

# An Interview With Robert Russell, Emeritus Professor - Southern Illinois University, Fall 1997

## Mal D. Goldsmith, Ph.D., CHES<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professor of Health Education, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville

Corresponding author: Mal D. Goldsmith, Ph.D., SIUE, Coordinator of Health Education, Edwardsville, IL 62026; 618.692.3252 (phone), 618.692.3369 (fax); [MGOLDSM@SIUE.EDU](mailto:MGOLDSM@SIUE.EDU)

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*It's a cool fall day as I pull up the long driveway that makes its way to the Russell farmhouse. It's a road I know well, as I look off to the left searching for the animals that roam around the lake. I think of the fallen barn that used to house the rabbits, the volleyball games so long ago, of one son's death and another who built a house into the earth. I think of milking my first cow and tasting my first rabbit stew, of sleeping with spiders and breathtaking views. But most of all my memories, like those of so many other students, are of Bob and Lenore, whose lessons on the farm are as much if not more etched in my mind as those I learned in the classroom. As I pull in front of the house I find Dr. Robert Russell (aka Bob-post Ed.D.) doing what he so often does, working around the farm. Today he had an axe and was cutting wood. I was welcomed by the two plain, but lovable dogs as we headed toward the house. This is my first interview and I'm both pleased and proud to have been asked to do it, as Bob has been my mentor for the past twenty-two years. I'm not quite sure how, let alone if I can capture his contributions to the field, but I've given this my best shot. In a way, I find it a bit ironic that Bob Russell (lover of technology - ha ha) will be the first interviewee for the electronic journal. But in a way, it is appropriate, for he truly is an innovator paving the way for many of us to follow.*

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**Mal:** Going back to your younger days tell us about your ambitions and schooling.

**Bob:** I grew up in Long Beach California and graduated high school in 1943 in the middle of WWII. Right after high school I had applied and was accepted in the Navy V-12 officer training program, but since I wasn't seventeen, I couldn't enlist. That Fall I went into the Navy and away to school at Berkeley, where I spent two semesters. I really had no career direction at that time as I was focused on the War and the Navy. In 1944 I was transferred to the naval ROTC at UCLA. Though I wasn't big, I had played football and run track in high school, and I made the Cal track team in the Spring of 1944. At UCLA. I made the varsity football team as an 18 year old sophomore, and their track team as well. After two seasons of football I was commissioned an Ensign just as the War was over, and I spent 4 months at sea.

I returned to UCLA as a civilian in the Fall of 1946, and our first post-war gridiron squad went 10-0 and we were the host in the Rose Bowl. (Ironically, considering my 32 years of professional life in Illinois, we were beaten by the U. of Illinois that January 1, 1947. I went out, this last Fall, to a 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of that Bowl team, and there were 26 of us there...a nostalgic afternoon.)

In addition to another year of track participation and a 4<sup>th</sup> year of UCLA football, I was also a student athletic trainer. Athletics had been good to me...had played an important role in

my life, and I then wanted to "give something back", so my goal became that of becoming a coach.

But when I came back to UCLA, after the navy, they had a new teacher named Ned Johns. It turned out that he was in same fraternity as I was, from his days at Stanford, so we had an instant connection. He was a model teacher who had classes at his home and added a human quality to teaching. He began to teach me about health education, but at the time my desire was still on coaching. A fraternity brother and close friend had signed a contract to go teach at the Punahou School in Hawaii. He suggested I meet the President of the school who was on campus recruiting. After meeting with him, he gave me a job offer on the spot. He said "I can't tell you what you would teach or coach, but I'm offering you a job. I don't want to rush your decision, but I need to know your decision before I leave, and I'm leaving in an hour". I usually don't make quick decisions but in this case I did. So off I went to a great adventure..

As I was one of the last ones hired I became assistant track and junior varsity football coach, while teaching 7th grade English and Social Studies. Ten days after I was there the ship bringing in female teachers from Los Angeles was arriving and the Principal suggested they might need some help. Beside he implied, "it might be nice for you to meet them". Coming down the

gangplank I saw a beautiful young woman - Lenore. It took me a while to win her over, but 3 ½ years later we were married and have been for over forty-five years.

