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Stewart Herman
Gettysburg College

Michael J. Birkner
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Interview with Stewart Herman, September 5, 2001

Description

Stewart Herman was interviewed on September 5, 2001 by Michael J. Birkner about his time at Gettysburg College in the 1920's & 30's. Herman discusses his classes at the time, as well as extra-curricular activities he participated in, including the Gettysburgian, the Mercury, Owl & Nightingale Players and Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity. He also describes his education at Gettysburg Seminary and working as an American pastor in Berlin during WWII.

Length of Interview: 52 minutes

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Keywords

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Disciplines

Higher Education | Liberal Studies | Oral History

Stewart Herman Oral History

* = unknown spelling
[] = unintelligible
() = explanation

Michael Birkner: This is September the 5th, 2001. I'm Michael Birkner, and I'm sitting here on the 4th floor of Musselman Library with Stewart Herman, graduate of the class of 1930 at Gettysburg College. We're going to be talking about Mr. Herman's experiences coming to Gettysburg, at Gettysburg, and as we have time, beyond Gettysburg. I wanted to start by mentioning that I understand your dad was a graduate of Gettysburg College. Would you tell me a little bit, if you could, about him and how he came to come to Pennsylvania College.

Stewart Herman: Well, he was born and brought up in York, Pennsylvania. His father was very ambitious for all three sons and saw to it that they all three came to Gettysburg College. I suppose the reason is that Gettysburg College was the nearest Lutheran college, since his father was a deacon and an elder, or whatever, in the various Lutheran churches in York. Father was in the class of '99 and his intention from the very beginning – largely because of his Moravian mother, I think – was to become a minister. So he went on from college to the seminary, and of course, from then on, did serve in the ministry for the rest of his life.

Birkner: Well, did he come to Gettysburg Theological Seminary?

Herman: Yes, yes.

Birkner: And then, did he do that immediately after leaving college?

Herman: Yes and he graduated from Seminary in 1902.

Birkner: And then where did he serve as a pastor?

Herman: He went to Wrightsville, Pennsylvania, where he served for about a year and a half, or so, and was called as an assistant pastor to Zion, Harrisburg and spent the rest of his life – about 45 years – in the ministry of that large and historic congregation.

Birkner: He must have known Henry Hanson, who was a Lutheran minister in Harrisburg.

Herman: Oh, they were quite good friends. In fact, my father and Hanson were both considered and publicized as the candidates for the presidency of the College, and Hanson won out. I don't know what the reason was, but father was seriously considered in the headlines of the Harrisburg papers at that time.

Birkner: Well, that speaks well of the Lutheran congregations in Harrisburg.

Herman: Oh, yes! Well, there are about 14 Lutheran congregations in Harrisburg, were at that time.

Birkner: I talked recently with Bob Hanson, and he told me a little bit about that, and he's still active in that church that his father was in in Harrisburg, but obviously the demographics of the city have changed a lot.

Herman: They had changed at that time; the Messiah church was on the edge of the black district in Harrisburg.

Birkner: Messiah was Henry Hanson's church?

Herman: Yes.

Birkner: Okay. That's what I thought.

Herman: A beautiful church, very nice church.

Birkner: Apparently it's got a new pastor with a lot of energy and they're doing something. Well, Bob is still a member of that church I understand. Now, did you grow up then in a parsonage?

Herman: Yes, in Harrisburg. I was born in Harrisburg.

Birkner: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Herman: Yes, two sisters.

Birkner: And they couldn't go to Gettysburg College, could they?

Herman: Well, one did. My first sister went to Beaver College, the second sister started off in a finishing school up in Massachusetts and intended to go to Wellesley, but eventually she decided to come to Gettysburg.

Birkner: So she did get a Gettysburg education.

Herman: Yes.

Birkner: What did she do with her career, or did she marry and raise kids and do that?

Herman: She took a secretarial course and worked for a while, but then she married a lawyer and had three children of her own.

Birkner: Now did you as a boy, would you characterize yourself as athletic, a bookworm, both? What were you as a boy?

Herman: Well, as a boy I was sort of small. It took me a while to grow up. When I entered college I think I weighed something like 110 pounds and five feet six or

whatever. And it wasn't until I got into college and was fed at the fraternity house that I really sprouted. I was not that athletic. Tennis was my game and track of various kinds, and I suppose I could have been characterized a book worm. Not exactly a book worm, but I read an awful lot of books.

Birkner: Did you expect to go to college?

Herman: Oh, yes, yes, there was no doubt about that.

Birkner: Did you expect you would wind up at Gettysburg College?

Herman: Yes. I was just following the line. There was no serious consideration of any other colleges. If so, I don't remember.

Birkner: Let me carry the question one step further. Was it assumed that you would ultimately pursue the ministry?

Herman: I think my father assumed it. I didn't quite assume it. In fact, I came through college and went to seminary for one year, and then I took a year off to make up my mind and went to sea.

Birkner: When did you actually first visit Gettysburg? Was it as a youth, or was it when you went . . .

