

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown Area/Education

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Jeffery Thomas

Interviewed

By

Sam DiRocco

On

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P: This is an interview with Jeffery Thomas for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Youngstown History, by Sam DiRocco II, at Youngstown State University, on February 20, 2004.

D: Jeff if we could just start out broadly with a general background of your family. Are you're originally from the area?

T: My parents are both from the Ohio/Pennsylvania area. My mother grew up just over the state line in New Wilmington. My father was born and raised in Girard. I spent my entire childhood in the Youngstown area with the exception of a six month stretch where we were in Columbus. After that we moved back here and I've been in the area ever since.

D: Did you attend schooling in Girard?

T: I went through Liberty, the Liberty school system. I graduated from Liberty High School in 1983, and I attended YSU in the fall of '83, and graduate din '87. And like I said, I've been here ever since.

D: Let's go back then. So you graduated high school in '83 from Liberty. Do you have any siblings? Large family? Small family?

T: Average size family. I have two older sisters. They both are a bit older than I am. Ten and twelve years older than I am. I'm the baby of the family. They were good role models for me as I grew up. They went to college themselves and they set the pace and set a good example, and I followed in their footsteps basically.

D: So as a kid, let's say before you were in high school, what did you do for fun? What were your hobbies? Describe your neighborhood, your house, your neighbors and friends.

T: Sports was a big thing when I was younger, mostly the backyard variety, backyard baseball, backyard football. All hours of the morning, afternoon and evening with the neighborhood kids. So it was a friendly neighborhood. Lot's and lot's of kids in my life group. Basically (we did) real active kind of things. We didn't spend much time in front of the T.V. We didn't spend much time sitting around, like I said, outside playing, riding bikes, and I did do quite a bit of reading as a youngster too. I developed a love of reading at an early age, and even that I would do outside, take it outside and sit, relax, and read a good book.

D: Did you play little league baseball?

T: I did play little league baseball. And I continued that through high school, I played high school baseball. As a matter of fact the only organized sport that I participated in was baseball.

D: Did your parents attend college? You said that your sisters did, did your mom or dad?

T: No. My parents grew up during The Depression. My mother never finished high school. She left high school I think when she was in ninth grade, so she had completed eight years, part of her ninth grade year, and because of the family situation, she grew up on a farm, she was needed at home, so she never did finish high school. My father graduated from Girard, and he entered the military at a very young age during World War II. He served with the Navy Construction Battalion, the CB's, and he was over in Japan right after the bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. So he spent some time there. After he returned stateside he decided to go to school. He did come down here when it was then Youngstown College, I believe. And he spent some time here in business-type courses. He never graduated from here but he did get a job because of his experience here. He got a job in insurance sales, and that's what he did for the next forty, forty-five years of his life.

D: After the war then he did com back to his hometown.

T: Yes. His family was from here originally, and his brothers and sisters were here, and it was home.

D: So you definitely have some roots in the Mahoning Valley.

T: Absolutely.

D: Was your neighborhood when you were growing up; was there different ethnicities in it?

T: Not really. There was not a whole lot of diversity. But I think it represented the community as a whole where I lived at in Liberty. Liberty was broken down basically I'd say about five to ten percent African American of the students attending Liberty, and the

rest were Caucasian. There was a large Jewish population which really was enlightening. There was such a large population that often on Jewish holidays the school would be open, but three-quarters of the students wouldn't be there in the classes that I was in. It opened up a lot of discussions, and it was really a neat time to be there because people freely shared their backgrounds, their beliefs, and it was almost like a time of innocence I guess you could say. Everybody was accepting.

D: So little league, stuff like that, you said that you did like to read on your own, you took a quick tilt towards that. Did you have any influential teachers at a young age or even into high school who influenced you? Or anybody within your family specifically who really had an impact?

