

**Transcription of Oral History Interview with
GEORGE K. HELMKAMP**

July 22, 1998

Erickson: Good morning, Dr. Helmkamp. Would you start by telling us where you were born and a little about your family, please?

Helmkamp: Yes, I was born in a little town in Eustis, Nebraska, in 1921. My parents were German of origin. We spoke German at home, except ...

Erickson: Oh, good.

Helmkamp: ... the only reason we spoke German at home was my Grandmother refused to speak English, and she lived with us.

Erickson: But that was terrific that you could learn that second language.

Helmkamp: The unfortunate part is that we learned Low German, Pladt Deutsch.

Erickson: What does that mean?

Helmkamp: That's one of the dialects of German. All of the official German is High German, Hoch Deutsch.

Erickson: I see.

Helmkamp: And these people who speak with dialects don't understand each other very well.

Erickson: Oh dear.

(laughter)

Well, it was a good thought anyway.

Helmkamp: Yes. I have one sister who lives in California here. My mother died two years ago.

Erickson: Oh. What did your father do?

Helmkamp: My father ran a small cafe.

Erickson: Uh huh.

Helmkamp: And during, or actually late in the Depression, things got so bad that he moved to California to see if he could get a better job. The thing that prompted him, I think, was one time he came home and said his gross that day was \$1.00.

Erickson: Oh. And to have worked so hard.

Helmkamp: Right.

Erickson: Well, did he find something here in California?

Helmkamp: Yes. He became a machinist.

Erickson: Oh. Uh huh.

Helmkamp: So he worked in the aircraft industry.

Erickson: Uh huh. Now where did you go to school?

Helmkamp: I went to school first at Hebron Junior College in Nebraska, and then I went to Wartburg College in Iowa where I got my bachelor's degree. After that, since I was a chemist and this was the opening of the World War, I had to act as a chemist rather than get into the services. So I worked for Atmospheric Nitrogen Corporation for a couple years.

Erickson: Where is that?

Helmkamp: In Hopewell, Virginia.

Erickson: Oh!

Helmkamp: We started there. They were training us for a major plant in Southpoint, Ohio. So eventually I ended up at Southpoint.

Erickson: I see. Did you get back to California to get your Ph.D.?

Helmkamp: Well, after the cessation of hostilities, I thought I'd go back to school, so I selected Iowa State. After I was there one week, I was drafted.

Erickson: My goodness.

Helmkamp: So then I spent time in the Navy.

Erickson: For how long?

Helmkamp: A year and a half. I got rheumatic fever and then was released.

Erickson: Oh. And then you went back to school?

Helmkamp: And then after that I went back to the oil industry and worked as a chemist. In Ohio, I had met the one who was to become my wife. I met Libby.

Erickson: Oh, great.

Helmkamp: And after the war we got married.

Erickson: Was she in school too?

Helmkamp: Yes. She was in Berea College in Kentucky.

Erickson: And then ... I am sorry, when did you get married?

Helmkamp: We got married in '47. That's a tough question.

(laughter)

Erickson: Well, it shouldn't be.

(laughter)

Erickson: How many children do you and Libby have?

Helmkamp: We have two living children.

Erickson: Uh huh. Are they close by?

Helmkamp: No. Los Osos and San Jose.

Erickson: What got you interested in chemistry?

Helmkamp: In college I was a music major. After high school my parents decided I was too young to go to the university. I was going to go to the University of Nebraska. So I stayed home and took a chemistry course at high school just for kicks.

Erickson: And how old were you?

Helmkamp: Fifteen.

Erickson: Oh, that is young.

Helmkamp: That got me interested in chemistry, so when I went to college, I kept taking chemistry courses even though I was

Helmkamp: a music major. In my senior year, I switched to a chemistry major.

Erickson: I see. But you've always been interested in music, too.

Helmkamp: Yes.

Erickson: Did you say that you played the French horn?

Helmkamp: No. Piano, violin and clarinet.

Erickson: Oh, how nice. How did you get to the University of California?

Helmkamp: A strange route. After I worked in the oil industry for a while, a friend of mine suggested that I should go back to college.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Helmkamp: So I went to Pomona College for a year just to warm up again, because I had been gone for maybe seven years.