Herman: Oh, from early boyhood, because my mother was from Gettysburg. She lived here. She was born and brought up in Fairfield. The family moved into Gettysburg, and she went to Irving College in Mechanicsburg, near Harrisburg.

Birkner: I think Harold Dunkelberger's wife went to Irving College too.

Herman: Could be. That was an incredible college. Father met her at some point – I never knew exactly when it happened – and courted her for a few years, during the time he was in seminary and his first years as pastor. And they finally got married in 1908.

Birkner: So you had relatives in Gettysburg to visit.

Herman: Oh, we had grandparents.

Birkner: Where did they live? Do you remember where they were?

Herman: Oh, yes, exactly. Sixty York Street. My grandfather had a nice, big house on the corner of York and Stratton Street, catty-corner from St. James Church.

Birkner: I know where you're talking about.

Herman: He was here all during the battle. His brothers had gone off to war, but they lived on a farm, Benner's Hill is near Culp's Hill.

Birkner: Tell me about the process of applying to Gettysburg College. I assume it wasn't as complicated as it is to apply to college today.

Herman: No, I don't recall it was any problem at all. All this happened a long, long time ago, so I've forgotten a great many things. I looked back over my freshman diary just to remind myself of what happened, and that's the dullest diary I've ever. . . It just consists largely of getting up in the morning and going to bed at night and eating meals and that sort of thing and nothing really substantive in it. But to come back to the. . . I also was given a scholarship of 25 dollars, which was a big boost at the time. I think the College tuition was so low, that grant compared with today was nothing. Getting here was simply a matter of being put in the automobile, which we had at that time, already of course, and coming over and signing up for classes and going into the dorm. I lived in Old Dorm on the second floor, right closeto that colonnade thing, and for the first few weeks, ate in a boarding house. I'm not sure where that was, any longer, until I joined a fraternity. I don't know whether this helps you or not.

Birkner: This is very helpful. Let me ask you some follow-up questions, because that usually jogs memory. When you came to the campus, what was your feeling about the dorm itself? Do you have a memory of that? Was it a decent dorm or was it [falling down amidst you], or what?

Herman: No, it was very decent. There was a small room, not much bigger than this one, which doesn't help on audio, but I had a roommate, a double-decker bunk, a table, rather than a desk, as I remember, at which we both sat, on opposite sides. The evidence of the old fireplaces was still there, because, previously, students had warmed their rooms with their own fires. There was one vast bathroom for the whole floor. Old Dorm wasn't used for any other purposes than dormitory, at that time, except for a janitor or caretaker, who had an apartment in the basement.

Birkner: Was that Jack the janitor?

Herman: I don't remember.

Birkner: Let me ask you this. What were your first impressions of the president of the College? Presumably he made some exhortation to you all to be good gentlemen at Gettysburg College.

Herman: Oh, yes, Henry Hanson was great at exhortating. (laughing) He'd get up almost every morning in chapel and tell us what great people we are and what a great college it was in these syrupy rather Southern tones that he could use. I think he was a pretty effective president, so far as promotion was concerned and morale building, that kind of thing. He and his wife after every noon meal most days would make a complete tour of the campus on foot and let his presence be known. Well-tailored gent, a very nice guy, except we thought he was a terrible hypocrite.

Birkner: In what way?

Herman: Because he just talked and talked, and we didn't feel that he was being totally sincere.

Birkner: You said that he talked a lot, but what does that have to do with being a hypocrite?

Herman: Because we felt he wasn't sincere, that he was just boosting us without necessarily making us feel as though it was real. I don't think that he personally, in his private life, was a hypocrite. I think he was just a good promoter.

Birkner: Well, he was probably in his prime when you were here, because he was relatively young and vigorous and new.

Herman: Well, yeah, he was middle-aged.

Birkner: But he had come to the College in '23. I'm presuming this is 1926 that you're talking about.

Herman: That's right, yes.

Birkner: Was there a spirit of energy on the campus among the students?

Herman: Very much so. It was an all-men's campus, of course, except for a very few coeds, and as I was observing to my daughter as we came across – everybody said hello to everybody every time you passed – I didn't notice anything like that this time.

Birkner: The Gettysburg hello, right?

Herman: It was "hello," "hello," you know, "how are you?" and all that sort of thing, depending on the extent of your acquaintanceship. It was a very friendly place, a very open place, and of course it was much smaller and everybody knew everybody else practically. We had about 800 students, I suppose, on the whole campus at that time, less than a couple of hundred in each class.

Birkner: Obviously a more intimate setting means you can get to know each other better. Do you remember your first classes, rather any of the professors from any of your first year classes?

Herman: Yes, I can remember them. I was taking Greek, Latin, physics, English. I can remember them all. I'm not sure I can remember their names. Let's see. Glenn was the Latin professor. Very good, very practical. He had a very downright and forceful way of addressing the class and keeping us moving. Bilheimer was the Greek professor, a really learned man. He knew that language and made it as interesting as Greek can be made to a 16-year-old high school graduate. And I managed to get both the Garver Latin prize at the end of my freshman year and I think first mention in the Greek prize. They did prizes for most of these things.

