

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Youngstown State University

Personal Experience

O.H. 1893

LEON STENNIS

Interviewed

by

Jerry Bakanowsky

on

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B: This is an interview with Leon Stennis for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Youngstown State University's 30th Anniversary, by Jerry Bakanowsky, on November 19, 1997, at Todd Hall.

Mr. Stennis, what was Y.S.U. like when you attended for your first undergraduate degree?

L: Y.S.U., when I started in 1966 just coming out of the United States Navy, was a much smaller campus physically, and it was smaller in terms of students, staff, and faculty. The university has grown considerably in both regards, faculty and students, and in terms of programs and that kind of thing. The atmosphere was cordial. Jones Hall was the center of things. Today Jones Hall is not so much the center of things, you know. I think Kilcawley Center is probably more the center of things now. But at that time, Jones Hall was the center.

I can remember a lady by the name of Mary B. Smith, God bless her, she is still alive. She was, in essence, to a lot of people and in a lot of our minds, the president. That is because her presence was felt all over Jones Hall. When Mary spoke, people moved, things happened. I was talking to her not too long ago, and I told her that. She laughed when I reminded her of that. She was the registrar, by the way. Registration was a big part of campus life because it was so hectic and strenuous, you know. We had to go here and go there. Everything was done by paper, you know. Computers were not around then. She was a big influence on a lot of people. But, very stern, very direct, very forceful at times. But also very cordial and very friendly, she was not a person that you feared. You wanted things to be done right.

My first class was in the fall of 1966. I registered late because my military time was extended by a month. I was supposed to get out in late August or early September but they extended it. I think it had something to do with the Vietnam War situation. They needed more military people to stay on for longer periods of time, maybe because they were not getting people to volunteer as they needed. So I stayed on a little bit longer. We were on semesters then, that is one of the things that was different. It is kind of ironic that we are going back to semesters, and the university was on semesters when I started. Ironically, thirty some years later we are going on semesters again. So when I came, I think I started in October, the quarter had already started. Either in late September or early October I started, and the quarter had already started. Not the quarter, the semester had already started. So I had a little anxiety, just coming out of the military and starting college just like that. I was a little apprehensive.

I can remember some of my early classes, at least one of my early classes was over in a building called Lincoln Towers, I believe. It was an old hotel, maybe Lincoln Hotel or Lincoln Towers. It was located where the College of Business Administration is located now, and my class was down in the basement. It was kind of dark and dreary, you know. Students used to joke

about what kind of creatures might creep out in front of you if you were not careful. [laughter] And then, I remember I had a social science class. That was one of the courses that everybody had to take, social science. I do not know if they still call it social science or not. But everybody had to take social science, two social science courses, three communications courses. I think they probably call the communication courses freshmen composition now, but there were three then. I do not know how many students take now.

I can remember I felt very confident with my communications classes because I had lots of things to talk about. I had traveled the world, if you will, and a lot of the other kids were just out of high school, or maybe at least a lot younger than me. Some were nontrads, I am sure, nontraditional students, as I was. Most were considerably younger than me. I think I was, if I recall correctly, 23 when I came out of the military and started taking classes here. But I used my experiences in the military, experiences overseas in Morocco and Puerto Rico and Spain. I talked a lot in the oral part of my communications classes. I think I will stop there because you want to ask some other questions. [laughter]

B: No, that is OK. That is good. Can you describe your role as a student activist and what type of organizations you participated in at Y.S.U.?

S: OK. I was not a member, a formal member, of any organization. I was involved in some of the groups that met informally. There was a peace group. I do not recall the exact name of the group. Dr. Alice Budge, who was a professor of English, was also active with this group. She retired just last year. She and her former husband were among the leaders. And there was another professor who was in the History Department. I do not recall his name, but some of the older professors in history might recall his name. They were leaders of the peace movement, and it was not only a peace movement. It was an anti-war movement. The group was not only against the war, it also favored racial reconciliation. You know, the races being able to be in more harmony with each other and cooperate with each other and have dialogue with each other. So that was an informal group. We met for coffee and discussions from time to time. There was a demonstration against the war on campus, the first anti-war demonstration, maybe the first, I am not so sure.

