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## W. Michael Weis

W. Michael Weis

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## Oral History Interview with Mike Weis, 2016

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Meg Miner: Today is January 26 and I'm in the Hansen Student Center with Mike Weis, the faculty member here at Illinois Wesleyan. My name is Meg Miner, and this is a sabbatical project on Minor Myers, our former president, his life as a collector and his influence on the university, so Mike go ahead and start up by telling us who you are and how you're affiliated with all this.

Mike Weis: My name is Michael Weis. I'm Professor of History at Illinois Wesleyan and I've been here since '88. So... Minor came the year after I did. Okay... I got to know Minor better than most professors at Illinois Wesleyan because we both have sons who went to the same school and were best friends.

Miner: What school was that?

Weis: Metcalf.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: And then Jeff then went to UHigh for a year before he transferred to a boarding school in New England. I think it was New England, maybe it was New York but...

Miner: Somewhere.

Weis: Yeah... so okay ... so because of that ... I'm trying to think. It was from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade on that they were classmates and best friends. So because they played baseball together, they played basketball together, I was frequently their baseball manager and basketball coach and because of that, I saw Minor a

lot. And we talked a lot. And him being a political science, me being an historian and we both had a love of old things. We ended up talking quite a bit.

Miner: Like what kind of old things?

Weis: Minor loved almost anything that was old. He loved toy trains, he loved musical instruments that were prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He really had a great love for the 18<sup>th</sup>-century, the 1700s. I'm not 100% sure why but I know that that was the ... most of his books that he collected were from that century and we would talk a lot about things he had found that were like Peruvian you know and just sort of then do a sort of pick my brain about what I knew about the publishing industry in Peru and hanging on the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and things like that.

Miner: Because that's an area of your expertise.

Weis: Somewhat.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: I don't know whole lot about Peru in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century...

Miner: Okay.

Weis: But I am a Latin Americanist, and so we would talk about a lot of things. In fact, one of the last times before he got sick, one of the last meetings that I had, Minor came into my office and said it was just on eBay and found original Woodstock tickets and wanted to know if the price was good and if I'd be interested in them or anything cause he knew that I had like I have an autograph poster by the Beatles in my office. You know, I – I have a few things but I'm not really a serious collector.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: I collect books that I'm interested in.

Miner: Sure.

Weis: I collect CDs and albums from certain things that I – again – that I'm interested in. I don't pick up things just because I wanna just have them on my shelf.

Miner: Sure

Weis: And so I'm not quite the same kind of collector that Minor was.

Miner: And that's really what I think I would love to hear about. So you distinguish between having a very narrow focus. Did you do – were you interested in the Woodstock tickets or no?

Weis: No, I was not.

Miner: Okay. Did he get them?

Weis: I don't know if he ended up buying them or not.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: But I know he wanted to know if they were good deal and so he may have purchased them and given them to somebody – a friend of his who had a similar – I have no idea. I just had a different relationship with him.

Miner: Sure.

Weis: I was Social Science Division Director in the late 90s and before we did away with divisions and I remember I was sitting in my office one day and Minor came like bounding in. He had this sort of energy and excitement to him on anything. In fact, a lot of us called him Tigger from Winnie and the Pooh cause he was always like full of energy and he came into my office and he just like had this smile on his face and he goes “Have you ever seen a million dollar check before?” [Miner laughs] and I was like “No!” and then he pulls out a check from Ed Rust for a million dollars to IWU.

Miner: Holy cow!

Weis: Exactly. He’s like “This is real!”

Miner: But he wasn’t gonna give it to you...

Weis: No-no-no

Miner: He just was sharing it.

Weis: No. No. He was just letting me see...

Miner: Oh, how fun!

Weis: But yeah, that was really cool. And I know that... he collected because he – it wasn’t like he was trying to make money. It was because he had a love of certain things like the 18<sup>th</sup> century books.

Miner: But he was looking at eBay for things in the 60s.

Weis: Yes. I think he was just sort of looking for deals.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: And you know maybe he had a friend who was interested in that period. He certainly was not a big fan of rock n roll at all. He didn’t know anything about it. he was interested – his interest is classical music and he liked that period in terms of classical music as well. He was a big 18<sup>th</sup> century – you know – he really like the borough period. I’m not sure exactly again why. But who’s the guy who did water music in the Hallelujah course...