T: Like I mentioned earlier, my sisters were a good example. I saw them studying hard. They both went on to become nurses. And when they were going to nursing school that's when I was in middle school. I would see them studying, I would see them going out and working their jobs, coming home and really working hard and putting forth the effort to get good grades. I think that was a big influence. In the educational setting there were a lot of teachers that I liked. I could name many of them, I don't know that anyone stood out above the others. I probably have the most fond memories I'd say of the elementary years. Just of the warmth of a good classroom of teachers that were nurturing, and encouraging, and really responsible for the beginning of the whole learning process, and I can remember back in the first grade learning to read and being very excited about the new words we were learning. I think it was because the teacher created a nice atmosphere and encouraged us and gave us very positive feedback.

D: So then in high school you said you graduated in '73?

T: '83.

D: So then did you look at other universities or were you pretty set on YSU? What was the process of finding a college for you?

T: I looked at quite a few universities. A couple that jump to mind, Boston University, the University of Southern California, Notre Dame. I had ambitions of what was called biomedical engineering at the time. And it was a cutting edge type of thing. It blended medicine with engineering. I always thought that I would like to get into engineering, and this was a perfect mix since I had family members, my sisters, who were already in the medical field, it seemed like the perfect match. Boston offered it, USC offered it, not too many other schools did. And I did talk with representatives from those schools and what it came down to was economics for one thing, the cost of picking up and going to one of those schools was astronomical, really, USC was very expensive. And it was prohibitive in the sense that my dad provided us with a good living, but it was just beyond what he could pay for and what he was willing to do at that point. He encouraged me continuously, "Hey, think about YSU." And I did. It was always on there as one of the schools I would like to go to. But as a youngster you have visions of moving out and exploring the world I guess. So when it came down to it, and I came down here, and looked around and I talked with people, the cost factor was a big thing, and the closer it got to the point where I was out of high school, getting ready to start college I had some second thoughts about whether or not I wanted to move away. My father was in bad health for a stretch, and that played into it, and I decided it's better to stick around here for the time being. At least that's what I thought at the time. I signed up for classes in the

fall of 1983, I signed up I think it was August 15, the last day to apply for admission for fall quarter of '83. I loved it. I started school down here, I enjoyed it.

D: When you came in did you have an idea of what major you were going to pursue?

T: I came in as an undeclared/engineering major. I wanted to explore a little bit more.

Since I wasn't able to get into the biomedical aspect of it I decided to look into what else was available. YSU has always had a good reputation. The engineering school has always been very well-renowned. So I looked into it. I did take some course and whether it was a growth process or whether I just was illuminated to what reality really was all about< I decided that that really wasn't something I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I ended up switching majors, and honestly I've gone back and forth over the years, and I started out by getting into psychology. I got my psych degree in '87, and then I returned for a teaching certificate, and I used that t teach special ed. for almost ten years.

D: So varying area that you were really interested in, medicine, engineering, psychology, the teaching.

T: I think with the medicine I got away from it just because I realized it wasn't for me. I saw my sisters in it and it seemed appealing, and I did talk to people in the nursing office down here, and I did talk with other individuals, and again it was just part of that self realization that it wasn't what I wanted to do for the next fifty years of my life. When I got my psych degree I had intended to get into either education or law, and again it was a time of exploring what's out there, seeing what option I had, and eventually winding up in education I think that combined my interests in all the different areas because I've been able to touch on the maths, the sciences, the liberal arts, all the different areas.

D: Did you commute when you went to YSU? Did you live at home or on campus?

T: I lived at home the entire four years that I was down here. Commuted back and forth from Liberty. And I can relate to all the issues that students have today.

D: It was amazing, Dr. Blue and I were talking about traffic and parking, and he said it was like that back in the sixties and it still is now.

T: Yea, I think that's where we draw a lot of our population. A lot of our students come from the outlying suburbs. Now the parking situation as I remember it was much worse than it is today. All these outlying lots were not around, if you didn't get a spot in one of the two decks, than you were limited to really far, far off campus parking lots. Behind the M-1 deck for example. It was quite a hike to get to class.

