

**Barrett Oral History Project**  
**Interview with Ted Humphrey**

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Interviewer: Dr. Stephanie deLusé

Transcribed by: Nathan DeJonge

**DELUSÉ:** Hello! Looks like you might still be getting set up, or your microphone is off.

**HUMPHREY:** Yes, okay.

**DELUSÉ:** There it is, yes, hello! Happy New Year! Happy New Year!

**HUMPHREY:** Hi. Happy New Year! How are you doing?

**DELUSÉ:** I am well, thank you, and so delighted to be talking with you. Are we ready to begin?

**HUMPHREY:** Sure.

**DELUSÉ:** Well, hello again, and for the recording of this oral history, I, Dr. Stephanie deLusé, a teaching professor and honors faculty fellow, am talking with Dr. Ted Humphrey, founding dean of the University Honors College that ultimately became Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University. Dr. Humphrey's kindly agreed to be recorded as we add voice and texture via these conversations to honor and learn from a few of the many wonderful people that have served and or have been served by Barrett. So, while there are others from whom we can learn about the development and evolution of Barrett over the years, easily, Dr. Humphrey is the best one, given his founding role and his longevity in that role. While I could say more, it would be better to hear from you, Ted, to hear your voice as much as possible, certainly much more than mine. So, before we get into the focus topic of today's conversation. Would you please share some about your educational and professional background that led you to becoming the Honors College founder and otherwise introduce yourself, like how long you were at ASU and in Barrett, et cetera.

**HUMPHREY:** Uh, sure. Uh, the history could go quite far back, as a matter of fact. I grew up in a very small town. 1,000 people then, not many more than that now. Town's name was Lone Pine. Graduated from a high school that had 156 total students and a graduating class, my graduating class was, 29, and I was the first male graduate of that particular high school, that I know of, to go to university. I received a scholarship and a number of other forms of support to enroll at the University of California, Berkeley in 1958 as a chemical engineering major. I spent my first year there learning to enjoy all of the available arts and cultural activities that one could engage in in the San Francisco metropolitan area, but also on the UC campus. Despite the fact that my high school record suggested that I would be successful as chemical engineering major or some kind of science and mathematics nature, I had great academic difficulties, during my, uh, first and second semesters. And, did not receive grades that qualified me to return to the university. On the other hand, during my second semester, I was able to take courses in anthropology, and Greek and Latin classics, as well as English literature. That helped me recenter

my academic interests. I spent an academic year at Citrus College in Glendora, or Azusa, California, and rehabilitated my academic record. Re-qualified to enroll at the University of California, Berkeley, but, had to make the decision to enroll at the University of California, Riverside, where I ultimately completed both an arts baccalaureate and a Master of Arts degree, both in philosophy. In my case, a first-generation college-goer, one of the lessons that I learned from those early experiences was that, persons who attended small high schools, even if they excelled academically, and were- would have difficulties managing the kind of very large on the one hand, but also very rich academic environment of a university of the kind that Berkeley was and continues to be. I left University of California, Riverside with my degrees, went to the University of California at San Diego, with my bachelor's and master's degree in philosophy. And there, studied with a faculty rich in the history of philosophy. I was fortunate to study with persons who'd been at Columbia University, which had a history of culture program that was quite famous at the time, but also persons who'd been at the University of Chicago, which had a competing program in the history of culture founded on the great books of the Western world. I left graduate school without my degree, without a PhD, to come to Arizona State University, then only 8 years into its time as a university, to join the Department of Philosophy and Humanities. And I was explicitly appointed to teach courses in the humanities, as well as in philosophy.

[Pause for break]

**HUMPHREY:** So, I took up my instructional responsibilities, my academic responsibilities, at ASU when I was 25. I had an outline of my doctoral dissertation, my doctoral advisor who was Herbert Marcuse, and I agreed that I would be able to complete the research and writing of that, of my dissertation, in a timely fashion. And so, I undertook the responsibilities for teaching a very large lecture course in the humanities as well as three courses in philosophy, each semester, for those first two years and typically, I would have three preparations per semester. One of the advantages of coming to ASU was, in the philosophy department, was that there was no faculty member with an area of specialization that significantly overlapped with mine, which my specializations were, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century French and German philosophy. And as a consequence of that, not having to share those courses with faculty members, I was, on the one hand, forced to do a lot of reading in preparation for my courses, but I was able also to develop a broad understanding of those movements. After, I submitted my doctoral dissertation to UC San Diego early in 1968. Defended it during that academic semester and was pretty much freed from the burden of doing that work in addition to my teaching and research. I came- my education was at the tutelage of a number of distinguished publishing scholars, and I brought that tradition with me, it was part of my makeup when I got to Arizona State University. I, by the time I received my dissertation, I had published a number of book reviews, and I'd been engaged as an editorial associate for the Journal of the History of Ideas. I'm sorry, for the Journal of the History of Philosophy, and had published one small paper in that journal. The philosophy department at that time in those early days, in the first 5 or 6 years I was a member of it, was in turmoil. There were a number of internal problems with-