Erickson: Oh, sure.

Helmkamp: And from there I went to Cal Tech for my Ph.D. After my first year there, I got a letter from Conway Pierce, who became head of Physical Sciences here but was then Chairman of Chemistry at Pomona. He said that after my first year, if I could finish in one more year, he had a job for me.

Erickson: Oh, how nice.

Helmkamp: It was sort of nice, but it was almost ulcer producing.

Erickson: Was it?

Helmkamp: To try to finish in one more year. But I did. So I got a job teaching for one year at Pomona. And then he came to UCR and brought me along.

Erickson: But the original position was at Pomona.

Helmkamp: Yes.

Erickson: And then you came to UCR. What seemed attractive about UCR to you?

Helmkamp: I didn't chose it because I didn't even know it existed.

Erickson: Oh, dear.

Helmkamp: Until I was offered the position here.

Erickson: You didn't know that this new liberal arts college had been formed?

Helmkamp: No, I had no idea. I was just a graduate student at that time.

Erickson: Uh huh.

Helmkamp: We didn't do much reading outside of necessary reading.

Erickson: You were busy.

Helmkamp: (chuckle) We were busy.

Erickson: Um hmm. What did you think when you came?

Helmkamp: I thought this was an excellent opportunity. It fit my desires, at least after I found out what it was about. Because I had always been in small colleges.

Erickson: Sure. What did Conway Pierce ask you to do, George?

Helmkamp: He said that I was going to be the first chemist working here. I wasn't the first one hired. Jim Pitts was the first one hired, but he didn't come until a year later. So I was hired to more or less set up the Chemistry Department.

Erickson: Um hmm. And how did you go about doing that, because it was from the ground level, right?

Helmkamp: Right. That involved ordering equipment. (pause)
Everything from routine things to things that would never be done now.

Erickson: Oh, like what?

Helmkamp: In Chemistry, Conway didn't like the set up of the Physical Chemistry laboratory, so he said, "These benches aren't proper for physical chemists. These have to be cut off here and redone." The building wasn't finished. The contractor still had control of it, but I was in there with a skill saw sawing off the benches.

(laughter)

Helmkamp: And building shelving.

Erickson: Oh my. You are right. That wouldn't be done today.

Helmkamp: No, it wouldn't be done today. And, it's interesting. I got a call from Chuck O'Neill who was Business Manager at that time. He tried to call Conway, but Conway was gone, so he talked to me. I respect Chuck O'Neill, so this isn't disrespectful, but he called me on the phone and said the following, (if I can mimic this properly) ..."George." big pause "George, now George, Jesus Christ, you can't do that."

(laughter)

Erickson: You knew, of course, what he was talking about.

Helmkamp: I knew what he was talking about and so my response simply was, "Well, it's almost done. I might as well finish." And he had no reply.

Erickson: So that was the start of it all.

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: How about the curriculum? Did you get to establish that?

Helmkamp: No, that was already established.

Erickson: And who would have done that?

Helmkamp: Conway.

Erickson: I see.

Helmkamp: The chemistry curriculum was a very uniform plan that was used virtually throughout the United States.

Erickson: Oh.

Helmkamp: There was no particular problem setting up the original curriculum.

Erickson: Oh, I see. Pretty standard.

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: Well, how did you meet ... you said Jim Pitts didn't come for a year. Did you meet with Conway Pierce on a regular basis. Did you have organizational meetings? Or how did that work?

Helmkamp: I don't remember much about the details of what went on. We were so busy with routine things.

Erickson: Sure.

Helmkamp: And he was busy with all the other disciplines in the physical sciences. So everything ... the curriculum was established, we had our instructors arranged for teaching the first year.

Erickson: How many instructors did you hire?

Helmkamp: Ron Tolberg was here. He was one of Jim Pitts' students and he came to teach the first physical chemistry courses. Conway taught general chemistry and I taught organic chemistry. And then very shortly, Hart Schmidt and Harry Johnson came on board.

Erickson: Do you remember the very first class?

Helmkamp: Oh, yes.

Erickson: Tell me about that.

Helmkamp: Eight o'clock, the first day of classes in Physical Sciences 1100. It was very interesting. I remember the first student coming in. I took his picture.

