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Gettysburg College

Michael J. Birkner
Gettysburg College

Interview Participants

Interviewee: Donald W. Hinrichs, Professor of Sociology & Dean of the College, Gettysburg College
Interviewer: Michael J. Birkner, Benjamin Franklin Professor of the Liberal Arts & Professor of History, Gettysburg College

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Interview with Donald W. Hinrichs, January 30, 2004

Description
Professor of Sociology and Dean of the College Donald W. Hinrichs was interviewed on January 30, 2004 as the first part of two interviews by Michael J. Birkner. During these interviews, he discusses his childhood in Baltimore, going to college in the 1960's, and his experience in the US Army during the Vietnam War. He also describes his time at Gettysburg, in particular the growth and development of the Sociology Department and his experience as a gay faculty member.

Length of Interview: 69 minutes

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Disciplines
Higher Education | Liberal Studies | Oral History | United States History
This is January 30, 2004, I’m Michael Birkner. I’m sitting in the fourth floor in a study room in Musselman library with Professor Donald Hinrichs, longtime faculty member at Gettysburg College. And we’re going to have the first of what will probably be several conversations about the life and career.

Birkner: Don, I understand you were born in Baltimore. Would you start by telling me a little bit about your family and growing up in Baltimore.

Hinrichs: Well, I was born in February of 1942, and my mother tells me that I was born during a blackout, because, of course, that was during World War II. But I don’t remember the event at all. My family lived in Baltimore City and where I spent the first six years of my life. And then before the first grade, my family decided that it was time to move to suburbia like many people did right at the beginning of the 1950s. So my father worked three jobs and bought this little house in suburban Baltimore, in a community called Pikesville. And so that’s where I grew up basically in this house that my mother lived in for about forty years.

Birkner: They purchased that around 1948?
Hinrichs: I think '50.


Hinrichs: My mother was a homemaker and she stayed at home and took care of things like the women did in those days. It was only after my brother and I went to school and got along in our education that she took a part time work in a school cafeteria not far from the house.

Birkner: First off, let me have your parents' names and then tell me what was your dad's main job?

Hinrichs: My mother's name is Laura Grandora. And her maiden was Bloominghower and my father's name was Grady William Henry. And my father was an assistant superintendent at the post office in Pikesville for the last part of his career.

Birkner: What was he doing at the time that he bought the house?

Hinrichs: He was working as a postal clerk in the main post office in downtown Baltimore. And then he did some miscellaneous, I think he was like a security guard at a couple of places.

Birkner: The good news about being a postal clerk was that it was a secure job for people who remembered the depression very well. And so even though he was not particularly well paid he could count on a pay check.
Hinrichs: Well, actually he always articulated that because he went to a very excellent high school. He went to the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, which was well-known for engineering courses, and he was really quite good in that, and in engineering. But he got out and started to work for Montgomery Ward and then he got a job with the post office. And you're right, the depression hit and he never left the post office. And it didn't matter what happened, it was a secure job. And he actually had a fairly good pension. The government has really good benefits although he just wasn't paid as well as other people who graduated with him.

Birkner: Yeah, I think that was a characteristic with people of that generation, my dad's generation as well. Security was maybe a higher priority for people than it would be for our generation or certainly the younger generation because they knew the depression and they knew the havoc that it had wreaked on people. As a boy, your first memories of growing up were mostly related to the life in Pikesville. Did you have a feeling that life was good as a kid growing up or did you have a feeling in any way of relative deprivation to anybody?

Hinrichs: No, I didn't because my memories are actually in the city when I was growing up. Because we lived in this little row house and it was a nice neighborhood. I had a
lot of friends and we ran around and played. And I actually can remember sitting at the back door looking at when it rained and smelling the rain. And then there was a women next door we called Aunt Jewell. She had an old icebox with ice on the top. And whenever you went over there, she would cut an orange and put sugar on it and we had a nice treat. And so I remember the layout of the house, I can remember my mother jumping on the chair when the mouse ran across the kitchen floor. We had a very good childhood. I think the only bad memory, I don’t think I remember it very much, but I was very attached to my mother and when she tried to get me to kindergarten I wouldn’t go. And she tried to sneak out, leave me in the principal’s office, and I just ran and grabbed her by the coat. [It was] rather traumatic for me.

Birkner: I think that’s probably a fairly common drama for kids, particularly in the pre-daycare era where kids are not use to going to school. How much younger than you is your brother?

Hinrichs: Four years.

Birkner: OK. Was your brother much a part of your life growing up? Did you play with him or did you ignore him?

Hinrichs: I think basically we were not close growing up although we lived, we were in the same room in bunk beds. It was a very small room. It was only a three bedroom house
and we always had grandparents living with us so we were always together. But I don't think we were very close. We are actually much closer now than we were then. But we didn't play together as I recall.

Birkner: And I have the same experience with my siblings, exactly. I had bunk beds with my brother and we were in a two bedroom house, a very tiny place, a bungalow in North Jersey. And some of the same experiences. What did you notice different about being in the suburbs, for example? Just for specifics, the neighborhood that you moved into, how close together were the homes?

Hinrichs: Well, it was a tremendous difference because we lived on the edge of what was called suburb park in Pikesville. And suburb park was an area of fairly large homes that wealthy people owned and some were hotels that people came out to in the summer and vacationed. They brought their horse and buggy and it was on a train line so they could come out on the train. And then this one road was built, actually not very far, maybe two miles in from one of the main roads that came out of Baltimore. And along it they started to build houses and I think we were probably in the second wave of just a block long housing development. So streets dead ended and behind me were just acres and acres and acres of wonderful woods and fields. We had a
pond back there that we called pickle, pickle and we used to go back and catch frogs and we would catch animals. I remember that we caught a raccoon and put him in a box and he stayed in there and by the next morning he was gone. And so there was a lot of wild life, a lot of playing in trees. It was a very good experience growing up. And it dramatically changed later because of gangs. Pikesville became an area into which the Jewish population moved. The Jewish population moved out from Baltimore City along major highways. And they moved into the area where I was living so eventually it became a very Jewish area and so there was a tremendous building behind us, primarily occupied by Jewish people.

