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Dave Moravec

Dave Moravec '84
Illinois Wesleyan University

Francine Krieger 2015
Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral History Interview with Dave Moravec

The Ames Library, February 16, 2015

Francine Krieger: Today is February 16, 2015. My name is Francine Krieger. I'm a student at Illinois Wesleyan and I'm conducting an interview with Moravec at the Ames Library.

Dave Moravec: My name is Dave Moravec, class of 1984. My wife is class of 1983 and we met here on campus.

Krieger: How did you meet her?

Moravec: I met her through dorm exchange between Dolan and Pfeiffer. She was an RA and they had a Secret Spook [note: this was a Halloween event for anonymous gift/message exchanges]. So you signed up for what would be a pen pal for a week and I signed up, we all signed up at Dolan. And then she rigged it so that she would get paired up with me. I was the volleyball coach for the intramural team at Pfeiffer and one of her friends had suggested that I would be a good catch. So she rigged and that's how we met.

Krieger: That's very funny. That's very interesting. So what was the Secret Spook like?

Moravec: They wrote letters and sent little gifts during the week and as it turned out, my counterpart, a guy named Brad Gregorich was getting the same gifts and the same notes and we put two and two together that the two girls that were sending us gifts were either friends or roommates or as it turned out, they were roommates. And my wife's roommate wanted to meet him because he was the point guard on the basketball team. So it wasn't very random.

Krieger: So they definitely rigged that one.

Moravec: Absolutely.

Krieger: Interesting.

Moravec: Yeah, Susan and Brad never did date and they did meet for the Secret Spook get-together which was at the end of the week where the guys were then supposed to bring the girl a gift and they revealed themselves and it was in October around Halloween.

Krieger: That's very interesting.

Moravec: Yeah.

Krieger: Cool. What was your most memorable experience at Illinois Wesleyan?

Moravec: Oh, there's not one memorable experience here at Illinois Wesleyan. My wife and I came back to Bloomington-Normal twelve years ago with our kids and I've gotten to relive some of those experiences as I walk through the campus or get involved in the basketball games or on the quad. So there's not one memorable experience. One of the things that stands out in my four year career, was that I was Tommy Titan, the school mascot, back in the day and became the school mascot as a freshman.

Krieger: What inclined you to become the school mascot?

Moravec: Actually, I don't really know other than I had been involved in a cheering group in high school at Lyons Township High School in LaGrange, Illinois. They were called the Hard Hats and I was exuberant and I guess I had heard through the grapevine. I don't think it was posted. There wasn't any tryout or anything but I had heard that the marching band was the caretaker, if you will, for Tommy Titan. I raised my hand and said, "Sure, I'll do that." Tommy Titan, at the time, came out to light the torch and they gave me the gear and not a lot of instructions. It wasn't printed on a sheet of paper that says you do this, you do that. But I was told it was a secret. So I held it to myself, didn't tell anybody and went into what was the laundry room in the old field house. I was told that you were supposed to wrap a group of tampons together and put them in the cup and douse them with oil because they would hold the flame for that period of time. So, I did that and went out and lit the torch at the time I was supposed to and then I put the torch out and joined the cheerleaders as a mascot would do. And that started into what turned out to be a pretty interesting story.

Krieger: Uh-huh.

Moravec: I led cheers. "Give me a T." "T." Give me an I". "I." Give me a T." And so on. The crowd went wild. I ran up and down the sidelines high "fiving" and cheering with the....I had a sword that I whipped in the air. The fans just loved it. The reason they loved it was because Tommy Titan had never done that before. Tommy Titan had come out, just lit the torch and then went away. They had no idea why I was doing what I was doing or anything. So, after the game, I went back into the field house, changed clothes, and went back to my dorm. It was fall baseball season, I was on the baseball team. And Coach Horenberger, who was the athletic

