

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Youngstown College

Growth of School of Education

O. H. 13

DR. JOSEPH SWARTZ

Interviewed

by

Randall Dicks

on

February 1, 1974

DR. JOSEPH SWARTZ

Dr. Joseph Swartz was born in Caroline County, Maryland on August 31, 1905. He is the son of Joseph F. Swartz and Flora McDaniel Swartz. He attended Caroline High School in Denton, Maryland. After completing high school, he went to Blue Ridge College, where he earned his A.B. degree in 1926. The following year, he received an A.B. from Bridgewater College. He completed his education at the University of Pittsburgh, where he received an M.Ed. in 1939 and PhD. in 1954.

From 1949 until his retirement in 1973, Dr. Swartz was a member of the faculty of Youngstown State University. He was the third full-time faculty member employed in the Department of Education. From 1957 until 1960, he was the head of that department. In 1960, the Department of Education was reorganized into the School of Education, and Dr. Swartz was appointed its first dean. He retired from that position in 1970.

Dr. Swartz was enlisted in the United States Navy from 1942 to 1946. He currently resides at 6550 New Road in Austintown, Ohio.

DONNA DEBLASIO
July 13, 1977

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: DR. JOSEPH SWARTZ
INTERVIEWER: Randall Dicks
SUBJECT: Growth of School of Education
DATE: February 1, 1974

D: This is an interview with Dr. Joseph Swartz for the Youngstown State University History of Youngstown College Project, by Randall Dicks, at Youngstown, Ohio, on February 1, 1974, at 2:00 p.m.

First, Dr. Swartz, I have a list of some of the significant dates in the University's history and I wonder if you can think of anything else that should be included here.

S: Well, since I believe your concern with me is primarily connected with the School of Education, you probably ought to put in here the date at which the first teacher preparation courses were offered.

D: When was that?

S: To the best of my knowledge and belief, they began formally in 1932. I would suggest, however, that you check one of the back copies of the catalog because this was before my time and I'm depending on a memory which is getting a little bit hazy in some respects.

I think that in 1932, Youngstown College, as it was known then, employed Dr. George M. Wilcox to set up a department of teacher education. I do not know whether there had been any informal teacher education courses taught prior to that time. Before Dr. Wilcox came, there had not been, I believe, any

attempt to gain accreditation for the teacher education program. I'm pretty sure he came in 1932.

Dr. Wilcox received his doctor's degree from Columbia University a few years before he came here and he instituted the Department of Education beginning, I believe, with a program for preparing high school teachers. Then, sometime later, they began offering courses for preparation of elementary school teachers. It was probably during the late 1930s. The College also hired, at that time, a specialist in elementary education, Miss Frieda Chapman. I'm not quite sure what her first year of teaching was, but she remained on the faculty until 1957 when she retired.

I became connected with the University for the 1949-1950 academic year, which began in September of 1949. When I came here there were only two full-time faculty personnel involved in the Department of Education. It had been organized as a department of the College of Arts and Sciences and it remained so for ten years after I began teaching here. I was the third full-time faculty member employed in the Department of Education.

D: How many students were there at that time?

S: I don't know if I can give you an exact figure. My answer is, at best, a guess. There was a surprisingly large number, considering that there were only three full-time faculty members. We depended very heavily upon part-time teachers for the education courses. A great many classes were taught in late afternoon and evening. I think that even when I came here, there must have been fifteen or twenty part-time teachers teaching education courses. There again, I don't know the exact figures. It remained that way until, I think, about 1957 when we began to hire full-time faculty personnel in the School of Education.

In that year--I think it was the 1957-1958 term--Dr. Wilcox retired as head of the Education Department and I was appointed as head. I remained in that capacity until 1960 when the Department of Education was changed into a separate school of the University organization. This followed the reorganization of the college into a university and the Department of Education became the School of Education, and I was

appointed Dean of the School of Education. I was, thus, the first dean, although Dr. Wilcox was the progenitor or the primary originator, of the area which later became the School of Education.

D: How had the Education Department changed from the time you first came to the University to 1957 when you became dean?

S: We had expanded quite a bit materially. Of course, the big expansion came a few years before my connection with the University, when what was a relatively small liberal arts college became swamped with students. I think this was largely a result of the GI Bill following World War II. We were still in the middle of that expansion when I came here.