Birkner: A little bit like the Barry Levenson movie I suppose. The life that you lived then was sort of a typical kid’s life. As you said being outdoors, playing with your pals. There were other kids I assume in the neighborhood? You went to local elementary schools, local public schools?

Hinrichs: Yes. There were four schools in the middle of the town which was one mile from my house in the middle of Pikesville. A great old school.

Birkner: Were you a good student?

Hinrichs: Oh yeah.
Birkner: By the time you're getting into middle school and high school, what kinds of things most interested you?

Hinrichs: Oh, I was a Boy Scout so I was very popular with Boy Scouts. I went to summer camps with the Boy Scouts, had weekly meetings. I was very involved in the church. Both the church that we grew up in and went to and then also a church which was in the center of Baltimore. That church was founded by my grandfather, my great grandfather. And so we stayed there. We went that every Sunday even though it was quite a drive. And then I went to a youth group at night in the neighborhood at a EUB church, Evangelical United Brethren. I was raised Lutheran, Christ Lutheran Church in Baltimore.

Birkner: If my memory serves me from a conversation with Carey Moore, the church that your family attended in the city was also the church that he was pastor of for at least a couple of years.

Hinrichs: Yeah, that church, it got smaller and smaller because the neighborhood changed. The church never had a great outreach into the neighborhood. And it became a poor neighborhood and many of the people who were the early members of the congregation moved away. And so we hung on but you could see it just deteriorating slightly and therefore it was very hard to have a full-time minister and
support them although Carey Moore was one of them. But eventually the church just had more part time help. But Carey Moore went up there. I loved Carey Moore because of his five children.

**Birkner:** Right. Now in 1952 Eisenhower was elected President. To what extent, I’m just curious, does your family talk about public affairs or pay any attention to Presidents and politicians and do you become interested in those kind of topics or to what extent did your family just stay political and not care about that kind of stuff?

**Hinrichs:** I think my great grandfather was the one who talked more politics than my father and my mother as I remember. First my interest came from school because I remember being on the team when Adlai Stevenson, I think he ran against Eisenhower? So I was on the Adlai Stevenson team, because my family was Democrat. But my grandfather always said I always vote Democratic because they were the ones that got me the job, got me my job for Aerometta. So he was the one that really.

**Birkner:** You, yourself were not particularly involved as a teenager in politics in ’56 or ’60?

**Hinrichs:** No.

**Birkner:** Did you take notice just to move ahead, you might have even been off to college by this point, but in the Fall
of 1960, you know, we saw a new star in the horizon, John Kennedy. To what extent did you pay attention to Kennedy and his message of let’s get America moving again.

**Hinrichs:** Well, I think I did, because I was in college at that time, ’60 to ’64.

**Birkner:** So you were a freshman in college when Jack Kennedy was running against Nixon. I don’t want to get too far ahead, however. In terms of high school, were there any memorable experiences for you in high school and was it called Pikesville High or did it have another name?

**Hinrichs:** It was called Milford Mill Senior High. I went to Pikesville Elementary School and then for the fifth and sixth grades we were trucked up about five miles to a little school, I forget where it was now, just for fifth and sixth grades. And then for the seventh grade, we went to Milford Mill, Milford Junior/Senior. That all changed as I got into the senior high school.

**Birkner:** Well, tell me about that: what mattered to you in high school?

**Hinrichs:** Well, I was a very good student and so I was in the honor society. I worked with the honor society. And I also had the opportunity to take certain advanced classes although whatever they call these classes today. And so I just really enjoyed those because I enjoyed writing and I
really enjoyed literature tremendously. I had a fifth grade teacher who loved poetry and she really got me interested in poetry.

**Birkner:** Were you active in any organizations as a high school student aside from the honor society?

**Hinrichs:** We didn’t have any that I can recall. The same way with sports. We didn’t have football. We just didn’t have it.

**Birkner:** That’s very unusual. Was it always assumed that Don Hinrichs would go to college and did you parents give you any advice or was this a matter of a stretch?

**Hinrichs:** They did. No. You know I don’t really remember. I just think it was something that I was expected that I would go to college. I was very lucky because my father actually paid for my college. Well, in those days it was only $1200 a year tuition or something. But the luck of it was that my great-grandmother dis-inherited my father’s mother, mother inherited a considerable amount of money from someone.

**Birkner:** Your father’s mother would have been your grandmother?

**Hinrichs:** My grandmother, right. She inherited you know like $100,000 or something kind of out of the blue from some distant relative, people they hardly knew. And so she was
very generous with that. And my father used that money to pay for my college.

**Birkner:** Now, did you know you would go to college in Maryland or did you decide that Western Maryland was the right place for you? How did that work?

**Hinrichs:** I didn’t know anything about college and I don’t think I even applied any place but Western Maryland College. And I got a $500 a year scholarship, a teacher’s scholarship from the state. And had a debate whether or not to take it. And decided not to take it and took rather a $200 scholarship from the college. It wasn’t until I actually accepted everything that the minister at the EUB church said that I should have gone to Albright; that was his alma mater and that’s where he liked to send people. But it was too late. I think it was Albright.

**Birkner:** Isn’t that the way it was back in those days? If you ran into somebody who had gone to a particular school, that was often the way you got steered. When I was going to college, I think that was true, it was certainly true for me.

**Hinrichs:** I don’t really know how I picked Western Maryland. I honestly don’t know. I don’t know where the name came from. Western Maryland was only about thirty-five miles from my home but in those days. The roads were two
lanes so it was like for me being a long, long way from home.

Birkner: [Laughs]

Hinrichs: I didn’t go home.

Birkner: Well, in the Fall of 1960, describe what you noticed about Western Maryland College when you went off. What were your perceptions physically of the place and what was you perception of being a college student?

Hinrichs: That’s a very good question. I don’t know what to say. I remember something that unnerved me and that was simply that I was walking down to the dormitory I guess within the first week-end and I saw a bunch of guys and they said I think “good afternoon” to me they were very nasty, you know like a little too polite or something. I felt like a freak in a way, so that was a learning experience.

Birkner: Was that because freshmen were supposed to be seen and not heard?

