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Oral History of

Dr. Victor B. Hann

Alumnus, Williamsport Dickinson Seminary Class of 1924

Date: December 5, 2000

Interview conducted by: Julie Dougherty, Andy Wenger, and Mike Bonnes

Transcribed by: Karla Procopio

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Dr. Victor B. Hann

December 5, 2000

Interviewers: Julie Dougherty, Andy Wenger, and Mike Bonnes

Transcriber: Karla Procopio

Dougherty: The date is Tuesday, December 5, 2000. My name is Julie Dougherty and with me are Lycoming College students, Mike Bonnes and Andy Wenger. We are speaking with Dr. Victor Hann, an alumnus of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary Class of 1924. We are meeting at his home at Bethany Village in Mechanicsburg, PA.

Hann: Tell me what you're going to do and how you're going to do it.

Wenger: We just have some questions, if you could just tell us what it was like, and maybe about some of the faculty there.

Hann: How much do you know about the buildings there at the time?

Bonnes: We have been through the archives of the college.

Dougherty: Did you stay on campus, did you live right there on campus?

Hann: Well, I did for two of my years. My dad built a home in Garden View. Does that mean anything to you? I went to school until I was fifteen and then I had to help at home, so to speak, financially. At fifteen I went to work for the United States Rubber Company. I had been there for two or three months and a fellow came along. The office help wore white shirts and neckties; he was one of the office managers. He said to me: "If anybody comes by and asks how old you are, say you are in your sixteenth year." You get the point, I was only fifteen.

Dougherty: How did you get to the Seminary?

Hann: Streetcars, for the first two years I had to walk down from Garden View or cut across the railroad bridge and go down to High Street and get the streetcar from there. That was two years. I always wanted to get back to school, but I had financial obligations at home that had to be taken care of first. After three years of working I went to see Dr. Long.

It was on a Saturday afternoon after work. The rubber company finished at noon on Saturdays when I went to see what now is Lycoming College. I was fifteen going on sixteen. I had wanted to go back to school, but my dad needed help and I had four younger sisters. In those days girls did not make money as easily as they do these days. I went down on a Saturday afternoon. If you have ever seen a picture of the old building; it was a six story building. The offices were on the second floor. No one was around so I peeked in on the first floor to get an idea of what they did there and then I went up to the second floor. I got over to where the front room was and saw a gentleman. He said, "What is your question?" I was very flabbergasted because I was

always a shy boy. I answered him: "I guess to get back into school." Then he said, "I guess you've come to the right place."

Dougherty: Was that Dr. Long?

Hann: That was Dr. Long and I thought he was a wonderful man. Later he went to China to establish a school associated with Syracuse University.

Dougherty: What year of school was that that you were trying to get back into?

Hann: Now, what year of school was that? We lived in Fairfield and my dad was working for The New York Central Railroad. They were on a long, nasty strike. Some of my mother's people lived in Williamsport and by correspondence we learned that they were hiring down here. The place he worked first here was where they made engines for automobiles.

Dougherty: Was it Textron?

Hann: That's what it is now, but I don't remember what it was called then. Anyway, he was there doing anything they wanted him to do for and then the whistles started blowing and there was a strike. Hahahahaha; we moved away from a strike and then there was a strike going on here.

He didn't know that when he applied for the job and so he said to another guy: "Where are you going?" He said, "Down to the rubber company." So my dad said, "Do you mind if I go along?" Then he started working at the rubber company. When I was fifteen I started there too. I worked from 7:00 am to 12:00 and 12:30 until 6:00 pm. Plus one half day on Saturday; it was sixty hours a week.

Dougherty: Those were long hours. How did you go to school too?

Hann: After a couple of years I wanted to get back to school and that was when I found my way down to Dickinson Seminary. The point was, I had been out of school for three years and I hadn't even finished high school. I had done my freshmen year at Fairfield before we moved down and I didn't want to go to Williamsport High School with kids four years younger than I was. I had read a bit about Dickinson Seminary and that was my first meeting with Dr. Long that is when he said: "I guess you've come to the right place." We went over financial business. He was very helpful at that time. So I graduated in 1924 from Dickinson Seminary.