[Pause for break]

**HUMPHREY:** The members of the department were ideologically divided. There was a lack of vision for the department, there was a lack of internal consensus as to what the nature of philosophy was, and one of the faculty members was politically very, very active. Came to the attention of the Arizona Board of Regents, and was fired. As a result of which the AAUP, the American Association of University Professors, placed Arizona State University on probation. The department had a very difficult time figuring out who should lead it, who should be its chair. I was called into the office of Dean Charles M. Woolf. Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and he and I discussed the state of the department, and he asked me to serve as department chair, and immediately advised me not to accept the offer. I was too bullheaded. I was probably too insecure not to accept the offer, and thought that I could probably bring the department into some kind of orderliness. Over the course of- so this is year- this is about year seven. Over the course of the next five years, I was able to make a number of significant appointments. Three, I appointed. Five, fresh out of graduate program, faculty members as assistant professors ended up having to not tenure two of them, but tenured three of them, all three of whom became relatively distinguished in their fields and had, in addition to that, the great good fortune to hire two very senior members directly into the department and to be involved in the appointment of another philosopher as head of the College of Businesses Program and Ethics. I got to the end of my chairmanship, and, having published a couple more papers that turned out to be fairly significant. Two of which are generally regarded as having solved long-standing problems in Kant scholarship, but felt I was not done with administration. Felt that I- having been successful in creating a department that, by then, had come to be regarded as the top non-PhD granting department in the United States, I wanted to continue to see whether I could build and direct other such academic enterprises. So, during the last year of my chairmanship, the directorship of the then College of Liberal Arts honors program came open, and I applied for it. It actually was a fairly stiffly competed position, but I was selected to undertake it. When I became director of that program, I was one of the few people in the United States who had turned to Honors with previous experience in administration. A lot of honors programs at the time, in what we're talking about is 1988, a lot of honors programs at the time were run by persons who'd become alienated from their disciplines and who administered their programs with relatively narrow visions, and from what I would call a position of alienation. They kind of built a wall around their honors programs, making very, very few attempts, if any, to integrate with the university. I took about 2 years after having been appointed director of the honors program to figure out what I thought an honors program ought to be, how an honors program should be fitted into the structure of a university, and trying to figure out ways in which it could integrate, not just with the College of Liberal Arts, which was the standard model, but, integrate with all of the undergraduate teaching divisions of the university. And I think that that was one of the significant differences that I brought to a vision for honors. It seemed to me that honors degrees could and should, indeed, ought to be pursued in all of the disciplines. And so, my first move was to work with a vice president for academic affairs who agreed, for whatever reasons, with that vision. And so, while

the program remained in the College of Liberal Arts, we, agreed to work at bringing major-bringing students majoring in, not just the humanities, but also the sciences in the College of Liberal Arts, College of Engineering, the College of Fine Arts, in other words, from all the college of education, in other words, all the colleges at the university. My vision in that regard was to bring together students, with academic talent and interest in a wide variety of disciplines who would engage in the process of educating one another in other areas of expertise and interest. It took about 3 years to do that, and a central element of that process was to develop the course, The Human Event. I had peripherally participated in developing that course while I was still chair of the philosophy department. But I've, you know, I very actively brought together the, dominant styles of doing cultural studies that originated at Columbia University, and that style was to approach it historically, as well as the style that was dominant at the University of Chicago, which was topic-oriented, and doing that allowed for greater participation by a wide variety of faculty members, as well as a wide variety of students. Similarly, I worked at developing a transdisciplinary course in mathematics and the sciences that I really wanted to require of all students, but I was never able to get that course off the ground. I'm not quite sure what the reasons for that were.