Hinrichs: I don’t really know. I don’t know.

Birkner: They would have classes with you. Let me just put it another way. When you got there would you say it was the right place for me or did you feel like this was not an easy transition for you?

Hinrichs: It wasn’t a hard transition. There were just little things there, you know, I had a strange roommate I
found out although I knew him from high school. But I didn’t know that he had a compulsion, he was possessive compulsive. And it really was like very strange. But, you know, I made friends there. I joined a fraternity. There were only four fraternities. I joined the one that was known primarily for its academic prowess and certainly not an athletic prowess. You know, I never thought that I would rather be someplace else. It never occurred to me. Plus at the time I had a girlfriend who was in Baltimore. We had been dating and so that was fairly pleasant.

Birkner: Now, you go to Western Maryland. How big a school is it in 1960 when you go there and how many people would have been in your entering class. More than 400? Less than 400?

Hinrichs: Three hundred. I think it was twelve hundred students, total at the time.

Birkner: So it was really a small college atmosphere at Western Maryland. Did you immediately or soon enough find a mentor?

Hinrichs: No, I found a mentor [but] I just don’t remember about all the details. I was thinking about going into the ministry partly because of my experiences at the church and that kind of thing. And for some reason I ventured into sociology. I can’t answer why. We had a religion
department but as I recall there were only two people and they were deathly dull. And so I ventured in and took sociology and then that just became my major. And I am still thinking about the relationship of that to religion as a career. So I did have a mentor there, Earl Griswold.

Birkner: Why don’t you just describe Earl Griswold a little bit.

Hinrichs: Earl was just a very nice man who always was concerned about students. He taught well. I wasn’t sure but I think he was independently wealthy. The rumor was that he didn’t get paid to teach there but I doubt that that was true. He owned a big dairy farm. He owned the farm with [inaudible]. He really liked community, urban, planning and actually planned the community. That was some years later. But one of the things that really impressed me was that he got involved in this. The college set up a program called SOS and I don’t think I know the name of that, what that meant anymore. But it basically was to establish libraries in foreign countries that needed libraries. And so they would collect books from publishers, donations and etc. And then a group of students would go and deliver them for him.

Birkner: You never did that, did you?
Hinrichs: I was involved in the SOS, I mean in the collection of things but I never went with them.

Birkner: Did Griswold actually ever single you out and just say "you’re good" or "you should be thinking about further education in sociology." How did this develop?

Hinrichs: I don’t think that he did. I just liked it.

Birkner: And did you go through four years at Western Maryland pretty much straight slide through and no big ups and downs?

Hinrichs: Right.

Birkner: Were you involved in any activities at Western Maryland?

Hinrichs: A lot. I was in the college choir, I think it was only one choir, the chapel choir if you will. I was in the fraternity. I was president of the fraternity. I worked with SOS. I was involved with the chapel a little bit. There were new programs. I remember we read a book. We’d read a book and there was a little panel discussion. I think it was For Christ Sake, is that one of them?

Birkner: I don’t know, but it could have been. What denomination was Western Maryland?

Hinrichs: It was Methodist-related until some years later.

Birkner: At the time, it was Methodist related?
Hinrichs: Right. *Honest To God*. I think the first book was *Honest To God* and the second was *For Christ Sake*. And so we had a little panel there. I can’t think of what else I did. I was elected to Delta Kappa which was the national men’s leadership society. And I was also in the Who’s Who of American Colleges and Universities for my senior year.

Birkner: You were getting positive feedback about your own academic ability which must have given you a sense of confidence that you could do more. How was that?

Hinrichs: I never failed in anything.

Birkner: Well, when we’re all looking back and I realize that this is now going on four decades ago or more, just how would you briefly characterize that four-year period in your life?

Hinrichs: Well, it was a time when I was able to develop intellectually. It was a time when I chose sociology as a career. I chose that as I did a senior thesis. It was a time when I developed my leadership skills. Had the chance to be a leader on campus which I never did in high school. It was a time when I really was able to do a lot of things and my girl friend came there. And we spent the last two years together there and would eventually be married after that. I took ROTC because I had to go into the army when it was all over and all of my classmates. We all decided we
would go in as lieutenants and not as privates. So we opted for ROTC, so that was the part I didn't like about that college. So it was a very, very good experience for me intellectually and from a leadership standpoint.

Birkner: Let me ask you something that you just said and push you on it. You mention you were a Democrat, that came out of the family, a very normal kind of thing. Would you say that during those four years you were a fairly conventional thinker but that you grew in some way more curious about certain things? More interested in certain things, whether it was urban life or John F. Kennedy's vision for the Peace Corps or anything like that. How do you see your own odyssey in terms of that four years of college? You mention self-consciousness you got from developing your leadership skills and being successful.

Hinrichs: I certainly think I became aware of politics more because of, you know, there was a lot of discussion of campus during those four years. There was some buses going down to Washington which I did not take for protesting, but I can't remember what they would protest.

Birkner: At that time it was probably civil rights or nuclear weapons.

Hinrichs: Might have been one or the other. And of course, I was very aware when Kennedy was assassinated.
Birkner: Where were you when Kennedy was assassinated? Were you in college?

Hinrichs: We came back from class and came up to my room and turned on television. The four of us lived in a little suite. And there it was.

Birkner: Pretty shocking.

Hinrichs: Yes. And so I was aware of that. So I do think I became more aware. I think in retrospect. You know colleges to me in those days were not like today. They were much more centered on campus. And studying abroad was not something that was done very, very rarely. And so I started to develop, I think, a more broader understanding. It was a homogeneous environment just like Gettysburg. It was very homogeneous, extremely. And you know, I began to think. I’m very liberal and sociologists are very liberal. I don’t know where it came from off hand, I’d have to think about that. I would say in retrospect though about the college. I have said this, that the college failed me in that it, there was no discussion of sexuality, it failed me.

Birkner: Really, if you had gone to virtually any denominational college, you could make that same statement.

