

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Dr. Hudson Taylor Armerding (CN 514, T4)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words which were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case “[unclear]” was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as “ah” or “um” are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

- ... Three dots indicate what the interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence on the part of the speaker.
- .... Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.
- () Words in parenthesis are asides made by the speaker.
- [] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Issam Smeir and Wayne D. Weber and was completed in February 2001.

**Collection 514, T4. Oral history interview of Hudson Taylor Armerding by Paul Ericksen on May 10, 1995.**

**ERICKSEN:** This is an oral history interview of Hudson Taylor Armerding by Paul A. Ericksen for the Archives of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College. This interview took place at 9:05 A.M on May 10, 1995, at the offices of the Archives. Okay. Well, the occasion for our doing this interview is to discuss the revival here [at Wheaton College] in 1970, but I'd like to just get little bit of preliminary information before we talk about that. For the record could you tell me when and where you were born?

**ARMERDING:** I was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on the twenty-first of June 1918. My father and mother had come down there because my father had been furloughed from Central America due to malaria and still want to use his Spanish so he settled in Albuquerque and in fact we lived, in my earliest recollection, next door to a Mexican family. But that's how it all got started, yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** Your dad's name was Carl.

**ARMERDING:** Yes.

**ERICKSEN:** And what was your mother's name?

**ARMERDING:** Her name was Eva [pronounced with a sharp "e"] and some people called it Eva [pronounced with a long "e"], but they always called her Eva E-V-A and her maiden name was Taylor. That's one of the reasons why they chose my name because they had read the biography of Hudson Taylor, and they figured they'd combine that with her maiden name to give me the name I have.

**ERICKSEN:** So double mileage.

**ARMERDING:** Yes, right [laughs]

**ERICKSEN:** And siblings, brothers and sisters?

**ARMERDING:** I had a brother who was born just thirteen months after I was born but only lasted five weeks. He had what they called in those days leakage of the heart, or they popularly called it a blue baby and so after five weeks he died and his body is in the ground there in Albuquerque. But then four-and-half years after I was born a sister came and then seven years another sister.

**ERICKSEN:** What was their names?

**ARMERDING:** Well, the first one was Evangeline Louise. And then Helen Winifred was the second one. And then in 1933 we had a third sister join the family and she got the name Geraldine after Geraldine Taylor, Dr. Howard Taylor's wife, and May which was my mother's middle name. And, in fact, she just celebrated her fortieth anniversary here on campus because she went to

Wheaton. My sisters did as well. The oldest sister graduated in 1945 with major in music and then my second sister was in a program we no longer have. It was a program in which it was homemaking and that sort of thing but because of my mother illness she did not finish and so she never got a degree from Wheaton. But then my third sister in 1955 took her degree in secretarial science and for awhile worked with the Billy Graham Association in that connection.

**ERICKSEN:** Now when...when did you come to faith in Christ? [door closes in adjacent room]

**ARMERDING:** I...I actually pinpoint that at the time when I was eight years old and it's very interesting thing to me still. My father, as probably know, was a minister and had a congregation on the north side of Albuquerque. Well, there was a Sunday school paper distributed one Sunday that had a story of boy who went to a gospel meeting, received a decision card and filled it out indicating his faith in Christ. Well, they had put a reproduction of this card in the paper. So I asked my mother for a pair of scissors and I cut out the card and then had this statement that on this particular day I had trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. Then I asked her [laughs] for her safety pin and I pinned this thing on the curtain above my bed. Well, Mother was a fastidious housekeeper and she came and saw this peace of paper [laughs] and, wanted to know, what on earth I had done putting it up there. And I explained to her that I had...indicate I had trusted Jesus as my Savior. And she said, "Well, that is wonderful but why did you put that up on the curtain?" And I [laughs, Ericksen laughs]...I said, "Well, if the devil comes by tonight to get me, he'll read that and know I belong to Jesus and leave me alone." [laughs] So, the childlike...the thing of Frank Peretti [Christian novelist who has written books like *This Present Darkness* in which angels and demons participate in spiritual warfare among human characters] type situation, I guess. But that was...what I...I think would have been the time, 1926. And I really believe that while none of us is able to know precisely when God effects his redeeming work, that was certainly when I was conscious, wanting to turn from sin and to the Lord, so I count it back to that time.

**ERICKSEN:** And then...for your College education you were here at Wheaton.

**ARMERDING:** Right. We had lived in San Diego. Well, from Albuquerque to San Diego then back to Dallas. My father was on the faculty of what's now Dallas Seminary from 1929 to '32 when we moved back San Diego. And when I graduated in 1935, he took the family to New Zealand and I worked for a year on a ranch and the second year for a British motor firm called British Leyland today, came back from there to go to Wheaton, so I actually came to Wheaton two years out of high school in the fall of '37, [pauses] graduated in '41.

**ERICKSEN:** Okay. We have...we have some of your dad things, and...

**ARMERDING:** Yes, I know you have his diaries because I...I had those when he died and thought that this would better place for them to be.

**ERICKSEN:** Yeah.

**ARMERDING:** I believe he also gave an oral...

**ERICKSEN:** Yeah, that's right.

**ARMERDING:** ...oral history thing.

**ERICKSEN:** I just wonder if you could tell me little about your recollections of your father, what kind of man he was from your vantage of point.

