

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Growth of Youngstown College

Changes in Educational Structure

O. H. 14

DR. GEORGE SCHOENHARD

Interviewed

by

William Manser

on

March 11, 1974

GEORGE SCHOENHARD

George Schoenhard, professor of Education at Youngstown State University, was born on September 17, 1912, in Canton, Ohio. He attended the Rayen School in Youngstown, Ohio, and the University of Pittsburgh, graduating with a doctorate in Education in 1957. For thirty-two years Dr. Schoenhard was employed by the Youngstown Board of Education. From 1936 to 1947 he taught school, then was appointed Visiting Teacher for nine years. From 1956 to 1959, Dr. Schoenhard was named Assistant principal, then worked as supervisor of Child Accounting for nine years afterward. Dr. Schoenhard also taught classes at Youngstown State University and remains there to this day. In 1964 he received the Distinguished Professor Award. Currently Dr. Schoenhard teaches classes in the School of Education and is a supervisor of student-teachers.

At present Dr. Schoenhard resides at 245 Beechwood Road, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, with his wife, the former Carol V. Armstrong. They have two children, Barbara and David. Dr. Schoenhard enjoys camping, hiking, and sailing in his free time.

SILVIA PALLOTTA
JULY 14, 1977

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Growth of Youngstown College

INTERVIEWEE: DR. GEORGE SCHOENHARD
INTERVIEWER: William Manser
SUBJECT: Changes in Educational Structure
DATE: March 11, 1974

M: This is an interview with Dr. George Schoenhard for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by William Manser at Youngstown State University on March 11, 1974, at 1:15 p.m.

Dr. Schoenhard, what changes in the university have most impressed you since you first came here?

S: Well, I suppose that one of the most significant things is the expansion of the size of the student body from a few hundred students to the thousands that we have now. Along with that there is a great difference in the size of the faculty.

About forty-two years ago here at Youngstown College there were possibly fifteen full-time faculty members and an equal number of limited service people. Today there are hundreds on the faculty. There are also different services offered today that weren't offered before.

Years ago I had a particular interest in history so I checked the number of courses that were offered in history at Youngstown College in 1932. There was possibly one full-time history professor along with one or two part-time people. If you check the current catalog, you'll see that there are literally dozens of history courses taught. This has been very impressive to me.

The physical plant, itself, has changed tremendously. The only building that we had in 1932 was what we today call Jones Hall. It was a beautiful building then and it's still a beautiful building now. They did a marvelous job in constructing it to make it a thing of beauty. Very shortly after I was here, they began using what later became the Business and Secretarial School. It was the Wick mansion immediately north of Jones Hall, but in the beginning it was only used for social events.

When I walk around the campus today and look at some of the marvelous buildings we have here, it just doesn't seem possible from that early beginning.

M: What changes in the Education Department have most impressed you since you first arrived here?

S: I suppose the most significant thing that ever happened in the Education Department here--we called it the Education Department in the early times--was the entrance of George Wilcox to this college. As I recall, it was about 1934 when George M. Wilcox made his way to this place and he basically started the Education Department. Before that time, a few courses were given particularly in Educational Psychology, but very little actually was done other than in liberal arts as far as education was concerned. The Education Department really got started with George Wilcox and it was a fortunate thing that he was such a fine master teacher because he taught practically all the courses.

As time went on, limited service faculty found their way into this institution and they were, fortunately, very fine teachers too. I took practically all my education courses with Dr. Wilcox and the course offerings were very similar to what they are today. Of course, he couldn't teach everything, but he did teach a full complement of courses. It wasn't until years later that another second full-time person came to teach education. It seemed to me that this teacher was Miss Chapman. Shortly thereafter or at about the same time, Dr. Joseph Swartz came here. Later he became dean of the School of Education. Dr. Wilcox was the head for many, many years. With them were some part-time people but it was a very fine place largely because of Dr. Wilcox.

M: He must have had quite a load, then, if he was the only full-time teacher. What problems in particular did Dr. Wilcox have to cope with at that time?