Maybe the first demonstration of any kind was when the university decided to let a part-time history professor by the name of Ron Daniels go. Y.S.U. had very few black faculty members then, and they let him go. He was part-time, and a lot of the black students were upset. So I think that might have been the very first demonstration of any kind on the Y.S.U. campus. It was a time when the black students protested, and some white students joined the black students. We have an organization on campus now called the Pan-African Student Organization, I believe. It was not called that back then. I think it was called the Black Student Union. There again, I was not a member, a formal

member, of that group, but I was certainly in solidarity with that group, you know. I marched with them to protest the university's release of Ron Daniels and, of course, I marched with the other group in protest against the Vietnam War. Vietnam was a very hot item on all campuses at that time. Y.S.U. was kind of slow to join the movement, but there was a movement here. I did not march in the march downtown, but there was a big march downtown that was joined by a lot of people from Y.S.U. Faculty and students, and there were a number of speeches given by faculty members who were sympathetic to students who opposed the war. And that was the kind of thing that was going on at that time.

B: What were your personal reasons for involvement, or solidarity as you called it, with these institutions or groups?

S: Well, of course, I grew up in the South. I was born in Arkansas and I had gone through the ordeal in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Little Rock school desegregation crisis back in 1957. My life had been affected by what happened in Little Rock because the governor closed the schools for a year and I did not go to school. I should have graduated in 1961, but I graduated in 1962, after coming here in my senior year. I graduated from East High School. I had a lot of, you know, emotional baggage, if you will. A lot of feelings, a lot of strong feelings about the need for the country to become more sensitive, to treat its minority population better. Mainly its black population, but other minorities too, of course. The black population, being the largest minority group in the country, just happened to be at the forefront of the civil rights movement, which was also very much alive at that time.

In 1964, the Congress had passed a Public Accommodations Law, which enabled black people to eat at public restaurants and lunch counters. They did not have to go any longer to separate restaurants and lunch counters or separate restrooms. They could patronize hotels and, you know, swimming pools or whatever. So that had been a big step. That much had been accomplished in the South, but there was still a lot of agitation for additional change in the South. So the civil rights movement was very much alive then. Of course, while I was a student, two years after I started here, Dr. Martin Luther King was slain in Memphis. This sort of threw a stick in the wheel, if you will, of the civil rights movement. Of course, the civil rights movement has never been the same since Dr. King's death.

But there was still a lot of agitation to get more things done in terms of equality for blacks and other minorities at that time. So that was the atmosphere, that was the environment that I grew up in. I was affected by the civil rights movement. I was influenced by it, so that was the attitude that I had at that time. And I still have. I still think the country has a lot to do and accomplish in the way of improving the quality of life for blacks in particular, and other minorities.

B: Were there any differences between your education in the South and your education in the Youngstown area and Y.S.U.?

S: Well, I think the difference here is, when I came to . . . Well, let us go back to East High School. The difference there was the fact that the East was racially integrated, whereas in the South my education was all segregated. Black people went to all-black schools, and white people went to all-white schools. I think that was the main difference. I think the quality was different simply because white people were the majority, and they saw to it that they got all the things that they had needed. They did not necessarily, because of attitudes, care that black people were taken care of in an adequate way in terms of programs, in terms of being up to date, in terms of the different tools used for educating, and the training levels for teachers and so forth. It was a political thing. If you are in charge, you are going to make sure that you or your group is taken care of. Maybe it is kind of a human thing. Whoever is in charge is going to make sure that they are taken care of, that their group is taken care of unless they are not very humane, unless they are not very empathetic, and lack the capacity to reach out to others. The others, the black people, just did not get equal treatment. That is what happened in the South, whereas the law here said that everybody had to be treated equal. You could not separate people according to race, you know, with regards to getting an education and so forth. That was the key difference. The opportunity was better here at that time for black people to receive an education equal to that of white people.

