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Jo Porter

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Oral History Interview with Jo Porter

In the Hansen Student Center on March 23, 2016

Conducted by Meg Miner, Illinois Wesleyan Archivist

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Meg Miner: Good afternoon, good morning.

Jo Porter: [overlapping] Good afternoon. Oh, it is, it is, true.

Miner: Not by much. Today is March 23rd, 2016. This is Meg Miner. I am on a sabbatical project investigating the many influences and interests of Minor Myers jr. I am in the Hansen Center today with retired, gratefully retired, Jo Porter. Jo, please introduce yourself and tell us how you're affiliated with Wesleyan.

Porter: My name is Jo Porter and I was brought into Wesleyan in 1989, '90 by both Minor and Ellen Hurwitz who was Provost at the time, who was, Ellen was an acquaintance because she had been at Lafayette College which is where my father-in-law had been president and she had seen my resume since we moved to town at the same time. When she saw my resume and saw that I did grant writing. She really wanted to introduce me to Illinois Wesleyan and bring me on board.

Miner: So, there was nobody here doing that?

Porter: There was a different take on that area in the Development office. It was always in the Development office and at that time it was more local corporate relationships and Minor, who had come from, Minor Myers, who had come from...

Miner: Hobart. Hobart and William

Porter: Hobart and William Smith was very familiar with a different kind of corporate and foundation relations office, because he was involved in one there, and so he was interested in taking this, the office here, in a different direction, and was looking for someone who could do that. So, I was brought in for interviews. I do know that he had one other woman he was looking at, who was the person he worked with at Hobart and William Smith, and she came for an interview, and I think chose to go, and I later knew her, chose to go to Indianapolis. So that left me with an opening, so you're already here, so I had moved here. Yeah, I was in the community, so, so at that point, and then, of course, I was, I would be housed in the development office, and therefore, really hired by the Development office. It was during the beginning of a campaign, and so they had extra funds, and this was a good time to bring someone like me on board they could afford to do so, because I am actually Ellen Hurwitz advised me, "don't sell yourself for less than you should be getting."

Miner: Oh, okay,

Porter: So...

Miner: Sorry

Porter: ...I interviewed and was brought in to develop the corporate and foundation relations office for Illinois Wesley University.

Miner: Wow.

Porter: It was a great time, actually.

Miner: How so, in what way.

Porter: I think there was a lot of excitement because of Minor coming to town, and even though he was perceived as East Coast, which in fact he wasn't. I mean, he grew up in Ohio and went to Carleton, and I think part of that perception is that he was at Connecticut College, and then he was at Hobart and William Smith, and there was a sense of wariness, which is a very Midwestern approach, and I know that because Bruce being hired at Illinois State University, and he was hired to change the way that the station was to make a major change, and knew from just, I think, years of living with a college president and knowing the politics of academia, knew that it's really good to step back and learn the culture of a place before you make major changes. So that had an impact on me as well, but I think Minor was such a charismatic personality that he won a lot of people over in a short period of time, but there was this enthusiasm. He also he had a good eye for knowing the people, which people would work for different things, and I think again, he saw Ben Rhodes as having a history. He was a local. He grew up here. His family had heavy ties to this community, and I think he really appreciated that history that Ben could provide to him, and so tap that. I mean, he was just really good at that, and at the same thing, worked with me. He saw my pedigree, and also the fact that I had graduated from Amherst College, which is very prestigious, worked at the University of Pennsylvania, got some graduate school at University of Pennsylvania, so he saw those things and how you can use those things to your advantage.

Miner: So, you're describing a very active managerial strategy that...

Porter: Oh, I absolutely.

Miner: Okay.

Porter: I know a lot of people don't see that side of him for some reason or other, but I think he was very aware of those things.

Miner: Okay. So, he, this was his first fall on campus.

Porter: This was.

Miner: 89-90

Porter: 90. Yeah, and I actually started in December of 90. I came or...No, I December 89, I might be off by a year. I started before I actually my contract started because they were implementing...

Miner: Another very Wesleyan thing.

Porter: It is a very Wesleyan thing. They were implementing a new computer program in development, and they wanted me to learn the system. So, for the whole month of November and December, I came in, which was actually a good thing. I came in early, on my own time, and went down in the basement of Holmes Hall with and I'm not going to remember her name, but she ran the computer stuff here forever Johnson. Her last name was Johnson, and she was she was notorious for being kind of gruff, and I don't know why. Somehow, she liked me, and I guess maybe because I came in on my own time and started to start to try to learn this program, and that's when I also met Jane Baines, who was down there from the Development Office, who was doing the same kind of thing.

Miner: But she was doing, she wasn't doing corporate research. Was she?

Porter: No, this had nothing to do with good. It was that, just that you had to learn how to do the advancement system that...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...allowed you to plug in all the data. Oh, it was the first string of going paperless...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...which we all know what that means.

Miner: Of course, it was a nice dream.

Porter: It was a nice dream, and so that was, that's how my tenure began...

Miner: Oh my gosh

Porter: ...and what Minor charged me with right off the bat, both Minor and Ellen was developing relationships with the faculty, because there was this we/them feeling before.

Miner: Between?

Porter: Between development and academics.

Miner: Really

Porter: Right. Very strong, very strong, and a distrust, heavy distrust.

Miner: Must have been hard for you to come into a new...

Porter: Well, it was. It was even more so because I had worked at Amherst College before I went there as a student, and I worked in what was called the Office of the Secretary, which is where all the publications and the Secretary of the college is not the notion of what a secretary is, but he that was the person who recorded all the history and everything of the institution...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...and I worked in that capacity, and I did the college catalog, or the institution which, and again, I was brought in there to take it from...hand, you know, written to computerized, and the woman who had done it before me just wasn't going to do any computer and believe, and that's the way we should go, and all that kind of stuff.

Miner: So, you'd already been doing that then in your work.

Porter: So, I had been doing, yeah, I've been, been doing that kind of thing, and I think I don't know exactly why, but I guess because I was curious and open to change...

Miner: There you go.

Porter: ...and I think that was appreciated. So, so I interacted. My point here is that I interacted with faculty on a regular basis because I had to get their copy for the catalog. I had to proof it, I had to document it, and go back to them and say, you know, blah, blah, blah.

Miner: Uh huh

Porter: Make changes if they need necessary, and so I knew all the faculty at Amherst College and all the people in the administrative area before I went there, and I actually went there because I was starting to, I wanted to go back to UMass Amherst, and went in and talked to the person who was head of financial aid at the time when he said, Why are you applying to UMass am, why aren't you playing here? We need women like you, because of this transition. They wanted older. They took the first class of women were older transfer students for two years. They did that.

Miner: Wow.

Porter: So, there's all that kind of thing, and I think that was fascinating to, to Minor, and the fact that I had contacts in the Five College Area.

Miner: Uh huh

Porter: So, when I began in this position, I got to know the, the Development office and their practices. But I right away went to Massachusetts and interviewed all the people I knew in the Five Colleges on how you run this kind of an office.

Miner: How wonderful.

Porter: What you what you do, and how you develop it, and, and then took that information and triangulated that into what I thought would work best for Illinois Wesleyan.

Miner: So, you came back with like recommendations.

Porter: Recommendations and documentation...

Miner: Ben or Ellen?