Hinrichs: I know, I know, and you know there were no classes about sexuality. It was never talked about nothing was ever said. And another thing was you know, calling
people "fag." And there were a few people like that. It wasn’t until I came out as gay here in ’83 that I actually learned that I had classmates who were gay. There was a class reunion or something around ’83 or ’84 and we wrote something for the newsletter and so I wrote all of this little cryptic stuff about working with [inaudible] and [inaudible] and stuff like that. And I got this letter from this fraternity brother saying “I thought I was the only person who was gay on campus.” Nobody knew anybody. That failed me. That’s why I really am concerned about what happens with family because of the whole thing. As I said publicly in the video I made, I’m very glad I got married. I love my ex-wife, my wife. I love my children. I’m glad I had children. But I sure made a mess of their lives because I never knew what was going on. And then you go into the service and you regret it even more, come out and get married. That’s where the college failed me. It failed a lot of people.

Birkner: Your comments are valuable but it seems to me in some ways you may be too hard on the college because the culture failed you.

Hinrichs: Right.

Birkner: You think about where were homosexuals in terms of the American population in 1960, 1964 or 1966. Americans
hadn’t even acknowledged this. When I came to college in ’68 there was no gay student union. There was no notion of people being gay. It was still years away. So, you know, everybody is really kind of in the dark.

Hinrichs: Well, I can’t just blame the school, but that was the only place that it was a problem.

Birkner: Well, let me ask you this, did you make any friendships in the fraternity or elsewhere in the college that have remained lifelong friends forty years later?

Hinrichs: Yes, but only in the sense that we acknowledge one another and send cards occasionally and we meet once a year. There are eight of us that meet once a year.

Birkner: Do you meet on Western Maryland campus?

Hinrichs: No, we have dinner, each year someone picks a different place.

Birkner: Are they fraternity brothers or different range of people?

Hinrichs: One of them is a fraternity brother who lives in Hagerstown, he and his wife. He’s one that went to college there. The other is from southern Maryland and he was not a fraternity brother but we kind of lived together in this little suite. Another is a doctor. He’s down in Westminster now. He was not in my graduating class, but he
was in the fraternity. But he was a good friend of my wife’s.

Birkner: For the record, I’m not sure I ever asked you the name of the fraternity.

Hinrichs: Phi Alpha Alpha.

Birkner: Was it a national?

Hinrichs: No, there were no nationals. It’s now, if you can believe it, it is now SAE. Though I did go to a reunion two years ago.

Birkner: So, in terms of college, you were really in some ways, if you’ll forgive me on this, stero-typical because you were a smart kid who went to college. You took out of it what the average person might take out of college, maybe a little plus to it because you were smart. You had a girlfriend. You were in a frat. You were planning to go to the army. You were planning to get married.

Hinrichs: Right, pretty typical.

Birkner: Pretty typical. When you graduated in ’64, did you in fact have to go into the army?

Hinrichs: I enlisted.

Birkner: Where did you go? Where did Uncle Sam send you?

Hinrichs: Well, interestingly that year in ’64 they tried a new program because they needed people, I guess. I don’t
know when Viet Nam was starting around. As a matter of fact, I think maybe that was what the program was about.

Birkner: There were no real protests in '64 on Viet Nam. That started the year after. Because LBJ was basically putting down any notion that we were going to have a significant commitment to Viet Nam in '64.

Hinrichs: Well, at any rate, we all went into the army, all of my friends went in.

Birkner: So what kind of assignment?

Hinrichs: I was in the infantry.

Birkner: It doesn't sound fun. What did you have to do?

Hinrichs: It was horrible. I don't why I chose infantry. But that year they had a special program in that you didn't have to go to basic training. Usually they sent people from college to basic training for two or weeks down in North Carolina or something. But they sent me right into a unit in Ft. Arnold, Kansas as a Lieutenant.

Birkner: That must have been scary.

Hinrichs: I hated it. That was terrible.

Birkner: I mean you had these soldiers say, "What is this guy doing here, right?"

Hinrichs: Well, I felt that way even in ROTC because we had to go to Summer camp for a couple of weeks for leadership. I didn't know leadership. I really was not a leader. I
didn’t like doing conferences, you know. And I just didn’t have this “fall-in” and all of that kind of stuff. So I felt like I probably had the worst score. I just didn’t really get into it, but we went in the army none-the-less. I probably would have gone to Viet Nam except I did a stupid thing in that I jumped off of a personnel carrier while we were out in the field and I wrenched my knee. I was in the hospital for two months while this doctor fiddled and faddled to figure what was going on and so forth and so on. Anyway I had surgery and they wanted me, they actually were going to let me get out of the army and I said “No, I wouldn’t do that.” I never gave up on things, which was stupid. So I went and worked on the training section of the battalion and then they were sent to Viet Nam. So I then moved up to the General’s staff and worked in training.

**Birkner:** And that was based where?

**Hinrichs:** Ft. Riley, Texas.

**Birkner:** I know where Ft. Riley is. I’ve been there and so I know the environment, pretty rural. Not a lot to do but drink beer on week-ends I would imagine.

**Hinrichs:** I don’t think I even did that. I don’t know what I did.

**Birkner:** What were you thinking as you were in the army and know what you’re next steps would be?
Hinrichs: That I was going to go to graduate school.

Birkner: And what was your relationship with your girlfriend from college?

Hinrichs: We had married.

Birkner: She was continuing her education at Western Maryland while you were in the army?

Hinrichs: Yes, yes. So she graduated in '66 and I got out in '66.

Birkner: And that's interesting that you say that because I entered Gettysburg in '68 and I think I had you almost immediately as a teacher. So it didn't take you very long to get into a university graduate program.

Hinrichs: Those were strange days because I applied to the University of Maryland. I had no clue. I applied to the University of Maryland. And so I thought, I had everybody in the world writing letters for me. When I got there, I was accepted. They gave me money. Those were the days when they'd take anybody. They needed people. There was money and space. And so I was there from '66 to '68. My wife taught. We got married in '66 and my wife taught in Baltimore. I commuted up from Baltimore to Maryland and in '68 my degree was on its way. My master's degree was going to be completed and I thought that it was time to step out. You know, I was kind of sick of it. I didn't like Maryland
that much. And so I decided that it was time to do other things. And so I started to look at various jobs. I didn’t think I would get a teaching job and then I found out that a master’s degree in sociology is like a kiss of death if you try to get into business or something. So I decided I would apply to various places for a job. These days, you can’t even get on campus without a Ph.D. They were looking for people in ’68. And I had job interviews setup at Lenoir Rhyne, Keuka College in New York, Montgomery County Community College and Gettysburg College.