When I seized the opportunity here, I was able to get the quality in education. There I could not seize the opportunity in the South. I did not have the opportunity to get quality there because of the practice of segregation. We got the best education that we could in segregated schools, but that was not always as good as it was in the white schools, simply because of the racial situation. I applied to the university, was accepted, and had the same opportunity as white kids. The only difference was the fact that my preparation was not as good simply because I had not always had the best opportunity in the South. Sometimes the teachers did not have the best training, sometimes we did not have the best equipment, sometimes we did not have the latest textbooks, or sometimes, you know, there just was a gulf between what was happening in the white community and what was happening in the black community. But there was not that kind of a gulf here. I was able to get access. It was up to me to do that, to get an access, to take advantage and to capitalize, or seize the opportunity and further my education. And it was tough because I can remember I was not a good high school student. The way I grew up, family background, my mother was a single parent. She left my dad when I was six, and we were on welfare. I can remember going to school hungry a lot of times. I was not the best, I did not do the best in high school. My preparation was not the greatest for coming to college.

Perseverance is what helped me to succeed as much as I have, not only in going to college, but also in the workplace. I was determined that I wanted to succeed in the Navy, in my advancement there. Perseverance probably helped me as much as anything, you know. Once doors were open, having been denied opportunity in the South, I said, "There is just no way that I will be denied the opportunity to walk through those doors." When they passed the GI bill while I was in the Navy, I said, "Here I have a chance to go to college. I never dreamed of going to college, you know. Doggone it, I am gonna go. If they let me in the door, I am going to make it somehow. I am going to succeed." A lot of it comes from my own personal desire to achieve and accomplish things.

B: After you graduated from Y.S.U., where did you go? Did you immediately apply for a position here or did you go elsewhere originally?

S: I worked part-time while going to Y.S.U. My first job after coming out of the Navy was in the steel mill -- the dirtiest, most stinking, in a sense degrading, kind of work that I have ever done. I worked in the 40-inch rolling mill at the former Republic Steel Corporation. That was down off of Center Street. I worked three to eleven, I remember. Of course, I worked some other shifts, too. I only worked six months before they laid me off. Of course, things were kind of depressed in the steel industry at the time. When I would come out after working a shift, I would have smudge all over my hands and my eyes and my ears and my nose. It would take half an hour to get cleaned up before I could get dressed and go home. So I did not have a lot of regret when they laid me off, you know. Of course, later on, they called me back, but I did not go back. I had taken another job.

I worked as a pipe coater in a plant in Girard. It is now closed and so is Republic Steel. I worked as a cashier in the office of National Cash Register Company in New Castle for a while. I worked in a dormitory at what used to be a vocational school out at the Youngstown Airport. It is closed now, but I was a dormitory leader for the boys who had dropped out of high school and were sent to the vocational school to get training. I worked various jobs before I finally got a job doing work similar to what I had done in the Navy. I mean, I was about halfway through my coursework for my bachelor's in business administration here at Y.S.U., which I received in 1973. I was a journalist in the Navy. What journalists do, primarily, is publish internal communication like newsletters for the Navy. They write news about Navy personnel and send it back to their hometown newspapers. They do radio news, television news. They do public relations kind of things. That is what I had done in the Navy.

So eventually, after about two years of college work, I was able to get a similar job at St. E's [St. Elizabeth's Hospital] in the public relations office there. I worked there two years. I went there after leaving the vocational school after it closed in 1969. I went to St. E's and I worked for two years in public relations.

Then, because The Vindicator knew of my work and my writing, one of the editors called me up one day and asked me if I wanted to come work for The Vindicator. I said, "Sure." It was more money. I went to the Vindicator in 1971, and I stayed there for 21 years. I was first a general assignment reporter, then later I became the religion editor. I was religion editor for about 19 years. I was there a total of 21 years, and then the opportunity opened here at Y.S.U. I came here as a news editor in 1992. Next month, December 1st will mark my fifth year as a news editor. So that is pretty much my work history.