Erickson: Oh, great.

Helmkamp: And as the class filed in, I took the class picture. This was in Physical Sciences Survey. It wasn't even in Chemistry.

Erickson: What was the size of that class?

Helmkamp: ~~Relatively large, I can't remember. Potentially forty.~~
The number of students in the survey course of early 1953 was fairly small, perhaps ten to fifteen. In 1954, the first full academic year of operation, it was relatively large, perhaps forty. On the other hand, my first course in Organic Chemistry had only two students.

Helmkamp:

Erickson: That's quite a few.

Helmkamp: Out of the original student body of 120-something.

Erickson: You were a young man, George, having just completed your graduate work. There were some returning veterans at UCR at that time, right?

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: Were they about your age?

Helmkamp: Very close.

Erickson: What kind of experience was that?

Helmkamp: It was a learning experience for both.

Erickson: For both.

Helmkamp: Because we had been through the same experiences in the war approximately. And I was still learning chemistry. So I think it was very good for both of us.

Erickson: Were they more mature and more interested in learning do you think than the typical eighteen year old?

Helmkamp: Very much more.

Erickson: They were.

Helmkamp: And certainly ... maybe I shouldn't say this, but certainly much better prepared than the average student today.

Erickson: Oh, well, do compare the students of the early years to now.

Helmkamp: They seemed to be more directed. They worked harder. They had fewer outside disturbances, let me say, partly because of size and partly because of the size of Riverside. There wasn't much to do in Riverside, so they had a better opportunity to study and keep their noses in books.

Erickson: What was the city of Riverside like then? You said it was small.

Helmkamp: It was ... I would think it was about 35,000 and I had the feeling it was small townish. There were very few major

restaurants, for example. I enjoyed it very much then. As a matter of fact, it was free of smog then.

Erickson: Oh, it was.

Helmkamp: One of our recruiting gimmicks was “Come to Riverside. There is no smog in Riverside. Don’t go to LA.”

Erickson: Because it was pronounced in LA?

Helmkamp: It was pronounced in LA. And it was free of smog here.

Erickson: Sure.

Helmkamp: We could look down towards the coast, and we could see smog layers in the distance. But it never got to Riverside. Sure is here now.

Erickson: Um hmm. A little bit. Were you pleased with the schools in Riverside for your children?

Helmkamp: Oh, yes. They enjoyed school and I think they got a good education.

Erickson: Did you live near the campus?

Helmkamp: Ah ... at first we lived in the Magnolia Center area, and then later we moved over here near Watkins Drive. So I lived within walking distance for most of my stay here.

Erickson: Oh, how nice. And did you walk most of the time?

Helmkamp: Most of the time.

Erickson: Great. Well, as a scientist, would you describe the relationship between the liberal arts college and the existing Citrus Experiment Station? Did you have interaction with them?

Helmkamp: We had interaction. As a matter of fact, there were some joint appointments. Not in the very early years but after we became a general campus, there were joint appointments of some chemists from the Citrus Experiment Station. That allowed them to teach in the Chemistry Department and allowed them access to students in the Chemistry graduate program.

My first office was in the headhouse of a greenhouse, and I had no laboratory. Fortunately, I was able to work on a joint project with Francis Gunther of Entomology dealing with a method for analysis of chloride pesticide residues.

Erickson: But that was later as you said. Does it help to have other scientists around so that you can have discussions on whatever you are researching at the moment?

Helmkamp: It does. But in the early years, there wasn't a lot of research going on.

Erickson: Because you were so busy.

Helmkamp: Yes. Teaching lots of classes and dealing specifically with laboratories, which was very time consuming. We had to monitor our own labs.

Erickson: In those early days, were you using undergraduate students to help you in the labs?

Helmkamp: Yes, but we seldom allowed the undergraduate student to be alone in the laboratory. We were there, at least in and out all the time, too.

Erickson: And you personally. I mean, you didn't have TAs or anything?

Helmkamp: No TAs, no Post Docs, nothing like that.

Erickson: So what was a typical day then for you, George, in those early years?

Helmkamp: First, we made a study of how much time we spent here, and it amounted to 75 hours a week.

