

**Interview Transcript for John T. (Tom) Mentzer**  
**University of Tennessee**  
**January 28, 2010**

**STOCK:** Good afternoon. My name is James Stock, the Frank Harvey Endowed Professor of Marketing at the University of South Florida. We are here today to conduct an interview with one of the luminaries in the academic discipline of logistics and supply chain management. The purposes of this interview are several. First, and perhaps foremost, is to get to know the personal side of one of the leading logistics and supply chain academicians; a person who has had significant influence on their profession. We often read the person's books and journal articles, listen to their presentations at academic and/or professional meetings, and sometimes even have individual discussions with them at various events and venues. However, we rarely get to "know" the person beyond the professional aspects of their careers.

In the field of literature and art, for example, researchers often consider the "what, why, how, who, and when" of a particular book or painting, short story, poem, and so on. They speculate on what might have motivated the writer or the artist to write the book or to paint the painting, to determine the message or story of the text or art, and the writer's or artist's perception of the contributions of their work. In the same way, through this and other interviews that will be conducted of leading business scholars, as the late Paul Harvey so often expressed, we will attempt to get "the rest of the story!"

These taped interviews will hopefully serve as supporting material for various university courses where the various works of these academicians may be discussed. They will be of significant impact in courses where history and theory are being examined, since these individuals contributed extensively to that history and theory.

Each interview is based a set of structured questions using an interview guide. Of course, the interviewee's responses are spontaneous and they may lead into other questions related to those responses. However, the general format for this and other interviews that will be conducted in the future will be similar.

It is hoped that audiences who view these interviews will get a broader and richer view of the people and events that have shaped their disciplines. We hope that you learn from what will be said and discussed during these interviews and be able to more fully appreciate and understand the significant contributions made by these luminaries in the field.

Let's begin by introducing our distinguished guest.

Dr. John T. (Tom) Mentzer is presently the Harry J. and Vivienne R. Bruce Excellence Chair of Business and a Chancellor's Professor in the Department of Marketing and Logistics, University of Tennessee, in Knoxville, TN. He graduated from the General Motors Institute with a Bachelor of Industrial Administration in 1974. He obtained a MBA from Michigan State University in 1975. His Ph.D. was completed in 1978 from Michigan State University, where he concentrated in Marketing, Logistics

and Psychometrics. His dissertation was titled “Simulated Product Sales Forecasting: Analysis of Market Demand Alternatives.”

Upon graduation, Tom took a position as Assistant Professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI). He remained there until 1994, whereupon he assumed a position at the University of Tennessee, where he has remained for the rest of his academic career. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1981, Full Professor in 1986, and the Virginia Real Estate Professor of Marketing in 1990 at Virginia Tech. When he moved to the University of Tennessee, he was appointed to his present position. All together, Tom has served as a faculty member for more than 30 years, teaching and conducting research in marketing, logistics, and supply chain management.

During his career, Tom has received numerous awards for his distinguished service to his students, his university and the profession. He became a Distinguished Fellow of the Academy of Marketing Science in 1992, received the Outstanding Teacher of the College Award in 2000, was given the Academy of Marketing Science Outstanding Marketing Teacher Award in 2001, awarded the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) Distinguished Service Award in 2004, named a *DC Velocity* magazine “Rainmaker” in 2005, received the Armitage Medal from Sole—The International Society of Logistics in 2007, as well as many other awards and honors during his career. The Distinguished Service Award—given by the CSCMP is their highest honor and is given annually to an individual who has made significant, career-long contributions to the supply chain management and logistics professions. This recognition by his peers

provides ample evidence of the high regard that the profession holds Tom Mentzer and his accomplishments.

For many years, Tom served on the Executive Committee of CSCMP in various positions. There is probably not a member of CSCMP who has not received some, and probably many, innovative and business-changing ideas from the various committees and positions held by Tom.

Of course, Tom has been one of the most productive logistics and SCM faculty in terms of publications, executive development programs, conference participation, and university education activities. He has authored or co-authored nine (9) books and published 119 refereed articles in such prestigious journals as *Harvard Business Review*, *Business Horizons*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Business Logistics*, *Journal of Operations Management*, *Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Retailing*. He is the most published author in the *Journal of Business Logistics*. He has served as a member of the Editorial Boards of numerous journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *Journal of Business Logistics*, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and others.

Tom also has excelled in traditional areas of academic faculty participation. He has served in a variety of roles within his department, college and university.

Yet, it is what Tom has done “beyond the norm” that sets him apart from his peers. His accomplishments with CSCMP over a long and productive career

are truly outstanding and profession-impacting. The sheer volume of articles and books he has published have had significant influence on faculty and students in the fields of marketing, logistics and supply chain management. From a student perspective, Tom has won college teaching awards and has assisted scores of students find careers in the logistics and SCM fields. He has chaired more than 20 PhD dissertations and served as a committee member of even more.

In recognition of his professional standing, Tom has served as a consultant and advisor to companies around the globe, including firms such as OfficeMax, Whirlpool, Best Buy, Ditch-Witch International, and many others.

In sum, his articles, books and teaching materials have impacted thousands of students and business executives around the world. Tom has been a “value-adding” contributor in every aspect of his professional career. It is our distinct pleasure to get to know the personal side of this man so that we can more fully appreciate his significant professional contributions and achievements.

### **Early Childhood**

**STOCK:** So Tom, it’s good to speak with you, and glad you could have us here for this interview. We are going to ask you some questions you probably haven’t been asked in quite some time, but your answers can be spontaneous and if you prefer not to answer a question, just let me know and we will move on. So, the first one is usually the easiest one: when and where were you born?

**MENTZER:** I was born in Charles Town, West Virginia. My family lived in Harpers Ferry about 7 miles away, the hospital was in Charles Town. If you look at the most eastern point in West Virginia, I literally grew up on that point.

**STOCK:** And what year was it when you were born?

**MENTZER:** 1951.

**STOCK:** Now, as you think back to your childhood, was there anything in your childhood that you think shaped your present personality in this position that you have now?

**MENTZER:** Yes, I think it was growing up in Harpers Ferry. I grew up in a little sleepy town. Given the transportation at the time, it was too far from DC to be a veteran's community. You know people that lived there were just basically families that owned farms and lived in town or worked for some of the local small manufacturers. I grew up in a house that literally sat on the cliff. Down over the cliff if you went down 300 feet, it wouldn't straight drop like in the Rockies; it was in the Appalachians so you would think it is more interesting, because you'll have little trails and caves and so forth. You came out at the Potomac River and my mother said every time she was looking for me she'd look out the kitchen window and the dog and I would be coming up over the cliff. So I think in the Shenandoah in Harpers Ferry, where the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers come together, people since I was a kid would be coming over there as a tourist attraction just to see the colors, you know it's just a beautiful view. So I think a large part of how I was shaped was I had kind of a Huck Finn growing up, building

**rafts on the Potomac River and fishing there in the summer. We owned the family farm across the river in Maryland so I've always considered myself, you know, born in West Virginia and technically grew up there. I think of myself as a Marylander. Family has been there since the 1700's. I think that was a large part of it. I was the farm boy growing up, with animals around and lots of friends; you could wander anywhere in town; there was never any traffic. My dog's favorite place to sleep was in the middle of the street. When cars would come down the street they'd blow the horn and he'd leisurely get up and get out of their way. So I think that had a large impact on kind of who I am was the terrain I grew up in.**

**STOCK:** Ok. Out of curiosity, have you ever tried to throw a silver dollar across the Potomac?

**MENTZER:** Yes, actually we talked about it a lot as a kid and we always figured the father of our country did some great things, but he was a lover of tall tales, because where I grew up, the Potomac River was a good three miles wide. Now he must have had a heck of an arm on him to be able to wing it that far. My father owned coal companies, so I've been up in West Virginia. I've actually been where the Potomac River starts as a spring coming out of the ground, so I've got George beat. I've actually stood on both sides of the Potomac at the same time.

**STOCK:** Interesting, how do you think your parents would describe you as a child? And why?

**MENTZER:** I think my mother would describe me as a trial. I was a rambunctious kid. I was raised in the traditions of the 1950's. So I was

raised: “listen, obey your parents, and for the most part did.” Never was in trouble, I mean technically in trouble in town. You know my mother was a very strict lady and I think she would say my sister was a much easier child to raise because she was much more likely to follow all the rules and I was a little more likely to shave the rules. I think my father saw me as a mystery. My father shaped a lot of who I am today, not intentionally, but just as an exemplar, as a life exemplar. My father walked up to me at my college graduation, shook hands with me, and said you know I didn’t think you’d live this long. That’s a really great kind of summary statement. This is a kid that kind of pushed the edge a little bit. My dad died when I was 28, so I was always happy that I got to live long enough that I grew up that he and I could be friends. I think he was very proud of the guy I turned into, but I think he had his doubts along the way.

**STOCK:** Are there any specific memories from your childhood that you have never forgotten?

**MENTZER:** Yes, I’ve got two. I call them my studies in black and white and my earliest memory and I think it probably is as a toddler, was the Potomac River in the morning. As it cooled off, it would fill up with fog. You would literally walk out in our backyard and it looked like you could walk straight across this landscape of fog to the Maryland mountains three miles away on the other side. And I remember coming out into the sun our house faced. The backyard faced to the north and I remember kind of toddling around the house and seeing my mother in the early morning. It’s barely sun up and this golden light is coming through this fog. And my mother, she may have

not been, it's a memory you know, but in my memory she is out there in a white house dress hanging out sheets and you know I just had this memory of Harpers Ferry being this clean, kind of safe place to grow up. That's the study in white. The study in black is one of the ironies. There is a lot of history around Harpers Ferry. People around there are actually thinking it is where the Civil War actually began in 1859 with John Brown's raid. Everything after that was preparation up to Fort Sumter in my minority opinion of course. So there is a lot of history around the local people there. Stone steps in Harpers Ferry are called the bloody steps because the Episcopal church was a hospital and literally so many men bled to death in that hospital that the blood would run down those steps like a stream. The story that is told to tourists is you see the old Episcopal Church and this is old kind of gutted fieldstone artifact. The story is that it burned in 1904. Rather than rebuild it, they just built a new church further upon the hill in town. The real story is the Episcopal minister felt they could never get the smell of dried blood out of the church of so many people; it was in the walls. And when the church burned down, they said this is the first time the stench wasn't still there. After 40 years they built it in another place. So you got these histories, the ironies of histories, and one of the great ones is that John Brown came to Harpers Ferry to free the slaves and he was an extreme abolitionist. He believed that the only way the slaves were ever going to be freed was by force. Harpers Ferry at the time was a booming industrial area and it was one of the two US arsenals; the other was in Connecticut; and his plan was to come there, take the arsenal, and he thought the local slave population would immediately back him and rise up with him. So he came there to free

slaves and the first man killed by his raiders was a free black man and this free black man had a daughter who was born the week he was killed and she became kind of the historical arbor of the town. She lived to be over 100. When I was probably 6 or 7 years old, so at that time she have been in her late 90's, my mother took me to see this women and she said we called her Mrs. Washington and she'd married Mr. Washington somewhere along the way. My memory in black is my mother taking me to see this woman at a little shanty in Harpers Ferry and going in and even though it was a bright sunny day, it was dark inside. Sitting in the dark corner is this old gnarled-up black woman and you know my mother said, its time you learn the history of your town. I went over to Mrs. Washington, I crawled upon her knee and she said now you are Tom Mentzer's boy right? I'm Tom junior, and I said yes ma'am, and then she said well let me tell you the history of your town, and the memory is I spent all afternoon with her. The reality is it probably this happened over a dozen visits, but I have this memory of her telling me all the little secrets. You know, she was the oral historian and she saw her job as to pass on all the little secrets of the way Harpers Ferry had really operated for the last 100 years. Those are my two, I think, the memories that always immediately come to mind.