Birkner: And they still give those.

Herman: Do they?

Birkner: Sure, sure.

Herman: And there was a general prize. What did they call it?

Birkner: Muhlenberg prize, maybe?

Herman: Yeah, Muhlenberg. I got that. Edwards was the physics professor, and I was not a scientist. I didn't shine in chemistry, physics or anything else. As a matter of fact, when I got around to chemistry in the next year or so, they gave us an option if you had a B average either to accept the B, or take the exam and try for an A. I took my B. English, I don't remember whether that was Thomas Kline or not. We had three English professors. I remember them all quite distinctly. It was a good department. Most of the English professors all came out of the South. They were from the University of Virginia, or wherever.

Birkner: Right, right. Francis Mason was one of those.

Herman: Francis Mason – we were very good friends. Of course I got onto the debating team fairly early and Mason and Kline as coaches.

Birkner: Was the other one George Warthen?

Herman: Yes, yes, George Warthen. Gentlemanly. Elegant.

Birkner: He lived with his mother. His mother used to call him "Saylor, Saylor" right, because wasn't his name George Saylor Warthen? At least that's what Carrey Moore tells me.

Herman: That could be; I don't know that part.

Birkner: But you had Kline, probably, and you liked him.

Herman: At one time or another I had them all.

Birkner: What were you going to major in, did you know?

Herman: English. But I took a lot of history courses and other things.

Birkner: So you had Dr. Fortenbaugh?

Herman: No, I never had Fortenbaugh in class. I knew him, of course. I can recall my philosophy professor, (Charles F.) Sanders.

Birkner: Anything you particularly remember about Sanders?

Herman: Well, the most outstanding thing I can remember is that I had a hard time writing themes that pleased him very much, and finally I just tossed one off in a big hurry, and I got an A- or A+ on it, and I reread it and I didn't understand a thing I said. (laughing) That was a mess. But he gave me a good mark.

Birkner: So you pretty much got right into it. You enjoyed your classes, you did the things a college student does. Did you get involved in activities on the campus?

Herman: Oh! In everything. I got into Owl & Nightingale, got into debating, got into the *Gettysburgian*, finally became editor of it. We had a literary magazine. I think I started it: *Mercury*.

Birkner: Well, that started in the 19th century, but you probably. . .

Herman: I revived it, I think. We also had two sort of newspaper sheets that you just punched up on bulletin boards, promoting all kinds of causes: *The Blister* and *The Brass Tax*. But they were authentic. I mean, they had real staff, small staff, usually a secret staff.

Birkner: What was their purpose again?

Herman: Just to take up a cause and promote it or make observations about campus life, things that you wouldn't put in the *Gettysburgian*.

Birkner: This is fascinating. It's the first I've heard of it. Did you ever keep any copies of it?

Herman: I don't think so. I remember vaguely having a blank sheet with *Brass Tax* across the top, the heading, but. . .

Birkner: Do you think it lasted throughout your years at the College?

Herman: Oh yes, oh yes. They were here when, I think, I came in and they were still here when I left.

Birkner: So one was called *Brass Tax* and the other was *Blister*?

Herman: *Blister*.

Birkner: That's very interesting. Did you follow sports teams when you were at the College?

Herman: Yeah, I was very interested in watching all the games. I didn't play anything because as I said I didn't have any weight.

Birkner: But you went to the pep rallies and you went to the games.

Herman: Yes.

Birkner: Do you remember the story, and I don't know whether it was from your era or not, where if they beat the arch-rival Dickinson or F&M the kids would go around to the president's house and say they wanted Monday off, and they would chant, "Monday off!" and President Hanson would grant that dispensation if they reached a certain decibel level? That's a story that people have told me from the 30s, but I don't know whether that happened in the 20s.

Herman: I don't remember, not that. We may have had a day off after a really big game, because there was a lot of school spirit connected with those games, both here at home and away. I'm trying to remember what else: there were a lot of interfraternity games too, and I participated, I think, more in those than in anything else. I was never on a college team.

Birkner: You mentioned a minute ago, and I didn't follow up but I want to do that now, that you joined a fraternity. Tell me about how you joined and what you joined.

Herman: I joined Phi Sigma Kappa, but that was sort of following in my father's footsteps too, because father, when he was in college, together with a few friends, established a fraternity of their own, called the Druids. And the Druids had a house over here on (I think it's Washington Street) near old ATO house, next door to the Phi Psi.

Birkner: Right across from the Tiber.

Herman: There was a row of houses there. And they had the end house on this row; it was the Druid House. This was a group of very loyal, like-minded friends, who remained very loyal all their lives, about a half a dozen at that time [when it started]. And the Druids kept on going until in 1923, they became the Phi Sigma Kappa, joined a national fraternity. And my father became eventually the national chaplain, or whatever, of the national fraternity. And this national fraternity, Phi Sigma Kappa, bought the Eddie Plank house across from the old Gettysburg Academy, and it was there. I got only two bids originally, the Sigma Chi's and the Phi Sigma Kappa's. I think everybody assumed that I would go Phi Sigma Kappa anyway, which I did.