Porter: I had to get it through Ben, Dick Whitlock was also the...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...Vice President at that time, but because I had this stamp of approval of the Provost and the President, in particular, it was easy for me, and Minor would come on a regular basis, walk down the hall, plop down in my office, and say, "Okay, what are your ideas? What" so, you know, and I would then say to him, this is what I did, and I think that was respected, and this is what I'd like to do, and I get the stamp of approval. So, and then I had a good relationship with Ben. Dick was, was always sort of a guy who was in his office with the door closed.

Miner: I was going to say. How'd they feel about being brought in by the new guy.

Porter: Well, I, I think, well, this is, and here's another. This is very interesting, because the firm that that was brought in to advise for the campaign. didn't believe that Illinois Wesleyan was in a position to have my kind of person.

Miner: How interesting.

Porter: And Minor fought for that position and said, "No, this is this is what we need here." Because he understood, and actually, again, I hate to be keep going back to this, but I learned this from my father-in-law. My father-in-law was brought from he was dean of faculty at Brown and he was brought in at Lafayette College to be the first president, and he first thing he did was implement a mandatory 65 retirement because...

Miner: Wow

Porter: ...they were primarily a teaching institution, and he, they, his charge was to make this a national institution with research and scholarship, and his understanding was that if you don't have faculty who are engaged in scholarship, you're not going to move forward, and that's exactly what Minor wanted here and understood that when you get your faculty to engage in their own scholarship and continue with that you're, you have a richer academic setting, you have a richer faculty, you have opportunities for students to do things that they wouldn't ordinarily do, and that's what his vision was, and so we meshed nicely in that, in that so.

Miner: Parallel

Porter: It was parallel, and I think the most difficult faculty were actually in the sciences, which is the most natural place to go to start on the research path.

Miner: Sure

Porter: Because the humanities is it's, you know, there's scholarship going on all the time, but the funding sources are fewer.

Miner: Right

Porter: So that was, that was my biggest challenge, was, was this the sciences?

Miner: So, you had to offer them your services at the same time that that they were then realizing that, oh, my God, we have to start doing original research and publishing. So this was like a cultural.

Porter: Cultural...

Miner: Mind blowing shift

Porter: ...and so I, you know, as you say, I don't know that people understood that side of, of Minor and his and his, mainly understanding of development.

Miner: Yeah, the, and it's interesting that you place that at his days at Hobart, because I have had no luck finding anybody at Hobart who can talk to me. So, do you know anything?

Porter: Well, I don't know whether Lois is still alive. Oh, and gosh, I'll have to go through I don't know whether I can find things.

Miner: That's ok

Porter: She was the woman who did the corporate and foundation relations. What was her last name? And she was very fond of Minor, but he, you can't find anybody from there, huh? Because his reputation followed him, and he was seen as eccentric there. I can tell you that from the people who are now there, oh, Helen, I'll have to look at some.

Miner: Well, if you know people there, that would be very helpful because all I, all I did was, I mean, I haven't reached out to the dean's office there. I contacted the archivist, and I was looking for, like, who was the librarian at the time, who was the because, you know, of course, my interest has been mostly about the library, but if you have names of people I can follow up

with, I would be happy to do that, because they had, they had one brief correspondence with a donation that he made of a book...

Porter: Well, I think...

Miner: ...in Special Collections.

Porter: ...if Helen is still there. Who does what I do there?

Miner: So the current person?

Porter: The current, yeah, she's been there quite a while, and she knew who Minor was because his reputation, he was, he, you know, he was just going to have that kind of reputation wherever he was, Connecticut College.

Miner: So talk to me about the specific reputation. Be specific, please.

Porter: Oh, be specific.

Miner: Eccentric in what way.

Porter: Well, eccentric and, and, I mean it just the person I correlate him with is to see that my name's, this is where my age is catching up with me. He had, he had this ability to just spark if you got into a discussion. In his mind, there would be one connector that would take you all over the place.

Miner: Okay

Porter: And to me, it wasn't like an ADD kind of thing.

Miner: Okay

Porter: I'm sure people maybe, I don't know whether they thought that, but it was that he would just be sparked by ideas, and so, for example, his, he's known, I think this is true at Hobart and William Smith, the Japanese connection, which he was involved in there, he drew on to get Tanaka Foundation here.

Miner: Oh, my.

Porter: So, so I'm not sure what the history was with Hobart and William Smith about in terms of the Japanese, whether they were they, early on, had had Japanese students, and he thought that was interesting, and so got involved in it. You know, I can't those things I'm not familiar with, but I know that they that that not that they'd be frustrated, but the fact it's that he would go off on these tangents for the development folks.

Miner: At Hobart and Williams Smith?

Porter: Yeah, at Hobart and William Smith, and it would be frustrating, or, you know, what's he doing now, and what are we going to have to contend with?

Miner: Okay? And did he do that here to you? Because you just said that he asked you for ideas. He didn't bring you ideas, right?

Porter: But he also brought ideas.

Miner: Okay

Porter: Yeah, so, so, so that, yes, so he brought that same enthusiasm here, and I'm sure it drove a lot of people crazy. [Meg laughs] I found it exciting, because then I would go off and research and, and just try to discover how we could manage to squeak our way in to a certain foundation.

Miner: And did that work on some cases?

Porter: Oh, absolutely. I mean Mellon.

Miner: Mellon

Porter: I mean, we would not have the amount of Mellon money that we have here now, if it weren't for, for Minor.

Miner: Minor's idea, but your research.

Porter: Yeah, well, and working together and having the contacts to get, I mean, he knew people from his at Hobart and William Smith, and I and so he would it, but I would be the one who would call and make an appointment, and we would travel there.

Miner: Oh

Porter: And Ellen sometimes would, Ellen Hurwitz would come along...

Miner: Oh my gosh

Porter: ...with us.

Miner Okay

Porter: And so, so what? How he understood? Foundation corporate relations work is the way it's understood on the East Coast, which is that the person who heads up that area is kind of the go between and makes all the connections, and then you kind of trot the president in and the Provost in, and everything goes from there.

Miner: To sort of sign the deal.

Porter: Yeah, to sign the deal, and so all the nitty gritty in between and Mellon understand this big time was I would deal directly with them on the in between stuff, but there was this, the way this was handled. That was the way it was.

Miner: Okay

Porter: And I guess, because of my years of you know at Lafayette and UPenn at Amherst, I understood that the protocols.

Miner: So, would you say most of the foundations that you were looking at were east coast, and so this would be like the way they...

Porter: Oh, no, we did east coast. We did west coast.

Miner: Okay

Porter: I mean, we dealt with the West Coast in terms of the Hearst Foundation. The Hearst Foundation has a cut off at the Mississippi, but we somehow got on, and I'm glad we did, because it got us out to LA to Hearst, which is in San Francisco, but and then LA for Keck...

Miner: Wow

Porter: ...and he brought, I mean, the other thing is that my involvement with the Five Colleges made me aware of what the top liberal arts, 50 liberal arts colleges were doing, and who they were, their foundation lists, I inserted myself into this group that met once a year, and finally, right before I left, actually got Illinois Wesleyan as a full-fledged member, not me as a personality.

Miner: Of the Five Colleges?

Porter: Of the of this, this SCAPRO, which is this organization, some other corporate and foundation relations officers, that's what the acronym is.

Miner: Oh, interesting, are we still in that?

Porter: Yes, but I would say I have no idea how it's going.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: All I know is from the last time Dick went, he said, well, and everybody just wanted to know about you and how you were doing and why you wouldn't come to a meeting and, and, you know, visit with people.

Miner: This is Dick Wilson? Oh, that's funny.

Porter: And Carl got some of that too.

