

1-13-1984

Interview no. 673

C. L. Sonnichsen

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Recommended Citation

Interview with C. L. Sonnichsen by Rebecca Craver and Vicki Ruiz, 1984, "Interview no. 673," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: C.L. Sonnichsen in Tucson, Arizona
INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Craver and Vicki Ruiz
PROJECT: History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 13, 1984
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted

TAPE NO.: 673
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 673

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

English professor who taught at UTEP, 1931 - 1972; earned a
Ph.D. from Harvard. Now with Arizona Historical Society.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

How he came to the Texas School of Mines in 1927; recollections
of campus life including students, professors, and administrators;
changes in students through the years; courses taught; Mexican
Americans on the campus; why he decided to work with the Arizona
Historical Society.

Length of interview: 45 min. Length of transcript: 28 pages

C.L. Sonnichsen
by Rebecca Craver and Vicki Ruiz
January 13, 1984

C: I have a question to begin that's been bothering me. As it says on the jacket of one of those books, "with the ink not yet dry" on your Harvard diploma, you came to El Paso to the College of Mines. I want to know why in the world did you come to El Paso to the College of Mines?

S: Well, it takes a little while to explain it, but it's because I belonged to the Harvard Glee Club, and I went out on the spring trip in 1927. That was the year I took my Master's degree, and when the spring trip was over I came back and all the good jobs had been picked over, all the university jobs, and the best thing I could get was a job at Carnegie Tech, where I went and stayed for two years. So then I went back to Harvard and finished my Doctorate work and naturally I was out of money, or pretty nearly. It was about the end of my resources. You know, they come out simultaneously, you get your degree and you're out of money at the same time--if you're lucky anyway. Sometimes you run out before. I needed a summer job and one came up at the Texas School of Mines. It hadn't become really a college yet. It wasn't a four year college until the fall after I got there. So there were eight applicants and I got the job, and I am perfectly sure that I got it because I'd had experience in a technical school teaching English. That means that since I had had to go to a technical school because I got back late after being out with the Harvard Glee Club, therefore my tonsils are responsible for the whole thing. And I look at my children and say, "What would have happened if I hadn't sung tenor in the Harvard Glee Club?"

C: Do you remember what your first impressions of the campus and the city were?

S: Yeah. I came in the summer. The summer school was just getting started. And I know it was a very bleak and barren place, you know. What it must have looked like up there on the hill with hardly anything. You know those junipers in front of Old Main, are they still there?

C: Yes, I think so.

S: Those had just been planted by a janitor named Gabriel who was a friend of mine. He was a good man. But that was about the only greenery we had around there. We had tennis courts down where the Science Building is now, or the Biology building, and the engineers used to play tennis in their boots, their high boots. It was really a wretched place.

C: I bet it was.

S: Yeah. And I didn't want to stay. In fact, I thought that I would go home as soon as this summer was over, and I was having a hard time because I was teaching two courses, the English Novel & American Literature. I had to get up my first lectures on the train coming down.

So I wanted to go back to the green east. That's where I thought I was going to spend my life, but that was the year that the bottom dropped out. The Depression was on. It hit and there were no jobs back in the east and I was out of sight and out of mind. So I thought, "Well, maybe I better stay here. I will stay if they ask me." They didn't ask me though. And it got half-way through the summer and I had no job for the fall or even... You know, I know ladies must eat. You never think of a man having to eat, it's just women that have to eat. But men have to eat too, so I had to do something. So, our first president had been

appointed. His name was John G. Barry. He was a consulting geologist, had an office in the Mills Building. So I thought, "Well, I'll go see him. It can't hurt." So I went down to see John Barry, and there was a barrier to Barry, and that was his wife. She was his secretary and one had to go through her. So I thought, "Well, I'll do the best I can." So I told her who I was and what I needed and had to talk about, and then found out that she had been Miss Pierce of Boston who had run Miss Pierce's School for Girls, and her father had been the editor of The Youth's Companion. She knew all the places where I hung out in Cambridge and Boston and we had the best time, and I was hired without a bit of trouble.

