Oral History Interview

with

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By Michael R. Adamson

Adamson: Well, to provide some context for our discussion, tell me about your background and career and how you ended up at Purdue and then on to meeting Charlie Pankow for the first time, and in what capacity you met him.

Beering: Well, I started out professionally as a physician and I spent fourteen years in the U.S. Air Force as a physician and flight surgeon. I worked with the astronauts and also was head of the medical program at the Air Force's major referral center in San Antonio, Texas, at that time called Lackland Air Force Base Hospital. Now it's called Wilford Hall Medical Center. It was just closed as part of the most recent BRAC [Defense Base Closure and Realignment] Commission review. They closed Walter Reed—that's the Army's major referral center—then they closed Wilford Hall, and this is all being merged in Washington, D.C. So it's going to be difficult to absorb the immense volume of patients. I'll be curious to see how that works out.

I left there in 1969 and came to Indiana as a professor of medicine. I was delighted with that. I was slated to go strictly administrative in the Air Force and go to Washington in the Surgeon General's Office, and I didn't want to do that. I wanted to

continue to teach and do research and see patients [but] the Lord had other plans, as you know from my subsequent career.

At Indiana University Medical Center, which is in Indianapolis, the second largest medical school in the country still—Illinois is a little larger—we immediately got busy with all kinds of exciting stuff. Endocrinology is my subspecialty and I had really a very fulfilling time there, but it only lasted a year and a half and then I was asked to be dean. I contemplated that for a while, and the president of the university there happens to be a good friend and fraternity brother, he said, "Well, you can do anything you want to. You can continue to do research and so on and so forth. You can do whatever you want. You're in charge."

What he didn't tell me was that the job is so time-consuming that you don't in any way shape or form continue to see patients. I was just running around managing six hospitals and the medical school and the associated programs of the Medical Center. I did that for another ten years or so, and then the Purdue trustees came calling. The former president of Purdue University was a patient of mine and I thought he was coming to get a prescription refilled, and he said, "I'm here today to ask you to consider the position I held as president of Purdue."

I said, "You've got to be out of your mind. A doctor at Purdue? You don't even have a medical school."

He said, "Oh, we have a branch of your medical school," which I started here in 1971. So that's quite a while back, too. In fact, we're going to celebrate the [25th anniversary of the] program this Saturday as part of the football luncheon, so even the medical school has to get involved in athletics. We have the first two years here of the

regular medical program and we have in Indiana eight locations throughout the state. It's called the Indiana Statewide Medical Education System, which I pioneered and it's now international. Everybody knows [accepts] this kind of thing [arrangement], having the first several years of medicine in the framework of a distinguished scientific university. Here it's the pharmacy school, the vet school, and [the] science school, in particular, that form the underpinnings for that.

At any rate, after initially saying, "Gee, I don't think I want to do that," my number two son called me one night. He was a sophomore here at that time in engineering—computer electrical engineering—and he said, "I understand that they've asked you to come to Purdue and you don't want to do it." He said, "Let me tell you about us. We Purdue people are really terrific folk and you're wrong about the Boilermakers. Give them a hearing, please."

So I said, "Well, I've always had an open mind to new things. You're right, and I'm going to listen carefully."

To make a long story short, I did that and I came here in the winter of 1982. I guess it was February of '82, and, boy, was it a winter.[1] We had a really rugged winter and I was in Indianapolis and it was very tough to drive up from Indianapolis. Did you drive today from the airport?

Adamson: Last night.

Beering: Oh, last night. So you know that can be—well, it's a good hour's drive, and if the roads are icy and snowy, it's more than an hour.

[1] Dr. Beering clarifies that it would have been December 1981.

So at any rate, we accepted the job. I say, "we" because the wife is part of this kind of a job. We have now been here ever since and it's been, without question, the best decision I've ever made because of the influence that one can exert on an institution like this, which is worldwide. We've got programs everywhere, and we have multiple campuses in the State of Indiana. The programs on this campus are phenomenal in research and in education on all levels and there's just nothing you can't get involved in. It's just an extraordinary opportunity intellectually and otherwise.

I must say that's been a tremendous thrill to see the program succeed on all levels. We've been okay in the academics area, the athletic area, and in the international area. We've got about 8,500 students from 49 countries right now on this campus alone. To see this admixture of folks from all over, with the sparkling intellects that are sent by other nations—they only send the very best and you've seen that in California in spades, I'm sure. It's really exciting.

So this has been a major high, and I continue to be very active in the national associations, like the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Association of American Universities. I've been in other countries doing this kind of work, constantly advising and consulting and speaking, and, of course, fundraising is an enormous undertaking for a university president. So much of what we do depends on private funds, and that's where Charlie Pankow came in very early on. I was introduced to him, and vice versa, by Henry Yang, our dean of engineering [at the time: now professor and chancellor, University of California, Santa Barbara].

