

Penland, C. William T., 1899-1982  
Colorado College Professor of Botany  
and Biology, 1922-1968

CASSETTE ONE - SIDE ONE

This is tape recording number 10 of the Colorado College Archives Oral History Project. I am Judy Finley, interviewing C. William T. Penland, professor emeritus of Botany, at his home in Colorado Springs. The date is January 31, 1977.

Professor Penland received his B.A. in 1920 from the University of Wyoming and his Ph.D. in Biology in 1925 from Harvard University. Except for a period of military service during World War II, and a semester in South America, he taught at Colorado College continuously from 1922 until his retirement in 1968, bringing him the distinction of having been a professor here longer than anyone else in the institution's history. An avid mountaineer, Dr. Penland is particularly well-known for his studies of the fungi and algae of Alpine tundra.

Good morning, Professor Penland.

PENLAND:

Good morning to you, Judy.

FINLEY:

Nice to be here this morning.

PENLAND:

Thank you.

FINLEY:

I wanted to ask you, as a background to your career for many years at Colorado College in the botany department, about your student days. You were born in Wyoming, and went to college in Wyoming, didn't you?

PENLAND:

That's right, went to the University of Wyoming, uh-hum. And was there for four years, before going east to do graduate work.

FINLEY:

You did your graduate work where?

PENLAND:

At Harvard University.

FINLEY:

At Harvard University. Now, were you always interested in botany? How did you happen to become a specialist in this field?

PENLAND:

I suppose that I had been an outdoors person all my life, so when I went to the university, the thing nearest to my interest was forestry, and upon inquiring about forestry, I learned that they did not have courses in that at the university.

So the next nearest thing was botany, and they happened to have a very well-known botanist there, Dr. Evan Nelson, and I was glad to be introduced to that subject under him. He later became an acting president of the college, before Dr. Duniway took over.

FINLEY:

Dr. Duniway was president then of the University of Wyoming while you were there?

PENLAND:

He was the president at Wyoming for six years, but his sixth year was the year that I was a freshman at the university. He left then, from Laramie, and came down to Colorado Springs to be the president of Colorado College.

FINLEY:

I see. Did you have any contact with him in any way, in Wyoming?

PENLAND:

I would say almost none. He spoke, of course, at various meetings, but personally, no acquaintance with him.

FINLEY:

You had gone then to Harvard for your master's degree. What led you back to Colorado College in 1922? How did you happen to get your job here?

PENLAND:

To start way back, when I was still in high school, I met, at a 4th of July celebration, a boy who had been to Colorado College. I think he was here only a year, maybe two years. But he was very much impressed with Colorado College, and thought that maybe I might want to go there to college. He spoke of a couple of things that impressed me.

Number one was the setting of the college, and the town, at the foot of Pikes Peak, and Cossitt Hall had been dedicated not long before he came down here, and he spoke of the fact that in the dining hall at Cossitt Hall, all the freshman and sophomores were required to eat there, and they could look out of their dining room and see Pikes Peak in the distance, and this impressed him very much, as it did me, later on, of course. Actually, I didn't come then. That was one of the things that led me to have some interest in Colorado College.

But of course, the great interest came back at Harvard, when I learned that there was to be an opening here in the biology department, as it was called at that time. And Dr. Duniway came east and interviewed a number of faculty people and future faculty people, and I was one of them.

But Miss Lane in the public relations and employment office there at Harvard told me about this position being open at Colorado College. And so we wrote and found out that there was a possibility of getting to come here. And this led, eventually of course, to my appointment, and I started the very next year to teach at Colorado College.

FINLEY:

Who else was in the biology department at that time, when you came here?

PENLAND:

The head of the department was Dr. Gilmore, who had been here, I believe, two or three years. And there was another person--I've forgotten the name now--who taught such courses as physiology and bacteriology at that time. But the department was rather small. Dr. Gilmore was the one who had charge of practically all of the courses, and he had worthwhile assistants who had taken courses with him.

FINLEY:

Do you recall anything of your first impressions when you came to the campus?

PENLAND:

I was much impressed, both as to the location of the city, Colorado Springs, and of the campus, and particularly of Palmer Hall, which was built, as you know, of that beautiful pink peachblow sandstone, and sat at the head of Tejon Street. I was impressed by that, and although I knew the mountains, there was nothing quite like Pikes Peak in my experience, and so I appreciated that a good deal.

Later on it turned out that Dr. Duniway had to apologize, more or less, for the low salaries which were

prevalent in those days. He was accustomed to giving receptions for new faculty people--in fact, I believe he hired as many as 26 over his entire career here, of six years.

And in this one occasion, at the reception when we were out on the porch at the president's home, together--it was a moonlight night--Pikes Peak showed up beautifully, and Dr. Duniway said, "Penland, you may not have much of a salary, but remember that those mountains are a part of your salary!" [chuckle] And I agreed with him, and I have felt that way ever since, of course.

FINLEY:

I think that's often been the attraction to Colorado College. [chuckle]

PENLAND:

Yeah, yeah.