director as well as the baseball coach, took me aside at Monday's practice and said, "Dave, I did some research. I understand that you're Tommy Titan." I said, "Yeah, coach. Wasn't that a great time?" He said, "Dave, (and he was elderly at the time) that's not what Tommy Titan does." And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Tommy Titan comes out and lights the torch and that's all." And I said, "But Coach," I said, "the school mascot" "No, but. That's the way it is." That led me to the following home football game when I had to make the decision. Do I come out and light the torch and go back into the field house? Or do I buck the system, so to speak? And I did. I decided if somebody higher than...since I answer to the marching band director, that I would just go ahead and do what I did the week, the game before. Well sure enough, the marching band director came and addressed me and said, "Coach Horenberger says, that's not what we do. That's not what Tommy Titan does. If you're not going to adhere to what Tommy Titan does, you're no longer gonna be Tommy Titan." So I made another decision that said, "You know what. If that's the tradition, that's what I need to do." I came out for four years and just light the torch.

Krieger: So you were so close to revolutionizing what Tommy Titan does.

Moravec: I was. Exactly. And Tommy Titan has never, since then come out and cheered or led cheers, he simply lights the torch and goes away.

Krieger: So interesting. I'm not sure I've ever noticed that personally.

Moravec: Well, part of the football game and it happens usually before the national anthem and it was what I thought was a really cool opportunity to change things for the better and traditions said nope, that's not what it's going to do. And here, 30 years plus later, because I would have started in the fall of 1980, so that would have been 35 years ago and Tommy Titan is still doing the same thing.

Krieger: Okay. Very interesting. What other sorts of things were you involved in? What was it like being on the baseball team?

Moravec: Well, I actually went out for the baseball team as a freshman. Made the team as a freshman in the spring, was an alternate so I didn't get to play all the games. It was a pretty long roster. Then my sophomore year, I hurt my knee and didn't play anymore. I also wasn't a very good student either, my freshman and sophomore years. I was this close to...and I'm putting my fingers together, about 1" inch from leaving Wesleyan because I didn't have as good of grades as I should have. I didn't study like I should have done and my passion was baseball. And the opportunity to leave Illinois Wesleyan and go play baseball in Florida, ultimately I chose not to. I chose to come back for my junior year and that's when I started doing better in school and my grades were far better in my junior and senior year than they were

certainly my freshman and sophomore year.

Krieger: What was your major while you were here?

Moravec: It was business administration. And at the time, I took a series of economic courses. I really enjoyed the economic teachers, Dr. Chapman and Dr. Leekley. Dr. Leekley is still here on campus and Dr. Chapman is not. I took business classes. I originally came in as an accounting major but when I wasn't able to take Accounting 101 as a freshman, I moved to math and then ultimately to business administration.

Krieger: Okay. So, you said you lived in Pfeiffer.

Moravec: No, I lived in Dolan.

Krieger: You lived in Dolan.

Moravec: Yeah, at the time, on campus, the dorms were all one sex. So, Dolan was all male and McGill was all male. Ferguson and Pfeiffer were all female. Munsell was all female. The only two that were integrated were Dodds and Gulick. In Dodds case, it was by suite. In Gulick's case it was by wing and by floor. So, it was all male in Dolan at the time, I was on 3rd floor Dolan for three years and then I lived in Kemp my senior year first semester.

Krieger: Okay. Was there anything that wasn't so wonderful about your Wesleyan experience?

Moravec: Wasn't wonderful? I had never thought about that. Nobody's ever asked me, "Did you have a bad experience at Wesleyan?" I really didn't. The overall, the attention to personal contact was terrific. I guess one thing was my German experience. I had a third year German teacher who had taught English over in Germany. And she was a first year teacher here at Illinois Wesleyan. And she failed, actually failed half the class and I was in that group. And I would have otherwise had a BA and I ended up with a BS because I didn't have time in my schedule to take German 3 over again. I had had two years of German in high school. I had my first two semesters, a B and a C. With Dr. McDonald who was the lead of the department and then this first year teacher came in and I can't even think of her name but she was really, really harsh on us. She said, "If you think you have it tough. You ought to go learn English in Germany. English is so much harder to learn and so much harder to teach." Well in failing half of the class and the comments that we gave back to the university, she got fired and didn't end up staying on. I remember that

was at least some vindication that we had done our best, cause I think all of us had but several of my classmates did go back and take German 3 again but I just didn't have time in my schedule.

