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## Jim Matthews

Jim Matthews

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Oral History Interview with Jim Matthews

In the Hansen Student Center on February 10, 2016

Conducted by Meg Miner, Illinois Wesleyan Archivist

00:00:28 - Jim Matthews introducing himself and his relationship with Minor

00:03:33 - Matthews describing his first time meeting Minor

00:07:36 - Matthew discussing Minor's "specialty"

00:07:42 - Matthews discussing Minor's support of broad-based education on campus

00:18:04 - Matthews talking about the student frustration on campus during Minor's presidency

00:24:59 - Matthews talking about Minor's views of student affairs and becoming Dean of Students

00:36:49 - Matthews discussing a change Minor made in the orientation system for new students

00:42:11 - Matthews describing board of Trustee's meetings under the leadership of Minor

00:46:36 - Matthews discussing Minor's influence on the budget

00:50:28 - Matthews discussing Minor's trouble with racial relations on campus

01:03:18 - Matthews discussing the process of getting the new student center

01:14:30 - Matthews talking about the trips Minor sent him on

01:16:39 - Matthews discussing Minor's book collection and love for books

01:21:17 - Matthews talking about Minor first getting sick and his leave of absence

01:26:06 - Matthews discussing his differing views than Minor of alcohol policy on campus

01:28:13 - Matthews discussing Minor's views of traditional Methodism

Meg Miner: Good morning

Jim Matthews: Good Morning

Miner: My name is Meg Miner. I'm the Archivist at Illinois Wesleyan University and today is February 10<sup>th</sup> and I'm in the Hansen Student Center this morning to talk about Minor Myers presidency, his influence on campus and I have today with me a faculty member. Please identify yourself and tell us how your affiliated with Wesleyan and Minor Myers.

Jim Matthews: My name is Jim Matthews. I currently am the chair of French and Italian and Associate Professor of French here at Illinois Wesleyan. Next fall, I'll start my thirtieth year with the University. I came to work closely with Minor in 1998 when subsequent to a Greek Affairs task force that I chaired he asked me to serve as interim Dean of Students and then in '99 appointed me to be permanent, full time Dean of Students and I served in that capacity with him...well I served in that capacity for seven and half years I served with him for... I think...six years. So he was my immediate supervisor and I was a cabinet member of the university.

Miner: from 1999 then until his...

Matthews: 1999 until he passed away, and then I left the dean's office in July of 2005.

Miner: so you were on campus then before Minor was hired

Jim Matthews: Yes.

Miner: that was '86 or '87?

Jim Matthews: I came here in the fall of '86. I was hired by Wendell Hess, and the president at that time was in his last semester going into retirement. Minor was technically third president, the second president in terms of actual work experience that I served under.

Miner: were you a part of Minor's search committee, or were you involved?

Matthews: No I was a junior faculty member at that time. My main campus wide function outside of teaching was Wendell asked me to serve on a committee that was reconfiguring Buck Memorial Library into a computer center and an office with classrooms for classes in courses in what they called then Foreign Languages. So really I didn't have a lot of direct contact with Minor. Although, one of the first times I came into contact with him...I was here over the summer and he came across to me and asked me what I did and when I told him he said he expected to see a display up in the library about the French Revolution.

Miner: and he wanted you to do it?

Matthews: He wanted to see it happen, and it didn't (laughter). But that was the first conversation I had with him. As first conversations go, he did all the talking and I just nodded my head. I am not sure that I made vocal sounds. No we never had a display about the French revolution, but it was interesting to me

that he knew enough about France and history of the revolution, he thought it would be something we should observe at Illinois Wesleyan.

Miner: Do you have any sense of why he thought that should be a focus?

Matthews: ... Well he was something of a Francophile. as I learned later and he was an ardent student of the enlightenment and had read many of the French philosophe. So I think intellectually he was drawn to it. But I think he was in many ways he epitomized what we stand for as a university, in terms of the well-educated liberal arts specialist, if you will, who can talk to anybody intelligently about anything that person might be interested in and that remained a constant throughout our relationship. He was constantly insisting on seeing me as a scholar of the enlightenment, although technically, I was responsible for that period here on campus, that was not my area, focus, of my research. I worked with 17<sup>th</sup> century theatre, rather than 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment, but it gave us a point to have a conversation.

Miner: To connect on

Matthews: Yeah

Miner: Did he ever come back to you and say where's that display?

Matthews: I was too junior of a faculty to know how to go about doing something like that but there were many themes of our relationship and his presidency that came through in that conversation. He wanted the library to be the focus, or host of this display. And just assumed that everyone would go to the library to see it. We were going to talk about things French whenever we could.

Miner: it's interesting that you use the word specialist. That he stands for the liberal arts specialist because that's not something that I hear on campus, although I'm much newer to the environment, but that he exhibited an attitude of a specialty.

Matthews: He very much supported broad based education. His ideal was the student who was a biology major who was an expert at any particular musical instrument, so that student took lessons in that instrument and played chamber orchestra or ensemble or performed with that instrument in some way and maintained a biology major, I think that Minor believed that was the epitome of the enlightenment and I think he believed that was the epitome of the liberal arts. With a broad based education you were free to pursue expertise in multiple areas. And not have to just focus on a particular major. So it's really with Minor (coughing) the idea of double majoring across what we might think of widely separated disciplines really started to take root here.

Miner: Do you think that's something that he insisted on or just lived by example and supported?

