

Interview Transcript for Dr. Tom Speh
Miami University
April 15, 2009

STOCK: Good morning. 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 SCM 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, researchers often consider the "what, why, how, who, and when" of a particular book or painting, short story, poem, etc. They speculate on what might have motivated the writer or artist to write the book or 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. Thomas W. Speh is presently the James E. Rees Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Distribution at the Farmer School of Business at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He graduated from Miami University in 1966 with a B.S. in Marketing. He obtained a MBA from Miami University in 1968. His Ph.D. was completed in 1974 from Michigan State University, where he concentrated in Marketing and Logistics. His dissertation was titled "The Impact of Demand Uncertainty on Physical Distribution Performance: A Simulation."

Upon graduation, Tom took a position as Assistant Professor at The University of Alabama. He remained there until 1976, whereupon he assumed a similar position at Miami University, where he remained for the rest of his academic career. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1978, Full Professor in 1983, and became the James E. Rees Distinguished Professor of Distribution in 1996. All together, Tom has been a faculty member for more than 35 years, teaching and conducting research in marketing, warehousing, 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 received the Harrison Medallion from Miami University for his global recognition for exceptional scholarship and the international contributions to supply chain management. The Warehousing Education and Research Council (WERC) professional organization awarded Tom lifetime membership in the organization, one of only six people to ever receive that distinction. He is the only person to have served as the President of both the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) and WERC. Very few persons serve in just one of those capacities and no one other than Tom has ever served both organizations in such a role. In 2007, Tom received the Distinguished Service Award from

the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals. The Distinguished Service Award - the CSCMP's highest honor - 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 Speh and his accomplishments.

For many years (1987-2001), Tom administered the Warehousing Research Center for WERC and received \$1.1 million in grants to investigate topics of relevance and importance to warehousing, logistics and supply chain practitioners. There is probably not a member of WERC who has not received some, and probably many, innovative and business-changing ideas from the research published by the Warehousing Research Center.

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 as well. He has published more than 50 refereed articles in such prestigious journals as *Harvard Business Review*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *Journal of Business Logistics*, *Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Retailing*. He has served as a member of the Editorial Boards of the *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, *Journal of Business Logistics* and *Warehousing Management Magazine*. He has authored or co-authored two significant college textbooks: *Business Marketing Management* (2009), now in its 10th edition, and *Marketing, Best Practices* (2006).

Tom also has excelled in traditional areas of academic faculty participation. He served as Chair of the Department of Marketing at Miami University from 1991-1996 and again from 2001-2002, and was Associate Dean of the Richard T. Farmer School of Business from 2002-2004.

Yet, it is what Tom has done beyond the traditional that really sets him apart. What makes Tom so extraordinary is what he has done over and above the norm. His accomplishments with CSCMP and WERC over a long and productive career are truly outstanding and profession-impacting. It is in these areas that Tom's legacy has been established. From a student

perspective, Tom has won numerous university teaching awards and has assisted more than 150 students find careers in the logistics and SCM fields.

In recognition of his professional standing, Tom has served as a consultant to companies around the globe, including firms such as Burlington Northern Railroad, FTD, Procter & Gamble, Rohm & Haas, Sara Lee, Exel Logistics, Federated Department Stores, Phillip-Morris, Limited Brands, Xerox, and many other companies.

In sum, his articles, books and teaching materials have impacted literally thousands of students and business executives in North America and around the world. Tom has been a “value-adding” contributor to his university, his students, the countless businesses that have interfaced with Miami University, and to scholars throughout the globe. 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: Tom, let’s begin by asking some background questions of you, first one being when and where were you born?

SPEH: Jim, I was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1944.

STOCK: Was there something in your childhood that you remembered that you think may have shaped your present personality and how you view life?

SPEH: Yes, probably a father who was very demanding and required that I always do my best and that one had to strive to always be on top.

STOCK: Do you think that particular personality trait is what has made you the person you are now?

SPEH: I think it’s been a major driver always trying to be the best that I could be and use my talents to their fullest.

STOCK: How about the opposite, were there any things you think in your early childhood that you picked up that impeded your progress or slowed it down a bit?

SPEH: Yes, kind of the parallel to the first one which was being criticized for not doing very well. So one always was looking over one's shoulder about was I doing the job right.

STOCK: Now, if your parents could be here right now, and I would ask them this question, how do you think them would have described you as a child?

SPEH: I think they would have described me as a pretty good kid who was quiet, but a little mischievous and a tendency to get into a few scrapes now and then.

STOCK: So during the years you became less quiet though.

SPEH: Much less quiet.

STOCK: Now as you think back, when you were very small, are there any vivid memories that even today you still remember as a child?

SPEH: Yes, I remember the time when I made a parachute, I was going to jump off the second story of the house and my mother wouldn't let me, and it was a crushing blow but probably a wise decision on her part, but crushing to me after all the work I'd put into it.

STOCK: Now as you grew up I assume it was in Cleveland?

SPEH: Yes.

Grade School/High School

STOCK: Tell us a little bit about your secondary school education.

SPEH: It was probably not a great educational experience because I was not a highly motivated student. My sole interest in high school was to play football, which I did for five years and I lived and breathed and slept it, but everything else revolved around football.

STOCK: What specific high school did you attend?

SPEH: Cleveland Heights.

STOCK: What was your favorite subject?

SPEH: Economics.

STOCK: And why was that?

SPEH: Challenging; first time I'd ever been challenged in high school was as a senior by the economics professor, Mr. Burdodado. I still remember him vividly; scared the hell out of me.

STOCK: Now you mentioned playing on the football team; any other sports?

SPEH: Oh I tried a few—track—I wasn't very good at it. Football; I really wasn't very good, but it was one where you didn't have to be good, you just had to be kind of stupid and tough and I was a little bit of both.

STOCK: How about school clubs or year book, politics, or any kind of organizations?

SPEH: No, I didn't do much. And again I was not the best student in high school and out of a class of 550 I was 270, so you would not have put me up as a poster child in high school.

STOCK: You mentioned your economics teacher; why do you think he was influential and were there any other teachers that were influential in your development?

SPEH: Yes, I mean the economics was influential because for the first time I found something that was interesting to me and also challenging, and the teacher was very hard, and I liked the challenge and I liked the material, so the two of those things together were motivational. The other one was a history teacher that I had for American History, an English lady, and again she was very interesting and stimulating. And again unfortunately, those two came when I was a senior in high school, when I finally started to find my way as an academic.

STOCK: So is that when you started thinking about college when you were a senior? Or did that come earlier?

SPEH: No, it was when I was a senior.

STOCK: Were your parents looking towards you going on to college?

SPEH: They weren't looking; it was a "fête de complete." I was going to college whether I wanted to or not.

STOCK: Would you have been the first person in your family to go to college?

SPEH: No, my dad graduated from Case-Western Reserve with a degree in engineering.

STOCK: How would you describe yourself as a student socially? You've talked a little bit about academically, but how about socially?

SPEH: I was kind of a clown, always looking for a laugh.

STOCK: Did you date extensively?

SPEH: A fair amount, yes.

STOCK: So you had a good time as a student?

SPEH: I had a very good time.

STOCK: What did you like most about high school?

SPEH: Football. I'm trying to get that across Jim. It was football.

STOCK: What about the least thing you liked about high school?

SPEH: Some of the classes that I took in areas that were not of interest.

STOCK: What did you do outside of school? What were your hobbies or interests outside of the high school activities?

SPEH: Other sports primarily. I was a fairly one-dimensional person in high school. It was socializing with girls and sports.

