

Aubrey Wendling
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interviewed by Lynn Olson
for San Diego State University

Part 2

LO: Well tell me about Elderhostel and how you brought that to this campus.

AW: Well, I really didn't bring it to campus. I initially.... I felt that there were so many people who had talent, that had retired and weren't utilizing that knowledge and so forth, so initially I went to extended studies, and they weren't enthusiastic about it. You know, the Elderhostel is not a money-making kind of activity, and if you break even, I think you're lucky. When the enrollment at the university dropped, and the dorms were vacant, it was at that time that Harvey Goodfriend [phonetic] said, "Well, this is one of the things that we could do." And he was really the one that started it. However, at that time, because of my interest in it, I became involved in it and helped. And Fols Bos, who is the.... Do you know Fols?

LO: No.

~49:59

AW: F-O-L-S B-O-S, had worked for Harvey some years previously, and she took over that, and then I worked very closely with her in working out the programs, getting people to give classes, and that sort of thing.

LO: So you tapped-into the faculty talent that we have on this campus—retirees in particular?

AW: Yeah. My idea was to use those almost exclusively, but there are so many other good people around too. And some of the retired faculty people, of course, don't

want any long-term commitment to do things like that. But it's worked out pretty well, an awful lot of them have done it, and the classes have just been great.

LO: That's what I've heard. I've heard it's an *excellent* program. Elderhostel is a lot of fun.

AW: Right now I'm doing a series of, well, programs with Tom Davies, who is director of the [unclear]. We seem to work [well] together, we like one another and respect one another, and we put on this program, and I take half of it, and Tom directs the trip that we take 'em on down to Tijuana. So we do that, and then I'll take up something in the classroom, and so forth. So it's been very successful. Generally those programs, for a given week, you generally have three classes. Well, about several months ago, Louis Hill and I did an in-depth thing for Museums of Balboa Park. So we did it just for the whole week, an in-depth kind of thing in which we took 'em behind the scenes. So it was a great program, very successful.

LO: Wow, that must have been fun.

AW: And so Tom and I are going to do one *like* that on the two Californias—the *baja* and....

~52:19

LO: *Baja sur* and *baja norte*. Well actually, that's not [unclear].

AW: Yeah, so we're doing that the end of October.

LO: Which is comin' up! Do you two handle all of the logistical arrangements as well, where you're going to go, and who needs to be contacted, and getting the people around to these spots?

AW: Yeah, we do all of it.

LO: That's a lot of work!

AW: Yeah, I know.

LO: That's a full-time job! Well let's get back to the subject more of the university.

We got kind of sidetracked with the retirement association and Elderhostel. Now, when you were here, and of course President Love was around, the faculty senate was established in 1960. Were you ever involved in the senate?

AW: Yeah, I think I was on the senate for.... I don't remember, but I think it was four or five years, when it was first started.

LO: So when it was first started, you were working [unclear].

AW: I was never really active in it. I went to all the meetings and I served on several committees and chaired several committees, but I wasn't as active as some other people. I tend to be more involved with the research and other kinds of activities.

LO: Well, you had a lot of projects going, obviously, which are very time-consuming. Were you involved at all with AAUP? I guess you probably weren't, because you had your other things to do.

~54:05

AW: Yeah, not very much.

LO: How about curricular development within your own department? Did you take an active role in coming up with new courses to meet new university requirements?

AW: Yes.

LO: Using the talents of your faculty members, and things like that?

AW: Yeah. That was very important. You see initially when I first came here in '54, the department was the department of sociology. It also included anthropology. It also included social work.

LO: Anthropology it included?!

AW: Yeah, [unclear]. So it's common, historically at least, for sociology/anthropology to be together.

LO: Sure. I always thought anthropology was separate—Spencer Rogers?

AW: Yeah, it wasn't until.... I'm not sure when that happened, but it was certainly ten years after I was here, so it must have been in the sixties that anthropology became a department of its own. And then they started the school of social work, and that took the people in social work. So it wasn't until the sixties that we actually became a department without all the other. And it was better for everybody concerned, because you'd get into meetings, and some of the discussions the sociologists had, had nothing to do with what the anthropologists were interested in. I pushed very hard for that separation.

~55:51

LO: Especially as your knowledge becomes more specialized and you pursue research in specific areas—it's much more important to have separate departments.

AW: I'll tell you a funny story. Orin Klapp was chairman of the department shortly after I started the research center, and each year we'd have to send in a list of different things that we wanted. So I had a special list for the research center of things I wanted. And we did a lot of cartography and made a lot of flow maps, census data maps, that sort of thing. So I submitted a list of names of things that

we needed, and Orrin called me in and said, “Look, we’re trying to help you out as much as possible, whatever you want, but why do you want these lead dogs?

Are you going to do research or interview in Alaska, or something like that?”