Matthews: He certainly tried to live that by way of example. It's something that he promoted very actively. He wasn't the type to be overbearing about it but he ceaselessly talked about it when he would encounter faculty members. At times, I have to say, particularly since I saw him much more often, I came to fear that he didn't fully appreciate the extent to which some faculty members saw what he was

suggesting as dilettantism, if that's a word, that you dabbled in several things, and perhaps were an expert in none of them. Sometimes the way he portrayed this could be confusing unless you remembered that he really encouraged students to pursue a passion and he wanted to make sure that there was space at Illinois Wesleyan or any liberal arts college for someone who might have more than one passion if you have a passion for biology and a passion for music there should be a way that you can pursue both. He was very consistent in pursuing that possibility for those students and he worked with both students and faculty to make sure that was a possibility for students. So it was a noble effort on his part. It represented a tiny percentage of our students. That could get confusing to faculty and students that it was part of my job as Dean of Students to remind him that didn't account for a majority of our students and we needed to serve everyone as best we could.

Miner: Structurally, we were set up a little bit differently. Right it wasn't as easy...

Matthews: Yeah we weren't a traditional liberal arts college. We were a university with a liberal arts college within it, but we also had professional schools. So the biology major who chose to pursue some type of major in performance in an instrument or vocal really had to be enrolled in two different schools with general education requirements that didn't match and major requirements that in particular in those two disciplines would be difficult to achieve in six years let alone four. So sometimes the faculty would particularly the longer he was here would tend to brush off those references to the multitalented student as he would call it as just not something that we could realistically do now in hindsight I think he was right in pushing for an opportunity for students to pursue more than one passion and we weren't as well equipped to do that as we could have been but we are what we are.

Miner: Well that philosophy though, what kind of an effect that would have, you said that eventually faculty started to brush that off some of the excitement.

Matthews: I think faculty got tired of the phrase the multitalented. They tended to look at it as unrealistic because at the same time Miner was reminding us of the students among us that had more than one academic passion; the faculty on the academic side were looking to increase requirements in their own majors. The faculty I think it's fair to say moved more and more to a silo structure, where Miner was thinking about the students who could easily or more easily move from silo to silo. The faculty and Miner were at odds in where they wanted to go with the university. Partly that's because of the people that were hired by the Provost over that same time that didn't fit Miner's vision of what we should be. We hired people who had the potential to be great scholars and might be decent teachers, but there was a reversal of the priorities by which we had hired people in the past and

Miner: So there were some mixed messages there that the faculty were getting.

Matthews: The provost a couple years ago, I mean our current provost, Jonathan, did a program on the liberal arts and at the end of the which he almost casually mentioned that only 16 or 17 of the faculty had had a liberal arts undergraduate background, so in my humble opinion, we had a lot of faculty on campus who were promoting an educational system or style of learning that they had not experienced first-hand and when push came to shove they reverted back to what they knew which was the

University of Illinois or major Big Ten university type of structure, and I don't think that is how Miner would have preferred us to see things.

Miner: Well it's interesting that you use the word unrealistic because that's what I was thinking of when you said his view and the faculty view backlash against him and his view as much as the nature people being hired so as Dean of Students, the students were getting a clear message from Miner and his praise from that type of student but they were being required to do something entirely different to meet the graduation requirements.

Matthews: Yeah there was a fair amount of frustration. The whole reason I became Dean of Students was because of the enormous student frustration on campus. They channeled this anger into the issue of student life. Part of it had to do with academic life too. We didn't offer enough courses. Again their comparison would be courses offered in psychology at the University of Illinois. Much bigger staff much greater ability to offer a variety of courses in their majors less emphasis in general education. As silos grew up around different majors on campus, what seemed to have been lost is the essential nature of the multidisciplinary experience as a student, which the alumni would report back on as being essential to their career growth, but that response was not and still is not widely known among the faculty because in some ways it is an inconvenient truth to how we have developed academically. Minor was all about expertise he just wanted to allow for people to be experts in more than one academic area and that grew very much out of his rooting in 18<sup>th</sup> century French philosophy.

Miner: So did you have an occasion to discuss the kinds of texts that he'd engaged with to form some of these opinions?

Matthews: Yeah, yeah, when I was dean my office was down the hall from him. I can't count how many times, almost weekly, if not more, he would tell me that there was a really important book available on eBay, under the rare books section of eBay, for only \$100 or more I could add that to my collection, that I had a collection was a surprise to me. Minor thought everyone kept collections. I would say to him that \$100 is so much more than I can afford right now and in a kindly way he really didn't understand that there's this book of enormous value and it's only \$100 and he might not even know what the particular value of the book and there had to be something great in it, I did it a couple of times mostly to make him happy and to show that I didn't discount what he valued. I thought it was pretty cool too. I had to go home and explain to the lovely Mrs. Matthews why I spent \$100 on an old book. Those weren't easy conversations. It was impossible not to get excited when he got excited about something. That he was excited about something in French was so thrilling to me. That a president took an interest, a very lively, in my discipline was almost beyond belief. That's not very common that a university president is interested in particularly gaga about old French writing. Authors...well he'd read of course Rousseau, Voltaire, but while he was president he became fascinated with Condorcet. Condorcet is best known to us today for having developed a theory of the perfecting of human kind. Condorcet believed that human kind had reached the penultimate state of perfecting humanity at the time of the Enlightenment and just required more time and encouragement and space that eventually they would reach that top step, unfortunately Condorcet didn't get to see whether his theory worked out because they cut off his head during the French revolution. You could mention those details to Minor, which was my nature, to

play devil's advocate with him and he would just brush that off... that had nothing to do with it, the theories are still valid... we had a lot of fun with that. He didn't have a regular meeting with his cabinet officers but we could go anytime we needed to and talk to him. I thought that it was important to go in semi-regularly and let him know what was happening in student affairs because his first question to me in every cabinet meeting would be to me and he would ask have the boys behaved over the weekend. We always had cabinet meetings on Mondays, Monday morning, and so I had to come in and go through security reports before cabinet meetings so that I could assure him that nothing had been burned down and that the boys had at least not been caught at what they were doing.