The next year (1949) I went back to UCLA for summer session. I did a course with Johns on curriculum development. During the course I developed an 8th grade health curriculum which I was able to get the principal and school to adopt. Thus I was able to teach it for three years as part of a health related science class. I also taught 8th grade math. And to my liking I discovered classroom teaching. My second year I became head track coach, my third year line coach for varsity football and by the fourth year head football and track coach. Thus I had moved in the direction of my goals, but I realized I wasn't going to be a great coach and after being married that spring, I saw potential conflicts between the demands of coaching and family life. Lenore wasn't interested in being a coach's wife, and we wanted to start a family. Informal tradition at Punahou (1952) was that after a couple of years faculty went to Graduate school at Stanford in the School of Education. I actually at that time had thoughts of leaving education and going into business. I was already accepted at both the Harvard and Stanford Schools of Business, but decided I was supposed to stay in teaching. So in the Summer of 1952 I went back to UCLA and finished my Masters in Health Education. Ironically I didn't finish under Johns as he was in Hawaii teaching that summer. But we had become good friends and he truly was a close mentor to me both on a human scale as well as professionally. That summer we stayed in his and Bertha's house in West L.A., where I had been several times before "in class."

**Mal:** Aside from his personal touch and dynamic teaching how else did Ned Johns mentor you?

**Bob:** He encouraged me to be active in Professional Associations and because UCLA had a great reputation in Health Education, being his student was a step up. Though I learned some of my teaching from Johns, I really patterned my teaching style more after that of Tex Byrd at Stanford.

**Mal:** So you headed off to Stanford after your Masters

from UCLA and you started the Doctoral program in the fall of 1952.

**Bob:** I took nineteen hours per quarter and finished prelims that next summer. In the Fall of 1953 I was a teaching and a research assistant - a unique opportunity. I taught defensive hygiene and another basic health course (not offensive hygiene). My first son was born the day after I taught my first class as a teaching assistant. He is now teaching Art History at the College of Charleston, a nice continuation for someone born on a college campus. It was a good experience at Stanford. Those knowing my preference for qualitative research should know that my dissertation was a controlled, experimental study looking at vitamin supplementation and its effect upon classroom learning with elementary kids. Bill Creswell and I worked together on our dissertations, though he was a year ahead of me

Even though they gave me a hard time about doing an experimental study, years later the Dean of Stanford's School of Education (who had been on my committee) commented that the study was one of the best done in the program. Though there were no statistical differences, I was able to secure a small grant to study the fifteen kids who made the greatest gains and talk to the key parties (parents, administrators, etc.) to investigate why they made the gain. The results revealed nothing else that contributed to the gains and there were even some things that suggested they should have gone the other way. My conclusion was that it wasn't something you could really look at statistically because too many human variables came into play.

In my mind at the time (1955), I questioned whether I wanted to take on the research agenda required of a University career at Stanford. I thought back to my time at Punahou, called them about the possibility of returning and they created a job for me teaching juniors and seniors in the academy. They called the courses physiology and behavioral science, but I taught them as the components of health. The next year I became a dean of the freshman class - it gave me experience supervising teachers, counseling students, talking with parents and working with administration. I thought this was what I wanted to do. I also was

junior varsity head football coach (I didn't want varsity). That year, in 1956, we won the championship - the first in Punahou's history.

**Mal:** So much for the self-doubt about your great coaching ability

**Bob:** By now (1957) we had three kids, and I became aware how much of my time was determined by somebody else. I was doing a good job, but I particularly didn't like dealing with discipline problems...and teachers who thought they had such problems. So I began, again, to consider University life. At this time I felt that I had the self-discipline to do what was necessary for the research agenda, and I preferred the flexibility of being able to structure my own time.

Then, right at that time I received this one page ditto job announcement for an Assistant Professor at Stanford. No cover letter, just a hand written note - "Interested?" OEB - who was Oliver E. Byrd, chairman of Health Education. So I wrote back and said I was, but I didn't hear anything and resolved to prepare for another year at Punahou. Late in May I received a telegram saying "You are # 1 choice for position. Let us know". So I talked with the Punahou people, who were very understanding and the next fall (1957) I returned to Stanford to begin my University teaching career. It was a stimulating but frustrating experience. Here I was the junior Assistant Professor working alongside all of these big names, many my mentors, whose accomplishments were so intimidating. I was doing all my curriculum work while they were reporting on these major national projects - let's just say the monthly faculty meetings were intimidating reality checks.

**Mal:** But you were doing some good things in those early days.

**Bob:** Yes, despite my dislike for the meetings, I was succeeding. I taught the Marriage and Family course, Health Ed's most successful, along with several others. I needed however to have a specialty where I was expected to be in the top 5-10% of the country. While I was at Punahou I had started looking into my student papers on alcohol and began to collect some research on the youth drinking culture as it related to Mental Health. I continued this at Stanford and published it as my

first major research work. In the summer of 1959 I went on to the Yale Summer School of Alcohol Studies and got connected up with Ray McCarthy, who was the "dean" of alcohol scholars at the time. The next year I took over editorship of the Bulletin of the Association for the Advancement of Instruction about Alcohol and Narcotics, which then became the Journal of Alcohol Studies, and now the Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education. This was a real fine experience for me. Since it was small, and not research oriented I wanted people who were active in the field to write about what they were doing. I developed a number of excellent professional relationships and friendships and this developed into the first professional focus of my career...alcohol and drug education. This sub career lasted about 25 years.