D: So describe for me if you could what campus looked like in the fall of '83 when you walked on.

T: I remember being impressed by the natural surroundings. The trees, the grass, it really stands out in my mind, it was a beautiful campus. And I had seen other campuses, some of which because of their settings in the mountains, or maybe way out away from an urban area had very nice appearances. I was always struck by how nice it was to be here when considering that we're this close to downtown of the city.

D: This is true.

T: It was a nice looking campus. Some of the buildings at that time were in the process of being updated. Some of them were just being built.

D: DeBartolo was fairly new.

T: DeBartolo, and Meshel Hall was built during the time that I was coming don here as a student, so that was brand-new for a couple of years of my time here. They updated Ward-Beecher around that time. So there was a lot of things that were changing. It was a



neat place to be, it was really nice to see improvements and the administration making the efforts to keep things as current as possible.

D: Now you said those lots that we have there now weren't there in the eighties. What was there? Was there more businesses? Houses? Was Youngstown more alive? I know this was during the time or maybe a little bit after the industry and the mills were starting to decrease.

T: my memories would be of neighborhoods around the university area. Actually going back in time I remember when my oldest sister was attending school down here. She took a music class, and she would come down here to practice piano. And there was a building...I want to say this was before Beeghly Center was built, I think it was right over in that area. There were some old houses that had been gutted, and they had put in some pianos. It was either in the Beeghly Center area or maybe down the street a little ways, but I remember as a kid coming down here and she would practice and I would sit there and read a book while she was practicing. And I remember looking out the window when I was there and just seeing lots of houses and lots of bare land. So I think they had even started tearing down some of the structures at that point in anticipation of building. And that is where some of the lots are now, that's where some of the buildings are now. I remember it being basically just the neighborhoods more than anything. I didn't venture into downtown a whole lot at that time.

D: Did you participate in any sports here? Recreational activities?

T: Intramural sports. I did play a lot of those, many of those. I tried to be active in my support of the sports teams. I always enjoyed the basketball games. YSU had a very good team in the mid-eighties. Exciting. Beeghly Center would be packed. There was a

network and they were part of the Ohio Valley Conference and they would televise the games. It was an awesome atmosphere, really electric.

D: Was the coach that had just retired his jersey, was that the coach that was still there at that time?

T: It was the coach that came along after that. Coach Roselli was there a little bit earlier. Mike Rice was the coach that took over in the mid-eighties. He came from I think it was the University of Pittsburgh, or maybe it was Duquesne, one or the other. And he brought one of his recruits with him, a seven foot one center named Ricky Tunstall. And he was a force. It was fun to watch him, it was fun to see Coach Rice, he was very enthusiastic, very energetic, and players responded. We had some fantastic seasons. Came close to making the tournament one year, we thought we had a chance that we were going to make the NCAA tournament. We had I think nineteen wins that year. Football was in more of a decline at that point. We had come off of the success of being a division two team, and when we made the jump to one double A. It was a little bit of a challenge. There were times I sat in the football stadium with about two dozen other people it seemed like, watching a game. There would be very few people there on a cold, wintry afternoon.

D: Was the one side of the stadium that's really nice, that was not there when you were here was it?

T: The big side was the side that was built first, and then the smaller side. I remember going to Fitch High School to see YSU play.

D: I was going to ask you about that because people who go back and remember, they didn't even play on campus.

T: Yea, I remember being out there at the local high school fields, whether it was Fitch, or South High School, I forget exactly which one it was now that I think about it, but I remember being there, and it was a different element. Very exciting, though.

D: Yea, especially in the mid-eighties if they had that great of a basketball team, that really livens up the campus and the community as a whole. What about – this is a topic that's been current here lately, what about books? They had the bookstore controversy here a couple of months ago. Was there a bookstore here on campus? Was that where you purchased your books? Were they expensive then?

