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This interview was conducted with Arthur Heald (BAE 1954) in the Viking Union on June 21, 2003. The interviewer is Carole Morris. This was part of the Golden Vikings Reunion weekend.

CM: First of all, Arthur, why don't you tell me a little about yourself? Why did you choose to attend Western?

AH: I chose to attend Western because it was here and cheap. I think I paid \$18 in fees for the first quarter that I attended here, plus books.

CM: Great! And you were from New Jersey?

AH: Yes.

CM: Demarest High School?

AH: *Demarest*.

CM: Demarest?

AH: Yes.

CM: So how'd you hear about it?

AH: My mother re-married, and we moved to the west coast. That's why I didn't start in fall; I started in January, because I didn't start the application process until August.

CM: And what year was that?

AH: It was August of '48, so I started January of '49. I started the day they broke ground for the Auditorium Building.

CM: Oh really? The Performing Arts?

AH: Yes.

CM: That's interesting.

AH: Yes, there was a huge crane in there digging up dirt the day I drove onto campus, January 3rd.

CM: Great. What town were you living in?

AH: Nooksack.

CM: Oh, you were?

AH: Yes.

CM: (Laughter) I live there now.

INTERRUPTION

AH: No, my step-father was the pastor of the Nooksack Valley Reformed Church, and he and Mother met on a transcontinental train trip, and that was in '47. And I finished high school in '48, and she came out in July of '48, and they got married. I lived with them for the first two years at school, and then, while I was playing soldier, he transferred to a mission here in Bellingham. And so I lived with them on G Street.

CM: So what were your parents' names?

AH: Well, Van Bronkhorst, Alex Van Bronkhorst was my step-father's name. Mother was Cornelia MacArthur Heald.

INTERRUPTION

CM: What degrees or certificates did you receive from Western?

AH: I got a BA, and I think it was a series of minors, rather than a major and a minor. It was general, geography was one, economics was one, maybe history. I don't remember.

CM: A variety. What other degrees, if any, did you receive elsewhere (before or after your attendance at Western)?

AH: None.

CM: What was your first job after leaving Western?

AH: I went to work as a teller at the Bellingham National Bank, and I stayed there for thirteen years. After a couple of years (I don't remember how many), I was elected as auditor of the bank. Then after being auditor for awhile, they put the responsibility for hiring and firing the clerks in my lap. One of the interesting things that came out of my experience was, as auditor, I was in charge of making sure that all the assets were there and not overstated or understated, and I was pretty good at that. But, then, while I was looking after the assets of the bank, it came to my attention that the President of the bank was trying to steal the bank.

CM: Uh-oh.

AH: And I was responsible to the Chairman of the Board, so I had a visit with him and he said, "Oh, yes. I know what he's doing."

And I said, "You going to do something about it?"

And he said, "I'm too old."

I won't mention who his name was, but he was chairman of the board at that time, that would have been in '63. So I did something about it. I passed the information on to a stockholder, who was incensed. And he got together a group of fellows, and they blocked the merger. There was a proposed merger with the People's National Bank, and the President had bought a whole bunch of stock in his name and his daughter's name and his son-in-law's name, and he was lying to his Board of Directors; and, as Vince Wilder said afterwards, "If this had been a listed stock, what he did was illegal."

And so, it was immoral to start with.

CM: So your job had a pretty big impact on the business community in Bellingham.

AH: Yes, it did, yes, it did. But then I went on to a bank as a loan officer in Salem.

CM: Was that at the end of the 60's, too?

AH: Yes, I was there three and a half, four years, something like that, '63 to '66?

CM: So three years.

AH: And, as a loan officer, you passed the duty around of passing on the overdrawn check accounts, and I noticed that every time this one particular account would go overdrawn, there'd be a check to the same payee. And, this is, you know, something you just notice over a period of time. And, so I went and looked in the paid check file, and there was a quarter of a million dollars worth of checks to the same payee, and they only did a half a million dollars' worth of business a year, and so I thought, "They're kiting checks!" And so we sent a couple checks back drawn against uncollected funds, and the President of the bank said, "That's the largest check kite I've ever seen in my career!" And, it's just a matter of being alert to what goes on.

CM: So you were a successful banker, it sounds like. Did you change...

AH: I did all right.

CM: ... professions after that?

AH: Yes. After three years or four years at the commercial bank, I realized that I was in the wrong business, and then I went to work for New York Life. That's a highly organized company, and we'd get a monthly bulletin with all the changes and how to do paperwork, and I would read them and file them, and then, in time, I'd use it if there was a new procedure, I would take advantage of it. And typically the response I would get: "You can't do that."

And I'd go back and get the bulletin and put it in front of the clerk and say, "Yes, you can do it."

And so I got used to hearing, "Only Art would think of something like that."

And so, while I didn't get any, you know, advanced degrees or special commendations, I think I served my employers pretty well.

CM: And do you think you learned some of those skills when you were at Western, or maybe...?

AH: Oh, you bet.

CM: Some thought, processes that helped.

AH: Yes, yes, I would have to say that when I left school I didn't have a teaching certificate, you know, so I wondered, "What did I get out of all of that?"

But I wasn't much of a reader. Books were not big in my family's household, but I moved seven big boxes of books yesterday, because we're going to live in Bellingham next year.

CM: Moving back.

