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Oral History Interview with Dr. Arnold Wettstein
(6/7/2005)

Zhang: Good morning. My name is Wenxian Zhang, head of Archives and Special Collections. Today is Tuesday, June 7, 2005. Me and Corey and Lily, three of us, are going to interview Dr. Arnold Wettstein, retired professor of Religion and Philosophy, and Dean of the Chapel, who is with us here today. Dr. Wettstein, could you share with us your family background? Where you were born, where you grew up?

Wettstein: Oh, gladly. I was born in Hoboken, New Jersey, which is right on the Hudson River across from Manhattan. My father was a Protestant minister, in Hoboken and I was one of three sons that he had. But shortly after my birth, our mother died and so we were cared for by a housekeeper for several years until my father married a second one— Well, it was very good for us as three sons to have a mother to be there. We, as three brothers, would cut up in a lot of activities. We— And in the kitchen, when we would do the dishes, we would suddenly find our brother saying to us, “Think fast!” (Laughter) And we’d look up and here he would have thrown a plate, which I was to catch. So our background, then, remained with our parents living in Hoboken until the end of my father’s life with the church career. My oldest brother was a graduate of Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and a lieutenant commander in the navy when he served his time. My next brother was a marine during World War Two, and he spent some of that time in the Pacific. So, I have just one brother who’s still living, and that’s where we are as a family.

Zhang: Could you tell us about your formal education, your grade school, your college experience?

Wettstein: Yes, I mentioned that we were raised by housekeepers. My housekeeper could not speak English, so we communicated in German and when I started kindergarten, she would walk with me to, from home just two blocks, to where the kindergarten was. But I was so embarrassed by her that I insisted that she walk on the other side of the street when she accompanied me to go to the school. But Frau Zeltman was a very precious person nonetheless. And so when I started kindergarten I could only speak German. But it didn’t take long [to learn English] when you’re surrounded by English speakers. So, anything else?

Zhang: So then you went to Princeton.

Wettstein: Oh, it was the formal education, then yes. I was apart of the [attended] Stevens Hoboken Academy; over the years I graduated and went to Princeton, which was my only choice as a college. I was just delighted to have been accepted and spent three years there, or three and a half years. We had an option of reducing the full four years time and that after three years we could take an accelerated course in the summer and we received our degrees.

So at Princeton I had an absolutely amazing educational experience. Two features at Princeton were that: one, every senior submits a thesis. So— I developed a thesis of thirty-seven thousand words. That’s something that was a significant research job. And that was really quite crucial to the education experience. The other thing that was unique at Princeton

was what we called the Preceptorial, which, in which the professor has special weekly sessions in his office with perhaps seven to ten of the students so that we really had a chance to interrogate the faculty and they to know what we're thinking, in that way.

So then following Princeton, I attended Union Theological Seminary in New York City, where I then received my B.D. degree, which was a degree given then after three years of study. I lived in New York and served as an assistant in churches in New Jersey and kept busy that way, indeed. And able to carry on through, through my seminary work. I wrote a thesis then also in my seminary, and that thesis is on religion and democracy.

Then, after completing my work for my B.D. degree, I went into the navy and served as a naval chaplain for two years and then returned from that and took a position in a church in Long Island, where I could continue my studies.

And so I took these studies at Columbia University, mostly in philosophy and religion and ethics. That was my central theme, and until I had the opportunity to serve in a church in Dayton, Ohio, and I took that opportunity, postponing my studies. After four years, however, I had another opportunity to, this one to go to Vero Beach, Florida. That's where I would be the minister of a community church, which is an interdenominational church. Very open-minded experience. I was the pastor of that church until 1966, when I realized that my children were getting older and that if I were ever going to complete my educational work I better do it then. So I went to McGill in Montreal and in 1968 received my Ph.D. in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. So that's a lot of education. I don't know how much of it has sunk in.

Zhang: That's very fascinating. Let's go back a little bit. I understand that when you studied in college you were preparing to become a medical doctor. What made you decide to pursue religion as a career choice?