[Pause for break]

**HUMPHREY:** So, I was appointed director of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences honors program in 1983, and there were 125 students participating in that program, some of whom were in the College of Public Programs. I'm not quite sure how that came about, but some of them, and it was not an insignificant number, were in the College of Public Programs. It took five years to develop a vision for the college and to develop a strategy that would allow the honors program to be university-wide and that actually happened kind of clandestinely. 1988 was a catalog year at ASU, which means there was the issuance of a new catalog, and the previous catalog had actually listed honors programs in all of the individual colleges, but only the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences honors program was actually active, and the secretary in the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs was responsible for the final edit of the university catalog, and she, very neatly wiped out all of the separate disciplinary college honors programs, save for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences honors program, and by an agreement of the deans of the separate colleges, we were designated the University Honors College, and had permission to go out and recruit students into the Honors College, no matter what their interest was. Part of that compromise was that students would participate, all students would participate in the first two years of the University Honors College program, which included, but was not limited to completion of the two-semester course, The Human Event. And during this time is when I was trying to implement a course, a transdisciplinary course in the sciences, which never came to fruition, but by 1990, after an Arizona Board of Regents commissioned study of the honors programs at Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona, as well as Arizona State University, we were able to get a recommendation from a review committee, saying that we were positioned to become an Honors College.

[Pause for break]

**HUMPHREY:** In academic year 1990-91, I was being recruited by another institution to come and create an honors college there. A member of that search committee phoned a very well-placed faculty member in the College of Business at ASU, Lou Grossman, to ask for recommendations, a recommendation, of me. That faculty member immediately called the president of the university and said, "Did you know that Ted Humphrey is being recruited by?" And the president called me in, said "I understand that you're thinking of going to this other institution." I said, "Yes, I am, because I think they'll give me the freedom to do what it is that I'd really like to do." And he said, "Well, if you decline that offer. I will go to the Board of Regents and ask them to create the University Honors College." And I really thought that ASU would be the better foundation as a whole for what it was that I wanted to do, and I'd already done all the work there. I knew all the people. And so, in June of- at the first summer meeting at the Arizona Board of Regents. The president took me to the meeting and introduced me. We created the University Honors College in the most official way. I think that one of the keys to the stature of the college, both within the university, and, nationally, is the fact that our governing board actually created the college. The reason I believe that that's so significant is that many honors colleges, subsequently, have been created, by fiat, by the presidents of their university. And that means that subsequent presidents could simply, by fiat, declare their non-existence. So, with the Arizona Board of Regents imprimatur, our position was such that if someone wanted to undo the work, they would have to go to our governing board and have the governing board declare the college no longer existent. And in fact, at Arizona State University, I've seen a number of programs come and go as a matter of leadership fiat. So, now we were a college, and it turns out that one of my primary responsibilities immediately became that of recruiting students and recruiting very good students. Turns out that there was a, what to call it, there was a group of scholarships that was being used by the graduate college to recruit graduate students that had originally been designated for undergraduates, but they've kind of gone begging. And as a consequence, it was natural for the graduate college to use those scholarships, well, inasmuch as they were designated, these were full-ride tuition scholarships. Inasmuch as they were designated for undergraduates, I began to use them. I began to award them. And it was not an insignificant number. The whole national merit, National Achievement Scholar program was built on those scholarships as a base, and we were able, within 3 years, to go from using the institution's primary scholarships, either for graduate students or for good, but not absolutely- from qualified, but not absolutely wonderfully qualified students. For, you know, high-order students, students who are able to, go to the very best institutions in the country. Until we got to the point where we, you know. In 1993, we recruited 127 National Merit Scholars into the university and into the Barrett- well, into the Honors College. That number, 127 students, turned a lot of heads. It turned heads nationally, but it also turned heads internally. We were in the midst of, the university as a whole, was in the midst of a capital campaign. It was Lattie Coor's largest campaign, and the university's largest campaign. And that's when the Barretts came forward and told Lattie that they wanted to help out. They themselves did not have a specific program that they wanted to support

with their gift, it was a leadership gift of \$10 million, but Lattie phoned me and asked me whether and how such a gift could be used to develop the college. We went through a negotiation with the Barretts to name the college for them. They did not particularly want to make a naming endowment. In fact, they were opposed to it at first, and it took a bit of talking to get them to lend their name, and it was very important that the college have a name, because by 1993, other honors operations around the country noticed that we were on the move. That universities creating honors colleges was a new trend in universities, and there were 40 or 45 University Honors Colleges in existence around the country at a time, and we needed a name in order to differentiate ourselves from all of those other colleges.