FINLEY:

Do you remember what your salary was when you were first hired?

PENLAND:

I believe I started at \$1800, and it remained that--well, after I got my Ph.D. degree, I was raised the munificent sum of \$100, so I got \$1900 as a Ph.D. And this is an assistant professor at that time.

Now you asked about the appearance of the campus and the town--

FINLEY:

Yes.

PENLAND:

One thing that stands out in my memory in the city was this pall of dust which hung over the main streets in those days, because there was no paving. And especially in the evening, after hours, this dust was just impressive, and rather unsatisfactory. I remember that very well.

But the city, of course, was beautiful. There were a lot--great number of beautiful homes, especially on Wood Avenue, and North Cascade, and so on. And out in the Broadmoor area. And I didn't think that the greenness of the campus amounted to very much in those years, but it wasn't as good as the campuses in the East, but it was ahead of the University of Wyoming campus, which, of course, was in a fairly dry country. And of course, since that time, it's

been very much improved, and is really a beautiful campus.

FINLEY:

Was the campus totally sodded in those early days--grass everywhere?

PENLAND:

Not totally so. I remember certain corners--the one where the big boys' dormitory now sits. That was rather an eyesore for awhile, although there was a Little Folks' School there on that corner for years. But it was in the state of nature, with wild grasses and weeds, and so on. So that it was not totally sodded, no. And a lot of it was allowed to take care of itself.

And the part that was attended was watered in a rather way. Mr. Arthur Baylis, the superintendent of grounds, had it arranged so that ditch water coming from the north of the city was turned in on certain blocks of the campus, and it became flooded, reminiscent of pictures I had seen of rice paddies in the Far East in earlier times! [chuckle]

And there were some difficulties with people crossing the campus at night, when it was dark, getting messed up with these flooded sections of the campus. But this I remember very well, the flooding of the campus in early days. It was only much later that there was an underground watering system, sprinkling system, installed.

FINLEY:

But there were always lots of varieties of trees on campus--

PENLAND:

Quite a satisfactory variety, and outstanding were the linden trees, or basswood trees--they can be called by either name--which were in their prime. They were beautifully shaped, like Christmas trees, tapering, and always had a wealth of foliage, until in the years when the drought conditions occurred. And the drought did kill off some of the branches, and they became misshapen, but have recovered from that to a certain extent.

But on one occasion I remember that Mr. Baylis borrowed water wagons from the city, and hauled water in to take care of the watering of these trees of various kinds. But there's always been a fairly satisfactory collection of shrubs and trees on the campus.

One of my summer school classes--we had the students go out and draw maps of the campus, and indicate the position of the various trees and shrubs, and then to draw those in on maps. And they presented that for a sort of a final

examination.



FINLEY:

You spoke of your first impressions of the campus physical plant. What do you remember specifically about the people you worked with in those early days? I'd been interested in knowing a little bit about Dr. Duniway's personal manner and appearance, and also about Dr. Gilmore, your colleague in the biology department.

PENLAND:

Dr. Duniway was a very impressive person in faculty meetings. He had the appearance of a thorough person, which I believe everyone agreed he was. And he handled the faculty meetings with a great deal of aplomb, and really, I was impressed with him all the time that he was here, which after all was just one year, but it was enough for me to get this very favorable impression of him.

But being a lowly instructor, and he being the president of the college, we had very little contact, even though I had met him briefly up in Wyoming, and of course, at the employment office at Harvard when he interviewed me there. This I could say about Dr. Duniway, and I believe I could add nothing much more about him.

I might say that, going back a little bit there, that before I was actually secured for the job, that the employment lady brought out some newspapers published locally, which told about the exploding of a bomb on the president's lawn, and the students carrying out animals from the museum and putting them in the trees, and--but this never occurred during the year that I was associated with him here.

But this employment lady said to me, after showing me these papers, "Now you see the place you're going to--what it's like!" [chuckle] Which rather teased me, but didn't deter me from coming here to teach, anyway! [chuckle]

FINLEY:

But you were aware of some controversy in the town, then, and the campus?

PENLAND:

I was aware, yes, that some--yes, some campus and town. And never thoroughly understood it, because as I said, my interest was mainly in what I was going to teach, and how I was going to teach it, and so forth.

FINLEY:

Yes.

PENLAND:

I think that Dr. Duniway did not have a great interest in athletics which former presidents had had, and maybe that was against him a little bit.

Now as to Professor Gilmore, I have the fondest memories of Dr. Gilmore. He, of course, introduced me to the campus. The first day I came, he invited me to lunch, and I was amused to have the family ask for the passing of dishes in opera songs of various kinds!

And then later, when he took me to Jackson House, which was the main registration office--or had the main registration office upstairs in those days--it was the Administration Building. I followed Dr. Gilmore up the stairs, which were lined with students taking their turn at registering, and the students nearby said to me, "Get back into line and take your own turn!" Well, I looked like a freshman in those days, I guess!