Charlie had been active in our School of Engineering because of his extraordinary insights and pioneering efforts in civil engineering. You undoubtedly know he devised a

system to keep earthquake problems out of the construction of a major building. That in itself was enough to give him worldwide acclaim. He was very humble about that, as he was with everything. So I was intrigued by his prowess as an engineer and I was even more intrigued by his personal characteristics of a very humble and engaging kind individual.

One day he said to me, "I understand you're going to England."

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Are you coming to London?"

I said, "Well, yes, a part of this I'm in London."

He said, "Why don't you stay with us in London. We have a flat there."

He had a very nice flat around the corner from the Savoy restaurant and Savoy Hotel, and they, in fact, were servicing the flat, providing food and cleaning up and so on and so forth. It was certainly a very interesting visit and we were there for just a few days, because I had other commitments in Ireland and Scotland. I was there twice, I think, in this apartment. Of course, they call it a flat over there. Have you been in England?

Adamson: Yes, I have, four times.

Beering: Great, great place. My wife's family are all from Yorkshire, so I'm an Anglophile from way back and have been to England almost every year for, even just a weekend, to visit with her family. That's been good fun.

Well, anyway, I first got to know Charlie in this private capacity as just a tremendous human being and became good friends with him and Doris. I've met his kids, as well. I shouldn't call grown-up people kids, I guess. [laughs]

While we were in London, he said to me, "Are you interested in art?"

I said, "Well, yes, I've got major interests in art because I've had family who are in the theater and family who are painters, and we have a wonderful collection at home."

He said, "Oh, I'd love to see that."

I said, "Well, when you're next in Indiana, we'll have dinner at our home and you can have a look at some of the things."

I regretted that statement enormously after I found out what *he* had in art, but he was very gracious and charming about that, as he would have been in any event, and he admired some of my modest collection of things. He said, "Well, now I've got to reciprocate and you've got to come out and see what we have put together and what we call a replica of the Trianon." You've been there? Have you seen that?

Adamson: The Trianon or the 3800 Washington?

Beering: Well, the Petit Trianon that he—

Adamson: Just on the outside. I haven't been on the inside.

Beering: Unbelievable. I mean, it's a museum in its own right and, of course, it's a true replica of the Trianon in France. We, eventually, after quite a few trips out there, he said,

"I'd like to give you this building and its contents, and after I'm no longer around, I want you to use that for Purdue University in any instructional way that the liberal arts people can use it."

I said, "Gosh, I can't even imagine how wonderful that would be."

So we worked on that, and he said, "But meanwhile, I want to enjoy what you can do with that."

I said, "Well, I can imagine having a Master of Arts program which involves this collection here." His curator on the grounds, have you met her? Judy [Vawter].

Adamson: Yes.

Beering: A wonderful person in her own right and a very bright lady. I said, "We would certainly make her an adjunct professor in the program and she can help teach people when they're here."

We started that and we had a number of Master of Arts students who rotated through and came to San Francisco and took advantage of Judy's knowledge and of the extraordinary collection that Charlie had there. I had great plans for that, and so Charlie, as an art collector, as an expert in his own right—he could talk about each of the pieces, be they sculptures or paintings, in depth and with great understanding of the artists and of the meaning of those particular pieces of art in their own time and what they mean now.

Probably my greatest disappointment in the way of working with philanthropic donors was that my successor here, Dr. Martin Jischke, the weekend of the Rose Bowl in 2000, he came along, we had a big delegation coming there, and I said, "Oh, you must

meet Charles Pankow while we're there and you must see the Trianon, and I'd like to tell you the background of that."[2] So we did that and we had a meal at the Trianon, in fact. And the first thing that Martin Jischke did was to say, "Well, we're an engineering school and I don't know what Beering had in mind in saying that this would be something that Purdue could use."

Charlie was just, if you had put a firecracker under his seat he couldn't have been more startled and upset. Then he said, "Well, what do you mean?"

Jischke said, "Well, how would you feel about our selling this property when we take possession of it and putting the money into engineering and furthering the interests that you have there because you've established a professorship and a lab in civil engineering, all of which is correct and very helpful?"

Charlie said, "Well, you know, if you need money for that, I can write you a check." He was very direct about it. "But I think that there's a value inherent in its own right here for the Trianon." And I was speechless. I was literally speechless. I was standing there with my mouth open when this conversation went on and I realized that this was a huge time bomb that was going to explode either then or later. Well, it exploded a little bit later, but Charlie withdrew the gift and I think he willed it to Stanford. I'm not exactly certain, but it went to another university.

Adamson: It resolved when he set up Charles Pankow Foundation. It was then sold off to provide the seed money for that foundation. He may have sold some to Stanford, I don't know the complete disposition, but most of the pieces, my understanding is that it went—

[2] The game against the University of Washington was played on 1 January 2001.