STOCK: You had your priorities.

SPEH: I did.

STOCK: Did you achieve any honors while you were in high school?

SPEH: **None.**

STOCK: Did you letter in football?

SPEH: **Oh, yes.**

STOCK: That was an honor.

STOCK: As sports being such an interest, did you have idols? Like sports idols? Like Mickey Mantle and Joe DiMaggio.

SPEH: **I did, I had two very big sports idols.**

STOCK: Who were they?

SPEH: **Jim Brown and Rocky Colavito.**

STOCK: So, a football player and a baseball player. Why did you pick them?

SPEH: **Well, because Jim Brown was the best running back ever to play football and Rocky Colavito was just such a personality larger than life individual who was easy to relate to as a teenager.**

STOCK: Now, did Colavito play for Cleveland?

SPEH: **Yes and then he was traded to Detroit.**

STOCK: OK, and Jim Brown played for the Browns.

SPEH: **Right.**

STOCK: So did you have any other interests beside sports?

SPEH: **I liked to build things. I built a little race cart, a go cart. I did enjoy putting things together.**

STOCK: Was it like a Soap box derby car?

SPEH: No, it was a go cart. Well, I took an old engine off of a lawn mower and then rigged up a sprocket and kind of had my own little go cart that I would tool around in.

STOCK: If somebody would ask Tom Speh, when you were a teenager, what would they find most surprising about you? Was there a fact, something that probably most people would not know?

SPEH: A fact that most people would not know?

STOCK: Something that would really surprise people about you.

SPEH: Yes, I like to cook.

STOCK: Well, you still do.

SPEH: I still do, but I did as a teenager as well.

STOCK: Where did you get that interest?

SPEH: I'm not sure. I had a mother who would never get up in the morning and so the duties of making breakfast for my father and sister, and that kind of left it to me because I was up at 4:30 AM delivering newspapers every morning. So I kind of developed this "I'm going to make breakfast routine," and I think that's where it started.

STOCK: Now why did you have a paper route when you were growing up?

SPEH: Well, because I wanted to save money so that I could go to college. And my dad paid for most of the college but this gave me spending money and so forth. I started delivering papers when I was 10 years old.

STOCK: And continued through high school?

SPEH: Continued even while I played football. I got up every morning at 4:30 AM and delivered the 80 newspapers and then went off to school.

STOCK: Interesting, so you were an entrepreneur even at a very early age?

SPEH: I don't know if I was an entrepreneur or wasn't particularly creative, but I cut grass for people and I delivered newspapers. I had about \$3,000 in the bank when I graduated from high school.

STOCK: Which was a lot of money back then.

SPEH: It was a lot of money.

College (undergraduate and graduate)

STOCK: How did you decide where to go to college after high school?

SPEH: It was a very easy decision. My best friend's sister went to Miami and she liked it. So I figured, it sounds good to me. Remember now that I was not a very motivated student.

STOCK: Well, Miami is known for its excellence in undergraduate education. So it was going to be a difficult school. Were you aware of that as you entered the college?

SPEH: No, but I was scared. That's the best thing that could have happened to me because, being not the best student in high school and then entering college, I didn't want to face flunking out, so it was highly motivational.

STOCK: So you mentioned that your father supported most of your college expenses. About what percentage did you earn versus your family paying?

SPEH: They probably paid 80 % and I paid 20 %.

STOCK: Did you work while you were going to college?

SPEH: Yes, not every year, but the last 3 years I did everything from driving a laundry truck early in the morning to deliver laundry to the dorms. Then I worked in the student center as a cook, slinging hamburgers; and then I drove a bus every Friday and Sunday from Oxford to Columbus, OH, twice a day.

STOCK: So probably that was your earliest logistics experience?

SPEH: That was my earliest logistics experience; as a bus driver.

STOCK: Did you live in the dormitory, or off campus; at a fraternity house?

SPEH: **In the dorm; and then married housing. In my last year I got married when I was a senior.**

STOCK: Did you join any fraternities?

SPEH: **Yes, I was in a fraternity for about four months.**

STOCK: Was it a social or an academic fraternity?

SPEH: **Social; I had an academic fraternity that I was in as well, but a social fraternity for four months until I decided the brothers and I just were not made for one another.**

STOCK: What was, if you will, the fact that made you come to that conclusion?

SPEH: **I was not one to take directions well from my peers, especially ones that I did not have a lot of respect for.**

STOCK: Now in college, what subjects did you study?

SPEH: **Well, I was a marketing major, but I probably took as much finance and economics or more than I did marketing.**

STOCK: Why did you choose marketing?

SPEH: **It was interesting. I found it to be an area that held an interest and a challenge—thinking about creating products and then, you know, how do you get those to be of interest to the public and selling them. I was eventually going to go into sales.**

STOCK: Did that really go back to that economics teacher in high school?

SPEH: **No. In a way it did because that's what stimulated my interest in business.**

STOCK: Tom, tell me about your interest in business in the university; how did that develop?

SPEH: **Well, probably one class was really a major pivot for that. I had a class with a guy named George Thatcher for economics and taxation. I was just so blown away with his ability to teach us knowledge; the way he presented things. He walked in the class the first**

day; never had a note, never had a note the second day or through the last day, and yet he would walk in and for an hour and a half teach the stuff that was enthralling and it was just unbelievable. He was one of my early heroes.

STOCK: So when in your four years did you get the interest in going on beyond just the bachelors' degree to get a Masters degree?

SPEH: I started thinking about it at the end of my senior year for two reasons. One, I really enjoyed school; I liked it. It was in the 1960's which, you know, was kind of a turbulent time and I was married and my wife was behind me, and so she was going to be in school for another year and so again, enjoying the school experience, thinking it would be a benefit to get a Masters while I could. I decided to stay on at Miami and just complete the Masters while she was finishing her degree.

STOCK: And so you continued taking marketing which was your interest area in the Masters program as well?

SPEH: I took marketing and finance basically. Again, I took as much finance as I did marketing. I had a professor that really was good and challenging and exciting and so I ended up at taking three of his courses.

STOCK: Was that individual like a mentor to you?

SPEH: Yes, I mean a really great role model in terms of teaching and approach and style and that sort of thing from the teaching side of things. And then I had another professor of marketing who was the chair of marketing, Joe Siebert, who was the same way; a totally different individual and probably my major mentor.

STOCK: When in that process did you decide you were going to be an academic?

SPEH: I really hadn't decided at that point. When I was finishing my Masters, my first thought was to enter the military, because it was either enter the military or be drafted, and I would rather make that decision myself, so I was looking to at least two years in the military. So I applied to navigator school in the Air Force because my eyes were too bad to be a pilot. Everybody else was trying to do that at the time so I was put on a waiting list to

get into that and during that period of time, I was then offered a job with Rohm & Haas in chemical sales, which I was going to take, but called the draft board and was told that I could take the job and I might hold it for 6 weeks until they came and got me, so I turned the job down. And I mean this was 1968 and it was \$10,000 starting salary, which was incredible. I'd had an internship with them during the middle of my two-year MBA program, so that went very well, and so that's why I was going to go into sales with them. But that didn't work out so I was all set and ready to enter the Air Force. And so I'm sitting there waiting to get into the navigator school, and during this period of time my mentor, who was chairman of the marketing department, came to me and said, we need someone as an instructor to teach entry level marketing and statistics, so would you be interested in the job? So I decided that I would give it a try and all I needed was one semester and that kind of made me decide that's what I wanted to do for my rest of my life.