I have been around Y.S.U. for over thirty years. I came in 1966, and this is 1997, so for just about 31 years really I have been around Y.S.U., one way or another. First as student, later doing post-graduate work or covering Y.S.U. for The Vindicator, and then more post-graduate work, and then now an employee. So I have been hanging around Y.S.U. for at least 31 years.

B: What type of changes have you seen in Y.S.U. as a student, administrator, and employee?

S: When I came, as I said, it was a relatively small campus and a lot of the buildings that you have now were not in place. I think, if I recall correctly, they had just completed the Engineering Science Building. Tod Hall, where we are sitting right now, was the library. This section, this office space, was probably a classroom. You know, these offices along the northern end were used as classrooms. That area out there was the main body of the library. Kilcawley was pretty much limited to the dormitory section and another area where the eating facilities were located. You did not have that large area where the bookstore is and all those spaces toward that end. Beeghly Center was not in existence. Of course, the stadium was not in existence. Youngstown State played its games at various high school stadiums, like Rayen or South or Struthers. The DeBartolo building was not in existence. Let us see, what are some of the other buildings? Cushwa was not in existence. These buildings have all been built since that time. The College of Fine and Performing Arts, Bliss Hall, was not in existence. The parking decks were not in.

Parking was a big problem at that time. There just was not enough parking space, you know. Getting parking tickets, that was a big item because a lot of people chose not to do the right thing, and they just parked wherever they could. There was an officer who went around on his motorcycle or motor scooter and gave tickets on a regular basis. He was a constant source of irritation to a lot of students. [laughter] That was a big deal back then. But life was fun back then, I mean socially. There were lots and lots of social activities. The sororities were big, the fraternities were big. They gave lots of social activities, parties and dances, and they had the other different kinds of fraternal activities. Football was also big. Well, football and basketball were big. I did not attend the games back then because I was just too busy. Like I said, most of the time I was a part-

time student and I worked most of the time. That was the case with most of the students, they were busy.

We did not have nearly as many students living on campus back then as we have now. We had a much larger commuter population. Of course, as Y.S.U. became a state institution, because the university got more money from the state and was able to do more things and create more programs and develop more facilities and so forth, the student population began to grow. And as we began to grow, sometimes, as I said, problems cropped up, especially with parking. More students came, and it seemed like the university could not acquire enough parking spaces soon enough with the growing student population.

OK, another change that occurred at Y.S.U. Previously, before the university became state-affiliated, most of its faculty members did not have terminal degrees like the Ph.D., you know. The highest level of education that most faculty members had back then was a master's degree. Some, there were quite a few, had only a bachelor's degree. With the university becoming a state institution, there was a requirement that faculty members have a terminal degree for tenure. I believe that is still in effect today, the requirement that you have to have at least a master's degree, at least in most areas, in most disciplines. And you have to be seeking or pursuing the terminal degree in your field, the Ph.D. or whatever the other terminal degree is.

After it became state-affiliated, the university hired a lot of faculty with greater educational backgrounds. Many more people with doctorates came from various areas of the country. And also back then, Y.S.U. probably had a disproportionate number of people who were from this area. Most of the people who were faculty members back then were not from other areas. They were probably from somewhere around this area, if not Youngstown, maybe the Cleveland or Pittsburgh area, not too far away. Whereas when it became a state institution, we begin to draw faculty members from a much broader area. And I think that added to the diversity of the university in terms of its thinking, its outlook, the way it thinks of itself as no longer just a local, regional school but a school that appeals to a much larger area. We now get more national recognition in terms of the kind of work that the faculty is doing with research and other kinds of recognitions. So those are some of the kinds of changes that have taken place.

Back to the social, I really do think sororities and fraternities were much bigger on campus. I think they made a lot more noise. They got a lot more attention. I think there was a lot more activism on campus, in general, among students back then. You see, activism now is not quite at the level that it was back then. That was a very activist age. I mean, a lot of things were going on. We had the civil rights movement. The women's movement was probably just in its infancy back then. Of course, the big item was the anti-war movement, and there was just a growing emphasis on protest in general. On rights in general. A number of other movements followed the civil rights and anti-war movements.