**ARMERDING:** Yeah, I certainly can. I should preface it by saying he...he was a German. Father and Mother both immigrants from Germany. He was very orderly, very systematic, very bright. On the old Otis test, he tested up in the genius range and while the validity of the test could be questioned at least [laughs] on the basis of those indices he was...he was very, very bright. He did not have any high school. He finished the elementary school, and then was apprenticed to mechanical draftsman. Then the Lord saved him and he immediately felt a call to missionary service, went to the field, got malaria, came back, settled in Albuquerque and it was there that Mother encouraged him to take a course at the university. And when he went in after the course was over to say good bye to the dean the dean asked him why he was leaving and he explained he'd had no high school. But because he had done well in the course, they admitted him and he graduated with honors, also in 1926. He was with a group called the Plymouth Brethren and did itinerant preaching but he was, one would say today at least, a stern disciplinarian, required unquestioning obedience to his requests, his commands, did engage in corporal punishment, of course, but at the same time was a very warm and somewhat emotional man, a man who felt things deeply. He had an artistic temperament in the sense that he made a number of oil paintings which we now have and water colors and that sort of thing. He was very gifted in foreign languages. He had known German before he went to school and, of course, Spanish but he took Greek and some Hebrew and French and for his devotions of the morning, he would read in one of these languages and tried to keep current in that. He loved to travel and did travel a great deal. And in the days when I was, oh, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, he was away a lot and I got a driver's licence at age fourteen [laughs] in fact in those simple days because Mother did not drive and so there was that. He had a great love of astronomy and mathematics and literature and music. In a modified sense was a true renaissance man. He just ranged over every thing like that. But he also was a person who was, one would say deeply and even passionately committed to what are called the *Fundamentals* [series of published essays affirming traditional Protestant orthodoxy; viewed as beginning of the Fundamentalist movement] that the Stewart brothers [Lyman and Milton] put out in the period 1913, '14, somewhere in there. And was very up front about his faith. In fact, when we lived in Albuquerque, he...we had four door touring car and he had gold lettered text put on each of the floor doors. Well, the family were a little bit embarrassed but he felt that this what his way of saying what he believed, and there are.... I think Dr. [Chuck] Swindoll told a story about him [laughs], but he was teaching at Dallas [Theological Seminary] and Dr. Swindoll was a student there at...he went to get a haircut and Daddy was in the chair and [adjacent door closes] the barber told him an off-color joke and my father stood right up in the chair, took hold of his ear and he says, "Does this look like a sewer?" And the doctor...Dr. Swindoll said that the barber very quickly finished the haircut and got my father [laughs] out of the barber shop. [laughs] But it was typical.



He was not backward at all in saying exactly what he meant. The cliché that people say that a person could be wrong but never in doubt, well, that was my father. [laughs] He was always very sure that what he believed was right. Now, I should add with that he mellowed as the decades went by and was very warm and accepting, we felt, to our children and ended up his life being, well, very, very affectionate and appreciative of what was done for him. So my recollection is of a man who grew, who melded together conviction with affection and even concession, appropriate concession, and that was an important thing to see. He...he worked for Moody [Moody Bible Institute] on their extension staff and then was Dr. [V. Raymond] Edmond's assistant and then in the Bible department here, for five years was pastor College Church here in Wheaton.

**ERICKSEN:** What years would that would have been?

**ARMERDING:** It would have been about 1952 to...to '57, somewhere in there. He and Mother spoke about those as the best years of their lives which I thought was a wonderful thing. And the church gave him the status of pastor emeritus and just loved him so it was again a tangible indication of his acceptance, along with students who still tell me today that they took a course from him and remember the way he taught and things of that kind. So I remember a fair bit about him in short.

**ERICKSEN:** How did he...do you remember his feelings at the time that you became president here at the College?

**ARMERDING:** Well, [laughs] he told me this, he said, "It's going to shorten your life." Because he had been a very good friend of Dr. Edman and, of course, had seen in the early '60s the pressures under which the president was working and he clearly felt that if I felt that it was the will of God to do it that I should recognize that it would be very costly in regard to emotions and that sort of thing. At...he lived until nearly ninety-eight [Ericksen laughs] so when he meant shortening life, maybe [laughs] he did not have the same idea that...that I did, I thought, well, I'd probably died of heart attack part way through my term but that didn't happen of course.

**ERICKSEN:** Well, maybe that this is a good time to sort of segue into the period leading up to 1970.

**ARMERDING:** Yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** What was it like on campus in the mid-to-late 1960s? [door closes] What was the attitude of students in those days here at Wheaton?