Miner: Did he, but you've been doing it first. When did you retire?

Porter: 2011

Miner: Gosh that's five years.

Porter: And then I was hired back to do a couple things.

Miner: Okay

Porter: Yeah, and then I did a six-month tour of duty at Beloit College, because they were they needed somebody to fill in while they did a search, but anyway, so, so those contacts made sense for, for the, the crew that were here at that time, and I mean, certainly Minor was responsible, to some degree, for getting, I think, for having Ellen come.

Miner: And how was that perceived on campus?

Porter: Well, I don't, I mean, Ellen,

Miner: No, she was, no, she started before he did.

Porter: She did.

Miner: She start with?

Porter: She was with Wendell. Yeah, that's right, she did start before mine. That's right...

Miner: She wasn't involved in his search. I think he'd been selected at about, yeah, and she...

Porter: ...and Wendell had a really good relationship. So that's true. She, she wasn't here because of him, but she got along with him. She was frustrated with him, but...

Miner: Because of the ideas, or,

Porter: I think because, well, you know, I could never say for sure. I, I think she appreciated, appreciated his vision, but frustrated, maybe with, sometimes with backing, with nitty gritty faculty stuff and financial probably, but Ken Browning was the VP.

Miner: Yeah, do you want to go off in that direction now, or you want to talk a little bit more about the corporate relation?

Porter: Oh, so, yeah, we should probably finish up with that. So, I think that combination of his awareness of what this area should look like, and then hiring someone who certainly agreed with that and had contacts made it, made it work, but it was slow going, but we were also in a campaign, and when you're in a campaign, things are done a little differently.

Miner: Why?

Porter: Because you have a very strategic plan of buildings that are going to be. So, the Science Center was the big and we were trying very desperately to get funds to support that, and that's where we got Keck funds, because that we got to get funds...

Miner: Interesting

Porter: ...and then had relationship with Keck from then on until they actually changed, trying to think of some of the other Hewlett Foundation. You know, these foundations, they, it depends on their leadership, what they're funding, and so many of these were funding educational institutions, and then they, all of a sudden, went off to K through 12...

Miner: Interesting

Porter: ...and changed, and that that really changed the climate for many of us, and that's when I think more government grants, where people really relied on getting working toward getting more money from the different government grant

Miner: For researcher?

Porter: Yeah, NIH, for research and well equipment, you know, NSF, you could get equipment. We got equipment grants here pretty much until I retired, even there were still some grants going out for equipment.

Miner: So, your, your comment that Minor was strategic in his thinking about building up faculty research resources, is it there's a right to make that connection?

Porter: Yes

Miner: Because it wasn't just about buildings. The campaign was already in motion, right?

Porter: Right?

Miner: He came in. Or was it something that started?

Porter: I think it started with it.

Miner: Okay, yeah,

Porter: I don't think they really launched it until he was here.

Miner: So that, ...

Porter: I think it was maybe the first year, so 90-91.

Miner: So, the campaign is about buildings in this era.

Porter: And in and then, therefore, equipment too.

Miner: Okay

Porter: But I think there were parallel lines for him, with the scholarship issue.

Miner: Okay

Porter: And people going down that, you know,

Miner: Right? I'm just trying to think of the money factor, right, which became a big thing, right? I mean, where does, where do we get our money?

Porter: Right

Miner: How do we spend it, and do all the things that everybody wants us to do? So, for me, a non-money, blissfully unaware, non-money person to understand how some of these things are teased out. So, you have to have different pools of money for different things. You can't just say in a campaign, I'm going to support faculty scholarship with this, or it wasn't at that time, because facilities were considered more...

Porter: Well, there were facilities I wish you know; I've been through several campaigns since that first one. The first one was really endowment, raising the endowment.

Miner: But it was started during the Eckley era. Right?

Porter: The Eckley era improved the endowment, and then...

Miner: Okay

Porter: So, build on that scholarship...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...buildings, infrastructure. I mean, the other thing is that at that time we were doing internet was starting to come, and so we did some grants around getting all that stuff done, and then, and I think this again, was campaign advice from Campbell and company. You learn who your wealthy constituents are, and you develop those connections.

Miner: And would that have been your responsibility too? Are you just on the...?

Porter: No, not, not as much that was, that would be where Ben really came in, because he had the history and, and then I would say, you know, the farmlands thing is a really big part of the money that Illinois Wesleyan...

Miner: Uh huh

Porter: ...and so those alumni who were really had a lot of holdings in farmlands were at that time where they'd already worked on that area, but they increased the work on that area. Well, I don't think our, I don't think faculty understand...

Miner: Yeah,

Porter: ...how much of those, that farmland, while it's still bringing in money.

Miner: Well, I didn't until President Wilson started holding dinners for, I mean, wasn't he the one who started holding dinners for the farm family?

Porter: He did I, but again, see, see, Ben had that stuff...

Miner: Did he?

Porter: ...a little and before, but Wilson understood that too. Yeah, he really, he, he did that. So, I'm just. I'm just trying to and then the library was always the kind of issue, and for Minor the fact that our original library was just so lousy...

Miner: Yeah

Porter: ...and holdings were important to him.

Miner: And talk about that.

Porter: ...and that's a major thing, because we weren't, what we weren't. There were two areas that we had to fight for. One was getting, getting the knowledge out there that we, we really placed a lot of students in medical school. So, for Howard Hughes, there was a list, and you had to be on that list. So, I did a lot of research on that, and went back through the AMA and, and had them recalculate and look through all those files. We got access to that to demonstrate how many students were through the MCATs, getting into med school...

Miner: Wow

Porter: ...and it changed where we fell on the list, and we got to be on the Howard Hughes list.

Miner: Wow

Porter: That was one thing. The other thing was that for there was something else that our holdings, our library holdings kept us from being in certain, on certain foundation lists and diversity Kresge Foundation, I have to credit Kresge for being responsible for us to diversifying our trustees.

Miner: You mean with race and...

Porter: Race and gender because when we went forward to them to get money, and the first grant that we got, I can't remember whether it's library, the first grant that we got from them, they stipulated that if you don't come back in three years, or when we, you know, do follow up with more representation on your board of trustees, you know, we won't look at you again.

Miner: Wow

Porter: It was and that had clout.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: When you get that kind of thing, and the holdings, the holdings in library, that was another one that that helped, had clout, and I'm trying for...

Miner: For foundations?

Porter: ...for or for getting on some list, and I can't, you know, I wish I could remember that, but that was way back when, you know.

Miner: Well, the only so, the only story I've ever heard about quantity of holdings...

Porter: Holdings

Miner: ...in the library relates to getting membership in Phi Beta Kappa.

Porter: Oh, that's it. That's it.

Miner: Was there funding with that?

Porter: It wasn't funding, but it's the prestige again. I mean, Minor understood the importance of those things in terms of being a national, highly regarded national liberal arts college...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...and there was a difference of opinion about whether we really go very national...

Miner: Yeah

Porter: ...because Knox College had made that attempt, and it backfired, and so I don't know that we did it. I think, I think it was a little more strategic. But the Phi Beta Kappa, I think, is huge. I mean, I think I thought that was a huge thing too.

Miner: Well, you know? So, here's where I put my librarian's hat on because there's a difference in quantity and quality, right, right. So right,

Porter: ...and Minor is accused of not having that.

Miner: Well. I mean, if all we are trying to set, I mean so and I purposefully have not done research into Phi Beta Kappa, because of this, I want to have these conversations but the quality of the materials that are in the library, the strategic planning that goes involved in library building collections and collection developments policies are about serving your community, right? So, would someplace like Phi Beta Kappa, not care that we're serving our community? I mean, you...

