Oral History

Interviewer: Dr. Daniel Doyle
Interviewee: Dr. William Homisak
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Dr. Doyle: It's a pleasure to be talking with Dr. William Homisak, who is one of the individuals very instrumental in the formation of Williamsport Technical Institute and the Williamsport Area Community College, uh. Bill, since coming to Williamsport in 1948 and since, and being hired by the Williamsport School District in 1949, you've held seventeen different positions at the Williamsport Technical Institute and the Williamsport Area Community College. What was your first position?

Dr. Homisak: My first position when I came here, out of the service, was to teach adult distributive education classes. And that was basically where we had the, uh, men, mainly, come into school in the mornings — learning salesmanship, merchandise information, advertising, and so on. And then in the afternoon they would be working out in the different stores and, and areas.

Dr. Doyle: What were the background of these students who took this distributive ed.?

Dr. Homisak: The background of these students was that they were mainly — a good number of them were — veterans, and, uh, they came in, uh, right after they got discharged and under the G.I. Bill; it was a brilliant incentive for them to come to school. So that was basically the majority background at that time.

Dr. Doyle: And were there particular businesses that had an interest in this relationship with the [Williamsport] Technical Institute?

Dr. Homisak: Uh, we were very fortunate. In fact, uh, myself, there were four of us as instructors, were very well, uh, received by the different merchants in town. And then they, uh, were very cooperative in accepting — or having our students work for them. They also paid them what would be maybe the standard wage, so that was a real incentive for these fellows to go to work.

Dr. Doyle: You said the G.I. Bill played a role. Uh, could you talk about that?

Dr. Homisak: Oh, yes. In other words, the background at that time, in 1944, the federal government, uh, brought out the GI Bill; I forget the exact term. And what it did, it paid a good portion of your tuition — fact, I'd say, all of it. And it also gave you a weekly stipend, uh, to live from, live off of. Uh, the exact amount of the weekly stipend might have been — and I'm guesstimating now because I happened to graduate at Bloomsburg

University, under that — would have been about $25.00, probably, I don't know whether it's a week, or a month, so. Basically, there was a stipend they paid you.

Dr. Doyle: Um, were there other programs like this besides this business orientation that were doing this: classes and then internship or co-op?

Dr. Homisak: Basically, with the Tech. [Williamsport Technical Institute], uh, any opportunity that the students, or if we could give them the opportunity for them to go out and work with their training. And we found that industry was very interested in having our — not only our graduates, but our students — as apprentice because, basically, if they could recruit the student, and, uh, see how he's performing, then they had a ready employer, er, employee. So, it worked out very well that way.

Dr. Doyle: The WTI [Williamsport Technical Institute] got national reputation because of this, so-called, what was referred to as the Williamsport Plan. Is that correct?

Dr. Homisak: Yes. They got national — in fact, I just read something about, uh, I think it was Dr. Parkes speaking to someone in Chicago. And the person, uh, whoever he was, from Chicago said, "My gosh, if we could do what Williamsport is doing, uh, with such a small town," he said, "We'd be able to employ a million people in the Chicago area." So, it was well known, and of course, Dr. Parkes was the kind of a spark, uh, that he not only, uh, influenced the national educational system, vocational, but he also extended himself to the, uh, Panama and, uh, Latin America areas.

Dr. Doyle: Dr. Parkes was the founding director of the Williamsport Technical Institute.

Dr. Homisak: Right, he —

Dr. Doyle: We're going to talk about him later, because I know —

Dr. Homisak: What was his, what?

Dr. Doyle: We're going to talk about him later —

Dr. Homisak: Yes, okay.

Dr. Doyle: — because I know you had a close relationship with him.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: Uh, earlier in your career, you were also responsible for business education at both the Williamsport High School and the Williamsport Technical Institute.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: Uh, what was the emphasis of that curriculum, at the WTI?
Page Break**Dr. Homisak:** Okay. When they came to the Tech., what we tried to do was to give them a real foundation to be employed. Uh, I might say, it was a little more advanced than the high school level. On the high school level, this was, you might say, entrance level. And, of course, some of these students did a very good job, and of course, were employable right out of high school. The — on a college or tech. level, these people were both men and women, who wanted to, uh, further their career or start out from scratch. And, uh, the ultimate goal for us, at the technical school, was to get them prepared for a job. And as it was quoted someplace in my reading: we said that they have not graduated until they could get a job. (*laughs)* So, you could see the, uh, opportunity there.

Dr. Doyle: My understanding is Dr. Parkes particularly stressed the importance of getting, the students getting a job, and pushed — Dr. Parkes stressed that idea to, to the faculty, that they had to help, help the students find jobs. Did you have to help students find jobs?

Dr. Homisak: Uh, yes. That was, for example — now I'm deviating a little bit — when I was coordinator of distributive ed., uh, my job was, not only to do the training, but to go to the different businesses and ask them to employ whom I thought might have been a good candidate. And they were very, very cooperative. Uh, later on, when I talk about experiences, I found that when we were working — both, at that time, it wasn't the Chamber of Commerce, it was the Merchant's Bureau, and the various stores — these people were happy to have us work with them. Uh, fact, I found that in dealing with these managers particularly, we become very close friends. And they felt that if you made a recommendation to them, you were getting, they were getting, a good, solid person.

Dr. Doyle: One of your personal strengths was that you had close ties with the business community.

Dr. Homisak: Yeah.

Dr. Doyle: And how did you develop those close ties?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, uh, probably, uh, I'm smiling, because sometimes people would say, "How'd you get to know that guy?" And you'd normally go in and you'd tell 'em who you are and what you're doing. And you sold yourself, and you also sold your program, and then got them to agree, "Yes, I'll give that a try." And I found that, uh, in *(unintelligible)* having two distributive education programs: one was the high school, one was the college, er, technical. On the high school level, uh, some of these fellas were hired right out of high school, and eventually became store owners and managers. Uh, the technicals, too, the same way those graduates — of course, they were, uh, pretty well grounded, uh, knew what they wanted, and so they also were very successful. But, with

the high school students, the merchants took ‘em, and they could train them right to whatever that particular business needed. Uh, we gave ‘em the basics and they went from there.

Dr. Doyle: At this point, when the Williamsport Technical Institute, technically, was part of the Williamsport School District.

Dr. Homisak: Correct.

Dr. Doyle: Correct? Was there ways in which students could move, upon graduation from the high school, to take advanced study at the Technical Institute?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, uh, if we’re talking about the high school D.E. [distributive education] program, they took English, math, history, whatever was required in the academic field; and then I had them in the morning, teaching the salesmanship, and so on. They probably had a period in the morning where they were taking the English, or probably, uh, civics or whatever. Uh, so basically, they were qualified to graduate from high school. And they got credit for their store training, and — in other words, I’m saying, the classes I offered them in the morning.

Dr. Doyle: Did any of the students, upon graduation from the high school, then take classes with W.T.I.?