Beering: He sold the artwork? What about the building?

Adamson: It was sold after his death, so he didn't—

Beering: So it's no longer in the family at all?

Adamson: That's correct.

Beering: Well, I must tell you, in all these years I've been at Purdue there's not a single event that can match my disappointment with this one. That rocked me because I just thought, wow, this is a comprehensive university. We have everything. There is nothing we lack except architecture. We don't have that school. That's at Ball State in Muncie, Indiana. I thought, wow, what a sheet anchor for the future of the arts here at Purdue. We have a big building here, which the trustees named for me because of my interest in the arts and humanities, and it's the largest building on campus. We have about eight thousand students in the arts here, which is respectable. Most universities are a quarter of that size. So that, obviously [was] the end of that, that [dream] went away.

But that was a very important part of my association with the Pankows, that mutual interest in those extraordinary art pieces and the history thereof and his ongoing excitement about incorporating arts in everyday life today. You know about his immense accomplishments in engineering, and he would come regularly and talk with the civil engineers here and be part of their program. I guess that's, in a nutshell, my experience

with the Pankows, the engineering part and the arts part and the personal part as humanity and compassion and his great interest in people, which was very attractive to me. We shared that.

Adamson: Well, you've sparked some follow-up questions that I don't even have on my list, but first off, as president, can you comment a little bit more specifically on how the civil engineering program developed while you were president?

Beering: The civil engineering program here—this university got started with two major emphases, one was agriculture, obviously, because we were the land-grant college of Indiana, and aligned with that was engineering, because when Thomas Jefferson came back from England in 1776 and he had learned at the foot of the master there, Mr. [Adam] Smith, he wrote that great book about the wealth of nations, he had told Jefferson in person that, "When you get back to America, you ought to go about the business of educating the young people for the future. The wealth of your country is the young people, and what they need to learn is the practical and mechanical arts and they ought to have a chance to be really men and women of the future, oriented to engineering and agriculture in a scientific way." A remarkable bunch of statements for a person who was fundamentally a historian and an economist. We have one of his folios here in our rare books library.

Jefferson kept that in mind and he was, of course, busy doing politics in Virginia and then at the national level, and after he retired from the presidency, he set about putting this dream into action and he founded the University of Virginia. That became

the prototype for all the land-grant colleges under the Lincoln Administration that were then elaborated. The notion was that every state in the union should have one college that was like the University of Virginia, or something that should be state-supported. The state should provide the funds and the space for it.

We were fortunate in this state that Mr. [John] Purdue, who was a very successful merchant who happened to live in Lafayette, offered 150 acres of land and $150,000 to get this going here [in 1869]. The legislature was grateful to him and named the place for him and made him a lifetime trustee, and also promised him that any of his offspring could go to school here free of charge. He never married, he never had any offspring, but interestingly enough, as late as during my administration here, people would come every so often and say, "I'm a direct descendant of John Purdue." I would always smile and say, "Oh, another bastard child, eh?" Because he wasn't married and had, to our knowledge, no kid that could make that claim. So we'd laugh about that every so often. But to make a long story short, that's how we got going.

On the engineering side, the first discipline was mechanical engineering, and the second one, I believe, was civil. Then we began to elaborate a great many other engineering programs here. For example, we founded the discipline of industrial engineering. I'm very proud of the fact that that group made me an honorary industrial engineer a few years ago. It really was a pioneering effort of Purdue, and now, of course, it's everywhere worldwide.

We also founded another special interest of mine, I mentioned, with the astronauts. And I am, again, with the astronauts. That's one of the things I did in Washington this week, trying to figure out how to send a man to Mars. That was the

School of Aeronautics and Astronautics. That was the first program in the country here and it's become one of our important programs.

The next thing that we did was to elaborate another new discipline in engineering and that's computer and electrical engineering, which is also everywhere now, but that was not an engineering discipline in its own right. Electrical engineering was. It was one of our early ones, but not the merger with the computer science. That's, of course, very fundamental to moving forward in the engineering field these days. Now we've got nano engineering and bioengineering. That was done during my time here, the bioengineering. That's a tremendous program as well, and we worked together with my former school, the Indiana University Medical School, to establish many of the research programs in bioengineering and the degree programs, as well. They spend time at the Medical Center in Indianapolis, as well as here.

Another thing we did—we have a School of Pharmacy here. There are only twenty-six in the whole country. That was one of our early schools. The School of Pharmacy really lacked a clinical arm, and while I was still the dean of the medical school, I consulted at that time with Fred Hovde, who later on would be instrumental in bringing me here, and said, "How would you like to have some joint programs with the pharmacy school? They need the clinical stuff." We needed a vet, too. We didn't have a vet school in Indianapolis and we needed that for the medical school. So we established some liaisons on the research side first, and then on the education and practice side with both the pharmacy school and the vet school.