Porter: So that's a good question.

Miner: Is it truly that that you know you have to have X number, hundreds of 1000s of books, or that your community is satisfied with your collection that is meeting their needs. I mean, so I think...

Porter: ...a cap it had to just even with online or with journals, you know, the kinds of journals and things that we had in the, in the library.

Miner: Yeah, because all I've ever heard is that Minor said we had to have this, this threshold level of books, and that he and another faculty member told me that he said we couldn't spend money on journals in certain disciplines. So, I mean, so this is where all of these...

Porter: That's interesting.

Miner: ...you know, memories and opinions and requirements. So, when you started talking about numbers of books as possibly being related to funding. Do you think, well, it might have been some of that? [overlapping]

Porter: It was just about Phi Beta Kappa.

Miner: Okay

Porter: It wasn't about funding so much.

Miner: Okay

Porter: The diversity was definitely tied too, and it worked beyond the Kresges. You know, there wasn't any foundation that wasn't...

Miner: And so, it was just board diversity, not students, or faculty?

Porter: It was primarily the board diversity.

Miner: Interesting

Porter: Because we had it well, but diversity was always an issue, I mean, to the point of, where I sat at the table in development. I always was looked at, for to provide the feminist perspective and ethnic to the point of passing around like homecoming brochures and saying, where's the representation in here? I've noticed it's not. It's gone. I mean, and we used to be, we sat around the table, and we would say, you cannot do...publish this, because this is not but in and also in admissions materials...

Miner: Yeah

Porter: ...and I don't know where things.

Miner: Why would people come here if they don't see people...

Porter: Exactly, and there was this, you know, they were just a naive, naive understanding of that. So...

Miner: In some recruitment?

Porter: ...in recruitment, and also in getting alumni back, I mean, Minor understood that it's really important to have your alumni engaged and back.

Miner: And, so talk to me a little bit about Minor and diversity that did he understand that representation argument? When, when you said, these foundations will not support us if we do not have board, you know, representation across different kinds...

Porter: Yes, he understood it. I don't know that he agreed with that fully. I don't, you know his head was, and I was going to say in the clouds about some of that...

Miner: Uh huh

Porter: ...that stuff. So, I, you know, I might be misrepresenting.

Miner: Because the issue of Minor and race and, and Methodism, I mean, the Methodist had a big push to say, you can't do contracting with people unless you agree that you're only going to pay companies that have racial diversity in them, and Minor wouldn't sign on to that.

Porter: Yeah, I can see that. I mean, he didn't want us really connected with the Methodists.

Miner: Yeah, at all, right, but the but the issue of race is interesting too.

Porter: Yeah, and I don't know why that, where that comes from, because I don't believe Minor was racist, I mean, any more than any of us as white people, privileged white people, are.

Miner: Right. No, and that's not the, the accusation is not that.

Porter: No, no, I don't think it goes to...

Miner: And the only reason I'm pressing a little bit more into these areas is to get into some more of the avenues of managerial, strategic versus, you know, other kinds of leadership styles. So, I'm just sort of, you know, sort of piecing out how aware is he of these kinds of things? Is he on the side of, oh, wow, yeah, that's a great idea? Or I already had that idea and I gave it to somebody else, you know, because these are the stories that have been coming out as well. What I don't think he ever people with, and...

Porter: He never cared whose idea what, whether it was his or somebody.

Miner: Non, no, I'm trying to say the if, if, an if, an issue of racial diversity came up in the board, you know, how is that received? Is that one of the things that he came to you or somebody else with, you know, saying, but it sounds to you that, mean, like...

Porter: It was driven research, and it was because...

Miner: External forces?

Porter: ...of criticism by...

Miner: External forces, okay? Because, yeah, this idea of east coast, even though he wasn't, versus Midwest, versus, you know, all-encompassing kinds of engagement. I mean, all of these things, I think, are fascinating to think of in a person who has the personality that we're talking about, but right? And how do those things mix it up in a place like Illinois, Wesleyan, but that that was regionally focused and not nationally focused when he got here.

Porter: Right

Miner: So,

Porter: And I would say, by the time he died, we had a more national recognition.

Miner: So do you think that there was you said Knox College had backfired. So, was there resistance to people taking or him taking us national?

Porter: I think it was, if we do that, we do it very strategically, and he was behind that, too. That's my understanding, you know, the way, and I hate the US News and World Report, but he loved it that we had this student here from Mauritius.

Miner: I haven't heard that.

Porter: And she was actually worked for me for four years, Isabelle, and she wonderful. I mean, she came here from Mauritius for the School of Business.

Miner: Where's Mauritius?

Porter: It's a little tiny island...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...way, way...

Miner: So sorry to say that even that has been lost in history. Now I didn't know that.

Porter: Isn't it? And of course, I don't think she is...

Miner But she came here because we had a number one ranking.

Porter: She saw a US News and World Report.

Miner: Isn't that funny.

Porter: With Illinois Wesleyan in it, and I'm sure she got scholarship funds too, and so she came here. She never went home for, you know, four years, five years, her uncle came from London for her graduation.

Miner: Oh, my goodness

Porter: So, so, you know, so he would love that. That's a story that, you know, when he learned of that, that's something he would use.

Miner: He could go out and tell that story to other people.

Porter: Yeah

Miner: Yeah

Porter: And that was the kind of thing that just that thrilled him.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: So, and he was thrilled with Mitsubishi plant being here.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: And courted very heavily, and the Tanaka, I mean, that whole Tanaka thing, which I know everybody's in the Japan Foundation, those were, again, places that he came down and said to me, I want to go after this.

Miner: And were they good things to go after? Were they reasonable things to go after?

Porter: You know, the language component, I think, for academia, is really a tough one.

Miner: You mean getting a language program.

Porter: Yeah

Miner: Okay

Porter: And so everybody, and I think even now Ellen Hurwitz would probably agree with this is that, of course, she was a Russian, you know...

Miner: Right

Porter: ...that that was sending us off in a different direction than we wanted to be, and he this is, this is what I would hear from Ellen, was like, you know, you just don't go after the money for

this, because the money is there and, and the feeling was that we did that with the Japanese and at that time, I mean, Japanese interests were high.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: And it's not different than when we went after the Chinese money.

Miner: Right

Porter: And then, what do you do? You know? How do you integrate those?

Miner: Well, that's so interesting, because there's been such backlash against funding for other kinds of external funding to start programs, right? That so that happened with the language programs, Japanese and Chinese. You're saying were external funding driven. I'm just thinking of curricular changes.

Porter: Right

Miner: Right, these are major curriculum changes.

Porter: The Japanese definitely was the Chinese, I think, percolated up on a couple different levels.

Miner: Because part of that was the Chinese government.

Porter: Well, when it was all, you know, and our Hong Kong relationships and Teddy being involved with, so, you know, there...

Miner: the Asia network

Porter: the Asia Network and so there was

Miner: Those were fascinating.

Porter: So, there was a mixed support of the Chinese, I mean, and that was right before I left, so I don't know how the numbers are on that at all. But again, I wouldn't, I wouldn't say it was Environmental Studies is another one. We wouldn't have had environmental studies here if we didn't get a grant, and I can't even remember what foundation it was that supported that, but that was, and that came from the faculty. I mean, Mona was very heavily invested in that, and involved in, in that. So, you know.