And the joke of that situation, in cartography you have these things that are shaped like dogs that are lead weights and you use them to hold down....

(laughter) So you get an idea of how cooperative they were, that they would have gone along if I had [needed] some lead dogs for a research project in Alaska!

(laughter)

LO: “How about the kennel space—can we buy that for you too?” (laughter) So it sounds as if there really wasn’t a problem with money during the fifties and sixties and seventies, probably, if things were pretty flush, huh?

AW: Yeah. And then with the research projects going on, you could hire people. At one time we had a *lot* of graduate students working for their Master’s, and I could employ them. I could employ them as interviewers or assistants and that sort of thing. So it made a big difference. And then we had enough positions that we took positions and divided them up into about eight parts so we could support graduate students. So there was the heyday of the whole graduate program.

~58:21

LO: That really must have been something.

AW: Uh-huh.

LO: Did you find that the research that most of the people were doing in your department directly related to what they were teaching? Because I’ve heard this complaint or argument that sometimes the faculty members would get so involved

in their research which has nothing to do with their course work, that eventually the courses—they're not as up-to-date on the things in their classes that they *should* be, but instead are concentrating only on research.

AW: I know the argument, and I think the criticism of it. It hasn't been my experience. The best instructors I ever had were people who also did the most research. So I think there *are* examples, some good ones, of what you're talking about, that there's people who neglect their classrooms.

LO: Also, there's another part of that argument, and that is that those faculty members that do a lot of research will not teach the freshmen, the incoming students, the ones who really need that personal attention from somebody who really knows his or her stuff—but instead those freshmen students are taught by graduate students or by lecturers, or by somebody closer to their own age group and who just recently learned that stuff last semester, so they may not be getting it as well. You've heard of that, huh?

~59:49

AW: Yeah, I've heard of that. There are people who have, I suppose, all kinds of little idiosyncrasies. I think they fall in the same category. I remember Barnhardt never wanting to go to a faculty meeting unless it was held at a certain time of day. He just wouldn't show up. And some of the people don't want to teach freshmen. I understand that. And maybe it's best not to have them teach freshmen. Maybe it's better for the freshmen, I don't know.

LO: I've heard it argued....

AW: I think doing research can be an exciting part of the lecture, because if you incorporate that as part of the lecture, it gives a new dimension to it. I remember taking classes from Bob Merton, and gee, it was just exciting to listen to the research that was going on.

LO: He was keeping you up to date on what he was doing, huh?

AW: Yeah.

LO: Did you ever take any sabbaticals?

AW: I took two sabbaticals, I think. I took a sabbatical in '66. When I was at the University of Washington, in those days you had to pass two languages. You had to at least read fluently in two languages—generally French and German. But because I was at the University of Washington, they had a big Scandinavian department. I substituted Norwegian for German. So I did have at least a reading background in Norwegian, and my wife's mother came from Norway, and we have a lot of relatives in Norway.

LO: So you thought, well....

~01:01:46

AW: Why not do that?

LO: Let's go there, huh?

AW: So we went and lived six months in Oslo.

LO: Beautiful city!

AW: So that was nice.

LO: What a nice place to go.

AW: I was doing

[01:02:00 to 01:02:05, silence, probably end of original Tape 1, Beginning of Tape 2]

LO: ... suicide data.

AW: Yup. And then the other sabbatical, I was doing some research on new towns. I don't know if you know the whole new town development that took place initially in Great Britain after World War II.

LO: Post-war redevelopment, yeah.

AW: Self-contained units with limitations on it. And I did studies of those in Great Britain and in France and the Netherlands and Sweden and Finland. After the sabbatical, I made three or four trips just to follow up on that.

LO: To go back.

AW: Yeah, see what's happened.

LO: To tighten up the research a little bit?

AW: Yeah.

LO: That must have been a lot of fun.

AW: Yeah.

~01:03:02

LO: Nice places to go to. Boy! Well, can I ask you a real generic question? This is on your list also. I don't know if you've thought about this at all, but what were the most pleasing moments of your time teaching here at San Diego State? Teaching or being chair of the department or doing research at the center—what did you like the most about working here at San Diego State?

AW: (sigh) It's a difficult thing, because there's so many things that stand out that were satisfying. I suppose in general it was exciting in terms of the way I was

treated. I think I had a nice relationship with the people in the university, with President Love, and with a number of other people who were in administrative posts. So I understood the role of the administrator and what they had to do, and I thought I got along well with them. And I think within the department itself, I think there were exciting times when we were involved in all these research projects, and the department was growing. I think those are probably the most memorable things. As I look back on it, I think of some of those people who went from here and became well-known and published well. That was exciting.

LO: Well obviously research seems to be at the core of what gave you the most pleasure, your years here at San Diego State.

AW: Yeah.