Krieger: Is there anything that you remember being on Wesleyan campus that isn't here now?

Moravec: Well Sheehan Library was not here. It's not here. And Ames obviously has replaced it. We are in Ames Hall and it's absolutely a beautiful building. The Sheehan Library, was it torn down, was it open when you were here on campus?

Krieger: I don't believe so.

Moravec: Well it sat behind next to Shaw/Holmes Hall. Just behind the observatory.

Krieger: Okay.

Moravec: It was a 50-60's type building. There was a place called the pit. It was in the basement. It had pads you could lay on and study reclined. And there were pillows you could lay on and get comfortable with and it was kind of organic and people were known to sleep down there for hours on end, without a librarian or student person coming to wake you up. It was kind of a joke if people were snoring, you'd do something funny to them.

Krieger: That's interesting.

Moravec: But yeah, Sheehan Library is no longer here. The career center was actually downstairs in the basement of Gulick at the time. The Hart Center didn't exist. The welcome center and the admissions office was in Holmes Hall right at the entryway. That's a terrific addition to the university, the Hart Center is beautiful. Great place for students to come and get their first experience here on campus.

Krieger: What was your decision? What inclined you to come to Illinois Wesleyan?

Moravec: Illinois Wesleyan was about my only choice. Strange as that sounds, I had gone to the University of Iowa and Iowa Wesleyan on a trip, recruiting baseball trip and didn't like the size or the place of Iowa Wesleyan and the size of University of Iowa, I would have had to walk on as a baseball player and the big town. And I realized the competition level as such. And going back to Coach Horenberger, when we had come to Illinois Wesleyan, it's about 2 hours south of where we lived in LaGrange.

And my high school counselor had suggested I come here. His name was Mr. Johnson. And Mr. Johnson said, "If you didn't like Iowa Wesleyan for the reasons that you did, Illinois Wesleyan is perfect. You ought to go check it out." So my parents came down with me here and we got a tour of the place through Jim Rudy. Jim was the admissions director and got to meet several of the admissions counselors that were here. Got a tour of the campus, got to meet Coach Horenberger. And for some reason, he remembered me. He remembered that I played baseball. That there was something about me. Whatever personal stuff that takes place here at Illinois Wesleyan, handwritten notes make sense. Coach Horenberger had sent me a postcard from their spring trip to New Orleans. And I still have it with me. I carry it with me in my bible. Coach Horenberger wrote me a note that simply said, "Dave, enjoyed the visit at Wesleyan. Just bringing it out. We are one in three after our two double headers here in Louisiana. Hope you see your way clear to be with us next fall. Jack Horenberg." Hand written to me with Louisiana super dome postmarked obviously the spring of 1980. I graduated from high school later that spring. I still carry that around as a reason why I came to Illinois Wesleyan because somebody took the time to write a handwritten note and I do remember that.

Krieger: That was very nice.

Moravec: Yeah.

Krieger: I also enjoy that intimate relationship that the faculty has with students and incoming students.

Moravec: Absolutely. My son went to Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. And one of the reasons why he chose a small liberal arts school was the fact that my older son, his brother, had a freshmen English class at Illinois State that was 200 students. Taught by an Asian woman that had just been hired in. He had heard my story about the German teacher and realized that a large campus experience wasn't what he was looking for. And because there was two years difference in my sons, he had the time to decide where it was he wanted to go and he ended up at Washington and Lee with an absolutely terrific degree but about 2000 students. Very much like Wesleyan in that he's made connections with his professors that have helped him get internships or travel experiences. He's been to Germany for a German experience. He speaks fluent Swahili because he's taken intense language course in Swahili and traveled through eastern Africa. And because of his personal experience in a small school environment, he's going to have opportunities that many students would not otherwise have. Here at Illinois Wesleyan, my student internship was with a company called Beer Nuts. You have heard of Beer Nuts?

