

ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

Interview Release Form

In consideration of my desire to be of assistance to future historians of Roosevelt University, I, Edward J. Sparling, hereby authorize and approve that the interview with me recorded on Dec. 10 and 14, 1970, by Daniel Perlman be included in the Roosevelt University Archives and be made available, by the Roosevelt University Librarian, to users of the Archives. I hereby also grant permission to the users of the Archives for the publication of this interview or portions thereof.

October 13, 1971
(Date)

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INTERVIEW OF EDWARD J. SPARLING - DECEMBER 10, 1973

Mr. Perlman: My first question is why did Roosevelt University, or Roosevelt College at that time, adopt a policy of having representation of the faculty on the Board of Trustees? How did it come into being? Why was it adopted?

Mr. Sparling: That's exactly what I was going to tell you. You tell me when you're ready to go.

DHP: We're ready to go.

EJS: Roosevelt College has developed from another college which had developed under the auspices of the YMCA. In that college they had a Board of Trustees of 15 persons, one of which I, as President of the institution, was. We had an exceptionally fine relationship for the first eight years of the college. They had adopted every suggestion that I had ever made for their adoption and, until the issue of race and labor, and the freedom of the faculty, became involved, we had a very wonderful relationship.

DHP: You came there as the President in 1936?

EJS: Yes, I became President in 1936, and with respect to the Board I found some discriminations against students which we did away with. I could be specific, but you may know some of the history, I don't know...against the black students.

DHP: You mentioned I think that they were not able to use the swimming pool.

EJS: Yes, that's right, and my first complainant was a Negro student, when I became president of Central YMCA College, and he told me that he was charged \$2.50 and wasn't able to use the pool. Well, now then, I can summarize this by saying that all discriminations of all kinds were cut out upon the day they were discovered. We didn't wait. We established the complete freedom of admissions for this institution, which was in vogue from the day that I became president until I resigned on April 17, 1945. There were attempts on the part of the Board to challenge the freedom of the faculty, but I safely and completely defended the selection of texts and materials for classroom presentation, and, also, I defended the right of people, the professors, to teach freely about all phases of our society, including matters of race and labor. I also defended my right as President to eliminate incompetent members of the faculty upon proven incompetence regardless of their support by Board members.

DHP: Was there an issue where someone had support from the Board whom you wanted to remove?

EJS: Yes. The previous president had tried to remove him. But this Board member had come in and said he wanted him reinstalled, so the president reinstalled him. But, when I found out about his incompetence (I inquired of the Dean and the Dean told me of the past history of it), I said to the Dean: "Please inform him that he will be through as of the end of this academic year."

DHP: Can I ask a question about the Board? Outside of yourself, as the president of the institution, were there any other educators on the Board of the Central YMCA College?

EJS: Yes. Aaron Brumbaugh, from the University of Chicago.

DHP: How did it happen that he was appointed?

EJS: He was a member before I came. He was a member of the old board. At one time, he was of great use to me when the YMCA attempted to dock the faculty 50% of one month's salary because the college fell behind in budget for that month, which was a practice of the YMCA: in any department which fell below [budget] in any particular month, they docked the salaries of the members of the

department; but when they tried it with me, I called upon Brumbaugh who was on the Board, and he came and, in no uncertain terms, explained to the YMCA that their accreditation would be withdrawn if they tried any such thing as that.

DHP: He was a real ally.

EJS: Oh yes. He dropped out of the Board before this struggle. He wasn't on the board when the struggle came.

DHP: Did he drop out for his own personal reasons?

EJS: He became Secretary of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, so he felt that that put him in a conflict of interest position.

DHP: And outside of Brumbaugh? Was he the only educator?

EJS: There had been another in time beyond that. Philby, Vice President Emeritus of the University of Chicago, but he also had dropped out of the Board. But in this struggle he was on the other side, so far as I was concerned.

DHP: In other words, he sided with the public members of the Board?

EJS: In my particular situation, yes. When my resignation was required, I handed my resignation in not only to the Board of Trustees but to the press as well, because I resigned under protest. When I took hold of the College it was \$75,000 in debt, and we worked out from under that in two years; and the month they asked me to resign we had a \$35,000 cash surplus, plus an \$11,000 budget surplus for the month. So we were some \$46,000 ahead of budget when they asked for my resignation, and the college was fully accredited. Dean Works had made a report, it's in your files, no doubt. He had said that the College was in fine condition; it was well administered; its principles were proper. He pointed out that the difficulty was that the College was operating under Christian principles, and (he rather inferred that) the Board of Managers of the YMCA was not, because they had 23 white departments and two Negro departments. The Negro departments were segregated at the time. The whole YMCA was segregated, and the only part unsegregated or integrated was the College.

DHP: Let me ask you a question about the Works Report? What year was that written?

EJS: That was in 1943.

DHP: And that was a report on your administration?

EJS: It was a report on the condition of the College. This survey had been requested by the Board of Trustees of the College, because I had gotten an endowment promised to the extent of \$265,000: it was the endowment of the Chicago College of Domestic Arts and Sciences. I got the agreement of their Board to come in and join us, with the understanding that we would take their endowment and would fulfill, so far as the specifications outlined in the endowment, the educational functions for which the endowment had been given.

DHP: Something like the merger with the CMC?

EJS: Exactly the same thing. The YMCA even after the unanimous recommendation of my Board of Trustees, of which I was a member by the way, turned it down within a week of the time that the Board had made the recommendation. This was in the Spring of 1943. And, parenthetically; somebody in the YMCA tipped off Northwestern and within a week, they had the endowment that had been promised us. So this was very disturbing to the Board. They said, very frankly, why should we raise money for a college that the YMCA itself will not support and may or may not want? There had been a lot of

expressions of opposition to so-called formal education, They put all their eggs in the basket of what they called informal education. That has been the struggle of YMCA's and the colleges that they have started in the United States, and now I don't know whether there is a single college that is still under the auspices of the YMCA. in the United States. Sir George Williams College of Canada is still.

DHP: Many of them, like Drexel in Cleveland, started as Y, colleges, and became private, and some became state, even.