Birkner: Right.

Hinrichs: And I went to the interview at Montgomery County Community College and it was the worst interview, I mean it was my first and I think probably worst interview I’ve ever been on in my life. Even though I’ve been on other interviews for other things, it was frightening. And these people were nuts. They were a kooky group and they didn’t like me and I didn’t like them. And then I had these other interviews set up. I had this job at Gettysburg and the interview at Gettysburg and before any other interviews came up, Gettysburg called and offered me a job.

Birkner: They couldn’t have offered you a job within a day of being interviewed, could they?

Hinrichs: It was like three days later.
Birkner: Did the conference only run for three days or how did you have that sequence?

Hinrichs: What do you mean?

Birkner: I assume that you went to some meeting of sociologists in New York to do these interviews.

Hinrichs: No, it was here.

Birkner: You came on campus to Gettysburg for an interview. What you’re saying, you could have gone on campus to Keuka and other campuses.

Hinrichs: Yes, I interviewed at Keuka and Lenoir Rhyne at the convention.

Birkner: Well why don’t you describe who interviewed you at Gettysburg and what the interaction was.

Was Wade Hook chair of the department at that time?

Hinrichs: Yes. Esther Bloss was here and Wade Hook so I interviewed with them and there was this little methodologist. Funny I remember P.K. Geevarghese. I don’t know who the dean was. [Basil] Crapster, OK. I first talked to Crapster and then the big interview with President Hanson. He interviewed everybody. I think his office was in Glatfelter at that time. I remember walking in and sitting on his sofa and talking to him.

Birkner: Do you remember anything he specifically said to you?
Hinrichs: I really don’t. I really don’t remember what was said.

Birkner: What was your impression of Gettysburg through these individuals that you met?

Hinrichs: Well, I had actually had a good impression of Gettysburg before hand because of, you know, Carey Moore was here and I’d come up and he had showed me around. And actually somebody said “you should have considered Gettysburg instead of Western Maryland” way back when. But, you know, I didn’t because it was a Lutheran school and I didn’t know about it. You know I had very little impression. I’d only been at Western Maryland and I’d only been to the University of Maryland. And I’d never been on any other college campuses. So I came here and it was a nice college campus and everyone seemed to be fine. And they offered me the job.

Birkner: Well, is it at all unusual though even then for someone with just a flat out master’s degree and not in a Ph.D program to be offered a tenure track teaching job? Or was it a tenure track teaching job?

Hinrichs: It was a tenure track teaching job. And the same year that I got there, another guy came. He’s name was Larry Egelund, he was a Mormon. We were both in the same situation.
Birkner: Teaching sociology?

Hinrichs: Yeah.

Birkner: And were you told, if you can remember this, by way of Basil Crapster or the President that if you intended to stay at Gettysburg, you had to get a Ph.D.

Hinrichs: Wade Hook.

Birkner: He said to you "Don, if you want to stay here, you got to finish a Ph.D."

Hinrichs: Yes, that was one of the things he said and the other thing he said which was very, very strange and I haven’t quite figured this out. I really don’t remember this at all, but he had a conversation with me and he had a conversation with Larry Egelund. And the conversation basically wound up that one of us would have to leave. Well, we were both in the same field, the same situation, the degrees and things. And it just sounded, I mean I wasn’t sure what it meant. And no one ever said. Larry left.

Birkner: Well, how do you spell his last name.

Hinrichs: Egelund.

Birkner: Egelund.

Hinrichs: I think it was lund.

Birkner: Well we can check it with a catalog. That’s not a problem, just for the transcriptionist’s sake.
Hinrichs: He was the one who left and you know and then the college was very supportive in 1968. I came in '68 and the summer of '68 I applied to Maryland. I was so dumb. Honestly, I admit it, I was so stupid about all of this. I applied to Maryland and I don’t know what their problem was. They had a lot of problems down there. There were sexual harassment suits. I don’t know if they didn’t like me. They could never make the decision. So I said “to hell with them,” so I applied to Ohio State University. And I applied to Ohio State University because I heard that they were in the Big Ten and I thought that meant something academic. And I realize now that it doesn’t mean anything academic. But I didn’t know. So I applied to Ohio State and they accepted me and I started in the Summer of '68.

Birkner: I was going to ask you that question. Was the understanding that you would do your residency during Summers?

Hinrichs: Well, the only understanding was that I would be in a Ph.D program and move forward. And then I had to follow what they wanted to do.

Birkner: The Ph.D program was willing to let you, Ohio State.

Hinrichs: Well, I had to do a residency.

Birkner: So the residency could be done during summers?
Hinrichs: No, a year.

Birkner: And what year did you do that? It couldn't have been '68.

Hinrichs: '69, I think it was '70, '71.

Birkner: So you did a year. I would have had you either spring of '69 or the fall of '69 as my teacher.

Hinrichs: I left the Summer of '68 and I think, when were all these riots, were they in '68 or '69. Because the Summer of '69 that was the end of the riots. After Summer of '69 there were all these buildings with bullet holes in them and you know they had all sorts of problems out there. And then I think it was '70, '71 when I took a year of residency and my wife and daughter and we all went out there for a year. And I actually stayed another semester. Then I came back and wrote my dissertation and got my Ph.D in '72.

Birkner: Wow, that was pretty fast. Did the college make any aside from holding your job for you, what did the college do for you in terms of you going out there and paying your tuition?

Hinrichs: I had a grant from the Lutheran Church.

Birkner: The Lutheran Church helped pay your tuition?

Hinrichs: Yes. Well, actually living expenses because I had free tuition out there. I got grants and all out there.
Birkner: So what the Lutheran Church gave you enabled you to survive out there?

Hinrichs: What was it a $6000 grant that you then could pay $100 a month when you started teaching?

Birkner: So it was a form of a loan?

Hinrichs: Yeah. But you paid it back by teaching.