As I said, I came in 1949, and while the veterans' benefits from World War II were beginning to phase out, the slack was picked up by many other students. There was a general expansion of college attendance on the part of undergraduates. I recall some figures which may be only approximate, but I think fairly accurate. When I first joined the faculty, the total enrollment of Youngstown College was somewhere in the 4500s. During the succeeding two or three years, the enrollment gradually dropped off, as the GI Bill factor reduced, to a figure of about 3000 or 3500. This drop took place within two or three years of the time I joined the University. Even while this was happening to the enrollment of the University as a whole, the Department of Education was expanding and enlarging quite significantly.

Between 1949 and 1957, we expanded the number of part-time faculty members involved in teaching education courses. I believe that we still only had three full-time faculty members right up until the year that Dr. Wilcox retired as head of the Department or the year preceding that. Somewhere about that time, we began to expand and take on additional full-time faculty members. Since then, each succeeding year has seen an expansion in full-time faculty members.

We hired more full-time faculty members because we were seeking national accreditation for the School of Education in the early 1960s. One of the criteria for such accreditation called upon us to

reduce the comparative number of part-time faculty-- when I say comparative I don't mean gross numbers, but the percentages of people involved--and to increase the number of full-time faculty. In accordance with that criterion, we began expanding. I would have to go back to the catalogs to give you exact figures and dates.

Between 1957 and 1970, we had expanded from a full-time faculty of three individuals to a faculty of over thirty on a full-time status.

In the meantime, while we had reduced the heavy percentage of part-time faculty, we still continued to employ quite a few. By the time I retired as Dean in 1970, we had thirty full-time faculty members and about fifteen or sixteen part-time faculty members.

- D: When the Department became the School of Education in 1960, were there specific reasons for the change or was it due to continued development and increased enrollment?
- S: It's a little difficult to answer that question because it depends a little upon speculation. While I don't want to appear to be taking undue credit for myself, I would have to say that the development, in part, was due to my own activities and feelings that the Department of Education's prestige demanded recognition as an autonomous school. At that time the Department of Education was enrolling a very heavy percentage of the total University enrollment. We were, in a sense, competing with colleges and universities all over the state, most of which were organized as Schools of Education rather than departments. We were, in fact, certifying more teachers in Ohio than any other private institution. We were even certifying more than some of the state-supported institutions. All of these things brought about the desirability of an improvement in our status and relative autonomy.

I might also say that there has almost always been, in the history of every institution, some conflict between the organization of the pure arts and science area and the professional areas, such as Education, but the same is true for any professional group. The arts and sciences are generally not as vocationally oriented as engineering, business administration

or education groups. The School of Engineering and the School of Business Administration had already been recognized as separate schools prior to this. I felt very strongly, and I had the support of the education faculty, that this was a recognition due us. Consequently, the faculty and I petitioned the Board of Trustees, through President Jones, to approve this change, and they very graciously agreed.

- D: What was the general reaction in both the University and the community to this change?
- S: I have no way of knowing that. We tend to be a little self-centered in all of our university operations.
- D: How was the School of Education generally regarded by the Youngstown community?
- S: I think that it is a very fair statement to say that the prestige of our operation increased as a result of its becoming a School. I do know that as the years went along, we achieved more acceptance in terms of the status of our teachers and our graduates than we had achieved in previous years. I can say this quite specifically and I can even quote figures to this extent. I think our graduates became well recognized over the entire state and were accepted enthusiastically in all of the areas of preparation which were involved. I think part of this was due to the development of an autonomous School of Education.
- D: What was your reaction to being appointed the first dean of the School of Education?
- S: I can't say that it was any great change. Actually, I slid into the job from being head of the department. It was more or less automatic. I, personally, felt no different about the situation. I think I should add parenthetically, that as the department head operating under the jurisdiction of Dean Smith, I had acted very very much independently before that. We were, in fact, pretty much an autonomous organization in everything except name during my entire tenure as head of the Department. The transition from head of the Department to dean was very, very smooth, almost unnoticeable.
- D: Were there any particular advantages that the Education School had in becoming a separate school which it didn't have as a department?

S: Yes, it gave us increased participation in administrative organization. It gave us a little more jurisdiction in the appointment of our own faculty. As I have already indicated, it added somewhat to the prestige of the organization. I think there were even some other advantages. It increased our recognition among the other universities and colleges within the state and it enhanced our communication with the State Department of Education in many ways.

D: What were the problems which faced the School of Education in the early 1960s?

