

0:02 Interview with Vernon Hansen; subject President S.C. Eastvold, December 10, 1980; Tom Fryxell interviewer

0:23 As a senior class president I did very little, so I'm not really going to speak to you from that point of view. I think more just from a student who was here for four years. It was really kind of a fluke that I was a senior class president. It was something that I didn't want to do although apparently I didn't know that I didn't want to do, and so I wound up running and winning. I'm sure that that there has never been a senior class president who did less than I did, unless things have changed you know maybe there is no such thing anymore but was there was very little.

I suppose it was the kind of thing you could make make of it what you wanted but I and I just shied away from it, did very little. I don't recall any kind of contact that I had with Eastvold as a result of that. I can remember only one time that I was in his office and I can't remember what that was for. It may have been in relation to his class presidency, but I know that maybe.

So I think I was a fairly average student, fairly typical, very passive in comparison to... not at all active, you just do what you're told kind of thing. And I had been programmed pretty well, so I fit in fairly well in that. So maybe if you want to focus my answers a little more. I can speak more in terms of of this fairly typical student's attitude about Eastvold and knowledge of Eastvold from from a distance.

2:08 What were your impressions of him? What type of man did he strike you as?

2:12 Well really, such a complex person and it's kind of hard to maybe pin down into just a few words, but I guess one of the things that I remember as I started to think about him aloof. I can remember him being very busy. I mean very impatient kind of. He just had all kinds of energy and he'd never apparently learned how to just relax in a social kind of situation, at least in relation to students he always had an agenda.

I can remember him being at some kind of an informal thing and supposedly talking with students and spending a little time with me and it was just like you know the kind person who you had you had the feeling that he wasn't really interested in you I mean. I think we accepted that that's just the way he is that he wasn't a warm - he might have been a warm person some, but I doubt it. I think that he had developed it.

3:21 I think his mind was going all the time and he was always working at establishing this place and that relating to students was not at all a priority. He related to people, he was around a lot, I mean as he was working all the time I'm sure and when he was raising money. One of the things we were always aware of, but I think it was true too that he wherever he'd go he'd ask people for money for PLU and it was kind of a common understanding, it's not a joke, sort of a thing that he ... like if he'd go to Eastern Washington to see the rich farmers over there quote rich farmer.

And they would not like to see him coming because they knew that it was going to mean

money. There's no way they could they could escape that conversation without giving PLU some money, PLC of course. I think that he was just so focused on establishing PLU and maybe that's the way he operated wherever he was. It wasn't a change like his personality changed or anything, he was a builder. I think that he'd been a pastor before that and he had built the church you know and now he took this job as this college president he was going to build this college and he did. He scrounged and he got the money. He was wheeling and dealing and in fact eventually that kind of did him in.

5:02 Do you mean in relation to Ocean Shores?

5:04 Yeah, as it turns out that probably if people had just let him do that and let him invest PLU's money in a illegal way - he had no authority to do it - PLU might be really sitting pretty now you know if they just if they had just let that thing go and they hadn't pulled it back, or if they hadn't stopped you in the process. But you know the church, I guess enough people put pressure on them.

Well it's kind of beside the point but as I understand enough people put pressure on them - on the Board of Regents - and the chair of the Board of Regents was the district president of the ALC H.L Foss. He had been a long time supporter of Eastvold and even Foss had told him that he couldn't get by with that. I think that kind of was the end of it then, but Eastvold was just very single-minded.

The other thing I was going to say was that he did maintain contact with the community, the PLU community, through the daily chapel and that was his. He was just a master in extemporaneous speaking. He was never at a loss for words and he seemed to be a very gifted speaker: introducing people, bringing a message of some kind himself, and he did that often, wrapping things up and you know he'd introduce and then he'd close it off. It was a one-person show really.

6:42 Was this communication more one way than two way?