Miner: and this was solely in Greek life, he wasn't just saying any old dorm activity.

Matthews: He took me as some kind of expert on Greek life. I was never Greek. Never wanted to be Greek.

Miner: But he was

Matthews: He was

Miner: and you were on the task force

Matthews: I was on the head of the task force which is how I got into this mess in the first place, but every Monday he would start off with "have the boys behaved". So, I would make an appointment to go down and tell him here's what's happening in student life here's what you need to know about interaction with Student Senate which was very active at that time just to keep him fully apprised. I'd start talking about Student Affairs, and maybe I get five minutes and then we would spend fifty minutes talking about 18<sup>th</sup> century French philosophy and literature and things he'd read. It had nothing to do with Student Affairs. He had a total disdain for what he called student affairs professionals. He thought they were not academic enough. Not intellectual enough. He recognized the need to have a division of student affairs on campus, but he was delighted to have a faculty member dopey enough to agree to do that for him. I stepped in because we had hired a Dean of Students named Deb Wood who was thoroughly student affairs professional. She was very, very good at what she did, but she didn't know how to do it within the Illinois Wesleyan Culture. Her methods were very confrontational with fraternities. She would send security in the middle of the night searching for alcohol. Rousting the fraternity officers out of bed. And doing these searches and fraternities were calling them Nazis.

Miner: Oh my gosh

Matthews: and finally, a portion of the Student Senate formed their own committee, ex-officio, this was before when email was in its primitive stages, this was '97, '98, and a senator representing this group sent out a broadcast email to all of the faculty, which meant that somebody had to put in all of the faculty email addresses by hand, and basically this served as a vote of no confidence in the Dean of Students. She was a liar, she was not trustworthy, she was too authoritarian, she was a closet Nazi, they came up with all kinds of accusations. Of course they included the president in this. Now she was doing what she believed she was hired to do from what she had gleaned from the search committee.

Miner: Was her hiring before Minor?

Matthews: Miner was president. Miner went along with the search committee. I think because he believed student affairs really didn't matter and that kind of blew up in his face when he had as her supervisor, he had no real guidance to give her. He didn't want to meet with her. Partly because he didn't want to know some of these things, and partly because he didn't respect her background.

Miner: Because she wasn't an academic

Matthews: Right because she wasn't from an academic discipline. He got to know me through the task force and he decided that he had to do something because the student unrest was reaching parents and was reaching alumni and made us look horrible and accusations went unanswered. So between Christmas and New Year's I was walking to my car and he happened to be walking to his house and I was walking towards my car and so we walked alongside each other and he said I've got to find a way to get you more involved in administration. This was as I was going on Christmas break and I thought ok. I had no idea what he meant by that. I'm not sure he did. Of course he did. I'm sure he already had in his mind he knew that he needed a change in the Dean of Students' office. So he came over to my office in Buck and I had an evening seminar that I taught, and he came over very late in the afternoon with Carl Teichman and never sat down and said would you consider becoming the Dean of Students here. And he said would you consider becoming the Dean of Students here. And I said to him that's a very flattering offer on your part. I really can't consider it because I have a seminar to teach. And as usual I'm not as ready as I want to be and I have to go teach now. We agreed to talk later. In the ultimate interview, where he asked me to be Dean of Students, I was having problems with blood pressure, and it was very, very dry in the winter, and my nose started to bleed while I was in his office, getting this job offer. (laughing) It was pretty awful, but I found out he had a bathroom in his office because he ran in and got me paper towels. But the darn thing wouldn't stop bleeding which is now pretty funny but was pretty awkward at the time. I went to the Provost and she knew that he was going to tell me this. I didn't know what kind of salary to ask for I didn't know what kind of salary cabinet officers make. So she suggested a number and I said ok and this was just on an interim basis. At the most I was going to do this mainly for a year but it happened in the spring semester so he wanted me to come over to the dean's office for ten hours a week and shadow Deb Wood and get caught up but he also told me I shouldn't put any faith in Deb Wood at all, and essentially told me to stay away from her. So they created a little space for me in an office in Holmes, the space across from where Frank's office is now. It was kind of a work room. They made some space for me and within two days of meeting some of the staff the office manager started bringing all of the paperwork to me to sign off on and she had me meeting with students. I did a lot more than ten hours a week. With Minor's blessing, that I'd just took over running Student Affairs, which completely devastated Deb Wood.

Miner: I would thing so

Matthews: We had no relationship because he told me to stay away from her. And I wasn't yet secure enough in my knowledge of the people in the building or him to just openly go against him.

Miner: Right



Matthews: So I didn't go to cabinet meetings, but I pretty much did the work. Essentially told Deb Wood you can keep your office and you can look for jobs but don't do any student affairs work. Someone had to do it, and so I did it. She left for California. She got a really nice job in Los Angeles, where she would be much happier.