Birkner: And you did. Did you live in the house?

Herman: The next year I lived in the house. I started eating at the house immediately, left the boarding house and ate in the fraternity.

Birkner: Was it a fairly civilized experience, to be in a fraternity house in the 1920s?

Herman: Yeah, I would say so, in many respects. It was more civilized, probably, than it is today. There was no alcohol, there was no loud partying, at all. They had their parties, but on the other hand, this initiation stuff was pretty rough and nasty, or so I thought, even at that time. The hazing and running you around the battlefield in the middle of the night, you know, doing things like counting all the Johns on Pennsylvania monument, and that sort of nonsense. It wasn't brutal in any way and there was absolutely nothing in the way of alcohol or abuse connected with it. I think there was a little paddling going on, run you down a gauntlet or something. It wasn't too awful. . . We also, as pledges, had to do a lot of cleaning around the house and run errands for the sophomores especially. I looked up, as I said, in my freshman diary/journal; I was always running over there and cleaning out the bathroom or somebody's bedroom or I had to stand at attention and call out the minutes for 15 minutes from nine-fifteen to nine-thirty or something like that.

Birkner: So a lot of Mickey Mouse stuff.

Herman: Very Mickey Mouse. I had forgotten it all until I saw it in the diary.

Birkner: Well, I'm glad you consulted that, because that's useful for us to know. But once you got through that, I assume then the experience became more pleasurable.

Herman: Oh, it was very friendly, the whole thing, I had no trouble. The Phi Sigma Kappa chapter at that time was considered a very high quality bunch of guys.

Birkner: I think they're very proud of themselves still, and they have a man who's from the class of 1950 who's been their adviser for a long time – John Schwartz – and he keeps track of it.

Herman: He's been a wonderful help.

Birkner: Every fraternity should be so fortunate to have an adult take that much concern.

Herman: He's done a great job with that.

Birkner: I got a letter about a year or two ago from a graduate of the class of 1952 named *Howard Bowen, and he wrote me he went on to some distinguished career in higher education – he was a dean at an upstate New York college and president of Girard College in Philadelphia, and he was sort of disillusioned with the College in some ways in his later years and wrote me about this. But he felt that Phi Sigma Kappa was the one shining thing so he could still come to the campus and feel comfortable going to Phi Sigma Kappa.

Herman: Academically, we stood very high. We had some very high quality guys there during my time, and I learned a lot from them, because there was a certain amount of sophistication. I mean some of those fellows subscribed personally to literary magazines and to the best magazines, like *Harpers*, *Vanity Fair*.

Birkner: *New Yorker*, or whatever.

Herman: Yes, really good stuff. One of them became head of the English Department down at VPI later on.

Birkner: So it was a good experience, mixing up with these people.

Herman: Oh, I felt very happy about the whole Phi Sigma Kappa experience here.

Birkner: When you look back at those four years at the College, what kind of things would stand out to you? Is it the general opportunity to learn, to have growth experiences, or were there some specific things that happened to you that you can remember? Did you have any particular travail or problems at any time that you had to work through, or was it pretty smooth?

Herman: It was pretty smooth. I was working very hard, because as I said, I became the editor of the *Gettysburgian*, I played several leads in the Owl & Nightingale. Doc Arms was a great guy.

Birkner: He was the math professor who did theatre, right?

Herman: That's right.

Birkner: He just had a love for it.

Herman: He had a love and a total command. He knew the theatre. He knew math too. He was a bachelor, and he devoted himself heart and soul. He rewrote a bunch of plays. I played the lead in *Hamlet*. But he had edited it out so it was somewhat shorter, and he did that to other Shakespearean things too. But he did very well. And the productions were very well received.

Birkner: So you had good attendance at these productions.

Herman: Very good attendance, and the whole cast and all the supporting cast was top-notch guys. Everybody wanted to take an interest in it. Our only problem, of course, was finding enough girls to take the women's parts.

Birkner: Very few women on campus.

Herman: The only real problem I felt at that time was whether the College should go coed or not. And I felt at the time that I'd rather see it an all man's high quality college, unless they really brought the women in and made the necessary provision for them, because the women who came were just local girls who lived at home. They didn't really participate much in the life of the College, couldn't.

Birkner: Because as you say, there weren't many physical provisions for them.

Herman: There wasn't any, until the Academy dissolved itself.

Birkner: Although I gather, from talking to an alumna from the class of 1927, Jessica Weaver Smith, who was a local girl. . .

Herman: Yes, Jessica was excellent.

Birkner: She got to play basketball and do other activities.

Herman: Oh, they had their teams, but it was small potatoes for the girls. Marian Fisher was one of the stars of the basketball players, the daughter of a professor at the Seminary. Yeah, Jessica lived down in the original home of the College, did she tell you that?