Dr. Homisak: Quite a few. This would be particularly in the trades, where these fellas would take, uh, let’s say, machine shop. But, in order to become a machinist, and really become a technician, as, per se, they would need more training. So, they would transfer from the high school vocational program to the Tech. And some of ‘em went right out and had a job immediately from the high school program. But we did have a lot coming back.

Dr. Doyle: You talked about your relationship finding students, uh, in distributive education employment in business. Was that confined, here, to Lycoming County, or did it extend beyond this area?

Dr. Homisak: Well, basically, with distributive ed., and because the close proximity of employment, they were pretty much confined to this area. However, on a college — er, excuse me, I keep bringing college — the technical level, these people would be from all over. And most of ‘em would be living within the city, or within the proximity here, and they would then be able to come, as adults, and uh, from wherever. So, it was a matter of high school was pretty much confined, but the others were from any place in the United — any place in the state, or United States, as far as that’s concerned.

Dr. Doyle: Do you recall, as the Williamsport, as the Technical Institute became famous because of the Williamsport Plan, do you recall students coming from outside of Pennsylvania — maybe because of this publicity?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, from beyond?

Dr. Doyle: Pennsylvania.

Dr. Homisak: Pennsylvania. At one time — and I'm again guessing about the time, about 1951 or so — I remember hosting approximately forty-two foreign students from Iran, Iraq, and so on. And it was kind of interesting, because, uh, we happened to be, I think, at the hotel or something, at a banquet. And it was interesting to observe our problems we have today in history: Iraq, Iranian, and so on. Well, these two guys would actually begin to argue amongst themselves: uh, the political argument. And so, we did have 'em. For example, at one time I had a student who was from Africa. So — and most of these students were people of means. They might have been a sheik, or, uh, a government, uh, person sending his sons or daughters, mostly sons, here to get an idea, get an education. And I'll just expound on that a little bit. The fellow from Africa, he, when I was working with him, he said, "I'm here to find out how to make bricks — more than one at a time." I said, "That's simple: all you have to do is, we'll make a mold, with perhaps the size of eight bricks, and you can make eight at one time, instead of one." He said, "But my people won't buy that." So, it was interesting, the backgrounds of the people you had and you dealt with. Very appreciative. But it was a nice experience.

Dr. Doyle: So, it was a cultural uh, uh, change.

Dr. Homisak: *(overlapping)* Culture, right.

Dr. Doyle: Right.

Dr. Homisak: Culture —

Dr. Doyle: And you were learning as well as the student, then.

Dr. Homisak: Pardon?

Dr. Doyle: It sounds like you were learning as well as the students.

Dr. Homisak: *(laughs)* Oh, yeah, right. *(laughs)* Very much so.

Dr. Doyle: Uh, where did you teach the classes that were offered for W.T.I.? What facilities were used?

Dr. Homisak: WTI? I taught 'em at the, uh, old car barn. *(laughs)* Basically, that's what we knew it as. I think it was Unit 6 or something — but the car barn. And, um, I was on a second floor, and the, that would have been big places where, as the cars came in, the *(stammering)* — oh, I wanted to just say, streetcars came in. The upper level was probably with the windows, where they could see what was going on. I had my classes there, and I had one particular classroom that must have been about, oh, maybe 40' by 40' or so, all the windows, and, uh, had one little sink — I'm explaining *(laughs)* the conditions — one little sink so students could come in, and after using the mimeograph or ditto machine, could wash their hands. Uh, and inside that, there were tables and chairs that, again, we made, people made in the carpentry shop, and/or the machine shop so that, basically, we were self-sufficient in what we needed.

Dr. Doyle: And this, uh, car barn that you referred to was the, uh, storage and work shed for the Williamsport trolley system.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: Located on, on Third Street?

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: Essentially, at this point, is a parking lot for the college? Right?

Dr. Homisak: Yup.

Dr. Doyle: Um, were there other places that you taught in that maybe were even more challenging than that?

Dr. Homisak: Well, um I, I could honestly say, when — probably we'll get to it later — at one time I had four offices *(chuckles)*, so I bounced from one place to another. But my, that second floor was a challenge anyplace. There were a couple of small, um, classrooms, but they were all open as far as visibility. And, um, so basically, ah, I hate to use the term primitive, but we were very resourceful to be able to accommodate what needed to be done.

Dr. Doyle: And that resourcefulness was, um, sort of a hallmark of the WTI, as I understand.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: Can you think of other major examples of the, um, particularly with Dr. Parkes' influence of sort of this "can do" philosophy that he had?

Dr. Homisak: Uh, Dr. Parkes, that is?

Dr. Doyle: Well, or your experiences at WTI where you "made do."

Dr. Homisak: Right. Basically, ah, if there was anything you needed, or you suggested — *(laughs)* finances were very difficult — but basically, you were creative. If I wanted, let's say, a particular machine, typewriter, Dr. Parkes would say, *(laughing)* "There's a — our, uh, military surplus store down in Harrisburg. You may want to go down and check 'em out." And I remember going out, and um, coming back with rubber boots, typewriters, equipment. And one of the very exciting experiences is Clyde Brass and I were going to Philadelphia with a tractor-trailer, uh, to bring back a load of, uh, war surplus. And on the way down, Clyde Brass says, "Okay," when we got on the turnpike, he says, "It's your turn to drive," and I never drove a *(laughs)* tractor-trailer. But those are some of the kinds of things. You were resourceful in knowing where what was, and how you could get it. It was like in the military: if you don't have it from one, uh, place, you steal it from another one, you know. But there was nothing stealing about it. It was very, um, honest, and I'll just elaborate a little bit. And a lot of the equipment we got — particularly in the machine shop, which was war production equipment — we agreed that we would return — if we went back in the war situation, had we war production — we would return that equipment. I don't remember any experiences where the equipment was returned, but there was an agreement with the federal government that anything we had that they might need, would go, revert back to 'em. So that was one of the —

Dr. Doyle: Was WTI in competition with other schools for that surplus equipment?

Dr. Homisak: Ah, I believe, yes. But basically, um, it seemed that maybe we were partial, because they knew what we were doing: the kind of training we were giving. And at that time, in the early, late 40s and 50s, I don't think there was another school. I hate to divert, but in 1950 or '51, Dr. Parkes said to me, "Bill, I want you to go to Harrisburg. Don't tell anybody where you're going. This is completely, uh, secret." I'm at that time, maybe I'm 25 years of age. So, I get down to Harrisburg, Department of Education, and the, uh, Secretary of Education is there. There were, I think, twenty of us. And somebody comes in and says, "Who are you?" And I told 'em who I am, and he says, "Why are you here?" And I says, "Well, Dr. Parkes from Williamsport Tech. told me I was supposed to report down here." Nothing else was said. So, they told us, the twenty of us, I'm saying, twenty, approximately, "This is a secret mission. You are all going to be given a state policeman as a bodyguard in civilian clothes. You are going to investigate these GI schools." If you'll recall, in 1950, '49, '50, everybody was starting GI schools. And, uh, to give you just a little bit of background: I was working out of Philadelphia with my state police bodyguard, and the Philadelphia police knew we were there, and they would say "Park here, we'll keep an eye on it." South Philly. We would go into what would be a school. Uh, and uh, they would say, maybe somebody at the door, "What do you want?" "We want to see your director." "You're not gettin' in." And Leo Price, *(laughs)* my buddy, "Oh, yes, we're gettin' in," you know. He'd make a motion. And this is terrible to be saying, but we eventually got in there. If it was a radio school, you would see a room with one or two radios and nobody there. And you'd ask to see the, uh, roster and their

certificate. And they would say, "Here's the roster," maybe forty people on it. "But where are the students?' "Well, they're out on break now." "But when will they be back?" "Two o'clock." "We'll be back." And you'd never see the students. I think out of 183 schools we had — and I was working the east area — it was either eighty-three we left open and closed the hundred, or it was a hundred stayed open and eighty-three were closed. And this is what concerns me now in education: that unless we provide a plan, and make sure it's properly, uh — what do I want to say? — checked on, first thing you know, you're spending money foolishly.