But I caused a good deal of discontent. You see, we had, I think it was four Ph.D.s were brought in that fall for the beginning of the school as a four-year college, and the ones who were there already resented us very badly. They had M.A.s but there were no Ph.D.s on the faculty. So they went down to see Barry to try to tell him that they thought the present staff was adequate and they didn't need all these people with advanced degrees, they could handle the situation. There were some very odd people who were then on the staff--nice people, but just a little peculiar. And one of them I remember in the English Department, his name was Mr. Willis. He's long since dead so I can talk about him. He was the kind who...he was an M.A. from the University of Kentucky. He always went down into his basement every morning to meditate before he went to class. I have nothing against that, I think maybe it's a good thing since transcendental meditation has come in. I think it probably would be more popular now than it was

then, but it was something we didn't understand then, that he had to go down there and meditate. And I don't think his wife understood either. So he was against me. I used to play tennis with him, though, and he was happy because he could beat me playing tennis. At least that showed he had some spirit.

R: I hope you wouldn't mind repeating for the sake of the tape that you told me about when women came, about the men having to spruce up.

S: I don't think there was any particular conspiracy against women up there. And we had several women on the faculty. I remember the registrar was a woman and we had a mathematics teacher who is still there, Bulah Lyles.

C: Yes, I've talked to her.

S: Yes. She was a great woman. She kind of held the department back in one way, though. Dr. Knapp wanted to put in a course in Statistics, but he said he couldn't do it because Bulah couldn't pronounce "statistics." (Laughter)

R: /~You were~ telling me before that the men were used to going to class in their undershirts and unshaven.

S: Well, not the men, not the professors--the students.

R: No, but I said the students were used to coming in their undershirts and unshaven, but when the women students /~came, things changed~.

S: Yeah. See, the dormitory was right next door to old Keno Hall. which is, I guess, Burges Hall now. That was where all the boys lived. They had their all-night poker games, they had all kinds of goings on over there. And that's where I stayed for the first summer I was there, I was in on the whole thing. And so they'd

just pop over, you know, without bothering to put on a shirt and tie and they'd sit there and listen to their lectures, and the profs didn't seem to mind. It was a disorderly, male environment, so when the women came in, I think they were a little bit resentful because they had to spruce up.

C: Do you remember any pranks that went on in the dorm?

S: Oh there were lots of pranks in the dorm. Yeah, it was a prankish place.

C: Can you think of one in particular?

S: Yes. I sure can. We had a club--I wasn't a member--that was devoted to the observations of life in what you might call the raw. There was a little hill over where the old stadium is now. They took the hill down when they put the old stadium in, but it was a favorite place for people to park for romantic reasons. So the members of this club used to climb up on top of that little hill where nobody could see them, or they thought nobody could see them, and see what went on. It's, you know, they say you can learn more about life outside the classroom than in, and they were putting that to the test. I can remember when the club broke up. We had a boy from Buffalo named Rudolph Koukal who was an enthusiastic member of the club. And it had a name, I'll get the name back pretty soon, I've forgotten it now. Somebody saw him up there and had a shotgun they were carrying, took a shot at him. I saw him come over the hill with his shirt tail flying out behind him and his face white as a sheet. That was the breakup of the observer's club. I wish I could remember the name of it. I'll get it back before we finish the interview. *

Is this what you came for? I doubt it.

C: Well, I hear there was a lot of rivalry between what they called the academics and the engineers.

S: Yeah, at the beginning there, of course it was an engineering school and the engineers thought that it was something that was reserved for them. They didn't like the academic side. They realized that you had to have, that you might as well have, some academic courses because you've got the people there teaching academic subjects to engineers, even. But they didn't like very much to have the tail wag the dog. And I remember the first sign of that came when we had our first graduated class. The students, the senior class...I think they're the ones that had their reunion last year, the first graduating class. They wanted me to come but I couldn't do it. But they wanted caps and gowns and all the academic regalia. And we had had graduations in which these kids didn't get degrees, they got certificates in those days for the mining specialist. But now we're going to have degrees, and the graduating seniors wanted caps and gowns. And it came up at a big faculty meeting, and Dean Kidd, the Engineering dean, brought it up and said he was not in favor of it, said that it did not fit in with the purposes of this school. He said he voted for democratic dress. And they outvoted him.

I think that that is what has resulted in what we have now. I think the convocation with chains of office, I think old Cap Kidd probably turns over in his grave when the mace bearer comes in, you know, and the banners follow and all that medieval trappings. I don't think he likes that a bit. But the real fireworks came when we became Texas Western College and changed our name. You heard about all that, I suppose.

C: Well, tell me.

S: And the green line across the campus.

C: Is that when they began to paint the green line?

S: That's when they painted the green line, yeah.

C: So it was in '49?