**STOCK:** It would have been fascinating to have a video of her, which is one of the reasons we are doing this.

**MENTZER:** Yes, wouldn't it? How technology has changed.

### Grade School/High School

**STOCK:** Now, let's jump a little bit ahead to your school years. When you think about your school years, tell us the types of schools you went to from elementary school up through high school.

**MENTZER:** Ok. My parents might have a different memory of this, but I don't think I was a very good student up until about the eighth grade. And you have these people who kind of influenced your life along the way and in eighth grade Civics, we had been integrated as a school system since I was in fifth grade, so we were kind of used to black and white students being together. I really think integration was easier in many cases in small towns. It was easier for the students than it was for the parents because we were too young to know anything different; it was just another kid. I think I said eighth but it was ninth grade, ninth grade through twelfth was our high school and I had ninth grade Civics. I had never taken Civics in my life and I had Mr. King who was the first black teacher I'd ever had and I'm not sure that had any effect on the particular question you asked except that he is the guy who got me interested in learning, and I still kind of remember the moment where he asked a question in class and I knew the answer and I was thinking this is pretty neat to know the answer to the question. Before that I've been one of the kids in the neighborhood and I really think that, you know, I eventually became very enamored with this construct called scholarship and I think Mr. King started me down that road. So I went to a good school. It was a small school that doesn't exist anymore; they now have a county school which I think is good and bad, but when I went I had the largest graduating class in the history of the school, Harpers Ferry's High School. We had 42 students. I always kidded my sister who was valedictorian but she never quite finished in

the top 10 % of her class because there were only nine students in the class and she was in the top 11 % of her class. So I think that in small school training, you know all the teachers. It has its disadvantages, but it has its advantages. You knew everybody and the teacher knew you and, you know, when you played football you played both ways. I used to finish football games exhausted because we did not have an offensive team and a defensive team. We didn't have enough people to do both so the high school training was kind of good training but not great in terms of the classes. This was the late 1960's, so everybody, myself included, was interested in science. I wanted to go into engineering and there were some teachers there that struggled to try to teach the classes I needed to master, to go into an engineering program. My parents had been very good to me; I think they gave me a great upbringing. They'd done some wonderful things as parents. My father was a tough role model to follow, not because he tried to be or he was nasty, he just was a very accomplished man. He started out literally with a high school education in 1933, left the farm in Maryland, you know, height of the depression, hitchhiked across the Potomac river, got a job at a plant in West Virginia, worked there as a common laborer and self taught himself engineering and design; and when he had spare time he hung around the smiths shop, so he became a very accomplished blacksmith. I've got some examples of things that my dad made around here from industrial steel that I think are quite a bit of craftsmanship to it. Let's put it this way, he kind of self learned to be a blacksmith by befriending the chief smithy for the plant, so he ended up being plant engineer. He went from no training at all in eight years to plant engineer. By the time World War II broke out, he was plant manager and worked at a

plant that made material that was critical to the building of ships. He enlisted four different times. He was already in his 40's so they didn't want guys that age. I had an older father. My father was already past 40 when I was born. So my dad was at an age, they said we'll take you if we need you and he ran a plant that's called vital for the nation's defense job, so he always said if they won't let me in the service, then if this job is so important, we are going to do it well. And he worked 10 hours a day, seven days a week, for what today we would call 24/7, but 7 days a week for the entire war to produce these war materials. Finished, decided he didn't want to work for a company. He was an executive now with what was Martin Marietta because they bought the plant where he worked and he and my mother just said let's take our savings and walk away and they started their own company. To make a long story short, by the time I was ready to head off to college my dad was getting close to retiring and owned four successful companies. Well that's a tough model to follow, so I was looking for an engineering school but I was looking for one where I could pay my own way and my guidance counselor came up to me during study hall one day and said have you considered the General Motors Institute? And then I said what you say at those times; you know I don't want to be an auto mechanic and she said no, it is a 50 year old accredited engineering institute that GM just happens to run. They just started to produce more engineers back in the 1920's and that's kind of how I transitioned from high school. I applied to GM, went through a ton of interviews, getting accepted in this school, and then needing to get accepted by a GM plant because you were a co-op student for five years. That's a five year program and I decided that's where I wanted to go. I felt like I

**didn't have a lot of options because there was there or several other schools that weren't as strong in engineering, and I was going to say I will have to depend more on my parents. My parents were willing to put me through college but I wanted to go out and prove that I could do it myself.**

**STOCK:** Now before we get into your college years, thinking back through your high school, you mentioned the Civics instructor that you had. What were your favorite courses in high school?

**MENTZER:** Well interesting enough, Civics wasn't it. You know Civics I think was more the instructor and kind of how things progressed. I have to admit I did develop, and I should have mentioned this earlier, I'm amazed that every American does not regularly read the US Constitution. And I think that's what Mr. King got across to me was that we are governed by a living document and this document was written by people who wanted to form a government of the people, by the people and for the people, but we don't trust the people. We can't trust individuals to do the right things; we can't trust individuals that given absolute power they won't absolutely abuse it. So they built what I thought is a marvelously intricate document of checks and balances and the ability to grow. People complain the Constitution is vague in places. It's vague for a reason; it's vague so that 200 years later the document still runs this land. Later in life I developed a fascination with the civics part of who we are as citizens, but I actually thought at one time majoring in mathematics. I loved math; I loved the elegance of math. One of my daughters is very quantitatively oriented. She understands it. The other is the exact opposite; she says she gets

nauseous when she looks at the pages of some of the articles that you've sent me to read. To me, mathematics is just a different language. In terms of the symbols that we use, you can still read them like a sentence if you want, but I've been always fascinated with the quantitative sciences. That led me to a fascination with physics. I loved physics because mathematically I can figure out why when x happens, y happens. I hated chemistry and as a result I think I hated biochemistry because a large part of chemistry (no offense, it's an important area of study) but to me certainly as a high school student, chemistry was always this: logical things happen and then something happens and we can't explain and we do not have a clue as far as we know a miracles happen and then we go on and we do these things. And that part in the middle bothered me. I wanted the explanation, I didn't want the, you know, a man and a women goes through this physical act and these various things happen and then suddenly a new life is formed. A lot of this is chemistry and it's the part of chemistry that they just say; we just kind of accept that. I was definitely a physical sciences kind of guy. Hated French, love French today, wished I'd paid more attention, but hated it at the time.

**STOCK:** Now, were you active, you've mentioned football in one of your comments, where you active in sports or clubs?

**MENTZER:** Clubs not really. You know I finished valedictorian in my class; not that hard with the 42 of us, but still I finished valedictorian and I think in the spring the honor society realized; wait a minute, our valedictorian is not a member of our club. Maybe we ought to get this guy in here, so that's the only club I remember belonging to. I used to

say I belonged to the detention club because I was a well graded, straight A would be pushing it, but pretty strong grades guy that at the same time got a lot of detention hall. Back to my mother, my mother is 93 and still going strong, and I think she'd say I was only shaving the rules just a little bit.

**STOCK:** How would you describe yourself socially in high school?

**MENTZER:** Ah, you talked about clubs and football. Yes, the football I was a good, but not a great player I think. I couldn't run worth a darn. Somewhere I've got a clipping from my football coach in high school and he said anything the guy touches he catches and that's a pretty nice characteristic for a receiver. Now, once I caught the ball I didn't go very far because I wasn't that nimble. I wasn't that fast so I made the perfect what's called tight end and a tight end in a lot of plays actually has got to be big enough to block and actually be part of the line but the thing I always thought made me a good tight end, I always knew where the first down marker was so any play where I was supposed to go out and do something I would always make sure that I passed that marker, so if the quarterback can get the ball there, I was taller than most people, I could reach up the top of the pack and catch it. Now I might catch it and get immediately tackled, but we get a first down. That was my claim to fame in football. My claim to fame in baseball was I'm ambidextrous. I'm left handed and right handed and as soon my coach figured that out he said which one do you bat stronger? And I said I bat right handed stronger and he said: well every time you go to bat I want you to bat right handed and the first two pitches if you get a hit that's great you get a hit; if you get a ball or whatever, but he said when you

get to either 3 balls or 2 strikes or both at the same time, he said I want you to step out of the batter's box and clean the mud off your shoes and fiddle around a little bit and then step back up and bat left handed. He says there isn't a pitcher in the world that is going to be able to adjust to that and they are invariably going to either throw the ball behind you or so far out that you are going to get walked. And he said whatever you do I want you to do that; don't swing at that pitch because that pitch was going to be wild and it worked. I always knew where the first down marker was and I could always get to first base. We might not get any further, but I made it to first base. And I ran track just to stay in shape, but I considered myself kind of a good but mediocre athlete.

**STOCK:** Now your next question is about your social life in high school. How would you've described that?

**MENTZER:** I like women; I've always liked women. I liked women in high school and was fortunate enough to marry somebody that after 30+ years I'm still totally enamored with; but I liked dating. Brenda and I both talked about it at the time about the fact that we grew up in a time when you didn't go out in groups. A lot of the kids today they go out in groups, we went out you had a date and you might end up in a group together, but everybody was paired with somebody. So I really enjoyed the dating scene and Friday and Saturday nights something was wrong if you didn't have a date. I was 6 foot 5 inches at the time. I grew another inch as years went by but 6' 5" at the time and weighed less than 200 pounds, so I was a tall skinny guy with a full head of hair at the time. So certainly wasn't ugly to look at so I had a good time.

**STOCK:** Now considering that period of your life, what would people you know find surprising about you when you were a teenager? Is there anything they wouldn't know or would find surprising about you at that time?

**MENTZER:** I'm probably the only high school student (that's probably not true anymore nowadays unfortunately), but certainly during my time, I was the only student in my school that was the center of an FBI investigation.