STOCK: So that teaching experience was really the catalyst to propelled you into the academic career?

SPEH: Well, really I had some experiences before as a graduate assistant the second year in my MBA program. I taught an Introduction to Business class and just loved it; just loved the experience, and so that's what got me excited about it, and then when I had the offer to teach as an instructor full time and then had the experience; that's what convinced me to go that way.

STOCK: And how did Michigan State come into the picture for a PhD?

SPEH: Well, I wish I could say that I'd spent weeks and months and hours and days and everything pondering all of my opportunities, but I'd decided that I wanted to go on for a PhD because I liked the teaching. I basically looked at Ohio State and Michigan State and a good friend of mine who had been in the MBA program with me was at Michigan State and had written me a letter and he said you really ought to think about Michigan State carefully, because they have a new program up there called Physical Distribution Management; naturally quite interesting and there are lots of opportunities. So I applied and was accepted and that was that.

STOCK: But you knew nothing about physical distribution at the time?

SPEH: Well, I did because I taught principles of marketing and obviously the two were highly related, and so my interest had always been in the marketing area and the channels area and that kind of thing. So you know I had a pretty good passing knowledge of the area.

Military Experience

STOCK: So, you've mentioned the military; you were waiting for the navigator school and you started teaching here [at Miami University]?

SPEH: And I did eventually get accepted into navigator school, but I'd already accepted the job to teach here.

STOCK: So, did you go into the military?

SPEH: No, I never did.

STOCK: And you never got drafted?

SPEH: No, because you were exempted when you were a teacher. I didn't start out to be exempted, but that's what happened.

STOCK: So did you miss not having been in the military?

SPEH: Yes, I do; I wish I'd had that experience.

STOCK: Of course it was a difficult time. It was the Vietnam era.

SPEH: Yes.

STOCK: The military was not very popular during that time period.

SPEH: No, and I had a lot of friends that went into the military and in a way I felt bad that I didn't go along with them, but things worked out the way they worked out.

Career

STOCK: So in your doctoral program, you heard from your friend that they [Michigan State] had a physical distribution program and you knew something about that from your marketing background. How did you decide to choose that as your emphasis?

SPEH: Well, because I went up to Michigan State and met with a lot of the people—the doctoral students, the faculty and so forth. And the more I talked to them, the more interested I became, and it just looked like an area where there was going to be opportunities and it was inherently interesting to me.

STOCK: Now, we will come back to your PhD experience later, but when you got close to finishing your degree at Michigan State, how did you decide to go to the University of Alabama for your first position as an academic?

SPEH: Because the University of Oklahoma took too long in making me an offer. I was looking at Ohio State, Oklahoma and Alabama and the people at Alabama were really warm and welcoming and so were the people at Oklahoma. And probably my first choice was Oklahoma, but for some reason they took forever in making an offer and I got a very nice offer from Alabama and said, well I hadn't heard from Oklahoma, so I'll take Alabama. I liked Alabama because I was going to be the main person in physical distribution at the undergraduate, masters and PhD levels.

STOCK: Now at Oklahoma, Jim Constantine was there.

SPEH: Jim Constantine was there at the time.

STOCK: And who was your contact at Alabama?

SPEH: Morris Mayor was the chair of the department.

STOCK: But you only stayed there a short time?

SPEH: Two years.

STOCK: What motivated you to move?

SPEH: Environmental things. The south was an interesting learning situation for me and the family. I had two children at that time.

STOCK: Cultural differences?

SPEH: There were some cultural differences and that was an influence, but we had some issues in the business school and 9 of the 11 people in the department left the year that I did, so there were some cultural problems within the school, and there is no need to go into these, but as those arose and other people started looking around, so did I. A position happened to be open here at Miami and so I decided to take a look at it.

STOCK: So do you think that was the dream job, coming back to Miami University after having had two degrees from there and being very familiar with the school?

SPEH: I don't know if it was a dream job other than the fact that my mentor, the Chair of the department, was still here teaching. He was no longer Chair, but I did have a great experience here with a positive view of the area, the community and the university, and I thought it was high quality. I didn't think I'd stay here forever but I thought it would be a lot of fun to come back and teach where I'd gone to school.

STOCK: Did you think it would be an issue going somewhere you'd been a student? And now working with the same faculty that had taught you?

SPEH: Absolutely.

STOCK: And was it an issue?

SPEH: No. They were very gracious; they were very accepting. There was never an issue.

STOCK: And so when you came back here, did you teach Physical Distribution then?

SPEH: Well, I did. It was kind of, things happen for strange reasons, but I came back and there was a gentleman here teaching the physical distribution course and so they told me that I would just teach that occasionally and then I would teach other things. I taught statistics a lot and at that time we offered a second course in statistics that was taught out of marketing, and so they wanted me to teach that which I did as well as a strategy case course. And so I was also set up to teach statistics and strategy and kind of wait in the wings to teach physical distribution. Well, a month before I got here the gentleman

resigned and went into the business world, so that opened up the physical distribution position and so I moved right into that.

STOCK: How do you think you developed your teaching style? Was it from some of those people you mentioned that you'd seen in high school and college that you liked?

SPEH: Absolutely. I mean the economics teacher I had in high school, a finance professor that I had here at Miami, the economics professor that I had here at Miami, I think those three people and the chairman of the marketing department, Joe Siebert. Those four people really influenced and molded the way I approached teaching.

STOCK: So they had a very sincere interest in students?

SPEH: Absolutely.

STOCK: Which you are well known for.

STOCK: What do you think as you look back; you've been teaching 35 plus years, give or take a few; what do you think your most significant accomplishment has been as a teacher?

SPEH: The ability to motivate others to be interested in the field and get them excited about and willing to learn more about it. I think that's the greatest accomplishment. Because I still talk to students that I had 35 years ago and they still tell me that I had an impact on them choosing that career. In fact this Saturday I'm going to a review of the Navy ROTC and they are going to make an award to a student I had in 1978 who wrote me a letter and said he still uses a lot of the ideas that I taught him in his military life.

STOCK: Now on the research side, what would you say is the most significant thing, which could be textbooks, articles, research studies, anything of that sort?

SPEH: Well, this is kind of strange and most academics wouldn't point to this, but in the early 1990's I got involved with some folks in the business world who had a major problem. They were third-party warehouse people who had a difficult time working with customers and trying to understand warehouse costs, so I spent two years developing, for want of a better term, a warehouse cost model, which was fairly simple, but took a long time to put together and the whole purpose of that was to be able to sit down and talk apples to apples

when you were looking at what it cost to run a warehouse for, say Kraft, versus a third-party. We created an excel spreadsheet model that allowed people to do that with a lot of prescription behind it. And this is 17 years later and that model is still used. I still get requests for it. We've given away over 12,000 copies of it. It's used all over the world. That's a very simple thing, but yet it's probably my most significant accomplishment.

STOCK: We'll be back to some of your research after a bit but as you look at your entire career, those 35 plus years, what regrets do you have about them? Is there anything you wish you could have done or could have done better or more of something that you could have explored that you did not?

SPEH: Not really. It was a great ride.

STOCK: So you are pretty happy with what you were able to achieve in those 35 years.

SPEH: Yes, especially for a kid in high school who didn't know a textbook from a pencil.

STOCK: Now when you look at your career in total, you've mentioned some people that had influence, some mentors. Who, of all of those, probably would be the single most significant person in your career? Could be as an academic, could be as a student, any of those. Could be a professional person; it doesn't have to be an academician.