AH: And I've got a bookshelf of books that I've read since we've lived in this one house; so I've learned.

CM: So you're self-taught.

AH: Learned how to read and learned how to correlate information.

CM: Have any other family members attended Western?

AH: My step-brother was here briefly. I don't remember how many years he was here, but he went on to a navy program, and he got his undergraduate degree at Michigan or Michigan State, I don't know what.

CM: And what was his name?

AH: He's David Van Bronkhorst.

CM: OK. Are there any other personal achievements you'd like us to know about?

AH: No, there are the ones I've covered.

CM: Your work.

AH: They were the interesting ones.

CM: Those were big, I'd say.

AH: Yes.

CM: Where did you live most of the time when you attended Western? At home?

AH: At home.

CM: And that was, again, on G Street?

AH: The last two years was on G Street.

CM: And then prior to that? Nooksack.

AH: Nooksack.

CM: Right.

AH: Yes.

CM: Any favorite memories of your family and home when you were attending?

AH: No.

CM: Who were your favorite or most influential teachers and why?

AH: Well, I'd put down Larry Wright, he was the one that I think back on fondly. He taught economics, and he had a good way of presenting his material. That's where I learned about balance of payments, long before it was in the popular press. He wasn't here long. There was an ad for a stockbrokerage firm in San Francisco in Time Magazine, featuring a picture of Larry Wright, and it strikes me that I wrote to him, but I didn't get any comment back. I congratulated him on having done very well.

CM: Any other teachers that have stood out in your mind?

AH: I hate to say it, but there was one (laughter), another one in the economics department that they had a reception for him down in Seattle a couple years ago. And right off the top of my head I can't think of his name, but he was, I think he's still alive.

[Editor's note: Erwin S. Mayer]

CM: That might be one reason you were interested in banking was your interest in economics.

AH: Oh, yes, oh, yes. I mean today I read the local paper, but I get my information from the Wall Street Journal and the Economist magazine.

CM: So you've kept up that interest?

AH: Oh, yes. It cuts you off from general conversations because nobody else reads them.

CM: Right.

AH: Oh, I mean, nobody no. Business people do, but when you're socializing with people, you know, you're not talking about the Wall Street Journal or the Economist.

CM: When you were here did you have friends, other students that were in the same areas of interest?

AH: No, no. I've been a loner.

CM: So you didn't participate in any sports or other clubs or anything like that?

AH: No, living at home, you know, I had part-time jobs, full-time jobs. I worked for Johnny Westford, who had the Westford Funeral Home. His son still does. But I drove an ambulance for them during I think it was into my senior year, and we went to work at 5:00 every other afternoon, and we were off at 7:00 in the morning. And, then, every other weekend we started at 5:00 on Friday afternoon and worked straight through until Monday morning. And we just lived at the funeral home. On an hourly basis, I was grossly underpaid (laughter), but, on a per call basis, I think I averaged about \$2.50 a call. But -- my girlfriends would come down to the funeral home and we'd sit on the couch in a slumber room (laughter). And we'd go out to eat, we'd take the ambulance and we'd go eat someplace. It was an interesting job.

CM: Did you get any of his good barbecued salmon?

AH: I came up for homecoming a couple years ago, and out at the ballpark was a guy cooking salmon, and he said, "Hi, I'm Jack Westford." I said, "Well, of course you are." (I could see his father in him).

CM: Did he remember you?

AH: He didn't know me because he's too young, but his older sister married a long-time friend of mine; they were since split up. But, the long-time friend is now a cousin of my present wife. So we see him occasionally.

CM: That's great. So what was the hourly pay? I'm curious now.

AH: It was just months, maybe I made seventy-five bucks a month. I don't remember exactly.

CM: What other jobs did you have?

AH: Oh, I worked in the Fountain at the Student Union Building at one time, did family work...

CM: Where was that? Where was the Student Union Building?

AH: It was up on High Street, across from the library, right across from Men's Residence Hall (I don't know what you call it now, MRH is what we called it). But that was the building that they broke ground for the day I started school. [Editor's note: Auditorium Building had a Student Lounge which included the Fountain].

CM: Oh, I see.

AH: 1949.

CM: And, I'm sorry, what were the other ones you started to tell me about?

AH: What, the other jobs?

CM: Like the Student Union... Fountain...

AH: Oh, I did some cannery work summers and worked in a freezer, or a processing plant one year. Did a little part-time bartending, kind of an all-purpose, non-jock.

CM: So, do you have anything else before we finish up?

AH: No, I think we've finished.

CM: The last question is, please take a moment to consider the impact on your life of your education experiences at Western and any comments that might help Western enhance its message to legislators, policy makers, and fellow citizens during a time of great challenge for higher education in Washington State.

AH: Well, I felt at the time that there was a lot of, not pressure, but all the students were working for basically a teaching certificate. I had always had an idea that college was for a broadening exercise, and that after we graduated from college, then you went out and learned how to make money. I went to work for \$200.00 a month at the Bellingham National Bank, which I could not have done if I wasn't still living at home. But when I got married, the first time, that was when I moved away from home, and my wife moved away from home, but she moved from Seattle.

CM: So, you feel like education is liberal arts...

AH: Yes, yes.

CM: ...focus, or should be? OK, anything else to add?

AH: I don't think so.

CM: Thank you.