So anyway, Dr. Gilmore took care of me in that way. I remember him also, especially, because after the war, when I had some feelings, possibly, about not continuing teaching, he insisted that I come back here, saying that, "We do need you very badly."

So I thought with that encouragement that I should come and do my job, or continue with the job again. So I remember him in many ways. He was a superb head of the department of biology, and another statement for which I shall always be indebted to him was that someday, there would be no reason why I should not have my own department of botany. Of course, that did turn out to be the case, but many years later--as a matter of fact, after his death, it happened--I believe that was in the late forties, when there was a separate botany department.

FINLEY:

I see. Up until that time, then, biology had covered both zoology and botany?

PENLAND:

It included both of them, that's true.

FINLEY:

Now did you teach primarily always the botany end of things?

PENLAND:

No, as a matter of fact, I had many diversions from that. When I first came, I taught bacteriology for two

years. Well, bacteria are considered to be plants, so maybe that wasn't too far off from the subject. And then later I took over mammalian anatomy, which students and faculty members also referred to as "cat anatomy" because we spent the whole year on studying--dissecting and studying the various systems--muscular, skeletal, vascular systems, and so forth--of the cat. And this course was required of those students who were to go on to medical school--at least, hopefully so. And a great many of the present physicians in town and elsewhere did take that course. So there was another departure from the straight botanical approach.

In later years still, I taught genetics, but of course genetics is a combination both of plant and animal inherent study, so that was all right too. But otherwise it was more strictly botany, my courses.

FINLEY:

Uh-hum. I understand that the biology department, particularly under Dr. Gilmore's leadership, was very strong in pre-med courses, and in getting students into medical school. Can you describe some of the curriculum requirements and a bit about the whole atmosphere of the department in those early days? You said a lot of doctors from Colorado Springs were taking courses?

PENLAND:

Yes, it seems to run through my mind that on one occasion, sometime long before his death, that a list was made, and it seems to me that it ran up into the nineties, of students who had gone on to medical school, and had succeeded in one way or another--at least they had gotten into medical schools, and presumably had done a good job, and graduated, and were occupying positions over the country.

I would say that possibly, if there were any orientation in the biology department, that it was in the direction of pre-medicine. And I believe the reason for that was, partly at any rate, that the men preceding Dr. Gilmore, especially Dr. E. C. Schneider, was inclined that way, and had a terrific reputation teaching pre-med students, and securing positions for them. In fact, he did have a national reputation, as you probably have read, and Dr. Gilmore, I believe, wanted to continue that reputation in the department as much as he could.

FINLEY:

I see.

PENLAND:

But the courses were basic. He was very strong for

anatomy--my mammalian anatomy year course bears evidence of that. But he also had his vertebrate and invertebrate anatomy, which bolstered up the studies in medicine.

FINLEY:

Is it true that he used to wear a serge suit and put chalk marks up and down this to illustrate the arterial system, or some such thing?

PENLAND:

This is true. He could draw a beautiful kidney on his lab coat! [laughter] Yes, I guess he was very impressive in lectures, and had requirements. The lecture notebooks were to be made up and presented to him for credit at the end of the course. And he was insistent on very careful note-taking, and that included copying drawings which he made on the big blackboard in the biology lecture room. So that much I can vouch for, yes! [laughter]

FINLEY:

[laughter] And how about the rumor that there was a club that he was the head of, the initiation of which consisted of swallowing water-dogs? [laughter]

PENLAND:

That's true! This is true! He never asked me to do that, although I suppose he might have, as a member of his faculty. But I do know that this is true, and I saw one or two students actually perform this way.

And coupled with that was the fact that he was an extensive collector of water-dogs. He, with a number of his students--they were collected out here on the temporary ponds on Nob Hill, and various other places, and they were sold to various biological departments over the country. And a number of his students, I believe, made their tuition through the sale of these great numbers of water-dogs, which they collected. There was a tank in the biology laboratory, which was loaded down most of the year with water-dogs in various stages of transformation, and so forth! [laughter]

FINLEY:

[laughter] That's interesting. Now tell me a bit more about the botany side of the department. Did you have any sort of place for plants in those days? Where were your offices and classrooms?

PENLAND:

The offices and the classroom--let's say office--one! [laughter] One office, a small one, and one classroom, and one laboratory, very small, on the second floor of Palmer

Hall, adjacent to the other biology laboratories. The laboratory in botany had one fairly large table, which seated only eight students, and when I had up to, say, two dozen students, it necessitated having three laboratory sections--Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, which required, of course, additional assistance help and materials and so forth.

There was also a shortage of microscopes, which meant that we could only have about eight or ten students working at one time. So that was the setup for the laboratory. The office was larger, but it was filled mostly with cases of herbarium material--that is to say, pressed plants. And occasionally it served as the laboratory also, when there was an overflow.

As far as lectures go, I used occasionally the large biology lecture room. Later, we moved downstairs into what was called the "Clock Room" on the first floor. This was mainly a history and art room for lectures, but it served very well for classes of up to 30 or 35 or 40 students for a good many years.