Miner: A ...Handle?

Weis: Yeah, he is a big Handle fan.

Miner: Okay. Okay. All right. Long way from there to Woodstock.

Weis: Yeah, exactly. But any way, he was a classical music person. In fact, he would – when he – his big thing was selling people who are multitalented and his example was always a football or basketball player who also played the oboe. He would always say the oboe...[Miner giggles]... so umm...

Miner: So for students, he was interested in the multitalented aspect of students? Was that as a major or just as interests?

Weis: I just think he was – he was fascinated by people who has multi-interests.

Miner: To just people in general.

Weis: Exactly. And that's what he kinda wanted to attract here. He thought that our niche should be that you could do anything at Illinois Wesleyan. You could play basketball being a double major. You could be a physics major and also a dancer. Or whatever, you know. And he really wanted to get people double major. He wanted people who were interested in lots of things and I think he thought that that would be a real good niche for us.

Miner: And you said you had only been here a year prior to that but was that – that was something new then, it sounds like.

Weis: Yes.

Miner: People before had not emphasized it.

Weis: The emphasis prior to Minor coming here was that Illinois Wesleyan was a micro university. In other words, we did it all and we had it all but on a much smaller scale than the U of I.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: You know – that was sort of the – that was sort of the vision of the previous regime. And so – and I know that like subsequently there was a big push for liberal arts. Minor was never narrowly focused on the liberal arts. I think he liked the fact that we were a micro university, that we

Miner: Okay...

Weis: I don't think he had – no but like the Provost, Janet McNew was really being into the liberal arts

Miner: Okay.

Weis: Put a lot of money into the liberal arts, made a lot of hires and in both the humanities and the social sciences and things, trying to expand languages, trying to expand the offerings by the departments in the humanities and social sciences. And Minor did not oppose that at all. I mean, I think he gave Janet free range to do that. But Minor wasn't interested in, say, getting rid of the nursing school. I mean – and there was a – there was a lot of vocal calls to get rid of the nursing school that it's a very expensive program. Prior to the last about 5 or 6 years, it always was on the edge of – insolvency we couldn't get enough students to come in and you know, cause it's an expensive nursing school and nursing school makes you, you know, why do I have to take history courses or literature courses or whatever, and so I think that the thinking in the early 90s was this is causing us too much money. We should get rid of it. then we could take those lines and spread them out throughout the sciences and humanities and social sciences and arts

and everything else would flourish more because we had this albatross taken off our backs. And Minor had no interest in that. He wanted to keep everything we had and just keep expanding. He really thought we could sort of grow our way out of our problems. And it was under Minor that we went from a school of 1650 or 1700 up to 2100. I think he would have loved to take us up to 2400. He you know – it was definitely his vision and it was one that I think a lot of faculty were on board with.

Miner: That's hard to like, right?

Weis: Yeah, exactly.

Miner: You get more of what you love to do.

Weis: Constant raises, constant better students, constant – everything seemed to be improving throughout the 90s. so yeah what's not to like we learnt from 7 course load to 6 course load. We kept getting 10% raises every year.

Miner: Wow.

Weis: Yeah, exactly. So ... Minor like I said, he was not interested in shrinking the nursing school in order to fund the liberal arts but he was – I think he was devoted to the liberal arts because his background was from the liberal arts. He went to a liberal arts school in Minnesota. He then went to Princeton and his PhD is political science. He was a political theorist so he's interested in philosophy. He's interested in lot of – in history. He was interested in lot of things so that's how his brain worked. It's the kind of people he was attracted to. It's kind of what he wanted to make the university. And as a collector, and he was an avid collector of a lot of different things, like if you have ever been to his basement, he had tons of trains. He had trains everywhere in his basement. Some people have even speculated that it was the basement, you know, there's pests and stuff that maybe had caused maybe some of his health problems and such

Miner: Wow

Weis: I doubt that but you know, I mean it's always possible. I don't know how those things work but he had a lot of trains in the basement. He had lots of instruments. He collected old violins when my mother was selling a violin that was – by now is over a 100 years old – I went to him and asked him and he immediately knew how much it would probably be worth and where I could sell it if I wanted to. I relayed that information to my mom. I think she did sell it. I don't know how much she got...