EJS: Yes, that's right. The Youngstown College separated, and got some real support from the community afterwards, because it became a community college. The big steel companies came in and gave them money after they got out from under the YMCA. They wouldn't do it before.

DHP: You mentioned the Work's Report. Was that written as the result of this Board's concern?

EJS: Yes, the Board then requested the YMCA to say what kind of an organization they wanted and whether or not they wished to have

the YMCA College remain under their auspices. Either they should support the college or give it up.

Well, then, I think I should tell you basically the Board relationships: The Board demanded to know the number of Negroes. There's a history of that too, it just wasn't incidental. Newton Farr was the man who demanded to know it, after I had debated with him on the question of restrictive covenants.

I had been against restrictive covenants in the City Council Chambers when Mayor Kelly had held a conference on restrictive covenants and Newton Farr had spoken for restricted covenants. After that he came up and said to me, "Jim, you don't know a damn thing about restrictive covenants" and I said, "Don't I, Newt?" and he said, "No, you don't." I said, "Okay." He handed me a pamphlet by the Southside Improvement Association which was for restrictive icovenants. So I read it, invited him to lunch, and then I said: "Newt, we'd better get on sound ground here, let's get some definitions on the table. Would you agree that restrictive covenants are a device created by men who have real estate to buy and sell to better control the market?" He said, "Yes." I also said, "Would you also agree that restrictive covenants are unchristian?" "Oh, lord, no." That hit him right in the heart. So then he took

me down to the George Washington Carver apartments and showed me what he was doing for privately supported or capitalized, low-cost housing for Negroes. He had bought this whole block, torn down all the houses and put up fifty apartments that were well done, well constructed and very cheap: \$55.00 a month for five rooms. At that time, that was dirt cheap. And I made inquiry with him (I thought we had gotten along fairly well, I hadn't antagonized him at all), I said: "Well, Newt, this is very fine but this is just one block out of a thousand. While this is good in itself it is not going to serve the public" I said, "how many requests do you have for these apartments? He said, "we have over a thousand" applications for the apartments at that time, you see. It ended on a very good note.

In November, at the Board meeting, he interrupted the agenda and said, "Jim, how many Negroes you got in the college? I said, "I don't know, Newt, we don't count that way." Somebody else spoke up and, said, "how many Jews you got?" I said, "I don't know." That made some of them angry. They said, "Well, if we want to know how many of any group you've got there, we want to know.

What's more, you're going to tell us." I said, "Yes, but I would like to say this, that if we take the numbers and they aren't used, it's a waste of time. If the numbers are taken and are used to deprive one person of an education, I'll resign as President of this institution, because I would consider such action unchristian, undemocratic and immoral." I really just hit right on the nose. So right on top of that they passed a resolution demanding that I supply the numbers of Negroes in Central YMCA College to the Board. And then it was seconded, and then the Chairman or someone else said "I think we should take the name of the maker of the motion and the seconder of the motion from the motion," which they did. One month later, I had Steward stay up all night (he was then Registrar) and take the numbers. He had 625 Negroes out of 2,500 students (25.4 per cent of the student body). He had about 800 Jewish students, 96 Japanese, and about 400 Catholics. The school was a whopping "majority of minorities." There was no action taken by the Board but they determined to take my best friends on the Board and have them talk to me personally and get me to compromise my stand, which

they did. Stanly Harris was the Vice President of the First National Bank. He was the man who had thrown my hat into the ring to become President of Central YMCA College. He also was a fraternity brother of mine; I had taught his children to swim; when I came up as President of Central YMCA College, we stayed with them in Winnetka while we looked for a house and got located. So, he was my closest personal friend. Truly a wonderful person. But he had a hang-up on the Negro situation. Finally, we talked one time for two hours on the golf course and never hit a golf ball. And then three hours at my home from 7:00 o'clock at night until 10:00. I just wouldn't compromise. I preferred to cut wood in California with a clean conscience rather than being a president of a college that was preventing young people from getting an education. I don't care whether they knew me or not. So finally, he said, "Well, Jim, you'll either leave this community quietly or our friendship is over." I said, "Well, Stanley, sometimes there are issues that are bigger than men, and if that is what you require that's what it will have to be." So that was the end of that friendship. Then the other one was Burton Hales. He now has passed on. He was also a fraternity brother of mine and he tried to get me to agree

to cut down the number of Negroes. The third person was John Rettinger. He is a man who was half Jewish, who has become a Protestant, he goes to the Winnetka Congregational Church, and he tried his best to get me to compromise. He was always considered to be one of my very best friends on the Board. But he thought I ought to compromise since the Board wanted a different kind of a group. He, himself, was somewhat more broad, although he must have gone along with the idea of cutting down the numbers, or he wouldn't have requested me personally, and spent real time, and tried to put pressure on me to compromise. Now, do you want to go on with these relationships with the Board?

DHP: If you think they are significant in determining why you ultimately established a board that had faculty representatives on it.

EJS: Okay. Well, yes, then I can establish that. After I reported to the Board, I determined to try to get support from the foundations. So on my Christmas vacation I went to New York and saw the Carnegie Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation.

DHP: Towards what end?

EJS: To try to get them to give me \$50,000 which would impress the YMCA with the worth of this institution, you see.

DHP: I see. You were still trying to get support at that point for the YMCA College.

EJS: Oh sure. I talked with Leslie who was then Secretary-Treasurer of the Carnegie Foundation and he was very much impressed by the fact that we had such an integrated and democratic institution. But his point was that since the Board is demanding that you cut down the numbers, don't be bull-headed, go back and do it, and save your great democratic experiment. I said, "the difficulty is, you don't save it by compromising and destroying it." So I went to the Rockefeller Foundation and I got the same answer from the head of the Social Science Division of the Rockefeller Foundation at that time: compromise, don't be stubborn. But they wouldn't give me a cent, either one of them. So I came back and a few days after I got back, John Rettinger called me to talk with me. Just before I had left, before Christmas, I had seen Goldblatt, Maurice Goldblatt, to try to get him to help. I succeeded in getting a very unusual promise to help. That came out of the fact

