



4-25-1980

## Interview with Walter B. Roberts

Walter B. Roberts

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

**Interview #090  
ROBERTS, Walter**

**ROBERTS, Walter**  
Chair of Music Department, Faculty

*At Winthrop:* 1925-1958  
*Interviewed:* April 25, 1980  
*Interviewer:* Jeff Clark  
*Index by:* Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard  
*Length:* 00:26:29

**Abstract:** In his April 25, 1980 interview with Jeff Clark, Walter Roberts shares his experience as the chair of the Music Department and a faculty member during the Great Depression. Roberts discusses morale on campus and how the University remained fairly unaffected by change. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

**Keywords:** Great Depression, Chair of Music Department, Fringe Benefits, Free Tuition, Effects on Staff, Budget Cuts, Students' Attitudes, Culture and Entertainment, Artist Series

**Interview Session (April 25, 1980): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

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

00:00:18    *Question:* What do you remember in general? *Answer:* Salaries were low compared to other Universities. Heads of Departments had houses furnished and were provided light and heat. During the Depression, Roberts got a salary and a five-room house across from Roddey Dormitory. WR can't remember any faculty being unhappy even with salary cuts. WR really loved Winthrop. The Music and English Departments were the largest. Free tuition to attend the Training School for the daughters of those who worked on campus.

00:04:50    *Question:* How did the budget cut affect Winthrop's morale? *Answer:* Roberts had to let one of his professors go. Morale was good. WR's salary cut \$200 – he only made \$3000 a year. WR talks about the dining hall.

00:06:45    *Question:* Did the Depression affect your job/attitude? *Answer:* Not at all.

- 00:07:05 *Question:* Did the atmosphere of the students change? *Answer:* WR recalls an outstanding student. Morale of the students was good. Many of the students wondered if they had enough money to attend.
- 00:08:10 *Question:* Did students drop out? *Answer:* No. Expenses in the Music Department were low. WR says he gained students because other Universities were more expensive. Converse was an expensive college.
- 00:09:30 *Question:* Hard to teach? *Answer:* It was the same.
- 00:09:50 [no question] Around 1926, South Carolina State Festival Association started. The Music Department stayed large during the Depression.
- 00:10:45 *Question:* Were you asked to make sacrifices? *Answer:* Masters School of Music. D.B. Johnson would bring musicians to Winthrop to teach – WR says this was a service to the South.
- 00:12:40 *Question:* Tuition increased during this time. Did this hinder people from attending Winthrop? *Answer:* WR can't think of anyone. Winthrop was still reasonably affordable.
- 00:13:45 *Question:* Any difficulties with faculty members in your Department? *Answer:* There were conflicts but not because of the Depression.
- 00:14:24 *Question:* What was it like being an administrator during the 1930s? *Answer:* WR remembers having a full schedule – had 19 students.
- 00:15:00 *Question:* How was it working with upper administration? *Answer:* Fine. Faculty was loyal and that made it a good school. WR says faculty always got their salaries – may have had to wait. When the banks closed there were some difficulties.
- 00:17:35 *Question:* Did the Artist Series suffer? *Answer:* Program existed throughout the Depression – was included in tuition. The artists may have suffered in pay. WR explains the Artist Series. WR discusses uniforms and the Blue Line.
- 00:20:10 *Question:* Receptions for the faculty? *Answer:* Faculty picnics. The President's wife would have dinners. Gatherings after the Artist Series.
- 00:21:21 *Question:* Programs? *Answer:* The Artist courses were superior to what they are now. Used to have Artist course programs in Tillman auditorium – could barely hold all the people.

00:23:55 *Question:* Faculty meetings? *Answer:* Everything connected to the college was discussed. Retired in 1958.

00:25:15 [no question] Tenure controversy.

00:26:29 *End of interview*