

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM  
History of Youngstown University

Reflections of a Student and Faculty Member  
of  
Youngstown University

O.H. 77

PROFESSOR EDWARD REILLY

Interviewed

by

Alvin W. Skardon

on

June 2, 1972

## PROFESSOR EDWARD REILLY

Professor Edward Reilly was born in Youngstown, Ohio. He attended South High School, and worked for the railroad doing special duty for the superintendent. He came to Youngstown University in 1945 as a student, and graduated in 1949 from the School of Business with a B.A. degree. He later attended Case Western Reserve and graduated from there in 1953 with his M.B.A. degree.

Immediately after his graduation in 1949, Professor Reilly was accepted into Youngstown University as a full time faculty member, even though he only had his B.A. degree at the time. In 1950 or 1951, Reilly's future wife came to Youngstown University as Head Nurse.

In this interview, Professor Reilly discusses such topics as the outstanding members of the Y.U. faculty, the fund-raising activities of Dr. Jones, the law school of Y.U. which is no longer in existence, and Youngstown College's roots in the YMCA.

Reilly was a charter member of the honorary fraternity Alpha Tau Gamma and also received such awards as Distinguished Professor (Y.U. 1961-1962), Who's Who (Midwest 1969) and Outstanding Educators of America (1970).

Professor Reilly retired on June 30, 1962.

ELIZABETH A. REITZEL  
June 19, 1978

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

History of Youngstown University

INTERVIEWEE: PROFESSOR EDWARD REILLY

INTERVIEWER: ALVIN W. SKARDON

SUBJECT: History of Youngstown University

DATE: June 2, 1972.

SKARDON: This is a recording of a conversation between Al Skardon and Ed Reilly on Friday, June 2, 1972.

Well, Ed, what do you want to tell me about the university now?

REILLY: Oh, that's a vast subject.

SKARDON: Was it ever under the control of the Communists?

REILLY: No, I don't think this university was ever even remotely under the control of the Communists. (Laughter) Yes, that's sort of a distraction.

SKARDON: Good. In what year did you come here, Ed?

REILLY: I came here as a student in September of 1945.

SKARDON: When did you graduate?

REILLY: I graduated in 1949.

SKARDON: When did you become one of the faculty?

REILLY: I entered the faculty in 1949.

SKARDON: Full-time or part-time?

REILLY: Full-time, even though I only had a bachelor's degree at that time.

- S: I see. And you were in the school of business?
- R: I was in the school of business, yes, which was a new school, incidently. When I started here, there was no school of business. When Dean Miller came here, he immediately started to create one.
- S: Well, was that a department of business administration?
- R: Yes, and there was no degree, B.S. or B.A., available. You had to get an A.B. degree, which meant you needed a foreign language.
- S: Was that a part of the secretarial school?
- R: No, it was no part of the secretarial school. It was completely independent of it.
- S: About how many students did Youngstown College have then?
- R: The total student body, you mean?
- S: Yes.
- R: I'm just hazarding a guess, probably I would say five thousand. Don't forget, this was when the GI's started to come in in large numbers. Previous to my coming here, I would guess that the student body was probably around one thousand, but enrollment just leaped overnight, with all of the GI's.
- S: At that time, was the school located just in Jones Hall, or did it include other buildings, too?
- R: No, they had Jones Hall and, anticipating this influx of GI's, they put up a lot of army barracks here, several of them. The only one remaining is over where the nurse's office and our old cafeteria stand. There were army barracks where the library and the science building are now, plus some various homes about here that the school owned.
- S: Places like East Hall and Pollock House?
- R: Those were used and in existence. Mae Turner, of the secretarial school, used what I think they called East Hall. It's right behind the book store. That was the secretarial school then.