Miner: In Academic Affairs, Student Affairs

Matthews: She became Dean of Students in a college a lot better than ours. So she landed well. We had a tearful scene in the Provost's office, where Deb Wood accused me of neglecting her and I didn't know what to say. Honestly I didn't know what to say and then she accused me of "look he won't talk to me now." I just didn't know what to say. I didn't know what to do. So that was awkward. Minor was unhappy with our orientation system, and so that first summer that I was Dean we went through the usual orientation where students would come in over four weekends in the summer and essentially they would pick their classes for the fall over those four weekends. We talked about Minor's issue of we wanted higher retention of first year students. So we implemented, I think we called it fall festival and we brought in students a week early.

Miner: That was new during your tenure then

Matthews: That was brand new. The football coach suggested that each class design a flag for itself. We got input from lots of folks that hadn't been able to provide input or had anything to say about orientation. Jack Fields was the registrar he was very opposed to this because the system we had, he had put together and it worked very well and if we ever went to a program where we chose classes all at the same time in the fall, he was worried it was going to be a disaster it would be very hard. They would have to make substantial changes, obviously, to the way we registered students. But we ran this thing in the summer of '98 just as a trial balloon to see if that week would have any impact. Since we weren't going to be picking classes during that week, I had no idea what we were going to do and I became deathly afraid we wouldn't have enough for the students to do so we over programmed them, the poor students that summer, or that fall, had no free time whatsoever. We had them running everywhere. I think the programs that we came up with were ultimately beneficial, but there were too many of them. The students started the semester and they were just exhausted. And it was either '98 or '99 that one of our students came to us with shed had a wisdom tooth removed and it became infected and the infection became very, very serious so severe that at St. Joe they had put her in a coma, an induced coma, they told the parents. This was my first experience as dean of having access to information that the rest of the campus didn't have access to which was not uncommon under Minor's presidency. The nurse told the parents that she had a 50/50 chance of surviving. That's how serious it was, but they told us that it was really 20/80.

Miner: Oh dear...

Matthews: That we should be prepared for losing the student who had not even been to class yet. I mean this all happened that weeklong festival. It might have been the second year we ran this, so '99. I went to the hospital everyday on the way into work and sat with the family for a while and just checked in with them. I told them I planned to hand the president her diploma when she graduated walking

across the stage, and the parents better see to it that she's there. That's just kind of how we talked to each other. She ended up surviving the coma. She came back after a semester off she came back to Wesleyan. She took a class from me, a French class. I always continued to teach one class every year as Dean of Students. Her dad came up and introduced himself again four years later. He said you might not remember me but I am Amy's dad. We just had a great moment together she was in line because she was going to graduate. I did hand her diploma to the president to hand to her. That was a good moment.

Miner: You said Minor withheld information

Matthews: Minor's idea of a good Board of Trustees meeting, a good any meeting was there was no turbulence. There was no one was upset, no one was challenging, everyone proceeded calmly through the business and we had planned ahead of any upset that could happen.

Miner: That seems counter to some of the ideals he might have believed.

Matthews: Yeah, yeah, he did his dissertation on Machiavelli so. He never quoted Machiavelli he never referred to him much at all in my discussions with him. You can see some of that influence sometimes. He wanted to be careful about how we shared information so that we didn't inflame the student, the mini-insurrection that put me in the Dean's office worried him because it was something that happened that was out of his control and he had his focus on a new library and he didn't want things to disrupt that possibility. Faculty meetings and cabinet meetings... he wanted to control how information was presented. As an example, when I learned of this, this involved expectations for increase in alumni giving every year. Every year, Minor in the budget that was submitted to the Trustees every year would always target an increase of 10% in alumni giving to the general fund, to our operating budget, and I checked with people in financial, not financial...

Miner: Advancement?

Matthews: Advancement, sorry and Ben Rhodes told me that this idea of increase went back to the sixties when they brought a consultant in, and the consultant suggested a 10 percent increase. In those days the budget was so small and the amount of giving was so small that 10% may not have seemed like an unrealistic goal. When Minor was president alumni giving was up significantly compared to the sixties and 10 percent was totally unrealistic. The industry suggests maybe 3 percent as a target for each year, and Minor wrote it into the budget, approved it, 10 percent.

Miner: Do you think that was the Trustee's influence?

Matthews: Some of the Trustees had to know that it was unrealistic. Not all of the trustees. Some of the trustees didn't know it was an unrealistic goal but of course we never meet that goal. Our budget was always short. There was always a shortfall at the end of the fiscal year. And we would have to make a special tap into the endowment to meet our budget. What we heard in faculty meetings and what was always presented in Trustees meeting the headline was we will finish such and such fiscal year with a balanced budget and they brought out all the spreadsheets and showed how we were going to do that.

It wasn't until Janet became acting president that she reported to the executive board of trustees how this little dodge had been going on. The shortfall could be up to a million dollars a year but that would have to come out of the endowment as an extra tap that was not provided for in the Trustee rules. There was a fixed percentage that was to be taken out of the endowment every year to contribute to the operating budget of the university but we in effect took a million dollars on top of that every year because the expected income from alumni giving was always artificially inflated.

Miner: Yeah

Matthews: If anyone caught this, no one said anything about it. The faculty just heard every year and could see some of the numbers to know that we had a balanced budget and we were making money hand over fist in the stock market. Again I'm assuming with Minor's encouragement, the Trustees had their own investment committee. Following Minor's dream of this library, had invested in higher risk high return stocks, stock market. When the dot.com bubble burst, we made New York Times, Wall Street Journal's top ten list of universities in the country who had suffered the greatest percentage loss of endowment income because of the crash of the stock market so we played high stakes and we got called by the dot.com bubble and we lost.

