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## Interview with Gale Teaster

Gale Teaster

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

**Interview #068  
TEASTER, Gale**

**TEASTER, Gale**

Undergraduate student in the History department, minor in Political Science, librarian

*At Winthrop (Undergraduate):* 1971-1975

*Interviewed:* October 8, 2014

*Interviewer:* Rebecca Nave

*Index by:* Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

*Length:* 47 minutes

Abstract: In her October 2014 interview with Rebecca Nave, Gale Teaster detailed her thoughts and memories of her time at Winthrop University (then Winthrop College). Teaster spoke of the time period of 1971-1975 on the following topics: Coeducation, Winthrop traditions, student life, and outside opinions on the coeducation of Winthrop College. Teaster also offered her opinions on how Winthrop has changed between the 1970s and today. Teaster then discussed the change in diversity at Winthrop as a result of coeducation. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Coeducation, 1970s, traditions, student life, diversity, School of Education, School of Business, legislation, General Assembly, dormitories, class activities, Winthrop Presidents, degree programs, athletics

**Interview Session (October 8, 2014): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

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

00:00:20    *Question:* What years were you at Winthrop? *Answer:* 1971-1975 as an undergraduate.

00:00:33    *Question:* Why Winthrop? *Answer:* Winthrop gave GT the most scholarships, money.

00:00:59    *Question:* Area of study? *Answer:* History with a minor in Political Science.

00:01:15    *Question:* How has the image of Winthrop changed since you studied here? *Answer:* When GT started, Winthrop was an all-women college. There was a different alma mater geared toward women. Winthrop College known as an institution that produced good teachers. People with education degrees got jobs. There were no degrees in

- business.
- 00:02:49 *Question:* Was there an expectation for women? *Answer:* No. Not by the time GT came to Winthrop. Focused on producing graduates.
- 00:03:28 *Question:* Did Winthrop being an all-women's college affect your decision? *Answer:* Yes. It was mostly the money, but GT wanted to go to a smaller college. When GT attended there were a little over 2000 students. GT from a small town wanted to go to a small school. Got more personal attention.
- 00:05:03 *Question:* Did parents push you to go to Winthrop? *Answer:* No. GT was the first person in her family to go to college.
- 00:05:30 *Question:* What is your current title? *Answer:* Head of electronic resources department. Responsible for ordering, purchasing, maintaining subscriptions and databases.
- 00:06:015 *Question:* Did your past experience inspire you to stay at Winthrop? *Answer:* Yes and no. As a graduate student, GT received an assistantship to work in the archives. GT liked library work. Got her degree in library and information sciences. GT enjoyed the work.
- 00:07:25 *Question:* Position on coeducation? *Answer:* GT didn't feel strongly about it one way or another. GT benefitted from it being an all-women college. GT was initially hesitant about it. GT's husband went to the Citadel.
- 00:08:40 *Question:* Did the acquaintance of men prepare you for the workforce? *Answer:* Only here for a year. Not many men. It didn't hinder or help GT.
- 00:09:20 *Question:* Any important people who had opinions on coeducation? *Answer:* The general assembly of Columbia, male legislatures, was against coeducation. On campus, there was no group that embraced or opposed coeducation. There wasn't a strong movement. A lot of Winthrop Alumni who were opposed.
- 00:10:45 *Question:* Were there traditions before coeducation that changed? *Answer:* GT discusses sports. There was no basketball before coeducation. Primarily grouped by class. Events were based on class (freshmen, sophomore, juniors, and seniors). Classes competed against each other. There were fewer students before coeducation. Students were closer before coeducation. Before coeducation, students had to live on campus. Freshmen couldn't have cars on campus before coeducation. Class activities were important at the time, because not everyone could leave town or travel.
- 00:12:55 *Question:* Any speculations on why traditions of class competitions were lost with