that I had done a favor for him because he was within a block of me and I got to know him through that. That's the reason that he saw me; I got to him; he was appreciative of me as a person. He had rented the Strong household, which is just a block from me, and the furnace had blown up and knocked the caretaker across the room, and he came to my house because I was known as "Dr." Sparling; he thought I was a medical doctor. So I rushed over and got the man into the police car and had him taken to the hospital, and then I went through the situation down in the basement and had the gas turned off, and the electricity for the furnace. He was so appreciative that he said won't you come over and see us. So we went over to see them that night, he and Mrs. Goldblatt, and we talked from about 7:30 until 10:00 o'clock. And much to my consternation he told me, I guess it was a little against his conscience, that he had given the Improvement Association \$750.00 to keep the Negroes in their places, that day. So we had, not a knock-down and drag-out, but I told him, "Mr. Goldblatt, this is the kind of thing that has been visited against Jewish people in different kinds of discrimination for centuries now, and I just don't think that that's right. "I Well, I made enough of an impression on him so that when I asked him to see me about the YMCA College, he said he would. So after talking

with him, he said that he would put up just south of the Kimball Building (they had some hundred and fifty feet on Wabash Ave. on the west side: the buildings belonged to him), we could have a combination whereby he would use the first and second floors for receiving for his Goldblatt stores. He would put up an entirely new building for the College in which he would promise me that the minimum would be twice the space we had, for half of what we were paying the YMCA.

DHP: Where had the Y College been located?

EJS: 19 S. LaSalle. Where the Central YMCA is now. The high school is still there.

DHP: And Goldblatt was going to do this for the YMCA College not for Roosevelt College.

EJS: That's right. Of course, Roosevelt College was way in the distance yet. And so, I gave this to the Board and they appointed a committee with Rettinger as Chairman; he was an engineer. Well, when I came back, I saw Rettinger and he said that the newly elected Chairman of the Board, who was Bill Wiseman, said that he didn't want a positive recommendation

on this, that they wouldn't accept it. And he further said, Jim Oates, who had just come in as President of the YMCA (Wiseman had been Vice President of the Central YMCA College Board of Trustees, Jim Oates came in as President of the Chicago Metropolitan YMCA), Oates had told Rettinger that he didn't want Sparling as President of that college, he didn't care how good a college president he was. And Rettinger at that time told me (he was on my side so to speak) that he had championed me before the Board. But when Mr. Harris came to him and invited him and his wife over to the Harris', he was so set up by this, that such a distinguished man had invited him and his wife to his home, that from that time on he came to see me to try and cut this down. When I wouldn't do it, he went to the other side. The vote wasn't unanimous until my resignation was asked at the Board Meeting on April 16th. I was a member of the Board, but I was not invited to the Board meeting because they were going to ask for my resignation. It was agreed on April 13th that they would ask for my resignation. On February 7th, Bill Wiseman had called me, and I said to my secretary,

"Susan, this is it." (Susan Hutchinson Bowersox was my secretary at that time.) So, I went over to Bill Wiseman's office, he was Vice President of the Chicago Title and Trust, and he started in by saying that this was the hardest thing he ever had to do in his whole life. I said, "Well, what's that, Bill?" He said, "I must ask your resignation as President of the College." I And I said, "Well, why, Bill?" He said, "Your qualifications are no longer compatible with the requirements of the job." Whereupon I said, "the College was in the finest condition in its history, was fully accredited, had a strong faculty and a loyal student body." I then asked if his request for my resignation had been an action of the Board of Trustees, whereupon he said that it was not but that he felt that the majority of the Board would be very happy to see me resign as President of the College. Whereupon I told him that since the College was full accredited and this was not a matter of administrative deficiency that I was not going to resign voluntarily, that the Board would have to fire me. His response was one of consternation and he said, "Oh Jim, remember your wife and child." Whereupon I told him that it was my conviction that my wife and child would go with me to the ends of the earth, and furthermore I would certainly be able to take care of them. He was very much disturbed

and said, "Why don't you go down and get a job with the Rosenwald Foundation? They're interested in Negro education, and why don't you go down and live among the Negroes?" My response was, "Well, Bill, I have never been partial to Negroes, I merely tried to be fair." We then decided upon a meeting of the Board which was to be held on February 16th at which time the Board would formalize its request for my resignation. This gave me nine days to prepare a presentation to the Board of Trustees. This paper is a matter of record. On February 16th after I had made the presentation referred to above and made the request that the Board of Trustees allow me to form a new Board of Trustees to whom the responsibilities of the Board of Trustees of Central YMCA College could be transferred, the Chairman, Bill Wiseman, took the floor and asked me why I had not submitted my resignation rather than to have my request to form a new Board of Trustees. I responded that the difficulties were not that Central YMCA College was not properly administered and that it was not a good and strong College serving a unique function in the community. Our difficulties stemmed from the fact that the College was being operated on Christian and Democratic principles and the Chicago YMCA was not. Whereupon the chairman stated that the YMCA was being operated on Christian principles. My response was that it was not Christian to

administer the Chicago YMCA through 23 white departments and 2 black ones and I turned to Sam Harkness who was the minister of the Church I belonged to, the Winnetka Congregational Church, who was a member of the Board and present and I said, "Sam, where's there a place under the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man for the Jim Crow policy of the YMCA?" Whereupon Sam referred to me as unchristian and left the room. And then I addressed the Board on another point of division and I pulled from my pocket a report made on behalf of the Board of Trustees with respect to Board and College relationships. The letter had been prepared by Bill Wiseman, Vice-Chairman of the Board, in 1944. This memorandum stated that they were going to appoint three Board members to sit in the classes and report back to the Board of Trustees what was being taught in the classes. It went on to say that such questions as labor and race should not be discussed in the college curriculum because these were controversial subjects. The Board had not seen this, you see, and they never had appointed the committee. Because I would have resigned had they done such a thing. That would have destroyed the freedom of the faculty that I had protected for nine years. And he knew it. He said, "You give me that paper." And I said, "You wrote it, didn't you, Bill? If you want it that badly, I'll give it to you, but with one understanding: That you are

a man that will not stand by his written word. If you want it that badly,. here it is." I And he took it. He said, "Are there any more in the file?" I said, "I don't know, Bill, but I will return them with the same understanding, that you are a man that will not stand by his written word.

DHP: This was in an open meeting?