S: We were in the same situation that most of the teacher preparation areas were in at that time. There was a continuing shortage of teachers in the area as well as in the state and in the nation. This was a result of the population increase after World War II. There was a great increase in population, in particular, in the secondary schools. We were pretty much occupied with preparing enough teachers to meet the demand during most of the 1960s. We continued supplying the demand until the time I retired as dean.

One of our major problems during that time was to secure competent faculty with credentials that satisfied our accreditation standards. This was a continual struggle. We've been very, very fortunate in that respect compared to many other schools and universities.

D: What were your goals and ambitions for the School at that time? What did you hope it would become?

S: Well, we were all looking forward to the institution of a graduate school. Of all the different schools in the University, I think the School of Education was the one most ready to move into graduate work at the time that school was established. I do not mean to put any credit upon our shoulders. This is due to the fact that in this community there was a major demand for graduate work in Education. I think this is true even now.

Last year, I understand that at least seventy-five percent of the enrollment of the graduate school was in the School of Education for education degrees. I suspect that it's still around that

percentage now. The graduate program was one of the things that we were looking forward to and getting ready for.

I've already mentioned the problem of accreditation. We had been fully accredited by the State of Ohio almost from the very beginning, with the teacher preparation courses. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there was a great push for national accreditation, not only in our school, but in all schools in the United States. We were part of that movement.

My own reaction to national accreditation is somewhat mixed. I'm not sure that it always and in every respect makes completely good sense. I think some of the criteria and some of the standards that are employed are a bit unrealistic. Sometimes I think they may actually deter creativity and individual experimentation. They tend to put everybody into a kind of mold. Nonetheless, in the environmental conditions in which we were operating, it became almost a necessity to seek accreditation by the National Accreditation of Teacher Education, as well as membership in the National Association of Colleges of Teacher Education.

If we hoped to continue to expand, it became almost necessary to say, "We have met the highest standards of the group."

Accreditation was a constant problem during the early 1960s. We were handicapped by lack of facilities. As you know, the University did not begin to expand in terms of buildings and equipment and things of this sort until after it became a part of the state-supported system. We were still operating as a private institution. There was a lack of funds for a lot of the necessary equipment and for the building facilities that were desirable.

We moved a great step forward when the trustees purchased the public elementary school on Elm Street and gave it to the School of Education. We received it with the understanding that the whole University shared its facilities, but it was primarily our building. This helped us tremendously. I think it was the primary factor in our achieving national accreditation. We had had a visitation by the accrediting committee prior to acquiring that building and while they did not turn down our application

for accreditation, they didn't approve it either. We were in a kind of limbo and they issued a number of requirements that would have to be fulfilled before they would consider accreditation. One of them was expansion of space and better facilities for faculty operation.

There were a great many things involved. We were actually operating for two separate accreditations at the same time. They were the National Council on Accreditation of Teacher Education and the North Central Association for accreditation and approval for the separate School of Education.

President Jones and I went to Kansas City, Missouri, to one of the meetings of the North Central group to present our statements which included the acquisition and remodeling of the new building for the School of Education. This resulted in our receiving complete accreditation and we have maintained and improved our status ever since then.

D: In what year was that?

S: That was in the summer of 1964 or 1965. It was the year in which Dr. Pugsley succeeded Dr. Jones as President.

D: It was said in 1965 that the School of Education produced graduates who reached into every section of the area. It influenced students from many backgrounds. Is this statement accurate?

S: Yes, but I don't think the School of Education was unique in that respect. I think that was a characteristic of the total University situation. One of the things that has always endeared Youngstown University to me was the total community mix which was characteristic of the institution. It certainly was true of the School of Education. This is one of the unique characteristics of the institution which I noted when I first came here and of which I strongly approved.

D: It was also said that without the Youngstown University School of Education, schools in the area as far as Cleveland would have had a hard time finding teachers. Is this accurate?

S: Oh, yes, I guess the same thing can be said for any of the institutions which produced a significant number of teachers during that period. There was a teacher shortage which began during World War II and continued right up until approximately 1970. Then, of course, it suddenly turned over into the opposite direction.

D: What was the reputation of the school in the late 1960s just before the University became a state university? Had it changed since 1960?

S: We improved our prestige greatly primarily because we increased our facilities and our faculty, not because of any deficiency in the early group. I would like to make that clear. I don't know of any individual who was more capable of managing and directing the teacher preparation facilities than Dr. Wilcox. He and his colleagues of the early faculty were excellent educators in every sense of the word. If I say that we improved our image, then that is an actual result of the expansion of the area and improvement of facilities along with fulfilling the demand for teachers. It was a result of the dedication of the people involved.