Wettstein: Well my interest in medicine wasn't very serious. I enjoyed chemistry very much in high school and I thought that that might be the emphasis I could follow at Princeton, and use it as an entrée into medical education. But, as with so many students, we tend to overestimate our ability to handle organic chemistry and things of this kind. So that was indeed one of the reasons I changed was that I just wasn't sure that I could handle the whole package. The other reason I changed was that I thought that if I'm going to have any effect on the course of human life in society that I needed to identify where the problems were, and it seemed to me what we needed more was healing in the matters of thought and experience and relationships rather than in the physical way. That would open me to lots of connections with people.

Zhang: That's reminded me of the founding father of modern China, Dr. Sun. He was studying for medicine— (talking at the same time)

Wettstein: (talking at the same time) Dr. Sun Yetsen.

Zhang: —Yeah, and then he felt that society really needed a politician to move forward so he gave up his medical career to become the leader of modern China. So it's just very impressive.

Tell us about your navy career. Not too many people know you're a veteran.

Wettstein: Well, after our boot camp, our training, which was in Newport, Rhode Island. I put in that I wanted to serve anywhere on the east coast, so they sent me to the west coast (laughter) where I was assigned a duty at a recruit training command, where the students first came, not knowing what was in store for them and very fearful indeed. So that was my experience.

On Sunday morning, we'd have a worship service and three thousand recruits would walk in, would march into the auditorium where we conducted services. But most of our work with the sailors was on a one-to-one basis, dealing with their personal problems.

I was then assigned to an Ice Breaker, and that was one of my memorable experiences because we— The Ice Breaker's very special kind of ship, and it has a round hull, so that when you're out in the waves you lean and you heel over tremendously. And it's like totally, it seemed that we leaned over at ninety degrees and it was almost on the edge. That's when we went through the Gulf of Alaska and then into the Bering Strait, in the Bering Sea. And our task was to see how we could maneuver armed forces in that area, because that was the time when the Cold War was really hot and we were concerned lest the Russians find an easy way through Alaska to the conquest of our country.

So, that was a very special kind of experience. It was in January. One event that was of special note was the opportunity I had to serve in that unusual way. One day, I convinced the captain that it would be good, after several weeks, to have a day off because it was— The sky was cloudy and it was cold and the work was hard and so on. The sailors needed a break. He agreed, and we just stopped the Ice Breaker and went over a rope ladder onto an ice flow. And there we played a game of softball. (Laughs) It was quite unusual to have that opportunity; just hop over the side and we had a wonderful time. So that was one naval experience.

My next assignment was to be the new chaplain of a flotilla of LST's [Landing Ship Tank], which were supplying the radar installations along the northern coast of Alaska and— So that indeed was a special pleasure. Then, after serving as chaplain there, my next assignment was in Coronado in San Diego and after that I was released to go back to my civilian life.

Zhang: Great. So you— Tell us about your career as a minister in Vero Beach. You must've settled down very comfortably, but what made you decide to become a college professor?

Wettstein: Ah, well— Vero Beach is just a beautiful, beautiful town. It has one of the nicest beaches in the state and friendly people. It's the center of the Indian River; orange juice and grape fruit industries and all that. It's a very appealing and beautiful place. And a relatively small town.

What I heard people saying again and again, especially the young mothers, they were saying, You know this is the perfect place to raise children. It's protected, it's— People know who your children are, and all of that. But I thought about it and I said, Gee, I don't think this is the place to raise children because they're getting a rather limited view of what life was about. So I decided to leave the beautiful church and to get into a college where I would, could go to work, trying to bring students to a larger understanding of reality and its difficulties.

I made arrangements to go to Montreal and to finish my degree at—there at McGill. (Laughs) Interesting thing was I had said so much about sort of learning to understand the real world: on the first day of school in Montreal, my son came home with a black eye (laughs) so

that's what life in the real world was like. I had told him he has learned a lesson that I could never give. Yeah.

Zhang: So what made you decide to come to Rollins in 1968?