Miner: But he didn't want it?

Weis: No he didn't want it...[Miner laughs]...No. I think it was early 20<sup>th</sup> century and he didn't want anything from the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Miner: Oh, okay. so ... yeah.. sure...

Weis: But his biggest collection – oh I should say before in back up – he also inculcated a love of collecting among people that he talked to. He would talk to other people, you know, what do you collect? What are you interested in? w]What are you – you know – and his big question about from students and things was what's your passion?

Miner: Right.

Weis: But he did that even in job interviews with people...

Miner: Why do you think he did that? Why do you think he asked about what you collect?

Weis: I think he would get a sense of who the person was by the things they were interested in. And I – I tend to do exactly the same thing. When I'm having lunch with candidates, especially if it's not my department and saying that – you know – I know mine doesn't – my opinion probably doesn't matter there. They're kind of wasting time and filling up the day. I frequently will say to people, you know, what do you do for fun? What do you really like to do? Because partly that will determine if they're gonna be happy here.

Miner: Mm-hmm...

Weis: You know, if what they like to do for fun isn't available in central Illinois ...[Miner laughs]...

Miner: That's good information...

Weis: Yeah, exactly, you know. And we always.. our big thing is "Well, Chicago is only two hours away."

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: But it's like, how often do you actually get up to Chicago?

Miner: Right.

Weis: I mean, you know it's maybe only two hours away but it's a whole long way away if you're, you know... so inculcated... he would ask people "What do you like?", "What do you do?", "What do you collect?" I know he asked like Nancy Sultan in job interview this and I'll let her tell you the story and stuff but ... but we had a lot of similar conversations 'cause he knew I collected CDs and albums and so we would talk about that a lot and, you know, he would sort of try to figure out how he'd go about that. He also did that with his own son. Jeffrey was a avid collector of baseball cards and my son was also at the time when they were kids, an avid collector of baseball cards like 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grades, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> grades. I think I got too old for it and so I dropped but I know he spent hours with Gabe, my son, not his son. I'm sure his son was right there, too. He spent hours with Gabe. Just basically trying to teach him you know, how to look at baseball cards and what – you know – why these would be more expensive at a later date than these and stuff like that – stuff that I didn't really care about. I – I guess I had baseball cards as a little kid but it's never been anything that I cared a whole lot about. And I think I still owned my baseball cards when I was a college student for like \$20.

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: Which is basically beer money.

Miner: Yeah. Well everything's relevant in importance, right?

Weis: I feel like I was probably like students are what their used textbooks.

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: Like you should keep your textbook.

Miner: Well, why do you think it would be important for him to have a conversation like that with your son? Or anyone about, you know, sort of the ins and outs of how to be a collector, not just what they were collecting, especially if it wasn't something that he was particularly interested in, too.

Weis: ...[overlapping]... personally interested... yeah...

Miner: I mean, I don't know. I don't know what – there could be an answer to that question or...

Weis: I – you know, I don't know. I know that he got interested in collecting as a kid, that as a kid he collected both stamps and coins. And I think that... I don't – I'd have to speculate. It's really – it's not anything I know for certain but collecting gives you a focus and it helps you learn about a lot of different things. Not just the coin, but the time period.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: Why does this coin have less silver in it than this coin. Well, if you go into the history of it, then you know that, you know, some silver mines closed down and they didn't have the silver so they had to go to a different alloy, all that stuff. You know, people who collect things end up knowing all these things about the world. And they may be trivial but I think it helps broaden your perspective on how the world operates and things. So he ... he ... you know and it may have just been that that was fun for him so we he assumed it would be fun for other people.

Miner: Sort of a puzzle.

Weis: Yeah.

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: Yeah. My last conversation with Minor is after he was sick and I had had – I had in the January of 2003, I fell ill and I went into the Emergency Room and I ended up having bypass surgery...

Miner: Oh, dear.

Weis: And I was out for a few weeks and after I was released then I had cardia rehab then I had to go back to the hospital 2-3 times a week and workout.

Miner: Sure.

Weis: And while I was doing that, so this was probably by March, I went in in January. I went in literally the first day of the semester. I taught my classes, felt terrible and went to the emergency room and I never got out of the emergency room.