T: When I attended in the mid-eighties it was exactly like it is now. We had the YSU bookstore and we had Campus Book and Supply, they were the two options. As a student I thought prices were high back then, and I think it's the same perception that students have now. I did as much as I could to work around that. We were stretched pretty thin with my father paying tuition for me here, so I tried to do the best I could to minimize the cost. I used the library a lot. I used it *a lot*. I went over there and they would often have textbooks that were maybe one addition off, and it served me well every time I did that. Every once in a while you might be missing a chapter but you could borrow somebody's book if you needed to or I'd go stand up at the bookstore sometimes and just read through whatever I was missing, and it would save a hundred dollars. And I thought that was always a good option, especially for the textbooks I didn't plan on keeping.

D: Did you work as you attended school? How was that set up?

T: As I grew up my father wanted me to concentrate on education, so all through high school he didn't want me to have a job, he wanted me to work hard and get good grades, and he wanted me to go to college. When I started college he wanted me to concentrate

on school. So for the first two years he said, "No, I don't want you working. I'll pay the bill, I'll pay for your books, I'll do what I got to do to make it work, but I want you getting the good grades." So I concentrated on that. My junior year I did apply for a job on campus. I was hired on in the Students Serving Students program. I was a student assistant much like the peer assistants are right now for First Year Student Services. That was probably the best thing that happened to me down here because I felt like I knew a lot about the University by that point, but by getting this job I made contacts with individuals, I had the opportunity to meet so many different University personal, and learn the ins and outs of how things worked. It really made a huge difference in my experience down here. I was having a good experience up to that point, and it seemed like with that job I just developed more confidence as a student, as a person down here. So I worked for one year as a student assistant, and then the following year I worked in Kilcawley Center in what was called the Information Center. It's now where Bites n' Pieces is on the second floor. I worked up there and I loved it.

D: Was *The Jambar* being published at that time? If so, how was it run? Do you remember reading it, was it influential?

T: I read it. I'm a news junkie and I read just about any newspaper that's laying around. I had some friends that worked on *The Jambar*, back then as well as right now, it's was a good source of information. I never agreed all of the time with what they had to say. I didn't feel that they always represented the voice of all the students. I felt that sometimes the individuals that were working there kind of proposed certain things and spoke out on certain things that were more relevant to only a certain few people on campus. I don't know how that is now, I don't know exactly how that plays out now, but I did use it as a

source of information. As now there would be some enjoyable articles about entertainment and things like that, and it's always fun to read the letters to the editor, I think that's enlightening.

D: Having been in the area growing up, and of course you said your sister is a little bit older so you would come down to this area every once in a while if they had activities or music recitals and things. What was downtown Youngstown or your memories of Youngstown, compared to when you were younger, as compare to when you actually attended the university? How different or similar was it?

T: My memories as a youngster are very vague with one exception. I remember activity. I remember it feeling fresher. Some of the buildings were dated at that time obviously, and there were some issues as far as jobs at that time, but I remember there being more activity. One thing that stands out in my mind was the old Isley's right at the foot of the Mahoning Avenue Bridge there. My dad would take us down there and let us get whatever we wanted, and I have very fond memories of that. But that's really what it's limited to I think. We didn't venture into the downtown part too often, but down to Isley's, it seemed like every other week we were there.

D: Do you remember when the mills, and the industry, and the steel started to decrease, and maybe how the paper and the community – because I'm sure there were a lot of people, maybe even in your extended family in Liberty or Girard, who worked in Youngstown. Do you remember how that went down?

T: I remember not understanding a lot about it. I remember my parents being concerned. I had an uncle that lost his job at that time, I had cousins that were working there and lost their jobs.

D: This is in mid to late seventies?