Birkner: On High Street. Yeah, she did.

Herman: She's living over in Chambersburg.

Birkner: Yes. I believe she just passed away about a year ago. She was in her mid-nineties, I believe. She was a delightful lady. I interviewed her a couple of times; I liked her very much.

Herman: I took her out to a dance or two.

Birkner: She really was a sparkling personality. She did something nice for the College, I can't quite remember what, but she established some scholarship fund or something at the College in her later years. Now let me go back to Hanson for one more second. Did you get a sense of how your peers reacted to chapel or reacted to Hanson? We already mentioned that there wasn't any reality beyond the words, but I'm just curious if there's anything more to tell.

Herman: He overdid it. I think he did a little too much. He had a favorite saying, I can't remember. . .

Birkner: "If you pinch a Gettysburg man, you'll pinch a Christian gentleman?"

Herman: Well, that could be one of them, too, but that's not the one I'm thinking of. We went to Brua Chapel, and being young guys, you know, we resented anything we had to do and compulsory chapel we resented. And therefore we cut it as much as we could. The chapel services were all right, I guess, I don't remember there was anything special about them. We were even supposed to go, I think, to the College church for services on Sunday before there was a College chapel. I mean a built chapel. Well, now I can't say that. Brua Chapel was a chapel. But there was no chaplain in the College in my time. The most religious thing, I guess, was the YMCA, where the ministerial students met.

Birkner: So Hanson was really the person who [obscured].

Herman: Different people took charge at chapel. And it was a perfunctory thing, you know, it's bound to be, every day. And I forget how many minutes it was, it was some time in midmorning, I think. I wasn't rebellious, but there was resentment, and I think that was the general attitude towards chapel.

Birkner: Did you as students see Henry Hanson aside from chapel and that daily constitutional he took after lunch?

Herman: Well, he was open, as I remember. His office door, so to speak, anybody who wanted to knock and walk in, and ready to talk about anybody's problems. And he was always very friendly to me, because of his relationship to my father.

Birkner: So no other particular things. Now, when you were at college, would you say the quality of the education was appropriate to a good liberal arts college, that you got the kind of background you needed?

Herman: I definitely had the feeling, yes. I don't feel that I really missed a thing by not going to Yale or Harvard. In fact, I felt then and I feel now, that the small college has a great many advantages as long as the faculty is halfway decent and it's a matter of learning, not being taught, and if you can't find that out in college, well you're pretty well sunk, and I felt I learned a great deal. We had our objections to some of the faculty members, I guess, I'm sure we did. Guys like Kramer; he was Schwartz's predecessor at the Phi Sig house. We detested that man! He'd come in there, and he'd fuss around like little bitty biddy and criticize and pretend he was a big shot, with all his special interests. He was just like a maiden aunt. And his classes were the same way, classes in education. I never took an education class, although Charles Huber invited me to come and teach at the Academy my first year in seminary. I hadn't had a class in education in my life! (laughing)

Birkner: Did you as a college student go into town very much?

Herman: Oh, yes. Yeah, we would walk back and forth all the time, all over the place, and stop in at the snack bars and the restaurants, the drugstores, mostly Doc Schuman's drugstore was a favorite place because of milkshakes and that sort of thing. No bars. And a lot of movies. I was surprised at this personal diary, I went to movies almost two to three times a week, I think!

Birkner: There was one up on Baltimore Street, I guess, and there was one – the Majestic had opened just as you had got there.

Herman: Yeah, the Majestic was the one we went to. Originally, when I was a boy, we'd come here in the summer time for a month to stay with my grandparents, and there were two movies at that time, one of them on Baltimore Street, one on York Street, and then the Majestic opened near the hotel.

Birkner: In the mid-twenties, yeah.

Herman: That's where we had our commencement exercise.

Birkner: Do you happen to remember who your speaker was or anything like that? So, you commenced in 1930, right? You knew you were going to go on to the Seminary immediately thereafter for a year?

Herman: Well, I sort of accepted that idea. There was no other alternative that attracted me that much.

Birkner: What was your father's interaction with you about your postgraduate life? Did he put any pressure on you or in any way say, "I want you, Stewart, to do X or Y"?

Herman: No.

Birkner: He left it up to you.

Herman: Yes, he gave me complete freedom and never pressured me to do anything special. Even to come to college, I just sort of accepted that, I guess because I didn't know too much about other places, I don't know.

Birkner: So you went up to the hill, and how was that transition for you, going up to the hill?

Herman: Oh, no problem, it was just another educational institution, and I took courses pretty much as were prescribed, I think, at that time for ministerial students.

Birkner: What was the quality of your instruction there?

Herman: Oh, it was good. They had some excellent professors. A.R. Wentz, in history, I got an awful lot from him. And the president, the missionary from India, John Aberly and Raymond Stamm was New Testament. He had gone to the University of Chicago; he was one of the few that really had a university postgraduate – well, I can't say that – Wentz had done a lot of work in Germany. And he was very good in systematic theology. Herbert Alleman in Hebrew, wonderful man, with a lot of gracious stories. He loved to tell stories.