We elaborated another program that became a pioneering effort for the nation, and that is the doctor of pharmacy, which today is the entry-level program for

pharmacists everywhere. You will find that they have "Pharm.D." behind them, and as recently as thirty years ago, that just didn't exist. So that was something that got started here.

So this university is so extraordinarily frontier-oriented than the original sense of Thomas Jefferson's academical village, which is what he nicknamed the University of Virginia. By the way, if you ever have a chance to go there—you probably haven't done that yet—the University of Virginia was designed by Thomas Jefferson, the geographic aspects of it, the buildings [and the campus], and they have been careful to maintain that place in accordance with his plans. It's charming. It's a living historical monument to Jefferson, and it goes without saying the quality is tremendous.

Adamson: Yes, I have several friends who have gone there, and while I've gone to Washington, D.C., many times, I have not got down to Charlottesville.

So you mentioned a lab and a professorship. Is this an endowed chair that Charlie set up?

Beering: Yes, right.

Adamson: So in his philanthropy at Purdue—obviously, he was a graduate—was it directed to the civil engineering program?

Beering: Yes.

Adamson: It was not general?

Beering: No, it was focused on civil.

Adamson: I just wanted to clarify that. Just before I lose picking up on what you initially said, when you visited the flat in London, my understanding is that that was staging area for art acquisition as much as anything else. Did he have pieces in the flat?

Beering: Oh, yes, every place Charlie went, he had art pieces involved. You know, the thing is, they were all originals, they were all valuable, but he treated it like you would a painting in your bathroom, you know; it was just one of the art pieces. He took it for granted that everybody would love that kind of thing. Just a charming guy.

Adamson: If I have my information correct, at one point I believe he exhibited a portion of the collection here at Purdue. 1981 is the date I have, and it was the Egyptian, at least from a catalog.

Beering: That antedates me—I came here in ’82, the winter of ’82, and so I was not aware of that.

Adamson: I’ll have to confirm that, but I just took that from a catalog.

So just to finish up on the art collection, so you visited the 3800 Washington. Did you have a favorite piece in the art collection?

Beering: Not really. I was just charmed by the whole thing.

Adamson: What do you think was Charlie's attraction to collecting art in the capacity he did, putting all the effort into it?

Beering: I think originally it was kind of intellectual curiosity and then he got turned on by it and began to be interested by the artists themselves. He just loved beautiful things, and just like the Trianon, it's obviously a phenomenal building in its original state, and to come up a notion of replicating that in San Francisco was just remarkable. Wonder what they sold that for?

Adamson: No one's been able to tell me what the actual—and I haven't followed up, the actual sale price, but it was listed at twenty to twenty-one million. My understanding is they didn't get quite that.

Beering: Well, it's worth every penny. I mean, it was built and maintained to be true to the original, but from a mechanical point of view, the infrastructure and so on, was obviously up-to-date and modern and safe and very, very well done.

Adamson: Remodel of the adjacent guesthouse was—

Beering: Yes, I was there for that. In fact, I spent a night in the adjacent guesthouse. It's very lovely, too.

Adamson: Now, you brought up something I wanted to pick up on because no one has articulated this before, but prior to the setting up of the foundation, people have suggested that Charlie was thinking of ways to fund research, and one of the things before coming up with the foundation was that it would be, as you suggested, done at the university level. You mentioned that he was going to give the art collection to Purdue is the first mention I've heard of that. So I'm just wondering if in talking to Charlie he discussed sort of his legacy in research and what he wanted to do.

Beering: Well, what he had hoped and which I fervently agreed with was that we would accept the building and contents as it was and that we would not sell it off, although he said, you know, at one point it might be necessary to sell something off, but he would hope that it wouldn't be necessary. I thought that it was so unique that I could probably get other people to help underwrite it in a variety of ways so that we could maintain it the way it was. I also told him that I would like to hire Judy at that time, keep her employed there, whatever staff he had that made the thing the unique property that it was.

He called me before he acquired the adjacent place as a guesthouse and said, "What would you think of that? Wouldn't that be helpful if you have people come and study there, they could stay there?"

I said, "Gee, that's a great idea. What a wonderful thing. How can I help you then?"

He said, "I don't even know. I just wanted to make sure that you were okay with it." We had that kind of relationship; we got on the phone.

Adamson: That's great. So the foundation does research, and it's sort of suggested by your saying that he set up a lab here before the foundation centralizes—I'm told that he funded research, civil engineering research, at Purdue and other places, but that the foundation was the way of formalizing that.

Beering: He hoped he could perpetuate it with the foundation, yes. He had told me that he was hoping to get a foundation to make sure that there would be continued support. But, you know, we have been fortunate here, we've got such a spectacular faculty that they have been able to get grants from the National Science Foundation. In fact, we're number ten this year in the whole country in terms of the amount of dollars [earned] from NSF alone, and we got money from all manner of organizations, and importantly from individuals. We've really been very good at getting private support. So it wasn't just that we would have to say, well, Charlie was essential to having research at civil. That's a big broad program of which he's an important part, but he's not the only supporter.