Dougherty: We have the yearbook with your picture in it.

Hann: Oh the yearbook! That was the Dart?

Wenger: I read that you're a Theta Pi Pi brother.

Hann: Yes, Theta Pi Pi was a fraternity. I think the other one was Kappa Delta Pi.

Wenger: Kappa Delta Rho?

Hann: Yes, Kappa Delta Rho.

Wenger: Well, Theta Pi Pi eventually became Kappa Delta Rho. I am in that organization now; I'm a brother at KDR, the fraternity that Theta Pi Pi became, so essentially you're one of my brothers.

Hann: Where did you get the yearbook?

Dougherty: We have them in the archives. Would you like to keep this copy?

Hann: No, I have one somewhere. When I moved down here to this building (an assisted living facility), my daughter and son-in-law moved me, so I don't know where it is, when we were coming in here, from the other apartment, so much that I had got lost. My daughter has a doctor's degree, my son-in-law has a doctor's degree, and my grandson has a doctor's degree.

I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, but for 26 years I was superintendent of the Methodist Home for Children. It was an institution on the north side of this institution.

Dougherty: But you're at home here?

Hann: Yes this is home. This is part of a one hundred twenty six acre farm that the conference bought to establish the children's home. The home was established, then later the home for the aged was approved and they wanted to build it here. I was on the conference committee to find a place. And so I headed down and we weren't given much to drink, don't worry about that because they wanted us to be able to walk back up the hill! They decided this was a very good place to establish the home for the aged. And it worked out very well.

Dougherty: How long have you been here, I mean in Bethany Village?

Hann: Oh, I don't know. What I should have had here is these questions ahead of time. Then I would have had time to think about it.

Bonnes: It is a beautiful place.

Dougherty: Yes, it is beautiful here.

Hann: I want to brag a bit; The Methodist Home for Children was formed in 1942. It was one of over three hundred homes for children and three hundred homes for the aged from the Methodist Church. The main headquarters were in Chicago. My wife and I had a two bedroom house up there, by the children's home, which was also part of this property. Many of the

children who were raised in the home remained in this area; they married and developed their home life nearby.

I became ill a year or so ago and my daughter and son-in-law came here from California. My daughter called all the children together, who had remained in the area, at our home without my knowledge. It was a Friday afternoon at 2:15 that they came. I was not present. She said to them: "Pick what you want out of the home." They walked away with what they wanted. I remember the beautiful dining room set that had a table with six chairs.

When I first heard about it I did not think too much of the idea; I wasn't ready for it. Afterwards, I thought it was a good thing because after they took the things I did not worry about what I had; I didn't have it anymore.

Up on the wall there I have a picture of when I received an honorary Doctorate of Humanities degree from Lycoming College. When you get to be my age, when you get to be ninety eight years, you can brag a bit. There came a time when the organization up there at Lycoming decided to grant doctorate degrees. The first year, in 1956, there were four. That was more important to me than just an honorary doctorate degree.

Dougherty: Was that the first year they were given? That is fantastic.

Hann: Along with me was James W. Sterling, Doctorate of Letters, Lloyd Christ Wicke, Doctorate of Divinity, and Pauline H. Frederick, Doctorate of Humanities. She was a network news commentator who worked for NBC. She was the only woman at the signing of a peace treaty with Japan, and she got an honorary degree. The fact that I was selected in the first class of four was exciting. If it had been three or four years later it would not have been as distinctive.

Dougherty: When you were a student at Dickinson, were you involved in a lot of activities?

Hann: I realized that I was missing certain things since I had to go to Newberry and take the streetcar to campus. After a couple of years I studied my Latin on the streetcar and got a B there.

Dougherty: Who were some of your faculty? Who were your professors? Do you remember?

Hann: Skeath

Dougherty: Milton Skeath?

Hann: He was memorable. I remember that there were three teachers that graduated from Dickinson College who came back to teach at Dickinson Seminary, and Skeath was among them. For two years I studied Latin on the streetcar. I got a Latin prize in my senior year.

Dougherty: You went four years to Dickinson College, correct?

Hann: Two years of seminary, and four years at Dickinson College.