EJS: Yes, an open meeting. So then I made the plea that they allow me, since they didn't want this kind of college, to form a new board that would take over the financial responsibility of the College, would give the YMCA all the credit in the world for having established such a fine school, and that there would not be a ripple above the surface. And I suggested a gradual severance. We were getting at that time \$25,000 from the YMCA--their contribution to the YMCA [College]. But we were paying them more for the rental of the rooms than we were getting from them. So the college was a financial asset. And they sort of assented request without any formal motion. So during the rest of the month of February and up to, I think it was the 26th of March, I began contacts with such men as Marshall Field, Edwin Embree, Harland Allen, Percy Julian and Floyd Reeves.

DHP: It was easy to understand why you contacted Marshall Field and Edwin Embree, because they were sources of potential support, but how did you happen to contact Floyd Reeves?

EJS: Floyd Reeves happened to be the brother-in-law of Robert Dibble who used to be our public relations man and the head of the Educational Services Division of the institution. I can tell you how -wonderful it was. He was one of the first men I went to; I went to Floyd Reeves. I had known that he was a friend before; he had been on the Board of the Central YMCA.

DHP: Reeves had been on the Board?

EJS: Oh, yes. Sure; he was on the Board. So when I was in trouble, and I knew his great prestige, I went to see him. I had known him before, known him educationally, because he had been head of the North Central Association. I told Him what the situation was. I recounted the whole thing. He knew Works, of course, because Works had also been the head of the North Central Association. Brumbaugh, Works, and Reeves, all from the University of Chicago, had headed up the Association at one time or another. And

so he knew the whole situation and was very sympathetic to my stand. And so about a week later than that, I went to see Marshall Field. Now I had known Marshall Field through the Pan-American Good Neighbor Forum which was an organization that I had founded with Dr. Ernst Schwartz who had been in charge of German-Jewish-student exchanges when Hitler came in. Hitler had removed him from his work. He was a Professor of History and had his Ph.D., and came to this country with a letter to me from Ambassador Dodd. We worked out this Pan-American Good Neighbor Forum with a board of trustees that resembles, that was the same sort of organizational board, as we have for Roosevelt University, representatives from management, labor and capital, Negro and White, Catholic, Jew and Protestant, men and women. We had one man with a Ph D. from the University of Lima who was a South American Indian. end that Board worked so well. The idea of the Pan-American Good Neighbor Forum was to bring good will and better understanding between the common peoples of North and South America. We worked with schools, and labor unions, and churches, Catholic churches and Protestant, and missionaries. Anybody that would work with us for the benefit of the common

peoples of North and South America, we worked with. Dr. Schwartz had made a contact with Marshall Field and asked me to go with him. And he had made a small contribution of \$500.00 to the work of the Pan American Good Neighbor Forum. So it was a rather natural thing that when I got into this trouble that I would go to Marshall Field. And when I told him the story, he was very much impressed and said, "Is there anybody that you know that knows the situation at the College, who is at the University of Chicago or Northwestern?" Did I know any professors. I said, "Yes, Floyd Reeves." He said, "Floyd Reeves?"

I said, "Yes." And he got on the telephone and called Floyd Reeves and said, "Hello Floyd, this is Marshall. Dr. Sparling's in my office here and I've been talking to him about the situation at the Central YMCA College. What do you know about it?" And he proceeded to tell him what he knew. He was fully informed. Pretty much as I'm informing you. It's a convincing story. It's one that's based on sincerity and dedication to ideals in education. And so Marshall Field was very much impressed and he promised, right then and there, that he would help me to the extent of \$100,000.

DHP: This was at a time when you were trying to take over the YMCA College?

EJS: Yes, that's right. What I was trying to do was to get a group of liberals, people that believed in the kind of thing that I was doing, who had money, who would be willing to put up money and associate themselves with such an enterprise. And then, this was real luck, I asked Edwin Embree to luncheon at the University Club, and I told him the story, and he promised \$200,000, which is quite amazing. But then Rosenwald had in his will demanded that the Rosenwald Fund be liquidated in 25 years, that the trust should be closed and the capital that still remained should be distributed by the Trustees of the Rosenwald Foundation. And then I went to another person, Dick Goodstadt who was the head of the Anti-Defamation League and I told him the story. I had previous associations with him. My first contact with him was when he came to me as President of Central YMCA College and asked me to approach the National YMCA with the request that they publish a pamphlet by Allport and Murray, Professors of Harvard University, entitled The ABC's of Scapegoating. Well, I had followed through. I had approached the National YMCA and they were in no position to do it, because at that time only 19% of

the YMCA's throughout the country were integrated. All others had white and black departments. So then he asked me if I wouldn't approach the National Education Association, which I did. And since they have chapters south of the Mason-Dixon Line, they couldn't publish this kind of thing either. So then I said, "Well, how about the college publishing it?" You see, our hands were clean, we could publish a thing like this, we were on sound foundational grounds with respect to equality of educational opportunity and academic freedom. This was a college which, for nine years, had operated religiously, strictly on the basis of these two fundamental principles of democracy. And so he agreed and I took it to the Executive Committee of the faculty of the Central YMCA College and had them read it. They agreed that it would be a very good thing to do. So then I took it to the Board Chairman, who at that time was Francis Knight, the Vice President of the Continental Bank and Trust Company. Hank was another fraternity brother of mine, by the way, a person who had told me time and again that he was only interested in the college because of me. He couldn't have been more friendly, but he saw the implication of

this situation, and it was after that we had some of these divisions. It was after that memorandum had been written by the Vice Chairman of the Board stating that such questions as race and labor should not be discussed in the College curriculum because they were controversial subjects. And so he was not in favor of having us publish them. So I said, "We never go to the Board of Trustees with a request for permission to publish anything. But, I said, "I wanted you to know, because some of the issues that are taken up in this are hot issues in the community; I wanted you to know that we had determined to publish it in the College." He said, "Well, you do it at your own risk." I said, "Well, we'll take that."

So Dick Goodstadt, when I came to him with this situation, he, of course was all on my side. And he, said that he would raise \$200,000. It wasn't a written promise, but he said he would raise it. And as time went on, while he was always a friend, he never actually raised that fund for me. But this was a declaration of intent and it was very encouraging.