- coeducation? *Answer:* GT not sure why. Maybe people thought it was too hokey.
- 00:13:58 *Question:* Coeducation's impact on enrollment? *Answer:* Enrollment went up. One of the factors that encouraged coeducation: enrollment. Winthrop was more affordable for males in Rock Hill. Enrollment stayed steady up until coeducation. Enrollment down in 1974.
- 00:16:40 *Question:* Impact of environment? *Answer:* No curriculum changes. The School of Business started after coeducation. School of Home Economics enrollment went down after coeducation. Elements of Home Economics merged into the Business School.
- 00:16:57 *Question:* Did dress change? *Answer:* A little bit. Not as much as one would think. Some maybe became more aware of how they looked. Conservatism was still there.
- 00:18:06 *Question:* Did you experience a "loss of innocence"? *Answer:* That was a myth. A lot of the students left for the weekends to see their significant others. Coeducation did not dissolve innocence.
- 00:19:05 *Question:* Was Winthrop behind the times? *Answer:* Yes. Had nothing to do with coeducation, it had more to do with what was taught and how it was taught. The administration was traditional. GT goes back to loss of innocence. Streaking was something that people did. One of the language professors was fired for streaking on campus. Streaking inspired by a song – started a fad.
- 00:21:30 *Question:* Talk about black males on campus. *Answers:* GT doesn't remember a fear of black males. There could have been. GT remembers reading articles from General Assembly that discouraged men on an all-white, female college. GT talks about Rock Hill's reaction. It was a concern in Rock Hill for alumni.
- 00:23:32 *Question:* Why was there a delay? *Answer:* The south doesn't move very quickly on social issues. If Winthrop became coed, then what about the Citadel (all-male institution). Clemson had not been coed for very long. Clemson was the male counterpart to Winthrop.
- 00:25:17 *Question:* Any memories in the transition? *Answer:* GT remembers watching the men move into Bancroft. That was a big deal. GT didn't have strong feelings about it.
- 00:26:15 *Question:* Other girls' reactions? *Answer:* Others were excited. GT remembers seeing the first Winthrop play with men in the cast. They used to cast women in male roles.
- 00:26:54 *Question:* Overall impact of coeducation? *Answer:* Enrollment increased. Male students on campus encouraged the formation of a school of business. School of

- business came about after GT's studies. The focus changed from creating teachers to business people. There is more diversity in disciplines.
- 00:28:18 *Question:* Impact on outward community? *Answer:* With an increased enrollment there was more consumerism. Students don't always drive to Charlotte. In 1971, everyone lived in dormitories, over the years, more students live off campus. Housing has changed. Students had to stay on campus – students were residents. Increase in international students, because of the creation of the college of business. All of the international students lived in Joynes Center. There weren't many international students.
- 00:30:40 *Question:* What about the impact on social dynamics? *Answer:* Just seeing people together. Different races, international groups, etc. together. There is more diversity. Coeducation help start diversity.
- 00:31:58 *Question:* Senate reactions? *Answer:* GT doesn't remember any names in particular. Alumni would write legislatures and discourage coeducation. For a long time, most people did not want coeducation. Reasons for coeducation: tradition, long-standing history of creating teachers. GT remembers concern of black male students, but not a lot - may have been an underlying concern. There was some discussion about the concern of black males.
- 00:35:00 *Question:* Final thoughts? *Answer:* None of things people were concerned about came to past. There is still a strong teaching program. Male students studying to be teachers. Rapes and muggings expected to happen did not happen. People were worried about crime.
- 00:36:10 *Question:* Campus police? *Answer:* They were called "security". Their role was strictly on campus, now it has grown. There used to be a security officer in the library. There was no electronic security system.
- 00:37:20 *Question:* Rules and regulations for dating? *Answer:* In 1971, each residence hall had a house mother. An older woman lived in the dorms. Residents had to sign in and out. House mothers would lend their opinions on the men students dated. A lot of lying went on. Students always signed out that they were going to the library, even when they weren't.
- 00:40:10 *Question:* Who was president and what were your impressions? *Answer:* Davis and Vail. GT didn't have a lot of contact with either president. GT says Vail was boring. Vail gave graduation speech – boring. Vail's wife was also not very social. Davis was here shortly. Davis was friendlier. GT did not have a lot of contact with him.
- 00:42:00 *Question:* Did you participate in athletics? *Answer:* No. GT went to La Crosse games.

- 00:42:37 **[no question]** GT talks about blue line. Freshmen couldn't leave for the first two weeks. Everyone lined up and the president would walk students down Oakland Avenue. Students escorted to different churches. GT went to Presbyterian Church because it was the closest one.
- 00:44:10 *Question:* How were these traditions affected? *Answer:* Students didn't have to stay for their first two weeks –stopped before coeducation. Blue line still happened. Blue line went away, and then it was reinstated.
- 00:45:20 *Question:* Physical education classes? *Answer:* GT had to swim across Peabody Lake to graduate. GT took dance, because she was interested in it. GT also took bowling – GT did not excel at bowling. GT took PE classes before coeducation.
- 00:46:58 *End of interview*