Wenger: I have another question; this is just out of curiosity, in your yearbook your quote is: "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse."

Hann: I remember that in the yearbook; I don't know what that was about, I remember a kid falling out of bed. I think that it had something to do with that. Somehow the horse got mixed up in that.

Dougherty: That still happens today!

Hann: In those days, there were sixteen that lived in the Angel Factory. Skeath and his wife; they lived down there. They were chaperones, so to speak. They would come into the room every once and again and say: "Quiet down!" The students that lived in Old Main were always wishing that someone would leave from the Angel Factory so they could move down there.

Dougherty: So you did live in the Angel Factory?

Hann: In my senior year. I told Dr. Long that I thought I was missing something and he said to move in then. Dr. Long was generous and kind, but he was strict. He was strict.

Bonnes: In the dormitories, what were the rules with visits and such? What were the rules with females being in there? Was there any visiting allowed?

Hann: No, they were not allowed in the rooms, oh golly no- you wouldn't do such a thing as that. But there was visiting at 7:00, after the evening meal. The second floor was where the main room was and one of the teachers would be there, and some were a little stricter than others and would keep walking around for an hour. Some of the teachers would sit down; then a girl could sit down next to you and if you wanted to hold hands with her you could do that. The idea was you didn't want to get caught. They used to call it: "getting caught with flesh on flesh." It was very restricted. You could make a date with a girl under supervision.

Dougherty: What were some of the activities that you participated in?

Hann: I was not in any activities when I was commuting on the streetcar.

Dougherty: Were you in any of the productions?

Hann: I was in the Senior Play. I don't remember much about it, but I remember being in the play.

Dougherty: Did they have any banquets or dinners or parties?

Hann: There was one big social event so to speak of in February; it was on Washington's Birthday. It was an annual event and you could bring a friend, either someone from outside or someone from the girls' section. There was this girl who lived in Newberry, she attended the Newberry Methodist Church, and I brought her to the banquet. She was my Dickinson date in my senior year.

Dougherty: What was the event?

Hann: It was on Washington's Birthday. They called it the residents' dinner or something like that.

Dougherty: How about the Chestnut Party, do you remember that?

Hann: Yes, I remember. The seniors went up to Lycoming Creek if the weather was nice to a farm up there that was owned by a fellow, a friend of the seminary. The year we were there it was beautiful, just a beautiful fall day. We were taken up Lycoming Creek Road by bus.

One little happening that I remember while we were there- one of the fellows got hold of a knife, fork, and spoon from the table while he was walking by and he put it in Skeath's pocket. Skeath knew all along what was happening; he was making some sort of speech at the time. When Dr. Skeath got the chance, he slipped it back in the student's pocket and then teased him about stealing the silver. You know it's funny how some things stick in your mind and some things don't. Skeath was a wonderful fellow and a leader in activities at the school along with Dr. Long, first at the junior college and then at the college.

Dougherty: Were you acquainted with any of Dr. Long's children while you were a student?

Hann: Vaguely. As I recall they had a large family and they lived in Old Main. I did not live in Old Main. By the time finances were recovering at home I went to see about living down there and I was put in the Angel Factory right away.

Dougherty: Otherwise known as Eveland Hall.

Hann: Yes, but that name didn't come along till later, when they started to name some of the places. I remember the train that used to come by about two o'clock in the morning. I roomed with a guy named Benson. He was president of the class. He was a sailor who was in the First World War from the Baltimore area. We had a good time, but that train that would come by after midnight and would shine its headlights right in our window. If you were a light sleeper you would tend to wake up. It was from the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Wenger: I have a similar problem today. I have church bells right outside my window. They wake me up every single morning.

Hann: You know then what it was like.

Dougherty: Where was the cafeteria? Where did you eat your meals?

Hann: That was on the first floor of the central section.

Dougherty: Of Old Main.

Hann: The chapel section was on the second floor. By the way, the ladies' affairs and meetings were held up there too.

Bonnes: How were the food and the service in the cafeteria?