Wettstein: Those were days when there was beginning to be a pinch on the jobs open. So I came to Rollins because there was a job here and that job was for me, brought through the interest of Dean Darrah, who was dean of the chapel for, for thirty some years. And he— His department thought that he needed some assistance. There were more students who were enrolling for courses and so on. And it was a very heavy duty to do two things; both teaching and administrating. So they hired me to be a teacher, be an assistant professor in philosophy and religion, and to be the assistant to the dean of the chapel.

Zhang: So when you first came to Rollins, what was your impression of the school then? The student life, the school administration?

Wettstein: Oh, it was a wonderfully happy place. The students were very cordial. They were fun loving and they were easy to get to know. They were cooperative when you developed a new program and so on. It was quite an interesting place, but it did not have the strong academic focus that the faculty believed they needed.

We sought, then, to build a deeper kind of curriculum. In those days, one of the things that was attractive was that the students became a part of the so-called Free College Movement. In the early seventies, there was a movement through many, many colleges in which students would complain that they didn't want the formal education but they wanted an education that would build their understanding of themselves and the world. So they had a Free College; it would mean that the teacher would just set up a theme and then divide it up and students who wanted to do it would take that and become a part of it. Well that lasted about a term (laughs) and then fell apart because that could only work if you really had a strong, strong academic focus and we didn't have that. But we had friendship and an interest in building community. Rollins was a wonderful community; mutually supportive. So that was indeed a good feature. But I think typically the Rollins students loved the things like the Four O's [O.O.O.O.- Omnipotent Order of Osceola]. Have you come across the Four O's in these discussions, yet?

Zhang: Is that the fraternity? Or the Four O organization?

Wettstein: Well, the Four O organization was a secret society, in which people were invited. There were two representatives from each of the fraternities and then there were some faculty and administrators in that as well. And this was just kept secret. The only thing, the pledge took was not to use membership in the Four O's to one's own advantage. So it became a kind of service organization. When there would be something like a blood drive, these Four O's would hear of this and they would go and arrange it and encourage people to come out and to be a part of it, and so on. These were days when integration was a very tender point, and in that experience we had some nasty confrontations in the Beanerie [cafeteria] and elsewhere. So we called the Four O's together, and they decided they could cool this kind of attitude by getting out into the fraternities and helping them understand what was going on. So that kind

of thing could be done. There was some real leadership in the Rollins community and that was very attractive and appealing to me.

Zhang: You mentioned about nasty confrontations in Beans. Tell us more about that.

Wettstein: Ah, well, usually in Beans, people sat with their own fraternities, and they didn't open themselves to others. But some of our African American students thought they'd like to sit down there, and they were blocked off. And, so then there was quite a bit of tension around that score. Then also the problems of room assignments: where could the African American students lodge and how would we work that out?

Zhang: Looking back, has your impression of the student body changed over the years?

Wettstein: Well one—I think I see is a continuation of that community service interest. But now, in a context of really serious academic endeavor, Rollins is much stronger now, as a college and as a place of learning, than it had been. And that makes quite a difference in its style. So, there are some of course who are fun loving and always will be fun loving and all that. But there are some strong, strong leaders who are more than that, and they are the ones that we found who were willing to go to Guatemala and to Ghana to work on Habitat for Humanity, all these kinds of things. And that has really built, I think, a substantial foundation for the college.

Zhang: So you have worked under four administrations: McKean, Critchfield, and Seymour, and Dr. Bornstein. Can you give us reflections of those years?

Wettstein: (Laughs) Well each was unique and each, I think, contributed in a positive way to the development of the college.

President McKean was made president, despite his disinterest, but he was made president in a time of great crisis for the college. And his congenial manner, his careful reflections were well done. But he didn't really know very much about colleges. Rollins was about the only one he saw and he knew what the Four O's were. One of the things the Four O's would do would be at the very beginning of the school year. They would gather the freshmen under the family tree, on the property of Hugh McKean, and there they would pledge themselves to the year ahead and good things and so. Some of that was kind of like the McKean era and the X Club and its origins and that kind of approach and attitude.

Then, Dr. Critchfield was an excellent administrator and very careful about fundraising and financial matters. So he presided at a time when the college was settling into a more successful and viable economic institution as well.