And it wasn't until much later--I've forgotten the year--that the classics room, upstairs again, and adjacent to my old botany office, was available for classes in botany. Incidentally, that classics room held about 35 students, but I could move in collapsing chairs to take care of an overflow. And incidentally also, this was President Slocum office at one time, for a number of years, on the second floor of Palmer Hall.

FINLEY:

It was on the sort of the southwest side of the building?

PENLAND:

The south side, in the part that's sort of--

FINLEY:

Yes, in the west end?

PENLAND:

Sort of a bow there, the--no, it was not towards the west, it was--there was another bow on the west side, but I think that was mainly the room where religion courses were held. Dr. McMurtry held forth in there.

FINLEY:

Uh-hum.

PENLAND:

This was the easternmost of those bowed-out windows. I suppose there's a name for that, architecturally, but I can't call it right now. But it was a very pleasant room, and the door led right off from my office, so it was most convenient for me to get in there beforehand, to set up lecture materials, and a lantern and so forth, for demonstrations.

FINLEY:

And did you have a place, then, in those big windows, for your plants?

PENLAND:

Yes, there was room, but actually, we used very little in the way of plant materials. There was nothing like a greenhouse, and I of course had to use the botany laboratory mainly for that, and there was just another small table on which I placed a number of potted plants. So the greenhouse was just out, and if there was need for geraniums and other types of plants that we brought in for demonstration purposes, I would always go to the city greenhouses to get those. They were just temporary, so, as I say, nothing like a greenhouse, and it was much missed, believe me, in those days.

FINLEY:

Yes. Well, you spoke of overflow in your classes. Was botany a very popular subject in the twenties?

PENLAND:

In the twenties, no, but into the thirties, yes, it became more so. But I think that the biggest class I ever had was about 45, and it seems to me that was just after the war, when a number of students who were looking around for some course in science thought that maybe botany would be a satisfactory one. But mainly, the courses have been small.

I think your father could tell you--he did take one of my courses on one occasion--that the advanced courses ran about four or five, up to eight or ten students. But the beginning course did get up to 30, and as I say, on one occasion I believe there were 45. But that dropped down rapidly, and after the construction of Olin Hall, I think the maximum number of students was around 30, and fell below that occasionally.

FINLEY:

Yes, now you said you had your own separate department established after World War II. Can you describe a bit about the genesis of this, and how the major fitted in with other aspects of a biology major--or was it a completely separate thing?

PENLAND:

It was completely separate. Dr. Gilmore required his students who were going into graduate school, not as pre-med students, to take the elementary course in botany, and then he often advised that they could do even more than that, because if they were to be teachers of biology after their graduate studies, they should know something about botany. And of course, I agreed with him thoroughly there.

The change came, I believe, to the recognition of two separate departments--that is to say, zoology and botany--after Dr. Stabler arrived on the scene. That seemed to be an appropriate time for this separation, and as it turned out, it was reasonably good. A number of people sort of felt that to use the term "botany" for a department was something entirely new, disrespectful and uncalled for.

But in going through Dean Hershey's book on the history of Colorado College, I was impressed by the fact that at least five different people were listed in the faculty as being in botany. Now I don't think that they actually had a department of botany in those days, but they were listed as botanists. And some of them are rather outstanding. Leroy Schantz, for example, who became the head of the University of Illinois at one time, and William Cort, who later went to Johns Hopkins. He was, of course, a zoologist, but he is listed as being in botany when he was here for, I think, two years only. So the term botany was not really new when we had a separate department of botany at the time I indicated.

FINLEY:

Right. Let's go back now to some specific activities regarding botany that you got involved in over the years. What was this Alpine Laboratory in the Carnegie Institution that I understand existed in the 1920s? Were you involved with that?

PENLAND:

Yes, I was, for I believe it was six summers. I was one of the assistant--the helpers up there. Dr. Frederick E. Clements had this place built way back in--30 years prior to that, and there was a rather nice laboratory, and two or three houses to take care of the personnel who were associated with the laboratory. He was one of the Fellows of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, and had a great deal of influence. And his interest was in the relationships between plants and their environment. In fact, I believe he set out to prove that it was the environment that modified plant structures. Here at that laboratory, situated about three miles up on the cog railway--

FINLEY:

On Pikes Peak?

PENLAND:

On Pikes Peak, that's right. They had a number of gardens established, and they were referred to as transplant gardens, and then there were also gardens down on the plains--the plains gardens, and some on Pikes Peak, way up above Windy Point. I can remember having spent a number of nights camping out up there at Windy Point, and taking care of planting specimens obtained from other parts of the country, at other elevations, into those gardens, and seeing that the squirrels didn't eat them up too much, and that they were sufficiently watered.

Well, at any rate, this was the object of the alpine laboratory there at Minehaha on the Ruxton, as it was called.

And as I said, Dr. Clements was there for something like 30 years, doing research work, and I was with them during the summers for, I believe, six different summers.

FINLEY:

You actually lived up there during the summers?