S: '49, yes, that's when it was. I was out of town when they painted it and I didn't know about all this. I'd spent the summer on a research trip, so when I came in I stopped to telephone my wife. You know, when you get into town you can always telephone your wife first, so if anything is going on, why, you know. (Of course I shouldn't be joking this way on tape.) Anyway, I telephoned my wife and I telephoned from a bar out near the airport, and there was Dean Thomas there with a bunch of faculty members and students with their heads all over the table like that, you know, obviously making medicine. And they were going to do something about this business of the name change.

So they did. They drew the green line. On one side it said TCM and on the other side it said TWC, and there was an unspoken rule that TWC was not supposed to cross the line. Of course we did, but that was the idea: Let's keep this thing separate. We are not going to give up. They said, "Do not cross it." So it got so bad, the feeling got so spiteful, you might say, that the president had to call Dean Thomas in and tell him to get that thing off of there and stop this foolishness, which he did.

R: Where was the line drawn?

S: Well, let's see. It's called the Geology building still?

C: Yeah, I think. It started at the top of the hill over to the west

/of/ Main building.

S: It's just to the, well, northwest of the Main building, yeah.

Yeah, and they drew it across from the end of that building across to the other side of the road.

C: How did the term Peedoggie originate?

S: That was Dean Kidd's. It comes, of course, as a corruption of pedagogues. Of course we had Education majors which would be the opposite of course, the complete antithesis of the ideal of the engineer. So Dean Kidd called them Peedoggies with great contempt. Again, he and his students would prove their manhood by sitting on the steps of Old Main chewing tobacco and seeing who could spit the farthest. That was supposed to put the Peedoggies in their place, I guess.

C: Oh, my goodness.

S: Well, see what you do when you come over here and ask me questions?

C: When was the first graduate degree awarded?

S: Well, I think it was in 1948, wasn't it?

R: What about Nancy Hamon's thesis? Wasn't that '42?

S: Yeah, Nancy Haskell just sent me a copy of that book. Did it say 1942?

R & C: That was in '42?

S: Yeah. Then maybe it was '48 when we got a graduate dean. I'm not sure. These dates don't stay with me. I think our first thesis was 1942, Nancy Hamon's thesis, and I suppose it must have been two years before that we had had the degree approved. But all of that, of course, is in Fugate's history. You can find all that. Yeah.

R: What is your most embarrassing moment as a professor?

S: I had many of them. I guess very early in my career, that first summer, I found that I had a mannerism. You know you don't always know you have mannerisms. But in those days we wore vests and we had a watch in one pocket and a penknife in the other, and a chain across your front to exposure. And apparently I used to take that chain out of my pocket and twirl it around my finger and then twirl it back out. I didn't know I was doing it. So one of my students who was a smart aleck had to get up and give a little report to the class, and she asked if she could borrow my watch. So she stood there and twirled that chain.

C: Bet everybody was laughing, weren't they?

S: Oh, I was too, I was too. We had fun. I've had things like that that happened. Almost always, though, I found out that if a student was doing something you didn't really wish he would do, if you just told him about it he would stop. I tend to take things with too much visibility, I'm afraid, and I think some students sometimes felt that they could take liberties with me because we all laughed together, and I've had to call them down sometimes.

One of them I never could call down--she died just recently--her name was Edna Farris--who was an old schoolteacher. I had lots of these schoolteachers in class and I treated them with great respect because I knew what they were up against. They had a hard time, but they did tend to feel that a teacher was supposed to take charge even when she was not teaching. And when Edna Farris had something to say she would rise and face the class and tell them what she had to say, leaving me in the background, you know, with my teeth in my mouth. So I had to ask her not to do that. But she was all right.

R: In your opinion, have students changed, like their seriousness over the years?

S: Well, there was never anybody any more serious than an engineer. They had such a hard curriculum, and then the professors were demanding, had to be. So, I don't think we've ever had any great lack of seriousness about studies on our campus. And during the time when we had the Chicano troubles, you know, there was a lot of fussing and fooling around the campus and marching in parades and so on. And a lot of my Mexican students didn't pay it any mind, they wanted to go on with their work. So we never even went to the window to watch the parade, we went on with our work. But there was a wing of activists on the campus who did make considerable fuss, and they actually made life pretty miserable for some of the professors and particularly for the president, President Smiley. They braced him up and told him what he was going to do, but they didn't bother me any. I never had a bit of trouble.

R: Is there a difference in quality in terms of their preparation over the years?