**STOCK:** I'm not sure that's very common even today.

**MENTZER:** There was a place where I grew up a country boy and we used to hunt and I became very good over the years. I grew up on a farm and did a lot of shooting; a lot of target shooting, a lot of hunting with my father, rifle shooting. I never was very good with a pistol because they don't have a lot of use on the farm, but on a farm, a shotgun, and a rifle are basically tools and I got a lot of opportunity to practice. My father was very good with guns. He was very big on teaching gun safety and then letting us practice, so I was a very good competitive skeet shooter with shotguns and actually was rifle champion several years at GMI because I was a very good rifle shooter. My dad told me, it took me half a century to kind of figure out what it did for you. When I was 14, I realized I liked shooting; I liked hunting; I liked the skill it took to have a target and hit it but I didn't like killing things, so I hunted a lot with my dad, but if something was available I never shot it. I've talked to one of my colleagues and said, I went deer hunting and I've been deer hunting many, many times, but never shot at a deer. I just wanted to see how close I could get to the deer before it realized I

was there and would take off. So anyway, the long way around, there was a place where we used to dove hunt and this place that we had permission from the farmer to hunt doves was right near the old Norfolk, the B&O, back then the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. It's been bought by and is part of the Chessie system now, but it was right by the railroad tracks and a place where you parked was the rail maintenance area. You know again we knew it's a small town; everybody knows everybody. I got permission to park the car there, you know, we weren't going to break any really big rules. So I got called out of class one day. I'm in the middle of something and they called me to the principal's office. The FBI needs to talk to you. Well, my credibility in high school instantly went up considerably, you know, FBI investigative target and these two guys came down and I was too dumb to call my parents or have them call their lawyer and they wanted to talk. They said do you own a red sports car and I did, I owned a car I wish I still have today, a 1957 MGA convertible.

**STOCK:** That's what I had, same year, red color.

**MENTZER:** Did you, did you really. Fire engine red.

**STOCK:** Fire engine red, the battery was behind the seats.

**MENTZER:** Yes, wasn't that a great car?

**STOCK:** That was.

**MENTZER:** There was always something wrong with it, but just a great car. So yes, I drove a "red sports car" and they asked me other kinds of innocuous question and then they said do you have a 20 gauge

shotgun. Yes, I do have a single shot. Is this one of your shells and now I've started to get suspicious. The teenager brain is finally sinking in that there was a pattern to these questions, so I finally gave my first circumspect answer. I said my shotgun fires shells like that; that's not necessarily one of my shells, but it fires shells like that and I guess they've had this incident where somebody's red sports car was parked in the parking lot and someone was dove hunting like we do and decided they weren't getting any doves that day so it was kind of fun when the B&O, when the train came by to blast the windshield out and that's back when trains still had to have a caboose on the end because you had a conductor even though a freight train had a conductor and his job on the freight train was to ride in the back and every so often call the engineer because the train might be two miles long and say is the front of the train still moving. If the answer is yes, well we're not, so something is wrong along the way, and this guy shot out three of the windows in the caboose and fortunately did not hurt anybody, but I'm sure scared the daylights out of the conductor and I think we are going to take you into town for further discussion. You should call your parents. So by this time I finally, you know, called them to meet me at the—I never even knew where the FBI headquarters in Charles Town, West Virginia was. They took me in to talk and I finally as we were going through this discussion, I said you know this is very generic and they were talking about charges and it's a federal offense and is assault and these are serious and you are 17, so you might not be charged as a juvenile. I'm looking at a very different career path all of a sudden and I finally had a chance to think about it and I said you know the gun that I had that fires shells like this is a single shot, and I said I had to have

**plenty of time to reload from shooting out the windshield of the train and until the caboose went by 10 minutes later, but there is no way I could have fired three shots into the caboose with this gun because I simply couldn't unload and reload it that fast. And the FBI agent kind of scratched his head for a while and looked at his partner and he said we are going to talk with your dad for a while. Now, they went out and had a conversation with my father and they came back in and they said well, we want to warn you about a couple of things about parking on B&O property without permission and I said wait a minute, I had permission. And, you know, dove hunting so close to the railroad. Well, I had permission of the farmer to be dove hunting. Ok, we are going to let you go, but if you think of anything else let us know. And as we walked out my dad put his hand on my shoulder and he said it's a darn good thing you thought of loading the gun so fast because they were about to throw you in jail. So that's probably something, you know if you saw me up in front of class, he was an FBI person of interest at one time might surprise them.**

### **College (undergraduate and graduate)**

**STOCK:** Well, I can't think of any examples of who even comes close to that one, but let's move into college. You mentioned the General Motors Institute. Did you put yourself through school; or did your parents help you? How did that go? Were you the first person in your family to go to college?

**MENTZER:** No, I have an older sister; two years older than I am; she went to college. She graduated after me just because of some extra classes she took and she was a teacher, so she had some teaching certificates and time that was required in West Virginia, but I also had

a cousin from the same family group who was a teacher and she was a good ten years older than I was, so she'd been to school. My cousin, Eddie, who was 15 years older than me; I know he went to college. My mother's brother was a train engineer. That's how she and my dad met was through her brother, because he and my dad were both engineers at the same plant. My father never had more than a high school education. He got through high school, but barely, if you look at it academically. My mother never went to college but, you know, for a women at the time, she wasn't immediately getting married after high school, so she went to business college and essentially learned not just secretarial skills, but learned how to keep books—business accounting—so that she could be the office manager of an office. She eventually ended up being the woman who ran my dad's offices for him. So no, there was a good smattering. There was never any doubt in the Mentzer family; there was never any question in anybody's mind. The idea that my sister Susan and I were not going to go to college was just not a consideration. So it's very different than that first person. Now I'm one of the first people from Harpers Ferry from my class to go on for a graduate degree. I'm actually one of very few from my class that actually went onto college. So, I didn't grow up in a town where many people went onto college, but I certainly grew up in a family where that was expected.

**STOCK:** Now the GMI would have been in Michigan.

**MENTZER:** Yes.

**STOCK:** And you are in the Mid Atlantic. Did they have dormitories; did you have apartments; where did you live while you were a student?

**MENTZER:** It was actually fairly innovative. At GMI, they have a dormitory for the freshmen class to kind of get you oriented and after that you are on your own and what happened was, I went to school in Flint, Michigan at General Motors Institute, but my sponsoring plant, the plant that wanted me as an engineer when I graduated was in Wilmington, Delaware. So literally Jim, for four and a half of my five years, the last half year was staying in one place which was wonderful, staying in one place and actually working on a thesis, but the first four and a half years were living in Wilmington, Delaware for 6 weeks—pick everything up and move to Flint, Michigan—and freshmen year live in a dorm for six weeks and then six weeks later turn around and go back, back and forth all year round; it was a 12 month a year school all year round until you were done. And what happened after the first year was most of the students joined a fraternity; we had a very strong fraternity system at GMI. And I think that was by necessity as much as tradition because you had these houses that you pledged them in your freshmen year. If you joined them you had a place to live while you were in Michigan. Invariably what would happen was that you would find these groups of students who would team up and you'd have what we called A section and B section. I was an A section which meant that the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August I headed off to Michigan and I went to school for six weeks and for those six weeks my counterpart in B section came back to Wilmington, Delaware, lived in my apartment, and worked there, and what we'd do is we'd rent apartments with B Section guys but usually the big party was every six weeks we had to change over a weekend, and

**change every weekend was when everybody was in the same town and we'll have usually a big party and either had to work the next morning or head off to class the next morning. So yes, there was a very complex social structure that it kind of developed around the necessity, you couldn't spend eight times a year looking for a place to sleep.**

**STOCK:** Now, how did that experience, your engineering in GMI, lead you to go on for a Masters degree, but not in engineering?

**MENTZER:** That's a good question. You know along the way I was a mechanical engineering student, that's what I wanted to do. I said, I love the mechanical stuff and my freshmen year I figured out that just managing the design of stuff was boring. Managing the people who did that was pretty interesting stuff. So at the end of my year, it says something about the kind of school that I went to, I had to get permission from the plant manager where I worked to change my major and I changed from mechanical engineering to what's called industrial administration and at the time the only places that offered a degree in industrial administration was Indiana that offered a Masters in it and we offered a Bachelors degree. It was the degree designed for people to manage the technical staffs of companies. So I took a lot of the same engineering classes; actually all my classes transferred. You were going to ask about kind of surprise what would be a surprise, I think that for a lot of people is that I don't have an undergraduate degree in engineering. I have an undergraduate degree in industrial administration. So when I got to the senior year, I wasn't thinking about a professional MBA or engineering type of MBA. I was actually thinking about, you know, being a manager and this is how you kind of

**stumble into some of these things. The plant where I worked for a while, the plant manager needed a public relations rep. Well I had no experience, no training, and he said Tom, I need you to act for a couple of months as the PR rep. for the plant. We are changing your assignment. You are not going to be working in the paint department, you are going to be doing this and I said I have no qualifications and he said you've got all the qualifications, and I said what do you mean, and he said all you have to do is look good in a tuxedo and be able to play golf and I said well I can do both of those. And so I was a PR rep. and when there was a problem with the plant and somebody stuck a microphone in someone's face, I was the guy that had the microphone stuck in my face. And I handled a couple of things that were, you know, kind of minor problems, but they could have become big problems if they weren't handled well and I got noticed by a guy named John DeLorean who was kind of the refiner of the Corvette and very famous even then in GM.**

**He hadn't left yet, he was still a rising star, kind of seen as the next president of General Motors. This was before he became disillusioned with GM and left. I mean this is kind of a funny story. I was sitting in my office and literally got a phone call and my secretary comes on with kind of a hush tone and she says Mr. DeLorean is on the phone for you and I almost picked up the phone and said you've got the wrong number, this is the Queen of Sheba's office, and I thought, no it just could be true. So I picked up the phone and said hey John how are you doing, and he said Tom I'm going to be at the plant next week and I wanted to see if you wanted to go out to dinner. Like I'm going to say**

no to my bosses bosses bosses boss to go to dinner, so I said yes and sent this thing over to my secretary so his people talked to my people before we go out to dinner. Immediately hung up and called my boss and said what the heck is going on and he said John called me first and is looking for somebody to take under his wing, and he wants to kind of see what your plans are for the future and for GM and what are you going to do when you graduate and so forth and that's pretty much what dinner was about. So what he wanted to do is talk about my career plans and what I wanted to do with General Motors and when I graduated, was I staying? And GM gave out, (back then GM was 53 % market share, life was good), and for two deserving executives, they gave what they called GM fellowships. GM fellowships would pay the executive to take a year or two years at whichever school they would pick, to go back and get their MBA's. And actually that year a little interesting side line of my life is that one of my closest friends and certainly my closest studying buddy when I was at GM was Stanley O'Neil, the guy who used to be CEO of Morgan Stanley or whatever, the guy that got to retire with \$160 million in stock options. Stanley did ok. Stanley went to Harvard and John wanted me to go to Harvard to get my MBA and we got to talking about what I wanted to do with my career, and I mean this is an executive, not an academic advisor, and he said you know Tom, you are more of a marketing and logistics guy. Well big surprise, that's exactly what DeLorean was; he was supposedly the big marketing thinker at GM and concerned about change in the way we distribute cars and stuff and he said Harvard is a great school and you certainly can't argue that, but I liked his phrase; he said the Harvard of marketing and logistics schools is Michigan State and I think you could have argued at

the time that Ohio State was in the game, but they were in Michigan, and he said we will and he just kind of laid it out, he said if you want to go back and think about your BIA (you've got a Bachelors in Industrial Administration), think about the part of management would be the marketing side, you know, the creating demand and getting people to want the car and how do we get it to him, the logistics side. That's the first time I'd ever heard marketing and logistics used together, so he said you know, take some time to think about it which meant by the time coffee is over I want an answer and then I said John, I don't know how I can turn this down. I'm graduating in nine months; I can go and apply now. You kind of pick what you can work; had me work for a year or just head right onto the MBA. And he said you know, I rather you want to get this done, so rather than having you come and work for a year—you know we are going to bring up to the tech center and everything—why you don't just go ahead and apply. If you can get in Michigan State and we were kind of laughing because I had regular deans lists grades in GMI, so getting in wasn't a big deal. He is the guy who kind of talked me into you ought to go ahead and get the MBA, but it was to think about, what are you going to run in the world's largest corporation once you get that degree? It was still very much aimed at managing something.