Adamson: When you met him, his company was about two decades old. Was discussing the direction of the company, aspirations of the company, what the company was doing, was that part of your conversation?

Beering: No, that was not. I met a good many of the people who worked there and felt that they were unique people like Charlie. He surrounded himself with like-minded individuals, obviously, and that was nice. It must have come as a bomb when he died so suddenly, to all of them.

Adamson: Yes, right. Although in my talking with his personal physician is he had health problems.

Beering: Oh, yeah, he had all kinds of health problems, including diabetes.

Adamson: The broad brush: What traits do you think made Charlie a successful builder and businessman?

Beering: I'll give you a strange answer to that. I think it was his profound interest in humanity and his compassion for people and his integrity and his honesty. He was not interested in business to make money; he was interested in business to be of service to society and to humanity. I think everything he did was to try to do the best possible job for others. I admired and respected that. That's what we try to do here, too.

Adamson: If you can recall your conversations, what topic animated him the most?

Beering: Oh, it would have to be art, I think, his travels and the things that he was able to see in person when he traveled about. He would always come back to having seen some

original thing in some foreign location that he then tried to acquire and make part of his collection. That was the thing that we talked about frequently, but he was very interested in engineering, particularly civil, of course, and what one could do to advance the art and stay at the frontier of things. He was very active in the association, the organization that represents civil engineers.

Adamson: Right. Recently I was shown a training video where various people, including Charlie, are videotaped talking about the Pankow Company. One of the quotes by someone other Charlie was that there's a culture of respect that Charlie instilled within the firm. I'm wondering if you can follow up on what you just said about Charlie and comment on how Charlie exhibited this sort of respect for others in just his everyday dealings with people.

Beering: Well, perhaps because I'm in the university business, but when we talked about that, he would tell me about his interest in helping the children of his associates get into good universities and to further themselves intellectually and to get the kind of experiences that would make them successful citizens. He was not pushing for engineering when he did that, although he was interested in having Purdue-educated engineers join his company, and he had a number of them. I was struck by that as being part of his inherent value system that he realized that education was such a fundamental part of success that he didn't care whether it was an engineering or in the arts or wherever, so long as they would make the most of their inherent capabilities and talents and go on. He would try to encourage his associates to send their kids to go as far as they

could and go to good schools. I met a number—in fact, Judy's daughter was a student here for a number of years.

Adamson: I was not aware of that.

Beering: Yeah.

Adamson: Did Charlie Pankow articulate a collaborative relationship between the university and industry, or was it just that he liked Purdue and Purdue people and he thought that they would make great engineers?

Beering: He liked our philosophy about that, which is we try to get every engineering student, every student, really, to have an experience abroad and we have an elaborate program. We're sending people in the summer or even just for one semester a year to other places in the world. He liked the notion that we would have our students, speaking of engineering specifically, have an internship with an engineering firm so they could get practical experience. We have found that everybody who does that would not only be enhanced in his enthusiasm, or her enthusiasm, for the field, but also they would make valuable contacts for future job opportunities, and lots and lots of folks—he always offered opportunities to Purdue students to come out to his company. Lots of them wound up as permanent employees.

I have three sons. Two of them are Purdue engineers and I saw to it that they did both of those things, they studied abroad and that they went and had an internship

experience with a company, and I had no influence personally with them. I purposely stayed away from choosing these venues for them, but they all did it, and it turns out that those two guys got jobs with—their first jobs were with companies where they had interned and that got them going in a spectacular way. You know, it makes sense because when you have a chance to see a young person while they're still in school, it gives you a completely new appreciation, much better than an interview, as to what they're all about and what makes them tick. And vice versa, they have a chance to see what that company is like, particularly from the personal point of view, what kind of values they have, what kind of people they have. Then when they get finished and want to interview somewhere, it's a natural inclination, if they liked what they were doing, to see whether there's an opening where they had an internship. Usually that works very, very well.

Adamson: At least two of the people I've talked to who were Purdue engineers have talked about Pankow's involvement in civil engineering and construction management education, specifically both of them had served on advisory councils. Can you speak a little bit about what those councils do in—

Beering: We try to have in all of our disciplines here, not just engineering, but everything, try to have people in the field who, because they have become eminent and successful, we invite them for a term on one of these advisory committees or councils. They come and visit, they review what's going on here now, they make suggestions; they often will be instrumental in attracting students into their companies for these internship

experiences. I think they begin to network in a very special way, not just with the students, but also with the faculty and with one another and they have a good time doing this.