Miner: Interesting

Porter: So, we did go after funds to support interests and expansions in different areas. I think, I think that when Narendra Jaggi was hired here, I think he looked like a star, and he was, you know, thought to come in and shake physics up and bring in a lot of money.

Miner: And was that external funding that brought Narendra in?

Porter: No, oh, that was a position that was open, and they...

Miner: Because of Minor...

Porter: ...but they saw his. I think Ellen was also really behind Narendra, right? So, but I'm, I think about this. I early on he didn't do any really additional taking away.

Miner: Scholarship?

Porter: They thought he would take it, yeah.

Miner: Well, it is interesting. This uh, moving from teaching to, to scholarship focus, because so many of our alumni praise the teaching quality. I mean, you know, alumni, pre 1990 graduates...

Porter: The teaching.

Miner: ...have just such vivid expressions of delight over the teaching.

Porter: Well, but, you know, in the English area, we had a we had this is so interesting, because the fine arts and the humanities were phenomenal, and those faculty members were all very active in scholarship and beyond the institution, but they were also great teachers.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: So to me, it's just, it's so interesting.

Miner; So, it's not that Minor was saying, give up on the teaching.

Porter: No, no

Miner; Okay

Porter: I think you...

Miner: You got to do both.

Porter: Yeah, you got to do both, and I think you got to do both. Again, a lot of his emphasis was on building the reputation of the institution...

Miner: Okay

Porter: ...and making it in those areas. I don't know, more attractive maybe do a broader Sure, and I don't know what the answer to this is, Meg, you know,

Miner: I'm just...

Porter: In terms of boring well, but I do think it was more strategic on his part.

Miner: So, the faculty changes were something or working with, with grant money, was something that he laid at your doorstep, and you were doing that new. How would you say that was picked up? Was that picked up by faculty fairly reasonably? Or did you have a long climb there?

Porter: I had to, I had to do a lot of PR work.

Miner: To prove what's in it for them, right.

Porter: Right and, and it was still, even when I retired, there was still this some tension about understanding that just because you get a no, you know, there were those, especially in the sciences. Well, even in some of the humanities, you get a no, you don't ignore that. You go, you know you, you develop a relationship, and I think that's improved enormously. You know, faculty were starting to go to, we would take them, I would take them to the meetings that I went to in DC so they could meet program officers and understand and it's not lobbying, exactly, but it's, it's getting in front of these people and sitting in some of these mock sessions where you go review a grant and you see, what how panelists do, what they do.

Miner: What they look at.

Porter: Yeah, so that we had come a long way the last probably eight to ten years that I was here, I'd say it took at least seven or eight years, and it was pocketed. You know, there were some areas that understood it, and other faculty who understood and others, and I mean, part of it was the other thing was, Minor was really pro my going to faculty meetings, having a presence, being seen, and again, I think that was strategic in that we/them, the development isn't as bad as you think it is, and they weren't money grubbing and, you know, and I even said this, that because Dick Whitlock was real, the undertaker suits, you know?

Miner: Yeah, makes you stand out in the crowd. Doesn't matter around here, it is. That's interesting, yeah.

Porter: But I, again, I you know the faculty, Bob Bray was very involved in the Illinois Humanities Council, and some of the first things I did was travel up to Chicago with some of those folks.

That's how Mary Ann and I got to be good friends, and so, so I had, there were some people who recognized right away that this is a good thing, a really good thing.

Miner: So, when Minor would bring ideas to you and you would you said you would take them and go off and try and research them, and was there any follow up from him on, you know, how that, how that was going, or was it...

Porter: Absolutely

Miner: Oh, there's an idea. You go run with it.

Porter: Absolutely

Miner: Okay

Porter: And then we would go on visits. I was charged with getting us in the door and meeting you, the foundation officers and the people that you need to meet to tell your story.

Miner: What was it like in some of those kinds of situations.

Porter: Oh, it's great. We had so much fun. I mean, you know, frustrating too, but once you know the quirks, so we would go, for example, when we go to Kresge to make a visit. We'd always stay a little bit longer to go into Detroit or to go to a bookstore...

Miner: Oh really

Porter: ...where he knew where all of the best bookstores were, and we would have to go to books there. When we went to New York, we not only went to bookstores, but we also went to Sotheby's, stuff like that.

Miner: So, for auctions, he would go,

Porter: Well, just go and look around, and he had students who were from Connecticut who were employed by Sotheby's, and he'd go in and say hi to them, and we'd get up into the back rooms because of that.

Miner: You get to the good stuff.

Porter: Yeah, and so I was going to tell you an anecdote about the bookstore that we went to when we went to Michigan. He, we got there, and he kept saying to me, so what do you collect? What do you collect? And I told him, you know, cookbooks. I'd say, if you know, if anything, that's one of the collections that I have. It's not a deep thing, but I don't know whether that got him started on cookbooks, or whether he always did that, but that fascinated him, and then the genealogy thing and my family history, the Slocums...

Miner: You brought a pedigree chart, yeah.

Porter: Well, he did this?

Miner: Okay

Porter: And this is his writing, and this is how he proved that we were related, because I had a book that I sort of found in the Amherst College Library, and it was about yay thick, and it was the history of the Slocum family.

Miner: You sort of found it.

Porter: I found it, and then I, I offered to pay them money for this book. So, I bought it for 60 bucks from the Amherst library.

Miner: Oh, he must have loved that. Did you tell Minor that?

Porter: Oh, he had the book. Oh, he, this is what he did. He sat and looked through all of that stuff and then plugged in information, I guess in this, this, you know, he would do ours.

Miner: So, this is a, I'm just for the audio recording...

Porter: Yes

Miner: ...gonna say that. This is a family search, ancestral file, pedigree chart, and Minor's comment is, why don't you go ahead and read what Minor is circled and what his comment is and tell us about that. This is a family tree.

Porter: Right, and, and this yes, and he was sure that...

Miner: It started with, who's number one in the family tree?

Porter: Benjamin Slocum

Miner: Okay

Porter: Newport, Rhode Island

Miner: and, mi...Minor

Porter: Minor circled it and said, "My guy, pre-Mormon site"

Miner: Okay

Porter: And that's where he claims I was related in some way. We were related.

Miner: Well, that's great.

Porter: The Slocums

Miner: That's wonderful.

Porter: So that's just a little story.

Miner: So, he so when you were in bookstores together, like the one in Michigan, and you had a conversation about what you collect and what he what was he there looking for, just looking, or...

Porter: He was looking, and I think he looked a lot for first editions.

Miner: Okay

Porter: And it would be whatever he was interested in at the time.

Miner: So, on any particular topic.

Porter: Yeah

Miner: What did he say about your cookbooks? Did he started showing you cookbooks?

Porter: He showed us cookbooks.

Miner: Send you cookbooks?

Porter: No, he never did that. We just compared notes. Wondered how old some of the ones that I had were and they were inherited, you know, so I hope several, several from my grandmother and, and we talk about that. The other thing that he did, because Bruce, my husband, is a musician and has a fine violin, whenever we would be socializing together, he would bring out all of the instruments that he collected and show Bruce, and what do you think? What do you think? And, and Minor had a lot of instruments that were not playable.

Miner: Yeah, what's up with that?

Porter: What's up with that? and so Bruce, you know, is interested in instruments that you can play.

Miner: Okay

Porter: So, he had a hard time some days with it.

Miner: Why is he showing me this?