He was followed by Thaddeus Seymour, who took the education and the liberal arts very, very seriously and thought that education is not training and it might attract some people for training, but its task, and the Rollins task, is to provide this powerful form of learning in the liberal arts. And Seymour was one who was very close to students. And he knew that students needed to feel an identity with the college and with their teachers and others. So he really brought a character to the college, I think.

Then Dr. Bornstein came along, and I didn't get to work too closely with Dr. Bornstein because that was the time that I thought I should resign and give up to the chaplaincy and have

someone else do it. So I didn't have that much opportunity. But I loved President Bornstein's conversations. When she would have a small group to dinner, she always had some theme that she wanted them to explore and unfold, and she was very good in doing that. And of course, her other task is of course to raise money and to stay close to George Cornell and to get that legacy, which has really made a tremendous impression on the college. The college is much more relaxed about fund raising than it had been.

So I look forward to our current president. I think he has all of the characteristics of being just the person for the job.

Zhang: Over the years, what courses you have taught— What do you enjoy the most?

Wettstein: Oh yeah. When I saw that you were interested in that, I looked and said to myself, Geez, did I do all of these things? That's great arrogance to think that you can teach so many different things. But here are some of them. From the first I taught World Religions, Asian Religion, and Philosophy of Religion. I taught courses in Religion and America, the History of Religion in America, and the special interest in the Cults in America. I was really quite interested in that, did some publishing in that field. Bible— I did courses in the Old Testament and the New Testament and a course in the Book of Job. I did a course on Classic and Contemporary Literature in Eastern and Western Cultures and one on the future of marriage. That was a lot of territory to take but it was fascinating thing. And when the special masters program started, the Master of Liberal Arts, I taught in that pretty regularly because I did the Religion in Western Culture course and then also things like the study of the Book of Job and Contemporary Religious Thought. So those, those are a few things.

Zhang: That's a lot of courses! Tell us about your work with the eastern and western class of literature. I understand you received an NEH Grant to study Chinese literature and religion. That's just fascinating.

Wettstein: Yes, well we— What I did was to set up a course in which we read from the ancient materials. So with Indian culture we read the *Ramayana* and then we read some contemporary poets and novelists. Tagore, as a poet, and then Narayan, as a novelist. And what we were looking for were the values. Were they the same still after this big change?

Then in terms of Chinese literature, we did of course on the *Analects* and uh, with interest in the classical way, and then in the contemporary went kind of halfway there. The book whose title I just— Oh, the *Dream of the Red Chamber*. We looked at that and then in the contemporary field, a new book had come out which I just happened to see in the Berkley Bookstore when I was out there on a trip. And it was by six women, giving the women's experience in contemporary China. And that was a fascinating thing.

And then with Japan we did the *Pillow Talk* kind of traditional work. And I think, yeah, we read some of the Zen masters. So, and we found in all these that, yes, the values, the basic values, were still there. And we were looking then, at China under the communist culture, it wasn't dominant at all really in that as far as values and the people were concerned.

Zhang: Yes, we Chinese, have an old saying called: "Read ten thousand volumes and travel ten thousand miles away in order to be successful." Tell us about your course of service to the third world country. What inspired you to develop this course?

Wettstein: Well, what inspired me was kind of related to what we were talking about before. I felt I couldn't really teach ethics in an affluent society very well without having a confrontation with the problems as they really are. And so I thought, You just can't come to any significant ethical conclusions when you're sitting in your chez lounge or driving your convertible to the beach or whatever.

So, I made some arrangements with a minister in town who worked with high schools, young people. And that kind of got me going to think that there might be something that college students could do. So I went with him to Haiti and we spent a weekend in Haiti in Port-au-Prince, and there saw the most abject conditions: huts built out of discarded wood and metal sheets, and no— And five thousand people squeezed into a neighborhood. There being no sewage, they had to walk for their water. And all of that, what does that say to us and how does that shape us?