Dr. Doyle: How long did that take you away from your responsibilities here at the college —

Dr. Homisak: Uh —

Dr. Doyle: — at the time?

Dr. Homisak: I would say about a month, because I was working from the Scranton area down to Philly. And, uh, we kept a record of where we were, and, uh, what schools, and then recommendation was — this is not, you know, there's nothing there. So that was, then the State Department went ahead and canceled them out.

Dr. Doyle: If we stay with the subject of technology, uh, when were computers introduced, uh, to, either the Tech., or to the [Williamsport Area] Community College? I assume it occurred during the Tech.

Dr. Homisak: The involvement starting with computers?

Dr. Doyle: Correct.

Dr. Homisak: As I recall, it was 1962. We got the first huge computer. And in the one room, in the car barn or in Unit 6, on the first floor we had one room completely sealed off. The floor was built on springs, air-conditioned, and so on. And this computer was moved in, and basically, almost filled up the room. I'm again guessing, but I think, at that time, we paid either $300- or $400,000 for it. In other words, Dr. Carl, or someone like that, might have that amount. And, uh, as far as using it, it was used pretty much, so called, by the administration. About the same time, I was invited to go to North Carolina to a computer school. And, uh, so I had an instructor by the name of English. He was a Navy veteran. And I asked Curt if he would want to go in my place. This was in the summer. He did. He came back, and the only involvement we had at that time was that he put on a few courses: introduction. And mostly it was programming and so on, and in other words, so much different from today. But basically, that was about all the involvement I had. And when you think of what's going on today, it's mind-boggling.

Dr. Doyle: Uh, did that introduction of computers for education come in your area of business or was it in a separate area of the Tech.?

Dr. Homisak: Okay. When we become more sophisticated, uh, we had the computer center. And George Wolfe was the expert, and I think he still is involved with it, in teaching the computers. Back in about 1960, I was looking for an instructor in the business department — that's at the adult. And, uh, Bailey — boy, it's terrible.…

Dr. Doyle: Alex Bailey.

Dr. Homisak: Alex Bailey. Alex Bailey become, you may say, our chief computer instructor. He really — it was something he could eat up. And he really did a great job. He just retired a few years ago. But he definitely was a fine, very good instructor. And he really did a lot for our business department, uh, offering computers.

Dr. Doyle: Earlier we were talking about students who would be taking courses for business in the area for which you had responsibility. Were there programs that began to change the role of women, either during the war, or actually, because you came after the war, um, as far as the field of business?

Page Break**Dr. Homisak:** Okay. The women — of course, it seemed like we dealt with women, because at that time they didn't want to be machinists, and so on. Uh, they were really in there planning for careers, okay. Later on, it was advanced training. For example, every person in business had a — which of course, after my time or my job positions, they had to become very proficient with computers. So, there were a lot of changes in the technology. I'll divert a little bit and tell you that when I first started teaching business, the equipment we had, in addition to being World War II surplus, was basically manual. Everything was mechanical: like the comptometer and the calculator and so on. But after that we began to get electric. In other words, I grew up with the industry. We began to get 'lectric typewriters and 'lectric calculators — adding machines, not calculators, adding machines. And, my God, when you did, you got the students, they came in, and you told them: "Now look, you're going to sign in for that piece of equipment. You're going to be responsible to take care of it." You know, it was that, that important. And then, the great advantage was when IBM came out with their IBM electronic, electric typewriter. Uh, so the whole technology changed: in other words, the typewriters, the calculators. And then, I remember buying the firsthand calculator, and I paid about $285.00 for it. I think right now you could buy it for $2.00 *(laughs)*. But this was this way this technology has grown.

Dr. Doyle: And this was in the late 1950s, early '60s, is that correct?

Dr. Homisak: Pardon?

Dr. Doyle: This would be in the late 1950s and early 1960s?

Dr. Homisak: Okay. The real takeoff would have been about 1960s when we became a community college.

Dr. Doyle: Okay.

Dr. Homisak: That's basically the way I would remember it.

Dr. Doyle: Well, you talked — you raised the interesting point of changing from mechanical to electrical and electronic office technology. Uh, the college, the Community College, at least, and probably the Williamsport Technical Institute, had an office machine repair program.

Dr. Homisak: Correct.

Dr. Doyle: Was that in your area?

Dr. Homisak: No, it was not in my area, but we — their shop was right down below us. And, basically, what they were doing was repairing typewriters, the um, adding machines, and so on. Uh, and of course as things become more technical, they were more technical. In fact, right now, one of the fellas from down there — I, I have an IBM typewriter — when it needs serviced, *(laughing)* I still call on him. But, basically, uh, they grew up with the industry.

Dr. Doyle: Earlier we were talking about doing undercover work for the state police that interrupted your work at the Williamsport Technical Institute. But also, at the start of the Korean War, because you were a World War II veteran, you were briefly interrupted again. What happened?

Dr. Homisak: Okay. In World War II, I came home in '46. And, um, I never planned on going to college. Fortunately, as a flight engineer and gunner on B-24s, after flying, we didn't need any more pilots or flying, so they assigned me as a, uh *(pause)* non-commissioned officer in charge of base classification in Flor — in Boca Raton, Florida. But one of the fellas was working on his master's and the other fella was working on his doctorates at Northwestern. And the captain who was reassigning said to me, "You're going to work for me in the classification office." I said, "No, I want to keep flying." He says, "You can't, we're not going to have any more flying." He says, "You graduated from high school in business. I need somebody as a non-commissioned officer over those people." And I said, "But they know their work, I don't." He said, "That's all right. You're going to be responsible. They can do their work." So then, when we got discharged, and I'm making this a long story, when we got discharged, they asked us, that is, all the people being discharged, to sign up and stay in the service. Since I was on B-24s and combat-ready, they wanted me, particularly, to sign up on B-29s for Bikini Bomb Test, if you recall that. And most of us thought, "Nah, it's going to be nice to be civilian." So, they said, "Look, if you are ever called back, you're going to lose your rank." So, they encouraged us then to sign up in the reserves. So, I signed up in the reserves and, uh, I served for six years. But the thing that was interesting: in October of '50, I got called up to come down, report to the airbase in Florida. Then they changed the plan to October —

from October to November, and I was supposed to report to Langley Field, Virginia, which I did. When I got down to Langley Field, first thing, it was a Sunday night, guy says to me, "You staying in, or are you getting out?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, Congress just decided that this is a undeclared war, and you're in the inactive reserve. You have the option to go back home or stay in the service." So, I kinda thought, I was working on my master's at University of Pittsburgh, and I was working for Tech. The school district was very kind to give me a leave of — military leave of absence. So, I come back within about three or four days after I was processed into the service and called back — er let go. So, I come back to work, and they said, "Oh, we just filled your job with another man," whom I knew, you know. But, between Parkes and the school district, they says, "Well, we'll find something for you." And so I got back into the swing of things at Tech. But it was — had I reported in October, I would have been required to stay in the service. Which a lot of times look back and figure I made a mistake by not staying in.