T: Yea, exactly. And I remember just not fully grasping what was going on. Back then there wasn't as much media as there is now. It seems like -- I know with my own kids now, my kids are so aware of what's going on in the world, and they're very literate on so many different topics that I never knew anything about as a child. And back then you might here it on the six o' clock news, you might see it in the newspaper, but as a kid that wasn't really what your world revolved around. There was not the media explosion that there was now, so I did pick up on things, and I do remember comments, I do remember my parents talking with neighbors, I do remember family discussions. There was lot's of concern about what was going to happen to the area. I remember my dad being concerned about our own house, you know, is our house going to hold it's value? What if people move out of the area? Am I going to be able to sell this house in a few years?

D: So it definitely affected, in some way or another?

T: I think it very much affected us, I just didn't realize it at that point. And my dad being a salesman working on commission, not knowing from week to week what kind of a paycheck he was going to get, I remember it being a tense time, I remember him spending a lot more time out on calls, out trying to drum up some business. And in retrospect I'm sure it was related to the insecurities that a lot of people felt financially.

D: Now while you were actually here on campus, were there ever any major issues or topics, political things, student issues or concerns, that were memorable?

T: There was always something that came up. There were certain groups that would always promote awareness of certain issues. I remember the peace group was real big at that time, I never participated in any of their activities, but I remember them, I forget

exactly what they were called, but it was a student piece union, and they were vocal about some issues and very visible.

D: Was there an ROTC on campus, a military presence?

T: Yea, the ROTC would repel off the buildings, and they would let you do it. If you wanted to do it you could walk up to the roof of Ward-Beecher and you could repel down the side if you so chose. But yea, they were visible as well.

D: once you kind of had an idea of the area that you wanted to major in or at least get your degree in, was there a specific instructor while you were here who really had an impact or influenced you? Or a memorable professor?

T: I had so many professors that were really very good, very competent, very knowledgeable in their areas, and very good at teaching, which sometimes at the college level you'll find instructors, professors, who are so smart and so knowledgeable in their given areas but they're not sure how to share it with students. I came across many professors who possessed both those skills, the knowledge as well as the ability to communicate it. Just off the top of my head I remember Dr. Hodgekiss, for psychology, he was the first instructor I ever had on campus, so that stands out in my mind. I remember some of the history faculty. I remember Dr. Blue, I remember Dr. Roberts, I could name a bunch of them, and I think that as a whole they really contributed as a group to my sense of satisfaction being a student here as well as my achievement. I felt I learned a lot under a number of different professors.

D: Definitely a good repore then with the student body and with the faculty?

T: Yea. I never had a professor that was not accessible. That's not an exaggeration. In my own personal experiences when I approached a professor I never had a problem talking

with them, sharing time, sharing information. I just wish that I had done more of it because whenever you're going through it sometimes you hesitate at first to approach the professor, and even nowadays I hear students in my position here on campus that are hesitant to approach instructors. I wish I had done it even more than I encourage students now to do it.

D: Was there a balance between female and male faculty members? Was there ethnic diversity in the faculty?

T: As far as I can recall I myself had more male professors. I do remember female professors being here, it was just in areas that I wasn't taking many classes in. I remember some of the sciences there were more female professors. Ethnicity, I don't know that it's any different now than it was then. There were the different ethnic backgrounds that were represented then as there were now. I don't remember proportionally speaking, though, if it was much different.

D: But it was pretty well-balanced in your eyes? Because I know...and I'm sure this would be the case with many universities in the fifties and sixties, there really was a domination of just male faculty, and then over time once you get to the eighties it's a bit more balanced.

T: You know, I never gave it much thought at that time and I'm processing here as we're sitting and talking, I'm trying to think back. It was male-dominated, it wasn't an equal balance, obviously, but there was some representation by the different groups on campus, whether it was ethnic-related, whether it was gender-related. It's much more balanced now than it was then.

D: So you received your degree in psychology in '97?



T: Yes.

D: From there did you do some graduate work?

