

YONGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The History of Youngstown State University

Personal Experiences

O.H. 1897

Julian Madison Jr.
Interviewed

By

Gisela P. Dieter

On

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Youngstown State University

Oral History Program

History of Youngstown State University

O.H. # 1897

Interviewee: JULIAN MADISON

Interviewer: Gisela Dieter

Subject: History of Youngstown State University

Date: November 10, 1997

D: This is an interview with Dr. Julian Madison for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on the History of Youngstown State University, by Gisela Dieter, on November 10, 1997.

Could you tell us something about your place of origin? Where are you from?

M: I am from Cleveland, Ohio. I grew up in an area, which, well, let us put it this way, I can see now that if I look back that I was very lucky. A kid grew up in a better area than I; it is interesting because not too far away from where I live, no more than a half mile, there was an area called University Circle. Case Western Reserve was located there. Besides the college, though, there were Hall where the orchestra played. (It was) Probably the best in the world. I loved the classical music, so when I got a chance, even when I was a kid, I would go over there. Also University Circle had several museums. Cleveland Natural History Museum, Cleveland Museum of Art, which I guess is now still regarded as one of the top three or four art museums in the country. The Cleveland Western Reserve Historical Society. And in the middle of all this was a huge park, which has since kind of broken up a little bit. They put a road in. But when I was a kid, there were actually a couple of huge places to play baseball. So when the summer months came, we would play baseball in the morning, and by the afternoons we were dead tired and hot and thirsty. So we would go to the museums, and I think that the Natural History Museum cost fifty cents to get in. We would tell the guards we were getting water and still it was cool in there and you could get water and then we would en up sort of a tour of the place. And so it was a great place for kids to grow up.

D: Could you tell us about your college years, your academic background?

M: Well, that started out slowly. I had bursts of many interests, but nothing really downhill. And I did go into engineering because that is what my father did, and my grandfather was the first registered black engineer in the history of the state of Ohio. And so I never really was all that interested in anything. The irony is that my father died in

1989, and it was his death that got me into history, in that had he not died, I probably would not have even got to school. I was up in Seattle at the time and I came back to Cleveland, you know, try to figure what to ___. He was murdered actually; he was shot. And so ___ would also let me ___ back to Cleveland ___ go back to school and start taking some history courses. And next thing I know I had a degree in history. I was going to go back out to Seattle actually, but the last week of school spring quarter of the history department came up to me and said they had a opening for someone to be a GA (graduate assistant) and he asked me to apply to be a GA and get my master's. Someone had accepted and then at the last minute they had to drop out. So here the chair tell you that there is an opening and would like for you to apply, ___ and so I put in my application and that paid my master's. It was a two-year program, but I finished it in one year. I was doing about twenty, twenty-four hours worth of work. And so then, while I was getting my master's I was urged by one of my professors, a wonderful man, Melvin Drimmer, who was the grandson of Czechoslovakian immigrant _____. He taught black history, of all things, and he was after me constantly to go for a doctorate. One of the schools that he wanted me to really look into was University of Washington, because he knew I like Seattle. And so I did, thinking I would probably not be accepted by the University of Washington. But they did. As a matter of fact, they offered the most money. So, it worked out that I got my doctorate in Washington, at the University of Washington, ___.

D: Dr. Madison, you have been taking about studies in engineering. Where did you take these classes?

M: Ohio State. Great engineering school. I just did not enjoy engineering.

D: Where did you get your master's degree again?

M: Cleveland State University.

D: Cleveland State University. Okay. What did you do before coming to Y.S.U? You were at Washington University, but then you also talked about working at Microsoft. Can to you tell us a little more about that?

M: I worked for my father's engineering firm in Denver. I had an office out in Denver and we had some projects out there. The problem was that, for whatever reason, Denver's a very strange place in many respects. And in one way, from an engineering point of view, was that they would solicit companies to do various projects, even if the money was not approved to do the projects. It could be years before the projects could get underway and, as a result, business, you know, ___. Also, after finishing a project, there was a lot of financial difficulty. They would find it very difficult to pay companies. Sometimes it was six or eight months probably without getting paid. And as a result, my father thought it was not worth continuing that operation. W was invited to go back to the Midwest, to one of his other offices. So, I decided on going out to Seattle. I applied at Microsoft and got a job called a traffic engineer. Basically, what that meant was I was helping out in the parking lot. Really what it meant was, I did have a background in Ohio

State with computers and my job was to put together a team of various ideas and projects. We were given a time and budget to work with.

D: What helped you decide to become a college professor? What inspired you?

M: Well, I do not know if there was anything or one person that inspired me. I think that what happened was I was a GA and I never even thought of it until I was a GA. The person who I assisted, Melvin Drimmer, gave me the opportunity to give several lectures and I just enjoyed it. I think that there was one turning point and that is that when he convinced me I could do this ___. About fifteen minutes before class one day, he called me up. I happened to be in my office. He called me and said that he was at the doctor's, he was still at the doctor's, and he would not be able to get to today's class. He wanted me to give today's lecture. I will tell you what to talk about. So he gave me a list of A, B, C, D, and E, and I thought about this. And I said, gosh, I can not remember A, B, C, D, or E. So I had the key to his office, and I went in his office. And for the last six or seven minutes I looked up the things I had to discuss. And then I was able to bluff my way through fifty minutes of lecture and discuss ___. At that time I realized that this was actually a lot of fun. I really enjoyed this. He had enough health problems so that the last month of his life, I gave three out of four lectures of his. I figured ___.

D: And when did you come to YSU?

M: Last year. 1996 was my first year.

D: 1996. What brought you here to YSU and the Youngstown area?