**Mal:** All of this academic talk has me thirsty. If we could digress for a minute, many of us know that you brew your own beer and have shared both the fruits of your labor as well as your technique with a number of your graduate students and colleagues. What is your perspective on the role of alcohol in our lives?

**Bob:** Actually I learned brewing from a colleague at Stanford and now have some students like Rick Petosa who have continued the tradition. I see alcohol much like marriage and the automobile. The car has been a great boom to transportation and doing things that couldn't be done on horseback. And marriage has been a wonderful institution with love and ways of carrying on life. Yet automobiles kill people and marriages break up causing suffering. And alcohol too has this capacity to help people relax or relate to others in ways they wouldn't otherwise do. But it also causes problems. However, I see the balance as much more being a positive contributor to life. It's also something we didn't invent. It's something that's part of the natural environment, and it's something God either created or allowed to happen as a mood modifier, as a way of helping you see life differently. For some that means trouble; for others a kind of gentleness. When I brew my beer as I put in the yeast I lead off with a prayer: "God may this beverage be good tasting, of course, but may it not cause harm in peoples lives and may it bring people together and be a

part of the goodness of the life that you would have us live.” So that's how I see it, recognizing of course that when I went into the field it was problem related and medical. Over the years I have moved away from that perspective and into seeing health as a positive aspect of life. It's not just solving problems. In fact most problems don't really get solved, as either something doesn't happen anymore or something else happens instead. So I've moved away from the problem focus and feel I've made a positive contribution to the field in trying to bring it back to a more positive perspective. It doesn't deny the troubles people have, as that's part of earth life. In my own spiritual sense I see that many of those troubled situations are where the spirit grows. I have a sense God doesn't want all problems solved. There's plenty to do in the positive sense. But the positive focus is not the most popular one, as medicine's focus on problems continues to dominate.

**Mal:** Lets go back to your career travels and talk about where Southern Illinois fit in.

**Bob:** When I went into the field in the 1940's two of the strongest programs were at UCLA and Stanford. At Stanford Health Education was a single department in a school that didn't have departments. Tex Byrd was guarding this and he became an apparent threat. So the Dean, Provost and President decided to eliminate this. They couldn't get rid of Tex, so the issue came up when I went up for tenure. The Provost said it looks like you would be promoted and tenured, but we've decided to eliminate the program. They offered any help they could and even said to take a couple of years to find the right spot.

**Mal:** Was this a shock or was it expected?

**Bob:** I guess I knew it could happen, but the real shock was we had just built a house on the campus, our fifth son was just born and suddenly we had to go somewhere else.

**Mal:** So what happened?

**Bob:** I remember doing a phone interview with Columbia Teachers College, another strong program, but when I asked about my five kids and where we would live the commute from New

Jersey or Connecticut didn't appeal very much to Lenore and me. She really preferred more of a country setting. Tex had been a consultant at SIU and I was friends with both Don Boydston and Charlie Richardson. Tex had very good things to say about the program so I applied and came out for the interview. They were very strong with east coast representation and were looking for a little balance with someone from the west coast, not to mention the benefits of having a Stanford faculty member join the staff. I also had a nice interview but interestingly I had an opportunity with Lenore's uncle who was Medical Director of a hospital in Denver. They were very innovative at the time and were looking to develop what we would call today a health promotion/patient education program. So we were talking and I was kind of interested, but some internal problems held that opportunity up. Since I hadn't heard from SIU, I was still considering the hospital job, but was very concerned about which direction to turn to. So one morning I knelt down and said "Lord tell me what you want me to do!" Ten minutes later Don Boydston called and offered me the job, and I said "Thank you Lord." Lenore had liked the town and in 1965 we moved to Carbondale.

**Mal:** Where did you live?

**Bob:** We bought a big house in town and also bought a place down at Kentucky Lake where we had boats, went water skiing and had lots of fun. Then Lenore had a bad accident and was almost killed. As part of her recovery she decided we should move to the country. I didn't want a long commute, so in 1972 we moved to the farm in Cobden about 9 miles away, and have been here ever since.

**Mal:** The farm has always been a special place for your students hasn't it?

**Bob:** Well we had students out to our house in town, but the farm gave us an even better opportunity for having students participate in some way in our lives, and to have a unique experience many had not had before in their lives. This has gone on right through this last summer when I had all three of my classes out here.... preparing meals, working together, and eating out under the trees....true health education at work.

**Mal:** Moving out to the farm was meaningful to you in a lot of ways. It brought you closer to nature in terms of working in harmony with it and your ecological perspective on life. Was that always there or did the farm nurture that along?