Miner: Oh, my gosh.

Weis: Umm.. and well, I got out of it eventually

Miner: Yeah... not the way you came in.

Weis: Exactly. And Minor was already sick. He already... he had what he thought was a long cold from several months that turned into lung cancer and one of my former colleagues, a guy named Forrest Frank who taught in chem. was a hospital volunteer. And so I was coming out of rehab and I ran into Forrest and talked to him for a minute. And he said, "You know Minor is upstairs." And he gave me his room number. And I just went up to the room and just walked into the room... (

Miner: Oh, my goodness.

Weis: And, first of all, I could tell Minor did not want company. He didn't want people to see him like this and he already looked really terrible. He lived until the summer but he already by March, you could tell, he was really, really sick. But the other thing, when I walked in, and we only talked for about 4 to 5 minutes and then I told Mike Young and Mike Young went to see him. And then he was removed and out of the hospital and taken home surely after cause I don't think he wanted company.

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: But Minor had a magazine which he was perusing looking for things to buy...

Miner: ...[laughing]... even in the hospital?

Weis: Even in the hospital.

Miner: Oh my gosh.

Weis: He was still collecting.

Miner: Remember what kind?

Weis: It was old books.

Miner: Was it?

Weis: It was an old book – it was an old book catalog and Minor knew people in lots of different places around the world that sold old books, okay. I don't know if you knew this but he was offered a position as President of Pembroke.

Miner: I did not know that.

Weis: He had good friends in Oxford that's why we set up the Pembroke program cause he had all these friends over in Oxford and some of them were old book dealers.

Miner: Wow

Weis: And he would go every year on a trip to England to look for books, to meet with his friends and from that he met all the people from Pembroke and that's how we have the exchange program, that's how we got all those window panes, up by you...

Miner: Yep.

Weis: In your office, which he thought were really cool.

Miner: They are cool.

Weis: Yeah and I – but I mean, he’s the one that said, “Don’t throw them away. You know, we’ll take them.” But yeah, he was offered a job there but it was – and that I think it came out of book collecting.

Miner: Yeah .

Weis: Okay and he would go – there are several places in England he went every year. He went to France. He had friends in France who were looking for old books for him. Like I told you about the Peru...

Miner: Mm-hmm.

Weis: You know, and I don’t know how, you know, often that happened...

Miner: Sure.

Weis: When you’re looking for 18<sup>th</sup> century books you know this is a play that was produced...

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: You know.

Miner: Yeah. They wouldn’t be in central Illinois very often.

Weis: Yeah, exactly. So yeah he would go back to east coast a lot. And I mean, it’s sort of where he’s culturally from any way.

Miner: Sure.

Weis: Even though he grew up in Cleveland. So he grew up about 5 miles from where I grew up.

Miner: Oh, really.

Weis: And I think that helped bond us, too. My sister lived in the city that he grew up in. She has since moved down to Boca Raton, Florida but – but she lived about a mile from where he grew up and so I knew exactly where he was from and he knew exactly where I was from, 5 miles away ... the next town over.

Miner: That’s amazing.

Weis: And I think that helped us bond, too. We had kids the same age, we had similar at least disciplines. I mean I don’t know why I overstayed – it’s not like we hung out a whole lot.

Miner: No, I get it.

Weis: But he was in my house several times. The last time he was in my house – I gotta tell you this – even though it might probably not make it to anything... [chuckles]... the last time he was in my house was on Easter Sunday and I don’t remember the exact year. I just remember Michael Jordan had quit

playing basketball. For a couple of years, he just like got tired of it. He tried to play baseball, okay, and after 2 years or a year and a half, he decided that baseball wasn't working out and he'd go back to basketball.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: And so he played like the last couple months of the season. And the next year he was back and playing full and doing really well, but the Easter Sunday, so early April, late March somewhere around – you know – Jordan's team was playing Shaquille O'Neal team, which at the time was the Orlando Magic.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: So I really – I remember the situation 'cause Jeffrey had a new Michael Jordan cause when he came back he changed numbers, so the original Michael Jordan was 23 and the new Michael Jordan was 45. And Jeffrey had a Chicago Bulls 45 t-shirt.

