

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Youngstown State University Project

Student Experiences

O. H. 363

RAYMOND BURKE LYDEN

Interviewed

by

Terence Lynch

on

May 19, 1977

RAYMOND BURKE LYDEN

Burke Lyden was born in April 3, 1909, in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of William F. Lyden and Bridget E. Burke. He attended Immaculate Conception Grade School, Lincoln Junior High and Rayen High School, graduating in 1926. He attended Ohio State University in 1927 and then enrolled in Youngstown College in 1928. While attending Youngstown College, Lyden distinguished himself in being the first editor of the school newspaper, the Jambar, named in connection with the Youngstown iron mills. The paper still carries that name today.

After completing school in 1931 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, Lyden went to work for the Lyden Oil Company where he worked until 1935. Since then he has worked for Republic Steel and the Division of Water where he was employed until he retired in 1975 as an engineer.

Mr. Lyden currently resides at 6324 Tippecanoe Road, Canfield, Ohio, with his wife, Ann. They have two children, Thomas and J. Robert, both professional engineers and graduates of Youngstown State University. Lyden is a member of the St. Charles Parish and belongs to the Professional Engineers Society and the Elks Club.

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INTERVIEWEE: RAYMOND BURKE LYDEN

INTERVIEWER: Terence Lynch

SUBJECT: The Jambar, students, Wick Mansion, YMCA, Football, Basketball, Professors, YMCA Law School

DATE: May 19, 1977

TL: This is an interview with Mr. Burke Lyden, first editor of the Jambar, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program on the history of the university, in Mr. Lyden's home located at 6324 Tippecanoe Road, Youngstown, Ohio, on May 19, 1977, at 2:00 p.m.

Mr. Lyden, could you give me some information on your background before coming to Youngstown University?

BL: Well, I was born April 3, 1909, in Youngstown. I went to Immaculate Conception School, Lincoln Junior High, and Rayen School. Then I spent one year at Ohio State. Then I matriculated in Youngstown and graduated from Youngstown in 1931.

TL: What was Youngstown College like when you first came here?

BL: It was a very peculiar school for a college at that time. There was only one building, the second building from the corner of Wick Avenue, approximately where the south corner of the library is now. This was the Wick family home. The entire college was in the one home. There weren't many students in the day college. It sort of grew up right after we left. Jones Hall was built . . . Well, we dedicated the cornerstone and that sort of thing and the building was pretty well along at our graduation.

The start of the Jambar was a peculiar situation. We had weekly meetings, the entire college. For about a month and a half or two months we were talking about getting a budget for a newspaper. My idea was that you can't get a budget for something that you don't know what it is all about. So I talked to the secretary of the president, Frieda Flint, and we decided to go ahead and

make a newspaper and run it on the mimeograph. It was the simplest thing. So one afternoon I went into one of the large rooms where a lot of people were sitting around and I pointed out to different people what part of the paper they were going to take, social, athletic, and that sort of thing. Of course, there weren't many athletics going on at the time. We had a fencing team, which was the only intercollegiate sport we had. Basketball hadn't come in yet. We got the paper going and said that we would publish next week at a certain date, and that was it. Then came the problem of a name. We screwed around quite awhile about a name and finally came up with the name Jambar. Jambar was an historical name in Youngstown. At the turn of the century, as I was told, Youngstown was as well known by the name Jambar as it was Youngstown. The reason for that being of all the mills one of them was built square. All the rest of the mills in the entire country were of the English type which were built circular. And this square furnace required a particular bar after each sheet to clean off the jams. It was an L-shaped bar that was used to clean off the jam in the square furnace. This is the reason Youngstown was called Jambar. So that is the reason we chose the name Jambar. It has nothing to do with drinking institutions or that kind of a bar! (Laughter) It's an L-shaped iron bar that was used to clean off the jams of this particular type furnace. By the way, they were right over the hill from the university off Valley Street where the Valley Mill was. These particular furnaces were found there and were in operation a long time ago. In fact, the mill went out of operation in 1913.

TL: Why did the paper cost two cents?

BL: We had no budget and we had to establish some funds to buy paper and mimeograph stencils. Of course, we had a big circulation, about thirty or forty or so! (Laughter) Two cents didn't give us a whole lot of capital. Then, of course, the following year they had a budget and the paper was printed at the regular commercial printing concern. But we got it going and got it named and that was the chore that I performed more than being a very prolific editor. (Laughter)

TL: How did running articles such as "Imagine" and a few others come about?

BL: They were developed by the individuals just off the top of their head, or we, at various times, put out a red sheet to bring up on all the gossip that was going around. But that was a free sheet. I had nothing to do with that, fortunately! But the mimeograph machine and that sort of thing were all used on it because there was no lock and key on the editorial room, which was the old

law library in that building, which was on the third floor. There were a lot of things. It was a very closely knit school at that time because there was such small enrollment.