T: I had actually during the fall of '86 and the spring of '87, I had applied at several law schools, like five all together. And I had been offered the opportunity to attend a couple of them. My dad experienced an aortic aneurysm at the time. It was a very severe health problem. Miraculously he survived it. However, it required seven weeks of hospitalization, and this was occurring during my final semester here, and when he came out of the hospital he was not able to work, he was not able to do much of what he had done previously. And that in and of itself put an end at that time to my thoughts of moving away. And being the youngest child, being the only son in the family, I felt a responsibility to my mother and my father, and along with my sisters we all made a concerted effort to help out at home as much as possible. I stuck around here. I got hired on in the mental health field at a local hospital. A wonderful experience. I enjoyed. I got to work with adults, and then eventually got placed with the children and adolescents, and that it was got me interested in education. And in the meantime I met a lovely woman and got married and seeing that she was a Youngstown native and she had no desire to move, that pretty much anchored me here.

D: Family is definitely important to you, Jeff. Helping your family out and then of course that really helped you out because you met your wife and everything. So from the hospital then, you meet your wife, you get married, then you come back to get your teaching certificate?

T: Yes. While I was working at the hospital I made the decision that I wanted to return and get into teaching. So I picked up a spot on midnight shift. So I worked forty hours a

week midnight turn at the hospital, which was wonderful study time. I concentrated on being here in the morning, sleeping in the afternoon and working at night. So I came back and got my certification in special education.

D: Did you work at St. Elizabeth's?

T: I was over in Sharon, Pennsylvania. It was Sharon General Hospital back then, its Sharon Regional Health System now.

D: So you have those long days working and you get your certificate. Then you get hired as a teacher?

T: Yes, I was hired on by the Mahoning County Office of education at that time. I taught for a year for them, I was hired on then by Trumbull County. I continued that until 2001. Unfortunately I was low man on the totem pole and they were doing a reduction in force, and I was rified in 2001. I enjoyed my teaching experience and I had looked elsewhere, I looked in Cleveland, I looked in Columbus. I was offered jobs in both areas. We had thought about making the move to Columbus, and it would involve moving not only involve us moving away from our families, but just a big change in lifestyle. And again, it came back to the fact that Youngstown is home, it's where we were born and bred and it's where our families are, so I turned down the offer in Columbus. I did accept the offer in Cleveland, which I worked for a year, and I just wasn't happy with it.

D: Where was this in Cleveland?

T: Beachwood City Schools. A very good school district. I can't say anything bad about them. Lot's of high-achieving students, a wonderful learning environment, a good staff. I just didn't fit, and it was in 2001-2002, and with 9/11, and I keep harkening back to this, but my family, when it all comes down to it the first thing I'm thinking about is my

family. With 9/11 happening and with me being an hour away from home, and the uncertainty of that day and the days after that, of being so far from my family on a daily basis, it just made me reconsider. So while I was at Beachwood I had applied for a part-time position here with the University and was fortunate enough to get that, and then when I decided to leave Beachwood I had a full-time position that opened up here and so far, so good.

D: So let's talk about your family, your boys. How many do you have?

T: Four sons. My oldest, Cory, is nine years old. I have an eight-year-old, Kyle. I have a six-year-old, Ethan, and a three year-old, Andrew.

D: So they definitely keep you busy then.

T: They keep me busy. This here is not my job. My job starts whenever I leave the University and go home. This is fun time here, but its fun time with them too. I love every minute with the kids, and they've learned a lot about the University. They come down here, they've been down here many times, and they know a lot about YSU already.

D: Here at the Center for Student Progress and the Student Tutorial Services, what exactly are your objectives and your main goals here? You come here in 2002, you're closer now to the family, you're back to where you attended, so you have that connection. Let's talk a little bit about the actual center now if we could.