**STOCK:** How did you move into the academic arena? Obviously something happened during the Masters program?

**MENTZER:** Yes, the next step was, you know, I got in the program. I'm walking to my first class and how he ever got roped into this, but I walked into my first class I was going to have at Michigan State—this is

1974 I guess—8 o'clock somebody got stuck with teaching the MBA 8 o'clock Marking Principles class, and in walked my instructor [who] is some guy named Don Bowersox and Don was actually teaching the class, an 8 o'clock class which nobody wanted. I took the class from Don. Don I think was a very astute scholar at picking out quality MBA's that ought to be PhD's and kind of identifying those guys that really ought to move on to the academic career. I took a couple of classes from him; he kind of kept an eye on me in the marking and logistics classes that I was taking. Spring comes and I'm going to finish, I'm fast tracking the MBA because I'd had so many of the courses already as an undergrad. GMI required a thesis to graduate, to get your undergraduate. The people in the GM fellowship program had to do a thesis, so usually you'd be there and the last six months would be doing the thesis. Well I went to the dean of the graduate school and said I'm supposed to do a thesis for the MBA and I've already done one and you know here it is, kind of read through it and he said, you know, we can waive that requirement. So essentially they waived the last six months of the MBA, so I was fast tracked. I was looking at being back at GM, by I guess it would have been Spring of 1976, or somewhere along that time. It sounds about right, somewhere kind of that timeline, and you asked about me and John DeLorean. I was over at John's; this is when he was still married to Christine Ferrare. I was over for dinner one night and talked about when are you going to finish and what do you want to do and they all but handed me GM's parts division, and he said you know Tom, when you graduate one of the things we really need to figure out in this company is how to manage all these parts that we carry at thousands of dealerships for people who have hundreds of

different models of our cars. And we need somebody who can talk about, that can intelligently manage all these sales people that we have to go out and sell the dealerships, but we need someone that can also deal with the suppliers. Well I think John was thinking about this all along. You know this is the job I want this guy to have but this is the training. And he just saw the MBA as getting the training to do the job, so what he was saying was you are essentially going to take the “number 2” job in what was a very good size division, but not one we would be mostly noticed by Mister Goodwrench. Again you have to remember this was still the largest corporation in the world. You know and the “number 1” guy has already said that he was staying five years at the most, so this is your way of getting trained to prove yourself; then we want you to step in and take over this thing. That would have put me at less than 30 years old, maybe 30, and probably 30 years old that would have put me 3 levels down from president of the company. So this was serious fast track. At the same time I’ve got Don Bowersox talking to me and Don is saying you know given the way you approach things in class you are a natural teacher. You love to teach, you are good at teaching, you talked about research, finding the answers to questions out there and writing articles and publishing. And actually in over at my house for beer parties occasionally and, you know, as only Don can do, became kind of a mentor-influencer, a little more than a mentor, so I went through this couple months of going back and forth about captain of industry or staying a student. My father was going crazy at this time. You are going to give up a major position with General Motors to be a teacher? He just wasn’t taking too well to this idea, but up until the day he died, he still was sending me articles about PhD’s can’t find jobs, you

know, don't get paid well and I'd always said, dad, I've got a job, I'm getting paid well; things are going ok. He was against it, to use the West Virginia phrase, and I finally came down the side of, we've laughed since you know I really liked this teaching stuff and I don't know if I'm going to be good at research, but I'd like to give it a try. I've always said well eight books and 150 articles plus later, this research gig seems to be working out ok. I finally went to John and to his credit, laid all this thing out, and said I know you've invested a lot of time and effort in me. I want you to tell me what makes us square. If you want me to walk away from Michigan State and this is where Don Bowersox was starting another of his big modeling projects and he said this is a chance Tom for you to be involved. We will be working with Whirlpool and Union Carbide, which still existed at the time, and Johnson & Johnson. And you know it is really a chance for you to get involved in a big research project.

**STOCK:** Was that the LREPS (Long Range Environmental Planning Simulator) model?

**MENTZER:** The LREPS model was the forerunner. It was the father of the model we worked on. Speh worked on it, I believe he did, the LREPS model. Tom Speh was two or three years ahead of me in coming out of Michigan State but I worked on the SPSF (Simulated Product Sales Forecasting Model). It was same concept, but technology changed rapidly in five years and kind of building a planning model aimed more at, big surprise for me, forecasting demand, and the marketing side and the logistics part of how to meet that demand, so it had a lot of appeal to the marketing and logistics guy in me. I talked to

**John and said you tell me, five years moving up, we are talking about essentially indentured servitude, but I owe this guy a lot and to his credit he said look, you've made a choice. It is not the choice I want you to make but you've made a choice and I'm not going to stand in the way. I always felt good about this; he said the last project you worked on with us is still saving this company a million dollars a year. I think you've more than paid for yourself. So we didn't get the pay back we hoped for, but I think you ought to go to Michigan State. He is the guy who said go ahead and go back for the PhD if that's what you want to try. Now interestingly enough it was less than a year that he left and started the DeLorean Corporation and so I don't know whether he was already thinking about leaving or not.**

### **Career**

**STOCK:** Now, after you finished your PhD degree from Michigan State, how did you go about securing your first job at VPI?

**MENTZER:** I went through the normal marketing process and I think this was an eye opener for Don, because Don was used to (logistics was a new area); it was just starting to kind of develop and you had people at a couple of schools that you knew that when you had a student graduating you called up Bud La Londe and you said Bud, do you have an opening? I have a really good student graduating. Why don't you hire him? And you know, Bud had him down for the day and if he liked him, he hopefully hired him. If it wasn't Ohio State, it was a hand full of schools, and I came out just at the time that for whatever reason, more and more schools were saying we need you to cover all of marketing. The Marketing Department ought to have somebody who

teaches and this is when we had a lot more state resources coming in. We need somebody who can teach product management and we need somebody who can teach pricing and we need somebody who can teach logistics; and you know we need somebody who can teach promotion, so suddenly the American Marketing Association (AMA) was getting interested (at least the academics were getting interested) in logistics again and instead of two or three schools that Don would pick up the phone and work the network, suddenly you had 100 or so schools that weren't specifically looking for somebody in logistics, but wouldn't mind having somebody. This is when a lot of the academics who came along during the NASA years were retiring so every school was hiring. You know the phone was just ringing off the hook with people who wanted a date with me and just wanted to talk. I did the normal thing and went to the 1977 American Marketing Association Summer Educators' Conference, and pretty much the only thing that the conference exists for is for all the graduating PhD students to get together with all the faculty at schools and start looking for jobs. I had I think 24 interviews in a three-day period; hour long interviews; and turned down an incredible number of schools, not because I was the hot candidate—everybody was a hot candidate—everybody had 20 plus interviews. And what you did, was went home from those, and you decided which schools you would like to visit. A visit is when you go for a couple of days and you interview, and you do a seminar; kind of a standard thing for the faculty; and the faculty is back there deciding who to have in and I had six campus interviews. And I mean for years, more than two or three was unheard of, and again six wasn't out of the realm of normalcy. I had colleagues at other schools that were doing

the same thing. You know they were going to half a dozen schools and Virginia Tech was an accident. One of the guys who graduated from Michigan State a couple of years ahead of me, when I was an MBA, was a guy named Paul Anderson, and I just happened to bump into Paul, literally at the conference, and they were not on my interview schedule. The thing was filling up and Paul said we've got three openings and we really would like to add somebody who has some logistics interests. You should be talking to Virginia Tech. Well, you know, I grew up right across the river from Virginia. I grew up in a part of West Virginia that's culturally more Virginia than it is West Virginia, so I sort of knew a lot about the University of Virginia and I knew a lot about Virginia Tech as a technical school, so as a courtesy to a friend, I said more or less yes, I'll talk to you and like the "little engine that could," they were going to be my first interview, so it was going to be practice. Well, I had a great interview with them, so I kind of liked Virginia Tech. Interviewed with other schools and I had offers for faculty positions after six campus interviews. University of Massachusetts made me an offer, Georgetown, George Washington, Iowa State; I'm forgetting who the fifth one was; and Virginia Tech. So I interviewed some pretty good schools especially in what they've done in logistics in the quantitative side of marketing, what they've done through the years. Oh, I know, it was Texas Tech. And it kept coming down to, you know, Georgetown is too much of a teaching school although I will say that one of my strangest experiences was that was through one of these cocktail parties for you and at my cocktail party was the Secretary of State under Nixon, the German guy.

**STOCK:** Kissinger.

**MENTZER:** Kissinger, thank you. One of the adjunct faculty at Georgetown was Kissinger and whenever he wanted he could come on and teach, you know, he would teach a class on détente or brinksmanship, or whatever. I went to the cocktail party; where the faculty stand around and made bad jokes; then they laugh at your bad jokes. You decided whether you could work together or not, and suddenly behind me I hear this: “So, they are thinking about hiring you at Georgetown.” I can’t do the grumbling voice and I turn around and there is Henry Kissinger, you know and Henry had deemed to stop for the cocktail party and talking this Michigan State PhD into joining the faculty and you know I almost took the job right there. Brenda and I were not married yet, but kind of thinking about this marriage stuff at that point and we said, do we really want to live near DC and we weren’t really sure we wanted to do this or not, so for various reasons we cut various schools out. Iowa State I loved. I loved the faculty. I loved what they were doing. I would’ve loved being a part of it but they had me out there just before Christmas and man it’s cold in Iowa. I came back and told Brenda and said you know, I’m really tired of winter. It kind of came down to Texas Tech or Virginia Tech and I’ve never lived west of the Mississippi and you know the idea of living out in Texas in some place different (although it is definitely in the middle of nowhere in Lubbock) and Virginia Tech again was like a “little engine that could.” I kept looking at these other schools and kind of eliminating them, but I still had this offer from Virginia Tech and I finally realized that’s where we wanted to go. It’s a long answer because it was a long process. It took from the beginning of August to

**just the day before Christmas to say which job do you want to take, because I had that unique position we get sometimes in our industry where I had more offers that I knew what to do with.**

**STOCK:** Which is always good.

**MENTZER:** Always good.

**STOCK:** Now, you've only been at two schools; what were the precipitating factors going to Tennessee from Virginia Tech?