- S: I see. Was the school called Youngstown College at that time?
- R: That's correct. It was called Youngstown College.
- S: At that time, it consisted of a law school and a college of arts and sciences. Is that about it?
- R: There was a law school and a college of arts and sciences when I started here. Education, business, and everything were parts of the arts and sciences.
- S: Besides President Jones and Dean Smith, who were the other outstanding members of the faculty, say around 1945?
- R: I think one of the greatest men in my experience was Dr. Gould, from your history department. He was a great man and a great teacher. I had him as a teacher.
- Dr. Wilcox, a great man in my book, was Dean of the School of Education. I'll tell you why I think he was so great, too. Dr. Wilcox was very helpful to me, though I was not one of his students. He was dying of cancer, and he knew it. During his last days he was confined to the hospital and I went there to see him. He was in a two-bed ward, and the man in the other bed did not communicate with Dr. Wilcox at all. I knew some of his history; he had been a football player in his younger days and even coached college football teams. He was a very knowledgeable man in football. I began talking to him about football, and his next door neighbor in this room, a steel mill worker, I assume, was gung-ho for sports. When he realized Wilcox knew more about football than he did, he started communicating with Dr. Wilcox. I knew that Wilcox was dying, and he knew that he was dying. He had so much guts; he was such a brave man. His illness was no part of his conversation. He just talked as though he was going to be well and happy the next day, and he was not a bit fearful of death. Absolutely not. He was so brave. To tell you the truth, when I walked out of his room in the hospital, I cried. I didn't cry in his presence, but after I left him, I cried.
- S: That's very interesting, because when I first came here the one member of the faculty who called on me and welcomed me on a personal call was Dr. and Mrs. Wilcox.

R: I'm sure.

S: I was struck by that, but I didn't know this other part of his history. Dr. Wilcox was, at one time, Dean of the School of Education, wasn't he?

R: Yes, he was.

S: Then later he was Dean of Students, is that correct? Well, I'll check on this.

R: I don't think so. I think he was Dean of the School of Education until he resigned from that position and Dr. Schwartz succeeded him.

S: Who was the Dean of Students at the time you came here? Did Youngstown College have such a position?

R: If it did, I wasn't aware of whom he was. I didn't know him. I don't think we had a Dean of Students.

S: Do you know much about President Jones' fund-raising activities? This is one of the most fascinating things about that period, when the college literally depended upon Jones.

R: Yes, I do know something about his fund-raising activities. Dr. Jones would not take "no" for an answer when he went to see industry people. Literally, he just would not. He was persistent as a bulldog, and hung right in there. He usually walked out with some pledge of money, believe me.

S: These were rather substantial, too?

R: Right. I think a lot of credit must go to Dr. Jones. I don't know how the man continued as long as he did raising the vast sums of money from this relatively small community here, but he did it every year. I know people into whose offices he went asking for funds and he just would not accept "no" for an answer from them, that's all there is to it.

S: Who, in particular, did he call on? Did he call on the business interest in the community, or people he knew to be wealthy individuals?

- R: I would say he called on business people mostly, who had personal assets, but they were also active in business, their corporation, or both. But, the money usually came through that one individual, some of his personal money and some of the corporation's money, probably.
- D: Did fund-raising take up the major part of Dr. Jones' time so that the university was, more or less, run by other people?
- R: No, Dr. Jones was very well acquainted with all of the activities here. He was usually involved in every facet of its operation. I don't know how the man did it, but, of course, we were smaller then. He did all this fund raising and still was involved in promotions and salary raises and all those things. He had relatively few committees here, but he did have a few that he depended on for help and advice. Truthfully, he was involved in most all the decisions that were made.
- S: I wouldn't say that an institution with one thousand students or five thousand students is in any way a small responsibility, so my impression that this was really Howard Jones' college and university is not, by any means, far from wrong, is it? I was impressed by the way he ran everything here.
- R: I can tell you a very true story. Several years ago, I was on my way home from California, and I was up in the mountains; I can't name the town right now. It was a very small town. Fishermen came there and there was a lake. On one lone business street in the town, I parked my car and went into a store to buy some film for my camera. The man in the store said he didn't sell film, but he came to the door to direct me to where I could get some. In doing so, he noticed I had an Ohio license plate and he inquired, "You're from Ohio; what part of Ohio?" I said, "Youngstown." "Oh," he said, "I'm originally from Youngstown, too." Then we talked a while and got around to what I did and I said, "Well, I teach at Youngstown University." "Oh, well," he said, "My father is the one who started that thing." And it turned out that his name was Nearpass. His father was secretary of the YMCA back in the very beginning, before Dr. Jones had come to Youngstown College. The college wasn't accredited then, I don't believe, except maybe for the law school, but Nearpass was, in effect, (he didn't have a title of president of anything), the first president. To run into Nearpass' son in this

little remote village up in the mountains was something.