SPEH: Probably the one who had the most impact on me was a finance professor I had who has recently passed away, Bruce Olsen. Just because of the way he interacted with students and his ability to create this excitement in the classroom over the subject matter, which for the most part, was very challenging.

STOCK: Now, you mentioned earlier in our conversation the impact your father had in terms of how you approached issues and life. To what extent have you conducted your professional life, if you will, with a personal code of conduct or belief system?

SPEH: I think everybody's got their personal code of conduct in the way they look at things; I mean mine is pretty much based upon experiences as a child. It was to always take the responsibilities for your actions and make sure that your actions were as good as they could possibly be.

Family

STOCK: Ok, so in terms of family issues, because family is always important in development of the individual, tell us a bit about your background in terms of family, children?

SPEH: I have 3 children. I have a son Scott who is 38, a son Michel who is 36, and a daughter Betsy who is 24. Four grandchildren, all boys, so we are one short of our basketball team and we are hoping that would come sometime.

STOCK: Are any involved in physical distribution, logistics or supply chain management?

SPEH: They are not even close. My older son is an artist. My second son was a chef for quite a few years and once he had children he moved to a different career because he never saw the children. And my daughter is just about to graduate from Miami University with a degree in sociology. So I don't have any of them close to the field I was in.

STOCK: What was your goal or goals as a parent in relationship with your children?

SPEH: To act out my life and behave in a way that would give them a model for their own behavior and to give them guidance when they needed guidance and to stay out of their way as much as I could, and let them make decisions and suggest when I thought they were going awry, but to try not to be overbearing and make a final decision for them.

STOCK: If I could have the three of them here and ask them this question: How would you describe your dad, Tom Speh? What would they say?

SPEH: He is intense, he cares, he let us make mistakes and he stays out of most of our major decisions, and he is probably my best friend.

STOCK: Now which of your two parents would you say you are most like?

SPEH: My mother.

STOCK: And why is that?

SPEH: She was more open and engaging. My father was pretty quiet and stern and reserved.

STOCK: Although I think you are more of a morning person; so you obviously got that trait from your mother?

SPEH: No, not at all.

STOCK: Now do you think the manner in which you were raised as a child really structured how you worked as an academic?

SPEH: Absolutely. Having a father who was demanding and could never understand how one could make a mistake has always driven me to not make those mistakes and to do the best job I could and to take responsibility for myself. I think the best thing that he did was impart to me the idea that you are responsible for your actions, and no one else is, and whatever mistake you make is your own, and that's been a very significant lesson and driver for me.

STOCK: Would you say you are a perfectionist?

SPEH: Yes.

STOCK: Do you tolerate less than perfection in others?

SPEH: I've learned to.

STOCK: You mentioned earlier in questions that you had one other sibling. Getting into your nuclear family, tell us about your previous marriages, your first wife and then the second.

SPEH: Well, my first wife and I parted company after 15 years. We were kind of different people after 15 years so we went our separate ways. I remarried in 1981 to a wonderful woman named Michele. Unfortunately she passed away in 2000 from breast cancer and I married again in 2003 to Sara, so we've been married 6 years this coming Sunday.

STOCK: Now if I remember correctly from your earlier response, you probably met your first wife here at Miami University?

SPEH: No, actually I met her in Cleveland in high school and so she came to Miami.

STOCK: Anything about your family that you think was significant or unusual; your family at the present time?

SPEH: I think what's unusual is that we all have so different interests. I mean it's really incredible. I've got this son who has a Masters in Fine Arts and has his own art gallery and doesn't paint much anymore himself and then I've got a son who was a chef. So two creative people, and then a daughter who is extremely creative and really focused on kids and animals and that is what she wants to do for her career; she wants to do something that helps educate kids about the environment and about animals and that kind of thing. They are a lot different than I am, which I think is great.

STOCK: Do you think your one son got his culinary interest from you because you were a chef as well in the household?

SPEH: It probably had something to do with that. Yes, I mean my oldest son is a wonderful cook as well, so I think both of them probably got that interest from me.

General Historical Questions

STOCK: Now let's shift gears away from your family for a moment, but ask some unusual questions that would tell us a little bit about you. If you could live in any era of history other than the present time, which historical era would you like to have lived in and why?

SPEH: I think I would have enjoyed living in the late 1800's just because that was the time when things were booming and business was really taking off and there were all kinds of opportunities. And I think it would have been great to rub elbows with some of the robber barons and the people who were running the railroads. And given that I've been in logistics all my life, that would have been a real kick.

STOCK: And, if you could meet any past historical person who would it be and why would you want to meet them?

SPEH: Probably Nelson Mandela; I'd like to know how one keeps steadfast for 20 some years with one's principles as he did for so many years.

STOCK: Now if you could be anyone in history, who would you be?

SPEH: It's going to be very bad to say this but it would probably be some sports figure.

STOCK: Nothing wrong with that, would that be in football or baseball?

SPEH: If I could be anybody, I would probably be Jim Brown just because I think he is the greatest football player ever to have played.

STOCK: But unfortunately he played in the years that they didn't make a lot of money?

SPEH: No, but relatively speaking, he did ok.

STOCK: Yes, he did.

General Information and Perspectives

STOCK: Tom, tell me, is there a little known fact or factoid about you that would be especially intriguing that probably nobody knows?

SPEH: There is a lot of them, Jim.

STOCK: That you would reveal?

SPEH: That I would reveal? Yes, most of the time, I sing strange songs to my wife in the shower in the morning; I make them up.

STOCK: You have a good voice, singing?

SPEH: No, terrible. But she loves it because it's crazy. And it creates, you know, she is not a morning person and it makes her mornings a little bit more lively.

STOCK: Now you mentioned the warehousing cost model. If you look at both family and professional life, what would you say is the accomplishment you are most proud of?

SPEH: That both of my sons have written me letters telling me I was their best friend.

STOCK: And those were spontaneous, you know, unexpected.

SPEH: Totally unexpected.

STOCK: Now all of us I think as we get older, look back, and say oh, there is probably something that I would do different. As you look back at your life, are there any things that you would have done differently?

SPEH: Yes, there are some situations that I was in that I would totally do differently, that I feel I didn't do the right thing.

STOCK: More on the professional side?

SPEH: No, more in the personal side. Professionally, there were some times when I was the department chair when I responded to individuals in a way that I wish I hadn't when I lost my temper and I would like to take those back.

STOCK: Now it's interesting just to follow you up on that. Many academics choose not to do administrative tasks; what motivated you to get involved in the administration, at least partially in your career?

SPEH: Goes back to the issue you raised before about family influence and it was my father's feeling that one kind of took one for the team and one was responsible for doing what needed to be done, and I was in a situation where we needed a strong leader in the department and no one else would do it. I stepped up to the plate.

STOCK: And you were department chair more than one term weren't you?

SPEH: Yes, twice. Once for five years and once for a year, and then went from that one year into being Associate Dean.

STOCK: Which of those administrative positions did you like the least?

SPEH: None of them were good. Probably the department chair would be the least; I mean it is such a challenging job.

STOCK: Now, none of us knows when our life would end, but if we were doing a memorial service for Tom Speh, what do you think people would say about you as they remembered you?

SPEH: They would probably put on my tombstone just to be crude: "He gave a s__t".

STOCK: Why would they say that?

SPEH: Because I did. I cared about what I did. And about what an organization was all about and trying to do it right.

STOCK: Now that you are in the latter part of your career, you are still active and busy in a variety of things, but what do you do in your spare time that you have, even though it's small?