Hann: It was pretty good, but you know when you are at that age, you need a little more than food to look at. There was a teacher and his wife at each table; there were also a couple of girls at each table. More boys than girls of course, and the girls moved a table ahead every three weeks, while the boys moved a table back every two weeks. This was the school's scientific method of breaking up any connections. It didn't bother me because I was going to church in Newberry and seeing this girl. Eventually we were married; she was a wonderful person.

Dougherty: How many years were you married?

Hann: Oh, I don't know. It was a long time.

Dougherty: You are remarkable.

Hann: I was at the Methodist Children's Home then. Some children would be there for just a year. The mother or father would remarry and then take the child back. Others would remain there for years. If they finished high school in a respectable way, then I went out and found money for them to go to college.

Dougherty: How did you afford college yourself? How did you afford Dickinson Seminary?

Hann: I went into debt. Dr. Long called me one day and I went over. It was a student appointment, so to speak. In those days there were young people, usually married couples who would come and take me to church services, to dinner, and back to my fraternity house. They were very helpful. That was how I paid my way.

Dougherty: Do you remember what the tuition amount was at the seminary in those days?

Hann: No, I don't remember. I do remember that I worked in the summer time at the rubber company. The fellow that was my boss was a recent college graduate and he had a rough time. He was a fine fellow and a fine help. Most of the fellows that worked there did not have a high school education and to have a college graduate come in and be their boss, that is how the United States Rubber Company controlled the factory down there.

Dougherty: Did you work there after you graduated from the seminary?

Hann: When I graduated from the seminary I still worked full time at the rubber company, and then when I moved to Dickinson College I then had churches to preach to and take care of.

Dougherty: Did you go right on to Dickinson College or was there a year or two in between?

Hann: No, I went right on to Dickinson College. My parents and sisters in Gardenview were in much better financial shape by that time and didn't need me so desperately.

Dougherty: Mike and Andy do you have any questions?

Hann: I'm doing all of the talking here.

Dougherty: That's the idea- you're supposed to do that.

Bonnes: What kind of role did the church have in your life as a student? Did you attend church every Sunday? Were you required to attend church?

Hann: Let me tell you this. Way before my time even the students of Dickinson Seminary walked up to Pine Street Church, one behind another. When I went there someone said to me: "Oh, you're one of those quack-quacks." You can't believe how strict it was. But as I said it didn't bother me too much because I was looking forward to the young lady in the Newberry Church. She was a great girl up here at the children's house. She had short hair. She could do so much more than I could with our students at the home. If I would go to a young student and pat her hair, the student would say: "Oh, Mr. Hann." But if my wife did the very same thing, the student would love it. She was amazing with the children.

Bonnes: Also, I understand that you were on the track team?

Hann: I went out for the track team at Dickinson Seminary, but I found out that I couldn't do it. I did that in my freshman year because I found out that I had to do something physical two hours a week. So that was the only reason I did that.

Wenger: I was wondering, what was Theta Pi Pi like?

Hann: It was bound just like everything else. It was all for the Alma Mater so to speak, nothing much that you could do, or did do.

Here's something that I want to tell you if you promise not to push this thing though. There were several students who were Spanish and they were all respectable except for one. In Old Main there was a place called a "Day Room." A student who could not behave in his own room would be sent to the "Day Room." This particular day he was there in the "Day Room." He had

no respect for anybody. He was up the aisle a couple of seats and a girl had come into the room in a brand new dress that she had just made, to show it off to everyone. It was a beautiful dress. He took ink into a fountain pen and squirted it all over her dress- it was ruined. She screamed and yelled. Of course word got around pretty fast concerning what he had done. There were six young men who decided to take him for a walk with the paddle. After that he turned himself around and became one of the finest young men on campus. If you didn't live up to the gentlemanly rules, the brothers took it upon themselves to see that you did.

Dougherty: Were you married shortly after the seminary of shortly after Dickinson College?

Hann: We were married after Dickinson College.

Dougherty: She waited for you then?

Hann: Yes, she was a typist, a stenographer. I graduated from Dickinson College in June and we were married the following November. She was a year younger than I; she was sweet.

Dougherty: Mike and Andy do you have any more questions?

Bonnes and Wenger: No, we're good.

Dougherty: Dr. Hann, do you have any questions for us?