**Bob:** My interest in environmental dimensions of health and an ecological perspective was already developing, so these two things naturally developed together. We've had animals born and die, just two days ago a young heifer had her first calf and it died right out here in the woods. You come to accept that life and death go on. Two of our sons were married here. Our son Peter was killed just before he was 18 and is buried here on the farm in a place called Peter's Park. Our eldest granddaughter was born in the room that's now my study. Before I retired she fulfilled one of my goals by taking two of my courses at SIU. So in a sense this merging of my home life and professional interests worked out. So much of my life has gone that way that it could be seen as chance or I can see it as guidance.

**Mal:** When you did come on to campus you continued your work in alcohol studies, what else did you get involved with?

**Bob:** When I got here I found out that the Marriage and Family course was Don Boydston's so I knew I had to look elsewhere. Aside from the required Healthful Living class that everyone had to teach, I taught the Methods class and one on the School Health Program.. The first class that I personally proposed was patterned after one I had developed and taught at Stanford in 1958 on International Health. I also added an Alcohol and Drug Education course, and a few years later took over teaching of the Environmental Health class. Later on I had been impressed with the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and her notion that we're not thinking very healthfully about death and dying, so I developed and proposed a course on that title. But the Philosophy department already had approval for that course title, so we changed the title to Death Education, which was a better fit in the College of Education. I also came to feel that teaching was an important emphasis for that course so I required students to do some actual death education. Ironically the Philosophy course died and this one continues to go strong. And you,

Mal, were in the first class taught in 1976. That first class also had ties to my son Peter's death, as he was killed in a head on collision the night before the last class of that course. The funeral and burial were very non-traditional. We buried Peter ourselves on our Farm and dedicated the site as Peter's Park. The class wasn't going to meet again but I called them together to tell them what had happened. Fourteen of the 17 students gathered for a personal experience related to what we had been studying all semester long. And I'm pleased that you, Mal, and Nancy Jose among others have continued on in this area, as it's fulfilling to think I've had some influence upon the professional lives of others.

**Mal:** In what ways has Peter's death affected your approach to teaching and life?

**Bob:** About a month after his death, I felt the need in my own mind and spirit to imagine Lenore and each of my children dead, and then to bring them back again as a gift. Every day they became a gift, and that has affected how I look at life and death. It has been helpful in teaching death and dying as well as in other areas of my teaching. For example this year in one of my classes I had a woman who was dying of cancer, and my experience helped us to relate more meaningfully.

**Mal:** Lets get back to your involvement in the School Health Education Study (SHE Study). Tell us how you got involved, who you worked with and how you see the contribution the study made to the field.

**Bob:** I was still at Stanford (early 1960s) and had worked on a curriculum project in Alameda County. Tex was a consultant and I did much of the writing. I knew Elena Sliepevich and Ned Johns, at the time, was an advisor to the project, though he later came on as writer. To begin the project a study was done of student knowledge and administrative issues. A summary of research on health instruction was also done, all in an effort to launch the project legitimately and not rush in with just another curriculum. Another big factor was that other curriculum areas were talking about a conceptual approach to education. A concept can't be taught directly but you can teach toward it at any level. You build on what others have taught previously so that even after you finish

school you have this concept which allows you to incorporate new data and findings. It was exciting and innovative. Our project was the only major curriculum project funded not by the federal government, but by industry. It was wonderful, but also it was one reason why it didn't continue on. Though we've often said that the highest form of praise is being copied, and it has showed up in numerous other curricula since then.

**Mal:** There was quite a UCLA connection on the writing team

**Bob:** Yes, it was a marvelous experience for the eight of us, five with UCLA connections: Ned Johns, Dick Means, Gus Dalis, Marion Pollock and myself. Additionally Bill Creswell (who got his Master's with Ned at UCLA), Ann Nolte and of course Elena Sliepevich completed the team. It was fun, hard work, and we did it the right way.

**Mal:** So what happened to limit its impact?

**Bob:** Later in evaluating it, we realized there were three missing ingredients to its successful continuation. First, we didn't have the resources for continuing in-service education. Each of us did get involved in doing some in-service, especially with our try-out centers, but the resources weren't there to do it on a large scale and to keep it going. Second, schools tend to see that something developed by somebody else isn't related to them, even if it is. And finally, we didn't have a textbook that fit the conceptual approach. So you had to work from another textbook and blend in the conceptual approach. We had talked about this, but 3M, the company funding the project wasn't interested in getting into the publishing business. They were involved from the standpoint of overhead projectors and the visual transparency business. Their relationship to this project related to the fact that we developed a series of overhead transparencies for each behavioral objective in each of the 10 concept areas. It was a great time, had an influence in the field and formed some great friendships.

