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Interview with Isabel Potter

Isabel Potter

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

**Interview #089
POTTER, Isabel**

POTTER, First
Biology Instructor

At Winthrop: 1928-?

Interviewed: April 22, 1989

Interviewer: Jeff Clark

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 00:24:02

Abstract: In her April 22, 1980 interview with Jeff Clark, Isabel Potter shares her experience as a Biology instructor during the Depression. Potter recalls how budget changes affected her classes and the general atmosphere on campus. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: 1930s, Biology, rules and regulations, salary

Interview Session (April 22, 1980): Digital File

Time Keywords

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

00:00:31 *Question:* What do you remember, in general, of Winthrop during the Depression?
Answer: Winthrop was a smaller school. The size of the school went down during the early 1930s. The social rules kept students on campus – wasn't until holidays that students could go home. IP from Kansas – not used to a school with such strict rules. The atmosphere was good. It was small enough that students knew everybody. IP not conscious of a depressed feeling on campus.

00:03:04 *Question:* Position at Winthrop? *Answer:* Instructor in Biology Department. Role didn't change during those years.

00:03:30 *Question:* Salary cut? *Answer:* Yes. There was a month or two where faculty didn't get salary. A lot of the faculty lived in Joynes Hall. IP never felt like she would be homeless. The one bank in town closed. A lot of faculty had their savings in that bank and lost their savings.

- 00:05:15 *Question:* State appropriations and Kinard “releasing 22 faculty”. How did the budget affect the morale of the college and did any programs suffer? *Answer:* Faculty hated to see anybody lose their job. There was an understanding that this wasn’t anything personal.
- 00:07:05 *Question:* Did you feel like you would be next? That kind of attitude? *Answer:* Not in general, but you have to ask specific people. Most people felt pretty secure.
- 00:07:50 *Question:* Decline in students’ attitudes? *Answer:* Didn’t notice anything. IP speculates that it may have settled them down to work hard. Students were cut off from the world – didn’t get the full impact of the Depression.
- 00:09:40 *Question:* What sacrifices did the administration have to endure? *Answer:* Departments were requested to cut down as much as possible on expenditures. In the Biology Department, IP improvised equipment. IP worked with facilities to make equipment for Biology classes.
- 00:11:22 *Question:* Was it more difficult to teach with this improvised equipment? *Answer:* Yes, but IP felt that students gained knowing you didn’t have to have something factory made to carry out experiments.
- 00:12:05 *Question:* Anything that was peculiar to that time? *Answer:* It brought everyone closer together. The faculty was small enough at the time that everybody knew everybody. Faculty had more contact with the students.
- 00:13:35 *Question:* Did the administration’s attitude change in the way they interacted with faculty and staff? *Answer:* At that time, IP was an instructor, and she didn’t have much official contact with the administration. IP says her Department Chairman was very friendly. The Department Chairman died in office – the entire Biology Department had to work together.
- 00:15:35 *Question:* Tuition increased during this time to \$276. Did this affect the type of students who came to Winthrop? *Answer:* IP speculates the students were better. Not all of the students were from well-to-do students. Many of the girls worked in the dining room. They helped themselves.
- 00:17:40 *Question:* Personal feelings about the Depression? *Answer:* IP knew she had to meet the situation at hand. IP says everyone was in the same situation. It brought the faculty together. Faculty would have card games – entertainment without spending money. The Shack – groups would go out there to spend the afternoon and night there. People learned to entertain themselves without spending a lot of money.
- 00:19:55 *Question:* Was there a change in the way Winthrop entertained students? *Answer:*

Had assemblies (called Chapels in those days). The entire student body was required to attend. During these years, the speakers were more local people. Artist Series. The number of artists went down during the Depression.

00:22:15 *Question:* Did you notice a definite change in the atmosphere? *Answer:* Things became easier after the Depression. The student body appeared to increase in size.

00:23:28 *Question:* Any additions? *Answer:* No.

00:23:45 [no question] Interviewer concludes interview.

00:24:02 *End of interview*