TL: I remember, in reading the original Jambar, there's an article on the front page that the enrollment had just risen to three hundred and fifty.

BL: Well, that included night school, too. And we didn't have much to do with night school. The Jambar was started primarily in the day school. They had a paper as I understand it from the law school, but the law school went out of existence before the college, as it was known in those days, started.

TL: Do you know the name of that paper?

BL: I do not.

TL: How has the Jambar changed over the years?

BL: Oh, dear! How has the school changed over the years? (Laughter) That's about the extent of it, it has just grown up with the school. Don't forget that Youngstown is a lot bigger than Ohio State was when I was down there in 1927. Ohio State was, I think at that time, one of the largest in the world and still is. But there were twelve thousand students down there at that time.

TL: Why did you come to Youngstown College?

BL: I started out in dentistry and I couldn't get the darn Latin. That was about the extent of it. So I changed around and I was actually shooting for engineering. At that time there was no engineering school in Youngstown, so I did go up to Case. I didn't graduate from Case because that was the middle of the Depression and graduate engineers weren't getting jobs. I had a job to come to and I came back to Youngstown. That's what it amounted to.

TL: What were the students like at Youngstown College in the late 1920's and early 1930's?

BL: I suppose they're like the students today. There's not much difference. You had all kinds. We had quite a cosmopolitan group at that time down there. I'd say it's pretty much the same, only more of them! That's about what it amounts to.

TL: Who were some of the top professors and administration?

BL: Professor Bare was in English, Waldron was in biology, Schudder was in chemistry, and Knowles Wyatt was in law. Nearpass was the president at that time. Jones came in after my graduation year.

I was the one that greeted Jones and gave him his introduction into the university! I thought he was one of the fraternity brothers standing at the registration desk, which included one table with Frieda Flint sitting behind it and this fellow leaning over it. From the rear he just looked like one of the fraternity brothers from Hubbard. I came up and slapped him on the back! (Laughter) Of course, I just about fainted when I saw who it was. This older fellow turned around and I was introduced to Dr. Jones, who was the new president of the college. And to this day he remembers that. I was the one who gave him his chain around the neck. It was a different kind than they get now. (Laughter)

I was head of the fencing team. I was coach and three-weapon man on the fencing team, which we had quite a season. We beat everything, and every match we went into we won, with the exception of Ohio State. They just outclassed us so much that it wasn't even an exercise for them. But we beat Case, Ohio Wesleyan, Heidelberg, and Ohio Northern. That's as far as my memory goes on that. But we had quite a nice team.

By the way, we were the first ones to get letters from Youngstown. In fact, we picked out the colors, but they're slightly changed now. We picked out cardinal and grey, and of course, it's red and grey, isn't it now?

We got our letters and then we all bought the same sweaters and put them on. The school bought the letters, of course.

TL: What was President Jones like?

BL: President Jones was quite an individual. He was a very considerate person, but you couldn't push him around. He was a good administrator. He was, as I say, a very considerate person, a very, very sharp person. I always enjoyed talking to Dr. Jones.

TL: Who were some of the other top professors when you went there?

BL: Dr. Scutter came my senior year. He was quite influential in placing a lot of people around, especially into medicine. He had very good contact with one of the western universities. Dr. Levy was in that group. He was in my organic chemistry. He placed him out in, I think

it was, Indiana. And there were one or two other doctors that were developed in Youngstown at that time that went to Youngstown. He saw fit that they were capable and got them entered into medical school. He is the one that stands out most in my memory.

TL: What was a typical day like at Youngstown College?

BL: Like any other college day I presume. We did have one problem in getting the instructors. Dike Beede was an instructor down there at the time. I had him for a seven o'clock class in the morning for descriptive geometry. I happened to be working every night and that was pretty tough at the time.

Of course, this was before we had an athletic committee. In fact, our group organized a committee to go out and contact the prominent people in town to start athletics in a major way in Youngstown. We contacted such people as McKay, president of the Home Savings and Loan. His son is now president. He was an all-American football player. He was in the group. Emil Renner was another one who helped. Those are two of the principle ones that we contacted. But I was in the group. Now there were others that contacted other people. That group was primarily the group that put up the original money to outfit the teams because the college didn't have the funds at that time to do that. So it was through Dike Beede's efforts . . . Of course, he was coaching a football team down in Pennsylvania at the time, before he came to Youngstown to coach. This group was the group that formed the nucleus of the backers of the original football teams and basketball teams in Youngstown.

TL: Where did you play?