The gay rights movement and the feminist movement were among the most prominent movements to follow. We started to see a lot of these kind of things on campus, whereas we had not seen them before.

So that would be one of the basic changes. That was an era of activism. There was much more activism than you see today among students and faculty. A lot of faculty members were empathetic to, if not actually involved with, some of the concerns of students back then. You do not see as much interaction between students and faculty members in terms of activism, in terms of causes. You see it, but I think the level was much greater back then. So those are some of the kinds of changes that have occurred.

B: You have experienced Y.S.U. as not only a minority student but also as a nontraditional student, enrolling at the age of 23. How do you feel that or hope that relations with the nontraditional groups of students will develop in the future for Y.S.U.?

S: I think the outlook is positive. I see a lot more. I think the number of nontraditional students has, if not increased, certainly not diminished. Now we always had a good number of nontraditional students, students who work, who live at home and commute. Of course, a lot of those were younger back then, and probably still are today, even though they are still within the regular college-age group. I do not know what the numbers are, but I believe that number might be higher today than it was back then. And for a number of reasons. A lot of people have had to change jobs because of the change in nature of the economy and technology. And with Youngstown being economically depressed, a lot of people have lost jobs because of layoffs. The whole steel industry pushed people out the door, so to speak. Some of the other industries related to steel did the same thing. The telephone company, AT&T, laid off a lot of people too. That was big in this area.

Relations at Y.S.U. between nontrads and trads, between traditional students and nontraditional students, is basically good because I think there has always been an understanding here that Y.S.U. is that kind of school. Y.S.U. caters to the community in that regard. Although Y.S.U. is thought of as a commuter school, that perception is changing. I mean we are going more toward that. But that is something that has come in recent times. And that is probably going to increase in the future, from what I understand, as we build more dormitories. But I think the future for nontraditional students here is good. I really do. I think the administration is open to accommodating. We have an organization and a center for adult students. So the university is actually reaching out to the older student, the nontraditional student, the older nontraditional student. We have a lot of students here now who are over 40. I would venture to say that number is probably much higher today than it was in the 1960s.

B: What specific programs, if you had the opportunity, would you hope to initiate to make Y.S.U. more visible to nontraditional and minority students, not just regionally, but possibly nationally?

S: Well, I really do think, with regard to minority students, that there should be a more aggressive push. I really do think we are losing a number of minority students from this area to other universities. I mean really good students academically. We are losing them to other universities simply because they do not perceive that Y.S.U. would be as receptive to them as other institutions. I think Y.S.U. needs to make a much more aggressive effort in its recruiting to attract the higher academic standing minority students, particularly in the black community. I think we are losing too many of them to other institutions when they could go right here and get a quality education in their hometown. That is one thing that needs to be done. A lot of knowledge needs to be spread out there in the high schools, the inner city high schools, where the black students are located primarily.

As for the nontraditional students, I think we are doing about as much as we can. Maybe we could make a few more changes here and there. I think we are really reaching out already to the older nontraditional students, like I said, with our adult learning center. I think, at one time, we even had a day care center for women, single women who have children, to accommodate them. At least that was tried. I do not know how that worked out. The women's study center had set up something where single women with children could leave their children while they attended class. So we have made a number of efforts to reach out to older nontraditional students, and I think the university will continue to do this. If the university sees a need, it will create a program to accommodate even more. I do not know what else we can do there, but I know the university is very open and very receptive to accommodating all students for that matter. But I know that to be especially true for the nontraditional student because we know that we have many of those students in this area. That is one of the markets where we do our recruiting. We definitely try to appeal to those students.

B: Earlier you talked about your position here in relation to the Navy. Could you go into more detail as to what you do at Y.S.U.?