S: He would usually have one class in each subject. He had one class in the Principles of Education, and another in the History of Education. Then he also taught Tests and Measures and Introduction to Education. We called Introduction to Education something else at that time, but I just can't remember what it was. We used the term semester at that time and he may have had six classes to prepare for each semester. It didn't seem unusual to me to have so many classes then, but it certainly would seem very strange to me now. It was a tremendous load that Dr. Wilcox carried.

Educational Psychology was taught in the Education Department by Professor Bare before Dr. Wilcox came here. After that, the psychology part was handled by another department. Incidentally, the same thing is true today. Our Psychology Department teaches our Educational Psychology rather than having the School of Education teach it.

M: As the number of educational courses proliferated and Youngstown's educational program was built up, did any of the faculty, the administration, or the students, have a more-or-less skeptical attitude toward the effectiveness of these courses?

S: From the earliest times that I can remember, as a student here, I always felt that people had a great deal of confidence in the Education Department. This was partly due to the character of George Wilcox. There was a great number of people that seemed to want to come here. Education was a very important part of our program, partly because the state was insisting that two-year certified people become four-year certified people.

It was in about 1940 that the state insisted that the "submarginal certificates" be made significant and that a stronger certification go into effect. People seemed to come here to upgrade their certification. They seemed to come with a degree of confidence, and I'm certain that they were very well pleased once they took classes.

M: Then there was no blind inertia against new things that met the education program?

S: I had no feelings about that. No, I really didn't.

M: How much desire was there in the Education Department to become a school rather than a department?

S: It's rather hard for me to answer that question. I don't know all the ins and outs of the thing. I think, basically, it was a question of people and staff. In the beginning, as I recall, it was the Education Department and was simply part of the Liberal Arts College. For example, when I graduated in 1936, they gave a degree of Bachelor of Arts. I can't give you the exact date that they commenced giving the Bachelor of Science in Education degree.

You had to develop a faculty and you had to bring in many more students to qualify for the status of a school and that took time. We were fortunate in this here at Youngstown College. Youngstown started in Jones Hall in 1931 the year before I came here, and Dr. Jones--President Howard Jones--came here in 1931. It was basically a depression school, and many people came here simply because they couldn't afford to go any place else.

I've mentioned this to a great many faculty people here at one time or another: the cards always seemed to fall right for this school. It got its good beginning as a day school during the depression years. Most history students know that the Depression just didn't end; it turned into the cold war era toward the close of the 1930s. In 1939, we came into the Lend-Lease era, and business in our country increased. This caused more people to come into the University. Then we had the war years and business was good.

There were many people in this community who wanted an education and we seemed to have the answer. This place served a real need because the people in this community needed Youngstown College. Each year, the population grew. It continued to grow with wartime prosperity. Then, no sooner was the war over in 1945 than the GI Bill was passed. That brought hundreds and hundreds of young people into this place. The bill increased our load and made it possible to add faculty and services and many of the things that we appreciate today.

- M: Where did the main impetus come from to change the department into a school?
- S: Well, I would say basically that it had to have a large faculty and many students. It had to have a significant enough place of its own so that it wouldn't be just a department in the Liberal Arts College.
- M: Was there anyone who was displeased with this development?
- S: I'm certainly not aware that there was.
- M: Nobody felt that there was a personal relation or anything like that?
- S: No. As the college grew in size and population and as the Liberal Arts College grew, I had the feeling that some faculty folks, who were not in the School of Education, felt that we gave easy courses. That's a hard thing to try to explain. There are faculty people today who feel that the education courses are kind of "for the birds" and that the courses really didn't have any significance unless they were part of the Liberal Arts. There were those who have, I suppose, always looked upon teachers as not quite as significant a professional group as other professional groups. That's a question we've argued about furiously for a long time. We, in the School of Education still have that problem. We don't feel that the situation is justified in any way, shape, or form. We try to keep our standards up and all through our history, our standards have always been high.
- M: How did the people in the Education Department react to the sectionalization of the department in the 1960s?
- S: Oh, you mean what was the reaction when they broke the department up into Elementary Education and Secondary Education? By that time I would say that the need was felt. The number of students and staff changed terrifically. Many people were brought into the picture. This was particularly true after it became a state university in 1967.
- M: Were there any reactions from the rest of the University to the departmentalization of Education?