Erickson: Oh, my goodness.

Helmkamp: So we would come at 8:00 and we'd be involved in teaching three classes during the day probably, maybe Tuesday and Thursday only two, something like that. And research meant that you individually go into the laboratory and manipulate the equipment. Now we have manipulators ... called graduate students and post doctoral fellows.

(chuckle)

Erickson: Oh, I see.

Helmkamp: However, we did use undergraduates extensively, and I think that was one of the strengths of the early years. As a matter of fact, my first undergraduate research students were from Pomona College since we had none of our own to start with. But later virtually every undergraduate got involved in a research project.

Helmkamp:

Erickson: My goodness.

Helmkamp: Most of them in the early years became involved with scientific publications. I had one undergraduate student who had two scientific publications in chemistry.

Erickson: That's fantastic and quite unusual.

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: In the early classes, in order to graduate they had to complete a comprehensive exam. Did you have that in your area, too?

- Helmkamp: Yes, we had ... I guess you could call it a thesis. That was mainly the ...
- Erickson: Did they conduct some type of research and then write it up as a paper?
- Helmkamp: Yes, um hmm.
- Erickson: Did you give them instruction on what you wanted them to do, or how did that work?
- Helmkamp: *Their work was closely associated with that of their research director in the case of experimental chemistry. They first got acquainted with the technical side of the program (special equipment and techniques) then were given a research problem that hopefully could come to some reasonable conclusion before graduation.*
- Helmkamp: *Many of the undergraduates worked full time during summers. Whether or not a project was completed, the work was reported in the form of a thesis.*
- I remember specifically the last word written in a student's research notebook before he left for graduate school in Wisconsin: "DAMN!" He had come within a couple of weeks of reaching his experimental conclusion.*
- Erickson: Were you pleased when UCR became a general campus?
- Helmkamp: Yes and no. It was a necessity for the sciences. I don't think it was a necessity for the humanities.
- Erickson: Why do you say that about the sciences?
- Helmkamp: Mainly because of laboratory supervision. We would spend virtually ... well, a significant amount of our time with laboratories, whether we set them up or supervised them or took them down and cleaned up, we had to do it all.

Then on top of that we had to, more or less, go into our own labs and do our own research and then be judged by the chemists from UCLA ... you know we had to be productive. It was very difficult.

Erickson: Explain what you mean about being judged by UCLA.

Helmkamp: *For promotions. We had to have somebody from UCLA on our promotion committees. Tenure faculty members, uncommon on our campus at the time, had to make judgments on promotions to tenure.*

Erickson: Oh.

Helmkamp: *Or from another university campus. It was UCLA virtually always for chemistry. During my first four years here, the only tenure faculty member in chemistry was Jim Pitts*

Helmkamp: *(other than Conway Pierce, who was head of physical sciences).*

That did not allow for proper evaluation for advancements in the four specific fields represented among chemistry faculty members unless off-campus personnel were involved.

Erickson: Is that just until we became more established?

Helmkamp: Yeh, um hmm. And then once we had enough full professors and associate professors of our own, we became independent of that. In the early years, particularly before general campus status, we always had somebody from UCLA. And so, in a sense, we were being judged on their standards where they taught one course a year, had post doctoral and graduate students, so it was very difficult.

Erickson: I'm sure. How did you go about recruiting faculty in your department? Did you do it personally?

Helmkamp: Conway Pierce did it.

Erickson: He did it all?

Helmkamp: Um hmm. Or after Conway Pierce ... after Jim Pitts came and became chairman...

Erickson: Oh, was he the first chair?

Helmkamp: He was the first chair. He was responsible for initiating recruiting. And so he would contact major universities, or Conway would contact major universities, about good potential faculty members.

Helmkamp: Then, as now, several were chosen to come out to present seminars and discuss their situation with all the faculty members. All of us, whether we were instructor (as I started out) or way up the line.

Erickson: Has you department changed over the years quite a bit, would you say?

Helmkamp: From the pre-general campus, certainly, dramatically.

Erickson: And how about then in the early sixties when it became a general campus?