Birkner: Was Jacob Myers there too?

Herman: He was a graduate student, I think. Maybe he was an instructor; I didn't have any classes, no. Those were the main ones for me. I was mainly interested in systematics and history.

Birkner: So did you live in a dorm up there?

Herman: Oh, yes, I lived in Old Dorm there too. Now it's the Historical Society.

Birkner: In Schmucker Building.

Herman: Yeah.

Birkner: Did you have a roommate, or did you have your own room?

Herman: No, I had my own room. It was a very nice room, but several of us slept in the attic. We put our beds up there and had a wonderful time in the fresh air and used our rooms entirely for study purposes and just living quarters. There was a cot in the room, too, if I took an occasional nap, I guess.

Birkner: Now in those days, they didn't actually have a chapel at the Seminary. You had to go to church downtown, right?

Herman: Well, no, we had a chapel: the end of the building that's just been totally rebuilt.

Birkner: Valentine Hall?

Herman: Valentine Hall.

Birkner: They had a chapel in Valentine Hall?

Herman: At the end of that building, the oval end sticking out, that was our chapel.

Birkner: Oh, I see, okay.

Herman: It was also a lecture hall, could be used as a lecture hall, but it was chapel, always.

Birkner: I misunderstood, because I knew that a lot of the Seminary people went to the Christ Lutheran Church on Chambersburg Street.

Herman: Well, on Sundays.

Birkner: But you did have a chapel on the campus.

Herman: Yes, chapel on the campus and the library at one end of the building. Everything was in that building. Even a few students lived there.

Birkner: You're going to enjoy seeing the renovation of it.

Herman: Yeah, I haven't seen that yet.

Birkner: It's nice. Not fancy, but it's nice enough.

Herman: No, all we had was that Valentine Hall and the dormitory. There was no library. The refectory was there.

Birkner: Small class. But you must have had some Gettysburg friends also who went up to the hill, right? Because a fair number of Gettysburg grads would go on to the Seminary.

Herman: Oh, yes, a considerable number. I suppose in my class there must have been maybe half of the class was from the College.

Birkner: That can be good, and that can be bad, right? I mean, you can say you're getting tired of seeing the same people, but at the same time, you had good friends. You didn't mind it.

Herman: I didn't mind it at all, no, I think maybe I just sort of accepted that, I mean that – I didn't find any of the people particularly obnoxious. I selected some friends a bit more than others. At that time, of course there were practically no married students. There was one man who was married in my class in seminary. And we had a good time together. We had our touch football games, and all that sort of thing. Tennis.

Birkner: When did you come to the decision that you would not return for the second year immediately?

Herman: I don't know when I came to that decision, I don't know exactly why, I just had a feeling that I wasn't quite ready to commit myself fully to the ministry, and that I would take a year off. And I had the opportunity through the father of a friend of mine, to get a job on a freighter as an ordinary seaman to South America. And it was down in Buenos Aires that I just came to the conclusion I'd go back and complete the next year. But I never had a crisis decision at any moment in my life to do anything. As I've often said, "I never planned my life, I just planned my vacations."

Birkner: So you did the Buenos Aires thing, and then you came back to seminary.

Herman: Well, I went to England and toured all over England too. Most of the year was gone by the time I came back. I forget what all happened that year. And I also became very much interested in the idea of study in Europe. I didn't know what I'd do, whether to teach, or what would happen, eventually, and as a consequence, I was led, I hope by the Spirit, from one thing to another. Everywhere I've gone, it's been accidental, almost. I went to France on a scholarship and studied at the University of Strasbourg and liked that pretty much, so I decided to spend a year in Germany too and got a small scholarship and went to the University of Gottingen and stopped in Berlin on the way, to do some

extra German work, and got acquainted with the American Church in Berlin; and then they called me from the University of Gottingen, when the pastor at the American Church decided that the climate was too rough – he was an elderly, retired guy – he was going to Italy. He said, “Would you come over and take my place?” (laughing)

Birkner: Explain what the American Church in Berlin was.

Herman: It was an interdenominational church in the English language for Americans and any others there. It still is in existence.

Birkner: Was it for people who lived in Berlin, or was it for people in transit?

Herman: Temporarily, mostly. They were bankers, newspaper people, professors and students.

Birkner: But they showed up regularly for services.

Herman: Oh, yes.

Birkner: And you accepted that position.

Herman: Yeah.

Birkner: So, when did you get your MDiv, did you get that from the Seminary?

Herman: Yes, I got the MDiv from the Seminary.

Birkner: And then did you get another degree from France or from Germany?

Herman: I got from France the equivalent of a Master’s degree there, and I was working on my Doctor’s in Germany, but that’s when circumstances changed. We were getting closer and closer to war. I had shifted my studies from the University of Gottingen to Berlin, and I had finished everything, including my dissertation, but I came to the question: would I like to say that I had gotten my degree in Hitler’s Germany? I decided no, because a lot of those professors were Nazis. The war had already started, so I made my decision. “I’ll wait until the war is over; then I’ll come back and get my degree.”