SPEH: Well, we've already discussed that I really enjoy cooking. I've been known to visit a casino now and then. That's one of my passions so I've a good time doing that. If I had more time I'd like to build things. I like to do things with my hands and construct them, but I don't have the time to do it.

STOCK: Where would you've gotten that interest?

SPEH: Well, my father was an engineer, and he could build or put together about anything, and I think I got that from him.

STOCK: What are some of the main lessons you've learned in your lifetime that you'd like to pass on to others?

SPEH: Well, there are a lot of them. I think to start off with, never miss an opportunity to tell someone you care about them, because you never know when they are not going to be there. I think it's very important and I also think that it's important to do things that you really had as a dream in your life, but just never took the time to do them. I think too many of us get caught up in life without doing those things that are really meaningful to us. Don't bluff unless you are willing to take the consequences; I've learned that lesson several times.

STOCK: Is that also a good lesson for the casino?

SPEH: Yes.

STOCK: What place and role do you think ethics and religion have in Tom Speh's life?

SPEH: Religion, not much; I'm not very religious. Ethics, very important; I think I have high standards in terms of the way I conduct myself.

STOCK: You were a PhD student in the 1970's. A lot has changed since then. I know Miami University does not have a PhD program, but if you were presenting to some PhD students now, what would you tell them; what advice would you give them going into the marketplace?

SPEH: I would say that early in your career get into the pattern of being productive and that's both in the classroom and research. And learn as much as you can from the people that are teaching you that have the knowledge and the skill base, so that you can take and use that once you get into the career. I've seen so many people come out and they just get all tangled up in things that they shouldn't be tangled up in, and I think you've got to hit the ground running when you come out of that PhD program, and you've got to rely on those people that you really learned from and take that and be as productive as possible for the first five years of your career. The most people that I have seen fail, failed because it took them forever to be productive and they were not focused; they seemed to forget what they had been taught. I think it's absolutely critical to come out of the chute fast.

STOCK: Probably even more so today than when you and I were students.

SPEH: Much more so, because I think the bar has been raised.

STOCK: 1970's versus new millennium; what are the big differences that you see for academics then versus now?

SPEH: I think back then the bar was not nearly as high and I think that academics did not have, at least in our field, the expectations for quality, for overall productivity, research-wise to be a total player. I mean, be good in the classroom, be good at service, be good at research. I don't think the bar was nearly as high back when we started in the 1970's as it is now. I think the bar gets raised year after year, and I think it's a lot higher now, and I think it is a very big challenge, particularly emotionally for a lot of people when they come out.

STOCK: Now a lot of your career was during the time when marketing and physical distribution/logistics were not as integrated as it seems to now with supply chain management.

How did you bridge that gap because you are a marketing professor with logistics and supply chain interests; how did you marry those two together?

SPEH: Well, to me it just came naturally. I mean, I can see you couldn't be effective in marketing unless you had the logistics backing, and you couldn't be effective in logistics unless marketing understood what you were doing and you had some kind of cooperation. I just think those that came from the logistics side even though we who are in marketing understood the whole picture better than most people that were just focused in marketing.

STOCK: Do you think that sort of practical orientation that logisticians have is different from what most pure marketing people have?

SPEH: Absolutely, because I think it lends itself to be more practical. It's the nature of the discipline because a lot of time you are talking and working with things that are measurable; concrete, you can see them, feel them; whereas a lot of the things in marketing are emotional, and they are hard to measure, and they deal with behavior which again is difficult to deal with. In logistics we are dealing with hard and fast things many times.

STOCK: As an academic you got involved early in your career in writing an industrial marketing management text. How did that come about?

SPEH: Because you know, back then, we had a three or four course requirement and so I would teach one or two sections of logistics and then I was asked what else I was going to teach, and at that time I thought this area of industrial marketing was taught poorly and was boring, so I got into that, and a colleague and I here at Miami University decided there just weren't any really good textbooks. So in 1980 we launched into a textbook in industrial marketing simply because we didn't see much there to work with in the classroom.

STOCK: And that was with Michael Hutt?

SPEH: Yes.

STOCK: And that's now in its tenth edition?

SPEH: Yes, we just came out with the tenth edition a couple of months ago.

STOCK: Now, why didn't you ever write a logistics book?

SPEH: Because, if you want to be honest, teaching at Miami University at the time didn't have a logistics degree and you look at where is a logistics book used? Well, the major users are the big logistics schools like Penn State, Michigan State, Ohio State, Tennessee, Arizona, Maryland, etc. All of those places were people that wrote textbooks, so did I think they were going to use my textbook over theirs? No. So I never got into that area. I was pretty practical. I must have been asked by our publisher that published the industrial marketing, now business to business text, 25 times to do a logistics book, and I always refused.

STOCK: In looking back, do you think you should have done one?

SPEH: Sort of wished I would have tried it now, yes.

STOCK: And what do you think it would have been the uniqueness of that book, if you had written it?

SPEH: Probably, it would have reflected the way I teach the course, which is trying to get engagement with the students and so forth and probably would have had a lot of materials supplementary and so forth that would go with it, which I think a lot of logistics textbooks lacked 15 or 20 years ago. There was just a book and there wasn't much else with it. So I think it might have been more student oriented and more involving.

STOCK: Seeing the profession today, you know we've moved beyond physical distribution, into logistics and now supply chain management. While they are not the same, it's much more expansive today. What do you view as the really significant issues in supply chain management that need to be addressed?

SPEH: Well, I think the underlying premise of supply chain management is what needs to be addressed and that is an integrated comprehensive basic look at a business and the relationship with everybody else in that whole value chain, and I don't think we've addressed how we bring all those things together and integrate them. And I think we in supply chain can talk about that, but I don't think that people in many of the other areas

are listening to us yet. If you go into a business and talk to the sales and the marketing people, I'm not sure that they get the picture of what we do in a supply chain and that's to me what the central issue is now. We've got the tools, we've got the IT, we've got the infrastructure and so forth; what we don't have is an understanding by the other functional areas that they are part of this.

STOCK: Do you think part of that is a lack of understanding of what supply chain management is?

SPEH: Yes, or even seeing that they are part of it. I mean, I think we get so caught up in our own functional area that is very hard to do that; it's very hard for a sales person or a marketing person or a finance person to think that they are a supply chain person; even though they are part and parcel of it.

STOCK: There is an article coming out in the special issue of the *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science* on supply chain management that indicates that since the year 2000 there have been over 160 different definition of supply chain management. Why do you think there is such a divergence of viewpoints on what it is?

SPEH: Because it's so big; I mean, it's when you think about most disciplines they are pretty well defined; they are pretty focused. We know what finance is about, we pretty much know what marketing is about, we know what accounting is about, we know what logistics is, but then someone throws out this idea of supply chain—of this over arching—we've got all this different functional areas working together and integrated from cradle to grave; I mean that's a whole different animal and an entirely different way of thinking. It gets people out of their comfort zone because they cannot comprehend it because they are so focused on their main functional area. I don't find that as surprising at all. I'd be surprised if it were the other way. But you know, I look on this whole area as an evolution. We want to have some answers to supply chain tomorrow. Well I'm sorry this is an evolution and it may not be for 30 years that we get an answer to it, but that's OK, we are working towards it.

STOCK: Do you think it will still be supply chain management or will it be something else?

SPEH: There may be some other term for it, but I think the underlying idea of it will be there. But as you know, we've seen many other terms used, value chain and so forth, and I don't know if the term is important, but I think the concept is still there.

STOCK: Now from an academic perspective, can we ever develop a supply chain theory if we don't have definitions and constructs defined specifically?