S: Basically, as news editor, it is my responsibility to communicate with the Youngstown community through news releases and through the various mediums in the area. That means radio, newspapers, television, etc. People, faculty, staff, and students submit information to me for news releases. Sometimes I will write the news releases myself after doing interviews with individuals on campus about programs, events, and so forth. Sometimes I will have a student, one of my student writers, do the same. Sometimes people will

submit information to me, and we will send that news release to all of the media in the five-county area, the key five counties that Y.S.U. serves. That is Mahoning, Trumbull, and Columbiana in Ohio, and Mercer and Lawrence in Pennsylvania. We make sure that relevant news about Y.S.U. is distributed to those mediums, you know, radio, newspapers, television, magazines, weekly newspapers, whatever, in the five-county area. So that is the main thing that we do.

We also assist with the Y.S.U. Update, the newspaper that serves the faculty and staff. We do some writing for that, and we help with the editing. That publication has been expanded. It is larger now. We are able to get more things in. We are able to use pictures. So I help with that. When there is a need, the president will have a press conference to announce some special program or event that is occurring at Y.S.U., or to deal with some issue that concerns Y.S.U. For all the press conferences we make sure we invite all the area media to attend, and we get pretty good cooperation.

Other things that we do. There is a column that appears in the Vindicator every other Wednesday, and it is written by a faculty member. I coordinate that. I solicit faculty members to write a column. It is called Scholar's View. The president also writes a column that appears monthly in The Vindicator. Some other things that I do are special assignments. For example, for a short period I did a Y.S.U. oriented program on WGFT Radio, the African-American oriented radio station. It was a one-hour program that aired every third Monday of the month. It was called "Solutions." I did interviews similar to what you are doing right now. I interviewed someone from Y.S.U. about their work and how that work might be helpful to the Youngstown community. For example, I interviewed George Hammer, the crime prevention officer for Y.S.U. about his work in crime prevention. We invited callers to ask questions. So those are just some of the various kinds of things that I do.

I do other things, too. I answer media inquiries from radio, newspapers, and magazines. News people often call and ask questions about people or events at Y.S.U. It is my job to make sure that the media person gets the right information, gets the kind of information it needs. So I do a lot of that. I answer a lot of calls from media. We try to respond to all media calls because we want to have good media relations. We realize public relations is a two-way effort. That means that we send the information out, but we also allow people to direct inquiries to us. We want to cooperate with the community, we want the community to cooperate with us. We want to cooperate with media, and we want the news people to cooperate with us. Setting a favorable tone, having favorable relations, makes that easier. You know, when we want the media to get a message or word out for us, it is a lot easier if we respond when they have questions, when they have stories that they would like to do. So we do that a lot, we do lots and lots of that. Those are just some of the things. I am called on periodically to do other things too, but those are the main things that I do.

B: What would you say would be the most significant obstacle that you have had to overcome while you have been employed at Y.S.U.?

S: Well, you know, in public relations we are concerned with images. We try to do image-building of the institution through various ways, through communication, through programming and so forth. Actually, the whole university is the best public relations instrument. Everybody is a public relations agent. Students, how the students perceive the university, how they speak about the university in the community and with others, how the faculty feels about the university, how the staff feels about the university. So we are all public relations people. The perception that people get from us about the institution is really how the institution is seen by the community at large. By Youngstown State University being located in the center of the city of Youngstown it has often received bad raps from some of the media. Youngstown, in recent times, has had a perception of being a bed of crime. The perception in a lot of people's minds has been that Y.S.U., by the same token, is affected by a lot of crime because it is located in Youngstown. The perception about Y.S.U. is wrong. Our crime rate is extremely low. People have not been able to separate the two.

You know, we have our own police force. We go all out to have all kinds of crime prevention programs. We encourage students to work with the police, faculty, and staff, to be on the watch out and just take general precautions. Therefore we have a pretty good safety record or crime prevention record, but it seems some people just cannot get this poor perception out of their mind. Some people think that our campus is unsafe. On the other hand, the facts show that it is safe. We have been rated the safest campus in the state of Ohio for a number of years. So that has been one of the most difficult things, to try to erode this perception that Y.S.U. is an unsafe campus. We have tried to do that through various means of communication, through our news releases. Every time our president gets a chance to talk about it in a press conference, he emphasizes our good crime prevention record. Every time we get a chance to talk to media if they are inquiring about something that is happening here, we stress our records. We have made some inroads. We have made some progress, but we would like to make more progress in that area.