Porter: That's right

Miner: You know, and that's the question, right that people have about him as a collector is, you know, he collected music, but not necessarily all the parts for a piece that wasn't something that was important to him. He might collect a broken instrument; he might collect a ratty book. So do you have any insights into why that was important, just to have something, even if it wasn't perfect or usable, even.

Porter: I...

Miner: It speaks... no idea, okay.

Porter: You know, I just and I guess, how would you say? I mean, Bruce was very politic, and his response, he'd say, oh, that's, you know, there's good wood in that, and there would be, you know, but it's not, you know, you can't play it.

Miner: Right

Porter: He wouldn't say, "what you can't play it."

Miner: Right, right, right? So, when he said to you, what do you collect? Was that fairly early on in your, your time together was just when you started traveling.

Porter: It was, it was when we travel. Yeah, we had some I took him when we went, when we went to LA I took him to a Marxist breakfast place. It was clearly Marxist. He said, "Don't you ever tell anyone. I came to breakfast in this." [laughs]

Miner: Did he enjoy it?

Porter: Yeah. Oh, it was great. The food was great.

Miner: It was great. So, they had, like, decor or something that was...

Porter: Yeah, or was it, and I the name of it, addition, part of it was the name of it, and part of it was, it was clear that this was kind of a lefty, right?

Miner: Oh, so he was not a lefty guy.

Porter: No, no,

Miner: Okay, no, that's funny.

Porter: So, I so I don't know what else. I guess for me, it was very stimulating to work with someone and you were, I was appreciated. Now, I don't know what it was like for the people who he didn't see eye to eye with. You know, I could see a little of it. I knew very well that he did not like Dick Whitlock and thought that Dick was an impediment to certain areas in development. So, he always worked with Ben.

Miner: That must have been hard for Ben.

Porter: They were. They got along pretty well.

Miner: No, I mean, between Ben and Dick.

Porter: Oh, absolutely

Miner: Yeah, but I mean, I think it's of a piece, right? So again, back to Minor in management and leadership. So, if you found a person who he didn't particularly agree with or gel or somehow didn't respect them, that's the right word, would he just go around that person? Would he...

Porter: Yeah

Miner: ...go through that person?

Porter: He just go around and ignore. Okay, so ignore.

Miner: So, this person would just be off to the side, because, you know, the subject of firings has come up too, and I like a firing of a faculty member is like, how do you even fire a faculty member? I don't know. I still don't know how you do that.

Porter: But well, and I think a lot of that was the provost had to do a lot of work on those issues, depending on who it was.

Miner: Did it get on okay with Ellen?

Porter: I think so. I mean, she was frustrated, and she was used to...she, you know, she really wanted to get back to the East Coast, and I think that was obvious to people. She took a lot of hits for that, and she was, she was crazy too, in some ways, you know.

Miner: With ideas?

Porter: Just her behavior with people. I think she was really; she was kind of volatile.

Miner: So as a manager.

Porter: As a manager.

Miner: Okay

Porter: There are a lot of stories about her.

Miner: But she and Minor are generally, okay?

Porter: Yeah, they worked pretty well together, I think.

Miner: Because she didn't last very long. So, I mean, it's interesting that she was new here.

Porter: Well, she's she did the search, she, I think she wanted to get out, I think, and went looking. Do you have copies of this?

Miner: Is this his? This is a report...

Porter: Now this is an address to the faculty...

Miner: Oh, I don't know

Porter: ...that is really wonderful.

Miner: So, it's February 12, 1991 so two years after he got on campus, what is wonderful about it?

Porter: Well, for me, I really appreciate the intellectual component of it.

Miner: What is the subject?

Porter: It was it? It was a charge at the beginning of the year. So, it would be like, I always, I don't, I don't particularly like the way that those opening sessions went after, I don't know about like 20, 2002, 2003 you know, our opening session with us back.

Miner: Yeah but that is usually in the fall.

Porter: Yeah

Miner: ...and before...

Porter: Yes, but this one, this was February, and I don't know whether it was because of, I have to remember, because of correlating with the campaign. Maybe, um...

Miner: Well, I would be delighted to have a copy of it. If you can loan it to me. Yeah, I will definitely make a copy and return it to you.

Porter: Yeah. See here, it's like I have reviewed with you before, the addition of positions in the liberal arts college, and we've undertaken a program to add 10 or 11 positions that is ongoing. You knew about that improving faculty salaries. So, I think it was aimed...

Miner: At campaign update.

Porter: ...and also giving faculty this, this inside information, and I think Roger Schnaitter, have you interviewed Roger?

Miner: He has not responded to my request yet.

Porter: Interesting.

Miner: If you see him, I love, I gotta do some phone calls, yeah? But yeah, I'm sure not everybody's on email.

Porter: Yeah, I don't know how much he does. He, I'm in a book group with Nancy so, and then he and Bruce have wine interests, so...

Miner: I definitely want to talk to him, yeah?

Porter: So anyway, so if you want to borrow that and make it happen, yeah, absolutely,

Miner: Yeah. So you brought also handwritten notes from Minors, famous handwritten notes.

Porter: So, I don't know whether I've given you.

Well, maybe one more question about the collecting, right? So...

Porter: Oh yeah

Miner: When I said to you, what do you collect? What do you think that question does for someone like Minor I mean, would it be, would it be like, you know...?

Porter: I think he was, he meant...

Miner: ...the man...

Porter: Books in particular. I think when he did that question, it was related to books, because we were going into a bookstore and...

Miner: And what do you think he could he would, was it a judgment? Was it to take a measure of a person? Was it to...

Porter: I think it is, was to take a measure of, of your interests.

Miner: Do you think he would hold it against somebody if they weren't a collector?

Porter: Oh, that's a good question. I don't know, you know, I don't know.

Miner: Just curious

Porter: Yeah, I mean, he certainly was married to someone who wasn't in cu...collecting. So, you know, as far as I know.

Miner: Because I only met him once. I only met Minor once, and that was the first thing he said to me, is I was and I was actually hired to process one of the collections that he donated to the library before he died, and we had a five-minute conversation, and 10 things came up, and then he was gone, and then, you know, it was fairly shortly after that that they announced he was ill, so, but I always struck me, it's like, well, yeah, why? What does that mean?

Porter: I think for him, it tells he told him something about the person.

Miner: Okay

Porter: And even if, even just the fact that you, you're somebody who admires something enough to bother to look for it, and again, with him, we both question this, the meaning of these broken instruments.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: Because, to me, a broken instrument, unless you can re tool the wood, which you could, he wasn't doing that kind of thing.

Miner: So, what does it represent? Yeah, that's, and that's, you know, one of the fascinating questions.

Porter: Very, yeah, fascinating

Miner: That I'm not interested in.

Porter: Yeah, and, you know, there were things, they were just kindness. When he and Ellen went to Japan, and I think this was in part because the person who at Carleton, who does, did what I did, did here because of their involvements with the grants, went to Japan with the

President, and I didn't Ellen went with him, which is fine with me. Would bring back presents. They would and when they went to Arizona, the gem shows, he brought back a stone, my birthstone kind of thing.

Miner: So, he would bring you gifts.

Porter: Yeah, he brought me that wonderful Chinese chopping tool, oh, stuff like that, yeah, so that, you know, there was, he was, he was pretty fascinating. I'm, you know, I guess that kind of mind is always of interest to me, the train stuff.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: He was really interested in trains, and I told him about my family's collection. My father had a beautiful collection...

Miner: Oh really

Porter: ...lining trains, that kind of stuff, because we get of on those...

Miner: Did you ever go to the basement?