**MENTZER:** I'm an organizational loyal guy, I'll be honest. I went to Virginia Tech; it is a beautiful campus up in the hills of Western Virginia and just a beautiful little setting, nice town 80 some miles of bike paths in the town. Brenda and I biked a lot together. We actually met biking. Just a great little place, but we figured we were at that time young, just got married. We thought we'd spend two or three years at Virginia Tech and then we'd kind of move on to a different school. Tennessee didn't interview me that year because they didn't have an opening. Langley told me at the time that they actually tried to hire me a couple of years later unsuccessfully, and said we wanted to talk to you but had no position open. Maryland was the same way with me being in Maryland it had some kind some appeal to me, but we went there kind of figuring somebody else is going to hire me away after a couple of years and nobody ever kind of dug our roots out of there. We had an offer, a really nice offer from Arizona State to go down there and work with their marketing and logistics people to bring those two groups together. Living in Arizona in the winter didn't sound so bad and my father was there having some health problems at that time, so we put it

off and it didn't happen, so several different schools there that we just kind of talked about it, but never really got around doing anything about. There was never anything exciting enough to take us away from Virginia Tech. I guess it is now not a "little engine that could," but a "little engine that could keep on," just kind of keeping you there, and as I said, I'm an organization loyal person. It is hard to move me from anywhere. Virginia Tech was being very good to me; we were getting the big raises back then. I was being rewarded, my dean wanted me to tell him what my premier journals were which is I think an interestingly smart way to go about promotion and tenure stuff and you know we'll help you figure it, you tell us what your major journals are and we'll judge you against your hitting those. Well, I was hitting them and made Associate Professor, had one flirtation with going back into industry. I had an offer from a company to take over running the research part of a big banking research company up in Greenwich, Connecticut, five times the salary I was making as an associate professor and you know, the dean took me aside and he said Tom, you can take that job. He said you are really qualified, you are perfectly qualified for it, it will be a whole different life style experience living in the neighborhood where the yacht club is right there in the neighborhood and so forth, and all that he said, but we are on the brink of becoming a named college and I didn't have a clue what that meant at the time, and he said that has huge implications for the amount of resources a college has to do great things. He said you are poised as an associate professor to become a full professor. I've already had the faculty, several of the faculty approach me and say Kent Monroe, who was the world guru in pricing, we're trying right now to get a chair and Endowed Professorship for Kent and

someone had to explain me what Endowed Professorships were. He said the faculty has already come to me and said after Kent, the next person to get one of these professorships better be Mentzer. Well, this is kind of a neat thing, and you know dean's are like kings, they have convenient memory, so I didn't take it for too much worth but it was a guy kind of reinforcing that you've really got a lot you can do in academia and I had two good friends, the best man and the usher in our wedding. The usher had finished academia and became a captain of industry, was doing the job that I was turning down in Greenwich and he said Tom, how can you turn this job down? Think of the impact you are going to have. You are going to have 80 some people working for you. This is the most respected bank marketing research company in the world; you are going to run their market research staff and had a very convincing conversation and we got off the phone and the next call was Bob Krapfel, who still is associate dean at Maryland. Bob graduated a year behind me and curiously enough took a job for a couple of years at GMI to teach until his wife finished her doctorate and he ended up, again curiously, she took a job in the education college at the Northern College of Virginia Tech. His wife Gabriella and I were actually working for the same university. And Bob had a job in the Marketing Department at Maryland and Bob the academic got on and said who are you kidding, you're never going to have the kind of influence anywhere in industry that you have doing what you are doing today. You are teaching undergrads and MBA's; you are teaching them what ethical smart business behavior is and he said your job is to pass that value system on to them. You'd never have that kind of influence anywhere other than as a professor at a university and Bob's words

rang true to me and I stayed, and the rest kind of happened. The dean wanted me to go for tenure the next year; I refused, not tenure he wanted me to go for full, because I said I got several big hits coming and I said I like people when they review my promotion tenure packet to laugh, vote, and then go on to the next person. It's so obvious we've got to be doing this. You know let's have a big laugh about it, you know, and go on. Well, he said, I think you've got the resume and if we put you up this year, I think they'll push you up and make you full, and I said I don't want to go with think, I don't what to have to deal with a year of they turned me down now this year, they are considering me again, so I waited a year longer than the school wanted me to and blew away the P&T process. I eventually became a full professor several years after that and was awarded the Endowed Professorship which has a lot of prestige; a little bit of money; a lot of prestige attached to it. I was fat and happy, you know. My kids were growing up and it is interesting today to talk about the early 1990's, Virginia Tech as being the safe little town. Well you figured so many things have happened there, so many incredible tragedies over the last 10 years, but we had two daughters who were in high school as Brenda describes it. I guess in the grade school, we were big fish in a small pond. Everybody knew us. We were kind of influencers in the community and I still remember hiking in the George Washington national forest which literally was out in our back yard from the house. Brenda and I had designed and built our dream house on our dream lot and the kids were kind of running ahead doing stuff and we were standing in this little bridge over a trout stream looking out into a beaver dam, kind of watching the animals doing their various things, and Brenda out of the blue said: Would you

ever move? And curiously, we kind of said, you know I guess not, we've been here 15 years or I guess at that time it been 14, the proof seems to be in the pudding; it's not like they are doing things to spite me to make sure I stay here or anything, but you know that the only place I would move would be to the University of Tennessee and she said why, and I said because I like Knoxville. I like the town and we talked a lot about having the lakes nearby and we are filming here in my house and right out back as folks noticed when they got here is the lake and the boat is out there, and you know that's kind of a nice feature of Knoxville because you can live in your vacation house basically, live on the lake, and I liked the town, and the good school systems. So I haven't done a lot of investigation, but I said I just like what Langley and others had told me about Knoxville and Tennessee is poised to do great things. Tennessee is one of the big four; Langley clearly should get credit for that, I mean in terms of going from the big logistics schools up until the early 1980's, was Michigan State, Ohio State and Penn State. Other schools were good but they weren't the biggies and John is the guy who added Tennessee to the fraternity, basically. I said as a family person I'm kind of interested in the Smokie's, being nearby and living in Knoxville, but professionally that place is poised to do some great things and if I got asked to come there in a way that I could be part of that, then I'd be interested in making a move. There is only one choice or the answer is no. Within a year I was down here interviewing for the Bruce Chair, so yes, I'm hard to move from someplace. Ohio State tried to hire me away several years after I came here and I loved Bud La Londe. I tried to be as nice about it as possible but tried to get across to Bud there was no way I was going to give up what I had at Tennessee. Other

**schools had made the great kind of retirement offer you know, you can come teach at our school and spend a lot of your time playing golf and taking the boat out fishing and just kind of putting your time in your reputation. I have no interest in doing that. I still want to work for a living, so nothing has ever really tempted me to leave here.**

**STOCK:** Now, Tom, as you look back at your career as an academic, what do you consider to be your most significant accomplishment in your professional career?

**MENTZER:** Whatever small part I've played in the transition of the last 15 years of logistics; and let me say what I mean by that. I think academically as a group of academics, we did what scholars are supposed to do. We were starting to see this phenomenon that didn't fit into the way we thought about things in the past, and that is an interesting thing for an academic to start seeing things that don't fit our preconceived notions. So we started talking and it was the first time in the early 1990's people started asking me about what's supply chain management and my answer was, I actually don't know, I've never heard the term before. You know 15 years ago and I hadn't heard the term. Well, it kept happening more and more during the term and people writing about it and I started seeing something that was a very interesting challenge for an academic—when you see people starting to write about something they haven't defined. And I won't say who it was, but one of my favorite articles was one that defined supply chain management two different ways in the same article. You ought to pick one horse and ride it all the way across the river and not change definitions half way. And this kept building up to around 1997 and in a

couple of years I got a research group together here at the university and I just said: guys, we are facing a kind of normal evolution, if you will, of a discipline. Everyone is talking about supply chain management and nobody said what it is. When you face that, one of the first things you want to do as a scholar is go read what everybody else has done, and based on that you come up with what's called an integrated literature review, you know. Let's see if we can take what everyone has written and integrate it to come up with some answers and probably some questions. Well, that was all in the 2001 book that is autographed in your library and it was a group of folks gathering every article we could find at the time that had been written about supply chain management and reading those articles, and discussing them, and putting them into categories, and starting to develop classifications. There seems to be this group of very operational definitions; there is a group that is behavioral; and just kind of come up with categories. Once you study the literature, you want to go study the behavior itself. So before we wrote the book we went out and interviewed the "Chief Supply Chain Officer" at 50 corporations that we could get to let us visit, what's called a purposive sample—a sample with a purpose; certainly wasn't random. We built that in and wrote what I think was a stake in the ground, and I think a stake in the ground is a good thing for academics to do. We said this is what supply chain management is; here is a definition. The *Journal Business Logistics* wanted an article from the book and I said to anybody who listened at the time, I said I don't care whether anybody agrees with this definition or not as long as this definition gets them talking about what the answer is. That's my job. So that process continued. There has been a number of debates; I think

one of the obvious things that one of our colleagues, Doug Lambert, was always pushing me on was what's logistics and what's supply chain management, and Doug's a process functional guy, so he always wanted me to put things in categories. Does transportation belong in supply chain management or does it belong here? I finally backed up and said wait a minute, we are going about this the wrong way, let's talk about what both those terms mean relative to each other because they are not interchangeable, and we had people still up to recently saying well, if you are thinking about logistics or supply chain management, and I would start telling people quit waving your hand; it is not the same thing. It's like saying well for tonight for dinner we want fried chicken or steak; they are interchangeable. No they are not. They are two different things, so we want to pick definitions. That led, and I don't want to say I caused this, my sense of modesty would never get me to say a thing like this, but I didn't cause the Council of Logistics Management to go off and put together a blue ribbon committee, but I was involved, I had some impact on it. To your question on the thing I'm most proud of—the impact on getting a very smart group of people together to say what is logistics? If we are the Council of Logistics Management why do we talk about supply chain? If we were the Council of Supply Chain Management what's logistics doing in there, and I think one of the neat things that came out of that was first of all, the Council, whose name changed soon, but the council at that time called the Council of Logistics Management came to a recognition. I can't believe none of us thought of it, myself included, for a quarter century. There is a difference between logistics and managing logistics. What are the things in logistics? Logistics exists whether we manage it