Then there is the perception that Y.S.U. is having a major problem because of its enrollment. We have had enrollment declines, and the media has sometimes fed on that. In the past, every time there was an enrollment decline, there was a big story in the newspaper about the decline. In the fall of 1998, we were able to turn this rep around for the first time in eight years by showing an increase in enrollment. Many universities have been having enrollment declines for a number of reasons, and one of the reasons is that the overall number of students who are college age is declining. We expect that to change at some point, but in recent years it has been declining. Youngstown has had particular problems because of economic decline and funding problems from the state.

The amount of funding from the state has declined. So therefore we have had to raise our tuition, and that creates a barrier in this area for a lot of students because they cannot always afford the tuition. So we would like to be able to work better to solve some of those problems, and therefore eradicate this perception that Y.S.U. has a major problem simply because the number of students has declined. I think the level, the quality of education, is still good here. [tape stops]

B: What are some of the problems and obstacles you had to overcome, especially with tuition and enrollment? We were just also talking about how the quality of Y.S.U. has not changed.

S: Right. Back to enrollment. Somehow some people in the media fed on the perception that a decline in enrollment equals decline in quality of learning. I do not think that is true. I think the quality is the same. You know, sure we have some problems because we are not as big and we do not have as much funding. Maybe some classes cannot be offered, and some students might have a few problems here and there to get in the class that they want. That does not mean that the quality of education is declining. You know, we just have a few adjustment problems here and there. Sometimes the media has not been very helpful in that regard.

You know, what is happening here at Y.S.U. is part of what has been happening in the whole Youngstown area. The Youngstown area population has declined. The population of the media coverage area has declined. There has just been general decline as the population has declined and the economy has declined here. So we are struggling with the same problems that the rest of the community is struggling with, you know. But I think we are doing a pretty good job overall. I mean, we are still here and we are still able to do all the things we need to do for our students. So I would like to do better at eradicating the perception that the university is in decline and so forth. That has been one of the most difficult things, to fight the perception that the university is in decline and the quality of education is not as good, that kind of thing. It is just simply not true.

And the perception that the campus is not safe, that is simply not true. It is a safe campus. Anybody that is here for any length of time knows that, relatively speaking, that is. That is not to say that we do not have problems. Sure, we always have some kind of problem, a skirmish here, minor problem there, but we do not have the major problems that some other universities have had. So that is one of the biggest challenges, to get the word out in both regards in terms of being a safe campus, and in terms of the university still being active and vibrant and producing a good quality of education.

B: For a final question, sir, could you describe how you feel your position or the role

this office plays in this university will change in the next ten years?

S: Well, from what I have seen, it is going to become even more crucial to the life of the university because image-building will become more crucial as we have the need to recruit more students, be more active and progressive in our recruitment outlook and just our overall outlook. That is one of the things that our office does. My work is only one segment of it. Another segment gets involved in advertising and publishing of publications that showcase the university. The publications section of our office helps produce materials that students get, potential students from high schools, and other students who are considering Y.S.U. as a college, the kind of information that they get in the mail, printed information, the kind of information that the community gets through advertising. The level of advertising has increased very recently. I think, I do not want to say how much advertising will increase in the future, but I would think that it would increase even more in the future as we become more competitive with other institutions. As we become more competitive with other campuses, this office will become even more important. The name of the office is University Relations, but our main mission is public relations and marketing. So those two areas, public relations and marketing, will become even more crucial as we enter the 21st century. Those are the roles that our office plays, public relations and marketing.

B: On behalf of the Oral History Department, I would like to thank you for doing this interview.

S: Thank you. I appreciate having the opportunity to talk about my past and Y.S.U.'s past and Y.S.U.'s future and, hopefully, my future. [laughter]

B: Well, thank you.

End of Interview