Dr. Doyle: Did this type of interruption affect other staff or possibly adult students?

Dr. Homisak: Yes. Yes, we had a few others. And it's terrible, I can't remember the one man's name from the shops. He was called in. And I don't know, you know, specifically, if there were many, many more, but I know some of us were called back. And I think, in his case, he probably got called in the same time I did, but he reported in October, and had to stay in, and I didn't. But basically, we did have them.

Dr. Doyle: Um, is there anything else, do you think, you would like to add about the Williamsport Technical Institute days that's important from your involvement?

Dr. Homisak: What was that again?

Dr. Doyle: Are there anything else you would like to say about the Williamsport Technical Institute from your personal involvement?

Dr. Homisak: Well, to me, it was a great experience. Because basically — I'm going back to my own personal experience — learning to become a flight engineer and a gunner, I attended at least nine technical schools in the Army, Air Force — actually, Army Air Corps. When I came to the Tech. and saw how Dr. Parkes and Ken Carl got these people together in the creation of, of technical training, or vocational training, I was just fitting in from my experience where I went to mechanic's school, then I went to factory school where we built B-24s in Ypsilanti, Michigan, gunnery school, engineering school, and so on. And basically, in the military, boy, if you were to take a plan of Tech, in the military, you'd fit right in. Some courses in the military, for example, in the, uh, mechanical school, airplane mechanics, I think I might have spent four months. But in gunnery school, I only spent 26 weeks. It was, is that about right? I guess. The point is, the courses were very intensive, they knew you — should be able to read, and so on. Everything you got was exactly what you're gonna need to do. And this, I think, made that experience very similar to Tech. Excepting, in our case — and this is why Dr. Parkes

and Ken Carl deserve a lot of credit — if I wanted to become a machinist, I concentrate on the machine shop. I talk — took blueprint reading, in other — as a student. You also took the mathematics you needed, and so on. But you didn't take the English and literature and so on. In other words, that was not necessarily required because of the, the certificate programs, the other credit courses were not particularly. But we become a community college, that's when we made the transition.

Dr. Doyle: And that was a significant transition that we'll talk about in a few minutes. Um, I did have one other question about facilities, and that was: during the Technical Institute days, a library. Could you tell me about where the library was, and —

Dr. Homisak: *(laughing)* I'm smiling —

Dr. Doyle: — the size?

Dr. Homisak: *(laughing)* I'm smiling because it was kind of difficult to find where the library was. If I recall, at one time, we had it over, uh, one in, away from the campus completely. Then we had one over here in one of these buildings uh, uh, adjoining the campus, and so on. I used to smile when we got orders: "We're gonna move the library back to such and such a building on campus." And the human, uh, chain, chain gang started, and books were passed on from one person to another. And so, we then came in. And I'm trying to think exactly where we ended up before we became a community college.

Dr. Doyle: Well, I know, one of the, um, memorable experiences for you, uh, in your days with the Williamsport Technical Institute, was your work with the, uh, disabled workers who were members of the United Mine Workers. In 1951, you were responsible for this program, particularly with United Mine Workers coming out from western Pennsylvania. Now, what did this involve?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, that was rather interesting. And I'm not sure whether it was Dr. Carl or Dr. Parkes said, "Bill, we want you to go to Johnstown and meet with Dr. Brinkley and see what they have as a plan for the United Mine Workers." So, I met Dr. Brinkley in Johnstown, and he says, "We have a lot of disabled miners, and we would like to start a diagnostic program where you could then decide what these people would be capable of doing. We will pay all their expenses." And the money just flowed. These men I would pick up — I had to get my bus driver's license at that time — these men, I would drive to Johnstown and pick up a busload of miners and bring them to Williamsport area. And this is hard to believe. When they came to Williamsport, I had to go house to house to find places where these miners could get board. We took care of, administer — the board, doctor's appointments, and so on. These fellas came in, and, uh, many of them had never been out of a mine or Johnstown. And what I did is try to introduce them to various industries and businesses. And then we put them in a shop. Silicosis was one of the biggest problems. And the guy would say, "I want to be a heavy equipment operator." So, you might put him in heavy equipment. You also thought

maybe he'd make a good draftsman 'cause that won't affect his lungs, or maybe he should be in electronics. So, you put him in these different shops for two or three days. The instructor, department chairman would keep an eye on him. In the meantime, I would take these guys in a busload. Ingersoll Rand is one, really was outstanding — and I can't tell you his name — he was the personnel manager up at Ingersoll Rand. When we would come up, he would take these men to the country club and dine 'em. These people never had the opportunity before to have this kind of experience. And I could take 'em to dry cleaning schools and so on in that month's time. Then at the end of the month, United Mine Workers representative, Pennsylvania Bureau of Rehabilitation representative, myself, the department chairman and/or the instructor, and they'd say, "Tony, what would you like to do?" Tony says, excuse the language, he'd say, "Bill, me think I like to be heavy equipment operator." "But, you know, you also did well in drafting," I would say. "Yeah, but I like that equipment." The doctor would say, "But you shouldn't be on that equipment." And I'd say, "Here's your drafting instructor. What do you think of him?" "Doctor," he would say, "Oh, he's a good student. He knows what he's doing." So, I'm going to use the term directive counseling. "Tony, we think you would like drafting, and you would be a good draftsman." First thing you know, Tony said, "Oh, okay." And we signed him up in the drafting department, and he'd maybe spend nine months in the drafting department. I'm going to digress just a little bit. One fellow, uh, was a fairly young man, about 42 — heart condition. And you had to be a diplomat. After the first week he was here, he came to me, I'm going to say literally crying, he says, "I wanna go home to my family." He had three — two daughters, and his wife. I said, "Why do you want to go home?" He said, "I'm lonesome. I'm homesick. This is terrible for me." And I said, "Ah, come on. Give me one month of your time, and we could prove to you, you could do and enjoy what you're doing." I kind of embarrassed him. And he said, "Okay." He stayed for the month. We, directive counseling, got him to become a machinist. He graduated, I think after nine months, basically. About two years later, he comes to me — or he didn't come, he came to the college, or Tech., and he said to the switchboard operator, he'd like to see me. And I'm thinking, "Uh oh, this fellow's going to punch me in the nose." Went down. He says, "Mr. Homisak, I want to show you, introduce you to my family and my new car." After that two years, he got a job with General Motors in New York, he was driving a General Motors brand new car, and his family was absolutely elated to see me and proud of what he did. Those are the kinds of experiences you had. And you couldn't follow your psychology, or you couldn't follow your counseling methods because you needed results. United Mine Workers were very happy with the program — particularly if the fellows got trained, because then they could take them off their retirement rolls or sick rolls. And these fellows were free. Instead of The Mine Workers paying a hundred or two hundred dollars disability, they become productive citizens. Some of these stories are a little corny, but interesting.