S: Well, you must remember that I've been out of there now for over 11 years. I don't know what the situation is now. I think for a while we were complaining that standards were getting lower and lower. Yeah, I heard about that and that something had to be done about it. I think when Dr. Templeton came he started to clean things up a little bit. But I really believe that the hard times we had, the coming on of the Depression, had a lot to do with making people realize that it was a pretty competitive world and they better give it their best at what they were doing. So I don't feel that we...perhaps in some departments we've had low standards

and people got by pretty easily, but I don't think on the whole that UTEP has ever been a place where nothing was expected of anybody.

How do you feel about it now? You think standards are pretty low?

R: Well, I think the preparation that these students are getting in the high schools is dreadful, particularly in relation to History. It's like they don't know how to listen. It will go in one ear and out the other. They don't do the readings. Like many of them in my 3102 said that Joe McCarthy was the president between Roosevelt and Truman, you know. It's just a real lack.

S: Well, you know what the high school teachers say. They say that they come up from the grade school without adequate preparation in reading, writing and arithmetic and so forth. And I don't believe that any of the teachers are to blame. I think it's the social environment. I don't think that responsibility is inculcated in the home very much any more with both parents working. I do feel that every student has a chance to learn if he wants to, and that you can't make a student learn if he doesn't feel that he wants to or that it's necessary. And I don't believe you can blame it all on the high school preparation. I think the teachers try.

R: Plus they get a lot of peer pressure, too.

S: A lot of peer pressure. Yeah. When these kids don't believe that their peers are going to have to learn, why, they don't see why they should have to learn either. But I used to dig at them very hard. I gave them weekly quizzes.

C: What was your favorite course to teach?

S: I guess Southwestern Literature. I was an 18th Century man when I

came down but I had to teach everything for a while. I taught American Literature and I taught The 18th Century and I taught The Short Story. And then I got into the Southwestern Literature in a very peculiar way, which I'll tell you about if you want me to. But that was the one that I was the most enthusiastic about. I think it was good for these kids to learn about their own background. It always is good for kids to learn about their own background. So I went at it pretty hard and we had fun in the class. We talked about a lot of things that were not strictly academic. I remember I used to always have a folk song session. I'd bring the guitar and sometimes I brought some other musicians. I had this old folk song sheet and we would sing folk songs. And I can remember that Dr. Wiggins saw me going across the campus one time with my guitar and he says, "Where you going with that?" And I said, "I'm going to go and teach my class." And he said, "You be careful."

But when I first came I was looking for something to do in the way of a scholarly project. And with the one-room library not much bigger than this room, there wasn't anything I could do on the campus. So I went out to Stanford at the Christmas holidays and looked for something out there, and I didn't find anything I could do. So I decided I was going to go to a meeting of the Texas Folklore Society in Austin, and I went. And I don't know whether it was the first meeting or at the second, but they elected me president, just like that. And I thought, "My God, what goes on here? I don't deserve this." And I didn't know why they did it until I found out that they'd been wanting to have a joint meeting with the New Mexico Folklore Society for years and years and they wanted to have it in El Paso, and there was nobody from El Paso

to take charge. So the first person who showed up that showed any signs of being willing to take charge, they made him president right away, and there he was.

And then I got acquainted with J. Frank Dobie that way, and when he had to leave in 1936... He was in the habit of having his wife teach his courses. Budget committee got tired of that. So in 1936 when he wanted to go out on the Devil's River because he said he had hay fever (but he really wanted to write a book), they asked me to come down and teach his course. So I packed up my family and traded houses with a professor in Austin, and we went down and I taught the course. I did it twice. I could have done it more, but after two times I thought, "They better give me a job here." So I told them so. They didn't want to do that. They said, "Sonnichsen, you have ridden off in all directions." But while I was there I got interested in Roy Bean. He used to live in San Antonio, so it was the closest to where I could start some research, so that got me going.

C: I still wish I could have taken that course.

S: We had a good time. Dobie thought I was not going to make it. He had 125 students registered when I stepped into the classroom. When they found out that Dobie was not going to teach it, they started dropping out. I think I got down to somewhere around 75, something like that. When they found out it was not going to be painful, they started coming back in, and I ended up with 95 students. And I still hear from some of them. We had a good time.

C: Tell me about the faculty quartet.

S: Well, we never had a formally organized faculty quartet. But there were times when it was a good idea for us to provide some

entertainment. Then we would get together a quartet or an octet or whatever showed up. We recruited anybody that could sing parts and we'd sing a few times. There were times when we had parties for the faculty where we had what they called singing waiters, and that was the quartet or the chorus, and we would serve whatever was served and then we'd get together and sing some barbershop for them. That was it. But it was never anything that was well-organized or intended to be.

C: Tell me about some of the faculty parties. Did you get together quite often?