BL: Well, right next to Jones Hall there was an old newsboy's gym. That's where they did their practicing in basketball. About that time, South Field House was being built and that's where they played their games. They did their practicing in the building next to Jones Hall on Lincoln Avenue, about where the planetarium is now, in that area. Then they played at South High Field House. That was the first basketball. And of course, football was the same as it is today. They're still playing it at various spots around the city.

TL: Were there any codes of dress or codes of discipline at Youngstown College when you were there?

BL: Not written or implied.

They had a swimming team, too, at that time, but they didn't get into much competition.

TL: I remember reading in the Jambar about freshmen wearing green ties.

BL: Oh, well, that would be for a week, or something of that nature. The first week of school they would wear green ties to make them stand out. But that was a carry-over from somebody up east, I think, with their beanies, when they used to wear beanies. The freshmen had to wear a small cap; but that didn't last very long.

TL: What were some of the campus activities?

BL: Well, somebody used to play the piano every noon. (Laughter) We used to dance down there every noon in the old dining room of the old Wick home. Of course, there were two fraternities functioning: Sigma Delta Beta, that was mine, and Phi Sig was the other. Now these names have nothing to do with the present fraternities they are now. We had a room in the Lincoln Hotel at the time that we used as a club room. It is where the business building is now. Irving Kretzer followed me as president of the fraternity. He's with the county now or had been. He is a lawyer. He went on through to law. I don't know where he graduated from, but he graduated from Youngstown and then went to law school. That's pretty much it.

The fraternities supplied the major dances. There weren't dances by the school itself. We had no facilities to have them.

Another one of the professors that I remember quite well was Dr. Smith. His wife is still up at the university. He had a class in criminology which was quite interesting at the time. Of course, it isn't as elaborate as their criminology courses today, but it was quite interesting at the time.

TL: Was there any one single place where everybody congregated at the college?

BL: No, there wasn't any place near there. There wasn't any place close that could be considered a hangout. And don't forget, most of these people had jobs on the side, if they could find them, because this was during the Depression. Well, it wasn't during the Depression when I started up there.

I remember one anecdote that may be going into history here. You must bear in mind that this house on Logan Road belonged to the Wick who went down on the Titanic after he built the mansion. He was the same Mr. Wick who donated the old house next to Jones Hall. Now the mansion is no longer in existence, but it was a fabulous



building out across from the Youngstown Country Club. It was designed to be an art museum, eventually. There was a huge organ in the home. It was a fabulous home. In fact, later on it was turned into a nightclub and then the convent bought it--the Ursuline nuns bought it. Then it was sold and they used the proceeds to buy their present location on Shields Road. Now this home that the college was in on Wick Avenue had a locked iron door in the basement, and no one knew what was behind that iron door. No one had ever gotten in there, unfortunately! But this was in 1929 or 1930. They decided to find out what was in this locked door. Now don't forget, there hadn't been anyone in that door since before 1912, in that area of time. And in that door was the wine cellar of this mansion. Mr. Wick died before the wine and liquor could be moved. At that time all liquor was kept in barrels. So they called the revenuers in. These fellows were pretty well equipped to drink liquor, but this stuff was fantastic according to them. It was white, just like honey, thick. It had stayed in these barrels for so many years. They got themselves pretty well oiled before they got out of there, before they transferred all of this wine and whiskey out of that basement room. It was quite a shock. Of course, this was, as I say, during prohibition and it was quite taboo to do. Of course, if a lot of us knew about it we would have probably had that lock picked a long time before the revenuers got there! But that was a little anecdote on the college as it was then, that there could be this fantastic liquor in the basement and nobody knew about it. Of course, in 1912 that would have been good liquor before that, so it wasn't any fluke.

TL: Did the YMCA still have a lot of influence?

BL: The YMCA still operated. We had our gym classes at the Y. We worked through the Y. The YMCA had their name on the certificate. It was a YMCA school. In fact, it was not too long after that that it left the YMCA and became totally independent.

TL: What did the people of the Youngstown community think of Youngstown College?

BL: They didn't think very much of it. It wasn't too big an institution to be very much interested in at the time?

TL: How was it promoted to the general public?

BL: Dr. Jones did most of that. He really got it going. Then, of course, they started playing basketball and they put a good basketball team on the floor, which brought them publicity. Then they got into football and that

brought them a lot of publicity and a lot of following. Of course, when they built the new building they had something to show. Jones Hall is a very nice looking building, it still is. It was primarily that that started the university on its way.

TL: Was the university a very serious academic institution then?

BL: Yes, it was. It was quite serious. We didn't have the biggest curriculum in the world, but we had a good, substantial curriculum and quite capable teachers.