I have no feeling that I, personally, did anything in this direction. I hope I didn't hinder it in any way. I think it was just an actual growth and natural development that continued throughout this particular period.

D: What was the attitude of the students? The School of Education had a large proportion of the total student body. Was education considered an easy major or was it a popular one?

S: You're getting into some of the classic controversy that's centered around education. I'd like not to get involved in the continuation of any controversial ideas on this particular thing. Let me approach this indirectly.

Among the features which attracted me as a candidate for faculty membership when I first came here were the published standards for teacher preparation curricula in this college at that particular time. In many colleges and universities, teacher education candidates were frequently taken from the lower academic strata of the college population. Youngstown

College maintained a very strict and high standard for acceptance of candidates for teacher certification. I'm sure that you are aware of the fact that our insistence on academic qualities often precipitated some controversies in the University community itself. Beyond a shadow of doubt, our insistence upon high standards was a major factor in our developing reputation.

At the time I speak of, we had the highest standards for admission to teacher preparation of any university or college in the state. I think there was one other private school that had about the same standards. This was a small private school which I won't name because I'm not sure of the exact figures.

Most colleges and universities required only that their teacher education candidates meet the bare minimum standards for graduation of the university, whereas we maintained high academic and aptitude standards. In other words, our education students were competent people. They were from the very top of the group.

Now, let me get back to your direct question. There have always been some elements of controversy between areas of professional and general or classic education. By that I mean that many arts and science faculty personnel have tended to sneer a little bit at some of the aspects of professional preparation. That was not directed exclusively at teacher education. In using the words "professional preparation," I refer to the whole spectrum of vocational preparation as opposed to classical education.

This attitude toward teacher education began in college and university circles very early, with the establishment of the very first separate departments or schools of education. There has always been some tendency for certain individuals of the liberal arts faculty to look somewhat patronizingly at the intensely vocationalized aspects of higher education.

We have often heard comments from dissident arts and science faculty people about the "snap" courses required for an Education major. Actually, such criticisms were not applicable to our situation because we did not accept students into the School of Education until they had proved their academic capacities by two preliminary years in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Thus the first two years of work consisted of a general curriculum taught almost entirely by faculty in the College of Arts and Sciences. Therefore, the standards which applied to their admission to the School of Education were university-wide standards, not the standards of courses or marks that they got specifically in education courses.

I'm not going to enter the controversy of whether or not the content of education courses is comparable to the content of classic studies. I don't think it's necessary or important to make that distinction. Certainly, there is a difference. There are many, many different kinds of college studies. There are at least two distinct types of studies, not only in education, but in any field.

I can compare education courses favorably with philosophy, psychology, sociology, and most of the social science areas, all of which belong to the traditional liberal arts curriculum. They are quite similar in that they do not specifically emphasize the content aspect. My teaching area and my major was in mathematics and physical sciences. There is obviously a difference in material and content in physical sciences and in areas that call for philosophical consideration. I am taking advantage of this opportunity to philosophize a little bit.

In the long run, those students who have been recognized as outstanding students in the School of Education have, without exception, achieved high superiority in their College of Arts and Science courses. That, I think, ends the whole controversy.

- D: When was the graduate program in Education first offered?
- S: Well, I would need to consult the catalog to give an exact date, but I believe it was in the fall term of 1967. The School of Education offered graduate courses along with the English Department in Arts and Sciences, I believe. You had better check with the graduate catalog.
- D: The graduate program then was offered after the University had become a state university.
- S: Yes, I think it was offered the first year that we became Youngstown State University.

D: As you said, you saw the growth of Youngstown University from a small private college to a large state institution. What was your general reaction to the change, growth, and development of the school?

S: Well, you're getting into the area of personal consideration, which has very little objectivity. I can give you my own personal reaction. I don't like big universities, I never did. One of the reasons I came here was the fact that it was a small private institution. In the light of that feeling, I did not particularly welcome the change to a large university. That is not meant to be critical of what happened within the community. I think the university was coerced into the situation, to be perfectly frank, and it had little or no choice in the matter if it wished to survive. Therefore, I'm not critical as an individual of the major changes that have occurred. I don't like a lot of the things that have happened, but I suspect that they were inevitable.

