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Interview with Walter Hardin

Walter Hardin

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

**Interview OH #311
HARDIN, Walter**

HARDIN, Walter

Interviewed: August 27, 2015

Interviewer: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard

Length: 01:42:58

Abstract: In his August 27, 2015 interview with Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard, Walter Hardin shares his life story growing up on Winthrop Campus and discusses his career at Winthrop from 1987 through the present. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Facilities, Winthrop Buildings, Winthrop Presidents, Winthrop Training School, South Carolina Legislature, Vote of No Confidence

Interview Session I (August 27, 2015): Digital File

Time Keywords

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

00:00:30 *Question:* When and where were you born? *Answer:* Rock Hill in 1955. WH shares his birth story. Grew up on Milton Ave. and Myrtle Drive. Went to Macfeat Nursery. Attended Winthrop Training School until 1965. WH's mother's father was Walter Roberts. WH's mother's mother was an impressionist painter. Drove across country to get to Winthrop. WH's mother born on Winthrop campus. WH's mother attended Winthrop College. WH's father owned the Rock Hill Body Co. Rock Hill Buggy Co. WH's great grandfather was a member of the Board of Trustees.

00:06:50 [no question] Describes Walter Roberts. Describes Georgina Wooton Roberts. Georgina Wooton Roberts not allowed to teach at Winthrop. WH describes his mother. Lois Rhame West – one of the first married students at Winthrop. James C. Hardin – WH's father. "The other family business." March 2, 1987 when WH started at Winthrop.

00:11:48 [no question] The state of Winthrop when WH arrived. President Vail. President Lader. President Piper. WH describes why he was hired. President DiGiorgio. WH discusses the creation of buildings on campus.

- 00:21:05 [no question] Dr. Piper going to the South Carolina Legislature. Visual Arts Department created. Piper asked for capital funding to renovate Rutledge, Johnson, and the Conservatory of Music. Discusses the needs of Rutledge, Johnson, and the Conservatory of Music. Johnson's original function was a YWCA.
- 00:28:20 *Question:* How did DiGiorgio get funding to renovate and build buildings? *Answer:* South Carolina used to give bond bills. "Below the Line" money. Commission on Higher Education. Dalton Hall.
- 00:32:35 *Question:* How did DiGiorgio advocate for Dalton Hall? *Answer:* Commission on Higher Education. Winthrop's electrical distribution. Needed to replace transformers. Not enough chiller capacity to cool buildings. 1995-1996.
- 00:36:10 [no question] Withers renovations. "It needs to be fed." "It's just like a big ole beast. You gotta feed it." Initially going to renovate and add onto Sims. Seismic code for Sims. Built Dalton Hall. Renovated Sims in 2002.
- 00:42:40 [no question] Exxon Valdez fine money. South Carolina spent the fine money on energy efficiencies. Winthrop replaced windows. 2000s.
- 00:44:15 [no question] West Center aka Wellness Center. Original plan was to add onto Peabody Building. Brick and mortar fee added to tuition. Winthrop's competition. Housing fee. Privatized development. Courtyard. Wofford and Richardson buildings.
- 00:51:00 [no question] First public institution with housing to have all buildings with fire sprinklers. Completed in 2004-2005.
- 00:51:45 *Question:* Vote of No Confidence? *Answer:* South still healing from the Civil War. Republican reconstruction. DiGiorgio from New Jersey. Business in the South vs. North. Speech Department. Board of Trustees. DiGiorgio learned from the experience. Importance of the appearance of campus.
- 01:02:15 [no question] Future Steps program. Salaries improved and the vision of the campus came to fruition. South Carolina cut funding for higher education. Liberal Arts education.
- 01:06:55 *Question:* What did you learn from the Vote of No Confidence? *Answer:* "You can do anything you put your mind to."
- 01:09:20 *Question:* Fear the shift to online universities? *Answer:* Students learn a lot living on a campus. WH wants the state and federal government to better support higher education.

- 01:12:45 *Question:* Vivid memories from Macfeat Nursery? *Answer:* “I don’t remember anything other than the Winthrop Campus growing up.” WH describes how he got to Macfeat. Structured day of creative play. Rosemary Althouse. Students slept in cubbies. Student rode tricycles.
- 01:16:30 [no question] Winthrop Training School. WH’s father went to Macfeat too.
- 01:17:05 *Question:* What was it like being in Withers as a child? *Answer:* “It just seemed like a castle.” Fourth floor was a gymnasium. WH never got to go up to the fourth floor of Withers until he started working there. Billy Culp. Bill Culp. WH describes the layout of Withers.
- 01:19:55 *Question:* Student teachers? *Answer:* Yes. Mickey Taylor. Mickey Taylor was the student representative. Rooms all set up the same in Withers. Cloak room. Chalk dust.
- 01:22:05 *Question:* Good student? *Answer:* Probably not.
- 01:22:25 *Question:* Alligator on campus? *Answer:* Dragon costume. WH thinks there may have been a real alligator.
- 01:24:00 [no question] Front yard of Winthrop Training School. Recess. Playground. WH describes the slide and other equipment.
- 01:25:35 *Question:* What influenced you to work here? *Answer:* WH compares himself to his brother. WH says he had a natural aptitude for fixing things. WH had an artistic ability. Furniture making.
- 01:29:50 *Question:* Was Bill Culp an influence? *Answer:* Yes. WH says he wanted to be like Bill. Ernest Carroll another influence. WH discusses the family business. “I was just a good fit for this job when it needed me.”
- 01:32:55 *Question:* First position at Winthrop? *Answer:* Applied to three places and was offered all three jobs. Took the job at Winthrop because it was “the other family business.” Assistant Director of the physical plant. Had that position for 8 months. Became Director. Became Associate Vice President around 2000.
- 01:36:05 *Question:* How does current position compare to first position at Winthrop? *Answer:* Winthrop was unstable throughout the 1980s. Coliseum was considered a debacle. WH speculates he was hired to bring new and youthful thinking to facilities.
- 01:39:20 *Question:* What do you hope to accomplish in the next three years? *Answer:* Keep the campus at its current level. Building assessment. Library. New residence halls. WH wants facilities personnel appreciated more.

01:42:58 *End of interview*