LO: I ought to switch this question around here, but What about things that you *didn't* like here at San Diego State? I should have asked you that first, and then have you follow up with the good stuff. But what was the most distressing, if there *was* anything?

AW: I suppose the distressing thing also relates to the positive things. Sometimes things that you wanted to do, whether it was involved in a research project, or whether it was teaching, you were limited, you didn't have the freedom that you would in a university to *do* those things. Sometimes the kind of support you had, you just had to push for that. Or you had to manipulate the system, it wasn't there for you to utilize.

~01:05:53

LO: Right, they weren't going to come and offer you services, unless of course you kind of complained for them a little bit.

AW: And it was like I was invited to be an editor of a journal, and was for about six years. That was a manipulation. You had to get time off for that, or you tried to do that. And that was difficult to get. Those were frustrating things. And they didn't have it. Not being treated like a university à la UC-Berkeley or the Cal system I think was frustrating. And I think the status of the university always bothered me, because I just thought that the people here were as competent or more competent than professors in the UC system—just outstanding people. And there was that thing, “Oh, well, I'm at San Diego State”—defensive.

LO: Do you think that a lot of the faculty members did feel defensive about being at State? Kind of like apologetic?

AW: Sure.

LO: Because it was a college and not a university?

AW: Yeah. Right. Particularly when you're within the California thing and there's a whole hierarchy.

~01:07:19

LO: Yeah, and the competition between UC and the CSU system.

AW: Initially you got it from La Jolla.

LO: Did you feel any conflict specifically in sociology between the school and UCSD?

AW: No. In my own case, I was involved in the professional associations, so you just operated at a different level, away from the environmental setting here. So I had a

lot of friends that I used to go to lunch with and that I worked with that *were* at Berkeley or at La Jolla.

LO: So you transcended those lines of the institution, and instead just worked for the field.

AW: Yeah. I think it's how you look at what you are. I always felt that I was a sociologist, and I was concerned about [how] my peers out there saw me. I just *happened* to work at San Diego State. So if you take the perception that you are an employee of the school, then you behave differently, look at yourself differently, than if you think of yourself as a professional or sociologist or psychologist, and the recognition that you get from outside becomes important.

LO: Yeah. Well that also ties-in very closely with teaching versus the research viewpoint as well. Those people who really concentrate on teaching and only did a little bit of research on the outside don't have that same viewpoint or that same outlook. They view themselves as employees of the institution.

AW: Uh-huh. (pause) Well, it's been fun. Are you through?

LO: Well, I wanted to ask you if you have any other comments you would like to say, because yes, I am done, I have no more questions to ask you.

~01:09:28

AW: No, I don't think so. I'll probably get home and think of something I'd like to say.

LO: I'll probably think of a few things as well. That always happens.

AW: But it's been a very pleasant experience.

LO: You worked here during some good times, during some good years.

AW: Yeah. We went through periods, you know, and the Vietnam War, and we taught classes. I spent half my time out on the lawn there by the social science building teaching classes.

LO: Why out on the lawn?

AW: Bomb scares.

LO: Oh, bomb scares!

AW: They'd have a bomb scare every other day.

LO: Oh, is that right? And that was because of war protests, do you think?

AW: Yeah.

LO: I always thought that bomb scares happened a lot around finals time because some kids didn't want to take the final.

AW: Or when you give an exam. Yes, that happened then too.

LO: That did happen? We haven't had a bomb scare in years. Thank goodness that's died down.

AW: But those were exciting times during the sixties. They had a lot of negative things too. But they were kind of interesting, because kids were in revolt. I remember assigning a book that I wanted them to read. Boy, they practically marched in front of my office because "it was a racist book," they said.

~01:10:46

LO: What book was it, do you remember?

AW: It was Banfield's book, something about the city. I don't remember it right now, but it was Banfield—controversial book. And it made you think, and that was exciting, because it brought up issues. But they wanted to ban the book.

LO: The faculty members did? These are instructors here at this university that didn't want you to use that book?

AW: The students.

LO: The students didn't want you to use the book.

AW: Yeah. Or some group on campus.

LO: But it was a topic of discussion.

AW: I had departmental meeting on it.

LO: And the department members said go ahead and use it?

AW: Yes, support.

LO: That's good. Can you think of anything else like that, that may have happened to you or to other faculty members during the Vietnam War?

AW: No, I hadn't really thought about that period. It was interesting, you know. San Diego is pretty conservative, as you well know, and so we didn't have the activity that San Francisco State had, for example; or Berkeley had.

LO: That seems as if the biggest protest that we had on this campus didn't necessarily revolve around the war, it revolved around faculty members' tenure and promotion procedures.

~01:12:20

AW: Yeah.

LO: And things like that. Well, that's it for me. Thank you very much—unless you can think of anything else you'd like to tell me.

AW: No.

[END OF INTERVIEW]