Another person that I went to was Percy Julian, at that time he was Director of Research for the Glidden Company, and he had done outstanding research on the soy bean. One of the derivatives

he had discovered was "bean soup" which was a chemical substance used for putting out of airplane fires--gasoline fires. And it was instrumental in saving, I don't know how many, but a tremendous number of American fliers who were caught in fires in the air service. And another thing that he had discovered was synthetic cortisone. Where an ounce, or a pound (I forget which it was), came to some \$200.000, he could produce a similar amount for \$10.00. When I went to him about becoming, a Board member, Marion drove me out to the plant and sat in the car outside while I went in and talked to him. In twenty minutes he had done all the talking and said he would serve on the Board and help me in this project. When the Glidden Company had brought him to this part of the country, he was still single and they had suggested he go over to the YMCA and stay at the YMCA And they had refused him a room even though the Glidden Company had thought that would be a place he could stay. And so he knew what this was all about, and I enlisted him.

Then, of course, Marshall Field had asked me if I would allow him to make a study, to send over his education editor, John McGrath, of the Chicago Sun

(at that time, before it was the Sun-Times) and to have him make a survey of the institution. And I said, "Sure, I will; put everything on top of the table; we have nothing to hide, the record is all there," And so, he came over. He made a study, and he talked with students, and he talked with faculty, and he talked with Wiseman, the head of the Board of Trustees; and he talked with several of the other trustees. He called up Hank Knight; he was a personal friend of Hank Knight's; he said, "Hank, what's the idea over there?" He said, "Oh nothing, Sparling is just stubborn. He won't obey the directives of the Board and that's what's the matter." But Marshall Field had the facts, you see, or he got them after that. And so then on the 26th I had made a formal request and brought the names of these people to the group, and made a formal request that the Executive Committee of the Board meet with these men. They sort of agreed that they would on April 4th or 5th. We met at the Mid-Day Club with John McGrath sitting in the meeting for Marshall Field. He was the one who made the study.

DHP: I see, John McGrath was the educational editor of the Chicago Sun. He ultimately came on the Roosevelt Board.

EJS: Yes. And he also went out to the University of Chicago, in his study, and inquired out there of our reputation in graduate school and found that our students had done exceptionally well out there. Also,

he went to Northwestern and found the same thing. So the story was a pretty convincing one and if this had not been the case, if Marshall Field had not required this study, or asked his educational editor to make it, probably you and I wouldn't be sitting here. I will tell you why later. We met with these five men: Harland Allen, John McGrath, Floyd Reeves, Edwin Embree and Percy Julian. Well, we had a very nice luncheon at the Mid-Day Club. The food is always good there. And after we had finished luncheon, Ed McDermott, the lawyer on the Board of Central YMCA College, and one of the members of the Executive Committee, said to John McGrath, "Why is Marshall Field trying to blackmail us?" And of course this may have made the institution, I don't know. But blackmail was so far from the mind of a man like Marshall Field, a great liberal and humanitarian, that when John McGrath took this statement back to Marshall Field, that gave him the kind of orientation and the kind of conviction which allowed him, after my resignation and after this because public knowledge, that I had resigned and I had given my resignation, with the reasons for resignation: that I could no longer maintain a college with

equal opportunity, with a faculty that was free to teach the truth as they found it, and since the YMCA would not accept endowment for formal education, since I no longer could maintain a free and open institution, I was therefore resigning under protest. So they got five of the biggest men in the YMCA, two of them bank presidents, one of them the head of a great department store, a big real estate dealer in the city of Chicago, and the five of them went and talked with Marshall Field from 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon at the Tavern Club until 8:00 at night, trying to get him to come out from under me and he wouldn't do it. So you see why I say we probably wouldn't be sitting here if it hadn't been for Marshall Field.

DHP: He stuck by you.

EJS: The things that I have told you, the fact that he knew me before this came up and knew what I was trying to do, and I had gotten money from him for a purpose that he thought was worthy. He gave \$500.00 for the Good Neighbor Forum which was for bringing about better understanding and good will between the common peoples of North and South America. And then, I had told him the story of the College, he had checked by sending his educational editor over to make a free and open survey, entirely

apart from me, which he had made.

DHP: With this kind of support for you, and loyalty, even in the face of the arm-twisting that was done to get him to change his position, why was he not on the first Board?

EJS: He asked if I would accept John McGrath as a substitute for him. He apparently did not want to come on at that time. He did come on though, for six years, later, and was on the Advisory Board when he died.

DHP: But initially, he wanted McGrath to serve in his place?

EJS: That's right.

DHP: So McGrath was on the founding board?

EJS: Yes, that's right. Now then, this leads us up to why I suggested that faculty members be on the Board of Trustees. With the experience that I had had in the Good Neighbor Forum and because of the sincerity of these people and their ability to work together even though they were from widely separated groups in the community, gave me a deep and abiding conviction that this is the way a board ought to be set up. In contrast to that, the Board of Trustees of Central YMCA College was fifteen Protestants, all Republican, except me, and all church members, Protestant church members, there were no Catholics. In spite of the

fact that several of these board members were fraternity brothers, who had worked together with real morale for eight years until these issues were brought out, in the final analysis it was impossible for them to think in terms of the welfare of the total group of people. They were thinking basically in terms of the welfare of the particular group which they represented, namely the industrial and commercial establishment, the existing churches and the YMCA. So I was convinced that no matter how fair-minded, no matter what the associations had been, these were all friends, we called everybody by their first names, and six of them were fraternity brothers, who were pledged to brotherhood, but only brotherhood of white Protestants, so to speak.

DHP: So you felt that any lay group, no matter how close they seemed, might experience the same kind of thing that these other people, who had been close before, had experienced?

EJS: If they were all from one group, they were not capable, therefore, of interpreting the highest interests and well-being of the Black group, the Catholic group, the Jewish group, or of labor. And that's why I suggested that in order to keep the freedoms that we had and to insure them in perpetuity if that was possible, that I suggested not only representatives of management, labor and capital, Negro and White,

Catholic, Jew and Protestant, men and women, but faculty members, and that 51% of the Board should be faculty members elected by the faculty.