Birkner: Circumstances usually don’t make that kind of thing possible.

Herman: After the war, Russians were there.

Birkner: Right. Now you were in Berlin you say in the mid- to late-thirties. You were literally there when the Germans invaded Poland?

Herman: Oh, yes.

Birkner: So, that must have been a time of high excitement in your. . .

Herman: Austria, Czechoslovakia, Norway, Denmark. . .

Birkner: You were there all during that. That must have been a time of high excitement in Germany. I mean, in the worst sense, I suppose, in that people were caught up in Fuhrer fever, right?

Herman: I never saw Germans get really excited about going to war. They were always cheering Hitler, mostly because they had to, I guess, I don't know how many. . .

Birkner: Well, you're not going to tell me that the German people didn't like Hitler in 1939.

Herman: A lot of them did. But a lot of them didn't.

Birkner: Yeah.

Herman: A lot of people like Bush, and a lot of them don't, right?

Birkner: Well, this was a different climate than the United States.

Herman: Oh, yes.

Birkner: It was a climate of totalitarianism.

Herman: Oh, totalitarian, no doubt about it. He had total command of communications and radio and television, all the press. You just couldn't say anything or do anything.

Birkner: Which leads me to ask you, what was it like as an American born and bred in our ways, to be in a society like that?

Herman: Oh, I didn't like it, of course.

Birkner: But I mean, did you feel restricted in terms of how you could express yourself?

Herman: Well, I had to be careful. I didn't stand up on the street corner and yell, "Down with Hitler!" but I don't think anybody who knew me regarded me as a Nazi.

Birkner: There's a nice story in an article about you, in which you were asked to say, "Heil Hitler." And you didn't do it.

Herman: I wasn't even asked to say that. What happened was, I had come out of the subway and got up on the street and noticed everybody was standing there very quietly. Hitler had marched into the Rhineland and there was to be a moment of silence. And I kept walking across here when everybody else was standing still. Eventually I stopped at the curb and these other people – I don't know whether they were saying "Heil Hitler", or whether they were raising their hands or not, but in any event, I was moving, and this guy stood right next to me and he hit me on the back.

[End of Tape 1 Side 1]

[Begin Tape 1 Side 2]

Herman continuing: He was standing still, as I walked up. He turned on me and hit me on the back, as I remember, shoulder, or something like that. I stopped because I was at the curb anyhow, and then the whistle sounded, or the bell rang or something happened. The moment of silence was over. So I turned on him, and I said, "What's your problem? I'm an American." He took off like that. That was the end of the incident. (laughing)

Birkner: Did you have any difficulties, though, as an American pastor in Berlin, in 1938-39?

Herman: No, not any real difficulties. They came and took me away to the police station once, but that was after – over here a bunch of German newspaper people, I think, had been picked up. I was on the list, along with several other Americans, to be picked up in case anything happened. It was a kind of tit-for-tat. And they took me to the police station and I said, "I think you people had better be careful. I happen to be a minister of the American Church, and this is going to make big headlines in the United States." A few minutes later, they let me go.

Birkner: You were bluffing them, of course.

Herman: No, I wasn't bluffing! My friends there, the American correspondents, they'd get word of this. . .

Birkner: And there would have been an international incident.

Herman: Sure there would have been! You know, they'd see an old white-haired American clergyman being mistreated by the Nazis. That would have made headlines. And there were Gestapo in listening to what I was saying on Sunday morning, I knew that.

Birkner: You knew that.

Herman: Sure. But I said what I wanted to say. I wasn't being political, though.

Birkner: Would I be right in thinking that your congregation would have diminished during 1939?

Herman: Oh, yes, they were gradually going home. It was dwindling.

Birkner: Could you communicate with your family back in the States without difficulty?

Herman: Yes, up until Pearl Harbor.

Birkner: You were in Germany through Pearl Harbor?

Herman: Yes, I was there.

Birkner: So Germany declares war on the United States. Is that the end of the line for you?

Herman: No, I was interned along with the embassy staff for six months, and then we were exchanged.

Birkner: I didn't know this. Where were you interned?

Herman: Bad Nauheim. It was a sort of summer hotel. It was okay.

Birkner: What could you do during that six months? How did you occupy your time?

Herman: Well, there were about a hundred or so people, and we just lived together as a community. We took what exercises we could, and we organized a so-called university and gave each other classes, that sort of thing. I was on the embassy staff because when a war broke out in 1939, the charge d'affaires asked me to come in and help out because they couldn't get any more staff when we took over the British and French interests. So I was on the staff for about two and a half years. At which time, I resigned my salary at the church because of the congregation dwindling away.

Birkner: And you worked for the American embassy. Now, did you know that there were going to be efforts to exchange you? Did you know anything?

Herman: Yeah, sure. Well, as much as we could know. There were negotiations constantly going on. George Kennon was in charge of those negotiations on our side. In the internment. Oh, yeah, I knew George very well.