Dr. Doyle: But they were personally rewarding to you. It showed the merit and the fruitfulness of what you had been doing. So, that certainly understands why that sticks in your memory. One of the things that I think is important to understand is the flexibility in scheduling, where someone could come in in the midst of a year. Could you talk about that?

Dr. Homisak: Oh, yes, that's very interesting because, basically, we got people signed up anytime. In other words, I'll use the drafting, for example. I'm a draftsman for one week. Here's a man who's maybe six months. As an instructor, I'm working with him as a one-week, on ability, in the drafting program. He goes from his, to the six-month, and he's working with him to that advanced program. And this was, basically, the way it worked. One of the greatest things was that as people become eligible, or wanted to go to school, we could take 'em at any time, and that was — allowed us the flexibility.

Dr. Doyle: Uh, this program that you described sounds similar to the vocational diagnostic program that Dr. Carl developed. Was that used with other groups besides the [United] Mine Workers?

Dr. Homisak: Oh, yes. We then become the agent for the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Bureau. And they sent us disabled people — both men and women, but mostly men — from pretty much all over the state.

Dr. Doyle: Um, Dr. Carl, of course, was the director who succeeded Dr. Parkes. What would you say were some of his major contributions to the Williamsport Technical Institute?

Dr. Homisak: Dr. Carl?

Dr. Doyle: Dr. Carl.

Dr. Homisak: Dr. Carl was also very creative. And, uh, if something needed to be done, let's do it. And, basically, that's, that's where we were very able to continue what Dr. Parkes started.

Dr. Doyle: Well, you were here when the Williamsport Technical Institute became the Williamsport Area Community College.

Dr. Homisak: Yes.

Dr. Doyle: A major transformation in the history of this institution.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: Um, you said you were possibly one of the first, if not the first, employee hired for WACC. What was your first position at WACC?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, that was rather interesting, because I was actually working at Williamsport School District and assigned to WACC. Uh, when Dr. Carl — back in 1964 is when we passed the Community College Act in Pennsylvania, and he had a lot to do with it. In fact, in his doctoral dissertation he dealt with community colleges. He and I —

he would ask me to go out with him, and we'd cover the ten-county area, recruiting. When we decided we'll start the Community College in 1965, we would have been the second school — the first one was Harrisburg. So, the development of a board for the Community College, Kenny was not named president as yet. But, uh, we started recruit or hire. And the board says, "We want you to be dean of continuing ed." So, I was hired as the first person, before Dr. Carl, as dean of continuing ed. And they finally decided Dr. Carl would be the president. And the thing that's interesting at that time, Doctor, was the fact getting instructors, as a community college, degrees were important. And really, to a recruit, you almost said, "Do you have a degree?" The guy said, "Yeah." "We need you." It sounds terrible, compared to what we do now in the academic field. But basically, it was very difficult at that time to find qualified teachers, in addition to the fact that they had trade skills. And I'm going to divert a little bit because Penn State University asked me in the early '60s to be an instructor in their teacher training for vocational teachers. So, I probably did that for about two years part-time: I taught 'em at night and weekends and so on. And I get these instructors — plumbers, carpenters, steam fitters, and so on — and I would teach them from Penn State to get them qualified to be certified teachers. I would teach them introduction to education, uh, curriculum development, testing, and so on, these were done. And I traveled pretty much through Central Pennsylvania: Shamokin, I may go up to Canton, and so on, all these classes. Basically, these people, as we had them before, were qualified tradesmen, but they did not have the background. And to give you an example, a lot of times I'd say to the fellows, "Let me know about your program so I can give it some pup PR," and they'd say, "I can't write it!" In other words, they were shell-shocked about expressing themselves. And this is the way we then recruited a lot of the instructors — I think, I think we have some in here now, maybe they're retired — that I had at Penn State.

Dr. Doyle: You talked about going around with Dr. Carl though the ten counties. I assume you were referring to attempting to persuade various school districts to become sponsors of the Community College? Is that correct?

Dr. Homisak: Yes.

Dr. Doyle: Uh, what was that experience like as far as support of, or resistance to, the whole — it was a very new idea really?

Dr. Homisak: I'm not quite sure I understand.

Dr. Doyle: What was that experience like as you went to the various school districts and the ten counties in north central Pennsylvania? School districts supportive initially or were they hesitant to become a part of WACC?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, basically most of these people were not a part of WACC. We did some, had some of the people from this area coming here. But in our case, we were trying to get the, um, school districts that were not supporting the Community College. We would go up to them and sell them on the idea of sending their students or adults to us on

a — they would pay half — one third of the tuition, the student paid one third and the state paid one third. The sponsor school districts paid fifty percent of the capital and the state paid the other fifty percent. We had at that time, when we had become, or shortly after we become a community college, we had twenty school districts that agreed to sponsor us. And they were mainly sponsoring the high school programs. And of course, the adults — they authorized it — they also paid them their tuition.

Dr. Doyle: So, when you talk about the high school programs, the, the Community College also served as an area vocational technical school.

Dr. Homisak: Correct.

Dr. Doyle: So, what the school districts were particularly interested in was sending their high school students here.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: *(overlapping)* Correct? Some of these school districts were already doing that, but others had not been doing that, is that correct? So, Sullivan County for example, Warrior Run, I believe Jersey Shore were already sending high school students to —

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: — the Williamsport Technical Institute.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: For, for secondary education, but this would have been new for others.

Dr. Homisak: Well, we gained a few — uh, Montoursville, for example. Uh, many of them could send their students, say, for two weeks. That's why we went to Two Week About plan. They came here to shops for two weeks, then they went back home for their academic training for two weeks. It was a two-week, called the Watsontown Plan. And so basically, they grew and were happy to give their people the vocational training they couldn't do back home.

Dr. Doyle: Was business and industry supportive of this idea of becoming a community college?

Dr. Homisak: Was the in—

Dr. Doyle: Business and industry, did they play any role in trying to convince school districts to support a community college?

Dr. Homisak: Yes. Basically, our greatest supporters were maybe men of industry and business, because they knew that we had ready trainees or trainers, trained for them to go put them to work. Our biggest supporter was AFCO: Textron now. We worked with them for years before we even became a community college. Uh, in addition to that, in our training, we had at least twenty industries where we taught foreman trainership — training, because a lot of these industries did not have the formality or formal training for these people to be foremen. We also had, uh, rural rectification, where Dick Long went out and taught the rural electrical people, uh, the electrical systems and so on. We had an awful lot of outreach programs, uh, that sometimes it's almost impossible to remember them all.