**ARMERDING:** One would have to say that any generalization has exception to it, because the most visible part of it, of course, was very disappointing and even bewildering. For example before Dr. Edman left office, a student wrote him purportedly a very dreadful note, wrapped it around a brick and threw the brick through his front window. And this was a kind of an overt indication of the antipathy that students had toward authority in general and to him in particular. Well, to those of us who had been undergraduates or lived in the '50, it was incredible because he was always the affectionate father figure. Well, see I inherited some of that. We had [pauses] children of

missionaries, of ministers, who would tell us that they no longer believed anything. There was, of course, the feeling about the Vietnam War and the R.O.T.C. program was a target of a great deal of unrest. What I think was the most disconcerting was to have students say that they hated Wheaton and when you asked them why they remained here, they said, "Well, my friends are here." But our point was if you hate the place why punish yourself by staying here. And it was almost, I hope I can say it kindly, a kind of a masochistic thing. But we did have some demonstrations against the R.O.T.C. program. We never did have any offices occupied or anything of that kind, but there would be [pauses], well, rather overt challenging of not only the rules of the College but the doctrine of the College. And the whole change: long hair, beards and all this kind of business at that time was perceived as a visible sign of the counter-culture. So when I took office, it was at a time of considerable difficulty and then the College at that time was also, as it is periodically, was under attack because of a conference that was held here in 1960 on creation. And we had some people who came here and advocated evolution and, of course, being a conference that would be understandable, but the publicity seemed to link the College with these views and therefore there was need to reassure our supporters that the College was not endorsing evolution. So I became provost two years before I became president, provost in 1963. And I interviewed with the dean. We interviewed all of the faculty and asked each one individually what their views were and from every faculty member we received an affirmation of our position on creation and therefore were able to tell President Edman that we felt there was support. Some of the faculty then as now felt that we should not make it a test of fellowship but they indicated that their personal convictions were consistent with the view that the college officially held. Well, then when I succeeded Dr. Edman there was [pauses] a continuing kind of difficulty. One would have to say that at the time some people had assumed that with Dr. Edman's leading ...leaving there might well have been a moving into areas of greater latitude and faith and practice and when that did not occur this did prompt some sort of incipient reactions on the part of people. And one would have to say also that the way in which I was selected by the board put me at a relative disadvantage when I began because you see they had no selection committee, they had no publicity that Dr. Edman was planning to leave. They simply met one afternoon and voted me in. Well, when the news broke on campus, faculty especially was very distressed and felt that there hadn't been an adequate bringing them into the whole thing. So I began my time in office with a...a feeling that I had been chosen by the board but even though I'd been provost for two years but there hadn't been an adequate opportunity [door closes] to look over all of the possible candidates but they had sel...simply selected someone whom they knew. And I felt that the 1970 awakening maybe was God's means of helping to bring a drawing together from those first five years which very frankly were difficult years.

**ERICKSEN:** I was...I was listening to one of the interviews that a student did with one of the...I don't know if it was with the Ortlunds or with [pauses]...is it James Armstrongs? It's not James.

**ARMERDING:** John...John Armstrong.

**ERICKSEN:** John Armstrong talking about just a few weeks earlier students coming up to you in the dining hall and being pretty aggressive and pretty abrasive. Can you talk about that?

**ARMERDING:** I don't remember that. Maybe that's one of the things that...well, either that wasn't unique [laughs] or that God mercifully has tempered that. But yeah I...I did have some correspondence both and some reproaches, partly because see being with a career in part in the military I favored the R.O.T.C. program and this focused a great deal of antipathy for people who did not like the military to start and certainly with the Vietnam War didn't like it. But I...I really do not remember that particular incident.

**ERICKSEN:** Okay. Now the ...the occasion of the...the revival was the special services held in February. How...the Ortlunds have said that they had no idea of how it was going to play out. What was the...what was the function that you envisioned those services playing on campus?

**ARMERDING:** Well, see they go back a long time in our history and I'm not certainly when they began but years ago they deliberately admitted non-Christians into the student body. And in those days they were called evangelistic services because the whole point was to present the gospel to the unbelievers. I'm almost positive that Evan Welsh and Harvey Chrouser were among those people who were brought to Christ after they were admitted. Well, see then we took a view that to do Christian education appropriately you had to have people with the potential of understanding Christian truth, II Corinthians 2. And so we moved to admitting only professing Christians with that in...in mind. Well, then it wasn't so much evangelistic services as it was spiritual nurture or edification and it was in that context that Ray Ortlund came to speak.

**ERICKSEN:** What...what were your impressions of the Ortlunds?

**ARMERDING:** Well, warm hearted., [pauses] you know highly personable people, the kind of person that...persons rather than...whom you would like almost right away. And when he that Thursday....well, let me back up a moment. We used to have the services both morning and evening in...in the chapel over in Edman. And the evening services were reasonably well attended back in those years, so that they went Monday through Friday because chapel was five days a week in the morning and then the evening services were five days also. So it really was Ray's idea on the Thursday evening to allow for [laughs] a few testimonies. I think some students had asked him if they could give a word of witness and he said as I recall....he said, "I'm going to allow five for ten minutes for a few people to give a word of witness." And that was really all any of us had expected up to that point. Now I should say that I had known about John Armstrong, his transferring in, his deeper burden for the campus and all of that, but I frankly did not connect that with any overt manifestation. I thought it would be more of...of a general one-by-one type possible change and therefore did not anticipate at all what occurred that Thursday night.