DHP: This you felt would help insure the academic freedom the faculty had?

EJS: That's it. This I considered to be more necessary than anything else, from the standpoint of a sound, democratic institution operated on the basis of fundamentals of Christian principles.

DHP: You sort of had the feeling that they would be potential allies in the struggle against lay members?

EJS: This is the wrong slant. The idea being that no one of these groups could ever then dominate or influence the total group with respect to their own biases, partisanship, or convictions.

DHP: Although, if the faculty had 51 percent that would have given them a controlling interest in the operations, if it ever came to that.

EJS: Yes, but if they followed the principles for which the institution was founded, we no doubt would have Black faculty members, Jewish faculty members, representatives of labor, and women, so that it wouldn't have represented a partisan stand.

DHP: So you proposed that 51% be from the faculty?

EJS: I did. And the faculty when it wrote its constitution, this was the preamble to it

(continued on next tape)

#2 Interview with Edward J. Sparling

December 14, 1970

EJS: As a matter of fact, over the years at Board meetings the public members did not attend in as large a proportion to their numbers as the faculty. Practically all the faculty members of the Board attended every meeting. But the lay members, generally not more than 50 per cent of them. So there was just about as many faculty members, generally, as there was Board members.

DHP: So it worked out that at any given meeting the faculty had a greater representation.

EJS: In proportion.

DHP: Did this ever make a difference, this fact?

EJS: This is the thing really, we're getting down to the nitty gritty of the situation now. The faculty, I don't know that the faculty ever- accept in unanimous votes--but in deeply controversial issues, did the faculty ever vote as a group.

DHP: They never voted as a group?

EJS: No, not that I know of. Not that I knew of. And I don't think they did, because in all of the big issues the faculty was divided.

DHP: Before we get to the question of how the faculty worked out once they got on the Board, I'd like to explore some other questions with regard to how they got established on the Board. And these other questions of Board membership. You talked about the Board being representative of people that were from labor and management, that were black and white,

that were men and women, and so on. And the Board does in fact reflect people that have those interests. I'm curious about one thing. The way the Constitution is set up was that of all these groups, the faculty was the only one that elected their representatives directly. That is, the Board, as I read the Constitution, accepted the representative that was elected from the faculty, by the faculty.

EJS: Constitutionally this was their requirement. They are elected by the faculty without the consent of the Board, All other members of the Board had to be elected with consent of the Board, by the rest of the Board as well as the faculty members on the Board.

DHP: Right. Because they played a full role on the Board. Well, was there ever any thought given either to having the other representatives elected by constituent groups the way the faculty were, that is to say have the labor organizations delegate a labor representative the way the faculty delegated their representative; either having them do that, on the one hand, or alternatively, was there an thought given to the procedure whereby the faculty representatives would be appointed by the Board the same way that the representatives from these other outside organizations were, that is to have the Board say well, we want you and you and you as a representative of the faculty just the way we want you as a representative of labor or you as a representative of... ?

EJS: That is a very good point, because so many of the faculty members felt that their first duty was to the well-being of the faculty as they saw it. They were truly representatives of the faculty. No other Board members were representative of any group. We tried to get people from all of these groups, business and labor, that had a liberal democratic outlook, that really believed in the fundamental objectives of the University. We tried, of course, also to have both Democrats and Republicans, but I was almost unsuccessful. We had, I think, two or three Republicans in the total time that were lay members. As long as I was President. This was because we couldn't get them, not that I didn't try. Two or three of the most distinguished Republicans in the City of Chicago I got to know well and tried to get them to come on the Board, but they wouldn't do it.

DHP: Was there ever any thought given to having any of these other groups elect a representative that would come on the Board?

EJS: No. That just was never considered. We might have asked labor people at different times to make a suggestion for a member.

DHP: You wouldn't ask the AFL to appoint a member?

EJS: No, not to appoint a member. We did, in the early days, go before both the AFL and CIO for a vote of confidence in the institution as it was established. And we got a 100 per cent vote from the AFL. The CIO

we lacked 3 votes, and these particular people at the time were reputed to be Communist labor leaders that would not support the kind of institution that we were, or give us a vote of confidence. Which is interesting.

DHP: Well, on the other side, was there ever any thought given to the procedure for the election of faculty representatives that would be other than having the faculty elect their own representatives?

EJS: No, and in retrospect I don't know but that that would have been perhaps a better mode of selection, I'm not sure. It would have been less politics, because there have been politics in Roosevelt University with respect to the election of faculty members on the Board. And also it has allowed certain factions to work very hard for persons who represented their particular orientation.

DHP: Was there a particular reason why this one group, that is the faculty, were given this autonomy to designate their representatives where the other groups did not really have representatives per se? Or did this just sort of evolve without having been explicitly chosen among alternatives?

EJS: Well, in retrospect, as I look back over it, I think it was because of the one basic fact that I never wanted an institution which I was connected with to be at the mercy of a group of people totally unconnected with the institution. Never again, I hoped, would an institution have its freedom challenged by a group outside of the institution.

DHP: At that time, when you set up this Board that was composed partly of people outside the institution, partly of people inside the institution, did you anticipate that there would be situations where the vote might line up as opposed, with the outsiders on one side and the insiders on the other, where there would be a division?

EJS: Well, I thought there might be, but not likely to be, because of the constituency of the Board. And that is true, that the freedom of this institution has never been challenged by the public members of the Board.

DHP: But just to make sure, it would be better, you thought, to have 51 per cent of the Board insiders just in case the outsiders may have behaved as they did in the other situation?

EJS: That's right. And, as I see it, it was a skepticism or, I don't like to use the word fear, but it was a skepticism on my part with respect to the complete impartiality of a group which was not connected with the institution. My skepticism as to their objectivity with respect to decision making.

DHP: Was this expectation realized?

EJS: Well, I feel it has worked out so that the broad representation of the Board is a greater protection to the institution than having faculty members on the Board of Trustees.

DHP: This is a pretty unusual thing, to have faculty members on the Board, and admittedly Roosevelt College started out by being unusual in many ways. But was there any opposition to this on the part of the lay trustees that you were involved with?

EJS: Yes, there was, and Floyd Reeves was the chief among these. He predicted that with this kind of organization that the institution would not live more than three years.