or not. We can do a poor job of it, but it's still there and so on the website, the Council came up with a definition. There is a different definition than logistics and logistics management. I do think that was influenced by the book because in the book we talk about the difference between a supply chain and supply chain management. What are things we do to manage the supply chain versus a supply chain that exists if you and I are buying and selling. Let's face it, Toyota's got a supply chain management problem right now. When this video was made was the period where they had to stop production because the problem in their accelerator peddles was caused by one of their suppliers. They've miss-managed that process, but still, it was there. The supplier is still selling parts to Toyota, now they've had to jump in being Toyota and they'll figure out a way to manage it. I think that's still going on. There is an article that came out in the *Journal of Business Logistics* last year by Mentzer, Esper and Stank, that talks about the difference between logistics and I'm very proud of that article, and our argument is supply chain management has various business functions; it's got a marketing function, it's got a finance function, it's got a logistics function, it's got a manufacturing function; those are all the things corporations do and if you manage the process, the actual things you are doing are logistics management. If you start managing the processes of how these things interact you are doing something we call operations management, and if you are doing those same processes but across companies, now you are doing supply chain management. In a lot of ways in 2009, we are back to where I was in 2001, where I'm saying we've put in the ground what we think is a very cogent way for academics and practitioners to look at logistics and logistics management and supply chains and supply chain

management and OM for the *Journal of Operations Management* when they are struggling with this stuff. We've put together a very good way of looking at it. Are there other articles that are coming out that will take parts of what we did to task and suggest changing it? I hope so. You know because I'm not the smartest guy in the world and you know I think we've got some great ideas, but other people—I've never ceased to be overwhelmed by the brilliance of my colleagues—they will step in and they will take what I've written and hopefully they will use that as a spring board to do further investigations. So I think again, there are huge answers to your questions, but you are talking about the career. I think the big career accomplishment I feel is, I've been some small part of that going from just talking logistics to having, I think, a very good schema to look at, and investigate and manage, logistics and operations, operations management and supply chains.

**STOCK:** Now Tom, on a related question, what would you view as your legacy to the profession?

**MENTZER:** My legacy to the profession? Jim, I've never thought about legacies before. I was struck from various different perspectives about two concepts years ago in my career, and one was the concept of scholarship. What does it mean to be a scholar? If you looked at my works; you know a lot of it is in marketing, a lot of it is in logistics, but a lot of my writing has been about scholarship and actually still working on some things about what makes a scholar. Part of my legacy, I hope is going to be that Tom was the consummate scholar and you know because of my definition of scholar, the second term I'll get out there because I think it is part of it, is this concept of integrity. I had a

department head once tell me that when I took the job he had the conversation every new department head has with the old one going out and it is how do you manage each of the faculty? You know. How do you deal with Mary Holcomb, how do you deal with Lloyd Rinehart, how do you deal with Ted Stank? What are kinds of, not the hot buttons but, what are the things to think about when I'm dealing with him as a manager and the new department head had told me; he said the old department head said to me, I figured out the way to make Mentzer what I want him to do. All you have to do is go in his office and convince him it is the right thing to do. So I would hope I'll be remembered as a scholar with integrity. I think you give me a decision to make. One of the last things I tend to think about is what's best for me. I think true integrity is given the issue, and I said this in my acceptance speech for the Distinguished Service Award, the first thing you think about is what is the right thing to do for the discipline. Second question is once you've got that answer, what's the right thing to do for the professional association that you are representing. Third is your institution. This is to do great things for the discipline of supply chain management, but does it hurt the University of Tennessee? Ok, sometimes you've to choose the greater good. And the last one is what works for Tom. I would hope I'd be remembered, as I said, the consummate scholar; that I saw my job as investigating phenomenon, letting everybody know what the phenomenon are that I'm going to investigate. Going about it in an intelligent, informed way, and doing it with integrity. If the data shows I'm wrong, stand up and say so. I was telling a doctoral student this morning, I said I think one of the most scholarly things I've seen in my entire career was last year at the

**international physics association meeting. Steven Hawking got up to give the keynote speech and this is way beyond my understanding of physics, but Hawking has been a strong proponent of a certain theory of how the universe was formed, you know, the beginnings of the universe, and there is a second theory that disagrees with his that has been equally strongly advocated by another individual for probably 20 years. And for 20 years these guys have publicly debated and they have bets with each other and various different publications in journals, and Hawking got up last year and said for 20 years we've been investigating these two theories and every study that we have done points toward the other theory being a better theory than mine. Doesn't mean it's right; it means it's more right than mine, and he said it's time for us to stop wasting effort following a bad theory, and seeing someone get up and say 20 years of my life work is wrong, it is time for us to move on, is one of the most scholarly things I've ever seen anybody ever do.**

**STOCK:** Now Tom, given all that you've done, you know, we talked about in my introduction to you, your books, you've done articles, refereed journal articles and so forth. Is there something that you did not do that you wish you would have done? Any regrets about not pursuing a path in terms of research or doing more in certain areas, anything that you would like to be able to do now that you haven't done in the past?

**MENTZER:** You know, I don't think so Jim. I mean the only thing I think that kinds of sits out there that anybody, if you can hold up the things that we've done, there are certain journals that we all want to hit. Have I hit them? Yes and on some occasions, numerous times. You know, I've had a *Harvard Business Review* which very few academics

actually get something published in *HBR*. You know I had a goal of hitting *HBR* and other journals I wanted to hit. Yes, I've hit them. Publications of books, awards that I secretly would like and never would nominate myself for, but secretly was interested in having. The only thing I haven't done that I think you could hold up as a possibility is editor of a journal and I think, you know, I talked to a colleague about this a couple of years ago and, you know, we were talking about various different journals. I was in the running to be editor of the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* which in our school is considered one of the top journals in the field, in the marketing field. There've been various opportunities and a junior faculty member who I think was a very insightful guy said, I don't think you really want to be an editor. And I said what do you mean? Look at the influence you have on the directions and so forth. He said you look on the editorship as the things you're going to have to give up to do that job for the discipline, and I do think you are thinking about being the editor because it would be good for the discipline and you could maybe set the direction or focus the things we do in research for a couple year process. I mean most of the academic journals are three year appointments. *JBL* is crazy enough to ask people to do it for five years and he said you know, you are much more interested in influencing the discipline with your writing and the articles that you write, so I don't think there is anything for you. The only thing that you could hold out there that you could say he hasn't done that are typical legacies, whatever you want to call them, have done and I'm kind in the category with Don Bowersox. You know, Don was never an editor either. Don had opportunities to be an editor; was never really interested. I was editor of the system section

of *JBL* for a number of years but I don't consider that; that's not being the editor-in-chief, the guy running the place. I had a wonderful time doing that working with Bud LaLonde, but I think that would be the only thing and I don't really think that I have or had a desire to do it. An interesting thing happened. I was in the running to be the *JAMS* editor and we were talking about several people and when I heard who one of the others was, I said I want to withdraw my name. I think he'll make [a great editor]. Well I won't say who he is, but he was a former editor of the *Journal of Marketing*. I think he was the best editor *JM* ever had. You know three years of this guy would have been, and was, wonderful for *JAMS*, so when I heard that he was interested I withdrew my name, so I wouldn't bring it down to a contest. And I was approached by one of the logistics journals right after that, who was looking for editors, again I won't tell the timeline or anything because I don't want to be your second choice for anybody for one of the journals, but I got called by the company that owns the journal. It is one of the journals not run by a professional association; you know by the Elsevier's and the SBJ's, and I can't remember if it's Springer that actually owns journals, and I said you know I was struck by how relieved I was the morning after I withdrew my name and he said well then, you've made the right decision and you know it's not like we were not going to make you the editor, but we won't come after you , we won't pester you any more with it. We may have a different and I think an excellent editor running the journal right now that I think he is doing a better job that I would have done. So, again, long answer.

### Family

**STOCK:** From a family perspective, you mentioned getting married in the doctoral program. Or was it shortly thereafter?

**MENTZER:** Brenda and I got married on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1978. I defended my dissertation on the next Wednesday. The next weekend I loaded up as much of our stuff that I could get into a car and a van and moved to Virginia Tech. Brenda was teaching summer school in Michigan, so I left my new bride behind and the following Monday started teaching summer school at Virginia Tech. So in about a three week period, I went from all but done (ABD) and single, to married, finished with the degree, moved to a new state, and teaching a brand new class.

**STOCK:** How did you and Brenda first meet?

**MENTZER:** Brenda and I used to live in Haslett, Michigan, and Haslett is about 10 miles east of East Lansing; a nice little community. I liked being away from the campus a little bit; had a place a block back from Lake Lansing which was kind of a little resort town. There was a little beach there and a marina where you could put sail boats in. I think the average depth of Lake Lansing was 4 feet. It's not like it was a deep dangerous lake, but was clogged with weeds and stuff but there was a nice path that went around the lake and a road went to all the homes, and every night I'd get home, my little break from the rigors of the PhD program was to walk the dog down by the lake. I would let him play for a while and then I'd take a bike ride around the lake and Brenda still kind of half way thinks I'm not telling the truth here, but I am. I was getting ready to go for my bike ride and had the bike out and this vision biked passed me; this 5' 10" blonde. She is still amazing, with the yellow top and white shorts on and the longest legs I'd ever

seen, went biking by for her little bike ride too. And I decided there was going to be some way to meet this woman and make it look like an accident. I biked like crazy for an hour to arrange things so that I could come casually biking up one of the streets and bike up along side and say it is a beautiful evening and you know try to have something to say to see if this young woman was interested in meeting somebody new. I said a phenomenal thing happened yesterday and that got us talking and what we found was that “simpatico” that the Italians talk about was instantly there, and we biked around and we talked all evening until finally, you know, we were standing in my front yard and nobody wanted to go home and finally I said, can I have your phone number and call you? The rest kind of went from there, you know, but for a long time for us, it was biking together. We both found we loved tennis and playing tennis and I think we were kind of friends for a good four or five months before it kind of got through my brain that maybe we could actually go out on a date. I got to say I was enjoying being single and you know, she said the first four months she knew me every time she saw me I was with a different woman, because I was enjoying the dating scene, but it didn’t take long to decide it was time to stop the dating scene and concentrate on one, and we’ve been together ever since.

**STOCK:** Now how many children do you have, what are their names, and what do they do?

**MENTZER:** We have two. Ashley is the older daughter, she is 26, is a preschool teacher at a preschool near campus and she’s been doing that for a couple of years. Loves what she does. She works with children;

poor as a church mouse. Of course, those jobs don't pay well, but she is "happy as a clam." The younger one (Erin) graduated two years ago from college; curiously enough is a logistics analyst for Kimberly Clark here in Knoxville and is kind of following dad's footsteps. She is talking about eventually getting a MBA and is actually talking about being the next Dr. Mentzer. Two daughters that are still single, so they are available if anybody is interested. I'm still trying to marry them off. Very happy children, they actually share an apartment, live together, which astounded us, because they fought as cats and dogs when they lived with us. You know, they make pretty good roommates.