6:48 I think most people, you know, just as I remember there was moaning and groaning and bitching about the strictness of it. And I'm sure some people didn't, for example, you had to go to chapel, you were assigned a place, you know, you had a seat, they'd check and they took roll. And I was one of the good boys and I usually went, you know. But I'm sure a lot of people didn't and that's what it played, not a lot but there was always a percentage who just you know rebelled against that they weren't going to do that.

7:30 What would they do with these people?

7:32 As I remember there they'd keep track and if you got three unexcused absences from chapel the Dean of Students would you know you'd have to explain that to the Dean of Students - the Dean of Men and the Dean of Women, you know, they'd called you in and and which was ridic - I never had the experience, I wish I had but ... so I don't know what happened but it had to be a pretty humiliating and just frustrating kind of experience, but what in the world? You know a lot of these people had no they weren't here to go to chapel they were here for various reasons maybe some even to learn something you know.

8:11 Who was the Dean of Men?

8:12 Dean of Man was Ecklund. I forget his first name now. Not Emmet Ecklund, no it was a different... he was a psychologist. I can't remember his first name right now. Phillip, maybe.

8:31 What would they usually say to the person who who refused to attend?

8:40 Well, I'm sure they would say well you you you have to, they would eventually kick people out if they didn't attend. That's what they would do if they didn't go to chapel and I suppose people found a way around it. But there were, I'm they were sure there was a small group of people who were considered troublemakers and and then maybe they'd give the Dean of Men - some of them enjoyed giving him a lot of trouble. And he was easy, it was easy to do that. He was a strange guy he wasn't cut out for the job. He was a soft-spoken kind of person and it must have been a horrible job that he had. He wasn't effective at all and so I suppose he just let some people get by with it and turn the other you know - look the other way or something because I don't see how they could have enforced it with with the collection of people who were around you know some just weren't going to put up with that crap.

9:37 what were the students attitudes towards Eastvold's policy of no dancing or no music on campus how did they feel about that?

9:46 Well I'm sure there was a lot of dissatisfaction and you're talking to someone who wasn't - I was well-liked and all that and well-known but I didn't have, there wasn't a group of people that I ran with. I was kind of a social misfit so you really should talk and I can give you some possible names of other people who might might be able to you know, depending upon how detailed you want to get in this, I'm sure that there is a lot of anger, a justified anger, directed toward Eastvold and those those policies.

And I can remember a couple of basketball players for example one year being dropped from the team because they were caught or somebody found out they had been drinking you know and so they had it. It was off campus even, too. I think in this case, at that point, I can't remember how much they enforced that but I think that it was even off limits, you know, the understanding was and see my problem is I never even thought about doing some of that stuff. So I can't really answer you very accurately at least from experience that but you know like the Golden Slipper down here, whatever it is now, there were several favorite places for PLU students and I suppose it was the kind of thing that there was a group who just blatantly - at least comparatively blatantly - violated those rules and then there were times when the Dean of Men was under pressure to to enforce them and I suppose some people got a kick out of violating too you know.

11:51 Did you hear of any ways they tried to get around these rules on campus such as the no dancing I heard also that he was against social music being played, popular music, that is?

12:07 That wasn't something I was aware of. I kind of doubt it, I mean just because there wasn't anything objectionable about that about the stupid popular music that was going on in those days at least in the early 50s. Maybe you know after Elvis came along in the late 50s when he was still around it's possible that he had, that there were, you know, he was even specifying what music people could listen to. I wasn't aware of that.

12:40 Did Eastvold ever give reasons why he wanted mandatory chapel?

12:46 There isn't there wasn't even a need to do that. I'm sure that that was just an assumption you know. There was no need to justify that from his point of view, it was just the main thing, it was just no question about it. Everybody, faculty, the whole place closed down. I suppose it had been traditional and maybe when he came here he agreed very much with that tradition. The understanding was that this is the center of the whole place, this chapel hour. My guess is that there was never any assumption that that needed to be justified.

13:46 What happened to the students who came into the dorm past curfew hours?