SPEH: Well, yes, but it's going to take time and that's my whole point. I think that we are rushing things and we want to have something tomorrow, and I think it's going to take many, many, many years of research, of creating constructs, of bringing in the other disciplines and borrowing those constructs and putting them together. I see a lot of attempts that people are making to try to create some theory about communication across the supply chain and interaction and so forth and so on. Again, I just believe it's an evolutionary thing. You know it's like the wheel versus the truck today. We are still laid back just looking at the wheel.

STOCK: What would be in your opinion, the first steps that academics should take in terms of developing the supply chain management field?

SPEH: I think the best thing that we could do is to try to open up the discussion with the other disciplines that are involved in the supply chain. And I don't think we've been very successful at doing that. Plus, I don't think we've tried very hard. I look at my marketing colleagues and they are few and far between who really buy into this supply chain idea and that's where we are, at the beginning.

STOCK: What would be the venue to do that, because you and I have both seen over the years just looking at how marketing and logistics had separated, we have our own conferences, both academic and practitioners conferences, there is very little overlap between marketing and logistics in a professional sense in terms of meetings. How can those differences be overcome?

SPEH: In my opinion the way you begin that is that you go and you start with the companies that have it figured it out or are starting to figure it out. I mean, I can name several firms where indeed people are working on teams in the company; and I mean you've got a financial person, you've got a sales person, a marketing person, a supply chain

person. I think we could learn of a lot from our brethren who are in the practice of business and I think we are ignoring that as the way to get this jump started. I think that the business world is quite a bit ahead of us in terms of getting some of that integration.

STOCK: So, with supply chain management, the business sector, the private sector, is leading edge, while the academic sector is lagging edge?

SPEH: That is what I believe in terms of understanding the supply chain idea. Naturally, actualizing or implementing it. I think we can learn something from studying those people and studying those companies and understanding that, and then maybe that's where we formulate our constructs and our theories.

STOCK: Do you think logistics people, who seem to have more interest in supply chain management, developed that because of their practical orientation more so than perhaps other disciplines who are more theoretical and not applied?

SPEH: Yes, I do. I think that's absolutely correct. I think our discipline, logistics, is simply one of the things that you can measure a little easier and things that are more tangible and I think that drives us to be different; when you can get your arms around something and you can quantify it and see it a little bit or a lot different. So I think we have an advantage in that way.

STOCK: Now you published a lot of articles and monographs and your textbook over ten editions now in your career. If you could write an article which everyone in the profession would read, what would you include in that article?

SPEH: Well, my focus would simply be how do you create, maintain and foster these relationships that we need in the supply chain to truly have the supply chain work as it ought to, as we prescribe in our textbooks and articles and so forth. What we really need is to bring in some of the behavioral concepts that the marketers have studied for so long and apply those to these relationships and to make that work. That would be my thrill, to be able to stand up and say hey, we were doing things and got that going and made it happen.

STOCK: Now both you and I travel extensively internationally, do you see any differences in your international travels in the approach to supply chain management or logistics that are significant?

SPEH: Well, not really, because I think that when you travel you go to Germany and you are going to find the German company, but they are also operating in China and in the US and in South America. And you go to South America and you see these companies, you go to China and the same thing. I've worked with a Chinese company that has six offices in the US, so I don't think there is a huge difference because most companies now have become global.

STOCK: Now you've been involved in a lot of professional organizations—the American Marketing Association, National Council of Physical Distribution Management which then became Council of Logistics Management and then the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, the Warehousing Education Research Council, and some others—probably the two where you were most involved were CSCMP and WERC. How did you get involved in those two organizations and how did you spend so much time in them because you've accomplished quite a bit in both of those organizations?

SPEH: With CSCMP I simply became a member and got more involved because at that time, George Gecowets, who was the CEO of that organization for many, many years, was always so helpful to academics in terms of providing information, and so I've got very much involved simply because he was so helpful and so forth. And then the WERC organization was something that started when I came here to Miami University and they were looking for academics to become involved, and so I was invited to become involved through Don Bowersox, and I didn't know a lot about warehousing at that time, but I knew it was a big piece of the logistics puzzle and I thought it was quite intriguing that an organization simply focused on that one piece of the logistics operation was going to start. So I got involved on that in the second year of its existence and the more I got involved the more intriguing it became to me; the more I've learned about it, and it was an area for me to make a contribution and also to learn quite a bit from; kind of one thing played off against the other. And so as I grew, it grew, and so forth. And then I saw where I could make a contribution to it though research in that kind of thing. Then with CSCMP, I just

found out as an academic [CSCMP was] very useful in terms of materials, to be useful for teaching, in terms of fostering research and development of the area, and then I was asked to, and this was a huge challenge, I was asked in the 1990's if I would make an attempt developing reading materials that we could use to teach every business student something about logistics. So I spent three or four years trying to do that and we eventually produced something; and I'm not sure if it's been totally successful or not, but we did do something in that regard.

STOCK: Now Tom, you just told us a bit about your work and CSCMP involvement. One of the things which was particularly significant was the establishment of the WERC Research Center here at Miami University. Can you tell us a little bit how that started and what was the focus and direction of that center?

SPEH: Yes, that center got started in the late 1980's and what happened was we had a lot of difficulty in the WERC organization finding people to do research and then tracking and making sure it got done. Tom Sharpe, who was then the executive director, and I would spend many, many hours discussing how can we get more research done; how can we make things happen? We were sitting in a hotel room in San Francisco after the annual conference late at night and we kind of kicked around, why don't we go to a university and establish a research center and I'll be happy to give that a crack, and so we started thinking more about it and wrote up some ideas and passed them by the Board. The Board seemed interested, so I came back here and put together a proposal for a center: what would be the structure; how would it be run; how would it work; how would it come out with projects; and then how would we implement them? And they [WERC] would finally publish them. And so in 1987, we established the Warehousing Research Center at Miami University and the university gave us some space and we had a nice complex, offices, two graduate assistants and a secretary and that began our work. Our very first publication was probably one of the most exciting things I've ever published; it was a book of job descriptions in the warehouse and frankly it seems a little mundane, but in fact it was very well accepted by the warehousing community and it turned out to be very useful for a lot of companies in establishing their own set of job descriptions.

STOCK: And that one particular study has been continued?

SPEH: Yes, in fact a lot of the studies that we did have been either updated or revised or redone over time because we did studies that benefited the programs. We did studies of compensation and all those have been redone over time and we've done some once that were pretty much long running that were self standing; like we did a major notebook on warehouse safety, again very useful for a warehouse that didn't have to reinvent the wheel, we gave a safety program.

STOCK: And where did those research ideas come from?

SPEH: Well, they initially came from where we had a research committee who would meet a couple times a year and we would hash around what's an issue that really needs resolution. And these were not academic studies; these were purely and simply business problems that people wanted answers to, so they were what I called "dog-eared" type of reports; that is, if you walked into someone's office our reports would be "dog eared" because people used them to manage their warehouse, so they got used and that was always a primary criterion, to do something that people in the warehouse community were going to find useful in managing their warehouse.

STOCK: Now how long did the center exist here in Miami and what's its status now?

SPEH: It existed for 14 years. In about 2000 over time, I was getting a little tired of it. I think they wanted to maybe go in a different direction and so we mutually decided that for 14 years it's been a great run. Let's go in a different direction, so it kind of ended around 2000-2001.

STOCK: So they are much like CSCMP today in terms of research, doing one-off projects here and there?