Of course, in a small college like that there were a lot of professors going for their PhD's and that sort of thing. And we had a lot of footwork for them. We made a lot of chemicals in the labs for the professors to work with! I remember our social studies professor. I forget now what the name of the course was, but we had to go out and contact all the churches in Youngstown and find out how many organizations each church had. Now this was part of his thesis on inner and total organizations. The professor in charge of organic chemistry was into dyes or something in this thesis. We made barrels of his basic ingredients to go into his thesis and his work on it. I do remember that! Of course, this is a few years ago. It's forty-six years ago now.

TL: Did you enjoy working on the Jambar?

BL: Yes, it was something entirely different for me. I'm not an editor type. It was primarily an organization job for me; I just organized it. I had to write an editorial, which was about so long usually, a paragraph or something like that. But it was different. As I was telling you, the room wasn't locked, and I did lose a portable typewriter, which was our biggest piece of equipment in the whole operation! Oh, they were interesting years and quite fulfilling years as far as I was concerned. I enjoyed it all.

TL: Have you maintained contact with the university over the years?

BL: Not too closely. Of course, this name Jambar has come up about every ten years and one of the editors comes out and questions me about the name. (Laughter) So that is the primary connection. I have gone to functions, and I know the presidents. I've followed them all the way through. I've usually gone to a lot of basketball games, several of the football games. I always used to have a season ticket to both, but lately I've sort of fallen off. It has gotten a little bit more than I can take.

At our first homecoming banquet in 1936 we had seven hundred people at McKelvey's Tea Room on Federal Street. Judge Gessner was toastmaster. He was the dean of the Law School. I organized the Alumni Association and was president from 1934 to 1936.

TL: What have you done since graduating?

BL: Oh dear, I worked for the oil company until 42 years ago, that would be 1935. I worked for the Lyden Oil Company, did most everything there, from managing stations to driving trucks and everything else. Then I got into a lubricant, upper cylinder lubricant business. No, first of all I got into pipe finding and leak locating. That's in the waterworks field. We did all right on that until the war came along, and then it deprived us of buying materials. We were using very high quality materials and all this particular type material was taken for aircraft production. This was before we got into the war; a year before we got into the war the aircraft production here picked up so tremendously for France and England.

Then during the war I worked at Republic Steel in Warren. Shortly after the war I went into lubrication, which was a fallback on my oil experiences. I did all right in that. It was an upper cylinder lubricant that went into gasoline that did a tremendous job. We had some very nice accounts and then we decided to enlarge with one of my brothers. I decided to go into half of the country on this business, nineteen states to be exact. It was too big a bite. In fact, the week we folded was the week that Mack Motor Company endorsed the product and put it on their shelf in the following week in New Jersey. Mack Motor Company, at that time, controlled the eastern trucking field, the big trucks.

So then after that I got into the waterworks field again and I ended up as chief engineer of the Youngstown Water Department. I spent twenty years there. I retired from there.

TL: What do you think were your major contributions to the university or to the college?

BL: Starting the Jambar is the only thing that I did that was a relatively permanent contribution. Giving it the name and preserving the name, Jambar, which today means nothing to ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of the people. But, as I say, it was a historical name to Youngstown, to the people that worked in Youngstown; Jambar was the town.

TL: Is there anything else you would like to add about

your experiences at Youngstown College?

BL: No, there's not a whole lot more to add. I could go on for a week probably, but as far as important items and things interesting to people today, that's about the total extent of it.

In our graduating class there were 38. That included the people from finance, which we had no contact with during the daytime at all. They were all night students at that time and we had no contact whatsoever with them. I hope you got something on the law school because that was a fantastic school.

TL: Yes.

[Robert Higgins of Youngstown supplied this information.]

RH: The law school was started while the school was still under the direction of the YMCA. It was called, originally, the YMCA Law School. This was in the 1920's.

The system of teaching was the case book method. Classes were held in the old Wick house at night. Then later in Jones Hall. Classes were held two nights a week from seven to ten o'clock, 48 weeks a year. It took four years to complete.

Judge Gessner was dean of the law school. Henry Church and Knowles Wyatt were professors.

In 1932 there were eight in the graduating class. All professors were practicing lawyers. The law school continued until the late 1940's. Some graduates became well known lawyers. Russell Williams, Jere Perkins, Robert Resch, and Robert Higgins are some that I remember.

The law school continued until the late 1940's and produced so many lawyers who were passing the Bar Exam that the Bar Association is rumored to have brought about enough pressure to close down the law school.

BL: They put more through the Ohio Bar per individual trying than any school in the country. A bigger percentage of Youngstown graduates passed the Bar than any school in the country passing the Ohio State Bar.

END OF INTERVIEW