Miner: that was after minor's death, wasn't it? The dot.com bubble? Or was it an earlier one?

Matthews: Well I remember the dot.com bubble was 2002.

Miner: Was it? Ok

Matthews: So yeah Minor was around. He would have sort of sheepishly at a Trustee meeting, he would say well yeah, yeah. We took a huge hit. He would find some way to make a joke about it. Ironically, humorous, but we lost so much value in the endowment. If we had been smarter, we would have been terrified by it (coughing). Most of Minor's years in office we always seemed to be rolling in money. We had lots of money. Today we know it was because we did this, this extra... I don't know how to describe it...special extra regular tapping of the endowment, we were giving more than we were supposed to the regular operating budget, so we all had money to spend and the endowment was growing and we were getting greater income from the endowment than what we were regularly taking out because the endowment was growing so fast, when that all stopped, that's when the pain started. The other area that Minor had trouble with was racial relations. We had a big incident that happened with Sodexo where the head of the Sodexo accused, who turned out to be an African student, not an African American student, but African of putting...sneaking...we had paper bags that you could fill with food and you could took the bags up to the counter and told them what was in the bag and they charged you... well he thought that this student had put more in the bag than he was paying for, Mike was sitting in the dugout and he saw this student and he walked up to the cashier and said make sure you check his bag. And from that comment, it became a huge racial incident. Black student union was infuriated. And thought that this student had been singled out for profiling. This student happened to be of a very wealthy, aristocratic family from Ghana. It was like an African prince had been accused of shoplifting. The kid, the student followed Mike down the hall, protesting, as Mike tried to leave the scene and the kid following, protesting all the way. Why would you even think I was thinking his family could buy the

university. Mike was on his way up the stairs because the Pepsi delivery guy was here and Mike wanted to make sure that he installed the new Pepsi correctly or something. Anyway, he was going up the elevator, in Sodexo, and the student had followed Mike to the elevator, and Mike put his hand on the student to stop him from coming on the elevator, now we had a racial incident with assault and it just got worse and worse and worse. Then the students would come to me and I'd tell them I don't have any influence over Sodexo, I am just the Dean of Students. That's what Kim Browning constantly told me. And used exactly that phrase. I'm just the Dean of Students. So I notified Ken that we had a problem and Ken did nothing about it, and now the students are beyond mad that nothing, that this hadn't been addressed in any way, the student came to me with the President, and President asked him how can I make this better for you. We're horrified that this happened and the student was so deferential to Minor that nothing got said, but then student went back to his, uh, black student union friends and told them that he hadn't really asked for anything and they went nuts because he hadn't asked for any concessions and they demanded. Their influence he made a very inflammatory statement in Student Senate, and it ended up that Mike had to go to a senate meeting and read an apology. It was a very Manchurian candidate kind of moment, which he did and the agreement that my office had negotiated with the Student Senate was that there would not follow up questions here and he would be able to leave. It was horrible for Mike. It was horrible for the all the adults in the room and even some of the students were very uncomfortable...

Miner: because

Matthews: Because an adult was being compelled by circumstances.

Miner: Drawn before the mass

Matthews: Yeah, exactly confess his sins to the... and Mike never did understand where he did anything wrong, so it was part of my frustration so it actually happened to be the first of three cultural racial incidences involving Sodexo employees and we got Sodexo on campus and major executives on campus and they came down. One time they were here, they said would you take a walk with us. That was never a good thing but we walked around the perimeter of the campus. They essentially asked me if I wanted them to take Mike's job away which is not what I had signed up for as Dean of Students. It was very much an unfair question. It wasn't up to me.

Miner: I would think VP for Business and Finance.

Matthews: So well now they had begun to not trust him because he hadn't said anything about this incident that I had reported to him. The students were mad at me because I didn't, I didn't make a big deal of this. In hindsight, I should have made a bigger deal of it.

Miner: Yeah

Matthews: My staff was hinting at the time that I should and I just, I was trying to follow the protocol of Holmes.

Miner: Where was this in your deanship?

Matthews: This would have been in...2000-2001. I think, somewhere in there.

Miner: About halfway in

Matthews: Yeah, and I...I was thinking who was president of the Senate at the time, maybe it was a little after that...what angered me was to find out four years later from Ken Browning that, oh yeah the Dean of Students and the VP of Business and Finance jointly signed the contract for food service.

Miner: Oh dear

Matthews: and in fact I had that authority. Sodexo told me "why didn't you just call us." I said, I didn't know that was our protocol because I was trying to stay within Wesleyan's protocol not understanding that I had not been given all that information, because I was a faculty member, right, I was still a faculty member and somebody going back to the faculty, Business and Finance couldn't trust me.

Miner: Well you said Minor tried to.