Miner: Okay

Weis: And the bulls were playing Orlando magic in the game. I don't know who won or anything like that. I wasn't actually watching the game but Jeffrey was over there. Minor came to pick him up and Minor apparently rang the doorbell but nobody answered. I must have been upstairs – might have been upstairs in my office reading but he then just walked into the – into my house and my dog bit him.

Miner: Oh, no!

Weis: Apparently he like screeched.

Miner: Oh, no!

Weis: Like "Ow!!" and the dog broke skin...

Miner: Oh, dear!

Weis: He was bleeding... on his... near his between his ankle and heel, in that area.

Miner: Oh, my gosh.

Weis: And so I went into my bathroom and was cleaning it up and he then decided that he needed to go and make sure that nothing was bad. He went to emergency room. About couple hours later, all of a sudden, we get a knock on the door and because Minor went to the emergency room, the police are there investigating it, making sure my dog is not a killer. And so, Easter night and I have police in my house, like basically like you know, making me bring my dog up and show the dog and you know explain...

Miner: But somehow he forgave you – Minor forgave you.

Weis: Minor forgave me but he never came back to my house...[laughs]...

Miner: Never forgave the dog, oh my gosh. That's crazy. Wow.

Weis: Yeah, so, yeah I really liked the guy a lot and I think he was a great person. He was also a really fun man.

Miner: Yeah?

Weis: I'll give you one more Minor story and that'll probably.

Miner: Please

Weis: You know behind our house, constitution trail, is a bunch of bike packs that go throughout the city – I – because it's in my backyard, I literally can go in my backyard, cross the alley, there's a little path that goes right out to the trail and then just take a walk. We can go to Normal or wherever we go. Minor was riding his bike this summer. So it's like July and it's 98 degrees.

Miner: Oh gosh!

Weis: Minor is riding his bike and his wife is with him. She is riding her bike. Carol and I are walking on the trail and just sort of talking and stuff, and Minor comes riding up. It's so funny – he – he sees us and he stops and he starts talking. And he goes, "Every time I ride my bike on this trail, I feel like I'm a choo-choo train...oooooooooo..." ...[both laugh]...

Miner: Oh, my god. That's so funny.

Weis: Yeah he's just like joy and right at that moment, a double rainbow appeared. I was like, oh yeah it was really, is really, really...

Miner: Where was this at? I mean what time and what

Weis: This was probably like 6 or 7 so it was late in the day, sunset not quite, you know...

Miner: In like early 2000s or...

Weis: Oh, this would have been late 90s.

Miner: Late 90s. I was wondering in the time frame of you knowing him.

Weis: No, no. I probably had known him for 5 years at least and maybe more. Maybe 10.

Miner: Really comfortable and ...

Weis: Yeah, he – we had talked many, many, many times before that.

Miner: That's fantastic.

Weis: And ... but he had that exuberance and you know, because he was a train collector and constitution trail started as a normal train and...

Miner: Train rail bed, right?

Weis: Yeah. Exactly.

Miner: That's fantastic.

Weis: Yeah, so he – he just – I can imagine being on the train ... all that stuff.

Miner: Did you ever go into his basement?

Weis: Yeah.

Miner: I'm desperately hoping to find somebody who has pictures of his basement. I've heard 3-deep books on a shelf. I've heard lots of trains, so ... Do you know of anybody?

Weis: Lots of everything. I don't know any money?

Miner: No. Anybody who knows – who has pictures?

Weis: Who has pictures? You might be able to get his kids. I don't know anybody else who would have taken pictures but yeah it was jam packed. There were a lot of trains, like literally dozens, if not hundreds of trains.

Miner: Do you think it would be a stretch to say that he never got rid of anything that he acquired?

Weis: You know, I... I don't know. I've never heard Ellen complain, you know, that we gotta get rid of stuff to make room for other stuff or anything like that. Like if you talked to Toddy Bushnell, you know, of Paul's books, she's a...

Miner: Yeah she's got stories about that.

Weis: Yeah, we gotta get rid of stuff and you know, all this. I never heard Ellen complain about that or anything and you know the basement was his. I don't think she – she very rarely went down there. And that's where a lot of his collections were, so...