Well, just as I was ready to take the group to Haiti for the first project, Papa Doc [Dr Francois Duvalier] left and Baby Doc [Jean-Claude Duvalier], who lived in Barbados, came into power. And the whole situation in Haiti was now too, too uncertain. It just— I didn't think I could really bring young students into that situation. So I made—followed up some contacts I'd made with people in Jamaica who had a program in which they were working in the Blue Mountains, and they needed help in nursery care and teaching and some health care. And so, we went there instead. And then had several, really beautiful years. Usually in the spring term, or rather the J-term. This was made possible with the J-term in which one has only this one subject.

We went to work in Jamaica and then from Jamaica we became a part of a group that worked in Guatemala and there we really made a big impact on one small village. It, too, had very little water supply. The water would be turned on for half an hour once a week. You kind of took a bath in a thimble full of water— That, and community building, were our emphases there.

And then I wanted to see if perhaps some students would like to tackle understanding African culture. So we made arrangements for a trip to Uganda, and then for three trips to Ghana. So that was—

And that changed people. They really came away from that experience with a commitment, a realization that we've got to do something about the number one problem of the world. The condition of poverty in the world of affluence is just not tolerable. So that is how we got into that.

Zhang: Great. Could you tell us what year those programs started?

Wettstein: Hm. Uhm, I think '85.

Zhang: Okay.

Wettstein: Yeah, when did Duvalier leave office? I think it was '85.

Zhang: Okay, could you tell us about your work with Habitat for Humanity here in Winter Park?

Wettstein: My work was just at the beginning of it. I've forgotten now how I heard of Habitat, but we heard that, oh yes— We have, among college chaplains an organization called the National Association of College and University Chaplains. This had meetings every year and we'd share ideas on ministry. It was a group of very interesting people, one of whom was talking to us about Habitat and introduced us to Habitat.

Now along with— Along my ministry at the church, at the chapel, we managed to take on an assistant chaplain for me, who was John Langfitt. John volunteered to take a group of students over to Tampa where we understood there was a Habitat project. So he went over to Tampa and started, and our students were so impressed, not only with the soundness of the building that was being constructed, but the responsibility of the home owner in the this whole process. It's very significant, I think, for Habitat to be very careful about who gets the help and how and why and so on. So they came back with a good report, and so then we called a meeting of interested students together to see if they were willing to do something. So they formed the Habitat for Humanity chapter at Rollins College to raise money for the building of homes. And then one home followed another, and so a lot has been done.

Zhang: Yeah, that's a great achievement. So basically you and John and a group of students established the Winter Park Rollins chapter with that.

Wettstein: Yes, but we couldn't do much without a lot of help. So we had wonderful help from the administration. President Seymour was very supportive of it all. I moved to the international side so in a way we had a local neighborhood task on the one hand and the international work on the other.

Zhang: Could you tell us about your work with the Daily Bread program and also the World Hunger Concert?

Wettstein: Well (laughs). Yeah, the Daily Bread was something that I became aware of. That was the work of the Christian Service Center in Downtown Orlando. They have a soup kitchen, and the soup kitchen needed help every day, of eight to ten people to serve up the dinner. And so we got involved in that. The churches, the local churches would supply people and then we would supply students, one per year. They had such good support that the churches couldn't serve more than once.

I had, in my ethics course, two students who decided that they would like to really identify with the problem by becoming a part of it for an overnight. So they took their shabbiest blue jeans and put them on. And the girl did not wear any make-up or whatever, and the two of them went down and sat down and ate lunch at the Bread for the World location [Daily Bread]. And they got into conversation and one of the homeless said, "Oh I know what your problem is: she's pregnant, isn't she?" (Laughter) So the guy wanted to go along with it; he said, "Yes, what can we do?" And one of the men overheard and said, "Whatever you do, don't go to the hospital!" (Laughter) "They're crooks over there!" (Laughter) "But I know of a good nurse, a good mid-wife nurse and she'll take care of you." And she found a bit of a paper napkin and wrote down the midwife's telephone number. Well that's the kind of thing that could happen. The students really got a taste of what it was like.

