're not going to put up with the racist and sexist sort of thing. So I think that's positive, but we need to keep working at it. If you ask me what I think are the most serious problems with our institution, I think that's it. I think

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H: we have such ingrained feelings. It doesn't make any difference at this moment that we can point to all kinds of successes, there are

more women doing this and more minorities doing that. Well, that's important, but I think we have to understand what kind of history we have and how far we have to go. I work very closely with Dwight Greer in the Minority Affairs office, but I've said to him and I've said to the President and other people that in a way the establishment of the Minority Affairs office is an example of institutionalized racism, and we have to deal with it. I'm happy that it's there. I'm happy that we have a room called the cultural center, but whenever you establish an office and fund it, and you hire a person who becomes a lightning rod for

both the white and black community, and then by inference at least you say, now these are the problems you need to take care of. Then that's an example in my mind of part of institutionalized racism because until we understand that we have to have a transformation across the entire curriculum, every faculty member has the obligation it seems to me to deal with racism and sexism. And until the curriculum has dealt with that, until faculty deal with this, until administrators deal with it, hiring a person and saying they're in charge of minority affairs is only a very, very small first step. And I think in some ways we can do that and feel good that we've done something. But then we sort of let that go, and then we don't sit back and watch what happens, for instance,

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H: to that person or to that office. Obviously there are people in the white community who feel uneasy about it, and there are people in the African American community who feel either that he is doing too much or not enough or should be calling on them to do whatever. So the more that we can have this as a constant conversation, especially in an academic atmosphere, the better it seems to me. So the establishment of the Women's Center, the obvious support through money and other kinds of way such as office space of groups of gay students or whatever. Now there comes a time when all of this has to dawn on us that these are

things that we can't anymore just assume that we're going to take care of or that we can go on with the business as usual. All we have to do is look at what's going to happen in the next ten to fifteen to twenty years about who's going to be minority and who's going to be majority, and this sort of thing and to train people for the future. I was asked not long ago to speak in a Parks and Recreation class, to students who were going to be park rangers and other kinds of things relating to the public, about minority persons and how to deal with that sort of thing.

My assumption to them was that if you are not actively at this moment training yourself to deal in a multicultural world, multiracial world, in 2015 when you're going to be working and supervising,

if you're not intentionally dealing with that right now then you're not being educated for the twenty-first century. That's

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H: where I start. So it's bare minimum that in our classes we ought to be doing more multicultural kind of education. There's hardly any course on this campus that couldn't incorporate something about diversity. I don't care quantum physics or what. There are ways. Even if it's the attitude of the faculty member changing. So I have some very strong feelings about all of that,

and I know at the same time that I participate in it. The longer that the Protestant campus minister here is a white, male, heterosexual, every thing I say is suspect. I'm the living proof that what we offer the world, whether it's the church or the university, is the result of racism. If I'm not followed in this

job by a Black woman, well, that's an overstatement perhaps, but all I'm saying is we don't have to look far to see the results of institutionalized racism. We don't have to beat ourselves over the head about it, but we need to say, at this moment, the waning moments of the twentieth century, that's what we have, and we have it here at Slippery Rock as much as anywhere else.

R: I did a course once called Black rhetoric, and our opening questions or the opening talk that everyone made is, what kind of racist am I? This was in Terra Haute, Indiana, as racism was flourishing and probably still is. The color line, the sociological color line is just so blatant, and we created all kinds of stirs over that question, and we had confrontations, and we

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R: had deans descending on us to say, what in the world are you doing in that classroom and all kinds of things. But it is a good fundamental question, and a little soul-searching has to come somewhere, and maybe that's it.

H: Right after the cross burning incident when we formed the group, African American students and others of us were flooded with mail from white supremacist groups in Pennsylvania. There's a group, I got some information not long ago about that they documented from the middle of 1990 until the end of 1991, I think

it was, the activities of identifiable white supremacist groups in western Pennsylvania, and they were just numerous, not only numerous groups, but activities ranging all the way from rallies to articles to petitions and that sort of thing. There is no way anymore to talk about a part of the country or whatever, but we just need to deal with that. As I said a while ago, we don't need to beat ourselves over the head with this. But we do, I think, need to confront it openly, and the University is one of those places, I think, ought really be doing this. We could be changing our language. For instance, the university is a wonderful place. My son just finished seminary. Now when he wrote a paper in seminary it was unacceptable for him to write in male specific language. People coming out of our seminaries these days are trained to use inclusive language, and if you ever hear me pray and I use male specific language, you'll