Matthews: Minor tried, he really, really tried to make things right. He took answers, he took questions a couple weeks later when he went to install the new Senate officers. He took questions from the senators. At one point he said if you have these kinds of concerns the Dean of Students sits with you every other week he's right there to...well I think the black students at that point thought I was useless because I hadn't done anything, and the other students I always had a really good relationship with the senate officers. I made a point to let them know that I was there to support them and help them. I would share information with them that I wouldn't necessarily share with faculty, trustees. I would give the students an honest appraisal of what was going on so that we could avoid all of the nonsense that can come up. I wanted the students to feel like they were partners in this enterprise. Minor...I went, I had a meeting with Minor about the racial situation on campus. There was the minority alumni network which was agitating and they were 100 percent African American at that point. So the minority was a holdover from there time on campus when minority meant black that group. The composition of that group has changed now. I went to every minority alumni dinner up in Chicago. One year we had homecoming at one of the hotel ballrooms here in town. The homecoming dinner was in one gigantic room but the minority alumni network chose to have their dinner at the same time right next door. So all the cabinet went to the big dinner Mary Anne and I went to the minority alumni dinner and we felt some sort of solidarity because of our own son's issues with civil rights because he had a disability. It wasn't exactly the same nature, anyway it gave us something to talk about with them and we were always welcomed. People got used to seeing us at alumni events.

Miner: But that goodwill didn't hold over then?

Matthews: Well it did with the minority alumni network because they accepted what I told them but by the time I met with them I had time to reflect back, I was able to say I made a mistake here because I didn't understand. They took that. I remember sitting, the president had his own conference room, and it was just Minor and I and I remember saying how can I help you with this racial issue. He genuinely didn't understand racial discrimination. He was a scholar of the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. He didn't see

this as an issue. He didn't see this as occurring in nature. He didn't understand why people would discriminate. It didn't make any sense to him and he didn't understand why black students felt they were less privileged than any other Wesleyan student because the rules applied to everybody and the opportunities applied to everybody, he didn't get it he didn't get it at all. It was kind of a blind spot with him, he meant well. He wanted them to be no discrimination. Why don't we just live like Voltaire is how he would have approached it. If we just thought like Voltaire, there would be no discrimination and we would be ok. Well that didn't work. (laughing)

Miner: There's reality, there's philosophy and then there's reality

Matthews: He didn't know how, it was a good time, there was the library was in place the Memorial...

Miner: The student center

Matthews: The student center

Miner: He put you in charge of that? Didn't he?

Matthews: With Ken Browning watching over my shoulder but I got a chance to head that project, co-headed that project with Ken. That was a trip, that was an interesting experience.

Miner: So he didn't interfere or try to influence anything in here?

Matthews: He was all about the library. The one time that was interesting when we got permission to do this project. In my reports to the Trustees, I had been indicating how thoroughly unhappy the students were with the Memorial Center as a student center because all the meeting rooms were taken up by faculty it seemed. They had the dugout and that was it. It was too institutional. Student senate president at the time went to Minor and said we want to go visit other liberal arts colleges, over winter break, I think and we want to look at their student centers. We want to see how they stack up. They purposely picked Minor's former place of employment.

Miner: Hobart?

Matthews: Yeah, Hobart but also other eastern schools that Minor considered our target. Our goal was to be like Williams. So they went to Williams, they went to Hobart, they went to Ivy schools on the east coast. And Minor paid for the whole thing and they used a university car and they went and collected all this information, then generated a report about the places they visited and how they stacked up against Illinois Wesleyan. Their premise was that more students would come here, better students would come here, and more students would stay here, if we had a student center that was dedicated to students and they presented this report to the president and they had high expectations that he would take this seriously. Well he did but he wanted the library and things were kind of touchy with the trustees about getting the library funded but Minor was good enough to have Michael Balsley, which was the student senate president, which is a good name for him, and he addressed the trustees and it will live forever in my memory. He gave an oral version of this report. He talked about the places they'd been. He talked about the places they'd seen. They talked about how much better they were, and how much different

they were he talked about how dissatisfied students were with having to share space with the faculty. It was a very good talk. It was very compelling. And it empowered the Trustees who were student oriented to speak up. One of the Trustees, it wasn't Minor, but it might have been the board chair of that time. Somebody asked, Michael Balsley, well, if the students had to choose between the library and a student center, which would they choose and Michael and I had talked a lot about this as a scenario. I didn't tell him what to say just you need to be thinking about it if you get asked this question. Somebody is going to be awkward enough to put student on the spot in this way. Michael's really good and he went on to be a professional actor. He stood up there and he was very thoughtful and you could tell, everybody in the room, that it was really, really hard, and he finally said. If I am going to be honest with you, the students want both. It was like total silence.

Miner: Oh my gosh

Matthews: Yeah and I'm thinking yes! So the Trustees voted to a certain amount of money to bring in our favorite architects and do a feasibility study. They focused Memorial gym because it didn't have to be new construction and could that gym...So we started the feasibility study, we had all these meetings...we had students, faculty, and staff all the constituents were represented but particularly students and we sat in the middle of the gym and we talked about can we do this and if we did this, what would it look like. We developed a set of principles which is a way I like to think about solving problems. Here are the principles we want to be valued by. It can't be institutional looking. It has to be multi-functional. There has to be a maximum variety built into this space. It has to have a bookstore, a real bookstore with books. The food was to be not Saga. Not the traditional stuff they serve in the dugout, and throughout that whole process, the students got, their voice got heard by the architects. And the architects would say oh your suggestions are well within the vocabulary of the building, and the students would say what the hell are you talking about. The architects heard the students, and responded to the students and there was nobody there like Ken Browning to filter the student's comments. Like oh no you've got to look at the cost. We knew we weren't going to spend a lot of money on the building compared to other buildings but what are the things that we could do. We developed this idea that walking down the Hansen Center would be like walking down a street. To the right there would be all these different places that you could go to. There would be a convenience store, there would be a café, there would be a quiet space in the back where you could study or hang out. All of the sweep would lead to our new bookstore. It would be a multi-level bookstore with textbooks downstairs but upstairs would be...So I'd report on this regularly to monitor what we were doing and to the Trustees and everybody liked it. When it came back, it was feasible to do this project. Will accept these changes without any need to shore it up structurally, solid foundation, and the floor can be used. We don't have to put in a new floor. They showed how it could be done for...I think the original estimate was four million? Something like that. Browning came up with this idea that we would borrow from ourselves. We had a substantial gift from Tom Hansen. So we got it approved from the Trustees to start drawing up plans. So we went ahead and drew up the architectural plans. That picture is about. We had a big celebration in the Memorial gym one night, Trustees and students and faculty, and cabinet and we put pictures up all around the gym floor of what the Hansen center would look like if we went ahead