PENLAND:

I lived there on occasion, but most of the time I came down here, and then went back up. After two or three days down on the plains, at the college, I would take the cog road up to Minehaha, or else hike up. It was rather a nice hike to make, although I wouldn't want to do that again for any number of times! [chuckle] But I did stay there on a few occasions overnight.

I think there were something six, eight or ten students, the helpers and other people who came there to consult with Dr. Clements. He really had quite a reputation in the plant world. A former faculty member at the University of Nebraska, and then later at the University of Minnesota, before he began his intensive research work.

FINLEY:

Well, what kinds of plants would you plant up at Windy Point? [chuckle]

PENLAND:

Well, you'd be surprised, if you've not been there! [laughter] It's in the alpine area, and some of our most spectacular plants are in those alpine areas, the tundra of the high places. They are mostly low-growing plants, but they have a spectacular beauty, some of them--bright colors



and low-growing because of the adverse climate which they experience there. Most of them, when they were moved down to lower elevations, would assume a little bit more vigorous growth. But since they were by nature residents of that tundra area, they adapted themselves very well, and lived on year after year.

In fact, this tundra vegetation became one of my major interests in the teaching of botany, and I'm glad to know that it still is being carried on. There is considerable interest in the alpine plants of various parts of the world.

So that takes care, I guess, of the work at the Alpine Laboratory. I've gone into that rather extensively, but it was very interesting to me to be associated with Dr. Clements, and to work with plants.

FINLEY:

Yes.

PENLAND:

I might add there, too, that as a member of the Colorado Mountain Club, I did go on a number of their high peak climbing trips, and I always had a bag ready to dig up plants from other peaks in the area, in the state, and transport them back to the laboratory there at Minehaha, and it pleased Dr. Clements very much to get these plants from other areas.

FINLEY:

Yes! Well, you must have climbed quite a few high peaks to collect all these plants.

PENLAND:

Well, yes. I think that the number was 42 out of the 54, is it now, that they have recognized as being over 14,000 feet. At one time I thought I might do all of them--a great many people have--but I've afraid that that wish is in the past now. But 42 of them I did climb, and they were not all of them specifically for gathering alpine plants, but I did make use of a number of those trips for that purpose, yes.

In fact, I liked this work so well--I could use it in my teaching at the college--that to use a statement made by somebody on TV recently, I felt like it was almost a shame to take the money for the teaching about these things which were so much a part of my interest and my delight.

I had other trips during the summertimes--not only this peak-climbing and hiking in general, but also fishing, exploring new areas, and always it was the idea in the background of seeing new vegetation and seeing how that fitted in with my teaching chores and teaching job.

FINLEY:

Yes. Well, it's very interesting that you think of your work almost as play, or of such an interest that you hardly wanted compensation for it. This has been a constant thread in these interviews, that people have said this about

their teaching careers at Colorado College.

PENLAND:

Well! You mean they agree, they all like to do it and-

FINLEY:

Yes! Very definitely!

PENLAND:

[Both talking at once--can't understand.]

FINLEY:

Very definitely! And I presume your students got some of this enthusiasm too. Did you ever take your students on field trips to the mountains?

PENLAND:

Oh, yes, indeed! To the mountains and elsewhere. I don't know whether your father was one of the classes that I took up to the Savory Mushroom Farm north of Denver or not, but we were up there a couple of years in connection of the study of fungi of various kinds.

And on another occasion, we went to Coors Brewery [chuckle] because actually the product of the breweries is due to the activities of a plant, the yeast plant, and they are fungi, and fungi happened to be the title of one of the courses I taught.

And we always had field trips in the general course at the end of the year, whenever the conditions lightened up to the extent that we could get outdoors. I think we had three field trips scheduled, some of them in the lower mountains, because we could only devote one afternoon to the study. But we would climb Cutler almost every year, invariably, and study the plants on the way up.

And then there were field trips in the summer school. One trip I remember, and I think we may have discussed that once before. I took a small class, maybe five or six students, up North Cheyenne Canyon and then over into Jones's Park, where Professor Loud, one of the earlier teachers at Colorado College, had a cabin, and we spent the night in Jones's Park at this cabin. And the next day we climbed Baldy, as it was called in those days. Now, that's Mount Almagre, I believe, officially now. We climbed Mount Almagre and studied, collected plants there, and came all the way back to Colorado Springs that same day. It was rather an ambitious trip.

FINLEY:

Yes!

PENLAND:

And one of the older girls in the class developed some pleurisy, and we had to transport her back partway on our backs, literally, or in our hands, in a kind of a--whatever that saddle is called. It was quite a chore, really, but we enjoyed the trip very much.

FINLEY:

Were you part of any of the faculty hiking groups in those days?

PENLAND:

Yes, I was. Professor Albright, who is one of the men I remember when I first came here, very well, had a group that went out Saturday afternoon, and they enjoyed their evening meal over a campfire in selected spots around Colorado Springs, in the lower mountains, and then came back early evening. Various faculty members belonged to that, although never any great number. And they were thoroughly enjoyable, because we could talk over things happening at the college in a very informal way.