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H: know I've just made a mistake and I know it. Because all of

our new worship literature, all of our services, are intentionally inclusive because the way we talk about each other, the way we talk to each other has a lot to do with the way we treat each other, and so the university is one of those places. Now, you see, I'm able to say that very often in very different kinds of settings, and be involved in some spirited dialogue about that. So that's why to me being on a campus is so exciting, and why it's kind of scary that I might be here next year or the year after, not because I won't find another campus to do it, but I don't want to start over someplace getting to know people. It takes so long to establish those kinds of relationships.

R: You get the doors open and you know what to expect. I'm curious about this. I taught here 18 years, and I stayed away from the faculty lounge after a certain period of time because the gossip and scuttlebutt and all of that kind of stuff, and had a lot of problems with privileged communications. And I wonder, I know you live in a world of privileged communication, and how do you sort that out. How do you keep the privileged stuff private?

H: It's very, very difficult simply because you are constantly running into situations where a person's well-being might well depend on you getting close to violating that, especially if it comes to physical or mental situations. Students or faculty

- H: or others that you're involved with. Conversations about suicide or violent kinds of behaviour. I just hope that in every situation that I do the most loving thing. I'm very conscious of that. Obviously when someone comes to me to talk or for counseling or whatever, I assume from the very start that this is privileged communication, and then I find out later on whether it really is or not. But I'm very careful to try not to violate that because you're right. There's hardly any place anywhere you can go anymore to feel secure in knowing that it's not going to come back to haunt you one day for political reasons or whatever. I know that because over the years it's been very obvious to me that there are some faculty members who have talked to me about situations that they really should have been talking or hopefully could have been talking to someone else about it in their department or elsewhere. But because of what's going to happen later on down the line, it was just not possible for them to talk to anybody except somebody they saw was fairly neutral. At least had a reputation for that, but that is tough.
- R: You have to sort out hallucinations or paranoia because some people have got an eternal problem. They thrive on it, and treating some of those things seriously gets tricky, I suppose.
- H: Well, one of the things that I've always tried to do is to treat every individual and every person seriously and with

H: dignity, and when you do that, I think, and then when you sort through things, then say what's the ultimate loving way that I can help this person. Then you have to do what you think is right, and you never know. I know a lot of people take their work home with them all the time, but mine is never anywhere but with me. On the one hand I enjoy counseling. I'm not sure I could have said that a few years ago, but on one level kind of I do, but on the other level it is a very draining thing and I'm tired after a while of doing it, and just really need a break. I think if I looked at my week, for instance, in the way of a time study kind of thing, maybe forty percent of my time would be spent what I would consider counseling. Some of it's very formal. A lot of it is just a one-time conversation. That sort of makes what I do at this point just so exciting that I can't imagine doing anything else. I don't know of anything that I do during the year, outside of writing a report this summer, and a couple of other minor things that I don't like to do. What I do, I just very much enjoy everything that I do, and because I'm able to have a lot of freedom to do what I do best, and to stay away from some of the things that I don't do well, then I can't imagine

doing anything else that would be more satisfying. That's why it's so frustrating at this point for me to get the feeling that financially we might not be able to continue, and that's just my honest kind of reaction to that. But I'm so happy that the

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H: universities still are inviting places for people to do ministry in higher education. And so I'm aware that I owe the University honesty and integrity, and I need to keep current. I need to work hard at being a professional person, and I need to be honest in what I do. And they need to know that I'm not a sectarian person. That I'm not here to drum up any kind of business for the Methodist Church or any other church. I understand all the time when I meet somebody new or go into a new venture that there's a trust relationship that needs to be established from the beginning. It doesn't bother me, but I know it's there all the time. Fortunately, I've been here long enough at Slippery Rock that I start to know what it means to feel part of it. People say I'm part of the woodwork. Only thirteen years. I'm not really part of the woodwork yet, but I'm starting to fade into the upholstery a bit.

B: I think you should know, I think you do know, that of all the people on this campus over a period of time, you're the one that people respect the most. You are not in the woodwork. You're

a really positive influence and trusted. You mentioned some people you have worked with. Father Ted was one. Are there others or can you tell more about Father Ted? People who have helped you. People that you respect that have helped your program.