and built it or funded it. If we showed great artist renderings of it. We'd have the blueprint out, which is what George, that's not George, the guy before him, the chair of the board is holding the plan...

Miner: I always thought that was the hammer

Matthews: maybe it is a hammer. I can't see from here.

Miner: For the audio recording sake, you're pointing to a picture that shows people, standing in the building. I always thought it was a hammer for the wall breaking ceremony. But that's ok.

Matthews: It is the hammer, that was at the wall breaking.

Miner: Ok, but there were other events

Matthews: Yeah, Minor supported it

Miner: but it doesn't sound like he interfered with it.

Matthews: No, no, no it's Student Affairs he didn't care.

Miner: But he interfered with the other Dean of Students.

Matthews: Oh yeah because she was Student Affairs and I was faculty.

Miner: Ok, so that was the reason

Matthews: Yeah I was academic. In fact, he would send on trips to meet alumni. In places I could do research. He sent me to Minneapolis to an alumni meeting with admissions, um, with advancement and then I take the next day and go to the Minnesota historical society and do research. This is one of the perks he would give me because I lost my summers as dean. He wanted me to keep thinking of myself as a faculty member who was working in Student Affairs and could maintain an active research. Often he would come down and ask me about my research. He let me go to Chicago once every two weeks, usually on a train and I'd go up to Chicago and I'd work at the Newbury and I'd come home that evening. He was fine with that. He wanted an academic as head of Student Affairs.

Miner: So one of the things that is interesting to me about the stories I have on Minor is this notion of influence, right? Sounds like he had influence in the faculty by not sharing information. He had influence in the board by not revealing some of the decisions that he made. I am also really, of course, interested in influence in the library and I don't know if you were too focused on what was going on with Hansen at the time to understand, or to have seen, the ways he might have been influencing the library. Of course we wouldn't have a library without his interest in books. I don't know if you have any observations that you could share about that aspect of his influence on campus.

Matthews: I got to spend a fair amount of time in Minor's home on campus. As a cabinet member, I would get invited to all kinds of things where he would hold receptions in his house and I would get invited. I would gravitate to the bookshelves...



Miner: Of course

Matthews: ...in living room I would look down the titles of things and was staggered by the kinds and the quantity and the quality of books that he collected. After he died people could be somewhat disparaging about how would buy huge lots of books and maybe find one or two and had the rest of this lot of books to deal with.

Miner: Did you know if that was true?

Matthews: Not ever for Minor.

Miner: Ok

Matthews: The way he collected, that I knew of, was I wouldn't be surprised if that were the case that he would buy a large quantity of books if there was one particular book in there that he really wanted to get his hands on. Once he had a target in his crosshairs (laughing), nothing would stop him from getting it. That's true about building the library, but I think had he lived, that would have been true about how he'd filled it. Again, there were no bad old books. They were badly understood or badly read but there were no bad old books. He collected everything. He collected musical instruments, he collected books, he collected model trains. I never went to the basement. I never saw his model train collection.

Miner: That was my next question. How could you not have done it?

Matthews: It never came up. He never...

Miner: So he didn't know your interest in trains.

Matthews: No and he wasn't particularly interested if I were or not because he had already identified me as his 18<sup>th</sup> century book person. So no we never got down to look at his trains. I've learned since that he was collected all kinds of things. He was a collecting person and my experience with him was through the books, but I was very impressed that, for example I was a very good friend of Hal Hungerford who filled every room of his house with bookshelves he made and filled so he had over 10000 books in his house when he moved out to California. He had over 10000 books.

Miner: Wow

Matthews: and how as impressive as Minor's in that he could find the book that came to mind and he would go somewhere in the house with the book he was thinking of. Minor was the same way. When he looked on his book collection, he could talk hours on that one section of bookshelf so he didn't just own them he knew them and he knew the story behind them. He valued them as objects as well as representative artifacts of particular way of thinking that he was also attracted to. I didn't dare go near any of the musical instruments for fear I'd do some harm or break them. Books I felt very comfortable with. On the bookshelves he kept a representative sample of what he owned. I don't know where he stored the rest of them.

Miner: What was your sense of things in the living room, high quality?

Matthews: Yes, very high quality and very rare. When he went to Mayo for the first time nobody knew. He'd done a presentation with Mona at a Trustees meeting. A full meeting in February where he both coughed and hacked his way through it. There was a bad flu going around and we assumed Minor had the flu like Mona had and then he disappeared. He was just gone. And when he came back, so the Trustees met on Tuesdays, so this may have been the following Monday we saw him in the hallway. I just said hope you're feeling better. I had this horrible pain in my back. I think I got it from lifting boxes of books.