Helmkamp: Yes. We grew in size. The major change, of course, was in the research area, when grants and contracts were prominent. You had to have grants and contracts in order to carry out your research. So associated with that, there were always post doctoral fellows and they added to the sophistication, I guess, of the department.

Erickson: Did you have to write your own research applications? Proposals, I mean.

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: What is your area, or has it changed over the years?

Helmkamp: Oh, a little bit. But first organic chemistry and secondly chemistry of small ring compounds that are compounds that have three atoms in a ring, two of them carbon and one not carbon.

Erickson: And did some of your graduate students help you with that research?

Helmkamp: Definitely. With most of it.

Erickson: And what happens when a professor retires, George? What happens to the research he has conducted over the years?

Helmkamp: Well, that depends upon the professor. If you retire as emeritus, you can continue it. You are eligible to get grants. You are eligible to teach, of course at your own choice, with the agreement of the department. When I left, I left for health reasons. I had to get out of the smog area, so I was too far away from the laboratory to continue anything.

Erickson: Oh.

Helmkamp: I did continue teaching.

Erickson: Uh huh. Well, did you actually give your research, the information, to someone else to carry on?

Helmkamp: No. Just quit.

Erickson: You were the chair of your department, is that correct?

Helmkamp: Yes.

Erickson: And then you were Divisional Dean.

Helmkamp: Yes. Physical Sciences.

Erickson: How did that come about?

Helmkamp: The chair is a rotating position.

Erickson: Every two ...

Helmkamp: In the early days, it was about five years, and so my turn just came around. And who makes the choice is an open question. I don't know.

Erickson: How about the deanship?

Helmkamp: That came out of the blue. Dean Golino contacted me one time and asked if I would like to be Associate Dean for Physical Sciences.

Erickson: You weren't chair at that point. You were a professor.

Helmkamp: That is correct. I was simply a professor.

Erickson: You didn't even know he was considering you?

Helmkamp: No.

Erickson: Were you hesitant or did you want to accept it right away?

Helmkamp: No, I was happy to accept that.

Erickson: And what did that mean you would be doing then?

Helmkamp: We would make recommendations about promotions and budgetary allocations within our area and also comment on other areas. We always met as a group, all of the associate deans and Golino.

Erickson: How long did you do that?

Helmkamp: One year. They needed a Chairman of the Budget Committee, and (chuckle) I was chosen Chairman of the Budget Committee for the following year.

Erickson: And the Budget Committee is now called the Committee on Academic Personnel, is that correct?

Helmkamp: Well, right now there are apparently two committees: one on budget and one on personnel.

Erickson: Oh, ok.

Helmkamp: That happened after I left.

Erickson: Yours would have included both.

Helmkamp: Included both, um hmm, but we were given very little opportunity to deal with budgetary matters.

Erickson: Did you accept that?

Helmkamp: Yes.

Erickson: Oh, my. That must have been a huge responsibility.

Helmkamp: That was terrible.

(laughter)

Erickson: When you do something like that, do you still maintain all the classes you are teaching and the research work that you are doing?

Helmkamp: Yes, I did. And also when I was chairman I did. I was chairman at a time when the course load was one major course, so that wasn't a great problem.

Erickson: And how long did you do that, I am sorry. You said it earlier.

Helmkamp: I am not sure but I would guess seven years.

Erickson: Oh, a long time. My goodness. We have in front of us this beautiful mace that you made. Would you tell us how that came to be?

Helmkamp: I should hold it up, I guess.

Erickson: Yes, so the camera can get a good picture.

Helmkamp: They were having processions at graduation and somebody just mentioned that most processions are associated with a mace. Whoever is leading the procession is carrying some device, and we just had a discussion. I think it was in the associate deans meeting when someone proposed ... “shouldn’t we have a mace and how do we get one made?”

Erickson: Um hmm.

Helmkamp: There was the one idiot who volunteered (to try to make the mace).

(laughter)

Since I did wood work, I decided I would try to make the mace.

Erickson: So did that mean that you designed it also?

Helmkamp: Designed it, yes. We decided as a group about some features that should be involved. We decided on the California bear. And the Great Seal, whichever is the Great Seal. This is the University of California seal, I guess, and in the back it’s the Great Seal of California.

Erickson: Oh, I see. I didn’t see that one before.