M: They offered me a position. I saw an advertisement. Actually, it was interesting. In 1994, when I was in my third year in the PhD program at the University of Washington, I saw that YSU had an advertisement out for teaching history, and in the black studies program. And I saw that I was tempted to apply, but I was not ready. I just started working on my dissertation, and this was my last opportunity to get very close to Cleveland, my hometown. But then, the following year when I was working on my dissertation, getting to the point where I thought I was going to finish up, I saw the ad again. Here they did not hire anyone the year before, I guess _____. And so, YSU tried again the following year. So I was one of the final two, and understand they offered the other person the job, but he accepted the offer and never came, so got stuck with me.

D: Could you tell us something about this first year here at YSU? What impressed you the most and other feelings?

M: The students.

D: The students?

M: The students are, particularly considering the fact that this is an open enrollment university, students are sometimes _____. You have some problems ___, happens a lot because it is a state university. But overall, _____.

D: What were your general expectations of YSU and the Youngstown area in general?

M: I had been to Youngstown before, so I really did not have the expectations as to what Youngstown would probably be like. About the only thing that did surprise me were the prices of homes here are very, very affordable, which is great. As far as YSU itself is concerned, again, I just sort of kept an open mind. I really did not have any expectations ___ and see what would happen. Again, I have not been disappointed. Generally speaking, there are some things that could be done differently, but YSU as a whole I do not have a lot of problems with.

D: What courses are you currently teaching?

M: Well, I do teach black studies course for the black studies department. I teach U.S. History for those who ___. I teach my specialty, which is diplomatic history. And there is a possibility, a couple years down the road when we go to semesters, I will be teaching U.S. Constitutional History. Dr. Satre also brought up the idea ___. Time can be a problem with teaching all these courses, but _____.

D: Could you tell us a little bit about your research? What research are you currently working on?

M: Right now I am working on writing a book about a thing that happened in Cleveland back in 1964. A white minister named Bruce Klunder, who was a very committed all his life to the civil rights movement, was killed when a bulldozer ran over him. He was protesting the Cleveland School Board decision to build schools in a black neighborhood in Cleveland to perpetuate segregation. In this particular case, Cleveland had a long history of segregation. The black schools by the 1950's were overcrowded, so they did this thing called relaying. In which, ___ in one school in the morning and when they go home ___ and go to a different school in the afternoon. Meanwhile, in nearby schools that were all white, there were empty classrooms. The school board refused to integrate the schools. Finally, after several years of pressure, the school board decided to go and integrate the schools themselves, but even then the black kids were segregated. They could not play on the playground; if they got hurt they had to go back to their original school to get looked at. They could not eat in the school cafeteria; they had to bring their own lunches and take their own garbage bag with them. They could not even attend the Christmas play. Although one principle ___ did let them keep the doors open so they could listen to it from the classroom. Under pressure that same year, though, after a few months of this, because of that kind of treatment, the school board was pressured again. So, the schools had to integrate the classrooms. At the time the integration took place the school board decide to build additional schools in these black neighborhoods to get the black kids out of these white schools. Protestors ___. So on April 7, 1964, Reverend Klunder (he was a minister) along with some other ___, decided they would try to stop the project

physically. So Reverend Klunder apparently laid down between 50 and 75 yards behind the bulldozer. From what I have been told, the bulldozer driver was told he was back there but continued to back up. So the book concerns the circumstances leading up to Reverend Klunder's death, and a little bit about afterwards.

D: And is this for your dissertation work or is it separate?

M: This is separate. My dissertation is totally different, and it is about U.S. and Philippine relations during the early 1960's.

D: Is there any way that you can incorporate the Youngstown area into your research? This book, and any other future projects?

M: Yeah, no doubt about it. In several ways. In one-way, incorporating actually what I am going to use ___ for my research. But beyond that, I will be doing one future project a couple years down the road. It will be a comparative history of Africans in northeastern Ohio, along with maybe one other area in the United States and also two areas in Canada.

D: And now, since we are talking about Youngstown, can you tell us a little about your involvement in the Youngstown community? Are you participating in any community committees or anything like that?

M: Not outside of school, not. I am so busy trying to take care of my family and get my work done.

D: And what about your committee participation here at YSU?

M: They keep us busy, probably, actually, too busy with committees. And so the faculty ___ a chance to teach, and not just to teach, but to keep up with the field. It is a problem. History ___. But I am on the History Department Committee. I am on the Curriculum Committee, I ___ the new requirements for ___, going over to semesters. I was involved with the History Day committee, as well. University-wide, I am the chair of the Senate Election committee. And, in addition to that, I am a member of the ___ partnership, the partnership between Youngstown State and various school systems ___.

D: Going towards your teaching experience, could you discuss a little bit about your teaching philosophy?

M: Well, the biggest thing here is to try to give the student information from as many points of view as possible. I once ___. And the thin is, is to me, education is about getting as many points of view as possible. You do not learn very much if you get information from somebody who agrees and had the same philosophy as you (telephone rings and tape stops). You see, to me, education is about viewpoints. It is about learning how to handle different situations, different arguments. And so, what I try to do is give my students information from as many points of view as possible. I encourage participation. I want discussion, disagreements, and arguments. I want the students to be able to sift

through information that is given and that they read, so that they can be able to give themselves more informed opinions to back themselves up.

D: Well, Dr. Madison, is there anything else you consider important that we should add to the interview?

M: No, no.

D: anything else you would like to ass?

M: Well, not really, actually. It was actually really informative for me because I got a chance to review things that I have done, actually. I believe that __ are important. One thing I try to do, actually, is looking through all this and answering questions, reminds me that __ sort of a family history thing. Where I am going to __ and give you the socioeconomic history of a family, not necessarily who married whom as much as what were their attitudes politically? What were their attitudes racially? What were their attitudes in other things and in different ways?

D: Okay, thank you very much.