H: Yes, a couple of more words about Ted Rutkowski. As I said, we didn't know each other of course before coming here. We had a couple of conversations on the telephone before I arrived, and

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H: we had a mutual friend on a national level. So we had a commitment from the beginning to try to work as a staff, but, of course, what happened was the icing on the cake as we became just really good friends. And we were able to have honest conversations about things, disagreements about things, but still really be close friends. And Sister Rosaire Kopezenski who came at the same time is a Franciscan sister, and right out of a higher education program of her own. The three of us, it was like we worked so well together immediately, that it was just wonderful. Whenever you go to a new place, you're always have a lot of anxiety. And the three of us just really worked together very well. The person who followed him has become a really good friend of mine, Father Joe Kleppner. At the beginning of our relationship, we found out that we were in different political parties. We had different opinions on almost everything. We decided this was

a great opportunity to carry on the Protestant-Catholic dialogue on a daily basis because also very quickly we came to the conclusion that we really did like each other. So every day for the five years he was here, we had the opportunity to carry on that conversation, and we still do from a distance now we carry on that conversation. The person that really stands out in my mind is Sister Concetta Fabo, who is also a Franciscan, was here for just one year. She had had experience in training Peace Corps people who were going to be going to central America. She was

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H: training them in Spanish. Sister Concetta had this wonderful way of relating the peaceful life of a Franciscan to activism. She was able to come across as this anti-war pacifist kind of person, but in a nonconfrontational way. She lived. I'm a pacifist and if you don't agree with me you know you're in trouble, but Sister Con-

cetta taught me so much about peaceful living, that she really stands out in my mind. A lot of faculty people here have just been really significant for me. A couple of years ago Bob Crayne and I did a series for a Presbyterian church in Butler on the liturgical year, and I did the history of the liturgical year and he did art to show through the centuries Christian art that had pertained to all of that. Ted Kneupper, we've done a lot of interesting

things. I also had his wedding and baptized both of his children. That's the kind of thing, also, when you look back and see the pictures on the wall of the marriages and the baptisms, not only of faculty and others but of students. Those are the kinds of things that really stand out in your mind, I think. John Peterson, who is the pastor of the Presbyterian church here, we always

looked at him as the sort of walking historian because he's been here for 27 or 28 years and whenever we say, when did that start, he'll tell you when that started and who started it and that sort

of thing. But beyond all of that he's just been a good friend  
and

pastor. I think those are the people that really stand out in my mind, and I'm sure if I thought for a while there would be a whole

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H: lot more. The kind of experiences that I've had at Slippery Rock they're the kind of things that I think when I was in Nebraska, I had positive experiences in Nebraska. But I was always thinking, if I really was good, I really would want to do it this way and I could do them. When I came to Slippery Rock, I kept trying to pinch myself. They say that this is what they want to do and we really are doing it. I think that kind of witness that that makes for the community where you work together and it's obvious that you're open to persons from other traditions than your own, and

that what you're really there for is to be involved in this wonderful enterprise of higher education from your own point of view, then I think that makes it very exciting.

R: Are you on the Town-Gown committee?

H: Well, the Town-Gown committee recently voted to end its existence at least in the way it had been going, but, yes, from the very beginning I was a part of it. The last couple of years I've not been as active. When I came here that was one of the things I got involved with right away. They had also for several years the executive council of that which met separately from the Town-Gown organization with the President of the University, the mayor of the borough, the chief of police, and four or five others and I was involved with that, too. We were able to deal with some things that you had to deal with in a more confidential way. I think that the Town-Gown organization is a good example

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H: of community working together. I think it's just one of those things that's going to take a new configuration in a couple of years. At the last meeting I attended, I think that was the vote, to at least go out of existence the way it's composed right now, and to sort of start again maybe in the fall. It seems to me that whenever we could help community be formed, especially right now, that's a great gift because I think a lot of people

don't feel part of community. They feel the alienation. A lot of individuals I think feel it because we don't feel too much a part of community. I'm not sure who's at fault there or what all the reasons are or what really is to be done about it. When we look back on the 1980's and the 1990's I think that's probably going to be what we're going to look at. The people are really

struggling to figure out how am I part of this community or am I part of a community anymore, or my community's gone and left me. We're so mobile and things change so fast.

R: Do you have a relationship with the fraternities and sororities situations on this campus?