Helmkamp: It turned out that the chancellor’s office had this Great Seal and the Seal of California, and so all we had to do was find somebody to do the bear.

The last thing we wanted to do ... we wanted to have something representative of the Citrus Experiment Station. We wanted to have a gold orange, ...

Erickson: Yes.

Helmkamp: and the people who made the bear could not make the orange. It kept collapsing. So we just put a semi-orange piece on the bottom. That's as close as they could come in wood ...

Erickson: Sure.

Helmkamp: to represent that.

Erickson: Did somebody make a mold of the bear? Is that what you mean?

Helmkamp: Yes, um hmm.

Erickson: Well, tell us about the wood in there that you used.

Helmkamp: Most of the wood is koa from Hawaii, which I happened to have in my shop. The dark wood is desert ironwood, which comes from our local deserts.

Erickson: It's very pretty.

Helmkamp: So all the dark wood is desert ironwood.

Erickson: And the orange is also the ironwood?

Helmkamp: No, the orange ... I don't even know what it is any more.

Erickson: It's so pretty. (pause) When did you become interested in working with wood?

Helmkamp: Oh, when I was about eight.

Erickson: Oh, no kidding. Was your father good, too ... good with wood?

Helmkamp: He didn't do anything like that.

Erickson: You just picked it up on your own?

Helmkamp: My parents provided me with a little shop in the basement.

Erickson: Oh, how nice.

Helmkamp: They bought me a lathe and tools and I started working.

Erickson: Did you ever work with somebody or did you do all this on your own?

Helmkamp: No, it was all on my own.

Erickson: Did you read books?

Helmkamp: No. It was just spontaneous.

Erickson: It's beautiful. What's your favorite kind of wood to work with?

Helmkamp: I like the koa. Koa has beautiful designs.

Erickson: Yes, it does.

Helmkamp: And it shines very well. This one has been handled a lot and has lost some of its polish, but it is very, very fine grained and it just has a beautiful texture.

Erickson: You also made a seal of the university ...

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: which is in the administration building, in Hinderaker Hall. Will you tell us how that came about?

Helmkamp: I don't know who had the original idea, but I do know that somebody from administration knew that I did woodwork ...

Erickson: That you had done this.

Helmkamp: and would I like to try to make a seal? So I again volunteered.

Erickson: It's all of wood?

Helmkamp: Yes.

Erickson: It's just beautiful.

Helmkamp: In a way, it's amateurish. It doesn't look like it's done in a professional shop.

Erickson: Oh, I wouldn't have said that at all. No, it's very nice. When you work on something like this, the seal or the mace, is it a very long process?

Helmkamp: Very long. Right now I make dishes and bowls.

Erickson: Oh, you do?

Helmkamp: Um hmm. And it's about a hundred hours per dish.

Erickson: Oh my.

Helmkamp: And so I am sure this took a lot longer than that.

Erickson: Do you do a lot of the carving by hand?

Helmkamp: No. I use small tools.

Erickson: Are you selling the bowls you are making now?

Helmkamp: No, I give them away.

Erickson: How nice. Well, back to the university. Did you serve on a number of systemwide committees?

Helmkamp: A lot.

Erickson: What kinds?

Helmkamp: Well, when I was an instructor, I was on the ... (pause) I am trying to remember the name of the committee ... the Executive Committee of the college.

Erickson: Oh ...

Helmkamp: Now that's something no instructor would ever do anymore.

Erickson: I hadn't heard of that before.

Helmkamp: I did that ... I was chosen for that because there was nobody else.

(chuckle)

There was nobody above the instructor level.

Erickson: And what did you do in the Executive ... what did you call it?

Helmkamp: Executive Committee of the College of Letters and Science.

Erickson: What did you do there?

Helmkamp: Well, we dealt mainly with curriculum problems and new courses, alterations of courses, and things like that.

Erickson: Well, how would you say that UCR is regarded within the system?

Helmkamp: Um ... you know I retired in 1980 ...

Erickson: No, I didn't. I was going to ask you what year.

Helmkamp: and there have been major changes in these ... what eighteen years since then. So I really wouldn't be willing to say right now.

Erickson: Sure.

