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2-20-2015

## Interview with Anthony DiGiorgio

Anthony DiGiorgio

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LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview #156  
DIGIORGIO, Anthony

**DIGIORGIO, Anthony**

Winthrop University's ninth President

*At Winthrop:* 1989-2013

*Interviewed:* February 20, 2015

*Interviewer:* Daniel Lee

*Index by:* Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

*Length:* 00:32:57

Abstract: In his interview with Daniel Lee, Anthony DiGiorgio recollects the impact Hurricane Hugo had on Winthrop University and the Rock Hill Community. DiGiorgio discusses weather reports leading up to the hurricane, his personal experience with the storm, and the aftermath of Hugo on campus. DiGiorgio shares the ways in which Winthrop University assisted the community and its faculty and staff. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: President, Hurricane, power outage, Tillman, Stewart House, trees, Breazeale Hall, environmental damage

**Interview Session (February 20, 2015): Digital File**

**Time      Keywords**

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

00:00:35 *Question:* How were you fitting into the University? *Answer:* Acclimating to the South. Never been a President before. AD speculates the campus was excited. There had not been much stability before. There wasn't consistency. AD was President for 24 years. Two months into AD's tenure, AD did not anticipate Hurricane Hugo. AD talks about the day before Hurricane Hugo – in Aiken, SC with an alumni group. Word of Hurricane Hugo came about. People anticipated this to be a typical Carolina Hurricane.

00:05:05 **[no question]** AD talks about meteorologist preparing for a Hurricane, but no one knew how devastating it could be to all of South Carolina. There were the usual warnings.

- 00:06:20 *Question:* What were your personal experiences when Hurricane Hugo hit? *Answer:* Weather reports said that this was a unique storm that wasn't following a normal pattern. AD got the word out to everyone. AD and his wife waited up for the storm. Hugo started in the middle of the night. Between 3am and 6am, the hurricane was devastating. AD compares this experience to his experience with a tornado. Hurricane Hugo spawned small tornadoes. AD talks about the devastation to trees. AD remembers the sensation of the feeling the storm come against the President's House. Power lines and telephone lines were down.
- 00:10:45 **[no question]** AD talks about a tree going through a residence hall window. AD in communication with campus police. AD wanted to go around campus and assess the damage. Windows were blown out of Tillman. Many of the trees on the front of campus were destroyed. AD asked to go out to the farm – the damage here was environmental.
- 00:13:33 **[no question]** AD talks about power/electricity. Winthrop receives power from Duke Energy – had a long-standing relationship. Winthrop only lost power for 3-4 hours. Winthrop was the only place in Rock Hill with power. Winthrop became a safe haven to Rock Hill. Winthrop opened the Coliseum so community members could shower. Breazeale Hall had power and had full kitchens in every room. Faculty members would go to Breazeale Hall to cook, because they didn't have power at home. Classes only canceled for two days.
- 00:18:25 **[no question]** AD got inventory of damage on campus. A lot of people were picking up firewood. The magnolia tree in front of Tillman was severely damaged – decided to save. Windows boarded up, a lot of roof damage. AD talks about the Stewart family – donated President's house and Stewart house to campus. Hurricane Hugo tore off all of the tile from the Stewart house roof. AD talks about Bill Culp's assistance during Hurricane Hugo. Bill Culp found the company in Chicago who made the tiles for the Stewart house.
- 00:24:05 *Question:* How much time passed when the tile was originally ordered? *Answer:* The tile was originally ordered in the 1890s.
- 00:25:20 **[no question]** No structural damage like many of the homes in Rock Hill. AD wanted to get back to normal life.
- 00:26:05 *Question:* What was your impression of the damage in Rock Hill? *Answer:* The town was badly damaged. The infrastructure and power grid were greatly affected.
- 00:27:35 **[no question]** AD criticized for reopening Winthrop so soon. Some faculty and staff were inconvenienced, but a great majority of faculty and staff could get back to work.

AD speculated that students would get cabin fever. Some classes had to be cancelled or rescheduled.

00:29:30 *Question:* What went right, what went wrong, what would you do differently?  
*Answer:* AD's administration debriefed everything they did. AD had to think about ways to communicate in a time without email and social media. No formal review created, however.

00:31:15 *Question:* Anything to do differently? *Answer:* Nothing major. If AD knew it was going to get hit with force, then AD would have taken more precaution. AD says, "We came through it in really good shape."

00:32:57 *End of interview*