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Interview with Manning Kimmel

Manning Kimmel

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

**Interview #221
KIMMEL, Manning**

KIMMEL, Manning

Co-Owner and Managing Partner of Our Three Sons Broadcasting
Chair, Rock Hill Economic Development Corp.

Interviewed: March 10, 2015

Interviewer: Rebecca Masters

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard and Rebecca Masters

Length: 00:55:00

Abstract: In his March 10, 2015 interview with Rebecca Masters, Manning Kimmel reflects on the DiGiorgio Administration. Kimmel recounts DiGiorgio's efforts to grow Winthrop and create a bridge between the University and Rock Hill. Throughout the interview, Kimmel summarizes the general consensus of the Rock Hill community in recent key events at Winthrop. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Anthony DiGiorgio, Rock Hill, Presidents, Winthrop History, Radio, vote of no confidence, Knowledge Park, College Town, economic development, athletics, facilities, DiGiorgio style

Interview Session (March 10, 2015): Digital File

Time Keywords

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

00:00:18 *Question:* Roles at Winthrop? *Answer:* Managing partner of OTS Media in Rock Hill – operates five radio stations. Has been in Rock Hill for 34 years. Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation – chair, Chair of York County Economic Development Board, involved with church organizations, Winthrop Athletics (fan of basketball), and Winthrop Community Leaders Advisory – planning and organization at Winthrop University.

00:02:44 *Question:* Winthrop's strengths and weaknesses? *Answer:* Weaknesses – no linkage between Winthrop and the Rock Hill community. MK speculates this was because Winthrop did not have a consistent President. When DiGiorgio arrived the vision of Winthrop changed. The programs at Winthrop got better.

- 00:04:20 *Question:* How would you compare “old” Winthrop to the Winthrop of today?
Answer: “More good stuff across the board.” The degree programs became nationally certified. The building program – seen mostly in the Athletic department. DiGiorgio added the school colors to the Coliseum. Remodeling of dorms. Transition to the NCAA – “that’s when the spotlight began to shine on Winthrop University.” Sports grew at Winthrop. Acquisition of the American Legion property. Transition from a College to a University.
- 00:09:20 *Question:* What were your first impressions of DiGiorgio and how do you view him now?
Answer: First met DiGiorgio on the telephone after the Board offered DiGiorgio the job of President. MK says he envied DiGiorgio’s management style. MK comments on DiGiorgio’s personality: organized, engaged, etc.
- 00:11:47 *Question:* Biggest challenge Winthrop faced?
Answer: When the faculty had the vote of no confidence. MK says he was impressed by DiGiorgio’s action and resilience after the vote of no confidence
- 00:13:50 *Question:* How did the community respond during the vote of no confidence?
Answer: MK speculates on the community reaction. The public was not in the inner circle. Faculty was very public about it. MK refers to a long-term issue: lack of state funding.
- 00:16:40 *Question:* Who was reducing funding?
Answer: The General Assembly. MK talks about the responsibility of the state in terms of buildings.
- 00:18:40 *Question:* How would you rate DiGiorgio’s Presidency overall?
Answer: MK recalls Presidents before DiGiorgio – Lader and Piper. “My benchmark is DiGiorgio.”
- 00:19:45 *Question:* How did Winthrop’s reputation change over the years?
Answer: Before people didn’t know about Winthrop. MK talks about the caliber of students and their commitment to the community.
- 00:21:40 *Question:* Did Winthrop’s historical beginnings as an all-girls school help or hurt Winthrop?
Answer: MK has no opinion. Winthrop has been coed, since MK has been in Rock Hill.
- 00:22:25 *Question:* Politics effect on Winthrop?
Answer: There is mindset in Columbia that results in higher education not getting the level of support it needs. Growth of businesses in South Carolina.
- 00:24:05 *Question:* Decision not to create a football team?
Answer: Stroke of genius on the part of DiGiorgio to conduct a study on creating a football team. MK says it doesn’t make sense to have a football team, because of costs, there are great football players in high

- school already, no scholarships, etc. MK says he understands the logic of having a football team, but it's not feasible without funding. "There are only a few football programs in the country that make money." MK lists the requirements of having a football team.
- 00:27:27 *Question:* Community reaction? *Answer:* It wasn't a burning issue in the community.
- 00:27:55 *Question:* Winthrop as a liberal arts school? *Answer:* Helps Winthrop. The Visual and Performing Arts Program has helped. "Art is a part of everybody's life." Winthrop has achieved a solid reputation in the arts program.
- 00:29:30 *Question:* What roles did Winthrop take on in local economic development? *Answer:* When DiGiorgio got on board, Winthrop's involvement in the community grew. Active Adult Retirement Community. Recession. Civic groups at Winthrop. "The bonds between Winthrop and the community are as strong as they've ever been." MK recalls story of an assignment given to DiGiorgio by the Board of Trustees. College Town Action Plan Committee. Knowledge Park.
- 00:35:55 *Question:* What would Rock Hill be without Winthrop? *Answer:* MK refers to a small town he lived in that had no university. MK drawn to Rock Hill, because of Winthrop. Universities provide knowledge and a certain caliber of people. Winthrop is also an economic generator. Rock Hill wouldn't be the same town. The arts department provide concerts and plays.
- 00:39:15 *Question:* How did Gale DiGiorgio influence the relationship between Winthrop and Rock Hill? *Answer:* "She is as much a part of Winthrop's success as Tony is." Gale attended sporting events, hosted functions, involved in community.
- 00:41:05 *Question:* Any interactions with President Comstock? *Answer:* MK had one opportunity to speak with her on "Straight Talk." MK met her husband when she was on a campus tour.
- 00:43:05 *Question:* Termination of President Comstock? *Answer:* MK's news operation looked into the problems happening at Winthrop. MK says Winthrop had no choice but to terminate President Comstock.
- 00:45:10 *Question:* What does Rock Hill expect from the next President? *Answer:* Stability is an important factor. MK gives credit to Debra Boyd. MK has met with three candidates.
- 00:47:50 *Question:* How should history view the DiGiorgio Administration? *Answer:* DiGiorgio got "stuff done." MK lists off DiGiorgio's work. MK provides Comstock's opinion on what it would be like to follow DiGiorgio's administration. Winthrop does

need more students.

00:50:35 *Question:* Any other events that stand out? Thoughts? Comments? *Answer:* The defining moment: aftermath of vote of no confidence. MK compares DiGiorgio to his grandfather.

00:53:50 **[no question—volunteered supplementary comment]** MK always respected the way DiGiorgio managed the Office of President in terms of level of formality, style, hospitality, staff demeanor and procedures with visitors.

00:55:00 *End of interview*