Birkner: Oh, I see. Wade Hook showed you that as long as you followed this regimen and moved toward the Ph.D there was not going to be a difficulty in terms of the college having a job for you when you came back. It was just a matter of you getting tenure, right? And that you would get on your own merit. They were not going to cut you off just because you went off to get a Ph.D. They wanted you to do this?

Hinrichs: Right. They were very supportive. The strange thing about this and I don’t remember all the details but I got tenure and in those days when you got tenure you weren’t necessarily promoted. And I think I was not promoted, it took another year in the system.

Birkner: That would have been uncommon. Well, you wouldn’t have gotten tenure probably until about 1975 or '76.

Hinrichs: Right. I had some other time in my head.

Birkner: Well, that’s all right. Well, we might as well start chronologically with the prior one which was the
teaching. What were your impressions coming to the Gettysburg College campus? It’s interesting that as I sit here with you, it’s strange thinking how many years ago it is that we came to Gettysburg College almost exactly the same time. I would have been a very raw freshman and you would have been a very young instructor. What were your impressions of the place coming in as a junior faculty member as you got your feet wet?

Hinrichs: Basically it was a good place to be. We had lot of friends and a lot of people had the same stage that we were with family and colleagues on campus. It was a good place to work. I liked the environment and Wade Hook was very nice and his family was very nice to us. And they had two little girls, three actually and we became close with them. And this was just a good place to be.

Birkner: Now given that they were building McCreary Hall when you came, where were you based actually?

Hinrichs: Weidensall.

Birkner: You were in Weidensall first. What floor of Weidensall were you on?

Hinrichs: Right off the main lobby. They had kind of built a little shack there for Wade. As you came off the main lobby, come up the first vestibule and turn right and there he was.
Birkner: Well, when I think of that though, I think that’s where Norman Richardson was.

Hinrichs: That’s where it was then. And then across from that I think it was like a double office. I think Larry [Egeland] was on the inside and I was on the outside.

Birkner: Was it a real office or was it a temporary office? I don’t know of any double office in that place. If you recall for many years, philosophy, Norman Richardson occupied the office that was just up the steps to the right. Across the hall from him was Dick Schubart and then Chan Coulter had an office which was, you turned right into the lobby. His was the first office on the left. This not a big problem because Norm Forness has a mind for this kind of thing. He would have been around there. He can straighten me out on that. I’m more interested in your impression of what’s going on on campus and your teaching and how you’re liking your classes that you’re teaching to the students and so forth. My memory is that Sociology was kind of a hot subject in the late sixties because we were all interested in social change, stratification, city life. All kinds of things having to do with the future of our society. So you didn’t have any lack of students, right?
Hinrichs: No, I can remember having fifty or sixty students in urban sociology. Having to teach in a lecture hall that was packed. All of those places were packed.

Birkner: But you had to do all the grading.

Hinrichs: Yeah, yeah. You're right, Sociology was very hot.

Birkner: I took two or three Sociology courses and all of them were big classes. It was interesting. It was more than what it would be like going to study German or Bible or something. What did you notice about this place? I guess you didn't have a huge frame of reference giving what you told me to compare Gettysburg with a more avant garde school. But you started in a solid place and you enjoyed your job, is that right?

Hinrichs: Right.

Birkner: Were there any students the first couple of years who impacted the college in a positive way or for that matter in a negative way?

Hinrichs: There were but I don't think I could call their names.

Birkner: Did you ever have student named Donna Osterheis Schaper?

Hinrichs: Donna Osterheis Schaper?

Birkner: She would have been a standout right?
Hinrichs: Yes, I remember her. She was a real challenge. Over the years there have been a lot of similar students. There are some that stand out but I can’t tell you when they did and things like that.

Birkner: Did you attend special events during those four years? My memory is also somewhat fuzzy but I do recall we had at least two moratoriums.

Hinrichs: Yes.

Birkner: We had events where John Loose spoke to a huge crowd in one of these moratoriums. Norm Richardson addressed a crowd in one of these moratoriums. I remember the time that President Hanson spoke. Were you there in the CUB when Tullio DeSantis pulled the plug on Hanson? Those were some interesting times.

Hinrichs: I remember those. I remember the faculty meeting that talked about you know this resolution against the war and stuff like that.

Birkner: Did you keep your mouth shut as a faculty member for those first few years or did you speak up?

Hinrichs: I would say shut. I was in awe of the people that were here Pickering and Crapster and Glatfelter and Mara. I mean those men were so articulate and so amazing to me.

Birkner: They were formidable.
Hinrichs: They were formidable. I didn’t speak up too much. It took awhile for me to get, you know when you’re in graduate school, first year, all these students. I was really running around.

Birkner: You had kids, at least one kid. You had tem, when? ’70, ’72?

Hinrichs: ’70, ’74 children, right so I mean it was really.

Birkner: How many kids do you have?

Hinrichs: Two.

Birkner: You have two kids, a boy and a girl?

Hinrichs: Yes.

Birkner: And girl’s older, OK. Was you wife a lab instructor in Bio?

Hinrichs: Yes. There was a lot things the college was very helpful on. She wanted to do some things and so they supported her non-faculty wise.

Birkner: Did she ultimately even become a high school teacher? And what school?

Hinrichs: Middle school.

Birkner: In which district?

Hinrichs: Here.

Birkner: Here, in Gettysburg. Does she still live in Gettysburg?

Hinrichs: Yes.
Birkner: So even though you've gone in different directions, you’re both still lifers here in Gettysburg.

Hinrichs: Yeah, but she's on her way out. I think she's going to retire next year and her husband's retiring this year and they’re moving down to the ocean.

Birkner: I see. And you’re moving out to Montreal.

Hinrichs: So there's nobody here anymore for me. No one except my brother.

Birkner: Now, about Ohio State, how would you describe your experience there?

Hinrichs: It was great. It was really great. It was just intellectually very interesting. I don’t know it was just, I liked the faculty members I had. They were interesting. Much different than I thought Maryland was. Maryland just seemed so quiet, so low key, so matter of fact. And Ohio State was just different. Plus there was a lot going on that campus. There were a lot of protests like, remember the gay and lesbian alliance. They were huge. They had a mock wedding one day on campus. I mean I just all of sudden was confronted with these people walking around campus. And the campus was absolutely gorgeous. I was teaching an introductory sociology course there.