S: Well, was Nearpass the secretary of the YMCA, then? He sort of founded the school, then?

R: Yes, because this was a YMCA college, if I can use that term, at the time.

S: That leads to my next question. Do you know much about the history of the school before you came here as a student?

R: I don't have too much first-hand information, only what I've heard from other people. I think they started running courses of various kinds, non-accredited. I think the first degree they ever granted was the law degree, and I did know about the law school. It was here when I came here, and when Dr. Jones took over, Youngstown College became a four year college. They were still a part of the YMCA, I believe, for some time.

S: You and I were both listed as YMCA secretaries, weren't we?

R: I am now. I am a retired YMCA secretary, because our retirement plans were all tied in with the YMCA when we were Youngstown College. And, you know, we had a great law school, really great. They tell me, and I believe this, that Youngstown College had the greatest percentage in the state of students who passed the bar exam. We had more than any other school.

S: Do you know much about the law school?

R: Yes. I know how it came to be dissolved. The bar association, locally, wanted us to become a full-time law school or go out of business. The school was only part-time, and classes were held only at night, taught by practicing attorneys and judges. My personal opinion is that they felt there was too much competition from students coming out of here with law degrees. At any rate, Dr. Jones decided to develop a full-time law school. To do this, he had to have a minimum of three law professors, who engaged in teaching only, and could have no outside practice. And he was on the way. He brought a man down from Girard, an attorney, and another man whose home was in Cleveland, and a Dean of the Law School.



While this was in the making, however, right at the critical point, the Dean of the Law School died. As a result, Jones threw up his hands and said, "Well, this is the end of the law school." They ran it until the first year enrolled students got their degrees, and then turned over our law library to the University of Akron, which started its law school at that point.

- S: In reading the history of Northeastern University, whose school is a parallel to this one, I found that the law school was started at Northeastern around 1908, because there was such a growth of business in that era. There was such a tremendous demand for lawyers which an old school like Harvard just couldn't meet. Also, the average Harvard-trained lawyer probably wouldn't want to go into business law. So, Northeastern put in the law school. Then, in 1955, they dissolved it because the law schools in the area expanded and new ones were built. There was no longer the demand for lawyers that there had been in 1908. Now, I wonder if that is also true about Youngstown. That is, around 1908, just after Youngstown Sheet and Tube was founded there could have been a tremendous demand for lawyers that couldn't be met by the regular law schools.
- R: That may be so, I don't know. I was too young to know what was going on in the world then.
- S: By about 1955, though, the law school was dissolved.
- R: Around that year is correct. I'm not sure of the exact year, either.
- S: The problem is that the conventional schools were now supplying lawyers for this area as well.
- R: Just from my own observation, I would think that there would be a greater need for lawyers today than before. I say this because today everyone wants to sue everyone else and go to every court there is in the land, up to the Supreme Court, over many things which are not too material. There seems to be much more recourse to law and to the courts than there used to be. So, I'd think lawyers would be very much in demand these days.
- S: I see. The school didn't dissolve then, just because there was a lack of demand.

- R: No. The school would have continued to operate had the Dean not died at that point, I'm sure. But he was the only one that was familiar with the law school; all the other teachers were part-time. The Dean had just brought in two new men to become the faculty. They both stayed on at the university because they had been given contracts, but they didn't teach law. They taught political science, history, and related subjects.
- S: I remember a fellow at the law school who taught constitutional history when I was here. He used to have lunch with us at the cafeteria.
- R: Yes. I think this was the man from Cleveland.
- S: He's very much the type of man that was around here during that period.
- R: Yes, he was. He came here, originally, to be teaching in the law school. When the law school was dissolved, he stayed on at the school until his retirement teaching history, political science, and related subjects. The other man was Westenfield, I believe. He was an attorney from Girard and taught here for some years afterward. As far as I know, he's still practicing law in Girard.
- S: Do you remember a professor here by the name of Johnson, in mechanical engineering, who now lives in New Hampshire?
- R: Yes. He and his wife used to publish books a great deal. Yes, I did know him, not intimately, but fairly well. I think he was only a part-time teacher, though. I don't think he was a full-time faculty member.
- S: No, but he was also a student here when the school was called The Youngstown Institute of Technology.
- R: I didn't know that.
- S: We hope to go to New Hampshire to get his memoirs tape-recorded.
- Dr. Gould, another faculty member, has moved now to Concord, Tennessee.
- R: Oh, that's probably where her daughter lives, I imagine.
- S: Yes, she is with her daughter in Concord, Tennessee, a suburb of Knoxville.