Oh, in regard to hunger, the hunger problems, we, Rollins, became one of the only college in the country that supported Oxfam America every year for twenty-five years. So

students would dedicate a day, and the idea was that they would not, that they would fast for a day and take the money they'd set aside for that day and put that in the fund for Oxfam. So they did that and then realized that there was even more that can happen when you build a larger base. So they started to get little combos going that could put on a big world hunger concert, which they did for, every year, for ten or eleven years, using some musical groups from the college itself and others from other schools. That was something that gave life to the program and kept it going.

Zhang: That's really a wonderful story. Now let's switch to a different subject. Could you tell us about your work as the Dean of the Chapel? I understand you served from '72 to '90, right?

Wettstein: Yeah, yeah. Well, it was a great privilege to serve as the Dean of the Chapel and it was something that I thought was needed to continue as a strong part of the college. The worship of God was one of the main themes of course of the chapel program. The openness to understanding, to understanding the divine, and working out a workable philosophy was something that individuals kept doing and most of my work as a Dean of the Chapel was meeting with students who were coming to understand what they believed about religion and ethics. And how religion must go beyond just talking about God, and so much of this was with small informal groups. It seemed to me that spirituality was an attitude into which students could grow. So we started to establish some Zen meditations. We located Abbess Geshin, who was a Zen master, who would come down and be with us for a week or so. And every morning at 7:30 students and faculty would come into French House and there we'd practice Zazen. Then often on a Friday afternoon we would take ten to twenty students out to a quiet tree lined area next to the lake and there have meditation. So the development of meditative skills was important to us and the development of programs in which respect for religions other than our own could be included was part of the whole system.

Students as chapel readers and ushers and had a lot of fun with that. We had to deal with emergencies from time to time, including one night at Christmas Vespers, with the chapel all filled with people. You couldn't bring another person in there with a crowbar, we'd say. All of a sudden it was raining outside, this torrent of water just came down the Frances Chapel, right in the middle of the ceremony! For years, some termites had been eating away at one section of the roof. This was the breakthrough.

And so a part of what we developed at that period of time was a baccalaureate service that we could do on our own and that became an important part of the chaplaincy.

Zhang: So I understand every Sunday you would hold a service.

Wettstein: Yes.

Zhang: So could you recall some of the most memorable sermons you delivered?

Wettstein: Well, I think the most memorable were from our guest preachers. Bill Coffin, who had been chaplain at Yale, had spoken here. The chaplain at Princeton, Ernest Gordon, had spoken here.

Well my own experience was shaped here, a good deal I guess, by one of the sermons that I gave, that was then published, called “The Listening Presence,” in which I spoke of God as the ultimate listener.

Oh, and we had some experimental services like Jazz masses, when the band came in playing— What’s the famous jazz song about heaven? Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In. Yes. They would come down the center aisle playing that, and those kinds of things were important.

But then much of the chaplaincy had to do with the different aspects of college life. And one of the trying and difficult times for us was back in, when was that? Seventy, nineteen-eighty-something. The famous *Equus* affair. Two students came into my office and said that the city ordinance has been announced that the play, *Equus*, could not be shown and given if it had nudity, and so that became the central issue for the campus. We made arrangements to have everybody gather for a town meeting in Bush Auditorium the following afternoon and there we realized that we have to maintain a free society and give people the opportunity to do things. And we happened to have a bunch of stakes six feet long and big pieces of cardboard and a few magic markers. The students filled these out and we took a march into Park Avenue and back. The administration was just marvelous in helping to see this being done without implying themselves in the field. So Dr. Seymour was glad to hear the announcement that the play can be presented. And it was very successful. So those are the kinds of things that one gets into in the chaplaincy.

Zhang: So looking back, any particular individual students you will always remember over your years at Rollins?

Wettstein: Students, especially? I guess— I just had a call a few weeks ago from Mark Miller, who was a philosophy and religion major in 1970. Or no, maybe even earlier than that. Let’s see, I had Woody Nash as a student, a very interesting activist. He opposed the Galileo Project for sending, which included a nuclear device powering the satellite. And we gathered, went over to Cape Canaveral, and stood at the gate and I had the bond money in my pocket because we knew what would likely happen. Woody crossed the picket line and was brought into custody and we then went to the county jail after an hour or two and found him, and put up our bond and managed to complete the project. There have been a number of really neat students like that. We had some great students in the choir, over the years. And those, those are memorable people.