S: There weren't any that I was aware of. The only way I could have ever heard of that would be while eating in the hall down in the old barracks building. At that time, I was on the limited service staff and I'd usually stop in there and get something to eat before going to my evening classes. Sometimes I was quite aware that some of the folks in Liberal Arts were critical of the School of Education, but that really didn't bother us too much.

M: Was this departmentalization done with any encouragement from accrediting agencies?

S: I don't believe really that I can answer that. We always got the accrediting that we needed and as time went on, the status of our accreditation continued to improve. Even when I first came here, as a full-time staff member in 1968, our big goal was to become qualified by the NCATE, the National Conference for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Between 1966 and 1969, we had partial accreditation or provisional accreditation and finally, in 1969, we got full accreditation for the School of Education. Incidentally, we're in the process right now of preparing ourselves for a re-examination. We have to be certified by the state and there are many different agencies that check to see if we are offering a solid program.

M: Did the university council on education fulfill its goals and objectives satisfactorily?

S: Are you referring to what we call a teacher council on education?

M: Well, it would be a generally university-wide organization.

S: It would be hard for me to discuss that because frankly, I didn't know about it during my years of experience here as a student. Since I've been on the faculty here, I've noticed that we get excellent cooperation from the total University. Secondary Education, for example, is closely allied with the Liberal Arts College. The School of Music and Secondary Education isn't alone in that regard. We have received all the cooperation that we could want from the total University. This is a question that I answer relative to the present time rather than to the time years ago. It always seemed to me

as I evaluate the University that there is a tremendous amount of cooperation among the different faculty members. They always seem to get along well. Frankly, it is kind of a happy family.

M: One thing that struck me as I was looking through the old directories was that many students had difficulty speaking English properly in the 1930s and the 1940s. Why do you think this was so? Do you think it was simply ordinary bad grammar or were there many foreign students here then?

S: Knowing something about the history of Youngstown, I would think that many people came to Youngstown in the early 1920s from foreign lands. Many times, first generation Americans found their way into this college to get an education. They may have carried with them some of the language barriers that their parents had. I, personally, was never too much aware of it. Maybe there were a few instances of it. As a student here, I was never aware that we had many people with great difficulties. I have always sensed that this entire Youngstown area contained a great many of what I call "dis, dese, and dose" boys, but that doesn't mean to say that they are not fine people. They just carry with them some of the language characteristics of their homes.

M: Do you think the problems students had to face in the 1930s were greatly different from the problems students have to face today?

S: Well, of course, the first things that occur to me are the problems of economics. The 1930s, I'm certain you know, were characterized by very poor economic conditions. The banks closed. You know that right after President Franklin D. Roosevelt came to office in March of 1933, he closed the banks for a short time until they could get reorganized. Lots of people don't realize that, back then, it became impossible to get your money out of a savings account.

Here is my own personal experience, if you don't mind my sharing it with you. I had worked three and a half years, partly while in high school, just to save up a few hundred dollars to come to this place. When I wanted to enroll here in September of 1932, I couldn't get any money from

the bank. The college here had to let me sign over some of my savings to them and they did the waiting.

Many other people were caught in that same bind and jobs were very hard to come by in the early 1930s. I think it was said that in 1933, in this town, one out of every three families was on welfare of some form or another.

The economics of the Depression made it difficult for young people to come to school here. That's why we had so many part-time students. Many of them had to hold little jobs during the daytime, then come to what they called the evening school. There was, at that time, a real distinction between the so-called evening college and the day college. The people in the evening college were there because they had to work in the day. They couldn't afford to go to day school. It sounds like I'm contradicting myself, because I commented before about Youngstown College being in a fortunate spot. It seemed to be able to take advantage of the situations that did occur.