**Mal:** And yet ironically if you look at the ten concepts now, they're as relevant today as they were over 30 years ago.

**Bob:** While we shared responsibility for working on some of the concepts, I still use the one I worked

on the most, which was "the use of substances that modify mood and behavior arises from a variety of motivations." The only change I made was to refer to the "use, non-use and misuse of.....," as opposed to use only. But I think the focus on why people do or don't do what they are supposed to do, and all variations on that is the most important aspect of the learning. I also used the one on "use of health information, products and services is guided by values and perceptions." So those two have really worked out well. We presently (1997) have a graduate student, Adrian (Lyde), looking at how these concepts match up with the National competencies. I'm not sure that they fit together, but I'm curious to see.

**Mal:** You and Dick Means then became good friends, and he went on to write a major contribution on the history of health education.

**Bob:** The first two volume dissertation ever done in health education.

**Mal:** As you look back historically, how do you view the development and growth of health education?

**Bob:** Sometimes I feel quite positive that we have made great strides in establishing our profession and the opportunities that exist. At the same time some of our areas like community health and perhaps patient education have not yet developed into lifetime careers, say the way University teaching has. For example advancement in the community health field often makes you a supervisor or director and you can't continue to do what you were trained for. It will be interesting to see what happens in health promotion. But you could also argue that if you get into administration you can have more influence over what happens in health education. I suppose you could see it like a good principal or leader of a department who effectively influences what happens in their "community". But the heart of it is still teaching, communicating and helping people learn, and since I've been fortunate to do those things directly, that's what I think it's really about.

**Mal:** Hopefully the new Graduate Standards in Health Education might move us into new and expanded career opportunities

**Bob:** And that's something that I don't think has changed in the 48 years I've been in the field. Having spent the year as a Dean at Punahou and

observed some my colleagues elsewhere, one of my goals in life became not being an administrator or even chair of a committee if I could help it. Part of this was for my own health. We had five kids, and so, to advance professionally, be a good father, husband, and good churchman, and to reach some other goals of mine, there were some things I couldn't do. I wanted to be involved with my professional associations and I did for my whole career. But I never did aspire for those administrative positions. I once told Don Boydston that I admire his leadership style, but I never would want to do what he did. I told him I'll focus on the things that will make him look good. I think that old Peter Principle of advancement into incompetence would have applied to me.

**Mal:** If I could put you on the spot about the Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) Credentialing, do you have any thoughts on that?

**Bob:** Well, I became a CHES through the grandfather clause, and I wanted to be part of it. I had some problems with the idea of being tested at this stage of my career, but I wasn't opposed to the idea of credentialing as some of my other colleagues were. I think it's important, but I'm not sure any test can show competence in all of the things that health educators do. I think it's an important professional move for the field.

**Mal:** The ultimate question might be whether we will improve quality control for the public.

**Bob:** At the University level and in the Public Schools CHES doesn't seem as significant. So it's main value will be in the community health field.

**Mal:** Lets go back and visit a project that you were involved with between the NEA and AMA.

**Bob:** The National Education Association and the American Medical Association had a relationship that produced some joint books under a joint committee on health problems in education. It began sometime early in the century and they had previously developed books on the three traditional areas of the school health program: health education; health services; and healthful school environment. As it came into the early 70's it was time for another book. The earlier books had all been committee developed books. Wally

Wesley, a good colleague at the time represented the AMA on the committee and she came to me and said we want to get away from the committee approach and have you write it. I asked her if she was sure, as my writing would probably not sound like the ones previously written. Do you want to take that chance? She said yes, and actually it was printed pretty much the way I wrote it. At that time the two groups were moving toward a break up, the AMA being fairly conservative and the NEA being on the liberal side. The book was published in 1975 and was the last thing published under the joint committee. It was fun to do and I still think some parts of it were fairly forward thinking at the time.

**Mal:** Give us some examples of some of the things you tried to do with the book.

**Bob:** Up to that time books were always written objectively, like you never knew who was writing it. Or it had things like "it has been said that". So I said right off that I'm writing this book and there will be some things in it that basically "I say." It was also the beginning of what I called the Holistic approach, including mention of the Spiritual approach. That had been identified by a few others, including Delbert Oberteuffer, and while I didn't say too much about it, it was included in the book. I also did some contrast issues and tried not to preach with it, basically exploring why people do what they do.

**Mal:** Your interest in Environmental and Spiritual issues eventually moved you toward the development of the Wellsprings Model. Could you tell us how that evolved and what were some of the key principles you were trying to get at.