S: Yeah, we got together a great deal. We got together much more than we could do after the faculty became too large, like now when they can't all really get together at one time. Sometimes they have to stagger their meetings and have them for two or three days, like the convocation ceremony. Were you there?

R & C: Yeah.

S: Do you remember Dr. Monroe had those...I think he had two days, didn't he? Or at least he had people coming in at different times because they couldn't all get there at once. Yeah. I don't know, I would have to search my memory to think of very many of these things. The one I remember best, I think, well, we had some good picnics. The first one I went to was out in the sand dunes, and I had never seen a picnic on bare ground before. If you didn't have grass, you didn't have a picnic. You had to have a tree, too, you know.

C: Where were the sand dunes? Down by the river?

S: Well, down by the river, out west of the river, yes. I don't remember if we ever had one at The Rocks. I don't know that you

know about The Rocks?

C: Well, where exactly is that?

S: Well, I'd have trouble telling you, but I think we probably went across the Country Club Bridge and headed west and stopped wherever we found a good place to build a fire and have a little get-together. But the parties I remember best were at the Warehouse, which is where the Liberal Arts building is now. It was called the Warehouse because somebody named Ware had built it, not because it was a warehouse like the way we use the term now. And Dr. Elkins and Dr. Wiggins both had parties for the faculty at their house at least once a year and we all came in formal dress. Dr. Elkins said he thought it did the faculty good to dress up once a year. Maybe it did, I don't know.

C: Why did they call him Bull?

S: Well, he was a football player, an All-American at the University of Texas. I guess that he probably charged about like a bull, I don't know. Maybe it referred to his linguistic habits. (laughter)

C: Did you know the Worrells, or had they gone?

S: Well, Dean Worrell had gone when I came here, but I did know Franklin Seamon, Frank Seamon. I didn't know his brother, who was dead before I came, but Frank Seamon and his wife. They were hospitable people, too. I had many a party in their house.

C: But the Worrell's house was on campus, wasn't it? Do you remember them telling...

S: Are you thinking about Cap Kidd's old house?

C: No, I was thinking about the Worrell house.

S: I thought the Worrell house was over on North Kansas Street where Dr. Knapp lived.

- C: The Cap Kidds lived there later on.
- R: Mrs. Knapp still lives in there?
- S: Mrs. Knapp still lives there, yeah. But Worrell was gone, and one of the Seamons. What was the other Seamon's name?
- C: The only name I remember is Frank.
- S: And his wife was a Virginia lady and she loved to entertain and be gracious. And she was.
- C: Well, one of the things Dr. Monroe's wanting us to find out is if the Worrells had any children.
- S: As far as I know, not. I'd never heard of their having any children. But he went off to Hawaii, didn't he? I think that's where he went, and then they never came back. He died rather young. But if he had any children I never head of it, and I think I would have.
- R: Since the El Paso area has always had large numbers of Mexican Americans, when did the Mexican Americans being to appear in your classes?
- S: Well, they were with us from the beginning, I would guess. They tell me a fourth of the mining engineers in Mexico were trained at our university, so we had particularly strong representation from good Mexican boys who came up and took our courses. There was one named Tres Palacios that I remember, and Emilio Peinado--you probably know about him--and that's the man who built my house. He became a builder. Thought you'd know him.
- R: Peinado?
- S: Peinado, yes we had several Peinados in there, and then a lot more. I could mention a lot of names, but of course you could go through the early Flowsheets. If you dont' have them, I do. I

guess they would be available then?

R: Yes, they're in the Admissions Office.

S: Yeah, you could find out who all was there. There was a problem about social life. For a while they didn't get into sororities, for instance, when they got sororities. Then several people who were of mixed blood began to get in, and I don't know, I don't think there are any bars up now, are there?

R: No. No, in fact the sororities are now predominantly Spanish surnamed.

S: Are they? Yeah.

S: But I was the sponsor of the first Mexican social group. And I thought we needed it and they wanted me to do it, and I very happily agreed to it. So we had considerable debate about what to call it, so we called it Mu Epsilon, MEX. And eventually they got rid of that because they felt that there was an implication of degradation or condescension or whatever you want to call it, in that. They felt that that worked against them. I was out of it by then so I didn't have anything to do with it, but they called themselves the Campus Colleagues. And I think they just naturally disappeared after a while. I don't think they actually disbanded but they just weren't there any more.

R: On campus in the forties there was a national Hispanic fraternity or sorority for majors of Spanish who were Spanish-surnamed.

S: It was an academic [organization]? I don't remember anything about that at all.

