

Partial Interview, date unknown:

POULTON: In attempting to meet some space needs, for example, we needed to have a place to build a new College of Textiles. We looked around on our campus and quite honestly the kind of facility we wanted to build, we couldn't find the space. That led us to looking about, was there space contiguous to our campus, close to our campus that the university might buy. We had a little endowment money and we were in the position to buy a tract of land if we could find it.

I became aware of what was called the Dix Hill Farm, a huge tract of land, almost contiguous to our campus, that had originally been a place where the people at the state hospital, the facility at Dorothea Dix, could go outdoors and work, producing vegetables, fruit, livestock, etc. That was seen as very healthful and therapeutic activity at that time. Then, the Psychology and Psychiatry changed and they decided that that wasn't the way to go. So that land lay fallow for a good number of years. I approached a woman who was head of Health and Human Services, secretary, her name was Dr. Sarah Morrow, asking about was there any opportunity to get some of that land reassigned. The way it works in North Carolina, of course, is that if it is state land, the Council State has the authority to transfer land from one state agency to another if they both agree on

that transfer. Indeed, Dr. Morrow told me she would be willing to recommend the transfer of some of that land, but she also alerted me to the fact that there were a number of other people interested in the land and surely enough we learned that individual developers were interested in getting some of the land and the City of Raleigh was also interested in getting hold of that land, so we were kind of Johnny come lately one of many who were interested. That led us to the Governor's office for exploratory conversations about was there any real chance and Dr. Hunt's response to that was "well you show me on paper what you would do with that land and make your case as to why it's critical to NC State University and we'll take it from there", which we did. We evidently put together a plan that was satisfactory to the extent that Dr. Morrow recommended the transfer of some 350 acres and Governor Hunt did that. We had a little ceremony; that was in December, I believe, of 1984 and we had 350 acres of land contiguous with our campus and we were just as happy as could be.

Governor Hunt went out of office and Governor Martin came into office, and as frequently is the case with new political ball club or team, there were some questions raised and one of the pressing questions raised was what about the rest of that land. To make a long story short, we ended up in a meeting that the Governor called and Lieutenant Jordan was there, Speaker of the House Ramsey, all the

members of the Council of State were there and there were assorted individuals from the City and different places.

We had a big discussion about all this land and we came out of this meeting with a challenge from Governor Martin which was if you can put together a master plan that will show how the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Agriculture and North Carolina State University can cohabit on this block of land, share roads and infrastructure, everyone agrees and signs off, then we will consider additional transfer. We did that, and lo and behold, we ended up with the best part of 1000 acres of land.

Now, 1000 acres of land one might say is too much land for NC State University to use right away. Well, I agree with that. Our time line on this development was 100 years. We filled up our original campus in the first 100 years, and I am absolutely confident we'll fill up our second campus in the second 100 years, especially going back to the idea of these centers and recognizing that that means that industries will come in and will be physically present. They'll build buildings, or rent spaces in buildings we build, and also remembering earlier comments about the need to build specialized research space.

This new land then gave us an opportunity to actually build state of the art research space for our faculty. It's only ten years later now and I am just absolutely delighted with what's going on there. When one goes on to the Centennial campus, sits and looks around at what's happening, the number of people already at work there, the educational programs that are in place. You see the buildings under construction and you somehow have a sense that this indeed is the future of our university sort of growing up out of the ground all around us. Again, the fact that we don't have to ask faculty to get into a bus or car and travel for miles to get there; the fact that we can have students living in close proximity is just so wonderful. I mean, I don't know how we could have been so lucky but were were. To sit on that campus and see that we can throw a rock almost to downtown Raleigh you understand that the sands of time were running out and if we hadn't moved when we moved, I suspect we would not have had the opportunity.

INTERVIEWER: You must look at that Campus [inaudible]

You may have taken them kicking and screaming, I mean you have to ... The Centennial Campus may not have been that easy but it's there, so if you'll talk about this ...

POULTON: Of course, everything sounds wonderful in retrospect, but as I recall there were those who were not particularly enamored of this whole idea, and there were some legitimate concerns. There were concerns about what we might do to the environmental quality; there is Lake Raleigh, back up water for the City of Raleigh, and we have concerns about how we do our construction project out there that we don't disturb the quality of that water. There were people who were concerned about more roads. Quite honestly there were faculty members that somehow resources that went to develop the new campus were resources that might be used on the current campus.

All of these were legitimate concerns. There was a very wise person who once said that making significant changes at a university is very much like trying to move a cemetery; it's difficult, let's just put it that way. I had my share of doubting Thomases and my share of down-right critics. Quite honestly, I think it's fair to say that the City of Raleigh was not happy. The City of Raleigh had a very sophisticated development plan for all of that property. They wanted, and you can understand this, to increase the tax base for the City of Raleigh. The problem with what they wanted to do was it was state owned land and there was no way the city of Raleigh could buy that land unless the state considered it should meet their needs. The legislative leadership, recognizing that Raleigh is the state

capital, the seat of state government and will be probably forever, then it is important to keep state land in state hands, so that if there was a need to build another legislative facility, fine; we recognize that. If that comes to pass and we have a legislative building built on the Centennial Campus, we're prepared to live with that. This is part of the expanding partnership with government. So, the City of Raleigh was not particularly happy.

We had faculty here that weren't happy. Some folks quite honestly thought they had more pressing needs on this campus for money that we would spend on the Centennial Campus. Initially even the Catholic Diocese wasn't happy because the land that we had acquired surrounded them, but we stilled those concerns by being able to buy the island of their land that got trapped; we very gracious about what we paid them for it so it ended up fine.

I do think, though, that it's like anything else you do at a University. In the beginning, there are a lot of legitimate concerns raised. The university works best if you give people a chance to sort of just wrestle with things and don't push them too quickly. That goes back to the idea that the Centennial Campus is not going to be an instantaneous campus; we're not ready for that. We can't take that kind of change. It's something that's going to happen slowly, over

the years and 100 years from now, everyone is going to say where's the next block of land; where do we go from here. Quite honestly, green space and college campuses go together. You don't want to build on every square inch. College campuses work best when you have lots of green space for students, on a gorgeous day like today, to sit on the grass and meditate and throw frisbees and all those other good things that students need to do. So, we'll use every square foot of it, I'm sure.

INTERVIEWER: What was your biggest concern?

POULTON: I was scared to death about the financial aspects of it. It represented an enormous undertaking and I knew that. It did represent a potential black hole for the university that might have drained resources off. I wasn't sure how industry was going to respond to this; whether we would have a reasonable number of people interested. It was a gamble; there's no question. It was a big undertaking. When we agreed to build the first building ourselves, with own resources, I had my heart in my mouth when I said go for it because I was really saying spend millions of dollars, build a building and hope that someone will come live in it. We've been able to find the courage to do that four times now and we'll probably do it some more; it's

worked. But ... a real concern in the beginning was that it was something that may not work here.

....

And, of course, the Centennial Campus ground-breaking, even though I had my heart in mouth when I realized we were about to spend a whole bunch of money that no one had given us. But the ground-breaking and the fact that we turned the first spade out there and were underway with our construction.