Dr. Doyle: Dick Long would have been teaching probably in the days of the Williamsport Technical Institute, is that right?

Dr. Homisak: Dick was a member here at the Tech. and his whole job was to move out to the rural areas, uh, and he then taught them the electrical systems that they needed in their, in their job.

Dr. Doyle: And then he eventually became responsible for audiovisual services.

Dr. Homisak: Yeah.

Dr. Doyle: Um, you had previously been evening school coordinator for the Williamsport School District, and you've already said that you became the first dean of continuing education. What was the initial focus for the continuing education program under the Community College?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, when we were with the school district, a lot of it was hobby courses, a lot of it was introductory courses and so on. When we became a community college, industry, for example ,would say, my contacts of industry would say, "Bill, we need a course in measurements." So, what I would say is, "Who do you recommend to teach it?" And he said, "We have this engineer who'd make a good teacher." And all of a sudden I'd approach this man, "Would you teach measurements for the college?" The guy'd said, "Yes." And many of these people were real technicians or craftsmen from industry and they were pleased to come on board and teach. And usually those courses met one night a week, uh, for three hours. Uh, I had one particular program I developed was known as the industrial technology associate degree. This was for men who were working in industry, but because they did not have, I'm going to say, certain qualifications, they could not move ahead. One fellow in particular was — worked for PP&L, and he took this. He graduated in a very small class — I think I had twelve in that class, in the industrial tech program. First thing you know he moved down to Allentown and was in the management program. Uh, the experience these people got because they're dealing with people who are out in the industry. And so, I would probably be a typical classroom book instructor. But these fellows could tell them exactly how it was. So, these are the kinds of experiences we had. And, uh, industry a lot of times whatever

course we offered, I didn't even have to think about 'em. For example, one day I got a call from the United — the, uh, Iron Workers out of Harrisburg. And they said, "Would you come down and meet with our board and set up a program for the Iron Workers?" So, I go down, and I said this is what they should have, you know. The guys said, "Well, buy it. Will you set up the program?" So basically, it was a matter of inquiries or word of mouth. We had one program on Saturdays, where up at uh, uh — they make the, um, Christmas decorations, isn't that terrible — called me and said, and this was up at Wellsboro, they said, "Would you be able to set us up a program up here on — in our plant?" So, I went up, found out what they needed, it was the, um, uh, plant operation. So, they said fine, these are the instructors, so I would get you to go up there and teach one Saturday in that particular field or whatever. And in your own experience, going down to Lewisburg Federal Prison and teaching the prison program. And the prisoners, uh, I had very good response with the superintendent — uh, director of education. And they'd say, "We would like to have" — we had the dental tech down there — "We would like to have machine shop or small gas engines." And so down in the hole, we would have these classes, and you know, your own experiences, that the people you dealt with, many of them were very interested, and occasionally you got somebody who says, "Oh, I'll try it out," you know. But I think we just covered the waterfront.

Dr. Doyle: So much of it was, uh, industry or other sources coming to you or to the college asking to put on things —

Dr. Homisak: Yeah.

Dr. Doyle: — run programs, run courses —

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: et cetera. Is that how the, uh, project with, uh, Lewisburg Penitentiary — the dental tech that you referred to — is that how that was initiated?

Dr. Homisak: Okay. *(chuckles)* Lewisburg Penitentiary, we had the first program. It was welding. They wanted some of their minimum security people to come up, take welding, Saturday. I says, "No problem. You provide a guard, we'll keep them locked up in the welding shop and then from there, uh, you pick 'em up again with your bus, Saturday afternoon, or whenever, and go back." Very successful. We didn't have anybody run away or whatever. From there, we then had the campus veterans coming up here from minimum security that was at Allenwood.

Dr. Doyle: The Allenwood, uh, prison camp.

Dr. Homisak: Right. They came up here. And the thing that was kind of interesting, my friend Bob Ganell, who was the director of education called me one day and he says, "Bill, my men coming up campus said they feel, you know, different because they have to wear the khaki uniforms and they said everybody knows we're prisoners." I kind of

laughed and I said *(laughing)*, "Bob, you buy that?" He said, "No, I don't think so." I said, "No, Bob, they cannot be told the difference from the regular students and prisoners because at that time so many of our men were coming back from the military and they were wearing khakis. And he says, "Oh, I know." And then occasionally from there, I'd be going downtown, and I'd see a guy in khakis, and I would spot him as one of the prison students. So I'd call Bob up and he says, "I'll have a guard right up there to pick him up." See, they had to come in and abide by what the rules were. So basically, people heard what was being done and they called.

Dr. Doyle: In your relationship with business and industry with the continuing education program, how important was it to them that they could possibly, or their employees could earn, associate degrees? Because that was the, one of the major transformations going from the Technical Institute to the Community College.

Dr. Homisak: Okay, the, um, importance there was that most of these people needed to — could — should be advanced, and if they had that academic training, the mathematics, or whatever, that helped. One of the greatest opportunities I had was to visit any plant, pretty much in this ten-county area. In fact, other plants throughout the state. I got a chance to see what the plants were doing, and, when they asked for training, then I had an idea of what they needed. In a lot of cases, you left out the math and the physics and so on, unless it was directly related with that career. So, the rapport was good, and you were always welcome to come down and visit with them at the plants. I had one experience: I was sitting in my office — and I hope I'm not holding this up — I was, uh, sitting in my office at noon one day, and a fellow come by. My office was across from Ken Carl's and, and Dr. Federson's. Guy come up and he's looking around and I said, "Can I help you?" He said, "Yeah," he said, "I'm from such and such industry and we need fifteen — twenty welders. We need twenty welders. What can you do?" I said, "Tell you what, you hire twenty people, and give them to us, and I'll have our welding shop train them within one month." Okay, we set up the training program and they opened up the welding shop — which was a structure shop, structural shop along Route 15 — within two months. And so basically, the thing I would like to say, in continuing ed., I know from an academic point of view, we were not operating the way you normally would: committees, approvals, and so on. If somebody said we needed something, you stepped right in, and if it was in a week, or two weeks, you were right there getting' started. And they know that we could serve 'em if they wanted it.

Dr. Doyle: One of your major involvements toward the end of your career with the Community College was the creation of the College Foundation. What, what occurred there?