In the early 1930s, some parents who couldn't afford to send their children to Yale and Harvard and some of the more prestigious schools, could afford to send them to Youngstown College. These students, many times, made up the day school population. The evening school population, of course, was made up of people who simply were working--those that were fortunate enough to be able to get work.

M: Dr. Schoenhard, what do you think constituted the main strengths of the University?

S: Well, I suppose there are a number of things that constituted its strength. Firstly, I think we met a definite need in this industrial community.

Secondly, I think we were blessed by some very, very fine faculty members who came to this place. Such people, for example, were Judge Gessner, who was dean of the Law School and Dean Gesten, an outstanding person. We had, for many many years, a very outstanding law school here. There are many people in Youngstown who would attest to this because many fine attorneys got their education here. The dean of men who later became dean of the college, was Dr. Joseph Smith. Dr. Smith, when I first knew him, came over from Hiram on a part-time basis to teach

economics. Eventually, he began teaching here on a full-time basis and he and his charming wife became very strong teachers and leaders in the life of this college.

The Dean of the Business Administration School was Mr. Charles Axtmann and certainly there were many other fine teachers. We had Dr. Scudder in chemistry, Dr. Ford in mathematics, Dr. Bowden in history, and Dr. Reid, a former superintendent of schools in Youngstown. Up until about 1927, he had been superintendent of schools in Youngstown, and he taught here for many years. He was a very fine scholar. The strength of fine faculty members really constitutes a college.

M: What reaction was there, in the community, when the Law School was taken away from Youngstown?

S: Well, I suppose there's a degree of ambivalence in that particular regard. There were positive and negative feelings. I know the college itself would have hated losing the Law School. It was a strong part of our college.

Some people felt that we were preparing too many attorneys for this area. Therefore, I'm certain that some students who had received their law degrees were glad that the law school would not be in operation. This was in keeping with the general idea then that law courses had to be given on a more full-time basis. So you see, there are forces pro and con and some perfectly neutral in this particular respect.

M: In general, what was the reaction throughout the various elements of the University?

S: I don't know if I could answer that, Bill. I wasn't a student here at the time this was brought to a close.

M: How well did the various student organizations cooperate during your student days at Youngstown? Was it a close-knit campus?

S: Yes, I think it was a close-knit campus. I think conditions then were very much like they are now. Committees would meet and sometimes they'd do their job and sometimes they wouldn't. I don't think

human nature has changed very greatly. Possibly, people had fewer things to do in those days than they have today, although we seemed to be busy then. It seemed to be just as difficult then as it is today to get committees to meet.

M: I noticed that there were a couple of spats between the Jambar and the Student Council. Why did they have these arguments?

S: Oh, they loved to argue. They just plain loved it. There was some kind of a pot boiling all the time.

The one that I particularly enjoyed, back in those days, was a scrap between the so-called day college and the evening college. I almost called it the night school. Really, a better term is evening college or the evening school. There was a kind of scrap between those two. The relationship between them was friendly to some extent, but the evening school had been in existence for many, many years while the day school was, basically, an institution that started in about 1928. The day school grew rather slowly, but as it grew in popularity and strength, the evening school found out that it was losing some of its prestige.

There were certain arguments and feelings that caused some dispute. The Jambar was a day school paper and the night school didn't feel that it was getting its share of the publicity. I can remember this very distinctly because some of my good friends were on the staff of the Jambar. The night school decided, at one time, to start its own newspaper. You might look through the records and find out that they called it the Hoot Owl. The Hoot Owl didn't appear many times, but it was an interesting experience to have the evening school try to express itself. After a few publications, and perhaps with some concessions by the Jambar, the Hoot Owl ceased to exist.

This interesting bit of dissention between the two schools, the day school and the evening school, ceased as time went on.

M: How were the problems of the night school different from those of the day school?

S: Well, basically, the students of the evening school were older folks. They were more experienced people. The evening school began at 4:30 p.m. when folks came from work. They had had experiences and they looked down their noses sometimes at the day school people as being just out of high school. There would be some arguments in that respect.

