

## Norman Tanis, Track 4

*Tape 2, side b begins.*

0:00 NT: There are still large areas of freedoms that are granted outside this institution, and one way of looking at this institution is that we have some of the same freedoms of the—what I consider the medieval university have. That is, students move in here, they live in rooming houses, they live in apartments around—around the campus, not so much in dormitories, or they commute back and forth and they gather around certain professors and certain departments. I think clinging a little harder, I think, in some ways, prestigious places are able to manage—so that I think there is—there is something that would, then, promote individualism. Carving out your own—your own destiny at this university. My daughter just went through this university at a student, and she found herself here and decided to be a journalist and just had a hell of a time becoming a journalist, just loved it. It just—she found her cause in life, as taking over. For all I know, she'd be a great success in this world, but she feels successful right now because she found what she wanted—she found the kind of education she wanted here, she found the fact—the facts she needed, she found the college and the fellow students she wanted, she found the professors to help her towards her goal and she's just out of her head with happiness and—and headed for a job right now, and kind of a success story. She's not the best student around, through this institution, nor is she going to appear on the platform at commencement, but you know, it's a big success place for her.

JB: So, she's a very pleased alumni.

NT: Yes, and—and she found that the great variety offered by this institution from which you can choose, and the great number of faculty members with all the different backgrounds and the things that they can offer, is a great advantage. She's never very good about going to a small—not going to a smaller institution or one that held prestige. She was so busy here having a good time, getting her education, and doing things. And doing things she may not have had a chance to do at these prestigious institutions. But, it was a good bargain for her.

JB: Smart. It's good to hear. With my son starting here in the fall I've been taking—(both laugh)

NT: Well I've—I've always claimed that—at this institution, if you go about it correctly, and knowingly, you can get a better education here than you could get in most institutions in this country.

JB: I agree. Let me ask you two more questions, if I may. Bear with me. One of which, just occurs to me as I look at the furniture of this office. This building is lavishly furnished, beautifully furnished. And all of this was built by prison labor, right, am I wrong?

NT: That's right, no, all of it. Just about all.

JB: What was the origin of that plan? How did that come about?

5:00

NT: Well, we were—it's kind of individualistic, actually. We were given the option of going to the catalogues of library furniture that are issued by the big vendors in the country, but we heard about a interior decorator, designer of furniture that was in this area. And, while the administration wanted to give the job of doing the interior to some architect who had done some favors by doing some work on campus, you know, how that goes, and we raised an awful stink and said, Ah, put it up for bids. So, it was put up for bids, and then we told the guy, you know, how he had to keep it low, and we'd make it up to him, and he'd make his name here. And so, he got the bid for doing the interiors and then we also persuaded him that it would be an awfully good idea to fit the interior and the furniture altogether. So, he and his small staff designed this furniture for us, and he designed it—he had worked once before with prison industries on some project, so he knew their strengths and their weaknesses, their capabilities and their lack thereof. So, he kept his design simple and structure of the furniture well-within their capability and this is the result.

JB: Was all of it literally done by prison labor?

NT: Mmhm. And it was designed by one man, and—and, well, small office, I really shouldn't say one man, but by a small office, who did both the interior decoration of the library and the furniture altogether as a unit.

JB: Extraordinary. There's a lot of skill in that card catalogue system. Remarkable amount of time, skill—

NT: Well, it was all done by prison industries, we sent them a letter thanking them, on the bulletin board, but I haven't had any prisoners ever come up to me and thank me for the opportunity to work on the furniture.

JB: What were they, one prison, or several prisons?

NT: Several.

JB: I asked you a lot of questions. Are there any questions that I didn't ask that you'd like to answer? Anything come to mind?

NT: No, I guess, at the end of this day, I can't think of any. Anything I dare talk about.

JB: I hope you'll feel free to, you know, I'm just upstairs, this is all very portable. If you'd like to [unintelligible], reflect on any aspect of this or other aspects we haven't touched, I'll be pleased.

NT: Okay, I'll be delighted.

JB: Sure.

NT: Maybe we should leave it that way, open ended.

JB: Oi, leave the tape unfinished, as it were.

*Tape ends.*

[END OF INTERVIEW]