[Pause for break]

**HUMPHREY:** Many people don't realize that Arizona State University was the first higher educational institution in the state of Arizona. It came about a very, very interesting way. In 1885, there was a territorial election, with respect to where the state prison should go, and where the state teacher's college should go. And the choices, interestingly enough, were the cities of Yuma and the town of Tempe. By the results of the election, the city of Yuma won, and was awarded the State Prison. It, after all, was, economically more important at the time than a state teachers college. So, Arizona State University, in 1885, was created in Tempe. In 1985, on the occasion of the centennial of the state college's founding, the now Arizona State University, brought about by a vote of the people, was, well, Arizona State University was celebrating its centennial, and the Flynn Foundation, being dedicated both to medicine and education, came to the university and said, in celebration of the centennial, it would award a- it would give a grant of a total of \$1 million to the university, with an initial award of \$400,000, and completion of the grant at the time that the first centennial lecture was actually completed. So, now the university had a fund for a very significant event, and it, at the time, it really needed one. The most distinguished lecture on campus was the eye-ring lecture in chemistry, which was a nationally prestigious lecture, but there was nothing there for the university as a whole. The then-provost, and I'm not quite sure who that provost was, I think it was Jack Kinsinger.

**DELUSÉ:** Maybe Roland Haden?

**HUMPHREY:** Uh, no, because Roland Haden, it was with Roland Haden that I actually secured the lectureship. I'm pretty sure it was Jack Kinsinger. I went to the deans, and I was not among them in 1985, and said, we have this opportunity, and our idea is that the dean who's able to set this up, will be able to count on having this lectureship, not necessarily in perpetuity, but on a regular basis. And I'm not quite sure which dean it was who went out and began negotiating with President Jimmy Carter to deliver the lecture and a manuscript of the lecture to the university. For whatever reasons, that particular dean was not able to consummate a contract, and the lectureship, in name only, simply hung around, until after the University Honors College was created. And at the time, Roland Haden was the acting, well, he was the dean of the College of Engineering, and he was the acting provost of the university. He was searching for another

position, and he and I got into a conversation and I had a vision for a centennial lecture that I brought to him, but I brought my proposal and my vision to him, conditioned on my, or the college, I should say, the colleges having the centennial lecture in perpetuity. I was rash enough to say, I know how to get this done, and because Roland had his eye on showing that he could administer a university in general, a whole university and not just a College of Engineering, he took me up on it. Well, I didn't really know how to get it done, but my feeling was that the university should create a lectureship, a residential lectureship, that would speak to the community as a whole. The academic community and the broader community as a whole. And I knew that I needed a readily recognizable name for the initial lectureship. I brought together a group of regent professors who I felt were the most distinguished faculty members we had, and the faculty members who had the broadest range of contacts, and we had several conversations, and finally, as a group, we settled on Carlos Fuentes. We settled on the name of Carlos Fuentes because, one, he's a diplomat, he was a Spanish-writing author whose name was constantly mentioned for the Nobel Prize in Literature. He had been awarded several of the most distinguished writing prizes across cultures and so on. He was an extraordinary speaker, and he spoke to our- he was a person who would speak to our Hispanic faculty, our literary faculty, our political science faculty. He covered an awful lot of bases. And I wrote directly to him, setting out very general terms, and I don't know, I optimistically hoped to hear back within a relatively short amount of time, but it turns out that all such mail as mine was shunted to his agent and that not very often, so quite a while went by, three or four months went by, and I didn't hear back from him. And in the meantime, uh a second name that the group had come up with was the name of Robert Coles. And again, he spoke to a very, very broad community. His work with children of different ethnicities was groundbreaking. He offered a course over the course, during 20-odd years as a faculty member in citizenship and community contribution, so on. So, I approached him and he responded fairly quickly and said he would certainly consider inaugurating the series. I'm sitting in my office, maybe within less than a week after I talked with Robert Coles, sitting in my office at about five in the afternoon, fairly despondent, and I get a phone call from Carlos Fuentes' agent, saying that they've just read my letter. They wondered what the deal was, what were we looking for? And I was told, you know, he'd certainly be willing to come and give a lecture, and I said, it's not just a lecture, I want a real piece of him. You know, I said I want ten days of his time. The agent immediately went to, well, how much are you offering? I said, well, \$40,000. And the agent said, well, for \$40,000, he'll do anything. So, we started with the- we started negotiations within about a day and a half or so. Had a signed contract for Carlos Fuentes to come and inaugurate the Centennial Lecture. I had to go back to Robert Coles and negotiate with him, and we came to an agreement that, you know, he would come the next year, but he would have to come the next year in two installments.

**DELUSÉ:** Thank you for all of these insights. It's such a fascinating view of how it all began, and I know we began to talk about the Centennial Lecture series today, and with your permission, we'll wrap up this recording and schedule another time to talk about the Centennial Lecture Series, and also the Rhodes. Would that work for you?

**HUMPHREY:** That works for me, sure.

**DELUSÉ:** Alright, well, thank you again, and we will be in touch.