I always remember sitting in an Education class when the folks came in who had been out teaching all day, and I would think to myself, "Here come the old traditionalists." I felt very superior because I thought that I was indeed a liberal and these were the old traditionalists coming in. These folks seemed so old, but they were really much more mature than I was.

As time went on, that type of thing ceased to be. The night school used to have its own organizations. We used to have here a night school fraternity and night school sororities. We also had day school fraternities and day school sororities, and at first they never got together. In the course of time, however, they did get together. That made for a tremendous amount of interest.

M: Did Student Council have any particular dominant group?

S: Well, that was another interesting scrap. There was a day school Student Council and an evening school Student Council. I don't know when the two joined forces. It might be interesting to hunt up the minutes of the meeting in which the two joined forces. Most of the time, while I was here as a student, this fuss continued. They did finally reach a point where they could get representation on both sides, but it was difficult sometimes. There was a problem about the time the meetings should be held. The evening people couldn't come in the daytime and the daytime people didn't want to come in the evening. It's quite understandable why a feud like this took place.

M: Was there a big distinction then between Greeks and non-Greeks on campus?

S: Oh, yes, there were distinctions. I'm not well acquainted with the fraternity and sorority strengths of today as I was at that time. We had strong

fraternities and I think they had quite an influence in this college. I was a member of the Phi Sigma Epsilons. Phi Sigma Epsilon is now Sigma Phi Epsilon, a national fraternity. It seemed to me that it was a very strong fraternity. I'd like to think it was the strongest of the bunch.

M: Were the fraternity roles on campus different then than they are now?

S: Well, Bill, I'd have to say that I was more conscious of them while I was a student than I am now. My statement here is reflected in the role that fraternities and sororities play in most colleges. I think that in the past twenty or thirty years, fraternities and sororities had gradually lost a little bit of their influence. The other day I read a study which indicated that they are again gaining a stronger influence on college campuses. Certainly during the experience I had at Youngstown College, the fraternities and sororities were powerful and strong.

M: Did they have a dominant influence in the Jambar or other publications?

S: I would say that they did, yes.

M: Were some people displeased about the amount of power held by the sororities and fraternities?

S: Well, there were some feelings naturally. I'm sure we have it today although I'm not as aware of it. We had some independents who organized themselves and became quite powerful. They would establish their own little social group, which was quite natural to do. Any time you have a group of people, you'll find that they'll get together in little cliques. We had our little cliques in those years the same as there are little cliques here at Youngstown State University today.

M: Besides the day school-night school division, how much did the cliques affect campus politics at that time?

S: Well, they chose May Queens and prom queens. The prom queens, I strongly remember, were chosen largely by the fraternity and sorority groups. The forces there were quite powerful, as they are today.

I really don't know how to compare them to the strength of the fraternities today.

M: I know that a very large number of students were graduates from either Rayen or South High Schools or the suburban areas. Therefore, was it very difficult for an average student coming from outside the Youngstown district to get involved in campus affairs.

S: Well, firstly, I don't think there were many students from outside the Youngstown district. This was what you might call a "streetcar" college or a commuter college. Most of the people came here simply by streetcar or bus, and many drove here even in the early days. People didn't come here to actually reside here; there wasn't any form of dormitory life. The YMCA and the YWCA were here to offer accommodations if they were needed, but I think the number of students who stayed here was very small. It isn't a very significant number today, either.

M: What influence did the YMCA have on Youngstown's social life at that time?

S: The influence on the college itself was tremendous because Youngstown College actually was formed and organized by the YMCA. This was not only true in Youngstown, but it was true of a school in Cleveland and various other places. It was popular for the YMCAs, at that time, to establish schools of higher learning. This school was organized by Leonard Skeggs and others from the YMCA. The Board of Trustees were YMCA people. Many years later, the the YMCA ceased to be a dominating force in the University.

