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Interview with Doris "Dorothy" Ezell Schmitz

Doris Ezell-Schmitz

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #302
SCHMITZ, Doris “Dorothy” Ezell**

SCHMITZ, Doris “Dorothy” Ezell

Class of 1973 English major with French minor. Middle school and community college teacher.

At Winthrop: ?-1973

Interviewed: December 11, 2012

Interviewer: Robert Ryals

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 1 hour, 7 minutes

Abstract: In her December 11, 2012 interview with Robert Ryals, Doris Schmitz detailed her time at Winthrop during the era of desegregation and social unrest. Schmitz recalls the Civil Rights movement in Rock Hill and her family’s involvement. In particular, Schmitz describes her perception of the similarities and differences between white and black students during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Schmitz also recalls the courses and professors that had a profound effect on her future career as an educator. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: 1960s, 1970s, alumni, desegregation, Civil Rights movement, Friendship 9, race relations, racial prejudice, English, French, Dacus Library, cafeteria, Blue Line, teaching, Indian Land

Interview Session (December 11, 2012): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer’s Introduction

00:01:27 *Question:* Why did you attend Winthrop? *Answer:* It was close and DS had a brain stroke that kept her close to home. DS wanted to go to a college out of town – doctors did not recommend this. DS got a partial scholarship to attend Winthrop. DS was excited to acceptance letter from Winthrop College

00:02:25 *Question:* Do you recall an entrance examination? *Answer:* Yes. First DS had to take the SAT. DS also took a French exam – was then exempted from the first semester of French.

- 00:03:40 *Question:* are you from Rock Hill? *Answer:* Yes. DS still lives in the same home she grew up in. Family moved here in 1956 – original house burned down. Family bought property in Rock Hill. There were no sidewalks when family moved here. DS reminisces about construction on streets and sidewalks.
- 00:05:15 [no question] DS remembers cross burnings and Civil Rights secret meetings. DS recalls her feelings during the 1960s. DS remembers “figures dressed in white robes” as a child.
- 00:08:10 *Question:* Friendship 9? *Answer:* Knew Dub Massey and other members. Recalls student killings. DS remembers Friendship 9 marching through the city and sitting at Woolworth’s to be served.
- 00:10:15 *Question:* What do you recall about integration in the early 1970s? *Answer:* DS’s roommate was African American. DS doesn’t recall a lot of African American students.
- 00:12:50 *Question:* What dorm? *Answer:* McLaurin. Recalls a black student rooming with a white roommate – was rare. Went to Emmett Scott High School.
- 00:15:10 *Question:* Were there still bed checks? *Answer:* Yes. Students had to leave room, line up outside rooms. Someone would check mattresses, desks, and window sill. Happened every month approximately. DS remembers a surprise inspection.
- 00:16:45 *Question;* What about lights out? *Answer:* It was strict. Lights out at 10pm. Students had to be in the dorm by sunset. If a guy came to see a student, he had to wait in the parlor area. Students had to sign out, in order to leave. There was a sign-in time. Students could get demerits, which would limit their activities. DS did not mind getting demerits.
- 00:18:45 *Question:* What kinds of experiences in dorms? *Answer:* Other girls who had guitars would sing and play folk songs. DS said black students would sit around and talk. On weekends, DS dated a man who she ended up marrying. DS recalls what white students did in their free time.
- 00:20:55 *Question:* Were their cultural differences that influenced how interactions between students occurred? *Answer:* There were still barriers. DS recalls an example of name calling between the black and white students.
- 00:23:40 [no question] DS recalls the Blue Line. Discusses what students had to wear. DS’s roommate and two other black students were walking together to go to a church. A man standing outside a church told DS and her friends to leave. Eventually, this man was removed from the church. This happened around 1967. DS was shocked at the

time.

- 00:27:40 *Question:* Did anyone confront this man? *Answer:* DS clarifies that she was harassed after the church service ended. The man would confront students when they left. Other weeks, students could select their own places of worship.
- 00:29:10 *Question:* Do you recall anyone in the congregation making you feel uncomfortable? *Answer:* No. Just that one person.
- 00:30:45 *Question:* Had things really changed racially? *Answer:* DS says things were changing, but things were still evolving. There was still hatred. The hateful stares from people were softening. DS recalls how some white students would greet black students. DS says that she got close with some of the white students.
- 00:34:45 [no question] Talks about her grandmother attending Friendship College.
- 00:36:13 *Question:* Did your personality make you want to learn more about white people? *Answer:* Yes. DS ended up marrying a white man during this time period.
- 00:37:05 *Question:* What were thoughts you had about white students? *Answer:* DS thought, at first, the white students were snobbish. DS discusses the similarities and differences between her and the white students.
- 00:41:10 *Question:* Did a lack of an understanding of cultural differences change over time? *Answer:* Yes. DS was the only black student in her class (English major, minor in French).
- 00:43:08 *Question:* Did a particular professor inspire you? *Answer:* Dr. Joy Pettigrew Berman helped DS get her first job at Indian Land (taught 7th grade language arts). Berman showed DS that she could hold her own. Robert Bristow also mentioned as an influence. DS recalls a party that she invited Robert Bristow to.
- 00:46:35 *Question:* What classes did you have with Robert Bristow? *Answer:* Advertising, creative writing, short-story writing. Hired Robert Bristow to lecture in some of her classes DS taught in Indian Land. DS still in contact with Robert Bristow. Discuss Ron Chepesiuk.
- 00:50:30 *Question:* Was there a professor that you dreaded? *Answer:* Yes. Mrs. Severe. DS did click with Mrs. Severe. DS dreaded having to take a class with Dr. Lange, but she ended up loving his lectures.
- 00:52:25 [no question] Talks more about Dr. Berman. DS talks about Dr. Berman opinions on DS's dialect. DS says that she had this same problem during her first position at

Indian Land.

- 00:54:20 *Question:* Any events that stood out? *Answer:* DS was in Midsummer Night's Dream – directed by Chris Reynolds. DS attended the Bad Seed and saw the group The Impressions (Curtis Mayfield was the leader of that group). DS says these events made her appreciate art.
- 00:56:35 *Question:* What about the food? *Answer:* DS had no problems with the food. DS worked as a cafeteria staff in 1972 or 1973. DS remembers being one of the salad makers. DS was later assigned to hot food, and that didn't work out. DS also worked in the library. DS liked that more than working in the cafeteria.
- 00:58:08 *Question:* Any library staff you remember? *Answer:* Dot Barber was helpful. DS recalls all library workers were very nice and welcoming.
- 00:59:25 *Question:* What defined the Winthrop experience for you? *Answer:* One of new experiences and it challenged DS to be the best teacher she could be. Winthrop made DS a better person and made her realize she could "go to the top." Winthrop echoed what her family told her. It was the ultimate experience. DS says if she had to do it all over, she wouldn't change anything.
- 01:02:25 *Question:* How long were you at Indian Land? *Answer:* There for four years. Taught one year at Lewisville High School. Taught at Chester Middle School from 1978-2005. In 2005, DS went to North Carolina and taught at two schools. Finally, was a part time teacher at York Tech College. Able to travel to China, Indonesia, and Japan with Fulbright scholarships.
- 01:06:10 [no question] Wrapping up interview.
- 01:07:09 *End of interview*