Miner: Oh no

Matthews: But of course it turned out to be cancer. Then he just disappeared. We were told by the board chair and the Provost not to go visit him but we could send cards. So I wrote a note to him and just thanked him for everything he had done for my family. By choosing...It was the oddest choice that anyone could ever think of to take a French professor, an associate professor at that and make him Dean of Students, and then have it work out. I think we were successful in what we set out to do. For me and my family personally, it allowed us to move away from Bloomington to Mahomet where my son's special needs were better addressed, it was better for all the kids. I just I couldn't thank him enough. He took the time to write me back, sick as he was and said something to the effect of make sure you live up to your potential as a scholar.

Miner: Interesting

Matthews: The theme he had pursued with me from the very first time we had talked together, I want you to be a scholar dean and I think I was a really good teacher dean. Even with the support he gave me, I couldn't push my scholarship too hard. It was just too hard. Dean of Students is not about the hours you spend in the office, it's the hours you spend at home worrying about the hours you would spend at the office. It's a 24/7 job and it just didn't lend itself to being...I did the best I could

Miner: It doesn't sound like he was disappointed in you

Matthews: I think up until the end, when I asked him how I could help with the racial issues on campus, he said I don't know and I don't think he was frustrated with me but he was frustrated with the whole idea there would be a racial problem. The world in which he lived that just didn't happen but it was happening on our campus. He didn't live long enough to see us make the improvements that we made for which, I am sure, he would have gotten a lot of credit. He would have let us do what we were going to do anyway. He was a remarkable man and I'm truly grateful for him giving me this bizarre career opportunity as Dean of Students. It was a whole steep learning curve for me but worth it.

Miner: So no regret?

Matthews: No because I think we made student life safer. I am proud of the fact that we put in counseling services here at Wesleyan while I was Dean. They typically have every available hour scheduled from now to the end of semester. There is that much need.

Miner: Wow

Matthews: Minor was not...the only time Minor and I were ever cross had to do with the alcohol policy and Tommy's in the Hansen center. Minor had this vision of group of Princeton students sitting around a table at dinner drinking beer and having intellectual discussions. I couldn't convince him that as wonderful as that was for Princeton, we didn't have a tradition here. We didn't have the student population that would do that responsibly. We had a student population that would do that irresponsibly. So we had restrictions at Tommy's. It was under our alcohol policy, you had to get a wrist band. When Minor found out that, he said to me in cabinet, if that's the case I am never going there. (laughing) and to my knowledge he never went. He wanted to go and have a beer whenever he wanted to have a beer and he didn't want to go through this nonsense of having to put on a wrist band...

Miner: Oh dear

Matthews: to prove, you know, but that was the only way we got a liquor license from the city, we showed how careful we were going to be with the distribution of alcohol. People at Sodexo have told me over the years that they throw away a lot of beer because they don't serve enough of it to keep it and it goes flat.

Miner: Interesting.

Matthews: They don't conserve it all, but from a student affairs perspective, I'd rather have that, than...

Miner: Sure

Matthews: We've never had an incident where we needed the police at Tommy's. We really haven't had any disciplinary issues at all, for any reason, and I think in the long run that's how we want to keep it. Myer had a real hang-up about traditional Methodism.

Miner: Yeah

Matthews: He had no use for it at all. He made an interesting speech after 9/11, I can't remember if it was the year of 9/11 or the year after. We had a memorial service so it might have been the next year. He gave a talk in front of the art building. He gave a talk about religious fanaticism and how it empowered these horrible people to do this horrible thing. If you've not already found a transcript somewhere, you should look at that.

Miner: I will.

Matthews: Because I think that was Minor, the man, speaking about something he truly believed was again perfectly in keeping with this 18<sup>th</sup> century French philosophical thinking that religious fanaticism was a source of evil, whether it is Christian, Muslim it didn't matter. So the Methodist that wrote in and opposed our change to the alcohol policy to allow it on campus. He had as much disdain for those as he did for Muslim terrorists that did horrible things in New York and Washington. He hated that kind of fanaticism. He would rail on that in Cabinet, fortunately they kept no minutes (laughing). It went unrecorded. He did not have any tolerance for... Which was funny because Voltaire wrote a very famous essay about tolerance.

Miner: Yeah, that seems counter to...

Matthews: The only thing you can't tolerate is intolerance.

Minor: So this was great. I'm sure your class time is getting near. Are there any other things we should know about Minor? Can think of.

Matthews: Uh...He was very devoted to his family. His marriage was not always the smoothest but he and his wife separated for a while during the time I was Dean and that was quite awkward. We had no idea what was going on. They eventually reconciled. We were very happy for that. I was a very hard thing, I think, to be Minor's wife, and it was even harder to be in the spotlight as a president's wife. It was a very difficult thing. He was president for a long time, here and even longer than he expected. I think that he finished the Ames library, he finished his first term as President and I asked him in this same meeting of the racial issues, what was going to be his central theme in the next term in office and he was a little surprised that I use that language because he thought of it all as one continuous flow. Once the library was completed, he didn't live long enough to give us an idea of what was going to be the focus of his second, in effect his second presidency. Whether he wanted it to be or not, racial issues were right at the fore when he died. In a way I'm sorry to see he never had a chance to address that. I think that would have been very interesting and good for the university if he had had a chance to put his full intellectual weight behind that. But it wasn't going to happen.

Miner: Well thank you so much.

Matthews: Thank you

Miner: For participating, I really appreciate it.

Matthews: I appreciate the opportunity to set something up.