

CONVERSATION BETWEEN RANDOLPH McDONOUGH & DR. ALFRED
C. NELSON ON CAMPUS BUILDINGS, THEIR NAMESAKES AND
HISTORIES, WITH PATRICIA DUBLIN, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER
ALUMNI RELATIONS

Mr. Randolph McDonough: As Pat suggested, maybe the thing we ought to do is just come up with a list of names of the various buildings and the individuals associated with them, then fill in a little background on some of these people. I think that would be a good starter. We can just list some of the names. There was Mary Reed and Margery Reed and Iliff and Conrad Hall. . . Conrad. What was Conrad's first name?

Dr. Alfred Nelson: Ralph Conrad. Also John Green Hall was named for his side-kick. Ralph and John Green came out here together, and Ralph Conrad was the first man to come and really established the DRI, the University of Denver Research Institute.

McD: Didn't you have a part in establishing the research institute?

Nel: Yes, I was teaching in the Graduate School at the time, and Conrad came out and talked to the people in chemistry, and to me. The administrative group talked it over and decided to make him director of the university's research institute as an integral part of the university. Then Green came out and worked with Conrad, because they had been at Kansas State University together in the chemistry department. Green came along and became a member of the chemistry department for that purpose and handled the staff of the then-called research institute. It wasn't until both Conrad and Green had passed away, killed in their tragic boating accident, that Sandy (Shirley) Johnson entered the picture. When he came, he was anxious that it become a more separate unit, called Denver Research Institute, and be only affiliated with the University in a technical sense as far as its title is concerned.

McD: What you're saying is that Sandy Johnson didn't come until after they both were killed.

Nel: Yes. I don't remember when that was.

McD: It was in 1945 or '46. It was a very sad situation, of course.

Nel: They were on the South Platte River, up near Deckers. They had a raft (or something) and got into that narrow place, as I recall it,

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between where the road stops and where the railroad goes. It's quite narrow and turbulent. They had gone up the week before and scouted the river there, and found the water fairly placid, and blocked-out where they wanted to go. And on the following week they went up. In the meantime, the run-off had exceeded what they realized, and so they got in and the water was too turbulent. They couldn't make it and they hit a rock or something and their raft flipped, and that was the end of that.

McD: Those two buildings were established in 1955, Conrad Hall was, that is, and Green Hall in 1958.

Nel: Conrad Hall is a combination of two or three Butler huts from World War II. They were put together and remodeled to make what is now Conrad Hall, named as a memorial to Ralph. When John Green Hall was built to meet additional space needs, it was named as a memorial to John.

McD: The Boettcher Center for Science and Engineering came in 1963, as you recall, as an outgrowth partly of the increase in the size and development of the research center. Dr. Chester Alter was Chancellor.

Nel: The trustees approached the Boettcher Foundation and discussed a need for putting science, engineering, and research together in a complex. The original intent as I understood it was that there were to be seven buildings built in that area, to house all the research of the DRI, instruction in chemistry, and physics, as well as all the engineering. That was the way it developed.

McD: That was a very interesting groundbreaking. I recall it very vividly because among other things they did in connection with the program, which was held on the site, they released a balloon. I've forgotten what it was they had tied to it, but it was something that was to be returned to the University of Denver. The thing went up and off to the east and to my knowledge it was never heard from again.

Nel: I don't think it was ever found.

McD: The interesting names connected with science must include our old friend Clarence Knudson, who was Dean of the College of Engineering. He was a classmate of yours, and you will recall that they named a building for him in 1966.

Nel: That is the Clarence M. Knudson Hall. . .