**STOCK:** What would you say was your main goal as a parent?

**MENTZER:** You know, I wanted my kids to grow up and be what they wanted to be, and I saw in Ashley--it takes you ten years to realize that dad was right—she'll never admit it, but I said Ashley you are going to have to find a job if you are going to be happy where you work with children or kids, children or animals, because you have a kindred spirit with them. For some reason you love working with them and she does, she loves what she does. She's talked to me; we've tried to talk about different changes she can make in her career path and do this and still make a living wage, because she can't. Preschool teachers make enough money to be the second income for a family; not to be a single woman. So she gets by, but she does other administrative assistant things for companies as a "temp" and some other stuff to people that are outsourcing secretarial stuff. She'll do that to kind of just make some extra money, but I mean that's not doing what she loves doing. Same thing for Erin. Erin is a natural born professor in terms of teaching

**and wanting to do research and figuring out why things work the way they do. But my goal as a parent was that they grow up and be happy. Happy for me as a parent meant part of it was recognizing what made them happy and helping them get there.**

**STOCK:** Now what do you think, if they were here and I was asking this question, how would they describe you? What would they say?

**MENTZER:** That's an interesting question. I think they would say the rest of the world does not see the Tom Mentzer that we do. You know, the rest of the world doesn't see the guy that clowns around with the kids. We'll do some really goofy things just because it is part of the relationship. I think you'd have to ask them. I think I know my kids, but they are daughters, and daughters and dads have a special relationship, but they never really know each other that well. I think you'll get different answers from them. I think you'll get a different answer if you ask Brenda the same question I hope there is a lot of respect for me there as a person because that respect from my father's integrity is a lot of what formed me. I hope it helped form them, with a sense of integrity, and still with a sense of humor.

### **General Historical Questions**

**STOCK:** Ok, here is a question, normally when I ask this, this is one of those "off the wall" questions that you've probably never been asked. If you could be anyone in history, who would it have been?

**MENTZER:** I read through the material you sent and I had time to prepare for that one and I'm still not prepared for that one. I don't honestly know. I mean it sounds arrogant to say I'd like to be me, but

that is not what I mean at all. I think the people in history; I'm enough a believer that people are a product of their times. I'd like to have been Pontius Pilate and say we are going to spare Jesus. I don't care what you say, but I don't think I would have. If I had been Pontius Pilate and I had been raised as Pontius Pilate, I would have done exactly what he did, so to be somebody in history to change the world, I don't think I'd do it. I mean, I'd make an interesting Napoleon. He was so short, but to be Napoleon and change battle plans; well yes, but I had to have the same information as Napoleon had. I'd had to have the same training and daring that he did because I'd be him, so I'd make the same mistakes. So would I have wanted to live for who he was? No. Would I have wanted to be Lincoln? No. I think Lincoln did wonderful things, but I can not think of a man who suffered more, suffered for the country, suffered the loss of children while he was in office, had to turn right around and get back to the work of the time. I guess, I'm taking a long answer to this one because I think there are a couple of examples, but I think the person to experience would have been to be Frederick Douglas. My two heroes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas. I think Lincoln changed the United States. Before them we always referred to this as these United States, after the Civil War, we always referred to our country as The United States. We are a nation; we are not a collection of hodgepodge, and I think that was as much his goal as slavery was or ending slavery. I think Frederick Douglas was Lincoln's conscious. He was the guy who said let's not forget slavery in this. Let's not forget the mistreatment of the black man. So to have lived Frederick Douglas' life, oh my God what suffering, but to have changed it, I wouldn't presume to say I could

**have done more than Douglas did, but just to experience the frustration and the agony he must have experienced of coming up from buying himself out from slavery, coming up through slavery and having a voice against slavery that in many cases was just ignored in audiences. He was feeling the suffering of three million souls.**

**STOCK:** Now Tom, in terms of more personal kinds of information, is there a particular era in time that you would have liked to have lived as a person?

**MENTZER:** Actually, I like the era we are in. I think things are changing, changing so much. My father died in 1980 and I was sitting with him as he died in the hospice wing of John's Hopkins and I was sitting with him, you know, being there helping him die basically. And you know you come to the point where the drugs had him, the pain was gone, and he was lucid; unusual for that cancer in that stage; and he said I've seen when I was born, we still ploughed with the mule; my grandfather did until the day he died. You were talking early about memories, one of my memories is going out every morning with my grandfather when I was visiting on the farm and having him start the tractor and start the tractor for him was taking a 2' by 4' and going in this barn and beating his two mules into submission to plough for him. I mean it did sound like the second coming. He never let me go in to see it, but you know, gathering the eggs from the chickens; my father grew up with this stuff, and he said I've seen more change in the human condition from 1912 to 1980 than all of humanity before me and he said you'll see more in your lifetime than both of us put together, and he is right, even up to this point. So, yes, there are interesting times, the Civil

**War fascinates me. I have family members who fought on both sides. Not the same guy. They lived long enough that I actually knew my Uncle Samuel, my Great Uncle Samuel and Great Uncle Lorean and they fought on opposite sides, and I knew the two of them. I don't remember much, but as a kid I met both of those men. I think the fight and the reconstruction afterwards would have been a fascinating time to live, but diphtheria, polio, malaria; maybe it was not such a great time to live.**

### **General Information and Perspectives**

**STOCK:** Now, with all those books and articles and raising kids, what do you do in your spare time?

**MENTZER:** I don't have any. No, all kidding aside, I think there was a period of my life where I did not have spare time. Those things you've mentioned, not necessarily in this order, but doing my job, and writing the articles, and speaking, and the public forums about what we do, being there for the kids; those are full time jobs. Now, what I've noticed was that I gave up hobbies to take on these full time jobs. I quit playing golf when we had kids, when I noticed that on Saturday afternoons, I was always home by myself, because Brenda and the girls were at the mall. I started playing golf again. The girls in their early teens got interested in boating. I would strongly encourage any parent that has the opportunity, if your kids express an interest in skiing behind boats, buy a ski boat. You don't have to spend a fortune on them, but I think it was a great parenting tool. I never taught my kids how to run the boat, so whenever they wanted to go out skiing and take their friends, they had to take dad along. Dad got to be part of the group. Dad got to

be somebody they were comfortable with. I was the guy that a lot of them came to with their problems. There is a fairly large bunch of them out there that Mr. Mentzer taught them how to drive. Why? Because mom yelled at me all the time. He was calmer about it. I wasn't calm at all; I was just hiding it. So I had a hobby at one time of boating that was driven by the girls. I've got a boat out back right now if anybody wants to buy it, I'd be happy to sell it, because Brenda and I are at a stage now where we'd like to get rid of the ski boat and get a pontoon boat. I want a boat now where I can take it at the end of the day, take it and my wife and a bottle of wine and go out to the end of the lagoon and watch the sun go down. Different boating. But the passion, the stuff that I do any time you give me a chance, is going out and playing some golf.

**STOCK:** What place does religion have in your life?

**MENTZER:** I think it is the center of my life. I've done some writing I know that you've read that hasn't been published. I just kind of put some thoughts out on the Internet that I wanted to share with the world. Actually, I originally wrote down kind of my feelings because I wanted to write something for my daughters, and Brenda read that and said you've got to broaden this thing out to a larger group and my minister has mentioned you've got to publish it, but I've really never worried that much about it. Maybe publish it, maybe not, but the purpose was just to get it out there. I've had some folks that have read it and come back to me and say one of my close friend is a doctor and he said I didn't know faith was such a large part of who you are, and I said Rick, you haven't been paying attention. By saying this thing, I don't argue

my way is the way; I think it is the way, but I would never argue that with anybody else. I think it is one of the ways. I think there are many paths to God. I think it's a true statement. Now I have been thinking mine is the way, certainly the way for me. I've been driven, guided my entire adult life, by my Christian belief, and I'm more of a New Testament than an Old Testament guy. I don't like the smiting and the smoting that much, but the forgiveness of sins, I think is one of the most wonderful stories in Christianity. The woman who claims that she speaks to Jesus every night and one of the tests they give her is the archbishop comes to her and says I committed a horrible sin in my youth only one time, the only one. Nobody has ever caught me, nobody has ever known, only Jesus knows the truth. If you actually speak to Jesus ask him to tell you what my sin was, and she came back the next day and he said what did Jesus say? He said he doesn't remember it. It's said, belief in and having been a parent of God the father as a father, and you know, you are going to commit crimes. The fellow who wrote Amazing Grace started his career as a crewman and eventually captain on a slave ship and describing his early life, he said he was wretched. Well, I'll be honest. We've painted a very nice picture of Tom Mentzer in this template, but there were times when Tom was wretched, you know, and those wretched times were always times where I varied from my faith and from my integrity, but the idea that the only person that hasn't forgiven me for that is maybe me. I've been forgiven and it has been forgotten, so it's a very important part of my life, my existence. I believe that for somebody like me, a great heaven would be when you wake up on the other side to have Jesus standing there and saying now there is a lot of questions about the universe that we haven't

answered yet, we would like you to look. Go to this list and pick the thing you'll like to investigate. Tom would be a happy boy! I get to investigate things, the fact that the universe is infinite and expanding, if that concept alone doesn't convince you there is something greater than me out there, then I don't know what's going to.

**STOCK:** I think that would probably be his second statement. The first one would be "well done, good and faithful servant."

**MENTZER:** I hope so Jim.

**STOCK:** What advice would you give to recently graduated PhD's?

**MENTZER:** I'll be very self serving here. First thing I would do is get the articles Mentzer has written on scholarship and go read them and start thinking about how they fit. There is an article I had recently, the schematics that I developed a couple of years ago, of what the applied business research scholar does. And it was in the *Journal of Supply Chain Management* a couple of years ago and it is a schematic of the scholar at the middle and teaching, and what you learned from teaching. You know, I've said I've borrowed from Boyer's four dimensions of scholarship: what do we learn about the phenomenon by teaching about it; what do we learn by reading all the literature and integrating it; what do we learn by actually going out and doing research; and what do we learn by going out and applying it? Applying doesn't mean consulting; it means applied research. Bud La Londe many times said I've got to go visit. Why do you spend so much time with companies? And his answer was I've got to go to companies; that's my laboratory. You wouldn't tell a chemistry professor that you can't

**go into your chemistry lab and test theory. So I've got to go into companies and test them. I've had many companies through the years contact me and want me to do a research project for them that I've recommended to a colleague or to a consulting firm, because it just doesn't fit my research. So I'd encourage young scholars to read that and to say the two things I need to think a lot about while I'm reading all these articles is what makes you a great scholar and what's it mean to have integrity.**

**STOCK:** Now some very specific questions for you Tom. All of the questions we've asked so far have been consistent with all of the interviews, but some are always specific to the individual. One of them relates to the Council of Logistics Management which became as you know the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals. When you first became part of that organization, did you anticipate that it would develop as it did?