The Saturday Knights, which was a larger, a longer-standing club which often made the newspapers, I attended once or twice on invitation, and might have joined, but they were accustomed to leaving late in the afternoon, and coming back late at night, and I felt the other club was a little bit more in keeping with my own wishes. [chuckle]

FINLEY:

[chuckle] Your interests, yes. You had also spoken, when we talked before, of a club called the Round Table. Now, this wasn't a hiking club, but can you tell us a bit about it? It was a long-standing town and gown arrangement, wasn't it?

PENLAND:

That's right. It had nothing to do with hiking, yes. It was started in the days before I came to Colorado College, and it is still being continued. It was made up of about 20 members, half of which were from the college faculty and administration, and about half were from the town.

It met regularly once a month and there was a paper given, followed by a discussion of varying lengths. Although at first only dessert was served at the meetings, monthly meetings, it turned out that in the later years through the present, that dinner was provided also by the host, and then he gave the paper later in the evening, and then there was a discussion following that. A very satisfactory club, and I was honored to belong to that, beginning with the year 1925,

I believe was the first year.

FINLEY:

Were the papers serious scholarly papers?

PENLAND:

Yes, they were, really. They were from the man's--the member's own subject, own particular interest, but not confined. If he had some interest outside of his own particular department, or study, he could give a paper on anything he desired. And it had to be rather thorough, and it was scholarly, I would say, for the most part, and the discussion was certainly very rewarding and information. And I believe that the members took a great delight in belonging to this club. They were faithful in their membership.

FINLEY:

Yes--still going.

PENLAND:

And it is still going, right.

FINLEY:

Who on the faculty are members today?

PENLAND:

Well, the president, of course, has always been a member, and usually the dean of the college, and--would you like me to name, to mention names of the faculty members now?

FINLEY:

Uh-hum.

PENLAND:

Well, I think offhand of, of course Lew Worner, and Rick Bradley, in the offices mentioned. They there would be Will Wright, and Wally Boyce, and Douglas Mertz, Frank Krutzke, and--let me see--that's not the total membership of ten, but it's close to it. Maybe that would be enough to give you an idea. I hope I haven't slighted anyone!

FINLEY:

[chuckle] That's all right! Back in the early days of the club, who were members among your college associates?

PENLAND:

The members of the--

FINLEY:

Yes, in the twenties, when you were first a member?

PENLAND:

Oh, yes. I believe that Gordon Parker, who was head of

forestry at that time was one of the founders, and Dr. Sisam, the head of mathematics, was another one. And Professor Daehler came into that group. So those three, and then, I believe also Dr. Drucker, who was head of business administration and banking. He was in the group. And--let's see--Justice Jackson, William H. Jackson--

FINLEY:

Oh, yes, uh-hum.

PENLAND:

--came in, I believe, the year just before I did. So he was one of the early members.

FINLEY:

Now, which of these faculty people were you particularly close to? Can you describe a little bit about some of them?

PENLAND:

Well, we've spoken of Dr. Gilmore, and of course, he was not in the group--

FINLEY:

Yes.

PENLAND:

You mean the ones in the club or--

FINLEY:

Yes. Well, your particular close associates on the faculty--your recollections of them.

PENLAND:

All right. Of course, all of those people in the Round Table I knew very well, and associated with them at least once a month during the school year.

FINLEY:

Uh-hum. Yes.

PENLAND:

I think I might mention Mr. Albright, who was in mathematics and astronomy in those days--made a great impression on me. I audited his course in astronomy, as a matter of fact, and have often wondered why we do not have a course in astronomy nowadays. I believe it's true, we do not have.

But I found it most stimulating, and I remember particularly the little trips he had in the evenings, out to



the east of town, to get out of the way of the city lights so we could study the constellations. It was most rewarding. And he was impressive as a man, and was the marshal of the faculty for a great many years, until his retirement. So I would recall him as one that I remember well.

Archer Hulbert--not going back quite so far as those early Round Table days--is another man that impressed me. He was head of the Stewart Commission for Research in Western History, as well as being, of course, head of the history department. And I happened to belong to a bridge group that met regularly, to which he and his wife belonged.

FINLEY:

Did that have a name?

PENLAND:

The Dirty Deuces!

FINLEY:

I've heard about that! [laughter] The Dirty Deuces!

PENLAND:

Dirty Deuces! [laughter]

FINLEY:

Yes! [laughter]

PENLAND:

Dr. Barnes was one of those, and--oh, there were several others--I've forgotten their names now. Hazel Earl, the former dietician at the college, was a member. And I remember Mr. Hulbert, whenever his name is mentioned, of sitting in the bleachers at a football game, and sharing a blanket with him and his daughter Katherine, when there was a blizzard raging on Washburn Field, and if my memory is not wrong, we beat Colorado University on that day! [laughter] I hope that's true--I think your father could probably correct me on that score! But in those days we did play Colorado University, as you have probably heard. So that stands in my memory of Mr. Hulbert.