Birkner: And how did it work? Can you remember the scene when the word came through that you would be exchanged? Did the Germans give you a hard time, or were they very efficient in helping you get back to the country?

Herman: They were proper. Because Germans were on this side under internment. Only they were at White Sulphur Springs.

Birkner: Well, let's just take a minute or two to wrap it up. I wanted to know what happened to you when you came back to the States.

Herman: Well, I started writing a book. Let's see. I was asked all over to lecture. Oh, I think the office – what became the World Council of Churches – they set me up on a

speaking tour across the country, and then I was invited to teach at Hamma Divinity School at Wittenberg University.

Birkner: Did you do it?

Herman: That was the second year. Yeah, I did that for a few months and then OSS called up. Wild Bill Donovan. And sort of drafted me for OSS. That shows I was a good Nazi, you understand.

Birkner: So you worked for the OSS during the war.

Herman: Yes.

Birkner: Where were you stationed?

Herman: In London.

Birkner: Wow! That's pretty exciting.

Herman: I got bombed in Berlin and I got bombed in London!

Birkner: Did you face some of those Nazi BU33 bombs?

Herman: Sure. Oh, yes. Dozens of them.

Birkner: But you got through it okay.

Herman: No. See? (laughs)

Birkner: Were you a single man during the war?

Herman: Yeah.

Birkner: So you married after World War II. Now you had to have married sometime between the end of the war and 1950, because I reckon your daughter must be about my age.

Herman: Yeah, 45.

Birkner: Where did you meet your wife?

Herman: At Cornell University on one of my speaking tours.

Birkner: And what were you speaking about?

Herman: Hitler, I guess, or Germany or something

Birkner: Was she a student at Cornell?

Herman: She was studying at Cornell, yeah.

Birkner: So you met your wife and courted her and got married.

Herman: Yeah.

Birkner: Now, with the war over, how were you making your living?

Herman: Well, I was invited to go back to Geneva on the staff of the World Council of Churches. Reconstruction. And then got into refugee resettlement.

Birkner: And you did that work.

Herman: Yes. This is stuff that goes on and on and on.

Birkner: This is quite a story. I know you don't have time to tell it all now, but I hope there'll be a part two. Did you know a man named Spurgeon Keeny, who was a Gettysburg alumnus, class of '14? He was involved in refugee work for UNESCO for many years, and he was a very distinguished alumnus of the College. In fact, he was a Rhodes scholar as a Gettysburg graduate. You didn't run into him.

Herman: No.

Birkner: So you traveled a lot in your life.

Herman: Yes, I was in charge of the Lutheran World Federation work in Latin America for about 10, 12 years.

Birkner: You've had quite an amazing career. Where were you living when Linda was born?

Herman: Geneva. She was born in Geneva. All our children were.

Birkner: Does that make them citizens of Switzerland?

Herman: No. Well, they could eventually apply, I think, but they were registered immediately as Americans.

Birkner: How many children did you have?

Herman: Four.

Birkner: Is ~~L~~inda the oldest?

Herman: No, she's the youngest.

Birkner: She's the youngest! So they were born in the late 40s.

Herman: She was born in '52, I think.

Birkner: She would have been very young going to college, because she graduated in '72.

Herman: That's about right. *[Actually, Lynda Herman was born in 1950. MSB]*

Birkner: Okay. So, final reflections. Have you had interaction with Gettysburg College on and off through your adult life?

Herman: Not as much as I'd liked to have had, but that's mostly because I've spent about 17 years in Europe, one way or another. And so I've just been out of. . .

Birkner: Have you written your memoirs?

Herman: No.

Birkner: Will you?

Herman: No, I don't think so.

Birkner: So maybe you're going to have to come back and tell me more on tape.

Herman: I've written a number of things. I will have the diaries; I have about 70 years worth of diaries.

Birkner: That's marvelous.

Herman: And I've written all kinds of articles, but not autobiographical.

Birkner: I hope when you go home, and insofar as you look through your old materials, if you ever have extra copies of your published articles and things, we'd love to have them to add to the collection. Anything that you can conveniently spare that relates to your life and experiences, we would be interested in, because you're a distinguished alum, and we're trying to build our collection around oral histories that we do of our distinguished alumni. We don't want to take anything that's dear and near to you, but if you had a second copy of an article you wrote, or something like that, that would be fantastic.

Herman: Well, do you have any old *Gettysburgians* from the time I was in college?

Birkner: We probably do; we have them right here.

Herman: I wrote a column for quite a while.

Birkner: That we would have. But I'm thinking in terms of the things you wrote as a professional.

Herman: And the Lutheran magazine carried articles of mine for several years from all parts of the world where I traveled.

Birkner: It's an amazing thing. Well, I think it's a wonderful squaring of the circle that that gentleman out there is here so you've got another generation of Hermans. David's out there, yeah. I'm going to quit now, so that you can have some freedom.

[End of Tape 1 Side 2]