SPEH: Right, so they've totally changed their focus, which is probably good because now they have a variety of researchers; different people, different universities, different consultants; and that gives them a much wider range. I mean our range was restricted, because you know I had MBA graduate assistants but no PhD's, so that restricted some of the things that we could do.

STOCK: Now, how did your colleagues view that, because it was applied research, and academics usually are interested in theoretical?

SPEH: I think they respected it; they knew it was not theoretical; they knew it wasn't creating new theory, but I think they respected the fact that it made a contribution to the making of some aspect of the business process better. At least at Miami University, I don't know how people outside here would look at it or other people, but at least the colleagues in my department looked at it that way. They used to kid me all the time about working for a radio station, WERC.

STOCK: Now some general questions about the past, present and future of the discipline. Being involved in this profession now for almost four decades, looking back over that time, what do you think were the most significant developments in logistics and supply chain management and who were the mayor players on the academic side?

SPEH: Well, there were a lot of players. I mean the significant players are the people that I think are like the godfathers of this area and would have to include Don Bowersox and Bud La Londe. I mean those two guys really jump started what went on in this area. The two of them worked together, which I think was significant. They created more together than they would have separately and I think they had a mayor impact and did for a long time. John Coyle at Penn State, I think I would put in that category in having a major impact textbook. He was a great educator and someone who I found had a great care and concern for his students at all levels: doctoral students, undergraduates; and he was really a complete player and I think that he added a lot. You can even look at someone like Charley Taft at Maryland that nobody thinks a lot about, but in the transportation area for years and years and years, his was the book that everybody read and he was editor of the *Transportation Journal* and had a lot of high standards and I think he made a major impact in the transportation area. And if we look at people that came along a little bit later, I would certainly say that Hau lee at Stanford has made a mayor impact, particularly in a way that I think he conceptualized the supply chain and some of the ideas he's come up with in terms of what's really important and how you design the supply chain. He has

done a really good job I think of blending the practical with the theoretical, and so I think that's been impressive.

STOCK: It's been in some articles in the *Journal of Business Logistics* and some other journals that have looked at logistics family trees. You look at folks, some of the ones you've just mentioned such as Don Bowersox at Michigan State with probably 30 PhD students that he's chaired dissertations for in his career, Bud La Londe at Ohio State with even more, John Coyle with lots of doctoral students, and it's interesting as you look at the people who've been productive in the last 20 years. A lot of them are their students. Why do you think that's the case?

SPEH: Well, I think it's a matter of attraction; I mean when you look around and you say who is really doing things and you say well, they are doing things at Michigan State and Ohio State and Penn State, students get attracted to there because they see the track record, so its kind of like a rolling stone; it's going to pick up a lot of things as it's moving. I think all of those guys got a momentum going and once you get the momentum going, you are going to attract good students. Therefore you are going to put out good material; therefore you are going to attract more good students and the engine keeps rolling.

STOCK: Well it's interesting in terms of those I'll call disciples of those individuals, they've certainly been more productive in terms of publishing and professional involvement. Is there some similarities you see across those individuals that created that legacy in others?

SPEH: Yes, because I think those people created a level of expectation that we are around to make a contribution to the discipline and that's why we are being shepherded and trained and educated by those people, and I really think it was the level of expectation that each of them held for their doctoral students. I felt that coming out of Michigan State; I felt that Don Bowersox thought that it was my responsibility to continue that legacy and to be productive and to add to the discipline, and I think the same is true for Bud La Londe and John Coyle and so forth.

STOCK: Now it's interesting that when you got your PhD there were very few logistics journals or physical distribution journals. You had *Transportation Journal* which was primarily

transportation, although it did publish some physical distribution pieces. And then in 1978, La Londe at Ohio State started the *Journal of Business Logistics*. Now today there is the *Journal of Supply Chain Management* and there are a lot of journals out there that publish logistics and supply chain materials. What's your assessment of the periodicals that are out there that are academic journals at this point in time?

SPEH: You know, frankly they are working to get better. I mean I think that we've suffered a little bit in the eyes of our colleagues in other disciplines and I think it's because of the nature of our discipline. It is a little bit more practical and applied and so a lot of our research has been that way. And I think some of our colleagues in other disciplines have an inherent advantage in terms of theory and in terms of applying statistical methodology and so forth. They look down a little bit on our journals as being maybe a little bit more applied and not as rigorous and so forth, and to me, I look at it as an evolution. I think our journals improve a little bit each year and I think the doctoral students that are coming out now are probably much better trained than I was, particularly in a lot of methodological issues and that's going to be reflected in these journals and I think we can see it. So I look on our journals and I look at what the *Journal of Business Logistics* was in 1978 and what it is today, and I can see a mayor difference. I think we are going to continue seeing that difference as we produce more and more doctoral students with higher levels of training, skill, statistical techniques and research methodologies and that kind of thing.

STOCK: What would you like to see the academic journals in the field do, in terms of you know; there are different editors of course in each of these journals, they have different sponsors and so forth; are the things you would like to see the journals do in the future that perhaps they are not doing now or could do better in the future?

SPEH: I think the key thing is to adhere to standards of high quality and that might mean taking fewer articles than we really want to sometimes. I keep hearing the question and I just heard it last week; someone asked me, well we are looking at someone in a department and they've published in the *Journal of Business Logistics*; is this an "A" journal? And it's an interesting question and I said of course it's an "A" journal. It's the best journal in logistics and they said yes, but is it as good as the *Journal of Marketing*? I said well, they

are two different things; different subject matters, different orientations. So I do think that if people in logistics are to continue to be able to progress at their universities and be able to be promoted, then we have to be mindful of maintaining and increasing the level of rigor in those journals so that we don't get these questions from some people in other disciplines all the time.

STOCK: Does that mean or infer that they need to publish in non-logistics journals as well?

SPEH: In my opinion no, but I don't think that necessarily speaks for everybody. I think that in a lot of instances I think you will see the non-logistics colleagues thinking that the logistics people should publish in a variety of journals; not just the logistics journals. For example, I think they'd like us to publish in the *Journal of Marketing* because I think some marketing people look down their nose and say I don't think he could. I don't agree with that philosophy. I think we ought to be publishing in the area that is our focus and I don't think it serves much purpose being elsewhere.

STOCK: You mentioned in discussing the logistics and supply chain periodicals that they are more applied, which the discipline has been over the years, and you mentioned the term, rigor. Do you think you can have as much rigor in application as you can have rigor in theory?

SPEH: Certainly, I mean when I think of when I review things, you can be rigorous in any way you are approaching something. You've got to define what you are working in, you've got to set it up right, and you've got to carry it out right. I don't think it much matters whether you are talking application or theory; there is absolutely rigor; there are just different kinds of rigor.

STOCK: Now you probably remember this as I did when growing up there was a television show called *Paladin* and it was about a bounty hunter and he had a business card on which he had a chess piece on it and his slogan was "Have gun, will travel." Some people have used sort of a paraphrase of that describing some of the logistics or at least early logistics research: "Have survey will send." We certainly see a lot of survey research in logistics and supply chain management. We are starting to see more qualitative research. What do you think is the role of qualitative versus quantitative research in logistics and supply chain management?

SPEH: Each type of research is playing a different role for a different purpose and I mean I revere qualitative research again if it has rigor for that type of research. I don't think that we can sacrifice the rigor because this is qualitative research, so therefore there is no rigor in it. I think there is a rigorous way of doing qualitative research and I think that we should be thinking of doing that kind of research. We should be thinking of all kinds of research. I do think we are challenged though and we do need to do a lot of survey research, but that's getting harder and harder to do as we are over serving our population out there.