We have had, coming out of these councils, a good many trustees, people who become interested in the university at that level, but without exception we've had people become major donors, because they got so involved personally in whatever it might be, that they say, "Well, you know, this is such an important thing to me, I want to help move it along."

For example, we've had a real major donor situation. We've had a number of people on the advisory council for our aviation program. We're one of the few universities that has its own airport and a full-fledged aviation program. We train astronauts and we train commercial pilots. One of my daughters-in-law is a captain at United and she studied here, has two degrees from here. But we have had, as a result of people in aviation being on the advisory council, we've been given hangars, airplanes, jet engines, testing tunnels, and so on, really hugely expensive things. They would say, "We're doing this at Boeing. We'd like to have this in an academic setting. Would you allow us to give you this so we can work together on it?" So we have a Boeing wind tunnel here, for example.

This is true in the arts, in the library—[it] got support that was spectacular. We just recently had two of our Hong Kong graduates give the money for an art center here, which is many, many millions of dollars, that's now extant and working, and these folks are still alive and well and come over here regularly and help enjoy the fruits of their labor, as it were.

So these councils are very important to us and I'd like to think they're important to the people involved, because they got a rich experience when they interact with the students and the faculty in the programs. It makes them feel good about themselves and often it helps them in their own profession.

Adamson: Very good. Thank you.

These same two people who were on the advisory council mentioned that along with civil engineering, training engineers at Purdue may or typically get training in construction management, that there's a construction management part of the civil engineering program. I'm wondering if that developed recently or is that something that's been around a while.

Beering: Well, recently in terms of the history of the university, but it's a fairly new program. We have it not only in civil engineering, but also in our School of Technology, which in many universities, technology is part of engineering and that's really applied engineering, but it is so big here it's a whole school. There's a lot of cross-fertilization intellectually and programmatically, but it's a large program in its own right.

Adamson: Did Charlie ever mention why he came here instead of going anywhere else?

Beering: I don't recall. I'm sure he did, but I don't remember.

Adamson: I ask that because so many of the Pankow people are Purdue graduates, I'm just wondering if Charlie just had wanted Purdue graduates or if he saw something in Purdue graduates that maybe you wouldn't find elsewhere.

Beering: I like to think that he saw that something, because I see that something. I've been associated with university life my entire career, and I must tell you that I'm not trying to cast dispersions on anybody else. I'm a graduate with three degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. I'm a trustee there and have been for the last decade, and I wish that Pittsburgh had the kind of attitude and behavior that Purdue has. It's hard to replicate because, for one thing, we're in a unique place geographically. Pittsburgh is downtown Pittsburgh, and you can't have the same kind of feel for a university that's an urban institution as you have here with a residential campus. At Pitt for many years we didn't have any residence halls. That's a fairly new development. And because of that, they're now beginning to develop that sense of family and cohesion and belonging and identity that we've had here from the beginning.

What I've found around the world as I travel, when I see people who are Purdue-related, there's an immediate kinship and Charlie felt that very keenly. We did talk about that, and he said that the people that he's recruited from here to come to the company, they fitted in enormously well and instantly and they were able to relate to one another in a way that he just hadn't seen from other graduates he employed. He liked that. I like that, too. It's very special.

Adamson: My understanding in terms of timing is that Charlie used to personally come to Purdue to recruit, but that by the 1980s I'm not sure if he had stopped doing that or if other people had come. But was he still coming to recruit?

Beering: No, he did not come to recruit.

Adamson: That's my understanding.

Beering: When he'd come he'd visit with me, he'd visit with Henry Yang, he'd visit with people in civil, but he did not set aside time to interview students.

Adamson: Was recruiting on campus something that Pankow did every year? Other people had done during the time you were here? Is it a regular event?

Beering: Well, we have an enormous undertaking in this regard and many companies have Purdue on their A-list and they can't go to every university, but they'll come here. This is true in engineering and it's true in management. Our Krannert School of Management is very highly rated for international management and for financial management in particular. So we have people who, by preference, come here.

I saw this with United Technology, where my youngest son and his wife were both triple [double]-degree Purdue candidates, wound up in executive positions and they would tell me that their list of schools where they went to recruit had some eight or ten schools where they absolutely had to go every year, and Purdue was one of those. They

were always very happy with the Purdue candidates. I would say, "Now, you owe me something in return. When you come here, I want to know what are the problems that you see. What are the things that need to be improved? What have you seen in Darden School in Virginia that we ought to adopt here in management? What have you seen in Berkeley? What have you seen here and there?"

They would do that, they would tell us, "You know, we just came across a very interesting program at Michigan that Purdue doesn't have."

But in engineering we are so far ahead of everybody else, we usually have been the first to do it and I haven't found very many things that are unique to another institution that we ought to start here.

Adamson: You've talked about seeing Charlie's art collection. Did Charlie ever take you to one of his job sites or show you one of his buildings?

Beering: Yes, in San Francisco.