I don't know whether I ought to say this or not, but I think it's part of the record and I ought to tell you about it. We had trouble in that sorority because of the class distinctions among

the Mexican American students themselves. I remember I was terribly ashamed of what I did one time. [A] committee came to me and asked me to speak to a particular girl who they thought was not dressing the way she ought to.

[PAUSE]

Course she couldn't do anything about it. She could only wear what she had. And I should never have done [it], should never have done it, and I hurt her. It bothers me still. But that introduced me to the fact that there is just as much class discrimination in Mexico as there is in this country against Latinos. And you know that that's true and it's a sad thing. But I find, I've always felt that this is not anything that you can legislate out. It's something that's on the level of instinct and it's a human trait rather than just a trait of a particular social group. And I think that it's something we must always wrestle with. I don't think we will ever get rid of the pecking order, that's what it really amounts to. But I was happy that I could do what I could to further the cause with respect to that first Latin American fraternity and it makes me happy that things are better now.

R: I have a cousin who, last year she was the Homecoming candidate for Chi Omega and was first runner-up or something, which was nice.

S: It gives you a good feeling that that can happen, doesn't it?
I'm glad, I'm glad. I've always said, I made a speech one time that I called "Harvard on the Border." Have you seen that?

C: I've seen it on bumper stickers.

R: Yes, I've seen it on bumper stickers.

S: Yeah, well, the first time I ever saw it, it was, well, here on this campus. Somebody had a TCM sticker that said, "Harvard on the border." Don't know where it came from. But I had a chance to make a speech for Bill Strain when he retired, so I went into all that. And I told them I felt that the main reason for being here was that we had a chance to work with these two cultures and that our situation demanded it and that we ought to do it. And I think they have done it more and more, and that's what they ought to do. We don't take advantage of that opportunity. If we try to be Harvard on the border, if we try to be a medieval university with chains of office and so on, we are far astray, I think.

C: You served under a lot of different administrations.

S: Yeah, I served from the beginning as a four-year collegerright up to 1972 when I retired.

C: What were some of the strengths of each administration? For instance the first president, Barry?

S: Well, Barry was a shift boss. He was a mining engineer and he commanded the faculty, is what he did. He didn't make all the decisions himself, I'll say that for him. He called faculty meetings whenever he was in doubt about anything, so we had innumerable faculty meetings, always on the top floor of Old Main. I can remember Mr. Drake and I going up the stairs together to another one, and Mr. Drake would stomp on the stairs and say, "Damn, (stomp), damn, (stomp) damn, (stomp)," like that, because he didn't like them.

Of course Dr. Wiggins, when he came on, he was a businessman and he stood in very well with the people downtown. And he didn't

have the same ideas that most academic people, most academically trained presidents, have. He was a specialist in education from Hardin-Simmons and he was the one who called a faculty meeting one time--I think I've told this story many times and you've probably heard it--and he had said that there was some dissatisfaction about the way the faculty was being treated. He said he wanted us to know that he took the same attitude towards the faculty that he would have if he was buying mules. Said it was his business to get as much mule for his money as he could.

C: Oh, dear.

S: I can see his point of view. What was bringing this all on was that there was beginning to be a demand for research and he didn't think that we could ever be a research institution. He said we were a teaching institution. "If you want to do research you can do it on your own time," he said. "And if that isn't the way you like it," he said, "I will be glad to write you a recommendation for any school you want to go to." So that was when Dr. Bachmann invited us to his home to see a new faculty picture be unveiled, a picture of the 20 mule borox team. And after that he always called us Dossie's mules. So we had our growing up to do about relations between the faculty and the administration. I think that we progressed from what was essentially a high-school type of administration in the first place to a college-type administration. Then we had to get on to a university level, and I think the faculty senate had a good deal to do with that. It was a long time before we had faculty representation from any kind of body which could at least recommend a course of action to the administration, but finally that happened. I think that could be overdone, too, and you can

waste a lot of time with that sort of thing.

I remember we did waste a lot of time. When Dr. Smiley was elected for his second administration we had a selection committee the way we always do, and we were told by these people in Austin that Smiley was not to be considered as a candidate. and so we considered everybody else. We brought them in from as far away as Indonesia and wined them and dined them and interviewed them and tried to make up our minds. And then we got a message from Harry Ransom that Dr. Smiley was the candidate he preferred. I do not know what machinations went on backstage. Of course Smiley had been at the University, you know, and did a good job down there, so after all our deliberations we were practically instructed which man to choose. And since we all liked Smiley we were glad to do it, but that kind of thing, of course, you have to till the soil and plant the seeds before the faculty is regarded as anything more than hired help. After a while we became professors that had some dignity, but it took a little while.