13:55 Trouble, I mean if they were caught. and on the other hand uh see the things were run pretty loosely, too. I'm sure now I remember living there down in Ivy, I can't even remember if we had any there was no nothing like a head resident. Of course there were - the males were treated differently than the women students and there was really no supervision down there. Anything went so that was a strange thing, too.

You also had at the same time, I don't know, there must have been some amazing conflicts because he was - when the veterans from World War II were - he came about the same time of that influx you know and I'm sure that there were times when on that group so they they must have learned ways.

They treated the males much differently than partly I suppose because of the experience with the returning veterans. The last year I was here two new dorms had been built they were called North and South, now it's Hong and Hinderlie. Hong was was men's and Hinderlie was women's - and again I don't remember having any problems there - getting in and out or violations.

I think that they had a woman who lived down there and she was, I forget they called it, different something else you know like I can't remember, some informal kind of name, she was supposedly in charge of the whole place and she had some students, a student assistant on each floor. But it was minimal supervision she was more like a you know a mom away from home sort of thing I mean people saw her as sort of a she was a grandmotherly type, older, pleasant, low-key. You didn't want to hurt her feelings kind of a thing, you know. and that was the way they tried to - I don't know if it was a conscious effort on their part - again I don't know I know that the women had they had much more strict rules about when they had to be in. They could be out like til two o'clock on the weekends and that sort of thing. Seniors living in the dorm.

16:37 What did Eastvold like to talk to in chapel? Did he have any theme?

16:48 Well the theme that I remember and that you'll probably hear if you talk to a few people, every Friday "it's been a good week" that was his theme and in other words, plus moving ahead, you know this is what happened this week. I talked to this little widow you know she's - I mean, not that that would be this all the time but as an example I suppose - and she has two pieces of property and she's going to will those to PLU. I mean not that it was always along those lines, but that he saw with the development of this place that's what that has been a good week meant I think.

Well one of the other things that was the common theme as far as any kind of message that he would have to provide was the badness of alcohol and - not that he preach on this often - but I can remember this is something he would refer to from time to time, "proud of the fact that not not one drop of the devil's something or other has ever touched my lips."

Other than that you know I can't remember any other positive themes or negative themes he usually had. Well I guess one other theme that I recall was death and you may have heard this in talking with people: we're dying men, not women, we're dying men in a dying world and this and this most recent death - whoever it might happen to be - reminds us all of that.

19:00 Did he tie this into sin?

19:03 Well, I don't know. I don't remember any kind of a connection there. I'm sure that that would have been a part of it you know he had a definite opinion of what sin was and what it wasn't and his opinions he had no qualms about sharing it.

19:25 Going back to his attitude on alcohol, did he make it a requirement that even the faculty not touch alcohol?

19:35 I don't think they could have - don't he could have accomplished that. I think that they did a thorough job of screening people when they came in and they no doubt they made as sure as possible that whoever they were hiring at least tended to agree with all this stuff.

20:04 Did you ever hear of a faculty member getting in to any kind of trouble regarding alcohol?

20:09 No, never did. They might have been, but because you know it's very possible there were people faculty who were alcoholics, but it must have been a pretty guarded kind of thing.

20:26 What would they generally do with students who had been caught. You mentioned that the basketball players have been dropped from the team. Did parents ever complain about this policy?

20:35 Suspended from school. I'm sure they did and I'm sure some probably agreed with the school against their kids you know and I suppose some fought the school about it. I suppose that maybe uh my guess is that maybe a larger percentage agreed with the school against their children.

21:07 What was the social life with all these restrictions like?

21:11 It was pretty bad, you know, it's even worse than it is now. There was very, there wasn't much. I think the women students then had probably more to complain about, about not being - well I hope it's changing so that the women students aren't dependent on the males to make things happen for them - but dates nobody had many of them. Women students didn't get asked out or anything.

It was few and far between. There wasn't much happening on campus. There were a lot of clubs and those got, you know, informal kinds of socializing in the dining hall, eating with people and maybe once in a while coffee. But very little formal. Very, very little formal activity.