**MENTZER:** Actually, when I became a member, it was the National Council of Physical Distribution Management. I even joined before it was CLM. Jim, I think I was clueless. I wasn't even quite sure what professional associations were. I think there is a lot we can learn by thinking about the differences, and I think George Gecowets got this (and if you ever get a chance, my vote of adding somebody to a legacy of logistics legends would be to add George Gecowets). George understood the difference between a professional organization and a trade association and a trade association is there for the companies and a professional organization is there for the individuals to help them develop. And NCPDM was a rapidly growing professional organization. As I said, I think George understood. I certainly didn't

understand at the time. So did I think it would grow to what it is today? By no means, because I never thought about it. When I was running the organization and we were growing so fast, we were concerned about capacity. I started thinking about what were the things we were doing and should we be spinning things off and how do you manage this and I certainly started thinking strategically, but I mean that was 15 years down, no further, 20 years down my career from when I first started out. I joined NCPDM because Don Bowersox told me to and I kind of said yes sir, you know. I joined and turned to one of my colleagues and said, what the heck did I just do? You know, what is this thing? And finding out that there is a couple of them in marketing, a couple in logistics, folks regularly get together and try to be better at what they do, that's kind of a neat idea. But I didn't know that at first.

**STOCK:** Another specific question for you Tom. You've written textbooks. What caused you to write textbooks and what was your intent and purpose for doing so?

**MENTZER:** You know, the first book that I was involved in was the *Simulated Product Sales Forecasting* book. I didn't know it at the time, I didn't know what to call these things, but there was a research monograph. You know, it's a paper; it's a book, on a specific research project that's too big to fit in an article. And it is certainly not used as a textbook where I go into class and teach. And what I found over the years what I was interested in, my second foray was writing books. I was approached by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. *Marketing Today* was a strong brand name they had. They had a *Psychology Today*, of course, *Sociology Today*, you know, *Management Today*, and this book was in its

third edition. They asked me to come in and write the fourth edition. And they started to talk about royalties. At that time, I'd never thought about royalties before and you know I said I'm not sure I really want to write a textbook; write a book that other people use to teach. Well, the money just kept getting bigger and bigger in terms of advances that my wife and I finally said, I can't afford not to do this. So I wrote *Marketing Today*, fourth edition, and watched it come out and "fight" with the McCarthy book and "fight" with the Evans and Berman book. Textbooks are great and valuable things to do. It breaks my heart that the graduate textbook you guys wrote wasn't there for me to write; I mean that was a valuable resource for me to use, but it was not the thing that I ought to be doing. I'm much better at taking a research idea and researching it, and then writing a book like *Sales Forecasting Management*. I actually was surprised it became a textbook. I wrote that to be a definitive statement about where is the state of the art in science of sales forecasting management today. And as it turned out, a number of schools wanted courses in the topic and it was a great book for teaching that, ok I don't mind that, there was never any *Marketing Today*, fifth edition that involved Mentzer in it. So, I'm very comfortable with writing books like the two that I autographed that are in your library and they are the result of huge research efforts of which I played a part. I'm proud to be a pedagogical part of it. The handbook we wrote just because we kept getting approached by academics and practitioners and editors saying, you've got to have one. You've got to have a book. This is such a big area and every part of it is so complex, no one person can write the book. So you've got to have a person write about the nuances of this and another one write about the nuances of

**this, so in the end, the book probably had 30 authors on there. And the editors pushed us and I think that was great, making sure there were as many articles as possible. You've got practitioners and folks from other schools, from other countries involved.**

**STOCK:** As I tell my PhD students, I said when you graduate and you start publishing more than you are doing in the doctoral program, never be the "et. al."

**MENTZER:** That's right.

**STOCK:** At least be in the first two authors.

**MENTZER:** And that's actually why we wrote the 2001 book the way we did. We put Mentzer's name on the front because what the journal has to cite is the chapter, so if they were citing the chapter on transportation, they had to cite Jim Keebler. The citation was Keebler, such and such. And it was in this book, edited by Mentzer. You know, I insisted on that book. There weren't 11 names to go in the front of that book; there was only going to go one, but the word editor was going to go there, so that they had to cite and again it was to protect, in my mind, to protect the students. And you are right you don't want to be "et. al.," nobody knows who the "et. al." are on Hair et. al. Hair et. al. is an incredibly famous book on the marketing side, but only Hair is known.

**STOCK:** It's interesting in one of the books that made Fred Sturdivant famous, *Ghetto Marketing*, that a logistics professor was a co-author—John Grabner is one of the "et. al.'s."

**MENTZER:** And I think also the other side of that is if you do big projects that result in those big monographs, you've got to make sure along the way that you've carved out the journal articles that are also going to come from it, because you want to be able to say you three take this part, and you three take this part, and you take this, because everybody gets on the big monograph. You know, we've always had with Don, but not faulting Don, it's just who Don is. Don was not good at turning a research monograph into the half dozen major journal articles that should have come out from that. I mean if you look at the 2001 Supply Chain book, there is a number of articles that you can cite in there that helps out the doctoral students who were involved, but there were nine major journal articles that also came out of research that followed up on that book, and that's what you've got to do to make sure there aren't any et. al.'s in there.

**STOCK:** Who do you believe, excluding yourself, has made the most significant lifetime contributions to logistics or supply chain management? You can select more than one person and they can be living or dead.

**MENTZER:** I'm trying to come up with somebody to add to a list that has Bud La Londe on it. Don Bowersox was my advisor; I went to Michigan State. I almost emailed you a kind of a tongue and cheek note that you ought to be calling this thing legacies in logistics, and other legacies, and the two legacies are Bud and Don. Bud and Don had the vision and saw it. Bud I think had the academic scholarly integrity. It doesn't say Don didn't have it, but Bud had it to the degree to say, we need a journal. I'm going to start a journal that is not going to be the best thing for me, but it's good for the discipline, and I'm going to spend

**a lot of time working with PhD students. Don spent a lot of time working with businesses and building them up within the business community. I think Bud built one of the strongest doctoral programs in logistics. I truly believe today, because we've learned a lot from various different disciplines, but I'll brag; I think Tennessee has certainly one of the best doctoral programs in logistics in the world because of the various things we train them in, besides just logistics, but Bud's the model that started that. I think Don produced some great logistics scholars, but not like Bud did.**

**STOCK:** And interestingly you can see this on the interview with Bud, a lot of his students where he chaired their dissertations—over 60 I believe—in total; a lot of them were very active in their careers. So he passed that work ethic on to others.

**MENTZER:** Yes, and that's part of the metric of why I'm judging them as such. He built that kind of doctoral program that students don't just get their degree and go take a job up at Western Carolina and teach at Western Carolina the rest of their careers. They go out and impact the discipline.

**STOCK:** Now, some general questions. Of the last two, what is the single, in your opinion, the most important issue facing logistics and supply chain academics and practitioners? Not necessarily the same issue.

**MENTZER:** Yes, I think the biggest thing facing practitioners, the thing I'm most interested in researching right now, is global supply chain risk management. I think we are Hansel and Gretel in the woods. When you look at the world economy and the way and amount that

things move around to get produced; things that we use on a regular basis, with no controls in place; who would have thought in 2000 in the third millennium, we'd be worried about lead-based paint in toys for children. You know, it went through a step in the process that let it happen. Who would think we would have a car company, nobody has ever handled anything and I mean we were laughing this morning about it, can you imagine General Motors finding a mistake and stopping production. I mean that's not GM. I would have been told to find a way to cover it up 50 years ago, but it's not a statement of what they do today, but Toyota of all companies having a problem that kills people; that is global supply chain risk management. The biggest challenge, I think, facing academics today is we are facing a crisis with CSCMP. CSCMP is changing; that is not good or bad—organizations change. It's becoming more of a trade organization, less of a professional organization, and George Gecowets used to always say you cannot be a little pregnant when you start allowing somebody to underwrite this, and what you start doing and you start saying, you know we'll give you some money for this but you've got to let one of my people be the keynote speaker next year. I don't know if it happened or not, but I mean, and we get those here on campus, you know where there is a kind of give and take going back and forth, but the academics are focused on making themselves better academics and CSCMP should play that role if it wants to be involved with the academics. That involves supporting and picking the right people to be Editor of their journal. Rick Blasgen and I were talking back, it's been probably 6 months ago, and he said, you know, one of the things they were considering was selling the *Journal of Business Logistics*, and I said, Rick, I think you ought to. I

think you've got to look at it and I said I'll get you the name if you want of the folks we deal with at Springer. I think it's been good for the Academy of Marketing Science to move the journal out because you are moving in a different direction. You sell it to a company, that they know the way they are going to get subscriptions is they are going to make money is to get the library rates up, you know the library subscriptions, and to do that we are going to have to do the Internet access and all these various things, but that isn't going to work unless you make it a prestigious journal, and that isn't going to work unless you get a good name person to be the editor and you start getting into all this stuff. I said you get a private company like Springer can make a lot of money running a JAMS, but they'll have to devote a lot of resources to it. And you've got to decide the direction that CSCMP is going, good or bad, whatever your direction you guys are taking it, does *JBL* fit with that plan? If the answer is no, then it's time to sell it. And I think that's what the academics are facing. I know there is this discussion going about, we need to have a revolution and we are going to secede from CSCMP and start our own organization and call it the Council of Logistics Management and I've heard rumors about that and my serious answer to that before you do that, talk to CSCMP and say this is what the academics want from a professional association. Is that what you guys want to do for us or not?" And if the answer is no, that's not the direction we are going any more, then ok, we'll go out and start our own organization and we'll go to the conference less. If you say yes, we still want to do that, but we are not going to devote a lot of resources to it, I would still go out and start my own association, because what CSCMP is saying is we don't want to lose you, but we really don't want

**to do the things that it would take to get you to want to be involved. I think it ought to be a conversation between the disgruntled faculty and the CSCMP first, and then that determines what you do as a group. So I think they face different things right now.**

**STOCK:** By the way, just a little piece of information you mentioned. The *Journal of Business Logistics* is being offered to all AACSB libraries free electronic subscriptions to increase the visibility of the journal.

**MENTZER:** What you've got to do to get it on the *Financial Times* forty.

**STOCK:** Well, ISI Social Science Index as well.

**MENTZER:** Well I know I went through that with JAMS, as a board member with *JBL*, and they make it darn near impossible. It's difficult to get through that.

**STOCK:** Lengthy process.

**MENTZER:** Yes. That's good news Jim.

**STOCK:** Last question, what do you believe to be the future of supply chain management in 300 words or less? That could be a dissertation for a student.

**MENTZER:** I think I've already answered it. I think the future of Supply Chain Management is going to have to be as we become more and more global, and we are going to, how do we deal with, and how do we manage the risks that come with that. So I gave you a hundred words or less.

### **Closing Comments**

**STOCK:** I appreciate you taking all this time. And to our viewers, as we've mentioned, this is one of several videos that have been prepared of people in logistics and supply chain management that have had impactful careers and we hope and you will enjoy and learn from this video of Tom Mentzer. Thank you.

**MENTZER:** Thank you for asking me Jim.