I would mention also a Mr. Rose in the department of English. He taught poetry, and I audited one of his courses.

He was a delightful Massachusetts gentleman, older than most of the faculty members, and he befriended a great many students. I had the pleasure of taking a good many meals with the Roses during those early days.

FINLEY:

Hmmmm. And how about Gordon Parker? Now, he was head

of the forestry school that existed here--

PENLAND:

He was head of forestry.

FINLEY:

Did you have any particular contact with the forestry school, through your interest in botany?

PENLAND:

Yes, I did. As a matter of fact, at least two of the courses in botany were required of the forestry students, and their schedule, of course, was made up by Mr. Parker, and so he often consulted with me about the course, and made some suggestions that I was able to follow, and our relationship was very pleasant all the way through.

And I recall some of those forestry students with a great deal of pleasure. They were forceful students, friendly and willing to work--did their jobs, and so I regretted, in one way, the change of the--rather, the loss of the forestry school, because it was a source of students in some of my courses.

FINLEY:

Uh-hum. Were you ever up at their quarters near Woodland Park, the forestry camp up there?

PENLAND:

Yes, I was, although I never taught any courses up there. It was suggested at one time that maybe I should do that, but it meant extending my own academic year through the summer, and I wasn't quite willing to do that. Oh, yes, I visited there a number of times, and went on a couple of picnics with the forestry students. They had selected places around the grounds of the--what was it?--30,000 acres that was given to the college, way back when, and was instrumental in the establishment of a forestry department at the college. So I was happy to go up there and talk with students, you know, informally, on a number of occasions.

FINLEY:

Did the students actually live up there, the forestry students?

PENLAND:

Yes, I believe they did.

FINLEY:

It was not year-round, was it?

PENLAND:

No, just during the summer. And the engineering students--see, they had engineering courses up there too, besides the forestry. And I'm sure that they stayed there at least part of the time.

FINLEY:

Do you remember anything about the demise of that school, and what happened to all the land?

PENLAND:

The land was sold off, eventually--or was it deeded to the state? I've forgotten that. You'd have to check with the administration on that. But it was decided, of course, that the acreage was not at all necessary to the college after the forestry department was discontinued, which happened back in the early thirties, I believe, upon the recommendation of a couple of men who were brought here to make a study of the entire college situation.

And their recommendation was, of course, that engineering be toned down, if not cut out completely, and also that forestry be discontinued. It seems that there was too much--too many funds to be expended on these departments.

At least that was one of the considerations. That the enrollment didn't justify the expenditures for staff and materials and so forth.

FINLEY:

Uh-hum. It must have been a difficult time financially for the college in that period.

PENLAND:

It was! It affected all of us. I well recall one of the trustees appearing at our faculty meeting, and telling the faculty that they were due to have a cut in their salaries. It was something of a shock, but I believe that the entire faculty took it standing up, realized it was necessary, that we were falling on hard times, and although our salaries were probably low compared to similar institutions, yet we could afford to take a modest cut. It seems to me in my case, that I was willing to accept at least a \$100 cut in my salary for the oncoming year. So, yes, there were hard times then, and the recovery was slow, but it was certain, and we're well up now in that line, or salaries.

FINLEY:

Yes. Now were you at CC during World War II?

PENLAND:

No, no! I was with the Army from 1942 until I was discharged in 1945, so I had no connection with the college during the war years.

FINLEY:

Yes.

PENLAND:

I was a single man, and I think that botany was one of the subjects they felt was really not necessary to the war effort, and so I decided that I would try to get into the services, and tried to join the Air Corps, but my eyes cancelled that out. And so I waited for the draft, which came shortly, and went into the service in, I believe it was August of 1942, and then came back after the war, in 1946 to resume my teaching there.

FINLEY:

Uh-hum. I understand that at some time after the war, you were involved in discovering a new plant of some sort, with Dr. John Hartwell?

PENLAND:

Yes, yes.

FINLEY:

Can you describe that situation--how it came about?

PENLAND:

Dr. Hartwell had long been a surgeon in town, a successful one, but he was interested in the outdoors, and plants particularly, and decided he'd like to take a course or two with me, which he did. And his interest really grew with leaps and bounds in the subject, and at one time he considered getting a master's degree in botany, although he had a B.A. from Yale, and his M.D. from Harvard, the medical school.

It developed that we had a great number of trips, two or three a summer, out over the state, collecting plants and bringing them back to be classified and added to the herbarium. We did discover one plant on Hoosier Pass, which was quite an anomaly. Its nearest location, its nearest station would be in the center of the Canada, to the north. And it would seem possibly that it might be discovered on other stations in the Rocky Mountains, but nothing has ever been recorded. So that raised quite a sensation with people who had made the study of plant geography their main interest.

I remember the man back in Washington, who was with the Department of Agriculture in a purely research capacity, thought that this plant must have been taken there by somebody and planted up there, because otherwise, it was just inconceivable that this would be there.