**ERICKSEN:** Now what kind of things John had been doing in campus that....

**ARMERDING:** Well, as I recall and it's...it's not as sharp as it should be but he had been trying to get some students together to pray for the campus and I would have to go back and maybe you already have but that was my recollection that...that he...he wanted to get people of like conviction to pray, interestingly enough, exactly what he's now doing in his renewal ministry, you see. To me it was an incipient calling that I believe is flowering now but that was my understanding of what he did to marshal other people and to begin to pray earnestly because there were ugly unpleasant

things here, things that were really difficult to explain in the light of aims and goals of the College: unbelief, resistance to Christian truth and questioning as to whether any of this was really valid and existentialism was popular at the time. The whole issue of whether the rational or the experiential should govern. So I think John sensed some of these even as an undergraduate and if one were to locate any cause and effect thing under the sovereignty of God, it seems to me that John was an effective instrument as I look at it in retrospect to have people calling on the Lord for that.

**ERICKSEN:** Now on Thursday evening when did you begin to sense that this was not going to be what you and the Ortlunds and others involved had sort of envisioned?

**ARMERDING:** Well, pretty well within a few minutes because the lines begin to form and...and, of course, they kept on forming and they probably told you that the service was broadcast over the WETN [Wheaton College radio station] and students listening in their rooms decided to come over and a little bit later they would be up on the platform. So it...it was a case of...of realizing that God was doing something and Ray and the rest of us all felt that we should stand back and let the Lord work through these...these students. So we knew right away that it was not going to end very soon but we didn't anticipate going all night long. [laughs]

**ERICKSEN:** Now did you and Ray confer at any point and sort of say, "Well, what we are going to do?"

**ARMERDING:** I can't remember that. We probably did but I [pauses]...the only thing I do remember was about once an hour we would stop and sing a hymn, and then [pauses] a young student who was...I guess, was up there as I recalled to offer pray or whatever would go out and get water and I think about three or four in the morning went out and got coffee and doughnuts from some all night place and came back and gave it to me to, you know, just to step out for just a minute and...and eat the doughnut and drink the coffee because I...you know, it was exciting but after all four o'clock in the morning [Ericksen laughs] you're beginning to feel the pressure a little bit and. So anyway it...it...apart from these about one hour breaks it just continued until about 7:30 the following morning.

**ERICKSEN:** And then at that point you...you brought things to a close for that session?

**ARMERDING:** Yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** How did you decide, "We need to stop now" and...?

**ARMERDING:** I think we felt that, as I remember (and I would have to be checked by the other people) I think we'd pretty well had the testimonies...you see, part of the idea of not trying to, I'd say arbitrarily have a cut-off was our recollection of 1950 when it went on for thirty-nine hours or so and we didn't know whether it was going to continue. So my recollection is that we'd pretty well heard the testimonies and so stopped, I think it was about 7:30 at that morning. And then, of course, as you probably know we of course had the chapel in the morning and then the Friday evening went on I think until about midnight. But with the same idea of not trying to have simply a



structuring. And the other thing that is very meaningful, we had a faculty staff chapel, I think it was the following Monday and we had a professor of military science, a big man who was ranger, airborne, all this, and he came up to me at the close of the faculty staff chapel and I was really unprepared for what he did. He put his arms around me, put his head down on my shoulder and he said, "Sir, I need God," you know, just like that. So we prayed together and then about a week later he told Dr. Peter Veltman, "I have become a Christian." And it was God's means of reaching this man who was an improbable person to be reached, but then we felt that the work of the Spirit of God was continuing although in a...in a much less dramatic setting. That chapel, simply had testimonies from faculty about how God reached them and had obviously reached Colonel Ellis at that point also.

**ERICKSEN:** Was there any...were there any kind of common themes that ran through the...the confessions?

**ARMERDING:** As best I could recall it was a the matter of...of confessing that there had been a failure to be ethically right, that people had not kept their commitments, that they had been involved in...in activities that were explicitly in Holy Scripture sinful. But I would have to say my recollection there were few if any that would cause a degree of discomfort that the person was being exhibitionist or whatever. Now the other people may remember it differently but I...I don't. I felt that it was remarkable balance between openness and restraint. I don't think as I recall that there perhaps as...as much emotion as reportedly this last time here but a very deep earnestness and a...a desire to get things right with God and things of that kind that seemed to me to characterize it. But I did not sense that people were trying to, oh, parade their wrong doings, anything of that sort.

**ERICKSEN:** Now was that an attitude that you tried to encourage from the stage or not?

**ARMERDING:** We really...we really didn't as I recall anyway. We did not try to say, "Well, I...I think we ought to be careful not to do this or to do that." I don't think we did any of that.

**ERICKSEN:** Any of the confessions that had a particular impact on you that you recall?

**ARMERDING:** No, I think it was more of a general impression that God was working in reconciliation, healing alienations, things of that kind that, of course, were so overt on campus at the time. [clears throat] And restoring literally some degree of fellowship from the polarizations that were persisting but I don't recall anyone one individual or anyone one testimony, I do not.

**ERICKSEN:** Now one of things that characterized the meetings earlier this year is that after each student would make his or her confession then a number of other students would gather around to pray with that person. Was there something similar during the 70s?

**ARMERDING:** I don't remember any of that. No I don't. That is where you might want to talk if you haven't already, talk with John Armstrong and those people who might have viewed it from the student side of it. But I don't remember that.

**ERICKSEN:** Were any, other than the R.O.T.C. member...the faculty member (I assume he was on the faculty; maybe he wasn't).