Hann: (Directed toward Andy Wenger) Where are you from and what do you do?

Wenger: I am from Hershey, Pennsylvania

Hann: That is the chocolate place isn't it?

Wenger: Yes. I am a Communications major. I am learning to work in television, learning to run cameras and things like that. I graduate this spring. I am trying to join the Peace Corps, where they send you off to another country for two years, where they need help. I hope to go somewhere where they speak Spanish because I would like to become fluent in the language. That is what I am planning to do right now; after that I am not certain.

Bonnes: Like Andy, I am a Communications Major. I am a junior, but I'm on the Public Relations track. I play lacrosse in college.

Hann: Let me say that all my years at the seminary were fine years. The girls were sent there by their parents for a year before they went on to college because it was a strict school.

Wenger: Was it like a prep school? I mean a preparatory school?

Hann: We had graduates from high school that were there another year.

Dougherty: Did you come back to the campus after you graduated? Have you seen any of the changes?

Hann: Yes, but in my ministry I did not go away to the seminary. I often wished that I did, but I just didn't have the finances to do it. I had two churches near here and one in West Virginia near Greenfield. My superior said to me, "If you're worried about not going to the seminary- don't be. You're better than many of the guys who come out of the seminary. We have some fellows who rely too heavily on the seminary book learning." I never had any difficulty. When they were voting on the director for the Methodist Home, there were five couples who were eligible and they elected my wife and me.

Dougherty: I would like to ask you if you have any advice for the students of today. You are coming from such a position that you have seen and done quite a bit. You have been there.

Hann: Well they should get out and do things socially. The main thing is the books, the books, the books. And only be decent.

Dougherty: These guys are decent; they are good guys.

Hann: How do you come in on this?

Dougherty: I work in the archives at the college; preserving the history of Lycoming College. We have a program where we interview people who are alumni and faculty. Since this is a communications class, it is also somewhat of an archival class and that is how I am involved.

The Hilltop Gym was there when you were there; it is now called the Fine Arts Building.

Hann: I remember when they build that, it was behind Old Main, and it used to be called "The House of the Hill."

Dougherty: Was Bradley Hall there, do you remember that building with the walkway to Old Main?

Hann: Yes, Bradley was there and the walkway, but I can't quite remember how it was together.

Dougherty: The Long children used to roller skate along that walkway.

Hann: The Long children were children and he let them be children.

I remember we were in class one day, I can't remember what class though. It was a warm day and the windows were up. I was looking out of the window and all of a sudden I said, "There goes Dr. Long with a pig under his arm!" He was somewhere and took a chance on a pig. They drew his number and then he came along carrying this pig. A couple of the fellows and I found a

can of green paint. The three of us got into the pig pen and with some difficulty painted the pig green.

Dougherty: Did you ever get caught? You were bad!

Hann: No, he never raised the question. I am sure he found out. He was seen after that trying to scrub the paint out of the pig's bristles.

I also remember that shortly after this, one of the Long children died. They suspended classes for the day. Everyone on campus was very sad.

Dr. Long used to go for a walk in that park that is behind campus.

Dougherty: Do you mean Brandon Park?

Hann: That's it.

Dougherty: Did he go in the daytime or at night?

Hann: He went at night. If someone was misbehaving he would take them for a walk with him at night. If you pitted yourself against him and became an enemy you went for a walk.

Dougherty: That does not sound like fun.

What was your field of study while you were at the seminary? Did you have to choose a major?

Hann: Yes, history I think. Although it should have been religion since I was living in the Angel Factory.

Dougherty: I understand that the heating plant for the whole campus was in the basement of Eveland Hall.

Hann: Yes, is it still located there?

Bonnes: That building has been demolished.

Dougherty: Bradley Hall is gone and Old Main is also. The Fine Arts Building that was on Washington Boulevard is no longer there either.

Hann: Oh yes, I remember that building too.

Bonnes: It's very different now.

Dougherty: There have been a lot of changes on campus.

Hann: I guess it has been at least ten or fifteen years since I have been there.

Dougherty: The new gymnasium is where Old Main was.

Hann: It is a wonderful school.

Bonnes and Wenger: Yes, it is.