But it developed--and we found this out later--that it was one of the waifs of the glaciation period, when possibly this plant, along with a great many others, were located on

the peaks running northward into Canada, and that as the glaciers came down, they blotted out these ranges, the locations on the peaks, except for this one particular one here.

Now, it might be that there'll be other places where it'll be discovered, but the story remains the same. We have a great many plants on Pikes Peak, for instance, that are not found anywhere nearer than, say, the summit of Evans, or of Mount Princeton, or Mount Harvard, over in the Collegiate Range. But at one time, they had a continuous range.

So that plant that Dr. Hartwell and I discovered over there was one of these little waifs, as I have called them, of the glaciation period. We also extended the ranges of a great many plants that we collected, found in a county that had not been recorded before. Altogether it was a very enjoyable association with him, and we both got a great deal out of it.

FINLEY:

Yes, and he managed to practice medicine at the same time, all those years.

PENLAND:

He did, right, yes. He surely did.

FINLEY:

Now, we're getting fairly close to the end of our tape here. I'm wondering what else you had on your notes that you wanted to bring out, particularly a bit about your own personal interests and philosophy of teaching over the years.

PENLAND:

Well, that certainly leaves the field wide open for me to talk, yeah! [laughter]

FINLEY:

[laughter] Go right ahead!

PENLAND:

My personal interests still remain with plants, of course.

FINLEY:

Of course!

PENLAND:

But my use of plants has turned into one that is purely practical. I'm a man who takes care of the lawn, and the shrubs, and plants a few things in the back yard for display

purposes. But whenever there's any reference to plants in the papers, this attracts my attention, and I read about it avidly. If you want me to say something about the philosophy of teaching--and I take it that means also subject--

FINLEY:

Yes.

PENLAND:

I would put botany well up, not as just a detached study of plants by themselves, but as the part they play in ecology. We hear much nowadays about ecology and environment, and--goodness knows, one doesn't have to be told that plants, the vegetation of the earth, play a great part in the environment. And we have not treated our environment very gently a lot of the time. This viewpoint I tried to stress with my students, that we ought to have more respect for vegetation.

He got to the point where he said, well, when he starts to mow the lawn, he wonders what he is doing. [sic] Is he changing the environment out there to the detriment of plants and people?

Of course, that's nothing compared to some of the practices we have carried on over the state and the world at large. We remove whole forests from mountains and build a ski course. What have we done there? Well, we have cut down the capacity of the ground to hold back water that feeds the streams that are so important for irrigation, and for water in cities, and so on.

One writer in botany said there are two great entities in our environment. One is the sky and the other would be vegetation. Well, I would add to that another entity. I would add the soil, and my advice and encouragement, if it could be followed at all, would be for everybody to study geology, botany, zoology--the natural sciences.

Because in the coming years, we're going to have to consider our environment more and more, and we already see the effects of the misuse of the environment, to a very great extent. We've altered the face of the earth in astonishing ways.

One of the things that impressed me in my early days here was the reading of this book called Deserts on the March, and some deserts are due to the fact that the vegetation was just wantonly destroyed, not because of destruction, because the plants were used. The forests were cut down, the prairies were plowed up, and so forth. And

this encourages desert-like reactions.

So that is sort of a nutshell of my advice, my philosophy of teaching. I think that teaching is being done beautifully, all over, but I would emphasize more people studying the environment. I believe that really, this is happening, that ecology is entering into the curriculum more and more all the time, and it should--it really should.

FINLEY:

Definitely. Now you taught at CC for 46 years, by my reckonings, from 1922 to 1968, with maybe a period out during the war years.

PENLAND:

Three years out for the war.

FINLEY:

Yes. And that, I understand, is the longest service of any professor who has ever taught at Colorado College. What comments do you have looking back, particularly at Colorado College and your many years there?

PENLAND:

Well, my faith in the institution has grown, of course. It's always been high. I thoroughly subscribe to all of the goals set for Colorado College and its students, and I think that it stands very high indeed--always will stand high. I don't know that I can enlarge on that too much. We've always had certain goals, at least individual faculty members have had goals like the present ones, from the very beginning.

My object when I came was to simply acquaint students, certain selected ones, with the facts about plants, and I think that this is still going on in the biology department, which it is now called. But there are courses in ecology taught there, and I believe that this block system has resulted in the taking of field trips to study vegetation over the country.

But I could point out that as far back as 1935, that I took an ecology class of something like seven students, I believe. We had our own station wagon, and we traveled clear down to East Texas, and back to Houston and Arizona--a field trip where we studied the vegetation over all that area. And the students did not get credit for this at all. They were stimulated to go; they wanted to go; they contributed a certain amount towards the buying of gasoline and tires, and so forth. So field trips, even that early, were an order of the day.



So I don't know that I can say anything further about that great expanse of the teaching record. I hated to quit. I wanted to keep on. In fact, I think I went on a year or two beyond what was the legal limit, but they kept me, and I enjoyed it, and here I am.

FINLEY:

I'm sure you're very much missed around the campus. It's been a great pleasure to talk to you today, and nice to see you again.

PENLAND:

Thank you very much!

THE END