C: Let's talk about the English Department. It really grew while you were there. What were some of the problems that you ran into?

S: Well, of course, in the first place, when I first came it was pretty hard to have an English major without some people to teach specialized English courses. That's why I had to do so much of it myself--without adequate preparation in many cases. But of course I got it up the best I could, and after /a/ while /in/ some of the things I got to be a pretty good specialist. I even taught Milton before it was all over, which was something I'd wanted to do but I didn't have very many credentials. I never did any research on him. I understand you've got a pretty good Milton

man there now. I don't whether he gets any people in his classes.

Does he?

R: Yes. He's very flamboyant.

S: Is he?

R: And I think by the power of his personality he has attracted students 7.

S: Is this Gallagher we're talking about?

C: Yes.

S: Yeah. I had never heard how well he was doing. But I know at first there was some trouble about getting students with him, but he's got them coming now.

R: Oh yes, yes. He's very good.

S: That's great, yeah. So we began to enlarge the English Department, bringing in new people, and so I had to give up some of the things that I had been teaching. I gave up with great regret The 18th Century, but we got a good 18th century man in and I thought, "Well, he better have it and I'll stick to my Southwestern Literature," and that's the way it went. When I was dean of the Graduate School I kept two courses. I taught half-time while I was a full-time dean. And that was a good idea that I did it because if you give up those classes you don't get them back, they get somebody else in to teach them. When Dean Thomas, who hadn't been teaching at all, when he had to go back to teaching there was nothing for him to teach, so he conducted tours of students down to the smelter. So I taught two classes and was able to rotate them, and I kept pretty nearly my full repertory of courses. And when I had to go back to full-time teaching, then I had something to teach.

But you'd have to say the thing evolved. Of course, it was

awfully hard for us to justify graduate work. Why should we have graduate work? We needed an M.A. for teachers, so why can't we have a graduate major in English? Finally we did. The big hassle came when we set up a system-wide graduate school, and that was while I was dean.

C: What year was that?

S: Well, I became a dean in 1960, I was dean until 1967, so it would have to have been in there sometime. But the idea was to set up a system-wide graduate school, and I made innumerable trips to Austin to the graduate school meetings. All the deans from all the graduate schools came in and we hoped that maybe we would have an interchange of courses. That was where we went aground with the University of Texas. They were not about to admit that the graduate courses we taught were on par with theirs. So when we tried to get that implemented, the whole thing just collapsed.

R: It's sort of like what we're trying to do now in the History Department, trying to do a joint Ph.D. program with the University of Texas.

S: Yeah. You going to have any luck?

R: Well, we may have. We may get it in Border History. Oscar Martinez is working for it and he says it looks pretty good, because if they can do some of their course work in Austin and some of their courses here for Border History, they may see the logic. But it's been very hard.

S: Who is your best contact down there?

R: Well, John Miller in Austin, and also the people in Latin American Studies.

S: There's one that I should know because he used to teach at UTEP

for a little while, but I can't recall his name right now.

R: Rudy de la Garza who, taught at UTEP.

S: No. No, he's older than that. He's in folklore.

R: Oh, yes. Americo Paredes.

S: Americo, yeah. I think he would be a good friend to ask because he knows us. But you see, the big trouble was all those people down there, many of them from the east, could never think of us as anything but a little cow college out in the sticks where we probably went barefoot across the campus and had no pavements and walked on cow trails.

R: That's the same image that's stopping us.

S: They still have it to a large extent. So when Dr. Ray was president he got around that. He made sure that they saw what we had. He would ask for a departmental evaluation and he'd have somebody from Austin come out and look us over, and they always went back with a much better impression than they'd had before, because they had never seen us. They didn't know anything about us, and you always feel that anything you don't know about must be inferior, you know. That's human nature. But he managed to change that image a good deal by just bringing them out there and letting them look.

Course we had a rule, which I think was a healthy one, that we would not hire faculty from the University of Texas, from our own complex, and what we wanted was to mix it up, you know, bring in good blood from outside and not just use our... It's kind of inbreeding that you get. But some of our best people did come from Texas, of course, like Ray Past. He was from Texas. I brought him out here and helped him break loose from the English Department, so he started his Linguistics program. There were

quite a number more. But I think we got even with them a little bit by...all the whole faculty, they'd like to dispose of their own students, of course, so they'd get them out here. But some of the good ones we were glad we got, and I don't think we let it go too far. I don't think we became simply a colony the way the University of Chicago became a colony of Harvard back in the early 1900s. They regretted it.