DHP: Of course he didn't stay with it that length of time. He resigned. He left the Board.

EJS: I wouldn't know when he left it. Do you know?

DHP: The records indicate that he was on it for just about a year. Then he resigned. What reasons did he give? Did he try and argue this out?

EJS: Yes. His reasons go back to the biblical times: a house divided against itself cannot stand; individuals cannot fairly represent two opposing sides.

DHP: He felt that a faculty member would be involved in representing opposing things if he got onto the Board?

EJS: There was an anomaly when you asked a person to be on one hand an employee of an institution, but on the other hand the employer of all of the faculty and staff. And this constituted a division of interest, or required an individual to wear two hats.

DHP: Did he try to convince you not to adopt this policy?

EJS: That's right.

DHP: How did you respond to it?

EJS: Well, just the majority of the people went along with my basic convictions at the time. I felt that the freedom of the institution was the most important thing. The faculty had to be free to teach and everybody to have the opportunity of coming in and participating. And that this was the most fundamental. If you had to choose, this was the most fundamental basis upon which an institution should exist. And it was in relation to that that I tried to gain in perpetuity these freedoms that had been denied in the other institution--or they tried to deny. They never denied them because we remained free until the day I resigned.

DHP: Do you think that there are anywhere written communications where Reeves on the one hand tried to dissuade you from having faculty members on the Board or when you tried to convince him?

EJS: I don't know.

DHP: He did this mostly orally?

EJS: Just orally and informally. Floyd is a very fine person, a man with very strong convictions. But he was completely friendly and he in no way put his head on the block for the sake of his ideas. He just said that it was

his opinion that no institution so conceived could live with that kind of a Board.

DHP: Were there ever other lay trustees in the course of things, or people that you approached to participate on the Board, that objected to the faculty representation?

EJS: Yes, I'm sure that I could have had perhaps any one of two or three great educational statesmen to have followed me in this institution had it not been for the organization of the Board, faculty members on the Board. They wouldn't subject themselves to it.

DHP: Now, by "follow you" do you mean succeed you as President?

EJS: As President, yes.

DHP: In terms of composition of the Board, do you think that that ever affected the Board?

EJS: Well, we never on all the issues the Board was split in different ways always. And that was on the basis of the convictions of the Board members. The greatest partisanship, I think, was on the part of the Board, I-mean the faculty members of the Board.

DHP: They were more partisan on this?

EJS: They were more partisan. They were more cliquish. They tended to form rump groups and to work for their particular ideas, whether it be

development or higher wages or less working hours.

DHP: Did they caucus among themselves, get together outside of meetings to try and decide how they would vote on a particular issue?

EJS: Yes. But never all the Board members of the faculty, just some of them. And they would work with groups within the college itself, people not on the Board.

DHP: Did you try, in a sense, to organize the faculty members. on the Board? Did you think of them as a separate group that you might meet with from time to time the way you might meet with the deans or other groups

EJS: No, I never in my whole history of the presidency of Roosevelt College and back into the Central YMCA College, I never asked a person to support me personally. I never tried to go to a Board member and convince him that he should vote a certain way on an issue. Everything was above the table. I tried to have a regime of merit, complete.

DHP: So that you didn't relate to the faculty trustees any differently than to the lay trustees? Even though they were in the building and convenient.

EJS: No, even though I was president. I can illustrate that in a lot of ways. When we had the discussion in the Senate with respect to. . . it was at that time the assembly, the faculty, the total faculty, and everybody was on it, we discussed whether or not we should go into the Senate form of

faculty government. And it was very hard fought and there were a lot of the people that felt democracy was going to be dead in Roosevelt University because we were changing from the town meeting kind of faculty organization to the Senate where one senator would represent eight faculty members. And when this was being discussed and just before the vote was being taken, my assistant, John Schwertman, came to me and said, "How am I expected to vote on this issue?" I said, "Well, I hired you as an independent mind and I expect you to vote your conscience, whatever that is." I didn't ask him if he was going to support me or anything else. That ended it. And the other person who came to me was Sophie Nack and she was head of public relations, and she asked me the same question. I said, "You were hired as an independent person, your vote is your conviction." As a matter of administrative principle, I felt that that was sound administration.

DHP: Outside of attempting to convince them to vote for you or against you or what have you, did you ever feel the need or see the opportunity to bring these people in, say as faculty representatives on the Board, to give them background information on a certain issue? I can imagine situations where information would come to you in the Administrative Council, that faculty members on the Board, because they didn't share administrative positions, wouldn't necessarily know, and did you attempt to involve them in ways like

that? Or did that not seem to be a needed thing?

EJS: We attempted to get some involvement. For example, with respect to the Budget Committee. This was a Board committee, recommended by the Senate to the Board. And it was a Board committee, but you had sitting on it six of the chief administrative officers, six members of the faculty elected by the faculty, and three public members.

DHP Three public members of the Board of Trustees sat on this Committee?

EJS: Yes, sat in the Budget Committee, or were invited to sit in, without vote. But I think in only one or two meetings during the whole time did they ever come in. They gave the institution the complete power to formulate and recommend its own budget. It was very difficult, perhaps more difficult for me than for some others, because I was always conscious of, I mean sensitive, to the fact that these men all had their jobs, were all important men working on important issues and very, very busy, and I was very reluctant to require or ask very much of them from the standpoint of coming in and working on the internal affairs of the institution. Well, it was pretty much of a philosophy that the institution should settle its own affairs.

DHP: Before taking them to the Board?

EJS: Yes, before taking them to the Board.

DHP: So that you would try, in a sense, to get things ironed out within the institution before you took them to the Board?

EJS: That's right.

DHP: Could you tell me a little bit about how the Budget Committee, which was probably one of the crucial committees, how that got formulated, How did that get started?