22:17 Did anybody ever bring the subject to Eastvold, concerning dances and stuff?

22:20 Yeah, I can remember even then at that point, just adamantly opposed. You know we can't have that, you know, there's no place for that here.

22:35 Did he ever say anything specifically about, say, dancing?

22:38 You know I can't tell you. I just wish I had been somewhat alert when I was here. This is all impressionistic from kind of a foggy awareness of the environment. So I can't be very specific and if you want me to I can try to think of some people who would be around here that you could contact who could give you some more specific points of view.

23:14 I was wondering, say in place of homecoming, what would they have?

23:18 Well, they had Homecoming. That was a big social event, but there was no. No dance, as I

recall, but I'm sure there were... I know there couldn't have been and I don't know what people did. They had the football game and they had the women's powderpuff bowl game in the morning they had some floats that they had at halftime and people would work on floats together. In lieu of dances there were dinners you know. They had tolos but they didn't dance. They invited you, you went out to dinner with groups of people, you just spent money at the restaurant eating I guess and so that sort of thing.

That as far as a formal, there might have been a lot of informal stuff going on you know small groups I'm sure there of course well I was going to say while I happen to think of it. Lou Hefty in the nursing department was here for two of those years at that point, at that time. They had the nursing students spend the middle years at Portland, in Portland at Emmanuel Hospital, but I think she was pretty active socially and she would be able to talk from the standpoint of women students. Another person right here on campus, Nan Nokleberg works from the School of Ed. She could really tell you she could give you a lot more specific answers I'm sure about this kind of thing. She's an administrative person there, works with Ken Johnson.

25:19 How about Erving Severtson?

25:21 Yeah, Erv was something like me except Erv was much more conscious than I was and he would be able to remember a lot more specific things and also he was the president of the student body. I think you thought I was when you first called me or something. He was active politically, I mean he tried to accomplish, he tried to do some things.

25:51 How did he get along with Eastvold?

25:53 I think he learned very early, ways of getting along with people. I mean he wasn't an adversary, he didn't, he tried to work with him yeah that's the only way he could do it. I'm sure he probably was pretty effective, too.

26:11 What are your most vivid impressions or memories of Eastvold? Are there any instances that particularly stand out in your mind?

26:28 No. I remember him standing at the podium, kind of holding forth at the podium, but in a very effective way now. He had tremendous powers of persuasion and also just an indomitable will.

27:02 What would happen with people who disagreed with him? Would he listen to their point of view?

27:10 I'm sure not. No attempt, no need, no need. So people either avoided him or if it came to a confrontation they were going to lose. Now eventually he lost when he got involved with this Ocean Shores thing and I think that that's probably what killed him. It took a couple years for it to come in, but yeah that probably did it.

27:42 Did he resign on his own accord?

27:44 No he was coerced to resign.

27:47 Directly because of the Ocean Shores thing?

27:50 Yeah, as I understand it. But there are other people around here who can fill you in on that.

27:57 Who would be good to talk to about that?

28:00 Well I would think that both Phil Nordquist and Art Martinson would be able to give you a lot of stuff there. I don't know if either one was around right at that time but they were at least close to it. They must have heard some stories. As far as people who were around at that time you've got a number of faculty who would date back to that time and just be a matter of looking up. I suppose John Schiller would have some handle on that.

Who else will tell you somebody who would enjoy talking with you and who's retired now, but it's Erich Knorr, Sociology. He's around here somewhere I think unless he's south for the winter, but he could give you just scads of information and of course all of this is from the individual's perspective and I was trying to think of someone who might have been a more objective kind of observer. Sociologists should be whether they are or not something else again both those people are sociologists John Schiller and Eric Knorr.

29:40 I was wondering what was the average student's, I realize you're a bit apart from most of the student body, but did you ever get any idea of what the student body as a whole thought of Eastvold? Did they think highly of him or did they tend to frown on him?