**Bob:** The first was what I called a Holistic Model. It included the physical and I took the mental dimension from the World Health Organization's definition and divided it up into two areas: intellectual and emotional. While researching the social dimension, I noticed that two main themes emerged. One had an individual focus and examined how individuals related to each other. The other a more community focus dealt with what communities do for the health of their citizens, how they get along with other communities, and how a community can be unselfish. Then I added the environmental as an

underlying dimension. Clarifying that all of this that takes place with individuals and communities takes place within an environment, a physical environment with other forms of life. I was very influenced by the work of Rene Dubos. All forms of life are potential food sources for other forms of life, so life is maintained by life. We as humans have moved away from that, thinking that we are the most important and can do what we like. This is an environment that has all kind of interactions that can affect each other both positively and negatively. Over this I saw an overlying spiritual dimension, the way in which spirit can influence these factors. In the Survival of Man course, in which I was one of ten lecturers from 10 disciplines, I pointed out that the only way we will effectively take care of the environment and maintain it is because of spiritual reasons. In the spiritual sense of doing something for someone else (the next generation) that they can't do for themselves. If we keep just taking care of ourselves, this environment will strike back.

**Mal:** These were just dimensions. How did the Well Springs Model emerge?

**Bob:** I wanted to know what are the wellsprings, the things that maintain health and how they vary. So we have nutritional balancing and exercising in the physical area. Intellectual and emotional balancing, which reminds me of one of the first things I learned in health education, that knowledge and attitudes don't necessarily go together. So you look at attitudes in the emotional area and knowledge in the intellectual and see how these things balance with each other. Another wellspring is human spiritual interacting, which became my favorite one. This examines various relationships, including: how you relate to other people, how you relate to those you love and care for, how you relate to other spirits, to God personally and to God in an abstract form. I don't think there's a way to easily measure this, but it involves in various ways, spirit in relation to the environment. A final area is ecological balancing which reflects how you balance off with other forms of life. The model also included the

influence of factors that you had no control over such as heredity, the treatment you receive early in earth life (and to a degree late in life), and, for some cultures who believe in reincarnation, the impact of previous lives.

**Mal:** Your career has had some nice transitions.

**Bob:** I've moved from being a health educator concerned with the physical domain and problems to solve toward a holistic picture of health with real focus on the spiritual dimension as a legitimate dimension of health. Along with that I've focused on the environment and its total relationship with health. While I have moved toward a more positive focus of health, I am concerned that we don't seem to have the spiritual capacity to go against the materialistic society. If something produces jobs, it's great, no matter what the consequences. As I think of my grandchildren (8 girls and 5 boys) I wonder what the future holds for them. Hopefully it will be better, but I see a great need for increased spirituality.

**Mal:** When did Elena Sliepecevic come to Carbondale?

**Bob:** At the time of the SHE Study no one from the writing team was from Illinois, but years later four of us ended up in the State: Ann Nolte at Illinois State, Bill Creswell at the University of Illinois and Elena and myself here at SIU. Elena came in the early seventies after the Study was completely over. It was a real coup for us to get her here, as she was the most outstanding woman in the field. It was a pleasure for our students, and they appreciated her greatly. She was a fine person and certainly the most well read person in our field.

**Mal:** Well certainly she and you and the other faculty here at SIU have turned the program into one of the best in the country.

**Bob:** I'm very proud of the accomplishments of our graduates and enjoy the way they can relate to each other and their experiences at SIU, even if they graduated 10 years apart. Each year I try to track the contribution made by our graduates at professional conferences, and I'm amazed at the level of performance.

**Mal:** It's interesting that if you ask any of the students what they remember most about Bob Russell they will probably say the Farm, and your singing in

class. Not to take away from the models, theories and other learnings, so tell us about these memories they develop.

**Bob:** When I was first teaching at Punahou School I got a ukelele and did a little playing at the canteens and at beach parties. Then I got a tenor guitar, but it took a long time before I would do what I did at presentations, in the classroom. But eventually you get older and don't care as much how you're received and it became really fun to do. The two presentations I've done most often are: one on Alcohol and Drugs titled "Man and Her Favorite Mood Modifier in Song and Story", and the other "Perspectives on Death in Song and Story." I'm especially pleased that Eta Sigma Gamma has video recorded the Mood Modifier one and made it available. The one on death helped me to look at perspectives on death and different ways in which people see the death experience. I occasionally think back to Jack Osman and I gathering a crowd in a hotel lobby and playing together. It was fun and a unique part of my career.

**Mal:** But also as a student it said to me that learning can be fun, songs can tell stories and the importance of human spiritual interaction.

**Bob:** Even though not everybody reacts in the same way that's good to hear.

**Mal:** A few years after Peter's death, and I'm not sure his death was the driving force behind this, you began to do something outside of the classroom that has been a major part of your life. That is receiving teachings from the Spirit and sharing them in the form of *Russell's Ruminations* with those who are interested. My impression is that you're as proud of these and they're as much a part of your life, if not more, than anything you've accomplished professionally. Would you feel comfortable talking about these?