**ARMERDING:** No, he's has the same thing that Colonel France now has ...he has as professor of military science so one...some people think that it was tangential relationship but he...he was listed in the faculty listing, you know.

**ERICKSEN:** Okay. I'm just curious whether there were other people testifying to their own conversions among the student body? No.

**ARMERDING:** There may have been [pauses], but again I...I can't give you anything precise there.

**ERICKSEN:** Yeah, okay.

**ARMERDING:** I probably should have written down more at the time than I did.

**ERICKSEN:** Well, [pauses] what...what was the role of the faculty and the staff?

**ARMERDING:** Well, it...I would have to say it was incidental at least in any overt sense. Back in those years we used to have an effort to have prayer on the Sunday afternoon before the meetings and they were not well attended. It was a very real disappointment to get maybe a half a dozen or so people together. Out of a faculty even at that time was running well over a hundred, of course, and there...there seem to be a feeling, I don't know how pervasive it was, that these meetings were for students and that their necessity was maybe questionable. There was at least a mood of that kind that we seemed to sense. But again obviously with others who clearly felt differently we had some professors who were very much in favor of it, of course, even as in the student body at that time we had students who were fully committed to Wheaton, loved the place and so sorry to leave it at all. So that you...you would make a wrong deduction if you simply said that they we were all questioning or abandoning their faith or what ever else. These were the visible ones and these were often the aggressive ones, the ones that wanted to control the school newspaper and in some cases run for student government office, that kind of thing. But there were a lot of wonderful students here at the same time and others who later came to the Lord, came back to the Lord in ways which were so dramatic and which taught me not to draw a final conclusion too early, for example an undergraduate experience.

**ERICKSEN:** What kind of positive impact did you see being worked out on campus following the meetings?

**ARMERDING:** Well, I felt there really was a greater sense of acceptance of reconciliation , openness to, well, the Lord, to His Word. And one must speak carefully here but I think that there was need for...for this to be understood, not just on the part of the students but on the part of all of us, in other words, that there would have to be a sorting out between the things that were central and the things that were not so central. I think that you've heard about the incident where I embraced the counter-cultural students. Did you ever hear that?

**ERICKSEN:** No.

**ARMERDING:** Well, that was about the same time. This man's name was Denny Lauer and these were the days I said where a beard or longer hair were indicators of commitment to the counter-culture. Well, we were about to have a convocation. Once a term I had a convocation where we did not have a worship service but simply talked about things relating to the college. But we still had the prayer time before this. We were about to pray when Denny came in and he had a headband.

**ERICKSEN:** He was a student?

**ARMERDING:** Yeah, he had a beard and he was wearing sandals and all these at that time were...were perceived as sort of indications that somebody wanted to be different. And so he came in and he sat right down beside me. Well I...

**ERICKSEN:** Up on the stage?

**ARMERDING:** No, this was in the Heritage Room.

**ERICKSEN:** Okay.

**ARMERDING:** And we were praying. So we bowed to pray and Denny started to pray. I will never forget, [laughs] something like this, "Oh, Lord you know how much I respect and admire President Armerding and how much I...I am grateful for his walk with the Lord and all this and that [laughs] and...and the more he talked the more [laughs] convicted I got because, you know, I looked at him, I didn't like him and.... So on the way down into the chapel, I...I really think God spoke to me. So at the end of the convocation I asked Denny to come up. Well, a friend of mine in the back of the chapel said that two students in front of him said, "Oh, no he's going to kick Denny out of school in front of all of us." [both laugh] So he walked up on the platform and, you know, here I am, military haircut and...and a suit and coat and tie and all the rest of it and I walked over and I embraced him. Well, it was an incredible scene in the chapel. Students wept, they embraced each other. It was just an incredible thing and Denny and I facing the chapel audience with our arms around one another. Well, it was a scene that I don't supposed has been ever replicated in...in chapel. But it was another way for people to learn to tolerate things that were not central, what the Word of God calls "the indifferent things." I still don't like long hair on the part of men and...and all that sort of thing but I felt that this man was a believer and a brother in the Lord and I almost felt like Peter on the roof top. And the Lord said to me, "What I have cleansed don't you call unclean," [Acts 10:15] see. And so I had to struggle then with the balance between a student body that would look at least clean and decent at all and whether to have them go as far as say I personally would want to go. And that I think says a lot to the campus and I don't take credit for it frankly. I give glory to God because God had to deal with me through Denny's prayer all the way down to chapel. But, you see, it did tell the student body something. [laughs] In fact, the amusing thing was after that they gave me a pair of bib overalls and sandals and [both laugh] one of these wide brim straw hats and just...oh and a turtle neck. So [laughs] one chapel I had the chaplain start and then I walked out wearing these things. Well it...it broken everything up. And then I said to them after all

the cheering and clapping I said, "Well, you see appearance does mean something." [laughs] And they all laughed about it but the point was made that if I was going look like that all the time it would...it would make a difference. Anyway it was a fun thing and I appreciated it and it was kind of an indication of the drawing together of a somewhat polarized campus.