Dr. Homisak: Okay. We talked about fundraising as early as maybe '70 — or '87, '89, something like that. And then when Bob Breuder came, Dr. Breuder, we decided then we would go into fundraising, particularly for the building program. And we had consulted with a firm out of New York. John, uh, cannot think of his last name, he was the guy, partner, came down, and he and I worked together. We set up the plan, in the meantime,

Dr. Breuder set up the board for the foundation. The board was involved, we were involved, and we made a survey of all the industries that possibly could give us some funds in our planning. Avco was a typical example, or Textron. Uh, approached them, and we said, "If we could get enough money, we may be able to build, or have a name of a building after you." So, my dear friend up there, the plant manager, says, "I think we could get — I'll talk to the board, see if I can get twenty — two hundred thousand dollars for you." I had one welding shop, uh, plant. John and I visited the man, he says, "Yeah, I'll give you five thousand dollars." I'm talking about how this worked. And, uh, he says, "How — do you have submerged welding?" I said, "Yeah, you come on down to the welding shop, and we'll show you what we have." And of course, at that time, our welding shop become quite sophisticated. So, the guy came through, and the instructor did a great job at selling him on the idea. Before he left he says, "Bill, we'll raise that to fifty thousand." Before I left, which would have been in '82, if I recall correctly, we had either pledges and/or money amounting to about 1.2 million dollars. And I think that's when we had this community education, continuing ed., bill started. When Dr. Breuder came in, we had refurbished — the new plant was the carpentry shop, and of course Klump Academic, and I'm trying to think, maybe it was the machine shop. When Breuder came in, he was here for about a week, and we were dedicating the buildings for that weekend. Naming buildings, I felt that one building should be named after Dr. Carl. Klump Academic was a good example, Dr. Klump. But basically, uh, when we did the dedication, Dr. Carl had no idea what was going on, and I was master of ceremonies. *(chuckles)* A this time, this was what we would like to do as a board, and this building we shall name, and I gave the background on Kenny and I called Kenny up, he about fainted. But the fundraising was fun, in that you had to use your imagination and how to appeal with these people. Uh, it, it was a growing situation, and basically we'd really never done much in that area. But we got it started and moved on pretty well.

Dr. Doyle: The building named after Dr. Carl is the construction technology building [the Building Technology Center], which is part of the main structure there on Third Street, and the Avco building that you referred to is the Metal Trades Building, which enabled, uh, the welding program — which had been in the basement of the shops — to go into a new facility there. Um, what was your last position at the college when you retired in 1982?

Dr. Homisak: The last position — when I retired I was assistant to the president and also the director, uh, executive director of the foundation. And basically, I would say that was about it.

Dr. Doyle: Let's talk for a while about Dr. Parkes, who was the founding director of the Williamsport Technical Institute. Um, how well did you know George Parkes and to what extent did you work with him directly?

Dr. Homisak: Well, I was very fortunate in knowing, uh, Dr. Parkes. For some reason, whenever something came up, Dr. Parkes would say, "Bill, I need you. Go to Johnstown," for example. Or Kenny would say, "Go down to prison and see what we can

do there." But Dr. Parkes would have a brainstorm, and he'd say, "How about developing this, I'm trying to — it's coming from my mind, I probably cannot use an illustration." But United Mine Workers was a good example. If there was something going on out there — and I don't know whether Dr. Parkes felt that I don't say no, and so basically he could call on me. And to give you an example, he was the kind of man, he was interested in public relations, and I mean that this way: if there was a convention in Williamsport, he would call me, he says, "Bill, I'll find somebody to substitute for you, you be along downtown, merge and mingle with the people." He felt that we had to sell the college in person, this idea getting out, tell 'em who you are, and so on. I may have mentioned at one time when we were low on students, we had Your College on Parade. We put out (*chuckling)* WTI on Parade, we would put on a show for high school students or we'd put on a show for adults about what takes place. Ray Palmer, for example, there was one fellow in the carpentry shop — I can't tell you his name now — there were about four or five of us, and, uh, we would then try to promote the college, or the technical school, at that time. It was not uncommon for Dr. Parkes to say, "You better get down there and see what's going on at some of those bars, see who's not working." This seems terrible, but you'd kind of see these guys hanging around and you'd say, "Hey, have you ever thought of getting a trade?" So, we could have recruited a few that way. And in salesmanship, (*laughing)* they say if you get one out of ten then you're good, so we did all right.

Dr. Doyle: Um, WTI made and assembled chairs and desks, you talked about that much earlier. Uh, what was involved in that work and what was your personal experience in making a desk?

Dr. Homisak: Making the — it was interesting because everybody had to cooperate — excuse me, I'll get a drink here.

Dr. Doyle: I'll get it for you.

Dr. Homisak: Thank you, Dan. The thing that was interesting: the esprit de corps of the staff was everybody worked together and cooperated, because I would think we had a job, we better work at it. I'm going to divert a little bit, in my — I'm going to say from '48 to '65 — those years I never had a contract. *(clears throat)* To give you an example, I would be — end of the year, summer year, and Dr. Parkes would say "Bill, I don't know whether we'll be able to use you next year, you might want to look for a job." Then I'd get a call, "Bill, we need you, come on back." I've had two or three jobs offered in the summer. But with our staff, when it came to, uh, improvising or building, the carpentry shop, Jack Struck, who is retired from the Department of Education, was a carpentry instructor, and he would call for us to come down and help assemble these desk or chairs. Of course, it was a matter of putting it together or whatever. We didn't use the machines or so because we weren't that qualified, but we could put them together and so on. So basically, that's the way we did it, and it was — guy had a free period, he went over there in the Carpentry Shop and worked, so that's the way we did it. Carpentry and basically the machine shop bent the pipes for the chairs and so on.

Dr. Doyle: And these were chairs and desks to be used by the Technical Institute?

Dr. Homisak: Oh yes, in fact, if I had a picture of my classroom, you would see all those chairs and you'd see the desk. A lot of times we just made desk and the desk was very simple, about that big, and then the legs were maybe two inches square. They didn't have any drawers on them or anything, but that was the way you, you taught the students that had that. One other thing I'll give you an example of: when I was teaching accounting to the adults, we had no money for books — this is terrible — I would go to Woolworth's five-and-dime store, and they would have a book, set of accounting books maybe, you know, two editions back or something, and I'd ask them, "How much are they?" "Fifty cents apiece." So, if I had a class of twenty, I'd buy those fifty, you know, twenty books, take them up, and then give them to the students. In many cases they'd give me the fifty cents. Whatever you do, you had to improvise; by the same token, we seemed to be successful.
Dr. Doyle: That improvisation was a key component of the success of the Williamsport Technical Institute.
Dr. Homisak: It was —
Dr. Doyle: *(repeating louder)* It sounds like it was a key aspect to the success of the Technical Institute —

Dr. Homisak: Yes, that, that was — *(overlapping)*

Dr. Doyle: *(overlapping)* — the ability to improvise.

Dr. Doyle: You said Dr. Parkes paid, uh, close attention to details. You had a story about the windows on the front of the trolley barn?