**Bob:** Even though I have to admit that sometimes it is difficult to talk about because ours is a scientific field and what I do is in the mystical tradition. Society has always had mystics and I imagine that some of our greatest scientists were mystics. They had an idea from someplace and they went on to prove it. But the idea often didn't come from their research it came from someplace else. I don't know why I was selected but I was chosen by the

Holy Spirit to receive teachings, and told it doesn't negate the other Holy Scriptures nor conflict drastically with Presbyterian beliefs. So I consider myself to be a Presbyterian mystic, which many might consider to be an oxymoron.

**Mal:** So what happens?

**Bob:** I sit down in a particular place, which has now become ritualistic with the same paper and pen. I put down the date, place, and time and I wait for the title. The title comes and I start writing. They're always three pages long and take anywhere from thirty to seventy minutes. Sometimes they come fast, other times longer. But now I have sixty-five volumes of the originally written ones. John Patrick, my 3<sup>rd</sup> son, has translated into single pages about 5 or 6 years worth into yearly compilations on his computer. They deal with all kinds of things related to my personal life, but also interests that I have or interests the spirit has. They're not prophecies, just teachings. They help me understand and do better the things I do in relation to the world and this earth. Most of the time they're done in my study the first waking hour of the day. But they've happened at the office or mostly in quiet places. I feel sometimes like a closet homosexual. I'm proud of what I'm doing but recognize that it isn't common at all and makes you feel a bit odd. Interestingly very devout Christians sometimes are quite skeptical of this. So these teachings have guided me in very important ways and have given me a sense of joy in life. I've been told my life has been guided from pretty early on into making decisions I was supposed to do. And its all worked out for the best.

**Mal:** How have your Professional colleagues responded?

**Bob:** I don't often say who gets the teachings, but it's a wonderful spread of the profession made up of different religious perspectives, cultures and backgrounds.

**Mal:** Could you give our readers a sample or flavor of one or two?

**Bob:** Here are two excerpts from the teachings:  
From *Celebration of Life - May 29, 1993*  
Then there can be small, gentle celebrations, such as greeting the sun as you just did...or watching it "set"...noticing

the moon as it “enlarges” toward full...appreciating the fireflies as a feature of summer nights. Appreciate the beauty of flowers, the miracle of new, small life...the way your body heals itself. Enjoy food, even that which is “not good for you”. Be appreciative of the actions of others, with compliments, even as these are not fully deserved. As your grandchildren grow and develop tell them in various ways, of how you appreciate them...and this will increase your actual appreciation...another form of celebration.

Balance the past, present and future. That is, remember from your past and let these memories apply in some ways to your present life. Live life fully in each present moment, remembering that life is a gift from Me, as is each of your loved ones. Then also look to the future, both immediate and long range. This long range is getting shorter, but fortunately you have no unfulfilled expectations. Life is certainly to be celebrated, in the earth and beyond. I certainly celebrate continuously.

From *Spiritual health - August 7, 1992*  
....If you can remember, your spirit was adversely affected when your leg hurt so at night...or when you were itching in such a painful way. Then you must remember that the successful reduction of that leg pain came, not with treatment for the leg, but in a conscious exercise of your spirit.

I encourage you to keep using the terms “spiritual health” and the “spiritual dimension of health”. Though these may be bothersome to a few, so it is with virtually every term that has any emotional impact. These are good terms, for they refer directly to the spirit, that which survives the death of body and brain, and continues on in a unique journey, often outside of time and space. As I have told you often, your spirit comes out of Me

and finally returns to me. What happens to you...as an incarnated individual in the earth is a factor, but finally isn't very important in the whole spiritual walk.

**Mal:** So as you've said these are predominantly teachings for you, and yet they can be shared with others for them to interpret and use for their potential spiritual growth. By sharing your “*Ruminations*” you're really carrying out your goal of promoting spiritual health.

**Bob:** I certainly hope so.

**Mal:** You've certainly been blessed with recognition from your students, peers and colleagues over your career. As you look back what have been three of the most meaningful things you've taken away from your efforts.

**Bob:** I enjoyed my time at school. I did well, but I wasn't compulsive. As I said earlier I wanted to give something back in athletics and I feel that I have.. Though I feel that I've taken much more away. Another thing is my student-centered style of teaching has been recognized and appreciated, even though not all will like it. But I received the SIU outstanding teacher award in 1991 and it was really meaningful. Thirdly, though I came to Southern Illinois from Punahou and Stanford two elite schools, I have been most impressed with the quality of learners that I have encountered at SIU. I remember being impressed with students who were the first learners in their family to get a college education. They've been wonderful people as well as learners. So I've been blessed.