**ERICKSEN:** And when did that...when did the incident with Denny happen?

**ARMERDING:** Oh, about '71, I guess somewhere in there [unclear]. I'd...I'd have to go back and check his date because. Incidentally, I found out later that he was trying to witness in Old Town [part of Chicago just north of the downtown business district] and he wanted to appear like the people in Old Town. And I can still remember too when he was going to Indonesia as a student missionary. He was running across campus saying, "Dr. Armerding, I've cut my hair," [laughs] which was kind of his indication that depending on where he was ministering his appearance was really indifferent, you know. He just wanted to fit in, which I thought was really great.

**ERICKSEN:** Well, it sounds that the mood on campus shifted rather dramatically.

**ARMERDING:** Well, it did and there was one other factor and that was the president of the student body. A fellow by the name of David Vanderpoel was the president and really tried to reconcile; another one was Ned Whittington. They really worked to try to bring about a...a better sense or relationships, Dave I thought in particular. And with their leadership, it then caused students, I think, to feel that it was not wrong to work with rather against the administrative group. So we owe a lot to people like that as well as the time in 1970 as such.

**ERICKSEN:** What kind of role did Chaplin [Evan] Welsh play in the events surrounding the revival?

**ARMERDING:** Well, he...he had...he had very little in an obvious thing but you probably know that every Friday night they would have open house at their place about where this building [Billy Graham Center] is now, as you may know, and students would come over and there would be a kind of individual discipling that would go on and that would...would help. But you see, I can't remember the exact dates, but he left the office of chapel and went away for a while as a minister in Detroit and then came back. No, I guess, he did that after he left College Church, he went to Detroit and came back, but in any case he was replaced by a man who was a Vietnam veteran with name of Jim Hutchens. And it was after that, of course, that Pat Patterson came. But Chaplain Welsh did not have a...to my recollection, a major role at the time. It was more of quiet, one-on-one type activity.

**ERICKSEN:** Where there any negative effects that followed the revival?

**ARMERDING:** I'm not aware of any. It...it seemed to me that...that it was positive with the idea, of course, that there is in any community this large and diverse there is a segment often localized in faculty who are a little uncomfortable with, well, things like extended testimonies, getting out of the realm of an orderly sequence of things who perceive of some things as more emotional than rational and so there certainly was some of that. But, I don't think that was a change. It was simply

a little bit more manifest and I'm guessing, although I've not been acquainted with campus intimately recently, I'm guessing that there probably are some now that feel the same way about what occurred in March and so it's...it's not that that is a negative result. I think it's simply a manifestation of an attitude. There was a doctoral dissertation written by a fellow by the name of David Landsdale on Wheaton College that was completed in '91, I think, it was, and he quotes one of our faculty. Have you read that?

**ERICKSEN:** Uh-uh [no].

**ARMERDING:** Well, this faculty member told David he said, "If a revival were to occur on this campus some of us would be too busy to notice." And it was this kind of sardonic statement that took this young doctoral student kind of off guard, you know, Wheaton faculty member. But then he in his dissertation indicates that there is...was at the time at least a segment of...of faculty for whom any manifestations akin to what you folks had, would not be appropriate and that [watch beeps]...that they would not want to give any concessions in their classes or anything else because to them it was something not to be noticed according to his testimony. I hate to believe that for any of our Wheaton faculty but he insists it's true. And whether that person is still here or not I don't know either. But my point is simply that would be symptomatic of something that's there and the revival would simply make it more manifest.

**ERICKSEN:** Now, from what you...what you've said already there really wasn't any short sermon or encouragement on your part or...or...or the Ortlunds. Once the testimonies and confessions began it pretty much ran non-stop with a...just stopping to sing a hymn.

**ARMERDING:** That is my recollection.

**ERICKSEN:** Yeah.

**ARMERDING:** Ray may remember it better than I.

**ERICKSEN:** No, I think that's what he...what he said too. Any of the hymns...any hymns that stand out that were kinds of hymns of the event?

**ARMERDING:** No, no, as I say someone who used to be in history I'm embarrassed I didn't write down [laughs] a lot of this to...to keep it and I don't think that there were any recordings either made of that whole time which in a way is sad too.

**ERICKSEN:** Have you...had you been a participant in any similar kind of event before that or since?

**ARMERDING:** No, no, no it was unique in my experience, because I come from a...a background that, well, simply hasn't been in that sort of thing like all night testimony times or anything of that sort so it...it was a unique experience as I far as I was concerned.

**ERICKSEN:** What...we talked about sort of the...some of the short-term impact on campus. In terms of the long picture up until the time of your retirement as president, what...how...how long did you see the effects stretch out or what kind of dynamics were in play because of it?

**ARMERDING:** It's difficult to pinpoint it because see, there was a shift generally let's say in the college and the university world from...especially with the withdrawal from Vietnam and the time of the 70s tended to be more quiescent than the turbulence of the 60s. So I...I don't know whether you could really give a cause and effect relationship with.... I would have to say that my final years here were so much more pleasant and, well, than the early years. It wasn't that we did not have differences but they weren't nearly as abrasive or corrosive as had been true. And, you know, I would like to think that it does hark back to 1970, but I guess I would have to say that I think then one would have to...to defend whether there was difference between that and the generally better feeling on campuses across the country, see. But I...I ended up with, well even some affection on the part of faculty and students which was different from the early years.