Krieger: Uh-huh.

- Moravec: Beer-Nuts at East Washington. We didn't have the travel experience at Wesleyan that students today have. The short term, your Maymester, used to be in January and it was difficult to travel overseas, book flights, worry about the snow, getting canceled, things like that. And it's a much different global world today than it was back then. So my business internship was as a marketing assistant with Beer-Nuts and I worked directly with Jim Shirk who is still the President of the company. It was a great hands-on experience. One that I probably learned a great deal about sales and marketing and business concepts. I couldn't work for them long term. They did offer me a job after graduation but I don't like nuts. I don't eat them. I don't eat them at all. I didn't like the smell. It was one of the things that was just very repulsive but I learned a lot. And I just couldn't see myself working for them. They also wanted me to travel 40 weeks out of the year across the country and I had already proposed to my wife. We were scheduled to be married in September after graduation and I just couldn't see myself traveling 40 weeks out of the year and being gone. It didn't seem like a good idea for marriage
- Krieger: What was the experience like acquiring that internship? How did you come across it?
- Moravec: It was through Ann Harding, at the Career Center, I believe. I think she was the internship coordinator at the time and she ultimately became the director of the center before Warren Kistner. Again, I think I just applied. I don't even know if anybody else did. I don't recall a competitive situation.
- Krieger: Interesting. Were there anything historical happenings that influenced your time at Wesleyan or do you remember them happening in your four years that you were here?
- Moravec: Well it was that we were just coming off Jimmy Carter's administration and the economy was not very good. We had gone to, my friend and I, up in Chicago had gone to a rally for Ronald Reagan in 1980. That would have been my first voting experience, was voting for Ronald Reagan. My economics classes were by the end of our four years here, they were around Reaganomics and the supply side economics. So that certainly influenced that. When we came out of school in 1984, the unemployment rate had dropped some but it was still difficult to find jobs. It was a very competitive job market. Those who were unemployed were more experience. I wanted to get involved in sales and if you didn't have any sales experience, you were competing against people that did. And so that was a more difficult era, the early 80's time frame to find a job. I remember Maynard Ferguson came on campus and had a concert and it was in the auditorium here in the, I guess it's the Main Lounge, across the street in the Student Center. I remember him playing "Gonna Fly Now" and *Rocky* had come out in '76 so it was during high school, so that was very cool. We did a lot of fund raising on campus at the time. I

don't know if it was just the time but just the word "athon". We had jump ropeathons, and rocking chairathons and all sorts of athons that you got pledges for.... How many minutes you did this, or how many this or that you did. I remember that was fun. We did a dance marathon and I danced, not my wife actually, but the baton twirler from the marching band. There was a marching band, there's no marching band anymore. There's a pep band it's in the football stadium. But at half-time, the marching band came on the field and performed and we had a baton twirler and there actually was a parade, a Homecoming parade that took place. And Tommy Titan got to be in the Homecoming parade. That was a lot of fun.

Krieger: So you got to march in the Homecoming parade?

Moravec: I did, yeah. That was one of the Tommy Titan duties I did get to do.

Krieger: So where did the parade start and end?

Moravec: I just remember that it ended by the football field. And it came through the neighborhood. I remember going through Franklin Park and I'm certain it was not a community....we did not go through downtown Bloomington or anything. But I do remember that the mayor was there. I have a picture of myself with the Bloomington mayor in the parade. That was a Homecoming tradition.

Krieger: And what was that like? Did families come out of their houses and watch everybody go down the street?

Moravec: Yeah, they lined the street just like they would any other parade.

Krieger: Okay. What other groups were involved in this besides marching band?