H: Not in any kind of official way. I would never be an advisor to a fraternity or a sorority. I've done some programs with them. Occasionally they've asked me to come and talk to them about various things, anything, but there's been no official relationship.

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B: I was going to change direction completely and since we're doing history, we didn't really get any early history of P. A. Harmon. Only that you're from the south. Can you give us little of that background?

H: I was born in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. When you're born

in Virginia and the Shenandoah Valley, it's very clear to you early what you are and what life is all about. That your history is dripping off of everything. From one of my cousin's houses you could see about four Civil War battlefields without doing anything but turning your head. I'm from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and I grew up in a family where my grandfather owned a construction company. It was very clear early on that I was going to be involved in the construction company business. I enrolled at Virginia Tech at architectural engineering. Before I even started my first class I realized I don't like construction work. I can't stand digging holes for my grandfather. I loved seeing the church built and all that stuff, but that's not my world. So I decided to change. So even before I started my first day of class I switched curriculums at Virginia Tech and I went into pre-law. What were

they calling it in those days? It wasn't a pre-law course, but anyway I was headed for law school, and during the time in college I met a man who was teaching world religions. I took a course with him in world religion to fill up a hole in the curriculum, and took a course in great traditions and ethics. I was in his office

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H: one day and I looked up on the wall and saw that he had gone to seminary, and that he had gone on to graduate school and got his

Ph.D. I raised this question, what are you doing? You're a minister. He said, yes. I said, I didn't know you were a minister. He said, well, this is what I do as a minister. I teach religion in college, and that's my calling. That occurred to me as such an intriguing thing. And I had been thinking for so long. My faith

tradition has always been very important to me. Lutheran.

Methodist. Father was Methodist. Mother was Lutheran. I went to both churches all the time, and all of a sudden it dawned on me that that was something that could be important in life. When I finished with college, I worked for two years with an insurance company handling claims, trying to figure out if I was going to law school or seminary or what. I got to handle malpractice claims, and it was wonderful for two years. Then I went to seminary in 1965. By this time I was married, and we had two sons. Timothy, the youngest son, is a claim representative for an insurance company. My oldest son graduated from here in 1985 with a double major in English and history, and through a couple of other kinds of things that he did ended up three years ago going to seminary. If he reads this, this will be the first time that I have said this publicly that I think one of the main reasons that he did that because of his relationship with Bob Macoskey. He and Bob were very close from the very first

H: day Paul was a student here. Paul worked on the ALTER project from the time he got here. It was about six months after Bob died that Paul told us he had been accepted to three seminaries and was getting ready to choose one. I think that Bob was a very significant person in his life. I've been married 30-a-couple of years. My wife is a dental assistant for Dr. Duryea here in town. The world of higher education, since I was 17, has been it. Except for those couple of years I worked for the insurance company. So like a lot of other people that I relate to around here, we think this is the best of all worlds. So when I think about my calling as clergy, as a minister, there isn't anything else at this point that I want to do. That has not always been real comfortable because there aren't that many of us who do that kind of specialized work. And so most clergy that I relate to are parish ministers, and sometimes we're not always having the same conversation we think we're having. It has been just really positive. Although I'm not thinking actively about retirement, obviously I'm going to retire, and hopefully I make it that long. I want to go back to the south or the southeast. I love Atlanta. Of all the places we've ever lived, I'd go back to Atlanta in a heartbeat. When I talk to colleagues who are campus ministers in North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, there's so much excitement. When we talk about dealing with racial issues, my colleagues in the south, both Black and white, they are so much more actively involved than we are

H: here. There's so much more going on. There's so much more opportunity and more openness to deal with that. I was recently talking to an African-American woman who's just come on the staff here. She just moved from the University of North Carolina/Greensboro as a student. She already has felt that there's just much more excitement and activity when it comes to interracial things than there is here both in the Black community and the white community. So there's a lot of things. I feel very positive about being a Southerner. I feel very positive about one day going back there.

R: Well, I think that's a lovely benediction. Is there anything else you'd particularly like to cover?

H: I don't think so. I've just really enjoyed the opportunity like I said in the very beginning to work where the two institutions I love the most meet everyday. It's been good. Thank you.

B: These conversations don't have a formal end so we get a chance to think about more we'd like to hear or if you think of other things we should know, then we'd like to continue. The tape and the transcript stay in the Archives and are secure. We haven't decided yet how we will publicize them or how they will be used, but we

hope they will be an important resource. Good to have you part of  
it.