Porter: No

Miner: I'm looking for somebody who might have taken a picture of the basement.

Porter: No

Miner: I've heard so many wonderful descriptions of it.

Porter: Yeah.

Miner: Well, what do you think? Are we running out of time? Are you...?

Porter: No, I'm fine.

Miner: Okay.

Porter: I don't have anything until one.

Miner: What do you think somebody like that does for a place like Wesleyan. I mean, what the kind of we talked a little bit before we got talking formally, my sort of theory of his life as a collector this, you know, to, to all in outside appearances, random interest in functional and nonfunctional things. I mean, he described himself as a collector of the 18th century, and any... this is, I've seen, like four published interviews with him about being a collector, and he said,

anything I can get and cheap, I'll get it. So, it didn't matter, like, format, right, books or instruments or whatever, but he had so much more, right? I mean, he had some, he had things that were beyond the 18th century in his collection at the end of his life.

Porter: Uh huh

Miner: So, what I am, am thinking of is that he was here when we were fortunate in finances, right? We were able to do expansion of our campus, we expanded our curriculum, we expanded our faculty. So, is, is it reasonable? Is it too much of a lead to say that the kind of person that he was, which sounds like it was very outward looking and not necessarily focused all east, which is also interesting, I think, to hear, had that same kind of influence on campus, or is it, am I just making that up? You know? I mean that that that kind of a leader would come in and do those kinds of things, and then, you know, how did, how does that play out with a place that was 14 years prior to his death, Midwest, regional, non-research emphasis, liberal arts institution.

Porter: Well, I've often wondered in that his decision to come to this, to a place like this, I mean, that's kind of what you're saying. I mean...

Miner: Why would he pick Wesleyan

Porter: Yeah, and I think certainly the financial stability of it at that point was very intriguing to him. I mean, it allowed him to reshape it, and if you look at his history, being a person who went to Carleton, and in this I'm projecting, it's seeing that Carlton was such a national institution in that little place...

Miner: Minnesota

Porter: ...and how could I do that? That same thing to this institution, and isn't it? Is it positioned to do that? And the history? I mean, I think that the, the longevity of in the way the, the institution was founded, would have been fascinating to him.

Miner: Even though he didn't like Methodists.

Porter: Well, at that time, it was more about local business people coming together and saying in the law school, you know, that whole, whole thing.

Miner: That's true.

Porter: So, I think he saw it as an opportunity to make a mark in a way.

Miner: Well, we didn't end up as financially well off at the end of his tenure as when he got here. Porter: I mean, and I don't know what his disappointment with that was, and frustration. I mean, I think he's extremely proud of developing the relationship with the Ames, and Ben is strategic in that.

Miner: Do you think Minor had a lot to do with that, or was it more Ben?

Porter: Well, I think Minor combed the alumni records to discover somebody like an Ames.

Miner: I see

Porter: And then made that, you know, together, they made that happen. It's kind of like what he did with me, you know.

Miner: So, he was a prospect researcher.

Porter: Prospect researcher, yeah, he would have been a great prospector.

Miner: Interesting

Porter: Yeah

Miner: Well, yeah, I don't want to stretch the point too far. I'm just because I didn't know him. I'm asking people who knew him in different contexts for opinions about that so...

Porter: Well, and I think he was like Gould, you know, who's dead now, he was from Kenyon and Jay Gould, the biologist.

Miner: Sorry, I don't know.

Porter: Yeah. Anyway, he came here to campus, and he was, he's another guy like Minor, who was just non-conformist and, and wrote some of the most fascinating stuff, but it wasn't, you know, it wasn't that linear scientist kind of approach to things. So, I think, I think that was with Minor, that was part of it. I mean, he was very bright. There's no question about that.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: I, I guess for me, the frustration would be, he didn't like to fire and, and delegating and giving autonomy can be a good thing and a bad thing, and that's I think, you know, in terms of, I, from the very beginning, I felt like Ken Browning was a detriment...

Miner: And did he hire? Did Minor hire?

Porter: No, he was in place and not the right person at the right time, and he because of Minor delegating and giving no autonomy, I think there was some stuff that might have been different if there was maybe a stronger person in that position, but that's my own, that's a very personal perspective.

Miner: Well, so, and I'm asking for your opinion, yeah.

Porter: Right,

Miner: Yeah. So, but is that, were the things that Minor was giving him, things that would fall to a VP of Finance, or was it other kinds of things that are like?

Porter: Well, I'll give you an example. For example, what they did was this model that they worked on for years of 10% increase from year to year.

Miner: Right, the alumni attribution.

Porter: Right, and which made no sense, because if you go, you know for year after year after year, and you're not meeting that goal, why would you do it again? and that was the model that Ken clung to, and to me, there was, there should have been sort of

Miner: Some analysis

Porter: Analysis, and I think, you know, and Minor did, he was very fortunate to have the finance people that he did have, because of State Farm, I mean, the very strong Finance Committee folks and Jim Bates, you know, that kind of thing. So, I think he really relied on those people, and because they had done such a good job with Eckley's engineering, you know, I think that was where he had a weak point in his leadership, and so it just, he didn't address it.

Miner: Not recognizing when somebody was over their head...

Porter: Right

Miner: ...or not performing up to standard.

Porter: Which surprised me, because if you look at Ken's history, I mean, he came out of MIT's, he was like head of housing or something. I mean, it was a very peculiar pedigree in terms of that...

Miner: But he'd been here for...

Porter: He'd been here for quite a while. I think I don't know how long I, you know, I don't, you know, this is just my own...

Miner: Sure

Porter: ...quirky thing.

Miner: Well, are there other things you wanted to tell other stories about...

Porter: About Minor No, I think, I think he could be if, if he was in your corner, I think he could be an incredible advocate and, and so in support. So, I don't know the downside of that as much, other than frustrations on, you know, a Provost frustration with, well, I can't get him to do this, or I can't get him to do that. That's necessary, and it could be financial, you know, it could be firings, that, that kind of thing, and at the same time, you made some really good hires.

Miner: Present company included, not excluded. [laughs]

Porter: So, I guess, I mean, I think it was a good it was a good run, you know, but not without, as everyone is, how would that problem.

Miner: Exactly. Well, the last question I'm asking, other than if there's anything else you have to ask, last question I'm asking, everyone is related to the sale of his books, right?

Porter: Right

Miner: So, do you know the story about how the university acquired those?

Porter: Yes, and I've heard lots of grumblings about how it's handled, and...

Miner: Like what?

Porter: I know...how many you know the family got to, for example, really cull through, and I don't know if that's the truth or not.

Miner: I'm trying to find out. So, I'm asking.

Porter: Have you talked to Mona and Janet about it?

Miner: They didn't want to speak about this project.

Porter: Wow, because I remember in that period of time, Mona and Janet going into the house and, and for a while, I think Sue Stroyan was involved in it as related to the collection, and then there was something the way this structuring with the family was that they had the right to go through, and I don't know whether that's, you know, whether that who that's coming from.

Miner: Yeah

Porter: Or how that, I mean, you think there'd be a document.

Miner: You would think, there isn't.

Porter: It was a crazy time. Man.

Miner: Well, it and it was, and I think a lot of this is, I mean, part of, part of why I wanted to write about the auction was not a lot of people know what happened, right?

Porter: Right

Miner: And there was so much trauma, anyways, with the way that the illness was announced and how private he was about it.