**ERICKSEN:** One of the...one of the interviewees mentioned that some students came up from Asbury [College] following what had happened there. Did you see any impact of their visit on what happened here?

**ARMERDING:** Well, yes, but I had been in something similar at Gordon College in the 50s and realize then that efforts to manufacture something or to jump start something, at least in that context, just didn't work.

**ERICKSEN:** Is that what they had attempted to do there?

**ARMERDING:** Well, in this one case this man really tried to press something at Gordon at the time and sadly it was perceived as...for what is apparently was: manipulative. Whereas with these people I...I got clear impression they were simply saying, "This is what happened to us and we out of our joy we want to share it." Although I have learned since that some of the faculty at Asbury, both the Seminary and the College were strongly opposed to what occurred back then there. And you know, to me for a setting of Methodism and the whole idea of an appropriate display of emotion and all, it was surprising to find that some of the faculty were negative about it. But I just felt those young people were simply authentically telling us what had occurred and wanting to share, of course, naturally saying we could hope that God will visit you also. But it didn't seem to me that anybody was trying Monday through Thursday to get something going at all. And again I may not of tuned in on it well but I certainly wasn't aware of that.

**ERICKSEN:** Did you have to make a decision about whether the hold classes on Friday?

**ARMERDING:** Well, [clears throat] I think that as I recall we did talk about that but [pauses] felt that since we stopped at 7:30 we would try to go ahead. That's my best recollection although I'd have to talk Peter Veltman who was then the dean of the College because he might remember more of that.

**ERICKSEN:** My guess is students were rather tired in class [laughs].

**ARMERDING:** Oh yeah, well, they...they certainly were although [laughs] student habits are something else. I [both laugh]...I don't think that it would necessarily be unique that they would have come after having been up most of the night. [both laugh]

**ERICKSEN:** That's true. What impact did you see on campus of the Jesus Movement that was taking place in that sim...same time period ?

**ARMERDING:** Well, there was some of it, of course, and, in fact, there was a march in Chicago where some of the students went and I actually marched in one of those as well. So that there...there was. And I think again at the time the idea was that one could love the Lord and live in commune or whatever else and to me again could be subsumed soon under the generalization that within the essential there could be degrees of diversity and I think a number on campus felt that way, that they now they could legitimately participate say in the Jesus march and not be perceived as ecclesiastically at least outside the pale. But I couldn't tell you how many of us went down, I can't remember that now, except that I do remember being down there. And again for me it was a uniq...a new experience because I am simply, a temperamentally and by background, not accustomed to that sort of thing.

**ERICKSEN:** Did you get any feedback from students about your participation?

**ARMERDING:** Not to my recollection. I'm sure I did but I don't recall it.

**ERICKSEN:** Okay. What role do you think you...you referred to John Armstrong's arranging prayer groups. What...what role did prayer play in what happened in 1970?

**ARMERDING:** Well, I think a great deal frankly. I...I...I...I realize the argument about how it can be applied, but II Chronicles 7:14, you know, "humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face," I think is at least a normative patterning for us to follow in imploring the blessing of the Lord on a particular group. And so I think it had a lot to do with it, myself. In fact, I haven't made the kind of study you folks have, but I've had the impression that 1936, 1943, 1950, all had people praying and asking the Lord's blessing. And I gather that they've been praying here too, in...in the 1990s, so I think prayer is very much in order.

**ERICKSEN:** Yeah, I've heard a few people say to me and I've heard sort of second hand that alumni had been praying...

**ARMERDING:** Yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** ...that students who were on campus here ten years ago were praying for...

**ARMERDING:** Yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** ...for revival.

**ARMERDING:** Well, we certainly were. We...we just sensed something that...and one can easily be criticized for being too lugubrious, too morose, whatever. But what...from what our children were telling us who when they were students here, they'd come in and say, "Dad, if you only knew," you know. They wouldn't name names but they would describe things...was indication of a real ethical...series of ethical lapses of not really being sensitive to the Spirit of God in regard having given ones word and deliberately not keeping it. So we knew that there was an undercurrent of...of explicit disobedience, refusal to keep one's word, even to the area of...of not keeping moral law of God as contained in the Bible. And, you see, knowing all of those things and having all of those things brought to our attention by people who were trusted and they were telling these things, I felt there was need to try to encourage our people toward diligence and prayer and concern that we might realize what's clear in the Bible, and how it's a startling thing but few believers I think really recognize it; "All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, that He knows the thoughts and the intents of the heart." [Hebrews 4:13] Think of that. Or in eighth of Romans, "God who searches the hearts." [Romans 8:27] Well, I think once a person is aware of that [laughs] then he's going to be quick to repent and clean up his act so to speak. I didn't see that. I saw the opposite. It was almost if God could be fooled or deceived just like a student personnel office [laughs] could be deceived, see. And once you got an idea of the presence of God there would be difference and so we felt it was important for our community to recognize that there was somewhat subterranean but also incipient and need of renewal and, as I say, at that point you could be open to criticism if you're looking too much on the negative side of things, see. Well, of course what happened in March we knew about...we knew all along that there were those things going on because students had told us of that. And that's what I think, well...well, trying to make the adult permanent community aware so that they might pray, that they might counsel, they might be a resource to people would be a good thing.