Zhang: And now looking back, how do you view your Rollins career?

Wettstein: Well, I couldn’t do it in any other place, I think. Rollins presented a series of opportunities for growth that anyone would like to be a part of. We saw that the tradition of enjoying life continued, but it continued as a part of a community of people who had strong goals; and some of them are goals for the betterment of human kind. So I think— As I think back on my life, sure there are plenty of things one might have done a little differently if one had a second chance. But, well that’s like being interviewed, you know? You don’t have the second chance. But Rollins has been very good for me. It has given me enough leverage that I could accomplish what I really thought was important to do.

Zhang: That's great. Now, in your opinion, what are the areas of achievement that you are most proud of?

Wettstein: Well, we haven't talked about my academic work. That's one of the things I might have been wrong in doing. I wrote a number of articles. My specialty was interest in the work of Paul Tillich, and I think that some of the work that I did in the *Cults in America* could have taken more time and been expanded into a book. And I could've had some publication there on that score. But that I think was one of the things I was proud to be a part of. Some of the original courses in the master's program I have felt strongly about, too.

Oh, yes, I haven't mentioned at all the *Chautauquas* that I was involved in. This, I noticed in a religion scholar's newspaper, that they were looking for someone who would portray Reinhold Niebuhr, the important Protestant theologian. And there would be a nationwide contest; we would have to send in a video and so on. Well I knew of Niebuhr; he was one of my teachers at Union Seminary and so I thought, Oh I'll try it. And I won. I did the video, sent it in, and one of the students worked the machine for me and that was a delight. One of the things in the, in the test was that one had to answer questions that were not posed before, and that was fun to do. So I became, then, a figure in the Missouri *Chautauqua*, which was set up by the Humanities Council in Missouri to bring current issues to people back in the small Midwestern towns and so forth. We'd go into a town and put up a big circus tent and then each night one of us, as a scholar, would portray a great figure from our history and or, you know, or literature. And then at the last we would wind it all up by Saturday night and be ready to go on to the next. That was very, quite a nice experience for me. One that I found just delightful.

Zhang: So that was before Rollins?

Wettstein: Ah, no, this was after Rollins. Yeah.

Zhang: So in recent years?

Wettstein: Yeah, this is recent. The—I'm not sure now what the date was of the Niebuhr. I also did one on Harry Emerson Fosdick, the great preacher of the Riverside Church, and that one I just finished like three years ago.

Zhang: Okay, great. I have one more question. You served as Dean of the Chapel and you're in charge of the weddings. So I understand you have married more than five hundred people over two decades. So how's that like in addition to your Sunday service? You must've had a very busy weekend.

Wettstein: Oh yeah, the weekends were busy. And very often we'd have three wedding's on a Saturday. The chapel is such a beautiful building and it just is so natural for a wedding that we did them again and again. Every young bride in Winter Park and Orlando wanted to be married in that chapel. Well we couldn't handle that many so what we decided to do is that we'd only make the services available to alumni or faculty and their families. And so, we cut it [the list] down.

Now, the five hundred figure is, I think, a little expanded, but we certainly did have lots of weddings and it gave us good relationships with these people. We, oh I guess about fifteen years ago or so, maybe twenty, we set up a special service for the renewal of the vows and invited all the couples who had been married in the chapel to come to a chapel service, and we included the renewal of vows in the service and then went out and had lunch under a tent. It was really quite a splendid occasion so, you know, we did a lot of marrying and the people still come by and say thank you. On Saturday, I will be doing a renewing of the vows ceremony for a couple that has been married twenty-five years. So that's an interesting opportunity.

Zhang: That's really wonderful. Thank you so much, Arnold. I really appreciate your time and your contribution to our oral history project. Thank you.

Wettstein: Well, thank you.