T: The Center itself has been around since the mid-nineties. The different areas of the center, like tutoring, multi-cultural student services, first year student services, they all had been in existence prior to being under one roof. The center was devised as a way to pull similar programs together, programs that had similar goals that could use the same resources and put them under one roof, under one structural umbrella I guess you could

say. On paper we look at goals like helping students become independent learners. There are some very good descriptions I guess if you look through the guidebooks of what we do and how we do it. What it comes down to though, and what our Director here, Jinel Beatrice, emphasized even back when I interviewed for the position, is that the buck stops here. Yes, it's a cliché, but there are many truths associated with it. We don't want a student leaving here being sent on another runaround around campus. We don't want students feeling like they have not received the help they need. We want this to be the place if they've exhausted every other situation, that's not going to be the case here. We're going to do what it takes to help the student, whether it's through a class, whether it's learning how to prepare for a test, whether it's learning to deal with different anxieties, whether it's dealing with personal issues, we really do everything we can to help the student. If it's beyond our scope of expertise, then we know who to refer to, and we follow up, and we make sure that they get set up. We help link them with somebody. We will not just send them blindly out the door.

D: And not just your traditional students either. It's also individuals who want to come back later on in life, non-traditional students.

T: Non-traditional students, yes. The faces that we see here at the Center for Student Progress I think represent the university as a whole. Sometimes outsiders tend to think of a traditional college student, a recent high school graduate, and they think they can picture the typical student. Here, I think we truly do see the typical student, and the typical student wears many faces, has many responsibilities, are dealing with things like child care issues, medical issues, caring for elderly parents, just all sorts of different things that people are facing. And again, we try to do what we can to help them out, and

we try to make sure that they prioritize, that they're not only setting aside time for their schoolwork, but if necessary we try and help them on the social side too. If they do have a parent that needs assistance with something, we try and hook them up with the right social service agency, that sort of thing.

D: So only being in existence for what, ten years as a together system, it's really accomplished a lot. I know from my own, personal experience at Ashland University, and of course, Ashland is much smaller, but something of this nature really existed. If a student needed assistance or needed to be tutored in a specific class, at the beginning of each semester the professor would just announce that if you had tutoring concerns, get in contact with the department and someone in that field and that major. And that got the job done, but it was nowhere near as organized, or structured, or set up as this. And this definitely can benefit a lot of students. Is there anything else you'd like to add to the interview here towards the end? Going back to anything at YSU, or anything at all?

T: Well, as we sit here and as I go through things in my mind, I have found memories of the University. I'm proud to be associated with it. I realize that there are a lot of younger people and a lot of families sometimes that say, "Hey, you need to move out, you need to go elsewhere for an education." And I understand the reasoning, I understand the desire to get the best that you can get and to do the best you can, and how sometimes that may take you down different roads. I always encourage people not to sell us short here at the University. Being a graduate I'm very happy with the experience I had as a student. With the interaction I had with the professors and other staff on campus. And I try to make sure that people realize we've got something very good here. I think it's one of the best things about the area, the University. And I'm always encouraging people to keep us in mind

and to not just discard us so quickly. I think the services that we offer are good. I think the people that work here are good. And I think the students that graduate from here are just a tremendous, tremendous group of representatives of what we can do here.

D: They definitely put their imprint on the world, and then if they decide to come back, as yourself, so one way or another, individuals from the Youngstown Mahoning Valley area, they're definitely going to help the outside.

T: I think so. And even our area right here. And I've heard people talk about it, just people that I've been exposed to here on campus, a desire to really see the downtown area get back to a viable location, a place where people want to come down to explore. There seems to be a lot of hope that that's going to happen, and as far as I know there's a lot of people that are willing to work to make it happen if the direction is provided and if the leadership is provided. And if there are some ideas about how we could accomplish that. So I think anybody that graduates from here that has grown up in this area, I think we could see a lot of them sticking around and helping us make the best of the future here in Youngstown.

D: Alright, Jeff. I want to thank you very much for the interview. It was very informative. I learned a lot. And as I told Dr. Blue, I'm very glad that you stuck around the area. Dr. Blue said how he intended on coming to YSU for a handful of years, as some of the faculty have said. But he stayed and made an impact. So thank you again for the interview.

T: Thank you, Sam