**ERICKSEN:** Over...now the...the period of time that you're talking about, when did you begin to hear these sort of things?

**ARMERDING:** Well, late 60s...

**ERICKSEN:** Okay.

**ARMERDING:** ...going through the late 70s. See we had...we had children here in that particular time.

**ERICKSEN:** Did the reports that you heard became more frequent, let's say in the last decade?

**ARMERDING:** It...I wouldn't say more frequent but they certainly have been similar. We've had...

**ERICKSEN:** Okay.

**ARMERDING:** ...even more recently students who were...students in the late 80s and early 90s coming to us and saying, "Do you know?" you know, talking about what they knew in their residence hall and all. It...it was disappointing. On the other hand I tried to tell them that student



personnel was not aggressively going out to find things. They were going to follow something that...that had been brought to their attention. And so I said to these students who came to us, "Your responsibility is to go to Dr. [Sam] Shellhamer and tell him and let him begin to...to work on it, but it's not really right for you just to tell somebody who's not even on campus any more." But the point simply was they were telling us and they...there were these same incidence akin to what was confessed in the meetings. I would say it was not a new thing.

**ERICKSEN:** That...you mentioning Sam [Shellhamer] raised another...another point. Did you...when people were making confessions during the 1970 meetings, [pauses] how...how did you decide how to address things that people were confessing?

**ARMERDING:** Well, for one thing we...we were...we were trying as best we could to say that the circle of knowledge was a circle of confession. In other words, if three people knew about it, then those three people. Unless God clearly indicated that a wider audience should know for the sake of encouraging people in the same problem to have it, but then as you probably know back then as it is true now we try to go on a case by case basis. And to deal with people certainly to see if there was a real breaking of the habit pattern, whether this was an inadvertent act almost, whether it was a persistent practice. Sam and his team and Henry Nelson before him had to figure all those out and I thought that was appropriate because you didn't have a kind of mechanical application to it at all so that's really the approach we sought to use.

**ERICKSEN:** Now that..."the circle of the..." I can't remember exactly how you put it, "the circle of responsibility"....

**ARMERDING:** Well, the knowledge of the sin...

**ERICKSEN:** Yes.

**ARMERDING:** ...the circle of people that knew about the sin I personally think is the circle that could be advised of your...of your repentance, renunciation and...and all unless God clearly indicates that a wider group needs to know so I've never personally been comfortable with people talking about intimate details which I think would better relate to a family or to a few friends and leave it there.

**ERICKSEN:** Was that a framework that you tried to encourage during the meetings in '70 or was this thing moving before...?

**ARMERDING:** No I...I felt...I felt at the time, of course, that we did not want to enter in and try to correct something or stand up and say you shouldn't have said that, so we did not do any of that.

**ERICKSEN:** I know that Dr. Cairns has mentioned keeping the circle of...

**ARMERDING:** Yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** ...confession to the...to the...

**ARMERDING:** Circle of knowledge, yeah.

**ERICKSEN:** ... group that it's appropriate to. Yeah. How do you feel about using the word revival? That issue has been discussed some. Is it...is it appropriate? Is this...?

**ARMERDING:** Well, I think so. It's almost like the term Fundamentalism. Depends on how you define it, see, or the term Evangelical or whatever else. If revival means that there is a sense of revived interest in knowing God and revived interest in knowing His Word and obeying it, then fine. If revival simply is perceived as a highly emotional experience that involves a dramatic outburst and all this, then I would prefer another term. Just as the same thing when you talk about Fundamentalists as snake handlers and all. I'd say, "Yeah well, I'm a Bible believing Evangelical," [laughs] whereas to another group, "Yes I am a Fundamentalist." I believe the fundamentals that were published back in the of 1910s. So it depends how the term revival is defined.

**ERICKSEN:** Okay. Now we sort of deterred from your hearing different accounts about just sort of the atmosphere here on campus. When did you first hear about what was going on earlier this year and how did you...how did that come to you?

**ARMERDING:** We had a [pauses]...I think we had a...a phone call; I can't remember now from whom. I think it was the parents of somebody who was here as I remember. But then right way we called campus and they faxed us information immediately. So we had Steve Kellough's [Chaplin at Wheaton] memo that came right out and then, of course, the president's [Duane Litfin] memo that went to the board. But I think our first knowledge was from some parent whose child was here as I remember and I can't tell you who that is right now [laughs].

**ERICKSEN:** Well, that...I don't think that's too crucial. What did you think when you...when you heard?

**ARMERDING:** Well, I guess the more I heard the more grateful I was because to me at least the fact that it was something that was oriented by students, that didn't even have a special speaker, of course, they had the people of Howard Payne [Howard Payne University, Texas]. But then they released the reports about the genuineness, the authenticity of it all and then the gathering around I thought was just beautiful. Even Dr. Litfin [Duane Litfin, President of Wheaton College] at least we were told that Wednesday night a student prayed for him and then the following day he shared that with the faculty council and couldn't quite get through the account which I thought was marvelous. So to me there was a great sense of gratitude. Frankly we had been praying months, years, whatever you want to say. Going back to David Landsdale's dissertation really, always been so deeply troubled by that comment, so....

**ERICKSEN:** I think we better switch this so I'm going to shut this off.

**END OF TAPE**