Miner: Did you ever get to his house and have him pull out stuff and show you things, new things? Did he do that than like bringing things to wherever you were like on the main floor or did he take you to shelves and talk about particular things?

Weis: He took me downstairs to show me some books, which is why I knew the train ...[overlapping]... yeah. He also took me down there another time and showed me some instruments. And he had like stamp collection down there and a coin collection but I don't think they were passions at – by that time.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: I mean I think he had done that earlier in his life and had not gotten rid of them but he was no longer – I don't – maybe he was but I mean he never actually talked to me about him but he had huge stamp collection down there, too. Books, musical instruments, trains...

Miner: Biggies

Weis: Yeah, those were the three biggies, at least the ones that I know about. You know, he was never in his upstairs – Gabe, my son was...[laughs]... I don't know...

Miner: Sure.

Weis: Gabe slept over there several times so he was throughout the house and stuff – I went down the basement a couple different times and then he had that room right off the living room.

Miner: I didn't know about this room. What was in that room?

Weis: Those were his prized books.

Miner: Oh, he had a special room for it.

Weis: Basement book – the basement...

Miner: Did he have a fireplace in it?

Weis: Yes.

Miner: A white fireplace with like a... okay, I've seen a picture of him and a student in a fireplace and I didn't know where that was. So that was a room off the main room?

Weis: It's – it's like a yeah little porch.

Miner: On the main floor?

Weis: Yeah. It's like the living room, when you go through the main door, to the left is a living room and then to left of that, having doors to the welcome center is another room and that has lots of book shelves, built-in book shelves.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: And that was full of old books.

Miner: That you thought he valued...

Weis: Those were prized I think cause the basement was a little dank and moldy. I don't know how moldy it was but it was...

Miner: A basement.

Weis: Yeah it was a basement.

Miner: Interesting. Okay.

Weis: Yeah, so his prized books were up on the main floor but he also had other books down the basement and then he had a bunch of other stuff in his basement.

Miner: Do you think that there's anything we can say about, like any relationship we can make between the kind of person that he was and the kinds of things he did at Illinois Wesleyan. Either you know as an institution or with students or colleagues, anything like that.

Weis: Yeah, I'm not 100% sure what you...

Miner: Well, I'm thinking of the way you described him as an expansionist kind of person, right? I mean he was obviously living in a time where it was economically possible for us to do that but he also was an expansionist collector. He said he collected things in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but he had a book from 1496 in his collection. He also has books from, you know, 2000. I mean, there was quite a range of things that he did and I'm just wondering about that.

Weis: I assume his 18<sup>th</sup> century fascination was because that's the political philosophers that he wrote about are from that early enlightenment period.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: So I assumed that sort of motivated – maybe they were easier to collect – 1496 is probably really pricy. Anything that's 500 years old even if it's a piece of crap, is probably worth a ton and the 18<sup>th</sup> century might just be affordable but I think there was probably an intellectual fascination with that century. But as far as the university goes, Minor – and I remember this when he was just interviewing here. Minor basically said something to the effect of “you guys don't know how good you are” you know, “this university is already good and it could be great” and I think that's what he sold and I think a lot of people bought it. The faculty bought it, the students bought it, donors bought it, you know, we were already good and we were getting better and that's the image he projected. And in really do think he was on to something.

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: You tell people “You're good” and everybody is gonna start believing it.

Miner: True.

Weis: And you'll start believing it you know sort of act as if it will happen.

Miner: Sure.

Weis: So that's why I like the guy. I mean, I bought in, okay. I had an opportunity. I came here in '88 on a one-year. I got the tenure-track job in '89, okay, so he wasn't yet president. I got the tenure-track job in 89. I was offered another tenured-track job at Kansas State at the same time I was offered this one. And my main reason for staying here was my wife. She basically said, “I don't wanna live in Kansas.” And you know, but you know, everybody in Ohio State and where I went to grad school was telling me, you know you should go to Kansas State. You should aspire to be at a place like Ohio State where you got your Ph.D. Kansas State is so much closer to Ohio State than Illinois Wesleyan is. You'll teach yourself to death. You know, you know you'll never be able to do anything else besides teach if you are at a liberal arts college, but I stayed here because it was a lot closer to my wife's family in Ohio, because it was close to Chicago, because I liked my first year here. But I didn't expect to stay. I took the job but I thought after 3 or 4 more years I'll find another job. And I actually had a chance to move to Arizona State and I – I loved what Minor was doing by the time that possibility came up. I really thought that I was at a place that was up and coming and you know this would be a great thing. I also had things like you know the tuition benefit for my kids that I could think about in the future, you know, my kids going to college and all that. But it was basically Minor Myers who convinced not by talking to me or – but just because I was part of that vibe and you know, we're hiring all these people who are now phonies, but we're young and