Dr. Homisak: Did Dr. Parkes —

Dr. Doyle: Dr. Parkes and his attention to details, you said he was particularly interested at one point about the windows —

Dr. Homisak: Oh, okay. First of all, Dr. Parkes was very safety-minded, and as the windows, these are all open glass, uh, and he knew that people walking by in the corridors, he decided we'll have somebody stencil the, what do I want to call it, you know, on the windows so it looked like it was — oh, terrible. Another thing that with him, he would walk around the shops, and if he could improvise or tell them how they could do something better, he would. But by the same token, if someone was doing something and it was unsafe, you could expect to have the wall fall. One example I'll use with Dr. Parkes — and you really ought to give him credit — like when I taught courses for Penn State on shop safety, the thing you would never even think about in the auto shop: here they would have the gas tank down. Now it might have been empty, but if they were not filled with water, he would raise the dickens, and you can't blame him. He was very concerned, he was very congenial, very easy to get along with, but he expected things to be done right. And, uh, you got to give him credit.

Dr. Doyle: You said he was also sensitive to his position as a public employee regarding his own standard of living; could you give an example of that?

Dr. Homisak: Okay, Dr. Parkes was very much concerned, as a public employee, that he was not a showy person. For example, I was associated with him in two different situations. Kiwanis, for example, he was a member of Kiwanis. You wouldn't know who George Parkes was because he was always in the background. When we would go downtown to a meeting — he worked with the Chamber, at that time, or Merchant's Bureau — but basically, he never spouted out. He was very active in the airport. In fact, we were the first airport training school, or first training school to be at the airport, uh, 1937 I believe it was. But you wouldn't know who was the pusher or who was getting anything done because he never tried to make it look like, you know, he was the guy.

Dr. Doyle: Is there anything else you would like to add about his legacy, that is, Dr. Parkes?

Dr. Homisak: Was there what again?

Dr. Doyle: (*louder*) Anything else you'd like to add about Dr. Parkes' legacy?

Dr. Homisak: He was, Dr. Parkes himself, was a very concerned person. He was congenial, he was friendly. Uh, and he also, if you came in there and you had the wrong plans or the wrong instructions, you knew about it. But basically, that was not the kind of thing that was ever going to make you feel you're inadequate. But he was a gentleman, he really did a lot for this community. *(coughs)* And it's too bad, because when it came time for him to get to a retirement home, we couldn't even find a retirement home for him here — he had to move up to Binghamton. But Dr. Parkes would be the kind of guy that you would want to get involved with or work with early in your career, because it sets you up, you know.

Dr. Doyle: Well, he also influenced, uh, Dr. Carl and you to become members of Kiwanis. And you in particular have been very active in Kiwanis on an —

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: — even on a national and international level. How did you see that as an extension of your involvement here at the Technical Institute and the Community College?

Dr. Homisak: Well, basically, to get elected on the Kiwanis international board, which represents eighty countries, you have to pretty much prove yourself as to your past, past experience. And all I had to do was write up what I was doing here, and when it came to election, where maybe we had 15,000 members at the international convention. They're the ones that voted for you. I ran for the board in Indianapolis in 1992. And I forget how

many of us, but I even beat the one man from Canada by 500 votes, but because they were short a chairman place on the board, uh, I didn't make the board. The next — well, before the year was over, one man was elected, but he had to leave the area. So, the president at that time knew I was the highest vote-getter and asked me if I'd serve. Basically, the experiences I had, even with foreign students, and I covered over 40 countries, not all of them with Kiwanis, but when you went to those countries, you knew how to respond and how to act. So, my training here, and of course the military, really made it easier for you to get around. And it was a good experience.

Dr. Doyle: You've had a long and very varied career with many contributions in vocational education: through WTI, teaching courses for Penn State, the Community College, et cetera. During that span of over 35 years, what gives you the greatest feeling of satisfaction?

Dr. Homisak: The greatest feeling probably would have been one student I'll use as an example, who wasn't going to stay, maybe left. Another fellow I had, I may have used the example to you once before, was this young man, who graduated from high school — and I don't remember if he went on beyond that — but he worked for the federal government as an investigator. And he was investigating a warehouse, and he saw this young man, nice, neat, college fellow back in a corner of this warehouse eating, and he thought to himself, "I'm going to test this guy." So, he went up to this fellow and he said to him, "Hey, let's you and I get in cahoots, do something." He says, "Yeah, what is it?" He says, "You and I could make quite a bit of money if we get a lot of this stuff and sell it." The guy says, "Oh, that's good." So, the fellow walks, he walked away from him, and after thinking awhile, he went back to him and said, "Hey, are you serious?" The guy said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, I want to tell you something: I was testing you. If you ever did this, you would never find another job; in fact, you may never even be a civilian anymore." I had asked him if he would speak to my class. He said he would, but he never got a chance. And he wrote me a note explaining this to them, he says, "Please read this to the students, but do not tell them who I am or where I work." So basically, it's this kind of thing. The other thing would be — and I'll close there — is I had quite a few young fellows who were going in the service. And in those days, everybody wanted to be a pilot: "Oh, I'm going to be a pilot." And I'd say, "Good, set your sights high, but if you don't make it, don't feel bad. You never fail; you only fail if you don't try." And I would get letters from these young recruits, and they'd say, "You don't know what you did for me, Mr. Homisak." The one kid was a troublemaker, and at those days, you didn't have to be so concerned about discipline that you could correct. And he'd say, "If it weren't for you," he says, "I would be in trouble right now." Those are the kind of experiences that make you feel good. And I guess the other thing is walking down the street and you run into a student, said to you, "You know, Mr. Homisak, I thought you were a rough guy, but you're okay now." It shows you that somebody felt that they got something good from you, and that's the thing that makes you feel fairly good.

Dr. Doyle: Do you have any last thoughts or topics we haven't covered that you would like to add?

Dr. Homisak: My thoughts of WTI, WACC — and now of course I'm so far removed from the community college, Penn College — is the fact that it was a great place to work: great supervisors, and all the staff members, teachers, were very cooperative. I got to tell you, one thing that made me feel good: my secretary, Merle Magiffen — she of course has passed, since passed away. But when I hired Merle Magiffen, probably twenty, twenty-five years ago, she was so nervous. I put her on the typewriter, and you could tell — I'd say, "Merle, just slow down, don't be worried." She'd say, "I'm not very good." I said, "Don't worry about it." That young lady turned out to be the best secretary. Person — human relations, knew what to do; if we were ever successful in continuing ed., it was because of her. And that's the kind of thing that when you see people — and I've had a lot of students as secretaries — see how successful they are, it makes you feel good. But the Community College, Tech, and now Penn College really make it a spot to work. And when I see the differences between what you have now and what we started out, and for me to *(unintelligible)* in the car barn, with the tracks in the mill, you just cannot believe, you folks would — well, you know, but some of the people would not have any idea what they, we put up with.

Dr. Doyle: Well, thank you, Bill, it's really been a pleasure to have this opportunity to have you share your memories.

Dr. Homisak: Right.

Dr. Doyle: And it seems to me a few minutes ago you talked about what was your personal, uh, motto and that is: to set your sights high and to do the best you could and to be resourceful and to make the most of the moment. And you certainly have done that through your long and distinguished career. Thank you so much.

Dr. Homisak: Well, thank you, and Doctor, it's a pleasure working with you again, twenty some years ago. *(laughing)* Thank you.

Dr. Doyle: Thanks, Bill.