- R: Oh, and you thought Coffield might look her up somehow and find her.
- S: Yes. Bill Coffield, who is living there now, said he has seen Mrs. Gould quite often.
- R: Oh, wonderful, yes.
- S: Yes. It's quite a coincidence that he lives near Concord, Tennessee. Without my even asking, he said that he's seen Mrs. Gould there quite often.
- R: You were trying to find her. That's wonderful.
- S: When I came here, there was a distinct feeling that Youngstown University was somewhat dominated by Hiram College alumni. Did that feeling have some validity?
- R: I think there's some validity in that because Dr. Jones was from Hiram College; Dr. Smith was from Hiram College; and much of the faculty did come by way of Hiram College. That's correct.
- S: Yes. Dave Behen said that he had the distinct impression that the one degree higher than a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago was a B.A. from Hiram.
- R: We had many, many people from Hiram College, which is a small college, and I'm sure that there were far more faculty people from Hiram than any other college, in spite of its smallness. Many of the teachers who have since died were from Hiram.
- S: It would be interesting to connect Hiram with Youngstown because Hiram is an old college. We want to get it out of the people's minds that Youngstown College or University sprang up suddenly. The school really has a long history, even if it appeared on the surface about 1958.
- R: We still have a man here on our faculty, in the English Department, from Hiram who came here way back when. He's still on the faculty here.
- S: Who's that?
- R: His wife is not from Hiram, but he is. He's got emphysema, you know who I mean? He used to teach speech courses and drama.

S: Elser?

R: No, not Elser.

S: Anyhow, I'll look him up. Yes, he's off this quarter because he's been ill, but he's one of the old-timers from Hiram. Is he still in the English department?

R: Oh, yes.

S: All right, I'll look him up.

R: I could look it up, if you want the name here.

S: That's all right. Dean Aurand, of course, is also from Hiram.

R: Dean Aurand. Yes, I believe he is from Hiram.

S: Hiram tradition here is not entirely dead.

R: Not yet, no.

S: Did you look over that list of significant and important events? I was wondering if you had anything to add to it, or any other questions you'd like to ask.

R: No, I think what I read here seems to be fairly correct. These dates are probably more correct than I would be. I didn't know some of this about when the college changed its name. But, I'm in agreement with all of this.

S: We find that the first recorded classes date back to 1888.

R: 1888?

S: Yes, and the YMCA organization actually begins around 1862. So you see, we go back a long way. One of the interesting things about the YMCA is that its first purpose, when it was founded, was to be sort of an evangelical organization for young men. Next it became an educational organization. It already had a full educational program growing before it began to encompass physical fitness.

R: I didn't know that.

S: Most people seem to see the YMCA only as a physical fitness institute.

R: Physical fitness, yes.

S: But the YMCA was already well established and the physical fitness program was largely the initiative of one secretary.

R: That's all news to me. I wasn't aware of that at all. I'd have put it the other way around.

S: So, really the educational program came even before the physical fitness program did.

R: Now, Cleveland State University originally was a school very similar to Youngstown College. They were a YMCA school like we were, then they became Fenn College, which is now Cleveland State University. I would say that their history is very similar to ours.

S: Yes. I'm going to write to them and ask them about their history. I find that Northeastern University has a typical institutional history, but it parallels Youngstown in a remarkable number of ways. Did we have a football team here when you came as a student in 1945?

R: Yes.

S: We did?