Moravec: I'm sure all the Greek institutions, the fraternities/sororities had their floats and organizations had floats. It was a political opportunity obviously in the fall for anybody that was running for election to walk the streets as well. I don't remember it was very big. It wasn't very big. It wasn't huge.

Krieger: Like locally, like actually put...

Moravec: Uh-huh.

Krieger: Oh, wow that's interesting. Very cool. Was there anything else you find interesting about your experience that you care to talk about?

Moravec: Well, there were some crazy things that took place on the campus. At the time, toga parties were pretty big and one time we had a toga party in the basement of Ferguson that was a planned food fight and among the things I brought to the table was actually mud. I had dug up some mud and put it in a bag and so when the food came out, mud also came out. So, we have some pictures of that event and other toga parties that took place on campus in either the dorms or the fraternities typically. It was a good experience. Illinois Wesleyan shaped my life. It certainly taught me the values. I think about my freshmen English class and Dr. Bray. Dr. Bray was very tough on my writing skills. I didn't have very good writing skills. And I remember every paper getting red pen written, circles, cross-outs, all those things you really don't want to get as a student. But as I look back it probably taught me as much from a business perspective the importance of writing. We didn't have the technology that you have as students today. We didn't have the computers, we didn't have the word processors, we didn't have the hand held devices that have spell check. So everything, if you mistype something in a paper, and you were doing so on an IBM Selectric or a Smith Corona typewriter, you had to either use whiteout or correction thing. And you could write 3 pages, 5 pages, 10 pages, whatever it was and get at the end and go, "Oh my gosh, look at all those mistakes." And have to retype it. So I touch type right now and it's one of the best skills I have and I type about 50 wpm. I could do so in the dark. With spell check today, probably come out with a mistake or two but not very many. And I think about the amount of hand writing that you see today. Students today don't write, they type things. Either in a message, an IM, an email, a Word document, Powerpoint, everything's typed. Back then, there was a lot of handwritten notice. You got mail. Different than you do today. If your mom and dad want to send you a communication from New York to you, they are probably going to email you or text you before they are going to write you a letter, right? So we had mail call each day when the mail came in and it was a pretty cool thing if you got mail from a girlfriend back home or was at a different campus, from your parents they would send you a package. I'm sure students still get packages from their parents but we looked forward to the mail day that came. I worked at the Dolan desk for the most part. I worked freshmen year at the admissions office under Jim Rudy and then I worked one semester at Saga my sophomore year and then a job opportunity came up at Dolan, so I worked there for 5 semesters. So I got to be there when mail came and hand out the vacuum cleaner or check out the ping pong paddles or whatever. That was my job on campus.

Krieger: Was there an existing work study program?

Moravec: Yeah, work study was a part of it and that would have gone to tuition, etc. Room and board, my freshmen year total room and board \$6900. Tuition, room and board, everything. Just under \$7000, maybe \$8000 when I left and that was a lot of money for my family at the time. Now \$45,000 – 40,000?

Krieger: I think it might be \$45,000-\$47,000.

Moravec: Yeah, it's a lot of money. But at the time \$7000 was a lot when Illinois State might have been \$1500-2000 as a state school.

Krieger: Wouldn't it be nice?

Moravec: Yeah, it wouldn't it be great to go back to that?

[break in interview recording.]

Moravec: The Hansen Student Center was a gymnasium. It was the old Memorial Gym. They had intramural basketball and volleyball there. And there was a pool downstairs in the basement that had a really low ceiling. They had synchronized swimming, I don't think they had a competitive swim team at the time. Just after I left, the Sanatorium was being built. There were some major renovations to the campus taking place as I graduated. I never got to see the Shirk Center built. Never got to see the Natatorium. The Natatorium came first and then the Shirk Center. The Evelyn Chapel had not been built, it was under construction and it opened just after we left campus. In fact, my wife and I had our marriage ceremony there on the 25th homecoming. They had a ceremony where they brought people back who had met at Illinois Wesleyan and we renewed our vows on that day. That was a lot of fun but the Memorial Center now is a beautiful place for students to come and for activities to take place and conference rooms and study areas but the bookstore was actually between Saga and Ferguson in the courtyard area. I lived at the top of the spiral staircase in Kemp and had a really small single at the top of the stairs but it was much different than the experience I had at Dolan. It was, again, it was a great time.