I can't speak for all of the students, but I know that many of the students wished that the YMCA influence would lessen and that we could become independent. It may sound as if the people here didn't like the YMCA, but I think it was really a question of status. I think they felt that the status of the college would be greater if it could divorce itself from the YMCA. One of the questions that was frequently discussed by students was: How can we divorce Youngstown College from the influence of the YMCA?

- M: How did they generally answer that question?
- S: I think time itself is about the only thing that did it. The College itself had to become economically self-sustaining. In the beginning, it had to depend upon the YMCA for support and only after the College was able to support itself economically did the YMCA let it go off on its own. The YMCA hung onto the College until it was strong enough to exist by itself.
- M: During that time, it seemed that students were encouraged to go to chapel and they had fire drills and so forth. Did the students participate in these activities with a great deal of enthusiasm?
- S: As I recall, they had chapel in Jones Hall. We didn't call it Jones Hall at that time. It was just called the main building. We had chapel there, as I recall, every Wednesday, and it always seemed well-filled. I suppose there were some people who didn't want to go, but the people that I knew were always there. Our whole class seemed to go. The freshmen, sophomore, junior or senior classes weren't particularly large, but the chapel was always filled.
- M: How much of a role did this play in tightening up the University bonds?
- S: Well, Bill any time you get a group together--whether it's one hundred fifty or two hundred or some type of gathering like that--it seems to me that there is something to bring them together. It binds them together in one way or another. I know that at times they would bring in prominent industrialists or prominent educators to speak to the student body. I think these were good forces in the life of the college.
- M: To what degree did students at Youngstown College retain their old high school ties?
- S: I don't think it was difficult for the students to give up their high school ties. There seemed to be a degree of school spirit here at Youngstown. It was kind of interesting. I don't know whether you know this or not, but I happened to be here when we established our school song. Strangely enough, the school song that we sing today at our commencement exercises was not the school song that we formulated back in about 1933 or 1934. I won't sing it for you,

but it went something like this: "By old Mahoning waters, stands our college fair." It was kind of fun to be in on formulating a school song, and it wasn't a particularly easy song to sing. Maybe that's why they changed it later. I might also say that we formulated school colors at that time. It was a red and gold hue. It isn't red and gold anymore, is it? I think it's red and white now.

M: How long did the high school associations last with the students then? I've noticed in my research that there tended to be a pick of Rayen and South people here, and they contested for the elections in their freshman year and tried to get the suburban people to support them? How long did this sort of attitude last?

S: Well, I don't know if I can answer that because I wasn't too aware of it, frankly.

M: Did it affect you much as a student coming from the outside?

S: No. Of course, I had been a Rayen graduate myself, but I had been out of high school for several years and by the time I came here, my ties with the high school were pretty well broken. I don't feel that I was too conscious of the fact that I came here as a Rayen graduate.

M: What were your main duties as Neon editor?

S: Well, it seemed like there was a tremendous number of things to do. I was always proud of the fact that the 1936 Neon, for which I had the privilege of being editor, paid for itself. It was the first annual that ever did. It simply had to pay for itself. You made every effort to have the thing become self-supporting, so that the College didn't have to pull you out of some debts.

To get the Neon to pay for itself was indeed a significant thing. You tried to have an annual that you could be proud of. Just the business of trying to get people to contribute to it was a problem and many of the problems that they have in the 1974 annual we had in the 1936 annual. We had to try to get the pictures taken on time, to try to get the organizations to send their memberships in on time and all the rest of the things. I don't think the problems were really too different then than they are today.

M: What, in general, was the students' attitude towards the campus publications? Which kind of student tended to react favorably to the Neon and contributed to it?

S: The other day I happened to be looking at the 1935 Neon, which was the first one. I was pleased to note that there was a pretty good cross-section of both the evening school and the day school. Again, I go back to this disagreement between the two schools. To keep the annual going, you had to get good cooperation from the evening and you had to get good cooperation from the day school. If you favored one or the other, you were bound to be in trouble. I guess the trick of the thing was not to favor either one.

END OF INTERVIEW