30:03 I think that, I know I think I can speak fairly well from that standpoint that is because I was at least superficially close to a variety of people. I think most people just kind of put up with it, sort of passive resistance. I think very few people thought he was a terrific, tremendous person or anything like that. There were some who were probably impressed with him from time to time at his skills and if they ever stopped to think about it, but I think most people just kind of put up with it. That would be the most positive and there were some who I imagine maybe the majority as you as you put it would wear more of a frown than a smile.

31:05 Was there any part of the student body who are quite vocal or anti?

31:12 Yeah I think a small number who would tend to be among those I was mentioning before would be flaunting the norms and for whatever reason and as long as they were here for whatever reason they were here and they just couldn't stand the rules.

Or else maybe they needed the rules to kick against, or something. You know what all kinds of developmental things are going on with various groups in various stages and so on so forth. Maybe they needed to be here so that they could kick against you know the authorities, the authority figures.

31:59 Where was chapel held before Eastvold Chapel? Was that down at Memorial ?

32:08 Yeah and I don't know where it was before that. Because I think Memorial was just being finished when I came in 1951. Then a couple years later Eastvold chapel came along. I don't know where they met before that. It must have been... There used to be a chapel or a church right on campus right between the library and Harstad?

32:43 What year did Eastvold die? Was that '72?

32:45 No you know I may be wrong about this when did he leave here? '62. It seems to me it was more like '64. That's my guess. So that's why I say I think that he'd experienced defeat maybe for the first time there when he had to leave here. And he went down to California Lutheran but it wasn't the same I'm sure.

33:25 Just from his overall presidency what attitudes does the school in general have from

now? Do you ever hear any of the faculty talk back on his administration? How do they regard him?

33:54 Yeah, every so often. I think sort of awe, with awe. Here was this giant of a person in terms of the skills that he had, and the sharp mind that he had, and then the, as I put it before, just indomitable, such a strong will. I think that there tends to be more admiration for him than anything and maybe that's, I don't know what kinds of things are going on there because there certainly were some negative, a lot of negative things too. Maybe there's a tendency to remember the good things rather than bad but we still - I suppose most people are when it comes right down to it the thing they are aware of that they who do look back on Eastvold's time here is is that there wouldn't be a PLU if it hadn't been for him.

He took it at a time when it was just ready to go under and he established it. He accomplished what he set out to do and maybe there's an appreciation for that and the fact that maybe people made allowances for some of the more negative aspects because of that fact.

35:41 So he's regarded with respect as well as a realization that he was unyielding in some aspects then?

35:58 Yeah and people maybe if they think about it a little they see that as both a strength and a weakness, that combination. There's a thing that allowed him to accomplish what what he did but it was also the thing that was a big handicap too in terms of personal, interpersonal relations or their interpersonal norms and maybe of the place too. He wouldn't have had to be that, he wouldn't have had to be, for example, as moralistic as he was.

On the other hand, he reflected the group that he came from: the church. At that point that's the way it was: very conservative, very pietistic, oriented to certain behaviors as being good and others as not being good there wasn't much question which they were.

So alcohol, sex, and things. Dance, that's just another word for sex and I mean that that was the that was the reason dancing was not allowed. It was physical contact, that was the point of being against it. But those were things that the church stood for. Those were norms of the church and he reflected those. This being a church school I suppose it was impossible it would have been very unlikely that you'd have a kind of a leader, a president who would be able to convince these good Lutherans to give the money to the college who didn't have the same values that they did.

38:06 So part of his being conservative also to keep the money coming in?

38:10 Well that was the effect of it, I mean that's the main thing he did was to get money, you know. His accomplishment was to raise lots of money and then eventually they got the federal loans to build the two dorms, Hong and Hinderlie. I suppose then the others came up, but I mean by that at that point they started getting into the federal bucks, too, but before that it was all private.

Then I think about the same time West was built, and that's the Kreidler. That another year later so, but Ivy and there were two down here, temporary or you know one turned into a permanent.

39:09 Well, thank you very much.