**Mal:** I think one of the most significant things people would want to hear from you as you move into Emeritus Status would be what you see as the most significant challenges facing the profession.

**Bob:** Since I have over the last twenty years focused on positive health, I think there's a place for this...to educate about positive health. So I hope that would be continued by many of you. I also think we haven't given enough attention to environment. With 5.8 billion people and continued growth, we have some challenges to work at, seeing that all of our aspirations can't be met if we want to leave something for the future. I'm also pleased to see that the spiritual dimension is beginning to get more attention, and I hope that this will continue to develop.

**Mal:** As one of the pioneers in spiritual health, what lessons have you learned from your interactions and classroom experiences on this subject?

**Bob:** I've learned that some people are spiritual and religious...some are spiritual, but not religious...others are religious, but not spiritual...and a minority won't acknowledge spirit (because it isn't measurable??). Some feel that relationships with other people come close to being spiritual...and then with love, sacrifice, and . . .the spiritual becomes more evident. Some experience the spiritual in nature, in animals, in music, in art, in games... For some God is a real part of the spiritual...from the abstract and symbolic to a very personal relationship. And then there are those who have experiences with disembodied spirits...angels, spirit guides, even Holy Spirit. . .that are certainly a factor in health. There are incredible combinations. I conclude that God loves diversity...even including those who ignore or reject Him...or Her...

**Mal:** Let me pick up on the earlier experience you had at Stanford and UCLA and more recently at Ohio State and Penn State, regarding some of our Health Education Programs closing down. Do you think we need to formally look at that, particularly the Doctoral Programs?

**Bob:** I see it as kind of circular, with some programs being down and then picking up again. Some will leave and others will start up. Indiana is a good example of the ups and downs and Florida a good example of a growing program. So I have faith as one goes down something else will take its place.

**Mal:** What advice would you offer a young individual in your shoes forty-seven years ago who comes to you now and asks about the field of Health Education?

**Bob:** I would be pleased to talk with him or her and paint the field in a positive way. But I would also say think about what you want to do, and what you want in life. I followed a path I wanted to follow, that was meaningful to me. See every opportunity that you have as a means toward something as well as an end in itself. Try to find value in everything you do, so that you just don't look at it as something to get you someplace else. Try to decide what is best for you and if you can do that, life is happiest. And if you have to do something

you're not totally into, at least try to learn from it. For you never know what might be useful to you in the future.

**Mal:** Recently I had the honor of attending your retirement party which had over one hundred and forty people, many from all over the country in attendance. It was a retirement party I wish every educator could have. Could you talk about that evening. And what it meant to you

**Bob:** It's always a little embarrassing to be set apart that way, but it was overshadowed by the people who came, some who I expected and others I didn't. It was a very special event and to see the pictures, the video and recall key things in my life was memorable. I only regret I couldn't spend the time with people that I would have liked to. It was just wonderful and I couldn't have asked for anything better.

**Mal:** You once defined healthy living as involving "the art of living each day as if it were your last and, at the same time, as if the future were limitless...both being and becoming. Health is a positive quality, and if I maintain health then I need not worry about ill-health". Knowing you for twenty two years that's exactly how you've lived your life. As you go forward in life what will you do to keep that balance.

**Bob:** I've been thinking about this and I like the thought of Emeritus status to keep in touch with University life. But I'm now describing my future as being sort of a semi-monk. Semi in the sense that I'm married and have family and church involvement. Rather than looking for new things to do, I plan on spending more time in contemplation. My work on the farm will not be for the purpose of getting things done, but rather as a spiritual activity. I plan on continuing to read, some new things, but also many things that will be revisited. I'll also continue the teachings and *Ruminations*. I also know what lies in the future and I would like to be as prepared as much as I can. Much like I prepared academically for my profession, I'd like to be prepared as best as possible for the next life. I'll try to live some days as if their timeless. It's kind of scary, but I think I'll become less time conscious as time goes on. Doing things for pure joy and service, not because I have to. I'll continue to attend some conferences and stay

active, in that way I'll get to see how my hopes for the profession develop or stay in balance.

**Mal:** You've taught for 48 years, I found out you wore number 48 at UCLA and you hooded 48 Doctorates. Anything spiritual at work here

**Bob:** I'm not a numerologist, so maybe it's God's sense of humor. Or perhaps as I've said earlier things in my life have been guided.

**Mal:** If I can speak for my professional colleagues and your former students you have not only made tremendous professional and personal contributions to our lives, you've been appreciated for your uniqueness and creative approach to teaching, your contributions to the profession and mostly your willingness to accept each of us for who we are. We wish you the best and hope you will always in this lifetime and beyond stay close to the profession and to those of us who've been fortunate enough to share some time with you.

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