EJS: Well, there was a sort of a group within the institution that had the philosophy that those who controlled the dollars controlled the institution: those who pulled the purse. strings called the tunes. And this was recommended in the Senate. But you must remember that when Roosevelt first came into existence, we only had four faculty members, full professors, getting about \$3,000. And we had no endowment. And the dollar sign was always right up in front of us. And there's a group of people in the institution to whom the dollar sign was all powerful. And many decisions--I can give you one: one of the first meetings in the fall of 1945, the Administrative Cabinet (we called it the Administrative Cabinet at that time) was all the administrative officers, the deans, the registrar, the controller and all the rest, and the question was brought before the Cabinet, because of [the] financial insecurity of the institution, that the number of veterans should be limited. They looked at it this way: in two or three years the veterans will be gone, and if we allow the veterans to come in uncontrolled numbers, the institution will go out of existence when the veterans' education is over. And the argument was between Dean Leys and me. Dean Leys was always frightened of finances of

the institution. So he was able to out-argue me and he carried the Cabinet with him--the majority, a slight majority. Remember, he was on the Board too. This is another thing. He was on the Board. But he was able to carry this. And so they agreed that the veterans should be limited, that there should be a quota on veterans. And I gave all the arguments: why should the people defend the democracy on the battlefields and then come home-to find that they were not full-fledged citizens? And, that we had no quotas on anything else and that this was an open free institution and the person's qualifications should be the criterion for whether or not he should get into school rather than whether or not he was a veteran or of a color or a race or a creed. But still he carried it. And I said to him and the Administration Cabinet right then: "I will not implement this decision because it's basically a financial decision. I will not implement it until the Board instructs me to." So I took it to the Board of Trustees and they supported me unanimously. I don't know why Leys didn't vote against it on the Board.

DHP Your mentioning that Leys was on the Board reminds me that I noted in the Board records that he was the first of the inside group, other than yourself of course, to be elected to the Board. That he was put on the Board at something like the second or third meeting of the Board.

EJS: That's right.

DHP: What was the background on that?

EJS: Well, he was the first administrative employee. That is, Susan Hutchinson was the first employee as-my secretary. Wayne's resignation was required on the 24th of April by the Board of Trustees of Central YMCA College. And on that same day I put him on the staff of the new institution. He went on the payroll. That was after he had been fired, and as soon as I heard him, or he came to me, I don't remember what, but he was put on the faculty. And of course, I think within the first or second meeting, he was made Secretary of the Board. Of course, I recommended him.

DHP: And he became a full Board member?

EJS: Yes, he was the first faculty member of the Board.

(side 2) [Some material lost in changing sides]

EJS: They knew that there was no hocus pocus. The Administration was not holding out on them. They knew the requirements of the various departments and their comparative needs. There was no favoritism. I think that this budget was decided as closely on the basis of merit, with as great fidelity on the basis of merit, as any that, I've ever known about.

DHP: When you say that without the Budget Committee you might not have weathered it or you might not have made it through, I understand that to mean that the cutbacks were so big that if you hadn't had the faculty involved in these decisions themselves, that the morale loss might have been overwhelming.

EJS: Exactly. And the institution would not have been able to have maintained the morale of the faculty, especially since the faculty salaries were so poor.

I have always been a high salary man personally, that is from the standpoint of believing that the faculty should be very highly paid, as highly as any other profession. And so I have always been for the highest possible salaries. We put as many eggs in the basket of salary as we could get in there. The point was that the faculty knew that all the eggs were in that basket.

DHP: And the fact that they knew and the fact that they participated made them more willing to go along with the constraints and stringencies that they might otherwise not have been?

EJS: That's right. But I think we put up the salaries almost every year. Every year there was a faculty increase of some kind. I don't think we failed on that. Neither did we ever fail to meet the paychecks, the faculty, staff and clerical paychecks.

DHP: Even though as the enrollment dropped you may have had to lessen the number of total faculty in order to make the budget?

EJS: Yes. And we had to let go some of the very finest of our men, two or three of whom I had convinced to come in to the field of education. Men like Charles Meister.

DHP: How did the Board react to the faculty Budget Committee, to the whole concept of having the faculty do the budget making?

EJS: Well, I think that it worked out very well. Because you always had members of the Budget Committee on the Board. I was always on the Board, and generally there was one of the deans, either Huelster or Leys or Hart.

These men were on the Board, they had been through the process, they knew that there was no water in the budget, they knew that it had been brought into being through travail of comparative needs. The recommendations with respect to faculty salaries were on the basis of merit and accumulated in a democratic way, that is first recommended by the department, and then by the dean of faculties, and then to the president. And in the final analysis the amount--the across the board raises--were determined in that way. And then there was a sum of funds that were given for merit raises, special merit raises, so to speak, and that had to be done by collaboration of the chairman of the department, the dean and the president. So, we had no favoritism. I think that everybody felt that the funds were being honestly administered and that they had had a part in the decisions.

DHP: Was there any opposition to this at the Board? When the Budget Committee came in with a balanced budget did the Board accept this?

EJS: Only once was it not accepted; or to, I'll put it this way, the Board always accepted it every year, sometimes within a matter of four or five minutes. The Board seemed to have confidence that the budgeting was fairly and well done. But on this particular occasion, it was one of the stringent years, I think '51 or '52, the Board accepted a very tight budget. And then Walter Weisskopf got up, he was a member of the Board, and said that these raises were not big enough. And he moved that an extra \$100 be given across the board to every member of the faculty. Well, the Board

was a bit stunned but they turned to me and said, where's it coming from? I said well, if the Board will take the final responsibility, this will cost roughly \$15,000, and I will give you my personal promise that I will do my best to raise this from sources not yet contributing to the institution. So on the basis of that, the Board voted an extra \$100 across the board. That's one of the things that in this Board-Faculty relationship has proven to be an Achilles' heel in the institution where people who take advantage of their position as a Board member to exercise partisanship.

DHP: Do you think this was one example of situations that recurred, or was this an isolated instance?

EJS: Well, I can name one of the things that I was going to do when talking to you about this, that is to take up situations like the getting of the building, and then show you what forces within the Board who were faculty members were trying to either defeat or to aid. The Auditorium situation again is another issue where the presence of faculty members on the Board tended to be a detriment and almost an insurmountable barrier to progress.

DHP: In the Auditorium situation?

EJS: Yes. Well, in the getting of the building, and in the Auditorium situation. I'm perfectly willing to give you this because I think it should be related in history. But I don't think that in the final analysis you should publish it as such when I use names because. . . . [Remainder off the record.]