R: I'm sure we did, yes. Beede was the first and only coach we had. Yes, football was in existence when I came here. Let me back off a bit on that. They had a team here before the war, actually. I think during the war period, they did not. Then it was, I think, reactivated when the war was over and we had the big student body. It's pretty hard to have a football team out of 500 students, 400 of whom were girls.

S: I didn't realize we had that proportion at one time.

R: I think we did have that proportion.

S: Marilyn Jones, Dr. Jones' daughter, has written a paper on the history of football at Youngstown University.

R: I didn't know that.

S: And it's quite voluminous. I found that out when one of my students wrote a term paper on that topic and used her paper as a source.

R: You know, her husband's on our faculty here.

S: Chuey, isn't it?

R: Chuey, yes, Phillip Chuey. Right.

S: I didn't know that he was on the faculty.

R: Yes, he teaches accounting here full time.

S: What about sports other than football? Do you recall very much about them?

R: Well, as a student, I wasn't aware of much of this. I didn't have much interest in sports. I had to work fifty-six hours a week and come to school, so athletics was not on my mind much at all.

S: I understand, because that's typical of the students that come here who work. They eat and sleep and study.

R: After I graduated, I started attending football and basketball games which were going on at the time. I just don't know when they actually started them.

S: What about fraternities?

R: The fraternities were primarily all local fraternities at that time. In fact, I was advisor to one fraternity which subsequently went national, and I think that happened to all local fraternities. They became national.

I am more familiar with the honorary fraternities, like Alpha Tau Gamma, the honorary accounting fraternity here. I was a charter member of it. It was started under the guidance of Dean Miller, and is a local fraternity. I belong to the national honorary accounting fraternity, but as yet we haven't qualified for that, Kappa Alpha Psi.

S: When did Dean Miller come here?

R: He came here in 1946, I think.

S: 1946.

R: There is an interesting story about him. He came up here to enroll in our school of music. Yes, he's a singer and choir director; he still is. He was a GI and he had just gotten out of the army. He came up here to go to the music school. The registrar was a former teacher of his in high school and he said, "Bob, we need you in accounting as dean." The man we had as dean wanted to retire to go into private industry, which he did.

S: Well, I think I'd better interview Dean Miller. I didn't have him down on my list of people to be interviewed.

R: Yes, probably you should.

S: Well, we've just got about five minutes left. You have an eleven o'clock appointment, don't you?

R: Yes.

S: Will you say a little more about your own background? I mean, were you involved in this area?

R: I was born in Youngstown.

S: I see.

R: I attended schools in Youngstown and . . .

S: Which high school did you attend?

R: South High. I worked for the railroad doing special duty for the superintendent. I had a very large territory to cover. I was expediting troop trains and munitions trains, and untangling snarls that were going on. I had the superintendent's authority where ever I went. I was stationed in Columbus and got tired of sitting in hotels and listening to sales men tell the same stories over and over. I don't like to hang around beer joints, so I thought I would enroll in Ohio State and take a few courses. And I called him

and he said, "Go ahead, Ed, that'd be a good idea; you're going to be down there all winter anyway." So I did. I enrolled as a math major at Ohio State. I only attended classes for about three weeks, and he called me and ordered me back to Cleveland, in spite of what he had said. So, I had to drop out of Ohio State. The bug had bitten me, though, so I went back to Cleveland for several months and thought I would quit and go back to Youngstown to college. I had seniority at Youngstown from my other job, and I so informed him, came back here, and enrolled at Youngstown College.

- S: Do you mind my asking a few personal questions? I can guess you must be about sixty-five or sixty-eight years old.
- R: I'm sixty-seven.
- S: Well, I came very close to that.
- R: Yes, you did.
- S: How long has your wife been the nurse here at the university?
- R: I believe she came here in either 1950 or 1951 as Head Nurse. The other nurses were all students or registered nurses. They were all R.N.'s, but they were working on degrees. In fact, so was she at the time. And over the years, they got their degrees and left.
- S: Well, I think that we've gone over the basics of the interview. Have you decided yet about when you'll be leaving Youngstown?
- R: Well, I don't intend to, at least for now, and as far as I know, we will maintain a home here permanently. I'm going to Alaska, though.
- S: Oh. I thought that when you left you were going to stay there some time.
- R: No, I don't want to be up there in the winter.

End of Interview