Are we missing a big opportunity to talk about something important here now? I keep running along.

C: No, this is important.

R: I'd like to know, what was your most rewarding experience at the University?

S: Oh, those are always so hard to answer. It's like asking, "Who is the most beautiful woman you ever met?"

R: Well, what is something that stands out in your mind, like in the classroom, that you felt you really got a lot of satisfaction from?

S: I always had a great deal of satisfaction at the end of every class. (laughter) Not because I didn't enjoy doing it but because I got a lift out of teaching, and I always felt better after I had been in class. I have the same thing when I make a talk. I always dread them ahead of time, but when I get with those people and we have good rapport and I finish, I'm glad I did it and it makes me feel good. I was walking a little higher than I did before. So that was one of the things, was an common experience for me. I loved to teach these kids. The funny thing was that when it was time for me to stop teaching I left my last class without any great regret, no ceremony or tears or anything. I just taught it

and that was the end. I love to tell about what happened after the classes were all over. You know, I made the Commencement speech. Have you heard this story?

C: Go ahead.

S: I thought you had.

C: Tell it.

S: I made the Commencement speech and they gave me all kinds of goodies, and I staggered off the platform heavily loaded. Then I went to my office the next morning and they had turned off my phone. So I accepted an offer to come to the Arizona Historical Society. Now that's the way I tell it. It's not strictly true. They turned off my phone because I was not going to be using the office that summer, but I did accept this job over here before school was out, really, I had been approached about it. They needed an editor and I thought I could do it. I didn't think my wife would want to come. She was born in Las Cruces, she grew up in El Paso, and I didn't realize how glad she was to get out of town. I said, "Shall we go to Arizona?" And she said, "When can we start?"

So the point was, of course, we had my friends and we had her friends and we had our friends, and she felt...she said, "I feel like a puppet on a string." And I think faculty wives sometimes can feel that way if they...well, she was popular and she was lively and everybody liked to have her around, so she was in some demand. So, she was glad to have a little rest. She's had it over here, though it has built up a little at a time, so she's just about as busy now as she was then.

R: How did you meet your wife?

S: She was in one of my classes.

R: Would you mind l-telling us about it7?

S: But, I had known her. I knew her in 1930 when she was a student but I didn't teach her then. But she had been married and her husband had died. She'd been divorced and she was married again. But she was in a class of mine and I knew her some, and it just sort of worked out naturally. We kind of fitted together, and we have ever since. We have our 28th anniversary pretty quick, this coming week.

C: Oh really?

S: Yeah, this next week.

C: Well, I hope you bought her a nice gift.

R: Yes.

S: Well, I've just given her a \$120,000 townhouse.

C: Oh, well, that's a nice gift.

S: Course I didn't give it to her. It was our money, and we're busy now selling off the furniture from...we were in a big house, a huge house. It's too big for two people. We sold a bed this morning. I just presided at the sale.

C: Well, there are a lot of people in El Paso that are still really upset that you all left.

R: Yes.

S: Well, I never have understood that. I know some people like Mrs. Ball were shocked with that--we had no business doing that. Since there was nothing much for me to stay for. I could have gone on limited service, but I didn't want to since this was a good job, chairperson. I would have a good retirement and I've been able to save all the money I made here. That's how come we could

buy this townhouse with cash. So, I felt it was the thing that I almost had to do. But I had been a part of it for so long and my roots were so deep, I guess they felt that I should be there a long time. But if I had stayed I would still be making those speeches to the Women's Club and running myself ragged doing things around town. That was probably healthy for me. I had a new life. At 70 you don't always have a new life. I had a new one and it was a pretty good one.

R: Well, Bill Timmons keeps so busy now.

S: Yeah. Well, Timmons has a natural affinity for getting himself involved in things and he's done a good job with what he's done. He's enthusiastic and lively and makes people enthusiastic and lively, so naturally he's done well. I don't understand anybody who retires and finds himself bored to death, and yet I see them all the time. It seems to me that you should prepare for your retirement just as you've prepared for life.

R: That's true. Well, I appreciate the time that you've taken with us.

S: Are we concluding?

C: I think so. We're about out of tape. I don't want to take up your whole morning.

S: Well, when some of these things happen I always feel that I have talked too much about things that didn't matter, and then I'm ashamed that we didn't get to more serious topics, maybe.

* According to Thad Steele, the name was the Purity Squad.