STOCK: It's getting more and more difficult, many of the professional organizations who were very pro-academic in their orientation have cut back in terms of allowing academics to use their membership lists for surveys. Do you think that's a good thing?

SPEH: No, but they control their membership. I don't think there is much we can do about it and I think it behooves all of us, particularly the people that are training doctoral students, to address some of those issues and OK what are we going to do now. We are facing a situation that it is harder and harder to do the survey research, so what's going to come in its place? You know how are we going to make this happen so maybe we have to go back and adapt smaller samples where we do in-depth probing and so forth, which again is going to be looked on as not so rigorous, but maybe we need to explore these different avenues and how to make them more rigorous. I do think the days of survey research, the way we used to do them, are pretty much numbered because we don't have the bodies to answer the surveys, although fortunately we do have easier ways to do surveys now through the Internet, which I think is a positive thing.

STOCK: Do you wish at this point that you had doctoral students to share this insight with, since Miami does not have a doctoral program, so you don't have PhD students that you can mentor? Would you liked to have had them?

SPEH: I have, I've been on three or four doctoral committees. In fact, I'm on one now from another university, so I've had that experience. Some of it was good, some of it wasn't so enjoyable. I can't say as I've really missed a lot. Probably I could have been more productive in terms of my own research if I'd had doctoral students to work with and

help publish articles, but I did have enough of that experience as an outsider sitting on doctoral committees over the years that I don't feel like I've missed a lot.

STOCK: Now as you've looked at your career as you've been at Miami University almost your entire career, which is much different from Michigan State, Ohio State or Penn State where there are lots of logistics or supply chain faculty within the department; essentially you've been pretty much alone or near alone. How has it been for you as opposed to having a lot of colleagues in the same department and just being essentially by yourself for most of your career?

SPEH: It's true, yes, in the university sense, but I've never sensed that I was alone because I did so much work with colleagues like you and other people at other universities who were in similar situations. I never felt the need to have someone necessarily on campus on board to do things, but what I did was I've worked with a colleague in accounting. We've had three publications together. I've got a colleague in finance and we've got a publication, and so that's one of the things I did, that was try to reach out and bridge the discipline a little bit with other disciplines, at least within this university. But most of the time in doing research it's been with colleagues like you and I have worked together on several things and I didn't find any problem with that, and now that Miami does have a supply chain program it is nice to have some colleagues around. But frankly, I've not published anything with them particularly, so my pattern is still pretty much the same.

STOCK: Well, at this point in your career, you retired from your present position. You're Emeritus but you are still employed part time through the University MBA program and you are working part time for the CSCMP. Tell us a little bit about what you do now and how long do you think that will continue?

SPEH: Who knows how long it will continue, how long they'll keep me, how long they'll have me? In the MBA program, I work with our director primarily. We require students to do a global consultancy which means they are overseas working in a company for five weeks. We have five teams in China and four teams in Europe and my job is to set those up, get them arranged, coordinated, get the students with the company, get the project designed, monitor the projects, get their travel arrangements, and so forth. I also work in recruiting students for the program and placing them, so it keeps me pretty busy. And

then at CSCMP, I'm what they call the Director of Strategic Initiatives, which is kind of looking at the new areas that we can get into. Right now I'm working very, very much with Rick Blasgen on developing on-site training programs for companies. CSCMP goes into company X and puts on a 3-day program for their supply chain people. We have a lot of material developed and now we are in the process of meeting companies and working on that. The other thing that I do is set up international conferences that CSCMP is holding around the world.

STOCK: Tom, you were involved in the executive committee, now called the Board of Directors, for CSCMP when they came up with the definition of supply chain management and then expanded that and said here are the boundaries of supply chain management over and above the definition. That's the definition most cited by people. Do you think that's the best one out there?

SPEH: That's a loaded question; you are putting me in a terrible spot. Many colleagues have other definitions. I think it is good definition, but is it the best? I don't know. I guess that's for the rest of the world to decide. I'm not going there.

STOCK: Well, here's an easier question. When you think of the future of supply chain management, what are the two or three things that you think should be the highest priority for both practitioners and academics to tackle?

SPEH: Well I mean the absolutely number one is the integration. I think first within the firm and the functions and figuring out a way of how we develop ways of getting those functions working together, which primarily means creating performance metrics that will foster that; which I think is a huge challenge. And then secondly is integrating the firms within the supply chain and getting true collaboration working and figuring out what sustains it and what doesn't, and how do we overcome those things that do not sustain it. If I were starting all over again, that's where I'd be putting all my attention. I think that would be exiting.

STOCK: And when we look at supply chains because they are so many functions and processes involved, who are, or is, the best to manage that? Is it an individual or is it a firm?

SPEH: The president of the company.

STOCK: Of which company though, when there are scores of companies in the supply chain? Which company should be the leader?

SPEH: You know I don't know if there is a leader; I don't know if that's even possible. I mean I think a leader is going to evolve in an individual supply chain who has a vision, is just like a leader in a business, and they can communicate that vision to the other members of the supply chain and they buy into it, and they use their skills as a collaborator and a leader to make it happen. I think that will vary all over the map from supply chain to supply chain, and I mean it could be a lesser known player in some cases as long as they have the vision and get people to buy into it. I think we've seen that in some supply chains.

STOCK: Anything else that you see as a significant development in the short-term horizon?

SPEH: Well, I think always the key issue is going to be technology, particularly information technology, because that's going to enable eventually better communication, which is going to allow better collaboration, and that's going to continue to develop probably faster than it has in the past. I don't think that we can sit around and simply say well, we can rest on our laurels, because the communication is going to take place because we have better IT. You still have to have the people with the vision of getting the companies to work together, but I do think as we improve the IT, that's going to be made easier.

STOCK: You mentioned in earlier questions that the area that you would have liked to live in would be the late 1800's. Well certainly at that time, management expertise exceeded technology expertise in terms of communications systems and obviously no computers were around then and so forth. Some have argued that the technologies are ahead of the management expertise. Would you agree with that today?

SPEH: Today, yes, I think it is.

STOCK: So what do we need to do to improve management to the level of the technology?

SPEH: Well, you know it goes back to education. I mean if we can't instill it, and I think it goes back at us at the University level at all three levels: undergraduate, masters and PhD's. If we cannot instill those ideas, not just in the supply chain people, but in the finance people, and the marketing people, then we are probably not going to make that progress and that's what I would like to see. More and more universities are requiring supply chain management of all of the majors. We do now and I think those kinds of things are really important steps because it opens eyes and at least when someone is in finance and they get into a leadership role, they are going at least have some background to understand that they are part of the bigger puzzle.

STOCK: Well, we've covered lots of things. Is there a capstone or summary statement that you would like to make as we close our interview?

SPEH: As a capstone statement, I mean I don't regret a day that I spent in this discipline. I feel blessed to have been in it and to maybe make a small contribution to it. There are great people in it, there are great institutions in it, the future is probably for this discipline brighter than anything that ever happened in the past, and I'm envious of young people that are coming into it for all the things that they can do and the challenges that exist, and they get to approach those challenges and make some contributions. As I said, I think we are really at the beginning of supply chain management and the people that are coming out now have a great opportunity to make some terrific strides and they are lucky.

Closing Comments

STOCK: Tom, I hope through this taping of yourself and other individuals that those young people that you mentioned will have a greater appreciation of what went on before and the basis of a lot of the things that are going to be investigated and studied in the future. So Tom, thank you for your time.

SPEH: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure and I really appreciate it.