Porter: Right

Miner: So, I've had people even say, well, I can't believe he they gave you all those books and you sold them, you know, meaning the library, right? You know had made this and that mess, absolutely, I can tell you, unequivocally, that's not what happened.

Porter: No, I know that.

Miner: The University purchased the collection, right? It's my understanding.

Porter: Well, but see, that, I mean, and then it's tied up with the fact that that Ellen was suing the university, and so I think there's a lot of missed misunderstandings around that whole circumstance.

Miner: Yeah, and I get that some of that is legal, right, but, you know, and that we, you know, people can't talk about the legal aspects of it, whatever, for whatever reason, but the documentation that I can say is that a decision was made to auction it, because the library evaluated it, and I was involved in this.

Porter: Right

Miner: The library evaluated the collection and chose to acquire things for special collections that were within our collection development policy.

Porter: Well, and I think that's, that should be.

Miner: That's, that's what? Well, it's interesting, because Minor would not probably have agreed with it.

Porter: Oh no, absolutely not.

Miner: So, so the auctioning of his collection. This is the, this is the punchline. This is a question, would a collector such as Minor have thought auctioning his collection was a good thing to do.

Porter: Oh, no

Miner: Okay, he'd be very upset about it. So, do you think that?

Porter: I think

Miner: So, you think that he would have preferred that the university keep it and put it in the library?

Porter: Yeah, but, but I disagree with it for lots of reasons, but I happen to know sort of the way Amherst does its collections, and what's in boxes down in the basement of the Robert Frost library and what's in the basement at the Lafayette.

Miner: Because people just accept things indiscriminately, right?

Porter: Right, and you know, in terms of, even with my own father in law's letters and documents, they...it's some there's so much that they didn't want, and the family was close to the head librarian and, and the family understand stood that. But there are a lot of people who don't.

Miner: Right.

Porter: They think this is, you know, end all be. All. This is great.

Miner: Right

Porter: And when you have a concrete method of collecting, which most good libraries do, you don't just put any anything in there. It's, it's not, I don't think it's, it's worth it. I mean, you only have so much linear...

Miner: Feet. Well, that's what, that's what I've always said, is that, you know, he built a, he built a library for university. He didn't build a Special Collections Library, right? I mean, if he had a special collections interest, I mean, the space that's devoted to Special Collections in our library is wonderful, but it's not big enough to hold everything that he had and everything else that we already had responsibility for, and you know, where's the audience for it? Do you think that he got on okay with the library, though? I mean, other than those contentious kinds of...

Porter: Well, he did not like that the original librarian.

Miner Clayton Highum.

Porter: Clayton Highum

Miner: Yeah, and he's the one faculty member I've heard that Minor got fired.

Porter: Yes

Miner: And I don't know how that how do you fire tenured faculty member? I have no idea.

Porter: I don't know how it happened, but, I mean, he, he wanted a new library, you know? So, if, if he wanted something badly enough this, I could see in his personality, he would find a way to make it happen, so that he could hire the person, or a person.

Miner: To get it done.

Porter: To get it done, and, and then hire a replacement that would be worth, you know, somebody worthwhile, and I think that's I he was, he was after Highum from the very beginning.

Miner: Why do you have any sense of why?

Porter: I think he just thought he was parochial, and they probably disagreed, just like I'm saying, you know, don't, don't, just take any old book that comes in the door. I just don't know him well enough, Clayton Highum, well enough

Miner: Right

Porter: To know

Miner: Well, because Sue said that too, we can't just take everything that comes in the door, but it didn't stop Minor from sending things.

Porter: Right, and Sue was a strong enough personality with him, I think sometimes to just to butt heads, you know?

Miner: But it's, it's interesting to me, the, the power dynamics of donor relations, which is something that is very present in my life, right? So, donor, you know, having to articulate to people that there's a purpose for what we do, that this is the shape of our collection. You know, obviously these things are very significant to you personally, conveying those significances beyond your lifetime is sometimes not going to happen.

Porter: Right

Miner: Some things in life are ephemeral, and we get more meaning, and I do this in my own life, you know, get more meaning out of some things...

Porter: Any you have to make those choices.

Miner: ...anybody else and ever will appreciate and is the hardest thing to do is it's hard. I do it more often than I care to think of with faculty on this campus who, you know, have opinions about the value of...

Porter: Certain things.

Miner: There are certain things, yeah, well, and it's not to say that that those things are not meaningful or not important or not, they're just not valuable from the sense of what our collection policy is and our audience, and we have certain institution we work at.

Porter: Well, and I'm struggling with this right now because I want to downsize, and we inherited from my family, but also from Bruce's family. For example, Bruce's mother had loved China and had amazing collections of China, and interestingly enough, her, her formal dinnerware, and my mothers was the same China pattern.

Miner: Oh, how interesting

Porter: And they both had double amounts of everything.

Miner: Oh, my goodness.

Porter: So at least I have two daughters who I don't know whether they went to stuff or not, but it's in my house right now, and I want it out of there, but we also have a full collection, and Peter and Cindy was his brother and his wife have a collection of Lafayette plates. Now, what the hell do you think of Lafayette plates? [laughs] and I'm sure Lafayette doesn't want them back.

Miner: Sure

Porter: Because Bruce said, well, we could give them back to Lafayette, and I said, they don't want them. I mean, what do you do with this?

Miner: Right

Porter: I mean, and they're beautiful. We have Limoges all kinds and silver.

Miner: Did you ever see that stuff in mine? Yourself?

Porter: I did, and I actually someone purchased from Gridley antiques, teapot or coffee pot pounded silver that was Minors, and they were sure that I would love this, because it was Minors, and it is the worst design pot because it has a metal handle. I mean, it heats up, so, it was antique. There was an antique, and it was labeled, you know, part of Minor Myers collection, you know how Gridley has...

Miner: Yes

Porter: Stuff down there labeled that way. So, so I'm fully understand this whole thing with collections, and I appreciate the value to someone at the time that it's theirs in their possession, but so this is interesting, so psychologically, I have this burden of being the caretaker more than Bruce does. It's not my mother.

Miner: Interesting

Porter: And I have this, and this is he and I get into this discussion, it's like, I feel like I'm the caretaker of this, and I don't want to do a disservice, and it's so ephemeral. I mean, you know, and kids today don't want that same stuff.

Miner: It's their grandkids that will but somebody's got to care.

Porter: Somebody's got to.

Miner: Until then.

Porter: Hold on to it. We have her wedding dress packaged...

Miner: Oh my god

Porter: ...in whatever you, put those in, up in the attic that's been passed from Bruce's brother's family to us, and now it's in our attic, stuff like that. You know.

Miner; Sometimes I almost think that I'm bestowing a blessing on people as they, get rid of it.

Porter: Right

Miner: Free, yourself, free...

Porter: ...and that's what I'm, I've gotta do.

Miner: Yeah.

Porter: So those, those Lafayette plates. Do you think Illinois Wesleyan would like Lafayette plates?

Miner: I can unequivocally tell you Illinois Wesleyan's Archives would not want those Lafayette plates, but thank you for the offer.

Porter: Oh, you're welcome.

Miner: Thank you for talking to me.

Porter: Oh, yeah

Miner: This has been delightful. I really appreciate it.

Porter: Yeah, I don't know that I told you much about his collecting, but...

Miner: I love the bookstore story.

Porter: Yeah. Is that great? Yeah?

Miner: And that you're a collector.

Porter: Well, I have to come up to this, special collections and see his cookbook sometimes well, and I'm really ready to get rid of mine. Okay, don't give them to me. Thanks, Jill. I.