Krieger: Very nice.

Moravec: Yeah.

Krieger: So, what was this 25th anniversary experience like?

Moravec: It was us and about 60 or 70 couples that came back and some of them had just recently got married a year or two or five out of school. There was some couples that had met and married 60 plus years that came back to renew their vows from different parts of the country or here locally that stayed in the Bloomington-Normal

area. They put an alumni choir together and a couple of my classmates were involved in that and Ann Ambler Murray was among them. She and her husband live up in the Chicagoland area but it was pretty neat to be a part of that and then they had a reception for us in the Student Center over here. So we got to visit with other couples that had met at Wesleyan and had gotten married. My wife and I just celebrated our 30th anniversary this past fall.

Krieger: Congratulations.

Moravec: Yeah, it was fun. We came back to homecoming this year as our 30th. In fact, I was supposed to come back and be Tommy Titan at this year's homecoming but I hurt my leg and I wasn't actually able even to run. I had the suit and everything to be able to come out and be Tommy Titan. Maybe next year.

Krieger: Maybe. That's a really fun idea.

Moravec: Yeah.

Krieger: What was your wife involved in as a student?

Moravec: My wife was biology major when she started and she ended up as a business major. After graduating, she was a manager of a restaurant on campus here she was involved in residential life, she was an RA. I believe one or two years, I think maybe. I think maybe two years she was an RA. She involved in intramural sports as well.

Krieger: What was intramural sports like? How often did you guys meet?

Moravec: Oh, well I got involved as a coach for the girl teams cause that was a good way to meet the girls.

Krieger: Of course.

Moravec: Of course. Then Dolan had a basketball team, an A and a B team. I always played on the B team because I wasn't that good. Basketball was one that stood out most in my mind because we got to play against the faculty. We got to play against the fraternities that had really competitive teams. So it was always a great chance to try and beat them. It was the competitive spirit inside of me. That did that. I did get to guard Dr. Bray because we were two of the slowest people on the court and so I got

to guard him.

Krieger: That was very funny. Who was Dr. Bray?

Moravec: Dr. Bray was the head of the English department and I had him for Freshmen composition and then for one of my humanities classes.

Krieger: That's very funny.

Moravec: Yeah.

Krieger: Very, very funny. Well is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Moravec: I don't know. I appreciate the opportunity. Wesleyan was a great experience. And I recall many friendships that have stayed through the years with Illinois Wesleyan, both faculty and staff that are currently here as well as friends that I see at a basketball game or homecoming event or football game. Those connections stay forever and if I needed to call on somebody for a business connection, I might reach out to somebody that I knew from Illinois Wesleyan to make an introduction and have over the years. I have a connection back with Warren Kistner in the Hansen Student Center, I volunteer to help students with their interviewing skills and we have a student intern currently actually who works here in Ames Library named Moya. Moya is a student from Nigeria and she is currently managing our company's social media on LinkedIn and Facebook and she does so from campus remotely and I got to meet her through the Hart Center interviewing process.

Krieger: Wonderful. That's pretty cool.

Moravec: Yeah.

Krieger: So you'd say even post-college experience, you've been very invested and very engaged in the Illinois Wesleyan community?

Moravec: Oh, absolutely. I've try to give back where I can and have been involved with the Hart Center through internships and interviewing for several years. Students here are great. I say often times, I don't think I could get into Wesleyan today with the grades that I had in high school and the competitive nature that Illinois Wesleyan brings today. I don't think I could have gotten in.

Krieger: Wonderful.

Moravec: Yeah. Well thanks for the opportunity.

Krieger: Yeah. Thank you so much for your time.

Moravec: You're welcome.