Adamson: In San Francisco. Do you recall which one?

Beering: I can't tell you the name of the building, but I saw a number of them there and I was particularly fascinated by this earthquake feature that he had, an anti-earthquake feature.

Adamson: The Paramount, the apartments, the 39-story—

Beering: Right, so I got to see that. What's the technical name for that?

Adamson: Hybrid moment resistant frame. I don't think I got the words in the right order. I know all those words are in it. Yes, moment frames have been around and the hybrid is what they brought to the moment resistant, so that it snaps back into shape rather than buckling.

Beering: Have you ever been in an earthquake, a big one? You must have living in—

Adamson: I was actually in London when they had the '89 earthquake.

Beering: Oh, my, gosh.

Adamson: So I got to watch it on BBC. I talked to people after the fact who were there, but I think the largest one I've been in is about a 5.7.

Beering: Well, I was in Tokyo when they had about a five or six. I was in a hotel on the fifth floor, and all of a sudden the dresser in my room went from one end of the room to the other, just slid across, I mean faster than I can tell it, and the bed took off and the furniture in the room, but it was all linear. It didn't go in a rotational way. So I got the [heck] out of the room; wanted to go downstairs and I climbed down the stairs. There

was a person who works for the hotel and he smiled and he said, "Oh," he said, "you're here because you're worried about the earthquake."

I said, "Yes."

He said, "It's not to worry. It's all in one direction, and as long as it's linear and it doesn't rotate, you don't have to worry. Go on back to your room."

I thought, holy cow, how many earthquakes do they endure here? They have a lot.

Adamson: One of the features of that research was to make it—well, do it through, I believe, through the National Science Foundation—make it publicly available, because I've talked to several people about how hard it is to get the profession, to get an innovation like that into the building codes.

Beering: Yeah, right.

Adamson: Then it didn't really serve—there were several things that Charlie patented, but I don't know if he was inclined toward a patent to begin with, but he was persuaded that there was a better chance of it being adopted if it was out there and the research was publicly available. There are several buildings that have used this feature, this frame, but I'm surprised, when I talk to people, that it's just not universally adopted, based on these predictions that we're going to have within thirty years a huge earthquake.

Beering: Yeah, well, we have earthquakes here in Indiana. We're on the Madrid fault, and I have endured one on the highway coming home one night when the truck in front of me suddenly shifted lanes. The truck was lifted up and moved to the other lane and then I realized I was right behind it, also in another lane. It was just awe-inspiring. It happened so fast and you couldn't react to it. This truck driver got out—we had CBs in those days in every car and he got on the horn and he said, "Did you see that earthquake? We had an earthquake."

Adamson: Yeah, I think, yeah. There was one recently that my parents felt in Wisconsin. So, yeah, I mean—

Beering: But they are predicting—we have a big program at the National Science Foundation that does earthquake predicting and hurricane predicting, and there's no question that California's a sitting duck for a major earthquake.

Adamson: I was doing interviews last week and there was a one-hour program on the L.A. Public Television station about all the buildings downtown that have this—they're wrapped in steel, but they're not to the extent that they are now, and that the masonry is predicted to crumble, and these are twenties, 1920s or 30s, and they were saying that there's many, many buildings that they figure are going to collapse. But, again, there's a resistance of owners to even make publicly available the list, because what they said was that they would rather have the earthquake, deal with their insurance companies, than incur the cost of retrofitting them. It's a big political issue.

Beering: Well, it's also much more expensive to retrofit a building than to build a new one.

Adamson: Right. Exactly.

So these other people from Pankow who would come to Purdue to recruit or to give talks or to talk students, did you have any relationships with them or was this largely did they just deal with civil engineering people?

Beering: Yeah, they would just deal with engineering. We have a number of weeks during the year where we have industrial companies visit and there will be many of them at the same time. We had many of the rooms in the Union are set aside for interviews and the place is just jammed, and you can tell, the students are all nicely dressed for those occasions. They clean up and wear shirts and ties and so on.

Adamson: Well, two of the people who work for Pankow said that they basically met Charlie when he gave a talk at a conference that was at Purdue and they ended up having lunch with him, and by the end of the lunch he basically offered them a job.

Beering: Yeah, right.

Adamson: So I guess recruiting at that point was a little less formal.

Beering: He was convinced if he could get someone from Purdue, that most of the interview work had already been done by the fact they were here, that we wouldn't have any slipshod people here. They were, by definition, a cut above, and he was very pleased with that whole notion and he said, "If I can get a Purdue graduate, I'm usually way ahead." He had had nothing but good experiences, but, of course, he had a tremendous sense of people. He could size folks up in a hurry. He was very good at this. So I said, "You're selling yourself short. It's your input and your ability to sort it out that makes a difference."