Birkner: To large classes?

Hinrichs: Yes.
Birkner: And that again would have been at a time when people were really into Sociology, right, in the early seventies. Did you know your mind about what you really wanted to sink your teeth into intellectually? Did you know it by then by being at Ohio State?

Hinrichs: What I studied at Ohio State was what I was asked to teach here. Remember I came out of graduate school with a master’s degree. And I had, the focus was primarily urban and community. So I had several courses in urban community and then of course some methods courses and a methods course in theory. And I think that’s about it. I came here and they needed me to teach criminology and I liked criminology a lot. But I had gotten that from Western Maryland. And actually when I first came here I taught theory. No one could teach theory like Wade taught theory, but I did teach theory.

Birkner: Why do you say no one could teach theory like Wade?

Hinrichs: Wade was just incredible.

Birkner: Why, how?

Hinrichs: He knew theory. I think he had a photographic memory. I honestly believe he did.

Birkner: You think he was a smart guy?
Hinrichs: He could go around the class one time and know every student's name from then on.

Birkner: He always struck me as so southern in both the best and worst sense. The best sense being he was a very cultured, kindly person, but he was so slow. I came from North Jersey and I found it difficult listening to him talk. He didn't talk fast enough for me.

Hinrichs: Yeah.

Birkner: Did the students like him? I didn't have him for class.

Hinrichs: The students totally respected him, even though some were bored.

Birkner: Seriously.

Hinrichs: Seriously. He had a following. And you know, if they walked in ten years later, he knew who they were. He was incredible.

Birkner: So he sort of represented that one kind of an idea of a slow liberal arts college professor that the person who really cares about you the individual. And who is a lifelong model for them.

Hinrichs: Right. And also he was smart. [inaudible] He could remember anything.

Birkner: And like most of the faculty at the college at that time, he didn't do scholarship.
Hinrichs: Correct.

Birkner: It wasn’t expected. Did anyone say anything to you? You were supposed to get a Ph.D but they didn’t say you had to publish two or three articles.

Hinrichs: I guess, I guess. I’m sure it was early on the career following the assistant professorship. You know, they wanted to wait a year and then, anyway. But now and then even for the full professor, it wasn’t that dramatic. I had a sabbatical. I wrote an article. I’m not a scholar, not much of a scholar. Things changed under David Potts and Charles Glassick. I don’t know who caused it. Maybe the way it was handled. You know, it caused a lot of us, I think, to be a little unnerved by that. I never got penalized. I was never penalized here because of my teaching. And plus the department chair never penalized you. So, I mean, I feel like I’ve done my job for Gettysburg College but yet [inaudible]. And Wade could have done scholarship. He just didn’t. He could have been that kind of guy. He did a lot of things for the church. Very involved with the church.

Birkner: What you are saying, though, the composite portrait here is that this person was an asset to the place.
Hinrichs: Oh I think Wade was a real asset to the place. David Potts, he was a authoritarian. There was no democracy.

Birkner: He didn’t ask for a show of hands.

Hinrichs: No, he decided what the rule would be. What would happen. On top of that, he got very angry with me as the years went on as I was working up at the provost’s office. He didn’t call me up for a year and then he called me back and he just thought that I was destroying the department. He and I really had some battles in the meetings. But I was tired of taking crap. That friction between him and me actually caused a really good faculty member to leave. That was Jeff Sobel, who was an excellent [scholar]. Jeff and I worked on a paper together. We researched together, but he didn’t like the friction. You know, Wade caused some problems every year. He was called to task for harassment by Karen Dutterer. Karen Dutterer was here for a year or two. I think for one year or something and then applied for a tenure track position and Wade just wouldn’t hear of it. And she claimed that it was because he had not liked her because she was a woman. And he said it was because she really wasn’t qualified.

Birkner: That’s not the same thing as harassment though.

Hinrichs: Not harassment, but discrimination.
Birkner: He wasn’t anti-women though, was he? You’re shaking you head in a way that you’re not sure.

Hinrich: Right. Not anti-women, it’s more. When he talked with an associate’s family, it was a practical guide on how to be successfully married. It wasn’t really Sociology.

Birkner: From a patriarchal standpoint.

Hinrichs: Probably, probably. But I don know whether Karen Dutterer was in fact qualified.

Birkner: Well, did she have a Ph.D?

Hinrichs: She did but it was the areas that was the question. She married a real tall black fellow in the economics department.

Birkner: Wynton Griffiths?

Hinrichs: Yeah. They are both now at Bucknell. Another time was when we were trying to decide on a candidate for a job. [inaudible] Three of us thought this guy was perfect and Wade didn’t like him. And so we actually had a meeting with Len Holder.

Birkner: Len Holder was Dean. We have to date this then 1975 to 1979 because that’s when Holder would have been the Dean.

Hinrichs: Well Wade was chair for ten years ’68 to ’78.
Birkner: So it would have been then between '75 and '78 that that happened. So there were positives and negatives to Wade Hook's leadership.

Hinrichs: He got angry with me when I got divorced. And I don't think homosexuality was right at the top of his hit parade.

Birkner: But it does sound like whether you had remained married or not that there would have been some tensions because you're willing to serve the institution.

Hinrichs: There were definite tensions.

Birkner: Now, in terms of the department. When I came to Gettysburg College, if I'm not mistaken, Anthropology was part of Sociology. And there was a somewhat eccentric woman by the name Deborah Pusay in the department teaching anthropology. Can you say anything about that?

Hinrichs: Oh, my gosh. She was a character. Students loved her.

Birkner: She was a good teacher?

Hinrichs: She was going to get her Ph.D. I think she was trying to decipher hieroglyphics, as I recall. She couldn't get it done. But what really happened was some of her antics.

Birkner: Didn't it involve a chicken?
Hinrichs: Yeah. Well, there were several things. One male student said that she invited him to her apartment. [inaudible] And she was lying on the bed. And then this chicken that got killed in the square. And then went into the bathtub or something and then a drinking ceremony. And she was let go. You may not know this but she stayed in town.