I sat on the faculty advisory group to the president which endorsed the change and I went along because I think we had no choice. The administration in Columbus, at that particular time, made it very, very clear that if we didn't go along with what they proposed to do with us, they would set up a competing state institution. In fact, they even went so far as to appoint a group to develop that very thing.

D: In 1955, Youngstown College was rechartered as Youngstown University. What was your reaction to that change?

S: That was simply a recognition of a factual condition. We were already operating as a university in everything. That was merely a change in name to accomplish what was being done. We had already had separate schools. We had a university organization. A typical college organization doesn't have individual vocational and professional schools operating relatively autonomously as we did. A similar situation occurred at about the same time with Pennsylvania State University.

D: There wasn't any real change then?

S: Not significantly, no. It did not change the administration greatly at that time. One of the things

that I don't care too much for under the state operation is the tendency to proliferate non-teaching personnel. The tendency is to get into administrative details somewhat more. This sort of thing tends to isolate faculty from students and faculty from staff and so on. In a sense, we lost much of our unique character and simply became a part of the lockstep state system.

D: Did you retire as Dean in 1970?

S: Yes, but I retired only as Dean.

D: How do you look back on both your time as Dean in the School of Education and as a faculty member?

S: Well, my heart has always been primarily in teaching. I never sought administrative jobs in any of my teaching assignments. When they have been tendered to me, I have accepted them and have done what I could as I saw the things to be done.

One of the very serious problems in all educational organizations is the tendency to polarize relationships between administration and faculty. I think that has happened down here to a greater extent since it became a state university. This is the cause of so much of the unrest in our public schools. I know this is the cause of the sharp separation between boards of education and teachers as organized groups for instance. I'm sure some of this happened in my own experience.

You should talk to somebody else for an evaluation of my own administrative capacity and efficiency. Certainly I'm not the person to pass upon that. I will say that I have never enjoyed administrative work as much as I enjoyed simple ordinary teaching, whether it was classroom teaching or innovative types of teaching. I tried to operate in the best possible manner that I could. I wish that we had more empathy between administrative groups and faculty groups than we have in our education organization. I believe we have made mistakes in copying the administrative concepts of industry.

D: What were your feelings about and earlier ambitions for the School of Education?

S: Well, as I say, this is a largely personal matter. I never particularly enjoyed being placed in administrative roles, but I realized that someone had to administer and there are some things an administrator has to do which he can't help doing. For instance, I criticize many school superintendents that I know for the polarization which has developed between administrations and faculties. I recognize though that the fault lies not primarily in the superintendents themselves, but in the system which makes it impossible for them to operate unless they adopt the attitudes that bring about the difficulties. In other words, the gap, the division, is between the lay control members and the professional aspect of education itself.

A typical superintendent wouldn't last a year as superintendent if he did not accede to the wishes of the Board of Education which employs him and, in effect, dictates his policies. Once in a great while, you'll see an enlightened community where that condition doesn't exist. It's very rare. The same thing is true, to a certain point, for administrators at the college or university level. In specific reference to your question, I would like to think I had helped a little bit in developing better administrative relationships with my faculty and student body.

D: In an hour, I'll probably think of other things I should have asked you. Is there anything you can think of that I should have asked?

S: Oh, I don't know if there is anything that you should have asked, but I might add a few personal comments. I still feel that teaching is a noble calling and I'm not going to distinguish between the different levels of teaching.

I know there's a lot of criticism about teaching as a profession, but it's been very good to me. I don't think I would ever change anything that has gone on in my own career as far as it relates to my teaching. It's been a very satisfactory operation.

I have particularly enjoyed my association with Youngstown College and Youngstown University primarily because, of all the institutions of higher education with which I have been associated in various capacities as a student or teacher, we

really accomplished more worthwhile things here in meeting the needs of our student population. I don't hold too much with this idea that there are some prestigious institutions of higher education which hold the key to excellence in academic preparation. We have a habit of believing that some institutions such as Harvard University are extremely prestigious and offer the best in education. I have shocked groups by saying, "An individual at Youngstown State University can receive just as good an education as at Harvard University or any other place. It depends on the individual himself and what he wants to get out of it. The facilities are there and the classrooms are there."

I don't go very much for this business of prestige and classification of education. In the sense of meeting requirements of its own particular community Youngstown College and University has done a magnificent job.

D: Thank you very much, Dr. Swartz.

END OF INTERVIEW