exciting and doing all this stuff. And history department went from 4 to 8 and all the stuff and so it was just like I really got behind the guy and I really bought in to his vision. And I know that some of it was manipulated. You know you can manipulate those U.S. News and World Report things pretty easy. “How big is your library?” Well let’s just buy all kinds of crap and then we have millions of volumes, right? I know he did all those things you know and I know he basically told Sue Stroyan, “You can’t throw anything away.”

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: You know stuff like that that probably just drove everybody crazy and he micromanaged your area of the university because he loved books so much that he never told us in history what to do you know. I mean, he went out and got money for a Japanese Historian and we hired Tom Lutze.

Miner: Right.

Weis: And although he expressed irritation to me, “What the hell are you guys doing” he never basically looked back, you know, “Okay, he’s the best guy. Okay. No problem.”

Miner: But you think he did something different in the library?

Weis: I think he had much more of a hands-on approach to the library because he loved books so much.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: And I think that probably made it a lot harder for Sue Stroyan to run the library – I don’t know – I don’t know anything about what happened...

Miner: Sure.

Weis: But I do know that he was in there a lot.

Miner: And big libraries were important to him – big, big from quantity.

Weis: Yes. Yeah.

Miner: What do you think – so you when we first sat down, you said you weren’t aware that we’d auctioned his collection...

Weis: No, I wasn’t.

Miner: What do you – what do you make – if you feel like you can speculate – what would you have thought of that? Cause the university purchased the collection at the family’s request. The university purchased his collection and then made a determination on what to do with it. What do you think he would have thought of that? Cause some collectors like the thrill of the chase, right? Getting and selling and acquiring again and – but it doesn’t sound like he was that kind of a collector.

Weis: No, I think actually he cared – if he had remained president and was sort of like the – and then retired and they – I think he probably would have donated to the library and he would have probably wanted it to be put in that rotunda where you are on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor and that would be the Minor Myers

collection of all these great old books and that wasn't even to hold on to him forever, that that would be one of his legacies. I kind of think in some ways that that whole round room on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor was sort of his pet project. You know, he loved the library. Period. He had such a hands on but I think that he kind of saw that as his room – the Minor Myers collection room...

Miner: Yeah.

Weis: And so I don't know that ... I mean I heard all kinds of stories that I don't know if they're true or not...

Miner: Sure.

Weis: About, you know, Ellen selling stuff away and stuff so I don't know. I know that she probably didn't share his passions in those ways.

Miner: I just thought maybe because you'd have conversations with him about collecting, you could speculate on.

Weis: No I would think that he kind of think that this was my stuff and I'm giving it to Wesleyan and this is where it will be and, you know, and I really kinda think that that space was probably more hands-on, you know, it's...

Miner: Than the other places...

Weis: Yeah, you know.

Miner: Are there other things about him that you think you'd like to share at this point or if you think about it later, you can...

Weis: I think he's a true renaissance man. He ... his interest were all over the place but I think his interest was that he loved life and I know – I don't know but I think he felt a little robbed that he was gonna die a lot before he was definitely ready to and so... you know ...

Miner: It's been very hard on you and him.

Weis: Well, a lot harder on him than me, obviously but I mean I think he was... I think he was in a bind. He didn't know what to do next, you know. He had kind of much done everything...

Miner: You mean as president?

Weis: As president.

Miner: Okay.

Weis: You know, the library was built, all these things were done and I don't know how – what he would have done. I think he was either gonna leave Wesleyan or he was just sort of going on a vacation but...

Miner: Interesting.

Weis: You know there's an old Jazz song by Mose Allison called "Your Mind is on Vacation"...[both laugh]...

Miner: Well, that's great. Thank you so much for coming in, Mike. I appreciate it.