Birkner: No, I did not know that.

Hinrichs: I did not know either. You know who told me, Dick Bort because he would take her to Quaker meetings. And she just died about three years ago. She lived in the hotel apparently.

Birkner: You know who else did? I don’t know if you ever met this person because you were away about the time she might have left. I had a French teacher named Michelle Berterand who lived at the Gettysburg Hotel. A single woman, French woman, wonderfully cultivated, not a good teacher. Had kind of tristesse about her that always intrigued me. And actually I got to know her a little bit because I went to France for five weeks as part of the class she taught. But there were these people who had set up shop in the hotel.

Hinrichs: Well, Pusay was there, I think living in poverty. I mean, she never worked.
Birkner: She never worked?

Hinrichs: After she left the college.

Birkner: So she had a master’s degree in Anthropology but never finished a Ph.D. And what happened to her position when she was let go? Is that when they hired Frank Loveland?

Hinrichs: I believe so. That’s probably true.

Birkner: So Frank would have been a full member of your department working under Wade Hook’s chairmanship, right?

Hinrichs: Correct.

Birkner: How did Frank fit in to the whole scheme?

Hinrichs: Well, he got tenure. And probably shouldn’t have.

Birkner: On what grounds?

Hinrichs: On the grounds that he was always late to class, always. Played all these old games.

Birkner: What do you mean by old games?

Hinrichs: Oh, he was too sick to come one day and he couldn’t come into work, too sick. And so on my way home I stopped in the grocery store and there he was. He and I had battle after battle over his lateness. Didn’t matter what time the class starts. Could have been two in the afternoon.
Birkner: He just was late. Well, did it bother the students?

Hinrichs: I don't know if students ever get bothered by that. I don't know, it didn't seem to bother them too much. They kind of liked him, I guess. I mean there always a debate on whether he was better or his wife was better when she was applying for the job. And Frank would always, you know, he would smoke cigars in the office. He was told not to smoke. He had very bad social graces.

Birkner: In a small college like this you do get feedback from students and colleagues. What were the feedback you were getting about him? I'm assuming you did not attend each other's classes.

Hinrichs: A little bit, a little bit. I don't remember though. I mean I think the student evaluations were OK. But, you know, we could see, we could see what he was. He would show the same film all the time. Then he would leave the room while the film was going on. And they're not going to think it's important if you are not there. And he'd take off to go the baseball game, the first game of the season. He would really kind of abuse other faculty members, particularly young females.

Birkner: Abuse then in the sense of giving them a hard time about their teaching or what?
Hinrichs: Oh, you know, "Why don't you teach my class today" or "Why don't you do this." They actually had to warn them, actually warned them, I think it was, "Do not accept any requests from Frank, do not."

Birkner: So they overlapped at some point?

Hinrichs: Yes, I think so. I think that's who it was.

Birkner: You know, he was always, you know, a little unusual.

Hinrichs: Yeah, but you know.

Birkner: It isn't something that goes automatically with the anthropologists, is it?

Hinrichs: And I got rubbed the wrong way because he had a party one time and he invited people over and I said, "Well, can I bring my partner over?" And he said, "I didn't know what to do about that." And I said, "You invited him and her, you invited him and his wife, right?" I didn't go. I mean he had very bad social manners.

Birkner: When I was a student at Gettysburg, a fellow named Ted Tannenbaum taught at the college. What do you remember about Ted Tannenbaum? Did you help hire him?

Hinrichs: Yes, probably. Ted was hired. He came as methodologist. He was here the same time as Paul Kyle. Kyle left [inaudible] because he didn't like all the commotion in the department. But Ted Tannenbaum, he was let
go because he didn’t get his degree. And that forced him to
get his degree and he went to Glassboro State College in New
Jersey. Unfortunately, or fortunately, he just didn’t fit
in because he was not very gentile. He cussed and cussed in
class, in meetings and everything else. And he was rough
around the edges. Unfortunately, he might have become a
person we needed eventually, but at the time it just seemed
like he was not a good fit.

**Birkner:** It seems like a total opposite of where you’re
going.

**Hinrichs:** Yeah, well, that would be true, yes. Definitely.

**Birkner:** New York, Jewish, hard assed, profane. That
wouldn’t have been Wade Hook.

**Hinrichs:** No, and it wasn’t me either.

**Birkner:** How long did Tannenbaum last? I had him for a
class. I liked him. Although, what happened in the class I
had with him, it was very distinctive from almost any class
I had with anybody in that I loved it the first half of the
semester. And then it was like he lost it the last half of
the semester. He was just almost non-functional. And I
asked somebody about this later. I told them the story in
more detail than I’m telling you and they said “that was the
semester that he was going through his divorce.” And he was
just an emotional wreck by the end. So that would explain a
little bit why he lost momentum in class. But actually, the first half of the semester which was on social stratification, I thought was quite good. And he was very much in command of the class, but then he didn’t remain that way.

Hinrichs: I don’t know how long he was here. I know he didn’t get tenure.

Birkner: And then you said he went on to Glassboro. Well, let’s just round out about Tannenbaum and then I’ll shut this off. What were your personal relations with Tannenbaum?

Hinrichs: None.

Birkner: Just colleagues.

Hinrichs: Right.

Birkner: And then of course you were focused at this era on getting a Ph.D. . . . When you and your family were getting ready to go to Ohio State, were you certain in your mind you would come back to Gettysburg or were going to look once you finished your work at Ohio State?

Hinrichs: Well, I was certain I would come back. We had a house here.

Birkner: So you were comfortable at Gettysburg?

Hinrichs: Yes.
Birkner: Well, I think that’s good for today, Don. If you’re willing, we will do another session.

Hinrichs: Sure, that’s fine. I’m afraid I couldn’t answer many of your questions.

Birkner: You did fine. It was enjoyable.

Hinrichs: I had worse trouble with students who were really picking on things I did not have enough detail on.

Birkner: Well, students sometimes expect things that aren’t realistic. I very glad we talked and it was a lot of fun and what we’ll do in a few weeks if you’re willing, we’ll continue.

Hinrichs: No problem.