Adamson: Well, I'm from the Midwest, and many people, not just the people I've talked to at Pankow, but other people in California point to this Midwest work ethic or sort of just an ethic. One of the things I'm supposed to ask all the Purdue interviewees is, do you think it was not just the quality of education in engineering, but it's sort of an innate sense of this midwestern regional ethic that Charlie also saw?

Beering: I think this is real, yeah. I really believe that. I'm not from the Midwest originally; I came from Pittsburgh. Originally I'm from Germany. I was born in Germany and then lived in England for a while, but my high school and college and graduate education was all in Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is sufficiently far away from New York and Philadelphia, for example, that those folks consider Pittsburgh to be Western. I wouldn't consider Pittsburgh Western, having lived in Texas and here. I've been here forty years now. But there is something very wholesome about the Midwest, and I think that's real.

On my father's side, my family came from Europe under the Lincoln Homestead Act and they settled in North Dakota in what is now called Bottineau. It was then a country just about twenty miles south of the Saskatchewan border, and they've never left. They're still there. They still live there. The extended family is still there. And they have that same feeling of community and family there which is so prominent here. It's very wonderful.

I once gave a speech to the American College of Physicians in Minot, North Dakota, and my name and picture were all over the papers then that I was giving this conference, and I had committed the mortal error of not informing my cousins I was coming. Of course, it's a small state population-wise, and they all read the big papers, the two or three that they have, and here they realized Cousin Steve was coming and he didn't tell us. They came to the airport in Minot in fairly substantial numbers and they said, "You rascal, you didn't tell us you were coming. We wanted to have dinner with you, wanted to visit with you, and now it doesn't look like you have time to spend with us." I felt awful.

I said, "I'll never do this again. When I come back, you'll have plenty of advance notice." It never occurred to me that they felt so keenly about it. But that's kind of true here in Indiana, too. People have the sense of kinfolk and of community and of doing things together and working for the common good.

Adamson: One of the traits that people mentioned, as I say, about Charlie is loyalty to people and expecting loyalty in return.

Beering: Absolutely. Mutual respect.

Adamson: I think you've touched on a couple of the things that Charlie has contributed to Purdue, but if you want to sum up or enumerate his contributions to the university, you can go through the list.

Beering: I think it's obvious that he's given a fair amount of money and helped us with the civil engineering programs, but to my way of thinking, the most important thing he's done is the friendship that he nurtured, and really without asking for anything in return, that was reciprocated by the engineering faculty and the engineering dean and by me. We benefited from that mutual association. We enjoyed each other and we saw each other in Europe, we saw each other in California, we saw each other here. I went to a couple of professional meetings where he spoke and I found that he had that same reaction among the engineers from elsewhere within the professional association. He was admired and respected and beloved, and you could bank on what he said, a totally honest and ethical individual, and you would want to hope that everybody's like that.

Here we've just come off an incredible election year. I was physically ill much of the time when I realized what people were doing to each other. It was so unnecessary, you know, this business of destroying personalities.

Adamson: Right. I think that's what I hear from all the Pankow people, the respect for one another and the people in the industry, so that comes from Charlie, I'm sure, although what people say is that Charlie was very hands-off as a manager.

Beering: Yes.

Adamson: "Let people get on with the task."

Beering: You trust them, yes. I think that's very important. You have to allow people enough latitude so they can make innocent mistakes, I call them. In medicine, this is so tough when you're teaching doctors how to become good doctors. I used to dread the month of July when I was getting the next group of interns or residents and they were now in charge, and I'd come sneaking back into the hospital at night to look at the charts and talk with the nurses and look at patients, because they had random doctors who were feeling their way along. I didn't want to not let these people make their best judgments and own decisions, but I also didn't want them to kill anybody, because here we're talking about life and death in a hospital situation. That's a very fine line.

Well, Charlie understood that. We talked about that, in fact, one time. In London we talked about it, because I'd been a visiting professor there at Guy's Hospital, and I said, "I see you doing that. You let your employees—you don't treat them as employees. They're associates and they're friends and they're colleagues, and you let them know that, and you trust them, and yet you're there for them and you're able to help them along with difficult issues."

He lit up and said, "Yes, that's right. I love to do it that way." He must have been great to work for, I think.

Adamson: Yeah, I get that sense.

Beering: I feel that way about my people. I don't have them work for me; I work with people and it works well.

Adamson: Well, we've talked about Charlie in his professional capacity and as an art collector. Is there any final anecdote that you have that covers something about Charlie that we haven't talked about?

Beering: No, I think I have a regret, and the regret is that we were living so far apart from each other that we couldn't enjoy one another's company more. Every time we were together it was just like we had just been together yesterday. We picked up immediately where we left off, and it was always just a great pleasure. I have the same feeling about his wife and so did my wife. We both enjoyed the two of them together and we loved being with them.

Adamson: Well, I thank you for your time.

Beering: You're welcome.

[End of interview]