Helmkamp: I know that in the early days when we were the liberal arts campus, our teaching was very highly praised.

Are you familiar with the University of Chicago? I mean ... what was the newspaper ... the Chicago Tribune?

Erickson: Yes.

Helmkamp: Report on teaching?

Erickson: Oh, no.

Helmkamp: They ranked the ten best teaching schools in the United States. Most of these were Ivy League, but UC Riverside was among them.

Erickson: Oh, wonderful.

Helmkamp: That was, I think, an indication that we gave a lot of attention at that time to teaching.

Erickson: Um hmm. Well, as a university professor, you are able to take sabbaticals.

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: That's every seven years?

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: Did you do that?

Helmkamp: I took two sabbaticals.

Erickson: Two, in all those years.

Helmkamp: Um hmm.

Erickson: What did you do?

Helmkamp: One year I stayed on campus. This was shortly after it became a general campus, and this was a necessity, because I really had to get my research going. And so I stayed on campus and put in all my effort in on the research.

Erickson: Um hmm.

Helmkamp: The second one I took at Cal Tech. We had a family with young children, and we decided it would be better for me to commute locally rather than move the whole family some where else for a year, so I commuted to Cal Tech. I worked in a new area.

Erickson: Oh. Did that change your area of study then?

Helmkamp: Just supplemented it. I went in two directions at that time. So I managed to get NIH grants for research after I came back.

Erickson: Uh huh. Well, the early faculty seems to have such a wonderful sense of pride for the university, for our campus. Would you describe that feeling for us, please?

Helmkamp: Kind of difficult, but I think it's the feeling that we came in as real beginners and created something in the early years that was quickly recognized, the whole Watkins plan,

Erickson: Um hmm.

Helmkamp: and put out students who were truly recognized as being excellent. I remember Harry Johnson one time made a survey of our organic chemistry students who had gone elsewhere to graduate school. You know, when you go to graduate school, you take an orientation placement exam?

Erickson: Um hmm.

Helmkamp: The worst anyone did was second in all of these exams. Most of these were tops.

Erickson: That's great.

Helmkamp: So I think that's where the joy and the pleasure comes from.

Erickson: Well, it is something to be proud of.

Helmkamp: That we did a good job. And that wasn't only in the sciences, certainly in the other areas also.

Erickson: Is there any other thing that we haven't talked about that you would like to bring up?

Helmkamp: Nothing in particular, except I do remember again in the early years, we did all sorts of things that nobody would think of doing now. You know, I mentioned the incident with the shelving.

(laughter)

Erickson: Yes. Can you think of some other stories?

Helmkamp: Sure. One time ... you know Bob Wild and I went to War Surplus often.

Erickson: And that was in Los Angeles.

Helmkamp: Los Angeles. We would bring back for chemistry, chemicals and equipment and glassware, things like that. We would

bring them down to the Chemistry Department or the Physics Department, but we would always have to drive up to the top of the hill where the director's residence was to contact our bosses there. And it was very interesting, the one time Bob Wild was driving, he started at Physical Sciences and backed all the way up to the director's residence. I think I'd like to see somebody try that now.

(laughter)

Erickson: Oh, goodness.

Helmkamp: Well, anyway, we did all sorts of things as I said that no faculty member would do now. When we outfitted the Chemistry building, everything was in storage. And I remember Harry Johnson and I carrying the very delicate analytical balances all the way from storage all the way down to Chemistry.

Erickson: You did it personally.

Helmkamp: Personally. Over twenty of them. And so that was going on all the time. It was a little different.

Erickson: Now, do you keep in contact with some of your colleagues who have also retired?

Helmkamp: Oh, yes.

Erickson: Are you a member of the Retirees' Association?

Helmkamp: No, I am not. I probably should be. But we live far away, relatively far away and don't get in on a routine basis.

Erickson: Sure. Well, I thank you very much for participating in this interview. It was a really wonderful, interesting session.

Helmkamp: You are sure welcome. I enjoyed it too. It helps bring up interesting memories.

Erickson: Oh, I am sure. You do have some great memories, don't you?

Helmkamp: Yes. Well, thank you.

Erickson: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

Text in *italics* has been edited by Professor Helmkamp.